

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
JOINT MEETING
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

February 7, 2018

8:01 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Justin Parish, Vice Chair
Representative Ivy Spohnholz
Representative Jennifer Johnston
Representative Chuck Kopp
Representative David Talerico

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Senator Gary Stevens, Chair
Senator Cathy Giessel
Senator John Coghill
Senator Tom Begich
Senator Shelley Hughes

MEMBERS ABSENT

HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

Representative Harriet Drummond, Chair
Representative Zach Fansler
Representative Lora Reinbold (alternate)
Representative Geran Tarr (alternate)

SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

PRESENTATION: BUILDING A CULTURE OF EDUCATION: K12-UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIPS; UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATIVE COST EFFECTIVENESS

- HEARD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

No previous action to record

WITNESS REGISTER

JAMES R. JOHNSEN, PhD, President
University of Alaska
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Gave a presented entitled "Building a Culture of Education: K12-University Partnerships; University Administrative Cost Effectiveness."

ACTION NARRATIVE

8:01:10 AM

CHAIR GARY STEVENS called the joint meeting of the Senate and Senate Education Standing Committees to order at 8:01 a.m. Representatives Parish, Johnson, and Talerico and Senators Stevens, Giessel, Begich, and Hughes were present at the call to order. Representatives Spohnholz and Kopp and Senator Coghill arrived as the meeting was in progress.

Presentation: Building a Culture of Education: K12- University Partnerships; University Administrative Cost Effectiveness

8:01:50 AM

CHAIR STEVENS announced that the only order of business would be a presentation: "Building a Culture of Education: K12-University Partnerships; University Administrative Cost Effectiveness"

JAMES R. JOHNSEN, PhD, President, University of Alaska, pointed to a painting in the room of the Alaska treaty signing in 1867; he said that the setting was during the Lincoln Administration. He noted that five years before that, the Morrill Act of 1862 was passed by Congress and signed into law by the President. The Morrill Act created land grants for universities across the United States, and in 1815 Congress approved the Alaska Agricultural College and School of Mines to become a land grant university. Alaska didn't get the land that was supposed to come with being a land grant university, but the state is pursuing the issue in Congress. Before the treaty and the Alaska purchase, a vision of the country's leaders was to invest in education.

DR. JOHNSEN stated that culture of education for Alaska means habits and values, and he emphasized that the university's mission is for Alaska. He said he would address the university's partnership with "friends in the P12 community." He noted that the commissioner of the Department of Education & Early Development (DEED) was present in the room. He mentioned cost-effectiveness in education, and he emphasized the importance of ensuring students' experiences are positive ones.

[8:04:33 AM](#)

DR. JOHNSEN began his PowerPoint presentation, entitled "Building a Culture of Education: K12-University Partnerships; University Administrative Cost Effectiveness." He directed attention to slides 2-5 of the presentation, entitled "P12 University Partnerships." He stated that he and the commissioner of DEED work together, which is something that was not done in the past. As shown on slide 4, he said partnering is taking place through teacher education and by reaching out to students to increase educational attainment in Alaska, which has been relatively low. Bringing that rate up is important in the development of a more diverse and innovative economy and to reduce the cost of health care and the incidence of crime. He offered a more in-depth look at the partnerships of the university, DEED, and local school districts, which focus on: increasing academic rigor, expanding concurrent and dual enrollment programs, increasing college and work readiness, increasing college attendance and completion rates, reducing required developmental coursework, and improving educator preparation, recruitment, and retention. He said the UA Board of Regents and Board of Education meet regularly, and he has regular meetings with the Alaska Council of School Administrators. He said UA is in the process of creating the College of Education at the University of Alaska Southeast, and that program has an internal advisory council and an external council.

[8:09:06 AM](#)

DR. JOHNSEN advanced to slides 6-7, entitled "Teacher Education." He stated that there is a low percentage of Alaska-trained teachers in the state with relatively high turnover, the estimated cost of that turnover is 20 million dollars a year. He stated he would like to use that money elsewhere, such as for recruitment of teachers. High teacher turnover in rural Alaska is a burden, but more of a burden to the students and the communities. More opportunities for Alaskan's to become

teachers need to be provided. He stated the goal is for 90 percent of all new teachers to be educated in Alaska by 2025. Dr. Johnsen said the operating budget request for the coming fiscal year includes an increment to fund strategies to increase the ability to train more teachers and, through additional professional development and enrichment, to retain teachers. He highlighted an item on slide 7, the Alaska Statewide Mentoring Project, which is not only improving the retention rate but also showing up in improved academic performance of students. He mentioned the Rural Alaskans' Honor Institute (RAHI) [not shown on the slide], which is a place where "smart young Alaskans" are brought to the university to learn about opportunities, including teaching. He pointed to Educators Rising, on slide 7, and noted that about half of the schools in Alaska have that program, and UA would like to expand it.

8:12:08 AM

SENATOR HUGHES asked how many teachers are trained in Alaska currently.

DR. JOHNSEN estimated about 800 total teachers are hired each year.

8:12:40 AM

SENATOR STEVENS asked Dr. Johnsen to expound upon the recruitment process.

DR. JOHNSEN responded that UA is working with school districts through the Educators Rising program by talking to children at an early age about becoming teachers, much like is done with middle school children through the Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program. He said there has been a decline in the respect given to the teaching profession. He mentioned the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program, which is a fast-track to teaching.

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON asked Dr. Johnsen how reduction of developmental training and the performance scholarships are measured, specifically related to performance levels two and three.

DR. JOHNSEN said he could provide those details. He recollected that when he started as president, about 50 percent of the students coming to the university required developmental coursework, and now the number has been reduced to approximately

30 percent. In response to a follow-up question, he confirmed that part of the reason for the reduction is because of the university's change in its approach to developmental course work; it has become more refined. He offered further details. He noted that some of these students are coming to the university at age 29, for example, and don't remember some of the math skills they once learned in high school. He said UA can tailor the developmental requirement to the student.

[8:17:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON asked if that means that UA has developed a network of tutors and has "looked into the tutors as far as developing a further network of teachers."

DR. JOHNSEN answered that he would get back to Representative Johnston with exact information. Due to fiscal cuts in past years, the university has had to cut student support and student advising positions.

[8:17:56 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked if MAT was developed for professionals in other fields who decide they may like to try out teaching or if it is designed for someone who already has taken several education courses.

DR. JOHNSEN confirmed that the MAT is designed for those who may want to change careers or perhaps just got out of the military, for example. The prerequisite for entering the MAT program is a baccalaureate degree.

[8:19:07 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP, regarding teacher turnover, said the state is spending about \$20 million a year, and he acknowledged that "these are a lot of partnerships that you're doing with DEED." He referenced information from the presentation saying that there was a 50 percent turnover rate in rural Alaska, and he asked how many teachers that is.

DR. JOHNSEN stated that he would get back to Representative Kopp with the details, but he estimated the number is 100.

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP stated that it was interesting that Northwest, West, and Southwest Alaska suffer from the highest turnover rates and have single percentile scores in math,

science, and the English language. He remarked that the loss of students in Alaska is directly related to teacher turnover, and the foundation already has been laid for a statewide mentoring project that may be much more intensive than what it is now. He stated, "It's almost like we need ... a fulltime support ministry for teachers." He said he thinks a program like this would eventually pay for itself by keeping teachers in classrooms. This program could give support at a ratio of one person for 6-10 teachers.

[8:21:19 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND opined that Dr. Herb Schroeder does an amazing job of "reaching down into that middle school cohort and producing engineers." She asked how that depth of reach could be modeled in Educators Rising.

DR. JOHNSEN stated that the university reaches out to students. Regarding the Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program (ANSEP), he said Dr. Schroeder identifies the smartest kids in school and gets them on the university campus every year. Ultimately, he said, it comes down to caring adults establishing standards and instilling confidence in those young students. He stated his belief that this approach needs to be taken to make effective prospective teachers. He noted that Finland, which is a country that has been "extremely successful in moving up the ranks," has done this. He said he would like to start talking to those students that have been identified and have them become math teachers. During the past few years, funding cuts have been necessary; these cuts have been a little more in-depth in some areas to ensure that ANSEP expansion in Anchorage has the funding it needs to continue. This year's budget request is another increment of funding for development of ANSEP in Anchorage, he said.

REPRESENTATIVE DRUMMOND said she is glad to hear that and hopes Dr. Johnsen is taking a similar approach with educators.

[8:22:52 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH commented on the importance of the mentoring program and how it has declined but is being discussed here. He noted that Dr. Johnsen had stated a cost of \$20 million annually for recruitment, and he asked how something such as Representative Seaton proposes - an earlier time period for solidifying the budget for education - would affect those recruitment numbers.

DR. JOHNSEN surmised it would reduce turnover, although he said he may not be aware of certain effects of early funding on turnover.

SENATOR BEGICH said clearly when students are in their last year of teacher training, they are being recruited. He asked if Dr. Johnsen thinks school districts would be able to recruit earlier if they had a certainty about their budgets.

DR. JOHNSEN answered that he thinks there would be an impact, but he said he would want to test that, perhaps by looking at other states that may have earlier funding. He continued:

Just like ANSEP where, in spite of cuts, we cut deeper and invested, we did that also with the mentoring program. So, we tried to protect that. That was in my first year. We said, "Wait a second, it's just wrong, given the positive results, to end this program." So, again, we cut a little deeper, painful though that was, to make sure that funding went to the mentor program.

[8:26:57 AM](#)

DR. JOHNSEN returned to the PowerPoint presentation, to slide 8, entitled "Student Outreach." He mentioned Alaska Middle College High School and said 75 percent of the students who graduate from it come to a UA campus with an average of 30 university credits units "in their pockets" and many with associate degrees. He said ANSEP is successful. He noted that the Jump Start Program in the Kenai Peninsula Borough supports tuition reduction for residents of the borough to close to one-quarter million dollars a year. He said there is a strong partnership between UAA and the King Career Center, and the community and technical colleges - UAA and UAF - work closely with school districts. He pointed to the last item on slide 8, "TRIO Upward Bound," and said the federal government is also involved in education - teacher education in particular. He informed members of the committees that the Higher Education Act is being reauthorized now; numerous provisions of the Act address education funding and teacher education. He said Alaska's senior Senator is playing an important role in the reauthorization of the Act.

[8:26:51 AM](#)

DR. JOHNSEN advanced to slide 9, entitled "Student Financial Support." He stated that the UA Scholars Program is funded through land development. Even though UA has never been given the full land-grant it was due, it is active in commercializing and getting monetary value from the lands that it does have. The money goes into a fund endowment and then earnings from that fund pay for the UA Scholars Program. The Alaska Performance Scholarships award \$12 million annually to students who come to the university. The Alaska Education Grant is given based on needs, between \$500 and [\$4,000] per year. He stated that even with the education grant and a needs-based grant, UA is about the lowest ranking in the country, in terms of providing needs-based aid for students.

8:29:38 AM

DR. JOHNSEN directed attention to slide 10, entitled "Administrative Cost Effectiveness." He emphasized that it is critical for the university, as a university of the state, to be accountable to the people of Alaska. He listed five efficiency review processes, as shown on slide 11, which are: a 2008 MacTaggart and Rodgers report; a 2011 James Fisher report; a 2015 Statewide Transformation Report; a 2016 Strategic Pathways [review], which is ongoing; and a 2017 review by experts from the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems of past UA systemwide studies. In response to Senator Stevens, he said he would be happy to provide [the 2017 review]. He brought attention to slide 12, entitled "Strategic Planning," and he said the university system has clear goals and measures, which he would share later. On slide 13, he said, is the summary from the 2017 review, which reflected that UA had done a lot and still has much to do. He said UA has engaged Jones and McGuinness over the last year to focus on improvement goals. Slide 14 focuses on strategic pathways and reflects the result of an 18-month process where 230 faculty, staff, students, and community members jointly looked at 22 areas of the university with the question: "How do we optimize our system to achieve our goals for higher education in Alaska?" He said the chart on slide 14 shows a tension between the governing entity of a state system and the campuses - the universities that make up that system. The top four rows of the chart - mission, objective, core principles, and strategy - and said they are all one. He then pointed to the row that shows courses and programs available across the university and said that represents unity. He indicated that the information between those rows, which he compared to [the filling of] a hamburger, shows where the three major campuses differ.

DR. JOHNSEN said the Board of Regents has made some tough calls over the last several years. The university system moved from three schools of management to two and is in the process of going from three distinctive colleges of education to one. It is streamlining its procurement process. He explained that UA purchases about \$200 million of "stuff" per year, which must be coordinated to get more buying power. He named grants and contracts administration as an example of two areas in which UA has "focused on backroom efficiencies to enable front room service."

[8:34:41 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON mentioned the hamburger and asked whether credits are transferable.

DR. JOHNSEN answered yes, all credits are transferable, though they may not transfer to a specific degree from one campus to another. He provided an example of statistics for psychology and statistics for economics where the theory is all the same, but they are very different courses and should not be counted when changing disciplines. The university has streamlined the process to 48 hours for evaluating which credits transfer to a major. That said, he reiterated that all credits will transfer from UAA to UAF, for example, in counting toward a degree. He added that general education requirements (GERs) all transfer. In response to Senator Stevens, he confirmed that if a student passed the general education requirements at the University of Alaska Southeast, then he/she has passed the general education requirements at UAA and UAF.

[8:36:41 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE JOHNSTON mentioned nursing and engineering degrees and asked, "Does that prove true for those two degrees also?"

DR. JOHNSEN answered yes. He said the nursing and engineering programs collaborate across the university system; their external advisory committees work together. He said, "We tend to think of these institutions as competing with each other, but I think we're realizing that we're so much stronger together."

[8:37:55 AM](#)

DR. JOHNSEN returned to the PowerPoint presentation, to slide 15, entitled "UA Goals & Measures 2018-2025." He said the Board of Regents has established five goals: economic development, skilled workforce, world-class research, increased degree attainment, and cost-effectiveness. He said the universities are meeting with deans and directors to find out the goals of the colleges that then will "roll up to these statewide goals." He said increasing degree attainment is the critical goal. Currently enrollment is at 29,000 and the goal of 45,000 by 2025 is almost a 50 percent increase. He has two benchmarks that the Board of Regents approved: one is to look at the percentage of population in school in another state; the other is to look at Alaska's history of student enrollment. In 1965, he said, 6.3 percent of Alaskans were students at one of the state's campuses. Currently that number is just over 4 percent, and he said 6 percent seems reasonable.

[8:40:11 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ stated that she is excited to hear about ambitious goals. She asked for an explanation of the item under the goals on slide 15, which is to increase annual completions per full-time equivalent (FTE).

DR. JOHNSEN answered that is a standard measure of productivity. He offered further details. He said if UA can increase graduation rates, then there will be "more people as a percentage of our total student body graduating in a particular year."

[8:41:30 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH asked what the target was in terms of the number of Alaska teachers hired and whether the turnover problem would be addressed.

DR. JOHNSEN indicated that the answer depends on UA's partnership with the school districts. He explained that districts need to reduce their turnover rates while UA simultaneously produces more teachers. In response to a follow-up question, he indicated that the focus is simply on "more" and refinement will come later. The 80 percent solution is more. He stated that he would love having too many Alaska-trained teachers.

[8:44:10 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP asked Dr. Johnsen if he would agree that athletics and research are two of UAs biggest "draws."

DR. JOHNSEN replied no. He acknowledged that \$4-\$6 outside dollars come in to UA for each \$1 that goes in to research, and the area attracts graduate students. He said athletics does not seem to be a powerful draw in Alaska. He said a powerful draw to students currently is the ability to graduate and find employment opportunities.

REPRESENTATIVE KOPP countered that he believes that athletics is a powerful draw when trying to get young people to select UAA, and he suggested that Dr. Johnsen may have "a little disconnect from actually where a lot of Alaskans are at with respect to our athletic programs." He said schools become known for different programs, and the better Alaska's programs do, the better recruitment is. He said he is glad to see research being highlighted, because he does think that "draws the ... top tier faculty, and that's critical."

DR. JOHNSEN acknowledged Representative Kopp's point. He said the university's goal with athletics has been to get private support up to the same level as the students are paying for their academic programs. He said there is no question that the athletic programs are valuable; however, they have been heavily subsidized - more so than academic courses - which he opined is not a good plan. Dr. Johnsen said UAA and UAF are going to continue to garner more private support for athletics. He related that UA has three alumni at the Winter Olympics this year, all of whom happened to have majored in engineering. He concluded, "So, there's no question that it's very, very important."

[8:47:50 AM](#)

DR. JOHNSEN advanced to slide 15, entitled "UA Goals & Measures 2018-2025," which represents the regent's established goals over the long term; those goals are tied to funding. He pointed out that the appendix breaks out the specific investments proposed in each of the goal areas. Referring to slide 16, "Institutional Missions," he said UA is clear about its missions for each university. He then addressed slide 17, "System vs Campus Authority," and he said UA has considered the relationship between stateside administration and campuses to determine who is responsible for what, as well as focusing statewide on governance and "those services that make sense." He said when he began as president, UA "had some programs that

touched students and others in the statewide administration; those have all been moved to campuses." He added, "The only stuff that's in statewide is where it makes sense from a governance standpoint and where, from an administrative standpoint, it makes sense to have that centrally provided service to the university campuses."

DR. JOHNSEN highlighted slide 18, entitled "System vs Campus Reductions," and he stated that the university has reduced systemwide functions 36 percent, in terms of positions, since fiscal year 2014 (FY 14). Funding has gone down about 37 percent. He said that is "not quite triple the systemwide average reduction over this period." Further consideration is being made to "make statewide even leaner."

[8:50:04 AM](#)

DR. JOHNSEN covered slides 19-21, entitled "System vs. Campus Authority." Slide 19 clarifies roles of governance between the Board of Regents, the statewide administration, and the specific universities. He said UA was criticized in the MacTaggart Report for not involving the campuses in statewide decision making. He relayed that he has weekly meetings with the chancellors individually and as a group with a couple of vice presidents. No decisions are made without consultation with the chancellors, which has strengthened collaboration. Dr. Johnsen said there would always be tensions in a system, but UA has a process for working through them. He said UA thinks about the needs of the state and provides administrative functions that are nonduplicated. Further, the University of Alaska Foundation and the Land Management Office are self-funded activities. The foundation is a 501-C-3, while the Land Management Office is paid for through development activity. These entities provide some services directly to the campuses, but they have an independent mission, as well. Dr. Johnsen said that [functions that directly impact] students and faculty members are strictly at the campus level. He gave examples of two programs that were moved out of statewide services: the Mining and Petroleum Training Services (MAPTS) program and the K-12 Outreach program. He mentioned the Executive Council, a Summit Team, and 12 systemwide councils. He said every council has a charter and a scorecard and reports monthly on its initiatives and objectives. He stated that this effort increases transparency as to what is going on across the system. He said many of the recommendations and decisions that came out of the strategic pathways process have been assigned to the councils. He said this plan comes partly from his experience in the private sector, where there

were monthly reviews that covered every aspect such that "nothing falls through the cracks."

[8:53:26 AM](#)

DR. JOHNSEN advanced to slide 22, entitled "Budget Development," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Reports identified the need to improve budget development between statewide and campuses
- Regents set goals, then Statewide administration works with campuses to identify strategies and needed resources
- Budget increments are tied to specific strategic goals down to the campus level
- Budget reduction plans are codeveloped with campuses

DR. JOHNSEN said budget cuts are not a pleasant process. He said, "We're planning for a good future, but we're also always preparing for what might actually take place."

[8:54:30 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH noted that Senator Coghill "is looking at extending the education tax credit" that Dr. Johnsen had said last year was a critical component of UA's budgeting process. He said the tax credit is set to expire this year, and he asked Dr. Johnsen how vital a role that credit plays in future planning processes.

[8:55:05 AM](#)

DR. JOHNSEN acknowledged that both Senator Coghill and Representative Tuck have bills that would extend the tax credit program. He emphasized that the tax credit program is critically important to the university, because it brings, on average, \$5-\$7 million dollars a year. A lot of that money goes into workforce development, research, and scholarships. He said the larger significance of the credit is connectivity between the university and the mining companies, banks, fishing organizations, and other elements of the private sector, that are making those contributions.

[8:56:24 AM](#)

DR. JOHNSEN returned to the PowerPoint presentation. He advanced to slide 23, entitled "Salary Schedules." He said UA is doing a comprehensive compensation analysis covering faculty, staff, and executives. The university system has "been on the downslope" financially, while other universities in other states "have been on the upside" coming out of the recession. He said UA has had salary freezes across the board in FY 18 and 19, which includes no step increases. He credited United Academics, the union for the university system, which helped UA work on a collective bargaining unit with no compensation increases for three years.

[8:57:50 AM](#)

DR. JOHNSEN advanced to slide 24, entitled "Retention & Graduation," and he said UA is committed to achieving a goal of 65 percent [retention and graduation] by 2025. A large study done by Georgetown shows that twenty percent of jobs will require bachelorette degrees and higher, while 20 percent will require "some postsecondary education of value," such as an associate degree or certification. He said all other goals established by the regents are in line with the 65 percent goal.

[8:58:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ referred to slide 23, regarding salary schedules. She shared that one of her brothers works in the Lower 48 and experienced the impact of the recession on public institutions, including the difficulty of retaining faculty. She acknowledged that there is a challenge to compete nationwide when recruiting faculty. She noted that most faculties do not commit to an institution for just a couple of years but hire on for "a long-term relationship"; therefore, the loss of cutting-edge faculty could affect the university's competitive edge for a decade. She said it took UA 15 to 20 years to recover from a "competitive disadvantage" it faced in the 1980s. She said she fears UA is taking backsteps that will once again affect it. She shared that when she was in school in the '90s, her classmates went to colleges in the Lower 48, because UA wasn't offering competitive degrees with exciting faculty. She said, "We don't want to see that kind of brain drain as we're moving forward."

DR. JOHNSEN said he agrees. He pointed out that UA ranks number one in Arctic research, and "we need to own that space." He said other institutions, such as Dartmouth, Northern Arizona

University, the University of Colorado, and the University of Washington, "are discovering the Arctic." He stated, "It's critical, not just for that ranking and that reputation, in terms of our ability to attract top-notch faculty; it's critical for solving relevant problems, challenges that we face here living in the North. So, it's a proxy for a lot of really, really important, good things that we retain that world preeminence in Arctic research."

[9:03:50 AM](#)

DR. JOHNSEN advanced to slide 25, entitled "Curriculum," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Fisher recommended common general education core across the campuses
- We are making good progress here
 - Aligning General Education Requirements (GERs) across all campuses
 - Establishing system wide policy for transfers
 - Establishing system wide standards for college readiness and developmental education

DR. JOHNSEN said UA has figured out a more streamlined process for figuring out transfers. He then addressed slide 26, "Career & Technical Education," which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Reports identified the need to clearly distinguish our vocational, career and technical education
- We've acted by creating distinct Career & Technical Colleges at UAA and UAF
- Prioritizing workforce needs - 65% by 2025
- Reports recommend pricing community college rates below other degree program
- FY19 budget proposing CTE tuition off-set

DR. JOHNSEN estimated that within the next week, UA would be announcing its specific occupational endorsement programs and

courses across the system where it will be providing a 25 percent discount. He said UA has a unified tuition model and, while its university tuition is relatively low compared to national standards, its community college tuition is relatively high.

[9:05:45 AM](#)

DR. JOHNSEN advanced to slides 27 and 28, entitled "Information Technology." He described information technology (IT) as UA's nervous system and emphasized the need to keep it strong. He said several reviews have been done, including strategic pathways of IT, and more recently he engaged an IT expert from the Silicon Valley to do a review; UA will be making decisions based on that review in the next couple weeks. He talked about the dynamic nature of IT and having to keep up with its innovations. He mentioned Thomas L. Friedman's book, The World Is Flat, and he said it means that regional geography becomes less important, which means UA has to increase its investment in online programs. He noted that UA currently has over 100 programs available completely on line. He talked about security issues and using data to make decisions, such as the use of metrics and predictive modeling, particularly in the area of student support. He said UA is doing streamlining, investing in automation process improvement, and is working with the State of Alaska on a travel system, among other things.

[9:08:03 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES noted that the two committees had focused on the virtual education effort through SB 96, which addresses the national problem of teacher recruitment and retention. Regarding the teacher education program, she emphasized the importance of "gearing up teachers to be able to use this model ... in a whole new twenty-first century kind of way." She said this is part of the solution in closing the achievement gap and addressing the teacher shortage.

DR. JOHNSEN responded, "point taken."

[9:09:22 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE SPOHNHOLZ stated there are a lot of opportunities for Alaskans to be moving into information technology and computer engineering. She questioned what UA is doing to provide those opportunities. She offered an example of a 30-year-old constituent who is a software developer who develops

applications ("apps") and is doing well for himself. She stated her belief that increased access to broadband throughout Alaska will provide opportunities for rural Alaskans to "have one foot in each world in the best of ways." She said she is interested in what UA is doing "in that realm."

[9:10:47 AM](#)

DR. JOHNSEN highlighted the university's computer and engineering programs. He provided an example of a successful entrepreneur - a UAF graduate who went on to Berkley to earn his Master of Business Administration (MBA). He said this UAF graduate has been working with the technical industry for the last 20 years. He recalled speaking with the entrepreneur about opportunities in Alaska, and he offered his understanding that this person would like to help other Alaskans rise in the field. He talked about the President's Innovation Challenge, which provides prizes for students who work with business leaders in the community to identify a problem and develop a solution to it. He said there is "a whole ecosystem of innovation," and UA needs to continue to promote it. He noted that UAF had launched a business incubator located in the new engineering building. He said Alaska Center for Energy and Power (ACEP) is "one of the anchors." Four faculty and companies have space there, and he expressed his hope that there would be a research park developed in the future. He mentioned mariculture in Southeast Alaska.

[9:12:36 AM](#)

DR. JOHNSEN advanced to slides 30-34, entitled "Improving Student Experience." He covered the information on slide 31, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- Budget cuts negatively impact student facing services; FY19 budget includes resources to replace those services
- New on-line student access gateway provides students easier access to courses and programs statewide
- New readiness assessment allows for faster, and more targeted developmental work
- Math Emporium and other innovations in developmental programs

DR. JOHNSEN related the information on slide 32, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- New Education Advisory Board (EAB) student success initiative will provide data based advising and increase retention
- Title IX compliance creating safer campuses
- Course sharing between universities increases opportunities for students
- Progress being made on common calendar (semester start / end dates and breaks are now common)
- Additional on-line programs for nontraditional students

DR. JOHNSEN noted that over 85 percent of UA students and 95 percent of staff completed training in Title 9 this past year. He estimated there are now 106 online programs available. He said Alaska is ranked as the state with the most individuals who have attended college but have not earned a degree. For those individuals to be able to finish college while working, online courses are imperative.

[9:17:09 AM](#)

DR. JOHNSEN covered the material on slide 33, which read as follows [original punctuation provided]:

- e-Learning was focus of Pathways process
- Increased cross campus collaboration through e-Learning Consortium
- 106 programs can be fully completed online
- In FY17, an average of 4.3 e-Learning credits taken per student - an increase of 43% since FY13
- Approximately one-third of students enrolled at more than one campus
- Exploring outsourcing of some online programs

DR. JOHNSEN related that at UAS, over 50 percent of the credit hours are delivered on line to students across the state. Considering that a third of UA's students are enrolled simultaneously at more than one campus, UA is working toward a seamless systems process across the UA system. He said UA has been looking at outsourcing a portion of its online programs. He said digital library and database subscriptions would be part of UA's operating budget request.

[9:18:24 AM](#)

DR. JOHNSEN advanced to slide 36, entitled "Strategic Investment by Objective," which details UA's budget request beyond the governor's request and breaks it down into state and non-state funds. He concluded his presentation by sharing the seven best practices for higher education systems, provided by the MacTaggart Report. They are: strong executive leadership; simple, clear public agenda; fiduciary capacity to execute; clear authority and responsibility; models of frugality; integrated decision making; and critical self-appraisal and the ability to change. He said he thinks UA has demonstrated all these best practices.

[9:20:23 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH commended Dr. Johnsen for UA's goal of operating more cost effectively and reducing the cost of education per completer by more than forty percent. He asked what would happen to tuition over that same period.

DR. JOHNSEN explained that in the short term the university has already approved a 5 percent increase for the next couple of years. Tuition is still under the median of the western states. The university will address the cost of tuition for more price sensitive courses and programs, such as occupational endorsements; it will put resources there to lessen the impact of the tuition increases. He stated that what drives UA's efficiency is increasing enrollment and revenue faster than it increases its expenses.

REPRESENTATIVE PARISH stated that he had attended UAF and UAS because he could afford it. He asked what UA's target goal is for tuition over the next eight years.

DR. JOHNSEN answered that UA would like to keep tuition below the median tuition of the fifteen western states. He stated

that affordability is critical. He listed affordability, efficiency, and excellence as the touchstones of UA.

[9:23:45 AM](#)

CHAIR DRUMMOND noted that Dr. Johnsen previously had related that student counseling had been reduced. She said that as chair of the House Education Standing Committee, she serves as a commissioner on the Alaska Commission of Post-Secondary Education (ACPE), which has an Alaska career information system and a complete range of services it offers students. She asked, "Is the university's counseling integrated with what the ACPE provides?"

[9:24:23 AM](#)

DR. JOHNSEN answered, "Absolutely." He said UA works closely with the Department of Labor & Workforce Development, under which ACPE resides, and has done so for years and will continue to do so. He said UA is currently working on a project [with ACPE]. He related that he is the former chair of ACPE; therefore, there is "a bit of personal commitment to ... that important mission."

[9:25:27 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committees, the joint meeting of the House and Senate Education Standing Committees was adjourned at 9:25 a.m.