

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE
HOUSE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

April 19, 2021

8:05 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Harriet Drummond, Co-Chair
Representative Andi Story, Co-Chair
Representative Tiffany Zulkosky
Representative Grier Hopkins
Representative Mike Prax
Representative Mike Cronk
Representative Ronald Gillham

MEMBERS ABSENT

All members present

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 32(FIN)

"An Act establishing the Alaska Middle College program for public school students; relating to the powers of the University of Alaska; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

HOUSE BILL NO. 132

"An Act relating to technical education and apprenticeships; relating to concurrent vocational education, training, and on-the-job trade experience programs for students enrolled in public secondary schools; relating to child labor; and providing for an effective date."

- HEARD & HELD

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 32

SHORT TITLE: COLLEGE CREDIT FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) STEVENS

01/25/21	(S)	PREFILE RELEASED 1/8/21
01/25/21	(S)	READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
01/25/21	(S)	EDC, FIN
03/08/21	(S)	EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205

03/08/21 (S) Heard & Held
 03/08/21 (S) MINUTE(EDC)
 03/17/21 (S) EDC AT 9:00 AM BUTROVICH 205
 03/17/21 (S) Moved SB 32 Out of Committee
 03/17/21 (S) MINUTE(EDC)
 03/19/21 (S) EDC RPT 5DP
 03/19/21 (S) DP: HOLLAND, HUGHES, STEVENS, MICCICHE,
 BEGICH
 03/22/21 (S) FIN AT 9:00 AM SENATE FINANCE 532
 03/22/21 (S) Heard & Held
 03/22/21 (S) MINUTE(FIN)
 03/29/21 (S) FIN RPT CS 4DP NEW TITLE
 03/29/21 (S) DP: STEDMAN, BISHOP, WILSON,
 WIELECHOWSKI
 03/29/21 (S) FIN AT 9:00 AM SENATE FINANCE 532
 03/29/21 (S) Moved CSSB 32(FIN) Out of Committee
 03/29/21 (S) MINUTE(FIN)
 04/07/21 (S) TRANSMITTED TO (H)
 04/07/21 (S) VERSION: CSSB 32(FIN)
 04/09/21 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
 04/09/21 (H) EDC, STA
 04/19/21 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

BILL: HB 132

SHORT TITLE: SCHOOL APPRENTICESHIP PROGS; TAX CREDITS
 SPONSOR(s): LABOR & COMMERCE

03/10/21 (H) READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
 03/10/21 (H) L&C, EDC, FIN
 03/15/21 (H) L&C AT 6:30 PM BARNES 124
 03/15/21 (H) Heard & Held
 03/15/21 (H) MINUTE(L&C)
 03/22/21 (H) L&C AT 3:15 PM DAVIS 106
 03/22/21 (H) Moved CSHB 132(L&C) Out of Committee
 03/22/21 (H) MINUTE(L&C)
 03/22/21 (H) L&C AT 6:30 PM DAVIS 106
 03/22/21 (H) -- MEETING CANCELED --
 03/25/21 (H) L&C RPT CS(L&C) NT 5DP 1AM
 03/25/21 (H) DP: SNYDER, SCHRAGE, MCCARTY,
 SPOHNHOLZ, FIELDS
 03/25/21 (H) AM: NELSON
 04/09/21 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106
 04/09/21 (H) Heard & Held
 04/09/21 (H) MINUTE(EDC)
 04/19/21 (H) EDC AT 8:00 AM DAVIS 106

WITNESS REGISTER

TIM LAMKIN, Staff
Senator Gary Stevens
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Presented CSSB 32(FIN) on behalf of Senator Gary Stevens, prime sponsor.

PAUL LAYER, PhD, Vice President
Academics, Students and Research
University of Alaska
Fairbanks, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided invited testimony on CSSB 32(FIN).

SENATOR GARY STEVENS
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, presented CSSB 32(FIN).

DEENA BISHOP, PhD, Superintendent
Anchorage School District (ASD)
Anchorage, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: Provided invited testimony on CSSB 32(FIN).

REPRESENTATIVE ZACK FIELDS
Alaska State Legislature
Juneau, Alaska

POSITION STATEMENT: As prime sponsor, presented HB 132.

ACTION NARRATIVE

[8:05:03 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR Harriett Drummond called the House Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 8:05 a.m. Representatives Drummond, Hopkins, Prax, Gillham, Cronk, and Story were present at the call to order. Representative Zulkosky joined as the meeting was in progress.

SB 32-COLLEGE CREDIT FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

[8:05:53 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that the first order of business would be CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 32(FIN), "An Act establishing the Alaska middle college program for public school students;

relating to the powers of the University of Alaska; and providing for an effective date."

[8:06:39 AM](#)

TIM LAMKIN, Staff, Senator Gary Stevens, Alaska State Legislature, presented CSSB 32(FIN) on behalf of Senator Gary Stevens, prime sponsor. He stated that participation in Middle Colleges and dual credit programs significantly improves student success, both in completing high school and beginning post-secondary education. He clarified that the proposed legislation is "not intended to micromanage," rather, it indicates that the University of Alaska (UA) and school districts may enter into an agreement that would establish a dual credit and Alaska Middle College (AMC) program. He stated that it is consistent with individual district's needs and capability levels and is meant to provide a flexible framework without a one-size-fits-all approach.

MR. LAMKIN provided an overview of the sectional summary. He shared that Section 1 would amend an annual report to the legislature to include AMC activity. In Section 2: subsection (a) would establish a Middle College program so high students may enroll in courses at UA and earn credit towards both high school graduation and a college degree; subsection (b) would establish that UA may enter into an agreement with each school district that elects to participate in the program; subsection (c) would speak to eligibility, requiring that students are currently in high school, haven't yet graduated, and are in good academic standing; subsection (d) would address awareness through outreach to parents of students; subsection (e) would address financing; subsection (f) would address course quality.

MR. LAMKIN continued with the summary of Section 2: subsection (g) would address a credit cap, limiting students to 15 credit hours; subsection (h) would hold harmless schools' average daily membership (ADM) calculation for students participating in the program; subsection (i) would address transcript sharing between schools and universities; and subsection (j) would address definitions relating to "program" and "school district". Section 3, he concluded, would address the general powers and duties of the universities in implementing and maintaining the program.

[8:12:02 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GILLHAM asked how the proposed legislation was different from current practices of high school students taking college classes and receiving credit.

MR. LAMKIN answered that the legislation is intended to embrace current practices, as the market is "doing a lot of this work already." He said the state has a significant number of memorandums of understanding (MOUs) that are on the books. He explained that the proposed legislation was intended to codify this in statute, so all districts may have it available.

[8:13:04 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked if each district used its own MOU with UA for its own funding mechanism. He asked if the costs are shared differently, and he asked how some MOUs are working currently.

MR. LAMKIN replied that committee members were supplied with MOUs [hard copies included in committee packet]. He said there were some from the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) with Anchorage School District (ASD) and Matanuska-Susitna (Mat-Su) Borough School District (MSBSD). He commented that costs do vary. He said he would defer to Dr. Layer, an invited testifier, for further details.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked how this would impact the ADM in the foundation formula in different districts.

MR. LAMKIN answered that there would be variance, as each district would have different situations.

[8:14:38 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY commented that MSBSD has a \$50,000 fee to help costs with UA, and she offered her understanding that the cost per credit varies between districts depending on what is set up with UA. She asked if larger districts would be able to negotiate better numbers with the university, and if smaller districts would have to pay more per credit. She said she was concerned about the cost and this being an equitable system for how different districts could afford to participate.

MR. LAMKIN replied that it is important to "keep an eye on the ball," and that this AMC is for gifted students who could take advantage of this program. He said there are districts that are

eager and happy to coordinate the details and work out agreements with UA.

CO-CHAIR STORY commented that according to the literature [hard copy included in committee packet], other states have had great results expanding this program to low-income students.

8:17:05 AM

PAUL LAYER, PhD, Vice President, Academics, Students and Research, University of Alaska, provided invited testimony on SB 32. Dual enrollment, he said, the broader term for these sorts of programs, provides a great opportunity for students to earn college credit while meeting high school graduation requirements. He stated that these sorts of programs have been around for quite a period of time with very different approaches. The first, he noted, was that qualifying students could come to the university and take classes. He said this was often done by homeschool students, with parents bearing the costs. He said high school teachers have also been approved to teach classes in high schools that meet university qualifications.

DR. LAYER said that several years ago, UA created the Middle College program with MSBSD and ASD, and more recently, with the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District (FNSBSD). In these programs, students are on campus and go to classes alongside college students and receive both high school and college credit. He informed the committee that the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) ASD Middle College program has 273 students and has increased every year in terms of participation. The MSBSD program has over 130 students, he continued, and the FNSBSD which just began last fall has 40 students.

8:19:35 AM

DR. LAYER said Alaska has other programs, including the Kenai Peninsula College JumpStart Program, the UAA Alaska Native Science and Engineering Program (ANSEP), and several others. He argued that these have been limited to districts with access to campuses in the UA system. He shared that a few years ago, UA created a virtual Middle College called the Alaska Advantage program through UAF. He said the cost to the district and students [for this program] was somewhat less. He explained that the districts provided the advising, proctoring, and mentoring. He mentioned that different districts have the ability to support students in different ways, which is why

different districts are getting different agreements. He clarified that students are enrolled in college level courses and receive college credit on their transcripts. He emphasized that students must meet the requirements for a class in terms of math or writing preparation, and that the grade for the class goes on a student's college transcript. He noted that these dual credit programs are not the same as advanced placement (AP) classes. He commented that this can also include career and technical education (CTE) classes and programs.

DR. LAYER said that many students who complete the Middle College program go on to attend UA. He explained that knowing the professors and the programs increases interest in attending Alaska universities. He pointed out that if a student has already completed most of an associate degree [while in high school], he/she is likely to continue with the baccalaureate program. He offered that a current virtual Middle College program student was set to graduate [high school] with her associate degree in the coming fall, and then would continue her program at UAF. He said the program was seeing outcomes from both the on-campus programs as well as virtual programs.

DR. LAYER concluded that the idea was to expand what was being done in larger cities and districts to students across the state. He stated that UA is excited to work with all districts across the state and to meet the students and districts where they are.

[8:23:20 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked why legislative authorization is necessary for this. He expressed concern that putting this in statute would make it inflexible.

DR. LAYER responded that UA is reaching out to districts with this program, but it is building very slowly. He said legislation would give more emphasis about the opportunity for students across the state to participate. He noted that the program is voluntary for districts, but he believed the proposed legislation would encourage districts to participate and help meet the needs of all the students who want to participate.

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX commented that kindergarten through twelfth grade (K-12) funding is separate from university funding and asked if that was the primary challenge.

DR. LAYER deferred to Superintendent Bishop in discussing funding issues. He commented that UA saw this as a win for districts, students, and UA.

[8:25:57 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked who is responsible for negotiating MOUs with the different districts.

DR. LAYER replied that each university negotiates its MOUs. He offered the online virtual college, the Alaska Advantage program, as an example and said the UAF e-campus does the negotiations.

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS commented that ASD works only with the UAA Chugiak-Eagle River Campus. He asked if that meant ASD negotiated specifically with that campus.

DR. LAYER deferred to Superintendent Bishop. However, he commented that the negotiation would usually be with UAA, UAF, or the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS), rather than with an individual campus. He said the negotiations tend to be at the university level. He noted that sometimes the Mat-Su Campus would negotiate on behalf of UAA, but he emphasized that it was through UAA.

[8:27:26 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked if remote districts, like Kotzebue and Dillingham, with satellite campuses would negotiate with the "main campus."

DR. LAYER responded that they would work through their College of Rural and Community Development (CRCDC) as the supervising entity which is part of UAF in terms of agreements and MOUs. In areas without a campus, he said the districts would work through UAF's Alaska Advantage program.

[8:28:17 AM](#)

SENATOR GARY STEVENS, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented CSSB 32(FIN). He said CSSB 32(FIN) would be a win-win for everyone involved. He argued that it was a win for students, parents, and for the university. He said that when students have a UA transcript showing credit for the classes they have already taken, there is a good chance that the students would continue with the university. He commented that

the legislature has a responsibility to improve the "situation for the university as well." He said the proposed legislation would give all districts in the state equal access, which currently isn't the case. He noted that larger districts such as ASD, MSBSD, and FNSBSD had done a great job, but other districts haven't had the opportunity. He said he has heard that ASD has helped students in smaller districts partake in the program through ASD.

[8:30:29 AM](#)

DEENA BISHOP, PhD, Superintendent, Anchorage School District (ASD), provided invited testimony on CSSB 32(FIN). She emphasized Senator Steven's point that CSSB 32(FIN) was a win-win for all parties involved. She offered background information and stated that opportunity for Middle College uses the base student allocation (BSA) funding model to support all costs. Regarding the concerns about equity, she pointed out that the funding formula is designed for equity for both size and cost.

DR. BISHOP said that in 2012, the goal was to have college-ready students. She said ASD wanted to understand why students [from the Alaska school system], even those who had performed well in high school, were not considered college ready. She explained that students must test into AMC with the Assessment and Learning in Knowledge Spaces (ALEKS) math test, the Accuplacer English test, American College Test (ACT), or SAT. If a student can't test in, ASD teachers work with the student to help them pass the entry level exam. Alaska Middle College School (AMCS) makes it possible for ASD high school juniors and seniors to complete their high school requirements while simultaneously earning UA credits, she stated. She said that with proper planning, a student can finish his or her associate degree, and can also start the track of a program for a Bachelor of Arts or Science degree. She said that 9 years into this program, 100 percent of the courses have been transferable to other universities nationwide. She imparted that 72-78 percent of students who participated have stayed with the UA system.

DR. BISHOP acknowledged that this is happening in other areas, and nodded to AP, CTE courses, and dual enrollment. She said this program helps the school district to have a plan for student success. She shared that ASD had five National Merit Scholarship Semifinalists. She said ASD aims for diversity, works to find first time college students, and works with different community groups to target under-represented students.

She shared that ASD had a senior graduate with a bachelor's degree in science and mathematics at 18 years old.

DR. BISHOP addressed concerns about equitable education and argued CSSB 32(FIN) was one of the most important [pieces of legislation] she had seen in her career, and that it codified the priority for students in Alaska. She noted that sometimes students want to remain in their home villages and utilize online learning. However, she shared that ASD has worked with Lower Kuskokwim School District (LKSD) who opened the Kusilvak Career Academy. She said ASD now has its first students in AMCS through the academy. She said the Kusilvak Career Academy would open its space to house boarding students from anywhere in Alaska.

DR. BISHOP noted that she had met with UAF the past weekend. She said ASD is working to get donations and grants to fund a teacher's academy for students to enter into through Middle College. The next two years of college would be paid for if the student continued through UAA or UAF.

[8:38:02 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND commented that Kusilvak Academy took care of an issue in Spenard regarding the re-use of an old hotel. She offered her understanding that the basis for coming into Anchorage was to have students attend classes at King Technology. She asked if students were also attending the Anchorage Middle College Program for the tech pathway, or for the academic pathway as well.

DR. BISHOP answered that last year the partnership was started to get students career technical certificates and experience. She said attendance of the Middle College was opened out of student interest. She commented that the UA system offers CTE courses as well.

[8:40:20 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY commented that Dr. Bishop had said that this is a funding priority with BSA money. She noted that in a previous hearing, Dr. Bishop had said ASD received about \$11 million less than the prior year based on BSA funding. She worried that schools would have to make "really hard choices to provide this program," because it could mean having to cut other programs.

DR. BISHOP answered that she believes that funding for students isn't just to maintain a school district, rather the district's mission is for student success. She said that when there are programs that lead to student success, ASD stops doing other things that it has always done in order to achieve that student success. She stated that funding should follow where student success leads. She explained that there wasn't money to start this program; instead ASD had to re-think how it was using its funds. She acknowledged that some things would need to be reduced if school districts could not figure the funding out. She argued that school districts should be nimble and creative in meeting the needs of students, which can mean changing what was always done in order to do something new.

[8:43:55 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY said she had heard from many superintendents that the flat funding and BSA since 2017 [has limited budget flexibility]. She commented that she felt it was a strong program and would like the legislative body to invest so more districts could participate.

[8:44:56 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE GILLHAM asked why some districts do not have access to the program, since there is Internet.

DR. BISHOP answered that access could be figured out no matter what, although live courses could be difficult [because of slower Internet connections]. She said she thought it was a budgeting issue. She also mentioned "having to figure things out." She pointed to the coordination between LKSD and ASD in providing CTE courses to students through boarding school because LKSD didn't have the resources or personnel. She noted that Alaska "has great distances," but said it could happen through broadband or cache courses. However, she allowed there may be other priorities in different places.

[8:46:58 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked why each district is on its own to negotiate MOUs, and what would happen if a school district and UA couldn't agree on the terms of an extension of an MOU.

DR. BISHOP replied that statewide implementation would allow districts to work together to understand each other's payments. She said that with nine years of experience, ASD has been able

to focus in on the university services that students utilize and more effectively negotiate based on similar districts. She said the ASD Middle College program was at the Chugiak-Eagle River Campus, which moved to Mat-Su four years later. She said she has offered the entire superintendent organization to work with individual districts to "make these things happen." She said superintendents don't have to be out on their own but noted cost differentials. She said if districts worked together, she believed the economy of scale would be greater.

8:49:35 AM

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS suggested placing a cost structure in statute may be beneficial, so each individual district wouldn't have to renegotiate with UA between MOUs.

DR. BISHOP responded that ASD's needs have changed from when the program started. She explained that the program began with a general liberal arts associate degree. She said the school found that students desired a Bachelor of Science later on and needed to take lab sciences, which weren't originally in the MOU. She stated the need for an understanding that costs have changed. The program is renegotiated every year depending on a student's cost and the updated costs and tuition of the university; therefore, although she liked having an agreement about costs, she questioned whether it would work to set them in statute. She pointed out that ASD negotiated not using some services that other districts may utilize. She stated that she liked the idea of having an understanding of different costs, but she hoped that each school district could determine what students want and then negotiate.

8:51:51 AM

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS asked whether different districts would have different costs to implement the same program for their students.

DR. BISHOP replied that she would assume so and noted how the delivery model for ASD is different. She pointed out that the BSA in funding formula takes in cost area differentials, as well as the size of schools, and other factors. She said there is a cost per child, but Alaska funds school districts according to an adjusted ADM. She said that if there is an additional cost for the university to deliver out in different areas, an online digital course would be different. She commented that on campus, face to face learning gave the real benefit later on,

and she also assumed that that cost would be different. She offered the example that K-12 is a different cost in Skagway and Bethel than it is in Anchorage, which is supported by the funding formula. She added that she could understand a common price for an online version.

[8:53:47 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS commented that all the costs that Dr. Bishop referenced were in statute, so it would make sense to add the Middle College program costs to the statute, as well. He noted that ASD and UAA agreed to an enrollment of up to 200 ASD students. He asked what would happen if the enrollment surpassed that number.

DR. BISHOP answered that at the moment ASD actually has 273 students enrolled in the program. She explained that when beginning a freshman course, the university only has so many available seats, but as students move to the second course, the first course opens up again. She said that of the 273 students, 160 are taking 12-18 hours of courses completely through the university. She explained that ASD doesn't see them unless they need the district for advising or counseling. She emphasized that they really are UAA students, through and through. She said the other students are part time because they may have passed the Accuplacer or the ALEKS, but not [a complete placement test]. She said there is a limit on the first "roll-in," but once students get started, the number can grow. She said ASD hopes to increase to 600 students in the Middle College program.

DR. BISHOP stated that the UAA took a big risk. She said she began looking into this program in 2009, and in 2011 was able to convince [stakeholders] that the Middle College program would be good for Alaska. She said UAA allowed only 50 students initially, but the program grew, because the interest from the students was there. She said there was too much interest during the pandemic school year, and ASD had to do a lottery, but the district can open more seats now. She added that ASD gets students into ANSEP through the program, as well. She summarized that the program started small, but now that the trust has been built and the program has demonstrated success, it has been growing.

[8:57:45 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE HOPKINS discussed tuition fees and administration costs in ASD and UAA's MOU [as provided in a handout, hardcopy included in committee packet]. He asked Dr. Bishop to discuss the costs for ASD and how the amounts are decided, reimbursed, or paid.

DR. BISHOP answered that the universities have tuition and fees. She explained that the fees are for the services utilized, such as access to the cafeteria, gym, library, and on-campus transportation. She said there are over 20 different fee services at UAA, and so ASD considered which of these fees ASD students would access and negotiated down the cost of the fees for only what students would have access to. She said she had also negotiated books, which she stated is one of the most expensive fees at the university level. She shared that the program holds onto and reuses books, with the intention of getting at least a few semesters of use. She stated that the overall cost of having ASD students at Middle College is less per student than having them in high school.

[9:01:40 AM4](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked Dr. Layer if UA was amenable to negotiating a flat rate for districts across the state. She cited concerns about it being cost-prohibitive to outlying districts. She asked if it was possible for UA to help absorb some costs.

[9:02:35 AM](#)

DR. LAYER answered that the Alaska Advantage online program through UAF is a flat rate. However, he said that different districts can "bring different things to the table" in terms of support, such as with labs or advising. He said UA wants to work with the districts to utilize that help and to maximize the services the university can provide to meet needs. He explained that there may be services available [at one campus] that aren't available at others. He said it was important to make this a partnership rather than a flat rate contract. While some programs may lend themselves to a uniform fee, he said, for others when considering services provided, it may be very different between campuses. He pointed out that many of the current agreements are in their infancy and are going to evolve.

[9:04:31 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked whether his understanding was correct that this would enable school districts to use funds from the BSA to pay the university system for education.

DR. LAYER responded that the students are getting both university credit and high school credit. He said that from an efficiency standpoint, students are getting both for the cost of one through these partnerships. He commented that while one could argue the districts are supporting the university, the districts are also fulfilling their missions as high schools.

[9:06:08 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE PRAX asked whether quality control for courses is maintained by the university.

DR. LAYER answered that these are university courses for university credit, and they must meet established student learning objectives. He stated that it didn't matter whether a course was in-person or online or on any of UA's campuses - any given course would have to meet the same standards.

[9:07:04 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY commented that she felt the proposed legislation was providing a partnership between the university and school districts, and the legislature would be supporting workforce development. She said that it was her perspective that if the legislature really wanted to achieve this, it should be putting funds towards [the program]. She said school districts have a wide variety of needs for students to meet, this being one of them. She saw this as a great opportunity that is worth investment. She added that this would provide opportunities for more students from different backgrounds.

[9:08:26 AM](#)

REPRESENTATIVE ZULKOSKY said she saw how individual MOUs worked for large and medium school districts but asked how rural districts without access to a campus could create agreements where they may otherwise not have economies of scale.

DR. LAYER replied that through the online Alaska Advantage program there is a lower cost, flat rate option for districts. He said the program has agreements with over 30 districts. He opined that in terms of the smaller districts, it makes sense

having a set price, especially when the district doesn't have access to the services available at a campus.

DR. LAYER directed attention to the Alaska Advantage program which had a sample agreement in the packet [included in the committee packet]. He described this as a standard contract which UA has for smaller districts. He reiterated that smaller districts are providing most services to their students, which UA takes advantage of as part of the partnership. In these partnerships, the districts are co-instructing students using online resources, which helps lower tuition costs. He noted that in some districts broadband access can be an issue but said that UA has reached out to those districts to meet their needs. He said the objective is to commit to the quality of a course, no matter where a student is in the state.

[9:11:52 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS responded to a question about the zero fiscal notes attached to the proposed legislation. He commended the set-up of the program, noting that the students are able to get a college transcript, districts are able to utilize existing funds, and students receive both high school and college credit. He said the proposed legislation had developed since its inception and shared that initially he wanted every district to be required to participate. He said there was pushback from districts against that, specifically from smaller districts, and so the proposed legislation was changed to make the program optional. He stated that it is up to the districts to decide what is best for the students. Regarding the fiscal notes, he said there is no additional cost to the state, and the program is funded through the foundation formula.

SENATOR STEVENS replied that the Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education (ACPE) has been supportive of the program.

[9:14:36 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND said her largest concern for smaller districts was broadband access. She asked if the state would have to provide supports in that department and whether that had come up as an issue for those districts.

DR. LAYER answered that there has been concern, but UA has been able to work with those districts in terms of how the online classes are provided. He said they have moved to asynchronous

classes instead of synchronous classes online. He said the staff of those districts has been very helpful in working with students with connectivity questions. He stated that this is a bigger issue for the state. For now, he said, UA is meeting the needs of the students in the districts with which UA is partnered and negotiating. He noted that there are outside competitors coming into the state to try to provide these online programs. He opined that UA is prepared to meet the needs of the students better than many of the outside competitors can.

[9:16:15 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY commented that she felt it was also a financial issue for some larger districts because of the associated costs. She noted that this program was meant to reach students regardless of socioeconomic background. She referenced Section 1, paragraph (4), subparagraphs (A) through (D), that discussed a legislative report on the program. She asked whether the report would have "a breakdown by subgroup and economics."

SENATOR STEVENS replied that he had no objection to including that in the report. He commented that Alaska had the least broadband access of any state, but he suggested that "things are looking better on the horizon." He said money was coming from the federal government to help with the costs, and he also mentioned the potential for satellite Internet connection.

[9:18:33 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND opened public testimony on CSSB 32(FIN). After ascertaining that there was no one who wished to testify, she closed public testimony.

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that CSSB 32(FIN) was held over.

[9:19:23 AM](#)

The committee took an at-ease from 9:19 a.m. to 9:20 a.m.

HB 132-SCHOOL APPRENTICESHIP PROGS; TAX CREDITS

[9:19:40 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND announced that the final order of business would be HB 132, "An Act providing for state recognition of federally recognized tribes; and providing for an effective date." [Before the committee was CSHB 132(L&C).]

[9:20:02 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR STORY asked for a short outline of CSHB 132(L&C).

REPRESENTATIVE ZACH FIELDS, Alaska State Legislature, as prime sponsor, presented CSHB 132(L&C). He said the proposed legislation is designed to expand apprenticeship and "school to apprenticeship." He said it ensures in statute that the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) is directed to work with the Department of Labor & Workforce Development (DLWD) and the University of Alaska (UA) to support apprenticeship and school to apprenticeship. He commented that it is thematically similar to the Middle College program from the proposed legislation that was just heard in committee [SB 32]. He said there is a growing need to link secondary and post-secondary education training and employment, specifically for graduating high school seniors who cannot afford not to work. He opined that the traditional model of either going to college or getting a job does not work "in a global society where we have a need to continue developing our human capital." He said the purpose of CSHB 132(L&C) is to ensure more work-and-learn options in the postsecondary system. He said that to get there, Alaska must "strengthen linkages" of the secondary education system.

[9:21:29 AM](#)

CO-CHAIR DRUMMOND opened public testimony on CSHB 132(L&C). After ascertaining that there was no one who wished to testify, she closed public testimony.

[CSHB 132(L&C) was held over.]

[9:23:24 AM](#)

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the committee, the House Education Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 9:23 a.m.