

**ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE  
SENATE EDUCATION STANDING COMMITTEE**

May 3, 2021

9:04 a.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Senator Roger Holland, Chair  
Senator Gary Stevens, Vice Chair  
Senator Shelley Hughes  
Senator Tom Begich

**MEMBERS ABSENT**

Senator Peter Micciche

**COMMITTEE CALENDAR**

Presentation: Alaska's University for Alaska's Schools

- HEARD

**PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION**

No previous action to record

**WITNESS REGISTER**

PAUL LAYER, Ph.D., Vice President  
Academics, Students, Research  
University of Alaska Fairbanks  
Fairbanks, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-delivered a PowerPoint on Alaska's University for Alaska's Schools.

STEVE ATWATER, Ed.D.; Executive Dean  
Alaska College of Education  
University of Alaska Southeast  
Juneau, Alaska

**POSITION STATEMENT:** Co-delivered a PowerPoint on Alaska's University for Alaska's Schools.

**ACTION NARRATIVE**

[9:04:05 AM](#)

**CHAIR ROGER HOLLAND** called the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. Present at the call to order were Senators Stevens, Begich, Hughes, and Chair Holland.

[9:04:46 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND announced that the business before the committee was a presentation: Alaska's University for Alaska's Schools.

CHAIR HOLLAND stated that the focus of today's presentation will be on teacher preparation, recruitment and retention initiatives at the University of Alaska. He stated that a biennial report is required by AS 14.140.190(b).

[9:05:45 AM](#)

PAUL LAYER, Ph.D., Vice President, Academics, Students, Research, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Fairbanks, Alaska, Delivered a PowerPoint on Alaska's University for Alaska's Schools. He reviewed the agenda on slide 2, which read:

- Summary of UA Teacher Preparation Activity 2019-2020
- Review of UA's activity to recruit students to its teaching preparation programs
- Review of UA's work to retain K-12 teachers
- Preparing teachers to teach reading
- Looking ahead

DR. LAYER said today's presentation will summarize what has happened during the past two years.

[9:07:21 AM](#)

STEVE ATWATER, Ed.D.; Executive Dean, Alaska College of Education, University of Alaska Southeast, Juneau, Alaska, presented slide 3, UA Students Have Multiple Paths to Earn a Teaching Certificate, which depicted a flowchart that showed UA continues to offer multiple paths to earn a teaching certificate. The university would like to offer students the option to select the program that fits with their location and lifestyle. Students can take courses on campus or complete a degree online from their homes in Talkeetna or Wasilla. All licensure programs have a clinical component of practicum and an internship known as student teaching. Currently, UA offers 17 programs that lead to an initial teaching license.

[9:08:00 AM](#)

DR. ATWATER presented slide 4, Multiple Pathways from Multiple Locations to Earn a Teaching License, which read:

- UAF-options to earn degree by distance, or on campus, or a combination of the two
- UAA- 2+ 2 option of an on-campus Associate of Arts at UAA and complete the Bachelor of Arts with UAS or UAF. UAF offers education courses on UAA campus
- UAS- most education courses offered by distance with some summer sessions on campus

DR. ATWATER related that students could select different universities, programs or other options. Of note, UA Anchorage will offer a 2+2 option that allows students to complete their Associate of Arts (AA) degree at UAA and seamlessly transfer to the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) or the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) to complete their Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Elementary Education. UAS or UAF campuses do not require students to take courses at their home campus, which means that students could enroll at UAA in the fall and complete their education degree without leaving Anchorage.

[9:08:39 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH clarified that the AA degree was not limited to elementary education since the degree could be in any topic.

DR. ATWATER agreed. He explained that the degree would be an AA degree but it is articulated with the BA degree programs at UAF and UAS. Further, students have a prescribed set of courses that they must take to meet the requirements.

[9:09:07 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH remarked that UA's School of Education no longer is accredited for education degrees in Anchorage. He asked him to speak to the value and quality of an Associate of Arts Degree in Education in Anchorage.

DR. ATWATER answered that students at UAA will be allowed to transfer to UAF or UAS to complete their BA degrees.

[9:09:50 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH said he was confused because UAA no longer offers a degree in education. He acknowledged that UAF and UAS offer degrees. He asked how an education degree from UAA would be perceived since the university's education program is no longer accredited.

[9:10:10 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND related his understanding that the coursework could be accomplished at UAA but the degree would be awarded through the University of Alaska Fairbanks or the University of Alaska Southeast campuses.

DR. ATWATER clarified that the UAA degree would not be an AA degree in Education. Instead, students would be awarded a general AA degree to meet the education degree requirements for a BA in Elementary Education.

SENATOR BEGICH responded that answered his question.

[9:10:48 AM](#)

DR. ATWATER presented slide 5, UA Education Program Enrollment Trend Is Down. He said the UA education program enrollment has declined since 2016, which mirrors the national and overall UAA enrollment trends. Fewer students are interested in becoming teachers. He acknowledged UAA's loss of accreditation and the subsequent Board of Regents' decision to discontinue UAA's initial licensure programs can explain the drop in education enrollment for the Fall 2018 and Fall 2019 semesters. However, UAA is optimistic that the university's increased recruiting efforts, current communication campaign and UAA's 2+2 program will reverse this trend.

[9:11:57 AM](#)

DR. ATWATER discussed the table on slide 6, First Time Initial Licensure Completers. The slide showed the number of UAA first-time teaching certificates issued by fiscal year (FY): 93 in FY 2016, 88 in FY 2017, 100 in FY 2018, 61 in FY 2019 and 15 in FY 2020. UAF's figures were: 35 in FY 2016, 55 in FY 2017, 56 in FY 2018, 59 in FY 2019, and 63 in FY 2020. UAS's figures were: 71 in FY 2016, 78 in FY 2017, 83 in FY 2018, 66 in FY 2019 and 81 in FY 2020.

DR. ATWATER explained that this slide reflects the number of students who completed their UA programs and earned their first teaching certificate but the figures do not include teachers who added additional teaching certificates. While not all new teachers will go on to teach, about 82 percent of UA education graduates work in education-related fields.

[9:12:28 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES, referring to slide 5, reported that between 2015 and 2020, UAS's education program enrollment stayed relatively flat. However, UAA's enrollment dropped by 575 students due to

UAA's accreditation loss. During that same time, UAF's education enrollment increased by 65 students, which means they likely picked up a small number of UAA's students. She expressed concern that other campuses were not making up for the enrollment losses. She asked whether UA was conducting marketing to increase their numbers. She related her understanding that education enrollment was down nationwide but questioned if those figures were down this much. She said she is disturbed and troubled by these drastic numbers.

DR. ATWATER agreed that it was troubling but offered that UAA is working on this issue. First, UAA is making a concerted ongoing effort to recruit students. Second, some Anchorage students were confused about their options after UAA lost its accreditation so UAA is working to provide clear information to students. Finally, UAA believes that its 2+2 option provides a safe way to enroll at UAA and obtain an education degree. He offered to further address recruitment efforts in later slides.

[9:15:10 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES related her understanding that by Fall 2021 it will be three years since UAA lost its education accreditation. She anticipated that there would be a tremendous increase this fall if UAA's recruitment efforts were successful, which she hoped would occur. She found it odd that suddenly there was less interest in teaching in Anchorage or Southcentral than in other areas of the state. It appears that this drop in education enrollment is related to communications and marketing, she said.

DR. ATWATER stated that the report has a breakout of where students reside. Although the vast majority of the students reside in Southcentral, he agreed that UA needs to recruit more teachers in Southcentral Alaska.

SENATOR STEVENS related his understanding that fewer students nationwide were interested in becoming teachers. He expressed interest in the committee further discussing that issue.

[9:16:57 AM](#)

DR. ATWATER presented slide 7, UA Prepared Teachers and Meeting Alaska's Teaching Needs, directing attention to the table that shows the number of teachers who received their certificates at UA. While this figure has increased from 40 percent in 2016 to 43 percent in 2020, UA still does not produce the majority of teachers in Alaska. However, he stated the percentage still was significant. For example, UA teachers stay longer in Alaska. He

said the goal is to have the percentages in the 60s and 70s. If so, he predicted it would drive down the turnover rate.

[9:17:37 AM](#)

DR. ATWATER presented slide 8, UA-Prepared Teachers, which read:

- Stay in the teaching profession in Alaska longer than teachers prepared out-of-state
- Through their courses, practicum and internship understand the Alaskan context better than do those prepared out-of-state

DR. ATWATER stated that teaching indigenous students in remote villages poses challenges for some teachers. He offered his belief that UA does a good job preparing its teachers. He directed attention to the list of interns shown in Appendix B of the report. He highlighted that UA was proud that many UA students gained rural Alaska experience prior to obtaining their first job teaching. While UA serves the entire state, it places an emphasis on helping students achieve success in schools in rural villages.

[9:18:27 AM](#)

DR. ATWATER presented slide 9, State Regulation Requires Accreditation from the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) for Alaska's Educator Preparation Unit. The slide consisted of a table of UA Education Units Licensure Programs and CAEP Accreditation status. He reported that the UAS School of Education was currently undergoing a site review for its advanced programs. He explained that there are two site reviews conducted for the education unit. The first covers the initial licensure programs and the second review entails the status of the advanced programs, such as when the university adds an endorsement or principal certificate. He related his understanding that UAA's site review went well earlier this spring so he anticipates receiving the formal status for the site review this fall.

[9:19:19 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS asked when the university can expect to receive full accreditation at UAA.

DR. ATWATER replied that decision is not fully made. Dr. Layer will address UAA's accreditation in the final slide.

[9:19:49 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH recalled previous presentations by UAA indicated that the Board of Regents did not intend to seek full accreditation for UAA's education program. He expressed concern if this is true. He recalled the earlier slide comments that the loss of accreditation was the reason for declining enrollment in education courses. Although UAA assured the legislature that those figures would improve, they did not do so. He found this disappointing but said he does not expect much change in the fall or spring enrollment figures.

[9:20:39 AM](#)

DR. ATWATER presented slide 10, CAEP Accreditation based on Quality Assurance, which consisted of bubbles that read: content and pedagogical knowledge, candidate quality, recruitment and selectivity, program impact, and clinical partnerships and practice. Quality assurance and continuous improvement drives the activity for the other standards. The faculty constantly collects and reviews data that lead to program changes. For example, this week UAS faculty will review data and make recommendations for changes and program improvements. The point is the quality assurance system provides the basis of accreditation, he said. It is the unit that receives accreditation, not an individual program.

[9:21:43 AM](#)

DR. ATWATER presented slide 11, How do we know that UA prepared teachers are effective? It read:

- CAEP Standard 4.1- Impact on P-12 student learning and development
- Annual survey of principals who hire grads- questions on effectiveness of newly prepared (UA) teachers- shows good preparation of UA grads
- Anecdotes-qualitative information from school personnel is that UA grads are well prepared

He reported that during the accreditation process, UA must track graduates. UAA conducts case studies by reviewing K-12 student performance data. UAA triangulates it with the qualitative information on their teaching experience and student performance.

DR. ATWOOD stated that currently, UAA is conducting its annual survey of all principals who hired a UA prepared teacher last year. The survey results will help UA make improvements. He

directed attention to Table 7 on page 9 of the Alaska's University for Alaska's schools 2020 report to a sample of the survey statements and the percentage of the responding principals who agreed with the statement. After reviewing the survey results, it is easy to conclude that UA's graduates are well prepared for their teaching positions, he concluded.

[9:22:35 AM](#)

DR. ATWATER addressed slide 12, The Challenge: Increasing the Number of UA Prepared Teachers, which read:

More than 200 unfilled teaching vacancies in Alaska at the start of the current school year

He pointed out that when teachers continue to teach in subsequent years, districts do not need to recruit as many teachers.

[9:23:05 AM](#)

DR. ATWATER presented slide 13, UA's Plan to Meet This Challenge, which read:

- Coordinated Education Unit Activity
- Increased level of recruitment
- Improving teacher preparation programs
- Supporting teacher retention

He said UA wants students to have options so a general coordination exists among the program for recruitment and to provide courses at other UA campuses to meet degree requirements.

[9:23:26 AM](#)

DR. ATWATER presented slide 14, Recruitment to UA for Teaching Preparation Programs, which read:

- Educators Rising
- UA Recruiter
- K-12 Partnerships
- Paraprofessionals
- Outreach to non-traditional students
- Communications Campaign

- Raise the social esteem of teaching profession- UA Foundation

He noted that the Educator Rising Program was designed to help high school students orient themselves to the teacher profession and teacher preparation programs after high school. He reported that the program is available in more than 25 districts. Although the Mat-Su School District is most active in the program other districts throughout Alaska are becoming more involved. Alaska is the first state in the nation to have a middle school program for Educators Rising. Thus, students ages 12-14 are being introduced to the teacher profession. UA recruiters reach out to counselors and attend K-12 college fairs as part of the outreach effort. However, this effort has been difficult due to the pandemic.

[9:25:22 AM](#)

DR. ATWATER spoke to the final bullet point, noting that raising the social esteem of the teaching profession is a statewide issue. He argued that the state's teachers are an important resource but the responsibility of elevating the teacher profession belongs to everyone. He said the UA Foundation is promoting a culture of education for Alaska that includes placing an emphasis on the importance of teachers. In terms of the communications campaign, he stated that UA President Pitney initiated an outreach campaign, which includes a new website that allows someone to easily find options for education students.

[9:26:23 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH, referring to the bullet point on teacher retention on slide 13, asked whether Dr. Atwater was actively involved in the Teacher Retention and Recruitment (TRR) Task Force.

DR. ATWATER answered yes; he served as an advisor to the task force.

SENATOR BEGICH reported that the TRR Task Force's number one recommendation was to increase salaries and its second recommendation was to improve teacher retirement plans. He asked how many of the task force recommendations were integrated into the seven bullet points noted on slide 14.

DR. ATWATER responded that the university is not able to affect retirement and compensation other than to encourage increasing them. However, the Educators Rising program is part of the TRR

Task Force recommendations. He emphasized that the university is working to promote the teacher profession as a good field to enter.

[9:27:57 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH asked where in the TRR Task Force findings it shows that UA is working to raise the social esteem of teachers.

DR. ATWATER answered that raising social esteem wasn't something teachers or retired teachers specifically identified but he views it as significant. For example, after high school graduations, he often visits schools with superintendents. He said when parents told him their daughters are going to become nurses, they say it with excitement, but he never got the same reaction when parents told him their sons or daughters were going to be teachers.

[9:29:18 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH suggested that the committee could identify what works and has impacts and then correlate the TRR Task Force recommendations with the university's actions.

[9:30:30 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND remarked that the TRR Task Force Action Plan is scheduled for next meeting.

[9:30:41 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES described a vicious cycle that she was not sure how to break. She stated that other nations pay their teachers more but their students must score high to get into teacher education programs. The teacher profession is perceived as a distinguished career in some countries but not in the U.S. She recalled reading that lower-performing students in the U.S. go into teaching, which just adds to the vicious cycle. She offered her view that the term "social esteem" wasn't the right term to use since it seems to refer more to how teachers feel about themselves as teachers than to elevating the teaching profession.

She suggested that higher salaries might attract higher performing students to the profession just as medical schools attract good candidates. She pointed out that it is not just academics that make great teachers since they must also possess the ability to care about their students and exude enthusiasm. She expressed concern that increasing salaries for teachers without expecting a higher caliber of student in teacher

programs was not the right approach. However, she was unsure how to address the issue and make it happen.

[9:33:10 AM](#)

SENATOR STEVENS remarked that the questions and issues being raised are not meant as an attack on the university but rather a means to enlist the presenters to help the committee find solutions to improve the situation. He said the university needs people to choose to become teachers because they love it. He pointed out that some people in midcareer decide to go into the teaching profession because it is such a rewarding career.

[9:34:25 AM](#)

DR. ATWATER presented slide 15, Retention, which read:

- UA supports the Alaska Statewide Mentoring Project
- Mentors (retired teachers) work with early career teachers across Alaska

He said the table of quantitative data on the slide shows it is working even though all of the teachers are not mentored.

[9:35:22 AM](#)

DR. ATWATER presented slide 16, UA Supports K-12 Teachers' Professional Development, consisting of a table of PACE-Facilitated Course Enrollment for 2016-2020.

He emphasized the importance continuing education (CE) plays to help teachers grow and develop and respond to changes in the profession. He identified UAA's program for continuing education as Professional and Continuing Education (PACE).

[9:36:00 AM](#)

DR. ATWATER presented slide 17, Preparing Teachers During Pandemic, which read:

- Loss of in-person clinical experience was significant
- Greater emphasis with preparing teachers to teach virtually
- Challenge of accessing bandwidth for rural students

He explained that although UA was experiencing a difficult time due to the pandemic, UA continues to do its work to prepare

teachers. UA received feedback from schools that their expectation is for graduates to be familiar with virtual teaching so a greater emphasis is now being placed on providing prospective teachers with those skills.

[9:37:38 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH remarked that the last few slides were encouraging.

[9:37:51 AM](#)

DR. ATWATER presented slide 18, Preparing Teachers to Work with Struggling Readers, which read:

- UA pre-service teachers are taught how to assess readers to determine the source of specific struggles and to respond instructionally
- UA pre-service teachers take special education courses that address specific learning challenges (e.g., dyslexia)
- UA pre-service teachers are taught strategies for supporting struggling readers, based on assessments
- UA education reading courses have been analyzed and augmented as result of House Bill 64 (CH. 52 SLA 2018) and conversations with stakeholders about the increasing needs in the State

He said UA has followed SB 111 carefully, including hearing some dismissive testimony about the way UA trains teachers to teach students to read. Thus, he prepared this slide to further explain the process and examine their own programs.

[9:38:56 AM](#)

DR. ATWATER presented slide 19, UA Responding to Stakeholder Input on Reading, which read:

- The UA teacher education programs pursue data-driven continuous improvement that includes substantive stakeholder input about the needs of Alaska's children.
- In the area of reading instruction, education faculty from UAA, UAF, and UAS are working in collaboration to strengthen literacy and special education courses in response to the needs of Alaska's children, stakeholder input and Alaska State Legislative action such as CS SB 111

DR. ATWATER said the big takeaway on SB 111 is that it stimulated faculty coordination. He said UA hopes to offer the needed professional development called for in the bill. He emphasized that UA stands ready to help in this area.

9:39:38 AM

SENATOR HUGHES stated that she participated in a Zoom meeting with some superintendents. She reported that three superintendents said UAF was the only UA campus preparing graduates to adequately teach reading. She asked if the university is conducting any surveys with superintendents strictly focused on the first-year teachers ability to teach reading. She acknowledged that the feedback she received from superintendents could be because it was based on an older curriculum that was not evidence based. She asked if the UA curriculum for reading instruction is now evidence-based curriculum.

9:41:26 AM

DR. ATWATER responded that his sense is that the feedback was based on older curriculum due to lag time.

He directed attention to slide 20, UAF Graduate and Teaching Reading, which read:

[Original punctuation provided.]

Shortly after the start of the school year I realized just how well prepared I was to teach reading. Seasoned teachers were overjoyed with my depth of knowledge about reading. I was able to determine the skills my students needed to strengthen or develop. I was also able to talk with the teachers in-depth about different things we could do to achieve the student's individual goals. I attribute this to UAF Professor Diane Kardash who spent a lot of time teaching the class about the essential components of reading instruction which includes the "Big 5".

We spent a lot of time studying the importance of phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, phonemic awareness, and fluency. Today, in my own 4th grade classroom, I stress these skills with my students. One of the first things I did when we returned in the fall was test their fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary so I could track their progress throughout the year. I

am grateful for the post-bac program at UAF because it provided me with a strong foundation in reading instruction that has proven valuable in my teaching career.

UAS taught me how to teach reading and language arts in a way that made students excited about reading. I was taught that in order to meet the needs of a diverse classroom, I need to teach strategies that will not only make my students better readers, but better thinkers.

Melissa McCumby  
4th Grade Teacher  
Hermon Hutchens Elementary  
Valdez, Alaska

DR. ATWATER explained that he solicited comments from graduates. He focused on the second paragraph of a graduate teacher from Valdez. He pointed out that UAF training includes phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

DR. ATWATER directed attention to slide 21, UAS 2020 Graduate and Teaching Read, consisting of a quote from a UAS graduate, which read:

[Original punctuation provided.]

I have students that read on Kindergarten and sixth grade levels. I have students that struggle with various learning disabilities and impairments. The strategies I use to teach the student who reads at a lower level are going to be completely different from the methods I use to teach a student with dyslexic tendencies. With all students, I will start with what I know to be the foundation of sound reading instruction by assessing students in their ability and awareness of the "big 5". I was taught by Robin Dahlman, Assistant Professor at UAS, that any quality program or curriculum adopted or used in schools to teach reading must include and have explicit instruction in these elements: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary and comprehension. To identify where a student is in their development is my first priority so that I can directly teach each student at their respective level.

Amanda Friendshuh  
First Year 3rd grade teacher  
Chapman School, Anchor Point  
Kenai Peninsula Borough School District

DR. ATWATER said the quote shows this first-year teacher felt ready to teach reading. MS. Friendshuh also highlighted that her students' reading skills were varied. Although, there is no formal statewide survey about reading, the feedback is positive, he said.

[9:43:33 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES asked if UA has removed older curriculum from campuses to ensure that evidence-based reading is being taught in all UA campuses.

DR. ATWATER answered that the foundations of literacy classes were revised at the start of the Dyslexia Task Force so campuses are currently placing a greater emphasis on the "Big 5."

[9:44:12 AM](#)

DR. ATWATER paraphrased slide 22, UAA and Early Childhood, which read:

- UAA is advancing a proposal for the Board of Regents and the State Board of Education to reestablish an initial licensure program (BA) in Early Childhood
- If all phases of the proposal are accepted, students would be eligible to enroll in classes as early as January 2022
- Currently, the only way to earn the PreK-3 endorsement in Alaska is by adding an early childhood minor to UAF's BA in Elementary Education (K-8)
- The program will have a focus on the development of reading and writing skills with PreK-3 children
- This proposal aligns with pending state legislation and Federal interest in universal Pre-K

DR. ATWATER said this slide addresses Senator Begich's earlier question. This represents the beginning of UAA re-establishing itself with respect to offering initial licensure.

[9:45:05 AM](#)

SENATOR BEGICH remarked that this is exactly the action he wants to see from the university. He commented that he runs a scholarship program for high school students that focuses on

education and public service. He estimated that approximately 25 percent of the applicants interested in education want to work in early education. He said he hopes the Board of Regents supports the UA programs.

[9:46:06 AM](#)

DR. ATWATER turned the presentation over to Dr. Layer.

[9:46:19 AM](#)

DR. LAYER directed attention to slide 22. He said the Early Childhood Program is not starting from scratch since UAA offers an Associate of Applied Science Degree in Early Childhood Development accredited by the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC). UAA has retained faculty so it can start this program quickly. He advised that it is a partnership because UA requires the State Board of Education to approve graduates for licensure even though the program will not initially have accreditation from the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). He anticipated that UA will be able to apply for CAEP accreditation. The partnership allows for graduates to be licensed in Alaska. The proposal will come before the Board of Regents in June 2021.

[9:47:39 AM](#)

DR. LAYER presented slide 23, UA Teacher Prep Going Forward, which read:

- Interim President Pitney convened a working group to review the structure of UA's education programs and to then develop recommendations to better align them with the needs of Alaska's school districts
- Recommendations will be presented to the Board of Regents at the June meeting
- A new UA education website highlights and guides students to UA's education programs as part of a comprehensive marketing campaign to recruit students to its teacher preparation programs

DR. LAYER stated that first, even though UAA lost its accreditation, the education program still has capacity to expand the number of UA students. One way to do that is to explain to prospective students the pathways for becoming a teacher no matter where they live in the state. Second, UA could consider other ways to provide support to teachers by initiating a loan forgiveness program, providing scholarships or relaxing out-of-state tuition requirements for education students.

Finally, UA must consider ways to address perception, given the turmoil in the last few years. The university can reach out to potential students to assure them that UA has quality and accessible programs and UA wants them as students. "UAA is here to stay" is part of the message that the campaign will address. He paraphrased the bullet points on the slide. He emphasized that each of the campus programs meet very different needs. In response to Senator Steven's earlier question, he said people with baccalaureate degrees were going into the UAS Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program is critical.

9:51:08 AM

DR. LAYER explained that it is important to provide a clear pathway for someone like a professional geologist who wants to enroll in the MAT program at UAS. He said this is crucial for people making a career change.

DR. LAYER offered to keep the legislature informed about UA's efforts. He said UA hopes to see student enrollment up in the fall but he does not see the university recapturing all of the education students it lost. He pointed out that graduate numbers were down but not to the same level as enrollment. UA has been producing graduates who are moving forward in initial and advanced licensure.

9:52:56 AM

CHAIR HOLLAND expressed an interest in the Alaska Statewide Mentoring Project mentioned on slide 15 that uses retired teachers as mentors. Second, he offered his view that the committee cannot fix education in Alaska but it seeks to give superintendents and teachers the tools to do so. Third, he said he is encouraged to hear discussions about strategies to help struggling readers as shown on slide 18. Finally, he apologized for the length of time it took to move SB 111 out of committee. This was after the committee spent years evaluating the issue. He said he hopes that the work will inspire change in the field even before the bill passes.

9:54:31 AM

SENATOR STEVENS asked for the status of the Board of Regents (BOR) consideration of accreditation for UAA's education program. He asked if it was true that BOR decided to not pursue it.

DR. LAYER related his understanding that BOR has not made any decision on pursuing accreditation. He elaborated that the Early Childhood Education Program is the first of the initial

licensure programs that the board will discuss allowing to move forward. He offered his belief that the board will insist that the program move forward to apply for accreditation when it becomes available. He said students need to graduate from programs in order for UAA to gain accreditation but students need to come from an accredited program to get licensure. By working with the State Board of Education, UA hopes to provide that pathway for students to achieve initial licensure in Alaska while the university is going through the accreditation process.

[9:56:27 AM](#)

CHAIR HOLLAND asked if Dr. Atwater had anything to add.

DR. ATWATER said the key is that the State Board of Education (SBOE) would have to give conditional approval to UAA. He anticipated that the SBOE would give UAA a three year window in which to attain accreditation. During that time the SBOE would accept UA's recommendation for licensure to allow that process to move forward.

[9:57:08 AM](#)

SENATOR HUGHES expressed an interest in obtaining more information about the university's reading curriculum, including the number of credit hours, reading endorsements or in classroom requirement.

SENATOR BEGICH apologized for expressing frustration. He thanked UA for its efforts to move the university forward. He said he is cautiously optimistic about the direction the university is taking on its education program to produce high-quality teachers and retain them in Alaska. He asked them to convey their needs to the committee and legislature.

DR. LAYER thanked Senator Begich for his longstanding support for its education programs. He acknowledged that UA is not achieving the goals of training students in the state to be teachers in Alaska. He stated that UA has some distance to go. He offered to continue to work with the committee going forward.

DR. ATWATER stated the legislature requires a biennial report. He said he and Dr. Layer are available to assist the committee.

[10:00:39 AM](#)

There being no further business to come before the committee, Chair Holland adjourned the Senate Education Standing Committee meeting at 10:00 a.m.