

## ***CHANCELLOR'S COMMENTS:***

### ***From UAS Chancellor Rick Caulfield***



March 29, 2017

Dear UAS faculty and staff:

Student success is our foremost goal at UAS. At a recent scholarship luncheon, I heard students share how they overcame almost-overwhelming hurdles in life to get to where they are today—on track toward their dream of a college degree. They could not have been more eloquent about why education matters. I never tire of the smiles on faces of our graduates as they receive their diploma--priceless affirmation that a college education transforms lives and contributes to a better world.

Steps leading toward student success are recruitment, retention, and timely graduation. And here at UAS, recruitment and retention remain a challenge. Recruitment of new students has declined in recent years—at a rate of about -9% annually for UAS as a whole. We've seen a drop of -23% in overall enrollment between fall 2012 and 2016—especially on the Juneau Campus and among non-degree seeking students. Some reasons for these declines are clear, including reduced numbers of high school graduates, increased tuition, and low college-going rates. On the retention and graduation side, we've seen some improvement: the graduation rate for first-time, full-time freshman after six years at UAS increased between 2012 and 2016—from 15% to 24%. Overall retention improved from 54% in Fall 2012 to 57% in Fall 2015. We're heading in the right direction, but this remains one of our university's biggest challenges.

This time of year—just now—is critical to 'moving the needle' on recruitment and retention. It takes engagement from everyone at UAS. Our recent UAS Student Success Summit identified a number of ways that we can move that needle. Our dedicated recruiting staff at all three UAS campuses are traveling, making presentations, and encouraging students to consider what UAS has to offer. I was especially heartened to hear about expanded faculty engagement in recruiting—Sherry Tamone, Bill Urquhart, Mique'l Dangeli, Reid Brewer, Kevin Maier, Sol Neely, Amanda Sesko, Robin Gilcrist, Keith Cox, David Tallmon, Ernestine Hayes, and Heidi Pearson, to name just a few—who are going out of their way to be involved. They are making a difference, and I'm very grateful for their efforts.

At the institutional level, we're making investments to encourage more students to choose UAS and to stay here through completion of their degree:

- 1) **STAY ON TRACK:** Stay on Track is back! The data from 5-6 years ago when this program was in place showed improved student retention and graduation rates. We know that not all students can take advantage of this, but many can. We're investing in the program once again for the 2017-18 academic year. Students in good standing who increase registration from 12 credits to 15 or more will receive a \$500 incentive award. We expect this incentive to promote higher levels of campus engagement and timely graduation.
- 2) **EXPLORE SOUTHEAST SHOWCASE:** On April 7-9 in Juneau we expect to have some 30 prospective new freshmen students on campus: living in campus housing, engaging in mini-lectures with talented faculty, exploring Juneau's surroundings, and experiencing fun campus life events. Last year—our first showcase—led to 77% of those attending choosing to enroll.
- 3) **CHANCELLOR'S AWARD FOR HOUSING & ALASKA LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE (AL-I):** We've added a new merit-based housing award to the existing AL-I program with a goal of filling freshman housing and building a more

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robust and engaged campus population in Juneau. Forty-four applicants applied by the deadline. We've also expanded the opportunity for part-time students to live in campus housing, including Banfield Hall and apartments.

- 4) **FINISH COLLEGE ALASKA:** We're just now adding incentives to encourage non-traditional students to come back and finish their Bachelor's degree at UAS—emphasizing opportunities to do so online and, where appropriate, to include faculty-approved credit for prior learning (CPL). Ketchikan Campus faculty and staff have taken the lead in identifying at least 10,000 students across Alaska who have 60+ university credits and a solid GPA. Because of UAS' online degree options, our university is distinctly positioned in the state to meet needs of adult completers.
- 5) **COME HOME ALASKA:** While the numbers are still small, we've seen significant growth in the number of students in the Lower 48 with Alaskan family ties who choose to return to Alaska and pay in-state tuition. We're marketing this especially through social media and in partnership with community organizations.
- 6) **UAS VERNA CARRIGAN PROMISE AWARDS:** We've redirected UA Foundation funding to support targeted scholarships for Southeast Alaska high school seniors who've overcome significant challenges in their lives but who've demonstrated great promise for college success. We anticipate awarding 4-5 of these for fall 2017.
- 7) **COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER AGREEMENTS:** Dean Karen Schmitt is developing a strategic plan to recruit new transfer students from the Pacific Northwest with a focus on our bachelor's degree programs in biology, marine biology, fisheries, geography, environmental science and math. A first step is formalizing an agreement with Peninsula College in Port Angeles, WA—building off of an early partnership started by Professor Jan Straley at our UAS Sitka Campus.
- 8) **EXPANDED SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT:** We know that social media is one of the foremost ways that students learn about the exciting educational opportunities that UAS offers. This online presence only expands what we already know: that 'word of mouth' is how so many of our students learn about our university. With this in mind, we've selected Katy Jordan to become UAS' Social Media and Marketing Strategy Coordinator. Funding for this is coming from President Johnsen's office—a new investment linked to Strategic Pathways.

We all know that UAS is a special place. We offer high quality education in a supportive learning environment, high-impact learning (internships, practicum experiences, and undergraduate research), degree pathways that link directly to job opportunities, cultural enrichment and a focus on educational equity, flexible online degree options, and engaging campus life and housing options. We find that the more prospective students learn about us, the more they want to be a part of our community.

All of us have a role in recruitment, retention, and student success. We have an ongoing Student Success steering committee—co-chaired by Vice Chancellor Joe Nelson and Provost Karen Carey—that is building on these initiatives and the outcome of our recent Student Success Summit. If you have additional ideas about how to improve student recruitment and retention, please communicate those to me and to this committee. We're all ears...and everyone has a role to play!

Thank you for your continuing good work in support of our students and their success!



Chancellor Rick Caulfield