

**A DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN  
LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES:  
IS IT FEASIBLE?**

PREPARED FOR  
STEERING COMMITTEE  
ON A JOINT PHD PROGRAM IN LEADERSHIP  
AND POLICY STUDIES

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## **INTRODUCTION**

In response to requests from the Alaskan community, the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) agreed to explore the possibility of developing a doctoral program in leadership and policy studies. This program would be developed in collaboration with the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) and the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS). The goal of the program would be to prepare Alaska leaders in the fields of education, health and human services, government, and business.

Joe Kan, dean of the UAF Graduate School, formed a steering committee to investigate the need for and the development of such a program. The steering committee included representatives from all three University of Alaska campuses, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development, and local school districts. As a first step, the steering committee decided to conduct a needs assessment by interviewing potential employers in Alaska to determine whether they would consider such a degree useful and what focus the degree program should have. The committee contacted the Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER) to help draft an interview instrument and to conduct the key informant interviews. This report is a summation of the key informant interview data.

The report is organized around the six main questions that respondents answered. Each question has a summary of responses indicated by bulleted themes followed by supporting quotations.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The steering committee put together a list of 28 names of Alaska leaders in education, government, business, and non-profits. A letter—signed by Joe Kan, dean of the UAF Graduate School and Shirley Holloway, commissioner of the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development—was mailed as well as faxed to each person (see Appendix A). The letter asked each person to participate in a telephone interview. An outline of the interview questions was included with the letter. Mary Killorin, a research associate with ISER, followed up on the letter with telephone calls and e-mails to establish a time for the interviews.

Ms. Killorin conducted the interviews in late September and early October 2002. Of the 28 people on the list, 22 agreed to be interviewed. The others were unable to make time in their schedules, often because of travel, but supported the university's effort to ask community members for their input. The interviews were conducted by telephone and lasted from 20 minutes to an hour. All participants were given an opportunity to review Ms. Killorin's notes and to make any changes, additions, or corrections. Ms. Killorin used the interview format found in Appendix B. The questionnaire had separate questions for potential doctoral candidates and for organizational representatives. However, participants were encouraged to engage in a conversation and give their opinions even if they did not fit within the structured format.

As Table 1 indicates, key informants represented a broad range of the education, state government, and non-profit sectors. Private business had only one representative. The range of Alaska work experience among key informants was from 4 to 36 years. On average, key informants had worked in the state for 23 years. Nine of the key informants already had doctorates and seven of them were personally interested in the leadership and policy studies doctoral program. When asked their reasons for wishing to pursue a doctoral degree, five people answered that furthering their general knowledge was their first priority and one said career advancement was the most important reason. Only one person considered research a priority.

**Table 1. Persons Interviewed**

		<b>Title</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Susan	Anderson	President/CEO	CIRI Foundation
Steve	Cathers	Superintendent	Valdez City Schools
Yvonne	Chase	Deputy Commissioner of Early Development	Alaska Department of Education and Early Development
Janet	Clark	Director of Administrative Services	Alaska Department of Health and Social Services
Tim	Doran	Principal	Denali Elementary School
Mary	Francis	Executive Director	Alaska Council of School Administrators
Alice	Galvin	Learning and Organization Development Advisor	BP Exploration
JoAnn	Henderson	Executive Director	Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC)
Bruce	Johnson		Association of Alaska School Boards
Carol	Kane		Alaska Association of Secondary School Principals
Rich	Kronberg	President	NEA Alaska
Jay	Livey	Commissioner	Health and Social Services
Ed	McLain	Deputy Commissioner of Education	Alaska Department of Education and Early Development
Bill	Mell		UAA/College of Education
John	Monahan	Assistant Professor/Educational Leadership	UAF/School of Education
Bob	Roses	President	Anchorage Education Association
Sarah	Scanlon	Education Consultant	First Alaskans Institute
Ann	Shortt	Superintendent	Fairbanks North Star Borough School District
Nick	Stayrook		Fairbanks North Star Borough School District
Sandy	Stephens	Principal	Government Hill Elementary School
Susan	Stitham	Chair	State Board of Education
Bernice	Tetpon		UAS Professional Education Center
Kelly	Tonsmeire	Director	Alaska Staff Development Network



**QUESTION 1: SHOULD THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS DEVELOP A DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES IN COLLABORATION WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA ANCHORAGE AND THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA SOUTHEAST?**

We started with an analysis of the degree to which respondents supported the development of a doctoral program in leadership and policy studies. We found that there was overwhelming support for the development of a doctoral program in leadership and policy studies within the state of Alaska. In addition, all the respondents were pleased that the university was consulting with the community before developing a program. The following is a summary of major points made by respondents.

- **Alaska needs to develop its own leaders who understand Alaska issues.**

School principals and superintendents in the state should be the go-to-people on issues of education in the state . . . . There is no outside institution that will be able to help us with that. No one understands what it's like to be in the Bering Straits School District with 11 district schools none within 100 miles of one another. Nobody understands what it is like to recruit people and keep them in rural Alaska except Alaskans.

- **We have the resources to offer a statewide doctoral program.**

I would like to see a statewide doctoral program. As long as I have been here, people have been going to Utah or Washington for programs. We have the resources and the technology to offer a program here . . . . No department here has the power to offer a program of the depth that we want. To me it makes sense to combine the strengths of everyone. A joint Alaska program makes sense.

I definitely believe all the campuses must be involved because each has its own strength. It also would be a great networking opportunity since superintendents in this state move so much.

- **An Alaska program will help keep administrators in the state.**

Alaska as a state has not invested very well in leadership and this is an excellent way to do it. I can name a number of people who are good administrators in the state who have left to get doctorates. Most don't return. The brightest and best move on because they can't get a terminal degree here and it is so difficult to commute to a Lower 48 institution.

- **Existing degree programs do not meet the needs of educators.**

At one time I had a group of about 13 people interested in a doctoral degree in education (approximately 1993) but UAF didn't have the personnel to offer the degree and we couldn't find an appropriate institution outside to take a cohort group. I think it is important for the university to take this next step from the interdisciplinary degree it currently offers. This proposed program provides more of a construct for educators than the current interdisciplinary degree.

- **Programs offered by outside institutions don't work in Alaska.**

We have had many attempts to have Alaska students align themselves with other universities—for example, the University of Southern California (USC) produced several doctorates. I don't know how those programs fell apart but they don't seem to work.

The University of Oregon started a distance program in Alaska last year. Now there are 14 people full time in the program – now in their second year. People would rather have something here in the state. They want more face-to-face contact.

Three respondents had reservations about the program.

I don't see PhD programs as a priority. I think there are many other things the university should be working on, for example, the need for Native teachers, health administrators, health aides, and nurses in rural Alaska. The positions in rural Alaska that need to be filled don't require PhDs.

I also think it is good for people to go outside because I think we can get too parochial here.

I do think that by pursuing an advanced degree that you can potentially become a better-trained leader. But I do not understand the urgency at this time. The doctoral program has been talked about since I have been in the state—1983. Why now when resources are less available?

In addition, one respondent emphasized the need for the university to maintain its credibility by following through with the program.

I think the university has had this on the starting block for so long that a big problem will be getting people to believe that the university will stick with the program. People will be fearful that the university will not follow through.

Three respondents believed that people in Alaska were more interested in a practical rather than a traditional PhD.

People in Alaska are looking more for a practical applications program. They are more interested in an EDD than a PhD. My opinion is that as people make choices in training they will be involved in the business of education rather than research about the business of education.

Two respondents believed that unless salaries increased people who got their doctorates would go outside to work.

I worry that salaries won't be commensurate with what graduates would expect unless something changes in the way the state sets salaries for administrators. People may take the degree and go to another state.

Finally, several respondents indicated the need for financial and other assistance for students through a variety of tools such as negotiating flexibility with state agencies and school districts, loan forgiveness, scholarships and stipends.

Summer institutes must have scholarships. The university must make some accommodation for people who are working or, if not working, give them scholarship funding to survive. Weekend intensives must have travel support and housing support.

We [DHSS] have been working on how to retain staff. The state doesn't pay enough to keep people. If the state could make a work arrangement for leave to participate in the PhD program it could be a useful perk for retention. This assumes that people could do this program and keep working.

**QUESTION 2: WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE INCLUDED IN A LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES DOCTORAL PROGRAM?**

We next asked respondents what they thought the content of a doctoral program in leadership and policy studies should look like. Their answers included suggestions as to how the program should be organized and the types of courses that should be offered.

- **Almost half the respondents suggested that the program use a cohort model.**

There is a great value to the state in having a cohort group with a common thread and interest.

I think the university should look at a cohort model. I think there should be as many options as possible. I know people who just haven't been able to finish their dissertations because they have very busy lives. If you had other people working on the project with you, there would be more impetus to finish.

However, one respondent cautioned that the model needs to be flexible and allow people to opt out and back in.

I think that there are pros and cons to cohort groups. On the plus side, you get to know and work with people that give you support. However, on the con side it is difficult because people's lives change because of life problems and family obligations and it becomes difficult to stay on the same time track. The program needs to be flexible so that people can opt out and back in.

Two of the respondents thought it would be valuable for the cohort group to pick an area of interest and collaborate on their dissertation research.

When I did my dissertation, there were five of us. We all used the same core survey and then added 5 or 10 individual questions. . . . We were able to get deeper using one large survey. It was a lot more work because you had to come to agreement but it was worthwhile. I could envision something like that. We don't have to be in the traditional mode.

- **Four respondents suggested that the program be based on Alaska case studies.**

In thinking about what kind of research could be done—I think you could organize the program around case studies. For example, welfare reform – you could also focus on the child health initiative. It seems you would get maximum benefit without generating a lot of busy work if you used a case study approach. You could also do evaluation of existing programs, a comparison of initiatives—what failed and what didn't, and post-mortems on programs.

The program should be developed to work on Alaska problems and issues. Research shows that there aren't many Alaskans or people with Alaskan experience in administration, particularly as superintendents.

- **Almost all respondents believed that they would continue to work during the program and they wanted the program to directly apply to what they were doing.**

I believe that the structure of the program will make it or break. It has to meet the needs of professionals working in Alaska . . . . Learning must be contextual and integrated with the professional experience of the candidate. All content in doctoral programs should be relevant to the work that the student who is also a professional is doing.

The program should be molded around both experience and theoretical framework. I am fearful of programs that don't value experience . . . . If you convey to practitioners that you don't value their experience base, it demonstrates that the professors in the program might not be able to treat experienced students with respect.

It would be important to have experience with many different parts of Alaska so that you can understand the whole state. There should be a rural and an urban internship experience.

- **Respondents most frequently cited research as the most important program content area.**

The program needs to get you to a point where you could do unique research for a dissertation. If someone has a doctorate, they must go through rigorous training and produce a dissertation that was rigorously reviewed. In that process, you become a community of scholars.

We need more researchers . . . I think there is a demand for research in many areas. For example, in meeting the demands of ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act – No Child Left Behind), there are lots of areas that will require research in order to obtain federal funding. . . . There are a number of private companies working hard to capture that money across the nation. Research will be paramount.

The state has a huge resource of data that they have collected for years about the students in Alaska—test scores, demographic trends, etc.—that is basically sitting unanalyzed. There needs to be an analysis of state level educational data. It would be useful for informing decision makers, legislature and state boards regarding the condition of education in Alaska. You could generate 20 dissertations from this data. The university should take the lead in analyzing and interpreting that data.

We also need research applicable to the classroom about what works in Alaska situations. We now have no clearinghouse for sharing what is working in Alaska and we often reinvent the wheel in every school district. This program could help with that function.

We must focus the research on the needs of rural communities so that we have a benefit from the program that remains in the state.

Although most respondents mentioned the importance of research on Alaska issues, one respondent believed that published research should be valuable to educators nationwide.

I think it is important to have some content that is uniquely Alaskan but one of the challenges for Alaskans in all fields is to stay connected to the world at large. I don't think research has to be based on Alaska issues rather than relating Alaska issues to national issues. It would be nice if any published research appealed to the education community at large. It might not do that if it is too narrow and only Alaska-based research.

- **It is important to learn to do needs assessments and evaluations.**

Several respondents mentioned the need for course work on needs assessments and program evaluations due to the focus of both state and federal legislation on assessment and evaluation.

We need people who better understand assessment—how to utilize test data to improve student performance. Alaska is focusing now on designating schools that aren't successful and on high stakes testing.

Districts want people who can help close the achievement gap, especially with Alaska Native students in rural Alaska. We must learn to collect the right data and then make the best decisions by analyzing that data.

Another piece missing in most programs is the cutting edge information regarding how to use assessment data, what does the standards approach mean, how to deal with the very public, very punitive concept of accountability.

It is always the evaluation end of a program that doesn't get addressed when in reality that is what you should be looking at in the beginning. Needs assessments should be done in the beginning. As federal funds dwindle we need to justify why programs should be funded. New and different funding partners will want to know what we've accomplished so far and how much farther we have to go.

Research practices and analysis are currently being targeted in education. I recently went to DC to meet with DOE staff and they are stressing the importance of research in education for the No Child Left Behind legislation. Also good evaluation is important.

They also have to know how to evaluate programs—especially quantitative evaluations. They need course work in statistical analysis.

- **The program must have experienced professors and committed advisors.**

Several respondents mentioned that the quality of the program and its success depended on the quality of the teachers and their expertise. They believed that it was important that professors have experience in the field and that advisors be committed and available to students.

Whoever teaches in the program must have the ability to oversee doctoral students and that is a step above teaching master's students or undergraduates.

People that are going to teach administration should have some experience in the field. They should have done what they are teaching people to do.

We need context. I am afraid that this PhD program will be taught and run by people that can't relate to the Alaska experience. Instructors or resource people in the program must have actual experience in rural Alaska—part of the program should be in the field.

I don't believe that the existing faculty can create a PhD program because they don't have the research expertise. I also don't believe you can get that from distance delivery course work. The most valuable part of a program is linking up with individual professors and helping them conduct research. You must have people who are conducting research to talk to and to model for you what is required.

Students need an advisor who checks in and makes sure things are getting done.

While several respondents said they assumed a master's degree would be a prerequisite for the doctoral program, one respondent said she did not believe a master's degree should be required.

In addition to the general components described above, key informants suggested that the following courses be incorporated into the program:

- Cultural sensitivity and diversity
- Best practices for formulating and implementing programs
- Best practices of high performing organizations
- Core classes in leadership
- Fiscal analysis of agencies
- General management
- Accounting
- Budgeting
- Ethical dilemmas of leadership
- Understanding the political process
- Role of federal government in education
- Policy
- Personnel management
- Legal issues
- School Law
- Indian law
- Bilingual education
- Educational administration
- Media applications
- Labor negotiations
- Conflict resolution
- Coaching
- Strategic planning and community relations
- Change management
- Innovation
- Training

**QUESTION 3: GIVEN YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES, WHAT TYPES OF COURSE DELIVERY WOULD WORK FOR YOU?**

Once we discussed respondents' ideas for the organization and content of coursework, we asked them how they would like their courses delivered.

- **Almost all the respondents agreed that a combination of Web-based courses, weekend intensives, summer institutes, distance delivery, and audio and videoconferencing would work best.**

I enjoy classes where you meet together. Video conferencing works as long as the equipment works well. Summer is fine as long as you plan far ahead. I could use the Web for assignments but I wouldn't want to do self-directed learning that was all Web-based. I learn by interacting with people. For weekends and summer institutes, I just need to be able to plan way ahead because of the complexity of my job.

However, one respondent mentioned that it was important to remember that people have different levels of computer literacy and two respondents objected to Web-based delivery.

I don't like Web-based stuff. I don't like reading stuff off a screen. I believe that an advantage of going to school is chatting with your peers.

One respondent who had taken distance delivery courses said that she found it difficult unless you were participating with a group of people so that you could have a group dialogue. However, another respondent said that in his experience "time is always the toughest commodity for educators. Anything that allows teachers to participate in the program without leaving home is good."

One educator recommended the chat room format based on his past experience.

I don't like to think of any of these as replacements for person-to-person contact. I like the chat room format. It allows more thoughtful, less verbal people to think through, to watch the conversation developing. As a professor, you can see the thought process evolve.

People who were in education were unanimous in their support for summer institutes.

Summer institutes are a great way to get people together. Problem-solving together and having professional time is very important.

However, people with 12-month jobs found summer institutes more problematic.

Summer institutes would have to be short. Summer for us is the busiest time of the year and I couldn't take three months off. Perhaps a few days a month for 18 months would work.

I would prefer more weekend intensives than summer institutes. A combination would work. The summer is difficult and the university has had problems getting people in the past for summer courses.

One respondent said that the university must provide scholarships, travel support and housing support for summer institutes and weekend intensives. Another respondent with a lot of distance delivery experience shared the schedule that had worked best for his organization.

We were trying to [deliver courses] with distance education combined with summer institutes. People wanted three additional meetings—fall,

winter, and spring. Meetings should ideally last two to three days and be on Thursday and Friday or Thursday, Friday, Saturday.

By contrast, three respondents felt that it was important to be on campus and not working at your job in order to develop mentoring relationships between students and professors.

I think about two-thirds of what I learned during my doctoral work was from being on campus associating with professors that mentored me and paved the way for me. I think that off-campus based programs offer a very narrow preparation. In a nutshell, it is more than the classes—it's the partnerships, relationships, and mentorships that need to be considered to provide a quality program. If we can't provide that we should let people go elsewhere and focus our attention on more pressing needs. If you have to spend a year in residency, away from the rigors of your normal job, I believe that the experience is a richer and potentially a more life altering experience. I don't think the mentorship can be accomplished over the summer.

**QUESTION 4: WOULD PEOPLE IN YOUR FIELD HAVE ANY PROBLEMS RECOGNIZING AN INTERDISCIPLINARY DEGREE?**

Next we asked respondents if there would be any problems with the interdisciplinary nature of the proposed doctoral program in leadership and policy studies.

- **Most respondents did not think that the recognition of an interdisciplinary degree was a problem.**

Some viewed the interdisciplinary nature of the degree as a strength; others felt that it was a person's experience in conjunction with the degree that was most important.

No, I see a strength with that. We deal with many elements in public education besides education – business decisions, social services, health services. We need all those perspectives. It also gives us the opportunity to look at the integrated nature of all these systems. Particularly in today's society we need to be able to interface with other institutions. How does business think and make decisions? How do we handle things when the legislature says the school will provide the mental health services for the village? Also, many of us have had the professors in education departments when we did our master's program so getting a broader range of resource people would be invaluable for us.

I don't think people really care what the degree is in. It's whether or not that person is accepted by the group/community/organization and can forge ahead with what the community needs.

On the other hand, a few educators thought it would be a problem.

I don't think people in education would necessarily be interested in a general leadership degree . . . . I believe most people in education are interested in improving their skills as educators and a general policy program wouldn't necessarily do that. If it were a continuation of the education leadership master's program with an emphasis in policy and leadership—if it became the route to being a superintendent or a commissioner—it would be useful. Most educators are pretty pragmatic. If it's not related to career advancement or improving skills in the job they have, they typically won't find the time for it.

The interdisciplinary degree at UAF has been available and there hasn't been a landslide of interest. An interdisciplinary degree is one thing; training in the education business is another.

School districts might like to see more of a focus on curriculum, instruction and education policy issues rather than a broader interdisciplinary degree. I'm not sure of how school districts as employers would view that. I do think an interdisciplinary degree that would appeal to a broader audience is more cost effective.

One superintendent who had a PhD in education administration emphasized the importance of offering specializations.

The further you go in education usually the more specific you expect the course work to be. Would an educator be equipped to secure a job as executive director of a health department? In terms of marketing the program, I think you need to personalize the program as much as you can to give specializations in education or health for example.



**QUESTION 5:** BASED ON YOUR EXPERIENCE, CAN YOU ESTIMATE THE NUMBER OF JOBS THAT WOULD BE AVAILABLE IN YOUR FIELD IN THE NEXT 10 TO 15 YEARS FOR PEOPLE WITH A DOCTORAL DEGREE IN LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES?

After asking respondents questions about their perceptions of the need for the program and how it should be organized, we wanted to find out if respondents thought there would be jobs available for graduates of the program. We asked them to estimate the number of jobs that would be available in the next 10 to 15 years. Respondents replied to this question in several ways. Some estimated the number of people in the state who might be interested in this doctoral program. Others estimated the number of jobs that might become available in educational administration in Alaska during the next 10 to 15 years. A few looked at national statistics indicating that a large number of administrators in education would be retiring in the next five years.

There are probably 500 or 600 school administrators in the state who could be interested in this kind of program. There are 500 principals and 53 superintendents. Probably a third of the superintendents have doctorates. Clearly if an Alaskan wants to distinguish himself and be a strong candidate for an administrative position, a doctoral degree would help.

One respondent mentioned that national statistics indicate approximately 60 percent of school administrators are approaching retirement in the next five years. Another stated that he thought a PhD in leadership would be relevant in most teaching positions in the Anchorage School District.

We have 3,500 full and part-time certificated people in Anchorage School District (ASD). The more education they get, the further up the pay scale they go. It is already in our contract that you get paid more for a master's or doctorate as long as you are working in that area. Many of our doctoral positions now are school psychologists and counselors. I imagine that the course work for this program would teach social skills, organization skills, and management styles. This would be relevant for most of our teachers. Many teachers are involved in curriculum committees, sponsoring activities in classes, department chairs. All of these people need leadership skills. There are 108 department chairs in ASD alone. I think we could argue that a PhD in leadership is relevant in most teaching positions.

A respondent who worked with the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development said she had looked at the department's Web site and thought there were 26 positions that could potentially use doctoral people. She also said there is a large pool of Alaska Native teachers who would be interested in the doctoral program.

The Native Educator Association has a potential pool of a lot of PhD candidates. Some Native educators are working on master's degrees and some are ready to go on to a PhD. Approximately 400 Alaska Natives are certified teachers now. Some are in a PhD program already. I think it is possible to get 50 per year. But there must be support systems in place.

An administrator with the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services gave the following estimate.

We have approximately 2,200 employees. I would guess that maybe 10 to 15 every four years would be interested in this program and maybe 5 or 6 would actually do it. There would be a backlog of interested people the first year and then it would drop off significantly.

Another administrator in the Alaska Department of Health and Human Services said that she had no estimate of future jobs but that she had talked to approximately 10 people who would be interested in the doctoral program.

The Fairbanks North Star Borough superintendent estimated that all the administrative positions in the district's 30 schools and the central office would open up in the next 10 to 15 years. A university professor in the School of Education estimated that there were 50 to 60 people in the state at this time who would like to pursue doctorates.

I would estimate that there are 50 or 60 people in education here in the state that would like to pursue a doctorate. I don't think you would have more than 10 people from the business, government, or non-profit sectors. I think the actual interest and follow through in this program would be from people in education.

He further estimated that 50 jobs would open up in 10 to 15 years. "I would say 50. My opinion is that anyone who goes through a doctoral program can become a superintendent in the state of Alaska or outside."

**QUESTION 6: ARE THERE OTHER UNMET NEEDS THAT THE UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA SHOULD RESPOND TO?**

Our last question asked respondents to tell us about any unmet needs that the University of Alaska should respond to. Their responses fell into several categories.

- **There should be more support for current programs.**

The teacher preparation process seems to have gone through some confusion. There doesn't seem to be a long-term view of the process. The students are confused. Is it a four-year program or five-year program? It seems like the university is making teacher preparation more difficult at a time when we have a teacher crisis. Quality can happen without bureaucracy if everyone stays focused on what the outcome should be—good teachers for Alaskan kids.

- **The university needs a plan to add new programs.**

It is the university's role to create the infrastructure to make it relatively easy for a teacher's aide to become a teacher. It shouldn't take 10 years. That program should be put in place and the university should make sure that people have access to it. The ESEA requires that all paraprofessionals have high school diplomas and an AA degree, 60 college credits, or pass a rigorous test that hasn't been developed yet. The university should have a program in place immediately for these paraprofessionals. Naturally, the university should receive adequate funding to establish and maintain this effort.

There has been an urgent need for a speech pathology program. There is a shortage of speech pathologists nationally and currently all our speech pathologists are hired in the Lower 48. I don't know how difficult it is to start a speech pathology program but I think the university should do it. A lot of rural people would excel in that program and could continue to work in their region. It is one of the few educational certifications where you can write your own ticket.

We repeatedly see the need for therapists—speech therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy and educational psychologists. We do contract services for schools that don't need a full time position. The salaries in the Lower 48 are equal to or greater than those here and they also give signing bonuses.

At the doctoral and master's level, the university should make programs available to people outside of urban areas that don't require them to leave their jobs. We also need university programs to be more stable so that people can plan ahead. For example, UAS used to offer a special education master's degree through distance delivery but then they discontinued it. Now we have a shortage of special education teachers.

I think the university needs to support more PhD programs. When people go outside for PhDs and take their families with them, they end up not coming back. We need to stop our brain drain. The university should also look for an endowment of some sort that could cover a portion of the cost of the program.

We are proposing a master's degree program in "teachers as leaders." We are also requesting that the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development have a certification with an endorsement of teachers as leaders. We are proposing this program because we think that the management style for effective schools includes teachers in the decision making process. We think that teachers are the critical players in solving education problems and improving student performance.

- **The university should offer more training and professional development.**

One of the greatest needs is for the university to be responsive to content needs. The No Child Left Behind federal legislation requires that districts get up to speed immediately. We need the university to respond quickly to needs expressed by districts for programs.

It is a time of great change in education—there are all those extra demands on teachers and they are feeling overwhelmed. Alaska teachers don't even talk about potential help from our university and many are graduates. You would think that they would look to the university for the additional classes and training in areas such as the national "Leave No Child Behind" legislation, school improvement, accountability, and the new school designator system. It appears that many overlook the university and that initiatives rarely come forward from the university itself.

Effective leadership in education training at all levels. In two years, principals are going to be publicly humiliated if their school is not distinguished. This is going to be all new for Alaska. School districts don't have the resources to help principals get to another level. I see that as the university's role.

UAF used to have an orientation for principals and teachers going to rural Alaska. This resulted in the development of relationships that you could rely on and thus feel less isolated. We don't do this now because of budgetary constraints but I believe it results in the loss of teachers and administrators and contributes to our retention problems.

- **The university needs to improve relationships with Alaska Natives.**

The total funds disbursed by all Native regional corporation foundations and educational trusts for scholarships/grants in 2001-2002 was \$3.6 million. Overall I get the feeling that UAA doesn't pay all that much attention to Alaska Native students. I don't think the significance of these funds is acknowledged.

If we had Alaska Native researchers, there would be more research from our perspective. I believe this is a real need but that we should focus on the basics first. The Native people who do get PhDs hit a glass ceiling and it is not a good system for them right now.

I think there are many other things the university should be working on, for example, the need for Native teachers, health administrators, health aides, and nurses in rural Alaska. The positions in rural Alaska that need to be filled don't require PhDs. University programs should be closely articulated with secondary schools. We should make sure that kids in rural Alaska are ready to come to the university. The university should not move resources from under-funded and under-staffed programs to

support PhD programs. We are not yet meeting the basic needs of rural Alaska. I want to insure that there is a viable economic reason to keep rural Alaska alive.

We must focus the research on the needs of rural communities so that we have a benefit from the program that remains in the state. Our Native regional profits and non-profits need to identify their needs because we have a lot of imported people. The university should do local needs assessments with profits and non-profits and see what can be done.

- **The university should continue to improve relationships with the broader community.**

The reputation of the university is building but there are still problems with recognizing UA degrees as valuable and preparing graduates for the complexity of the work place. As a principal, you noticed that different universities could be counted on to prepare teachers properly and others couldn't. The university should evaluate or follow up with what the school districts think of their graduates.

I think the university needs to place more emphasis on its tripartite responsibilities of teaching, service and research. Service ought to be service to the community at large not to the university.



## CONCLUSIONS

We found that almost all of the 22 key informants that we interviewed expressed overwhelming support for the development of a doctoral program in leadership and policy studies. The reasons they most frequently cited were:

- Alaska needs to develop its own leaders who understand Alaska issues.
- We have the resources to offer a statewide doctoral program.
- An Alaska program will help keep administrators in the state.
- Existing degree programs do not meet the needs of educators.
- Programs offered by outside institutions don't work in Alaska.

However, some respondents did express reservations about introducing a new program when resources are scarce. They felt resources should be used to support existing teacher preparation programs and other programs that address more immediate needs in rural Alaska.

Respondents generally thought the program should use a cohort model, be based on Alaska case studies, and be structured to permit students to continue working at their current jobs. Course work should emphasize research skills, needs assessments, and program evaluations, and should allow for specialization. Professors should have field experience and advisors should be committed to their students. Course delivery should be a combination of Web-based courses, weekend intensives, summer institutes, distance delivery, and audio and videoconferencing. However, face-to-face contact between professors and students continues to be important. Financial assistance must be available to students through scholarships, travel and housing stipends, and negotiated flexibility at state and school district jobs.

Very few respondents thought that people in their field would have problems recognizing an interdisciplinary degree. Some educators thought that experience was as important as the degree in getting a job. Most assumed that the program would allow students to specialize in their own area of interest.

It was difficult for respondents to estimate the number of jobs that might be available for graduates of the program in the next 10 to 15 years. However, respondents generally felt that in education there would be lots of administrative jobs opening due to high rates of retirement both in Alaska and in the Lower 48. Some respondents were concerned that state salaries were not high enough to compensate people who had doctorates and so they feared program graduates would move to the Lower 48 for jobs. Others felt that school districts relied more on experience than educational achievement when they hired superintendents.

We asked respondents to tell us about any unmet needs that the University of Alaska should respond to. Their responses fell into the following categories:

- More support for current programs—especially teacher preparation
- Addition of new programs—speech pathology, programs for teacher's aides, occupational therapy, and physical therapy, master's degrees in special education, and teachers as leaders
- More training and professional development to support teachers, particularly around standards and the No Child Left Behind legislation
- Improved relations with Alaska Natives—recognition of Alaska Native students and of the needs of rural communities
- Improved relations with the broader community



**APPENDIX A. LETTER TO KEY INFORMANTS**

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Dear

In response to requests from the Alaskan community, the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) is exploring the possibility of developing a doctoral program in leadership and policy studies. This program would be developed in collaboration with the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) and the University of Alaska Southeast (UAS). The goal of the program would be to prepare Alaska leaders in the fields of education, health and human services, government, and business.

We have formed a steering committee to investigate the need for and the development of such a program. The steering committee is committed to growing Alaska's future leaders in a variety of fields. As a first step, we are contacting community leaders and asking them to participate in a telephone interview. The purpose of the interview is to determine whether potential employers would consider such a degree useful and what focus the degree program should have. Once we have an understanding of employers' needs, we will contact potential doctoral candidates to find out what is important to them.

We are asking you to participate in a 20-minute telephone interview. A brief outline of the interview questions is attached for your review. Mary Killorin, a research associate at the UAA Institute of Social and Economic Research (ISER), will contact you to schedule a convenient time for the interview. Thank you in advance for the help you can provide. Please feel free to contact Mary Killorin (phone: 907-786-7724; email: [anmk@uaa.alaska.edu](mailto:anmk@uaa.alaska.edu)) or Joseph Kan (phone: 907-474-7729; email: [ffjrk@uaf.edu](mailto:ffjrk@uaf.edu)) if you have any questions.

JOSEPH KAN  
DEAN OF UAF GRADUATE SCHOOL

SHIRLEY HOLLOWAY  
COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT  
STATE OF ALASKA



**APPENDIX B. TELEPHONE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

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## **NEEDS SURVEY TELEPHONE INTERVIEW SCRIPT**

### **UAF COLLABORATIVE DOCTORAL PROGRAM IN LEADERSHIP AND POLICY STUDIES**

As you know from the letter you received, the University of Alaska Fairbanks is developing a doctoral program in leadership and policy studies in collaboration with the University of Alaska Anchorage and the University of Alaska Southeast. The goal of the proposed collaborative PhD program is to prepare Alaska leaders in the fields of education, health and human services, and business. Based on conversations with people working in communities throughout Alaska, the University believes that Alaska must aggressively develop its own leaders in order to ensure the continued growth of our state and economy.

The letter contained some basic ideas about this program developed by the program's steering committee. Before proceeding further, the steering committee would like to gather as much information as possible from organizations that might employ its graduates as well as potential doctoral candidates. These interviews are the first step in a needs assessment that will tell us whether this program would meet a need within Alaska as well as what focus the program should have.

#### **Questions for potential doctoral candidates:**

1. 1. What is your current occupation and position?
2. 2. Would you be interested in a doctoral program in leadership and policy studies?
3. If so, why? (career advancement, interested in research, general knowledge, certification, etc.)
4. If so, what would you like to see included in such a program—what do you feel you would need to learn?
5. Given your circumstances, what types of course delivery would work for you? (web-based, weekend intensives, summer institutes, distance delivery, video conferencing, etc.)
6. Would people in your field have any problems recognizing an interdisciplinary degree?
7. Are there other unmet needs in your field to which UA should try to respond?

#### **Questions for organizational representatives:**

8. What future trends do you foresee in your setting/sector that have implications for hiring people with a doctoral degree in leadership and policy studies?
9. Based on your experience, can you estimate the number of jobs that will be available in your field in the next 10 to 15 years for people with a doctoral degree in leadership and policy studies?
10. Can you envision other needs that could be better served with a program with a different focus or format?
11. Are there other people with whom we should talk?

