



CHANCELLOR'S COMMENTS: From UAS Chancellor Rick Caulfield

April 27, 2020

Dear UAS faculty and staff:

This has been an extraordinarily challenging semester for all of us due to the COVID-19 pandemic and our ongoing budget issues. I want to thank each and every one of you for your dedication, flexibility, and hard work in navigating through these turbulent waters.

As you know, we've made the decision—based on consultation with Alaska's public health authorities—to offer all of our summer classes online or through alternate delivery modes. We've also cancelled our conference services on the Juneau Campus, and we will not be holding camps or other large group events in order to minimize the chance of spreading the virus. We are continuing to monitor the progression of the pandemic as we consider what the Fall semester might look like. The UA chancellors and President Johnsen recently met with the state's epidemiologist, Dr. Joe Middaugh, to hear more about the likely trajectory of the pandemic. Even as efforts of Alaskans to “hunker down” appear to be having some effect in limiting spread of the virus, there remains a concern about a possible rebound of the virus in the fall after some restrictions are lifted. As a university leadership team, we've decided to hold off on making a decision about our fall plans for a little while longer with the hope that perhaps we can return to some semblance of a normal semester. Time will tell, and we'll keep you informed about our decision-making process. Our foremost concern must be the health and safety of our students, staff, faculty, and communities.

On a more positive note, we are excited about planning for upcoming virtual commencements at each of our three campuses. These events will be posted on our UAS website: May 1 for the Sitka event and May 2 for the Ketchikan and Juneau events. There will also be a celebration of Alaska Native graduates posted on May 1. All can be found at uas.alaska.edu/commencement.

For the Juneau event, we are seeking to incorporate many of the elements you find in a normal commencement ceremony. These include a recorded presentation by our commencement speaker, Ms. Emily Edenshaw, who previously worked for Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska and now is Director of the Alaska Native Heritage Center in Anchorage. Our student speaker will be Khrystl Brouillette, a 2020 graduate who has served ably as editor of the Whalesong newspaper on the Juneau campus. We will also be recognizing Clark Gruening as an honorary doctorate recipient and both William Todd Hunt and Sharon Gauptman as meritorious service award recipients. There will also be recorded presentations by Regent Sheri Buretta, Chair of the UA Board of Regents, and UA President Jim Johnsen.

Next week there will also be an opportunity to recognize the retirement of two distinguished UAS faculty members, Drs. Sherry Tamone and Robin Walz. Both are being recognized as faculty members *emeritus*. This is the highest honor that a university can bestow on a faculty member, and this recognition is certainly well deserved. Congratulations to them both!

As we approach finals week and our virtual commencement events, I again want to thank the faculty and staff who stepped up in March to convert face-to-face classes to online delivery in a very short period of time. Your work was exceptional. Thank you!