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October 30, 2019

Sonny Ramaswamy, President
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
8060 165th Avenue, Suite 100
Redmond, WA 98052-3981

Via Electronic Communication: sonny@nwccu.org

RE: The University of Alaska's Response to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities September 26, 2019 Correspondence

Dear President Ramaswamy,

In response to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) correspondence dated September 26, 2019, the Board of Regents met on Monday, October 7, and Monday, October 28, 2019. During the October 28th meeting, the Board reviewed and approved the University of Alaska's response and authorized me, as Board Chair, to send the following ad hoc response.

Ad Hoc Response Introduction

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Regents of the University of Alaska to provide the ad hoc response requested by President Ramaswamy's letter of September 26, 2019. In providing the response I want to note our appreciation for President Ramaswamy's clarifying and helpful comments as well as those of Senior VP Mac Powell at the meeting of the UA Board of Regents on October 7.

This response also covers and forwards responses from the chancellors of our three separately accredited institutions: University of Alaska Anchorage; University of Alaska Fairbanks; and University of Alaska Southeast.

Citing concerns regarding Commission standards 2.A.2 and 2.A.1, President Ramaswamy's letter urged the board, President Johnsen, and Chancellors Caulfield, Sandeen, and White:
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Formal allocation of authority and responsibility between the System and the board is a matter for the full board; the president is the board's executive officer, and must act in accordance with authority derived from, and subject to, board direction;

Chancellors serve as trusted CEOs of the three universities, and as officers of the UA System, with responsibilities to both;

Chancellors must have sufficient input into board decisions affecting the institution they serve, and sufficient control at the operational level, to carry out their duties and responsibilities to the institution and the system;

Chancellors serve as the spokesperson and advocate for the institution they head, consistent with board policy and priorities;

Chancellors' actions in all of these arenas are subject to board oversight through the president. Thus the actions of the president and the chancellors must be consistent with the board's direction and role in formulating policy and governing the University;

Systemwide councils and administrative consolidations must not impair the chancellors' roles as CEO, but also must receive chancellor commitment to coordinate, streamline student experience, and reduce expenses wherever feasible;

The board and president will fully consider adjustments to relationships and processes that allow chancellors to better meet their responsibilities while accomplishing board goals.

The chancellors in their individual responses have indicated their agreement with these principles. Thus the Board, through the president and chancellors, is able to ensure that each institution is able to meet accreditation standards and state needs in a coordinated and efficient manner.

Further, as the NWCCU understands, the University of Alaska operates as a state university within a legal framework.

The University of Alaska, the Board of Regents and the University President derive their authority and duties from the State of Alaska's constitution and statutes. The Alaska constitution establishes the University as a single legal entity (not to be confused with a single accreditation). That legal framework provides the foundation and sideboards for clarity in authority, roles and responsibilities.

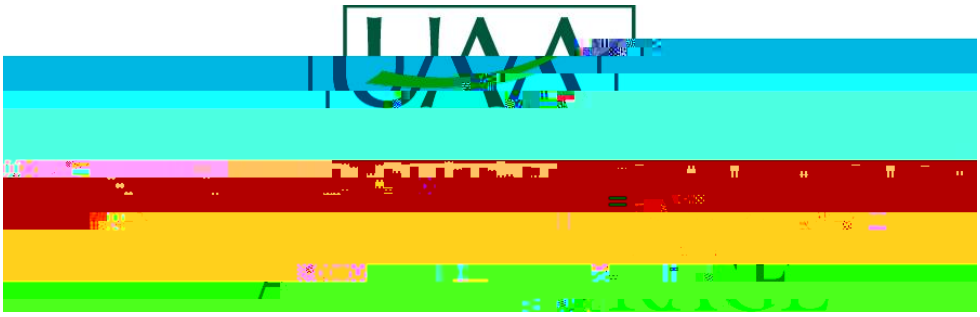
Space For Inclusive Dialogue on the Structure of the University of Alaska System

As noted above, on October 7 the Board acted to put a hold on consideration of changing to a single accreditation, as well as system-driven academic program review processes. These steps were taken to ensure compliance with accreditation requirements, and in particular, to ensure more inclusive and deliberative processes.

It is important to distinguish between the level of inclusive dialogue possible during a fiscal crisis

University of Alaska Anchorage

Ad Hoc Report on Standard 2.A.2 and 2.A.1



Submitted to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU)
October 31, 2019

- 6\VWHPZLGH FRXQFLOV DQG DGPLQLVWUDWLYH FRQVROLGDV as CEOs, but also must receive chancellor commitment to coordinate, streamline student experience, and reduce expenses wherever feasible;

- The Board and presidewill fully consider adjustments to relationships and processes that allow chancellors to better meet their responsibilitiesin achieving Board goals.

Specific actions from these deliberations may include: revision of policies and regulations to clarify roles and responsibilities, suspension or redesign of statewide councils, and redesign of administrative consolidations to provide sufficient chancellor involvement through a formal shared services structure.

Standard 2.A.1

The institution demonstrates an effective and widely understood system of governance with clearly defined authority, roles, and responsibilities. Its decision-making structures and processes make provision for the consideration of the views of faculty, staff, administrators, and students on matters in which they have a direct and reasonable interest.

While there are system level alliances of faculty, staff, and students outlined in Board of Regents Policy 03.01.010, these are constituted by members of the university governance groups. The university-level groups carry out their functions subject to the authority of the Board through the chancellor, who also approves their constitutions. Shared governance resides principally at the institutional level.

UAA faculty, staff, students, and administrators participate in the governance of the institution through long-standing structures. These include the Faculty Senate, and its boards and standing committees; the Staff Council; and the Union of Students of the University of Alaska Anchorage (USUAA). Each of these formal governance bodies conducts business according to its constitution and bylaws, which outline the authority, roles, and responsibilities on matters in which they have a direct and reasonable interest. Meetings are open, and agendas and minutes are posted on the UAA Governance website, as are other guiding documents. Executive administrators are invited to attend the meetings, submit written reports, and address the bodies as part of the regular agenda, providing opportunities for ongoing communication and discussion. Representatives of these bodies also serve on other institution-wide committees. For example, the Faculty Senate and Staff Council presidents are members of the Full Council of Deans and Directors.

Chancellor Sandeen prioritizes transparent

University of Alaska Fairbanks

Ad Hoc Report on Standard 2.A.2 and 2.A.1

Submitted to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) through the
University of Alaska System President and the University of Alaska Board of Regents
October 31, 2019

Introduction

In its September 26, 2019 letter to the University of Alaska Board of Regents, the UA System president and the University of Alaska Anchorage, University of Alaska Fairbanks, and University of Alaska Southeast chancellors, NWCCU requested “clarity around the authority, roles, and responsibilities of the University of Alaska

sustain the quality of their educational programming and fulfill the institutions' respective missions. Moving forward, the new NWCCU standards require the chancellors to ensure that decisions, including resource decisions, are guided by performance on student learning outcomes and student success metrics, with an overarching focus on issues of equity.

In response to the issues identified in the Commission's letter, the Board of Regents passed the following three motions:

"The Board of Regents approves ceasing consideration of a single accreditation structure at such a time as the University of Alaska Fairbanks secures its Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities accreditation in 2021. Subsequently, if the board chooses to actively consider single accreditation it will direct the president by formal action to conduct an independent cost benefit analysis and clearly examine accreditation issues."

"The Board of Regents approves suspending the statewide academic program review process until such a time as the board can get consultation from the chancellors and the president on a way forward."

"The Board of Regents approves meeting the last week of October to review the coordinated response to the accrediting agency, to look at a timeline and plan for a strategy session to look at the university's governance structure and to hire a consultant with expertise in accreditation and a mutual facilitator."

On November 7 the Board will hold a full day strategy workshop, with discussion about roles and responsibilities led by an external facilitator

Standard 2.A.2

In a multi-unit governance system, the division of authority and responsibility between the system and the institution is clearly delineated. System policies, regulations, and procedures concerning the institution are clearly defined and equitably administered.

The following elements, outlined in an October 21 letter from Board Chair John Davies to theora1e3ni (r).6(o)