

Year Seven Peer-Evaluation Report
University of Alaska Southeast
Juneau, Alaska
April 23-26, 2019

A confidential report of findings prepared for the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities

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I. Evaluators

Nathan Lindsay, Evaluation Committee Chair
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
University of Montana
Missoula, MT

Ron Larsen
Vice Provost
Montana State University
Bozeman, MT

Sierra Dawson
Associate Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
University of Oregon
Eugene, OR

Paula Gubrud-Howe
Special Assistant to the Dean & Associate Professor, School of Nursing
Oregon Health and Science University
Portland, OR

Tia Brown
Director of Operations
Montana State University
Bozeman, MT

Lindsey Brown
Registrar
University of Idaho
Moscow, ID

Eric Hawley
Chief Information Officer
Utah State University
Logan, UT

Craig Morris
Vice President, Finance and Administration (Retired)
Southern Oregon University
Medford, OR

Mac Powell, Evaluation Committee Liaison
Senior Fellow
Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
Redmond, WA

II. Introduction

The University of Alaska Southeast (UAS) is a regional university with campuses in Juneau, Ketchikan, and Sitka. UAS has an incredible focus on student learning and success that is tangible throughout the university. UAS also espouses the mantra of “three campuses—one university,” and the evaluation committee observed extensive evidence that these desired goals are being met during its visit from April 23-26, 2019.

This report addresses NWCCU’s five standards, along with responses to student achievement data and the formal recommendation given in the previous review. In the report below, Compliments, Concerns, Commendations, and Recommendations are embedded in the report in relevant sections. The official Commendations and Recommendations are then outlined at the end of the report.

III. Response to Student Achievement Data

The evaluation committee reviewed the university’s graduation rates, enrollments, and cohort default rate on student loans. The IPEDS graduation rate was 24% in 2017, and has fluctuated between 11% and 26% in the last 10 years. There has been a general upward trend in graduation rates since 2012. The retention rate for full-time students was 70% in 2017, which is up from 44% in 2007.

For enrollments, the IPEDS undergraduate FTE reported in 2017 was 1,359 students, and the total enrollment was 2,342 students. Enrollments at UAS have been decreasing since 2010, when the undergraduate FTE was 1,954 and the total undergraduate enrollment was 3,458. The most recent transfer-out rate was 29%. The default rate for UAS students was 9.2% in 2014. In the last ten years, this rate has been as low as 3.4%, and as high as 11.8%.

In order to provide additional context on these figures, UAS shared perspectives on the following four questions:

1. What are the key challenges of the institution related to the institution’s graduation rate and other data provided?

UAS provides workforce development and advanced educational programs ranging from certificates to master’s degrees at three campuses located in a geographically remote area of Southeast Alaska. These campuses are located in Juneau, Sitka, and Ketchikan, which are accessible only by water or air. UAS is a regional institution serving a wide range of students, including those interested in simply taking one course for professional advancement as well as those interested in obtaining a bachelor’s or master’s degree. While there are over 2,000 students attending UAS, less than 200 of these are first-time, full-time degree-seeking undergraduates. Of incoming students, on average only 13% of the newly enrolled students are first-time, full-time degree-seeking students. This is a challenge when discussing UAS’ graduation rates as reported externally, as these students make up such a small portion of the total UAS population. This is also a challenge when

summarizing data on retention rates, specifically for first-time part-time students, who account for about 55 incoming students per year. Additionally, while 668 degrees and awards were completed in 2018, only 17% (115) of these were completed by first-time full-time freshmen, further reinforcing the fact that UAS serves a majority of non-traditional students who are not fully captured in the IPEDs data.

UAS' broad mission and diverse student population stems to a significant degree from the fact that Alaska does not have a separate community college system. In addition to the baccalaureate and graduate programs offered, the university is an open admissions institution that also provides developmental education for students not yet fully prepared for college success. Some students may choose to complete general education requirements at UAS and transfer to another institution (either moving to a new location or participating in an online program). As can be seen from the data provided, currently 29% of students transfer out each year (note: 2012 data for transfer-out students were not reported to IPEDS). In this context, a student who does not graduate from UAS but is able to successfully transfer to a bachelor's degree program at another institution is considered a success. From a data perspective, we face a challenge in accurately capturing the 'success' of that student as they transition to their new institution.

In recent years UAS has seen enrollment declines, not unlike those elsewhere in Alaska. Part of the explanation for this decline is a corresponding statewide decline in the number of high school enrollees and graduates. Additionally, Alaska's population is aging. These trends are even more pronounced in Southeast Alaska. Moreover, the state is facing serious economic difficulties, resulting in significant reductions in state general fund support for UA. For example, UAS has seen a 19 percent reduction in its state general fund allocation between FY15 and FY18. University leaders have worked to minimize the impact of these cuts on academic and workforce programs on faculty, staff and students, based on the UAS mission. Tuition has been increased in recent years, and a greater emphasis is being placed on marketing and retention, leveraging external resources, and on philanthropic giving. Still, the State's uncertain budget situation is having a significant impact on the University's overall programs and services.

2. What is the institution doing to improve graduation rates?

Since the last site visit in 2009, UAS has worked systematically to improve marketing and recruitment as well as graduation and retention rates. The Chancellor established a Strategic Enrollment Task Force that has committees focusing both on recruitment and on retention and completion. Significant improvements have been made in gathering and analyzing data relevant to these topics. The Task Force has finalized a new Strategic Enrollment Plan and approved recruitment and retention plans. Each of these had identified goals, targets, strategies and metrics. Among the array of improvements is mandatory advising for all students. Other student success initiatives include the Alaska Leadership Initiative (ALI), the Chancellor's Award for Housing, Come Home Alaska, Finish College Alaska, Stay-On-Track awards, Career and Technical Education Tuition Discounts, the Sitka Start Initiative, Tribal Scholars, creation of a Center for Learning

and Teaching (CELT) and a Writing Center, an expanded Learning Center, and initiation of the Education Advisory Board (EAB) Early Alert System.

Improvement of graduation rates is also under the purview of the Strategic Planning and Budgeting Advisory Committee (SPBAC), which was expanded following the 2009 self-study. The SPBAC provides overall advice to UAS leadership about implementation of the UAS Strategic and Assessment Plan, including mission, vision, and core themes. The group also has oversight for NWCCU accreditation compliance and report preparation. Among other recommendations made by the SPBAC was filling a new position of Director of Admissions, Recruitment, and Advising in 2017. SPBAC has also recommended a new position for a Director of Student Success. First-time freshmen are one of the six top priorities in UAS' recently published Strategic Enrollment Plan. There are strategies in place to increase the number of first-time freshmen entering UAS as well as to help them thrive. A Student Success Task Force has been in place for almost two years that focuses on areas to improve the student experience, including mandatory advising, academics, housing, and new student orientation (both for campus-based students and those online).

One significant improvement at UAS has been the implementation of an expanded early alert system using EAB software to improve identification of students who may be at risk academically, emotionally, and socially. This tool allows advisors and student support staff to connect students with the right resources quickly. With this new system, UAS has implemented automated notices to faculty and staff when students withdraw from a class so that interventions can be put into place when appropriate. The Provost is also now working with Faculty Senate at the request of the Student Success Task Force to implement midterm grade reports. A pilot of this project was completed in spring 2019 and data are forthcoming.

Other strategies include expanding a first-year required seminar course, increasing high-impact learning opportunities such as internships and practicum experiences, and enhancing faculty and staff professional development to help them assist students who may be struggling. UAS has also significantly expanded its resources for ensuring safety on campus, with a special emphasis on Title IX (sexual and gender-based discrimination). A focus on improving the data tracked to understand the UAS student population in a more meaningful way is also underway through the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.

3. What initiatives appear to be effective in improving graduation rates?

Faculty and staff employment of the new EAB system, which has been in place since June 2018, shows promise in increasing retention and graduation rates of students. There was a 40% increase in total alerts/cases reported in fall 2018 through EAB in comparison to fall 2017. This was seen as a success as fewer at-risk students are being overlooked.

Efforts are also being made to increase financial aid and scholarship resources for students. One important example is the *Preparing Indigenous Teachers and Administrators for Alaska Schools* (PITAAS) program, which is unique to UAS. It

provides scholarships to Alaska Native students pursuing a degree in K-12 education. This program has received federal funding through the U.S. Department of Education from inception to 2018. As of fall 2018, this program has provided scholarships to 136 Alaska Native students who have completed 181 degrees and professional education certificates since its inception in 2000. A new grant proposal in partnership with Alaska Native organization Sealaska Heritage Institute received funding in fall 2018.

UAS is also working closely with local school districts to improve college readiness—specifically, the number of high school graduates requiring developmental math or English upon entering college. Recent collaboration with the Juneau School District led to a 30 percent reduction of students needing such developmental classes. The fact that these students are better prepared means that they can complete in a timelier manner and avoid the costs of developmental courses.

4. What might accreditors do to assist institutions to improve graduation rates?

First, the diverse nature of the UAS student population creates unique challenges. Only 13 percent of UAS incoming students are captured in IPEDS data focusing on first-time, full-time freshmen. Non-traditional students are the norm at UAS. With this in mind, it would be helpful for accreditors to continue to make webinars available to universities that describe strategies other institutions utilize to improve student success and track progress. It would be beneficial for university leaders to engage with peers in workshops or conferences to share effective efforts to improve student experiences and graduation rates.

Similarly, it would be beneficial to have workshops that focus on the needs and experiences of non-traditional students, and efforts of institutions to measure their engagement and success. Often, these students have goals to complete only a few courses at a time because they are working adults with family responsibilities. Many times, these students are categorized as unsuccessful because they do not complete a degree in the conventional 150 percent timeframe. They may take as long as 8 to 10 years to graduate given family and work demands. Assisting institutions with the challenges of accurately measuring and reporting the success of these students would be helpful.

IV. Assessment of Self-Evaluation Report and Support Materials

The UAS self-study report was skillfully and cogently written, with a consistent voice throughout the 197 page document. The Provost provided strong leadership in organizing many individuals and teams to write and review different sections of the report. The report contained a thorough preface that outlined institutional changes since the last report. Tables and figures throughout the report were effective and visually pleasing.

For additional support materials, the self-study included four appendices: the Basic Institutional Form, a list of institutional acronyms used with the self-evaluation, the UAS Leadership Organizational Chart, and a collection of UAS leadership curriculum vitae.

The institution also provided access to printed schedule of courses and the University Catalogue.

The evaluation committee was pleased that virtually all of the links in the report were active. In addition, UAS was very responsive to all requests for more information and documentation. The participation in all aspects of the site visit was superb.

Commendation: The evaluation committee commends the university for its warm and gracious hosting, as well as its robust participation in the accreditation process. Faculty, staff, and student forums were all standing-room only events in which many constituents shared their dedication to and appreciation for the university.

V. Topics Addressed as Addenda to the Self-Study

UAS received one third-party letter in relation to its site visit. The letter was from a grateful parent of a current marine biology student, and the parent advocated strongly for UAS' continued accreditation based on its outstanding student support and outreach.

UAS also received one recommendation in the 2014 Year Three Report, which was to be addressed in the Year Seven self-study:

Recommendation 1: The evaluators recommend the UAS focus on data points and data analysis. Some indicators for the core theme objectives need to be more specific, and the assessment data-gathering and assessment procedures need to be more specifically delineated (Standards 1.A.2 and 2.C.5)

The evaluation committee found that this recommendation has been met through many institutional efforts. The Office of Institutional Effectiveness was reorganized in 2015, and an outstanding director was hired this past year who is significantly enhancing data gathering and analysis at UAS. The Strategic Planning and Budget Advisory Committee has also strengthened the use of data on campus.

Academic program reviews have been conducted for all units since 2014, and will be continually reviewed on a five-year cycle. All programs also have assessment plans that address these four areas: how the data are collected for the student learning outcomes, the data actually collected for the prior year, evaluation of the data, and plans for improving student learning outcomes.

VI. Eligibility Requirements

The University of Alaska Southeast appropriately addressed the twenty-four Eligibility Requirements (ER's). Many elements related to the ER's are addressed in other sections of the report. However, a few highlights are noted below:

In the Administration section, the self-study noted the recent hire of the executive dean of the newly formed Alaska College of Education, which is taking a larger role in coordinating teacher education efforts across the state. This was communicated appropriately to NWCCU, in line with the ER on Disclosure. For the ER on Faculty, the student faculty ratio of 10.2:1 was notable, as it is lower than ratios at many public state universities. This favorable ratio for students contributes to the high sense of student support on the campuses.

In relation to Public Information, UAS has worked diligently to put institutional resources and information on its websites. UAS is also meeting all financial requirements. The Financial Resources ER indicated that UAS has had financial reserves of at least 8.5% for the last three years.

VII. Mission, Core Themes, and Expectations

Standard 1.A Mission

The UAS mission statement since 2011 reads as follows: “Student learning enhanced by faculty scholarship, undergraduate research and creative activities, community engagement, and the cultures and environment of Southeast Alaska.” The university’s Strategic and Assessment Plan was also developed in 2011, and then slightly revised in 2018. The mission statement and plan have been clearly posted and distributed throughout the university.

The Strategic Planning and Budget Advisory Committee has reviewed and updated the institution’s indicators of mission fulfillment that are connected with the objectives of each core theme. UAS core themes are also aligned with the Board of Regents’ Goals and Measures, which are as follows: increase degree attainment, provide Alaska’s skilled workforce, grow our world class research, contribute to Alaska’s economic development, and operate more cost effectively.

Standard 1.B Core Themes

UAS identifies four core themes to support the mission of the institution: Student Success, Teaching and Learning, Community Engagement, and Research and Creative Expression. Core theme indicators include outcomes, objectives, and goals that guide planning and assessment efforts. The self-study outlines compelling rationales for why the indicators were chosen. Careful alignment of mission, core themes, resource allocation, and assessment is evident. The basic core theme framework has been in effect for seven-years. UAS’ seven-year self-evaluation report provides evidence as to the effectiveness and stability of core theme efforts and their use to leverage opportunities for improvement and growth at the university.

During the accreditation team’s visit, faculty and staff spoke approvingly of UAS’ mission and its manifestation in the institution’s core themes. It is also widely recognized

by the campus community that the core themes form the basis for all work performed in their respective departments, colleges and schools.

Compliment: UAS's visual depiction of its core themes identified within the mission statement is an effective and articulate means of conveying the importance of the core themes to the work and activities of the institution. Campus awareness of the core themes is exceptional, with many faculty and staff able to recite them from memory.

VIII. Resources and Capacity

Standard 2.A Governance

Governance (Standards 2.A.1-8): The Constitution of the State of Alaska established the University of Alaska as the state university. The governance structures for UAS are clear and well understood across the relevant constituents, and the division of authority is organized effectively. Faculty, staff, and students have avenues to share their perspectives through Faculty Senate, Staff Council, and the United Students of the University of Alaska Southeast. Conversations with leaders from each of these groups confirmed that shared governance is valued on campus.

The Board of Regents (BOR) provides appropriate guidance and leadership for the institution. The BOR only acts as a whole, and BOR policies are outlined on its website. As noted earlier, the Board approved revisions to the UAS mission statement in 2011. The institution closely monitors its compliance with NWCCU standards.

Leadership and Management (Standards 2.A.9-11): UAS has a strong leadership team in place. Chancellor Caulfield, Provost Carey, and Vice Chancellor Ciri are highly regarded by UA system leadership, faculty and staff on campus, as well as by community members. Strong leadership is also provided by the campus directors at Ketchikan and Sitka, as well as the other deans on the Juneau campus. Effective collaboration among broader leadership teams has been achieved through the Executive Cabinet, the Chancellor's Cabinet, Provost's Councils, the Strategic Planning and Budget Advisory Committee, Strategic Enrollment Taskforce, the Student Success Committee, and several other bodies.

UAS is in the process of hiring a Vice Chancellor of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs, as well as staff in the Financial Aid area. In several areas, the level of staff needed to adequately support students deserved further attention.

Recommendation: The Evaluation Committee recommends that the University of Alaska Southeast stabilize its administrative team and structure, as well as employ a sufficient number of qualified personnel, in order to fulfill its mission and achieve its strategic priorities (2.A.9; 2.B.1).

Academic Policies (Standards 2.A.12-14): The UAS self-study report, including available links, shows evidence of sufficiency for this standard. UAS clearly states expectations in the Faculty Handbook, Adjunct Faculty Handbook, and Academic Catalog. The Faculty Handbook has appendices providing good detail on expectations relating to Teaching (Appendix B), Service (Appendix C), and Research and Creative Activities (Appendix D). The Egan Library has a well-defined policy manual that indicates how collections may be accessed. It is apparent that the library seeks to serve citizens of the state as well as UAS faculty and students.

The UAS provides a clearly articulated policy on transfer of credits in the Academic Catalog. The policy allows UAS to control quality by reserving the right to accept or reject any transfer credits. Options for course challenge and credits for military service (ACE recommendations) are described in the policy. Students transferring from other University of Alaska sites can check a database to see how courses from their institutions have transferred in the past. There is also a FAQ page for transfer students that addresses many common questions.

Students (Standards 2.A.15-17): Academic policies reflect current operating protocols, thoughtful review, and an appropriate level of specificity to guide UAS operations. Due to the size of the institution, many services and enforcement of policies are done through the main Juneau campus. Students shared that they were aware of policies and the resources available to them, and many of these policies are distributed to students through an optional online orientation. In addition, the Care Team is an active and deeply engaged group who process up to 160 cases per semester. They are often able to connect with faculty to assure student accommodations for disabilities before the official paperwork is complete.

As an open access institution, all applicants applying to two year programs are admitted. The Academic Catalog, Academic Regulations and Admissions webpage ensure that policies are widely accessible. The Juneau, Sitka and Ketchikan campus advisors meet regularly to ensure consistency across locations. Students must meet program admission criteria to be placed into a bachelor's degree program. The institution is reviewing this practice and contemplating open admission for their bachelor's degree programs also. Academic course placement is administered through the Accuplacer and ALEKS programs to ensure student success. Academic suspension policies are published in the catalog and interviews confirmed that they were applied equitably.

The United Students of the University of Alaska Southeast Constitution and Bylaws clearly articulate student leadership responsibilities, which are published on the Student Government webpage. On the Juneau campus, co-curricular activities include student activities and recreation, student health clinic, the student newspaper Whalesong, and the UAS Recreation Center.

Human Resources (Standards 2.A.18-20): Human resource policies are governed by the University of Alaska system with input from the various UA campus HR directors. The HR policies are enforced systematically by the UAS HR office.

UAS has procedures in place for communicating expectations associated with employment. Each employee is apprised in writing of any changes in job duties and expectations. A new Page Up HR system provides information on position descriptions, employee recruitment, and performance evaluations. Staff shared their appreciation for this new system and the opportunities it provided. Evidence supported that compliance with employee reviews has increased since the implementation of PageUp.

Human resources records are stored in a secure electronic document storage system (OnBase) that is shared with various other offices. Security protocols control access to appropriate records and information. Any paper files are stored in secure offices. UAS follows BOR policy for the release of HR records.

Institutional Integrity (Standards 2.A.21-26): The evaluation committee found that UAS met all of the standards relating to institutional integrity. This conclusion was reached and is supported by two review activities:

1. A careful comparison of UAS's states procedures and practices to the current NWCCU Institution Integrity standards. After concluding that the stated UAS standards were aligned with the relevant standards, a member of the review team personally tested each of the links on the university webpages that inform and support Institutional Integrity. Each of the sites was confirmed as being live, providing clear descriptions, opportunities for responses and ready access for Faculty, Staff and Students.
2. Confirmation that the standards are integrated into the operations of the university. Prior to the on-site visit the review team had an opportunity to examine UAS' contentions as to how the standards are utilized in the day-to-day operations of the university. Questions regarding the application of integrity policy and requests were part of several meetings with Administration, Faculty, Students and Staff during the site visit. Responses were consistently supportive of a strong awareness of the university integrity standards and enthusiastic compliance.

The evaluation committee was impressed at what it perceived as a value driven organizational culture in which the elements of integrity are deeply ingrained and embraced.

Academic Freedom (Standards 2.A.27-29): UAS meets the requirements for academic freedom. It follows BOR policy R04.04.01, which outlines that "Nothing contained in regents' policy or university regulation will be construed to limit or abridge any person's right to free speech or to infringe the academic freedom of any member of the university community." The institution also adheres to Board of Regents policy 10.07.010 that recognizes the importance of research, scholarship, and creative activity as central to the mission of the University of Alaska, and requires that the University "foster an environment supportive of conducting research, scholarship, and creative activity and

broadly disseminating its results in the tradition of academic freedom and its corresponding responsibilities.”

The University follows BOR policies prohibiting discrimination, with BOR policy 04.02.020 specifically addressing how this relates to freedom of expression. Similarly, UAS follows the Board of Regents policy 10.07.010 relating to intellectual property.

Finance (Standard 2.A.30): The UAS has clearly defined governing policies as evidenced by policies and laws established by the BOR, the UA system, and the state of Alaska.

Standard 2.B Human Resources

UAS enjoys a healthy faculty to student ratio, but the number of staff has been significantly reduced in the past few years. Many staff expressed frustration and the inability to effectively perform their duties due to the lack of appropriate staffing. As noted previously, one area of concern is having an adequate number of staff to fulfill the institution’s recruiting, financial aid, and student support needs.

Evidence attests to the use of criteria, qualifications, and processes for filling new or vacant positions being applied equitably across position types, and that accurate job descriptions represent responsibilities associated with respective positions. As duties are adjusted, job descriptions are updated to accurately reflect the changes.

Human resources recently went through a shift in performance evaluations systems. Due to this change, evaluations were not completed in a timely manner. Staff reflected that some areas were able to complete evaluations by the deadline, whereas others were unable to do so. However, all employees indicated that there has been a positive improvement in this area.

Due to budget constraints, professional development for staff has been significantly reduced. Interviews indicated that staff did not feel that they had adequate training or an on-boarding process to adequately do their jobs. In many cases, this is due to the high staff turnover and need for better succession planning.

Concern: Although the institution has a large focus upon the Native Alaskan student population, faculty and staff are not required to participate in any culturally sensitive training to prepare them to best serve this population.

In the absence of a training plan, many staff trained each other on essential duties. Faculty did not express concerns regarding professional development, as they have the opportunity to apply for funds as needed.

Evidence presented in the self-study regarding whether the college employs appropriately qualified and sufficient number of faculty to reach educational objectives was confirmed in interviews with faculty and with students. Faculty expressed that they enjoy a very low student ratio and appreciate the opportunity to know their students on

a personal basis. In support of the mission of the institution, the majority of faculty load is focused on teaching. Many faculty expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to get to know their students and serve at a very student-focused institution.

Information provided in the self-study, BOR policy, union collective bargaining agreements, and faculty handbooks indicates the faculty evaluation process involves several components, including peer observation, review, and student evaluations. College leadership was satisfied with the current process.

Standard 2.C Education Resources

Undergraduate Programs (Standards 2.C.1-11): UAS is an institution offering certificates, undergraduate and graduate degrees in a wide range of programs and across three campuses. Processes and procedures for approving degree programs are published in the Full-Time Faculty Handbook. UAS certificate and degree programs are fully described in the Academic Catalog. Both documents are accessible on the UAS website. Academic administrators, faculty and academic support staff consistently report utilizing sanctioned process and procedures described in the manuals for establishing and revising rigorous course, program and degree requirements. All programs and courses are developed and implemented using the UAS Faculty Senate curriculum process clearly described in the Full-Time Faculty Handbook.

Program descriptions and program student outcomes are fully described in the Academic Catalog which is available online. Syllabi are published on Blackboard and available through UAS Online. Each syllabus provides a course description and student learning outcomes for every course offered at the university. Faculty and students reported course SLO's are also published on all course syllabi and a spot check of syllabi confirms this practice. The evaluation committee was impressed with the significant progress the university has made in establishing and publishing student learning outcomes (SLOs) for every course, and noted the SLO's are stated using a consistent structure and format across courses, programs and campuses.

The evaluation committee compliments the Provost's Office for providing resources, supporting faculty development and facilitating faculty led efforts to develop the tools, process and infrastructure needed to assess the General Education Requirements. The Provost's Office has also supported the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, which involves significant investment made to develop and provide resources faculty can use to design program and course SLO's. The majority of faculty appear to be adapting the requirements for all phases of the program development, course design and assessment practices. The Provost's Office has initiated these resources and provides comprehensive support to assure quality education. (2.C.1-5)

Librarians in the William A. Egan Library on the Juneau campus provide regional library and information resources for UAS. The UAS Library Dean provides overall direction for UAS library services including the Juneau campus Learning/Testing Center, Writing Center, and the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching. The Outreach Services

Librarian provides resources and services to students, faculty, and staff on the Sitka Campus and to e-Learners in general. This includes library website development, database management, Libguides, an Open House for e-Learners, e-Learner Orientation, information literacy instruction, and Interlibrary Loan and book delivery. The Ketchikan Campus Library primarily serves Ketchikan students, faculty, and community members. The self-study and interviews confirm that the Egan Library and Ketchikan Campus Library provide access to library and information resources sufficient to support the UAS mission, core themes, programs, and services, wherever offered and however delivered, including access for distance students. (2.C.6)

The policy for granting credit for prior learning is clearly described in the Credit for Prior Learning (CPL) policy. The policy is documented in the Faculty Handbook and the Academic Catalog which are easily accessed from the University's website. The UAS CPL complies with NWCCU standards. The Academic Catalog details the policies and procedures used to govern transfer credits. UAOnline provides step-by-step instructions that allow students to view transfer equivalency report. Students can use DegreeWorks to determine how transferred coursework has been applied toward degree requirements. (2.C.7-8)

The university has devoted significant time to establish the Provost's Assessment Committee for General Education Learning Outcomes (PAC GELO). PAC GELO is charged with developing assessment tools (rubrics) and a process to assess the extent to which UAS undergraduate students can demonstrate academic knowledge and skills through the completion of UAS prescribed General Education Requirements (GER) coursework. General education courses are reviewed and revised as needed to assure at least one of the GER are addressed in each general education course. The comprehensive work done to develop metrics and assessment to measure GER has created the foundation for developing authentic learning assessments for courses and programs. UAS has developed program Student Learning Outcomes for all certificate, associate and baccalaureate programs. Required credit hours for each degree are documented. Course and program outcomes are assessed annually. (2.C.9-11)

Graduate Programs (Standards 2.C.12-15): There are a limited number of graduate programs available at UAS, but those provided are closely aligned with the institution's mission. These programs include the Master of Public Administration, the Master of Arts in Teaching, and the Master of Education.

There are also a series of graduate certificates available related to Education. Graduate admissions requirements described in the UAS Academic Catalog 2018-19 indicate that appropriate requirements should be met prior to admission to a graduate program. The UAS graduate programs in Education require either practica or student teaching experiences. These courses fit within the guidelines of this standard. The graduate programs at UAS fit predominantly within the "professional practice" category, and are directed at developing the knowledge and professional skills needed for professional practice.

Continuing Education and Non-Credit Programs (Standards 2.C.16-19): UAS is very connected to the needs of the community, and therefore offers many continuing education programs related to community interest and high demand jobs. The US Coast Guard representative mentioned they rely on UAS to provide lifelong learning opportunities for their personnel and their families. The programs on maritime trainings (in Ketchikan), water/wastewater operator training (in Sitka) and mine training (in Juneau) are examples of local needs being met by UAS. The Tlingit language offerings have become an important opportunity for Alaskan Natives and other local constituents. (2.C.16)

All continuing education courses for academic credit go through the appropriate established procedures. Non-credit bearing and professional development courses are developed by faculty with the appropriate credentials for the subject matter. The Continuing Education Units provided by UAS are defined in the Academic Catalog and meet this standard regarding the norms, consistency and mission. UAS' unique position to serve such a large geographical and rural area makes the CEU's offered an important part of the community's life-long learning cycle. (2.C.17-18)

UAS has made enrollment in non-credit courses easier and more user-friendly through the use of the Lumens online system. This system also ensures maintenance of records regarding number and nature of courses offered. (2.C.19)

Standard 2.D Student Support Resources

While support service resources are limited, UAS offers educational programs and services in support of student educational goals and within the financial means available to the institution. The Dean of Students area publishes comprehensive annual reports and assesses the student life programs.

Due to the location of UAS, the campus has unique security concerns and also has to protect students against wild animals. Students are given instructions on avoiding wildlife and signs are posted within buildings on how to keep animals out of the buildings. All three campuses have a low amount of reported crime and meet Clery crime reporting requirements. The campuses rely upon their local law enforcement for campus security assistance. Students reported feeling safe on campus.

UAS prides itself in being an open access institution that meets the needs of the community. The institution openly admits students to certificate and associate programs, but requires SAT/ACT test scores for baccalaureate degree programs. There has been recent discussion on whether the standardized testing is necessary and may provide a barrier for some students. The institution may move to a test optional model in the future to best serve their student population.

The orientation process varies from campus to campus. However, in an effort to standardize knowledge, UAS created an online orientation that enables students from all campuses to have a consistent initial knowledge of UAS policy/procedure information. In addition, students on the Juneau and Ketchikan campuses are invited to attend on-campus

orientations. These orientations provide campus specific information and build relationships for students.

A review of the college catalog, website and student handbook confirmed that UAS provides appropriate information to students in alignment with NWCCU standards. All materials reviewed showed accurate information regarding academic programs and the unique information specific to each campus. For programs that were eliminated, the institution provided documentation of previous teach out plans for students. The academic advisors provided examples of how they have worked with students to complete their remaining requirements in this situation.

FERPA policies and procedures are in place at UAS. UAS utilizes OnBase for secure student records storage. This electronic document system is shared by the University of Alaska system and multiple offices. However, appropriate access to student files is controlled by security roles and authorized after appropriate FERPA training.

Interviews with financial aid staff indicate that they are struggling due to staffing changes. The institution's loan default rates are within requirements. They are able to meet compliance minimums, but are not able to do the outreach and provide the additional support to students that they would like. As an open access institution with a high population of first-generation students and aversion to student debt, UAS may wish to expand its financial literacy and outreach.

Academic advising is multi-faceted at UAS. Students below 30 credits and associate degree seeking students have mandatory advising. Bachelor degree seeking students transition to faculty advisors after they reach the designated threshold. Information gathered indicates a strong academic advising team that is supplemented with Title III grant funding. This allows for manageable case loads and additional outreach. Title III advisors on the Sitka and Ketchikan campuses assist students with financial aid, tutoring, and career exploration. To provide consistency and accuracy across campuses, there are monthly advising meetings and bi-annual regional advising retreats.

Although training and succession planning can vary by position, the advising team assists each other and makes meaningful efforts to support student success. An example of this is the implementation of the EAB Early Alert system. The introduction of the EAB Early Alert was a smooth transition as UAS previously had a homegrown early alert product. Both faculty and advisors expressed that this was part of their culture of student success and supporting their students. Students expressed their appreciation to their advisors and faculty for their support and caring demeanor toward students.

UAS provides a variety of co-curricular activities consistent with the institution's mission and core themes. Student clubs are driven by student interest and vary between cultural, academic, and student interest. Students were appreciative of all the opportunities that UAS provided to them, from research to outdoor exploration.

Student support auxiliary services are commensurate with the institution's size,

geography, and students served. The bookstore is an outsourced third party that allows students to order online and have books delivered. The Juneau campus has a newer residence hall and food service. The Juneau recreation facility is a community partnership with the Alaska National Guard that allows both entities to benefit from expanded services. The Sitka and Ketchikan campuses do not have auxiliary services. However, it should be noted that staff in Sitka and Ketchikan go to great lengths to provide lab materials to their distance students. They frequently prepare lab kits and ship them to students so they may perform labs “on their kitchen tables.” Some courses allow students to utilize their own specimens. This is another example of how the institution serves students of the region who are place bound, and often do so in collaborative work among the three campuses.

Commendation: The evaluation committee commends UAS for its success at integrating three campus locations into one university with shared vision and values. The level of collaboration and consistent support among the three campuses is remarkable.

UAS does not offer intercollegiate athletics due to the cost prohibitive travel requirements. However, as an open access institution, all admission policies are equitably applied to all students.

UAS has a significant distance education program, and distance education students authenticate through a secure portal with individualized credentials. Information shared indicates that 50% of students take an online course and many are in online programs. Students expressed sincere gratitude for this opportunity to study in their villages and home towns. This is a benefit to both the students and the communities they serve. The institution has found innovative ways to serve their distance population and is meeting the needs of their regional community.

Commendation: The evaluation team commends UAS for optimizing distance education opportunities across a vast geographical area. Students have access to strong programs of study and student services that support their educational goals. Additionally, students on all UAS campuses are provided with meaningful experiential learning opportunities in a variety of community-based settings.

Standard 2.E Library and Information Resources

Faced with challenging staff reductions and budget, UAS has worked to balance library and information resources through strong collegial communication and planning efforts. UAS library staff and administration in both Juneau and Ketchikan indicated regular communication with faculty (made possible, in part, by small faculty sizes and excellent relationships) to receive feedback, publish and communicate change options, and query impacts on changes, in addition to course survey comments from students regarding library and information resources.

Faculty input is obtained informally through personal interaction and more formally through direct contact by faculty in liaison areas “once or twice a year,” including new faculty specific visits and committee engagement (faculty senate, curriculum committee), and instruction efforts.

Outcomes were evidenced by the well-attended faculty group convened during the evaluation visit which included an unsolicited endorsement by a faculty member specifically indicating that the “support they have been given in creating collections is fantastic.” Faculty were also queried during the meeting to identify if they felt the library and information resources were responsive to their concerns and needs, and nearly all hands were raised (some who did not raise hands were library faculty who respectfully withheld their vote). Additional comments, all in support of the library, were made at that time.

Egan and Ketchikan maintain a strong Libguide site communicating feedback-driven actions and potential actions to reduce costs with a shrinking library budget. Conversations with Ketchikan library leadership and staff by phone indicated similar efforts and positive results. The Ketchikan library contacts Juneau staff and leadership largely “as-needed” and indicates satisfaction with support and response.

Student course survey comments, which have been largely positive, are compiled and manually reviewed for opportunities to make change and to gauge perception in general. Collection of course feedback from students regarding library services is evident, though the website only publishes raw comment data with limited present analysis. (2.E.1-2)

Compliment: The evaluation committee library faculty and staff across UAS campuses for strong communication and relationships with constituents in obtaining input and creating and adjusting collections and services.

UAS shows evidence of regular course-related literacy instruction sessions in addition to two specific one-credit courses dedicated to information literacy and skills, as well as open houses both in person and online (essential for distance efforts). Lib guides are also published in specific areas and basic statistics are tracked. Input is provided from training sessions that feeds into standards 2.E.1 and 2.E.2.

UAS tracks many usage-based statistics as well as more qualitative comment-based data. Some data gathering efforts are mature and are adequately informing decision making, as evidenced by student and faculty input and related actions that drive generally positive perceptions of library efforts. Some evaluative programs, however, are in their infancy. As one example, UAS made efforts to track student use of library resources in courses with a research component, but have piloted only one course to date (COMM 111). Library staff are working to identify and expand to other courses that have a research component and have set goals to increase student use of information resources. (2.E.3-4)

Standard 2.F Financial Resources

Financial Planning: UAS is one of three public universities in the state of Alaska, all governed by the Board for Regents (BOR). The BOR is comprised of 11 governor appointed members. The BOR provides oversight of the budget and capital processes and associated legislative funding. UAS is also governed by the University of Alaska (UA) system President and the President's Cabinet which has responsibilities to supervise, coordinate, manage and regulate UAS as provided by the BOR and state law.

A large portion of funding for UAS comes from appropriations provided by the State of Alaska. Appropriations are determined by the legislative branch of state government and allocated by the BOR. In addition to state tax dollars, another large funding source for UAS is tuition and fee revenue collected from students attending the university. UAS is allowed to fully retain tuition and fee revenue generated from student enrollment. Tuition rates are determined by the UA. (2.F.1)

The campus budget process is primarily driven by the system and state budget process. The UAS Budget Office leads the development of the annual operating budget each year. The Strategic Budgeting and Planning Advisory Committee (SPBAC) plays a key role in ensuring an open and inclusive process. The UA Office of Strategy, Planning and Budget provides BOR approved planning assumptions. Department budgets are monitored by the Budget Office through the monthly management reporting process. (2.F.1-3)

Financial Management: The chancellor and the vice chancellor of administrative services regularly report the financial performance of the university to the UA President, who then presents consolidated financial reports to the BOR. The UAS has adapted well over the last several years to the ongoing reductions in state funding, as well as the recent decline in enrollment. Throughout that period, the institution has been able to maintain an operating fund balance that meets or exceeds the standard set by the BOR. (2.F.1-2)

Business functions, as well as budget and planning activities are centralized, governed by policy, and under the authority of the vice chancellor of administrative services who reports directly to the chancellor. These areas are adequately staffed by a professional, experienced, and knowledgeable staff. (2.F.3)

UAS debt is limited, by BOR policy, to 5% of unrestricted revenues. Current UAS debt service falls well below that standard. The university's capital budget and long-range capital plans are guided by the UAS Campus Master Plan. The institution complies with all aspects of financial management, reporting and audit requirements as evidenced by audited financial statements, independent auditor's reports, and internal audit reports.

The financial relationship with UAS auxiliaries (Housing, Dining, Recreation Center, and virtual bookstores at the Juneau, Ketchikan, and Sitka campuses) is well defined. Indirect costs of operation are recovered by the university by a charge of 5% of direct expenditures. The fund balances are closely monitored and there have been no subsidies in recent years. (2.F.4-7)

Fundraising and Development: All gifts, except those prohibited by donors, are accepted, held, and managed by the University of Alaska Foundation (UAF). The UAF, formed in 1974, is incorporated separately as a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.

The UAF is governed by a board of directors. The directors have adopted policies and bylaws that guide their decisions. Local fundraising activities are determined by the chancellor and managed by the director of development and alumni relations. All UAF investment activities are governed by policy and managed by an investment committee. All fund raising activities are governed by policy, comply with government requirements, and are conducted in a professional and ethical manner as evidenced by audited financial statements and independent auditor's report. (2.F.8)

Standard 2.G Physical and Technological Infrastructure

Instructional and Support Facilities: The University of Alaska Southeast main campus is situated in Juneau, Alaska. Additional campuses are located in Ketchikan and Sitka. A review of space utilization data demonstrates that UA has adequate classroom and class lab facilities.

The deferred maintenance backlog is inventoried by building and prioritized. The state provides deferred maintenance funding to UAS every year. The campus makes good efforts to work with the state to request deferred maintenance project funding. It also redirects institutional funds, when necessary, to fund minor deferred maintenance improvements.

In 2015, UAS completed a \$12M new freshman residence hall (Pugh Hall), and is about to break ground on a new environmental science facility, Auke Bay Station which will replace the current Natural Research Lab. The SVC facilities appear sufficient to support the mission, goals, and core themes of the university. The facilities management department has been able to maintain the buildings, grounds, and support infrastructure in a manner more than adequate to meet the needs of the university. (2.G.1)

Physical Resource Planning: UAS updated their Facilities Master Plan in 2012. The plan is designed to guide development of the university's facilities based on identified needs. The Master Plan Implementation Committee (MPIC) was established in 2015 to promote campus participation, advice, revision, communication, and transparency.

New capital projects are recommended by the MPIC and approved by the Chancellor's Cabinet. New projects requests are submitted to the UA/BOR/legislature for funding. Use, disposal, and storage of hazardous and toxic materials are appropriately governed by policy and procedures. (2.G.2-3)

Technological Infrastructure: The ITS infrastructure is sufficient to support the mission, goals, and core themes of the university. UAS shares both the administrative system (Ellucian Banner) and the Learning Management System (Blackboard) with the University of Alaska system to meet the needs of the campus. UAS has invested in their

core network infrastructure in the areas of voice, data networks, and enterprise servers. Faculty, staff, and students are supported by the IT Help Desk and the Center for Excellence and Teaching & Learning. User feedback and input is received through the Regional Teaching, Learning and Technology Roundtable, the Campus Teaching, Learning and Technology Roundtable, student surveys, and external review. (2.G.5-7)

Equipment for faculty and staff use appears to be adequate. Formal replacement cycle planning for desktops, laptops, and printers is not evident. However, the student technology fees fund regular replacement of classroom and lab computers, projectors, and printers, on an as needed basis. In 2013, UAS phased out its centrally managed replacement program for student-use computers. Part of this included the elimination of computer labs in favor of virtual computers available in the library and learning centers and mobile virtual computers delivered to classrooms as needed. UAS relies on expanded use of a virtual desktop strategy, rolled out in FY18 to avoid desktop replacement. A multi-year replacement plan exists for servers and core network infrastructure. (2.G.8)

Compliment: The Evaluation Team compliments the UAS for its beautiful campus, as well as the facilities staff for their outstanding, student-focused management of the UAS buildings and grounds.

IX. Planning and Implementation

Standard 3.A Institutional Planning

Institutional planning at UAS has involved a broad range of stakeholders at UAS during this review cycle. The Strategic and Assessment Planning Team, a group of 56 individuals, developed the UAS mission and core themes in 2010-2011. Since that time, UAS has aligned its planning with the UA-wide planning framework of “Shaping Alaska’s Future,” as well as the UA President’s “Strategic Pathways.” The shared governance groups have had abundant opportunities for engagement in the ongoing planning initiatives.

As guided by the Strategic Planning and Budget Advisory Committee (SPBAC), UAS is able to engage in an iterative planning process that is informed by timely data. SPBAC has a clear outline of seven responsibilities, and the effectiveness of the committee has continued to increase. Decisions about resource allocation are made by the Chancellor’s Executive Cabinet, the Executive Council, and the Provost’s Council, and are coordinated with the University of Alaska system. UAS has an effective emergency management plan, which is overseen by the Incident Management Team (IMT). Emergency management is appropriately communicated among the three campuses.

Communications and discussions about planning are shared through the UAS-wide biannual Priorities Workshop, as well as the Chancellor’s convocation addresses each year. Planning efforts are also shared with campus advisory council and other community partners.

Core Theme Planning, Effectiveness, and Improvement

Standard 3B Core Planning: Introduction: UAS identified four core themes in the 2011-2017 Strategic and Assessment Plan: Student Success, Teaching and Learning, Community Engagement, and Research and Creative Expression. The core themes and metrics were reviewed and underwent slight revision in the 2013-2019 Strategic and Assessment Plan. These core themes are aligned and together encompass the UAS mission.

Due to a back log of accreditation reviews, the 7-year accreditation self-study process and site visit scheduled in 2017 was postponed per the request of NWCCU. After careful consideration, UAS determined it was best to continue to use the established four core themes for planning, assessment and improvement processes until the 7-year accreditation process was complete. Administration and faculty leaders consistently articulated a plan to review, revise and update the UAS Core Themes after the completion of the 7-Year accreditation process and approval by the NWCCU Board of Commissioners.

Core themes are reviewed annually at the Chancellor's Priorities meeting. Core themes are discussed, and annual priorities are identified. Additionally, annual program assessment and program reviews are completed every five years and facilitated by the Provost's Office in collaboration with the Faculty Senate. These practices are used in the planning process.

Core Theme 1: Student Success

Standard 3.B Core Theme Planning –UAS is in compliance with the standards for this core theme, as evidenced by the detailed goals and strategies outlined in the 2018 UAS Academic Priorities report and the Strategic Enrollment Plan AY 18-25. The evaluation committee commends UAS for its comprehensive planning for the Student Success core theme and finds the planning to be in alignment with UAS's strategic plan and stated mission.

Given the complexity of the key strategies and initiatives outlined in the above-mentioned enrollment plan, it is suggested that measurable, time-bound objectives be added to the current 2018-2019 UAS Annual Priorities Table in order to produce meaningful action in this area of student success.

Standard 4.A Assessment – The evaluation committee observed that effective data collection and assessment practices are occurring for this core theme. However, the evaluation committee has concerns regarding the indicators selected to measure student success and the methodology used to determine success of meeting the outlined objectives (e.g., generalization of results based solely on UAS reporting and compared to peer institutions).

While retention, graduation and diversity rates are familiar metrics for all higher education professionals, the evaluation committee encourages responsible administrators and staff to improve the methodology and validity of institutional metrics connected to student success. By providing end users with data information such as how and when the data were collected will allow team leads and team members to make judgments regarding its usefulness.

Evidence obtained through university documents, the self-study report, and interviews demonstrates a strong culture of conducting assessment in the area of student success. Faculty and staff associated with accomplishment of this core theme are actively engaged in service and assessment related to student success.

Commendation: The evaluation team commends UAS, and in particular the Student Success Committee, for its efforts and commitment to student retention and student success. The creation of the Strategic Enrollment Plan and identification of student barriers of access is enabling a more efficient and operational framework to measure student needs and achievement.

Standard 4.B Improvement – Of the eight indicators used to measure student success, half of the indicators report UAS has not achieved desired outcomes. Despite the data results, it is unequivocally apparent that UAS is making progress in addressing student success. This was evidenced by the countless testimonials given during the Student Forum, with an underlying theme of students’ recognition and appreciation of UAS’ dedication to their learning and achievement. After conducting the on-site visit, it is apparent some of these metrics do not accurately reflect the “good-works” of the institution regarding student success. The evaluation team offers the following two considerations to UAS and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness when defining new metrics to better analyze this core theme:

1. **Create Custom Metrics:** UAS is a unique institution in academic offerings (certificates to master’s programs) and open admission. The institution could develop institutional metrics specific to its distinctive student population. Additionally, UAS could disaggregate its student data in more ways. For example, UAS could report student retention rates and degree completions of certificates and all individual degree programs—essentially treating UAS as two distinct educational systems. Viewing segmented data may illuminate patterns not evident when such data are combined.
2. **Integrate Data:** A common goal that resonated in several interviews, particularly in regard to the Student Success Committee, is the ability to capture students’ intent and students’ definitions of educational success, as well as why students selected UAS in order to achieve their personal goals. By systematically incorporating assessment data from Core Themes 2, 3 and 4, improvement would be realized in the over-arching framework of capturing student intent and students’ personal definitions of success.

Core Theme 2: Teaching and Learning

Standard 3.B Core Theme Planning – Core Theme 2 focuses on providing “a broad range of programs and services resulting in student engagement and empowerment for academic excellence”. The self-study further describes this core theme with three overarching strategies: continually improve academic quality, enhance learning through technology, and improve assessment and accountability systems.

Four objectives are used to assess this core theme, each with a set of two to four indicators used to evaluate attainment of stated objectives. The four objectives used to assess Core Theme 2 are: Quality of Programs and Services, Academic Excellence, Quality of Faculty and Staff, and Effectiveness & Efficiency. The core theme is directly associated with “mission fulfillment of student learning, faculty scholarship, and expanding the knowledge of the cultures and environment of Southeast Alaska.”

The indicators for this core theme are appropriate and align with the identified objectives. Interviews conducted during the site visit confirm annual program reviews are completed and consider objectives related to Core Theme 2. Reviews are conducted regularly and results are used to prioritize activity needed to enhance Teaching and Learning across all campuses and programs. However, it does seem the indicators for Core Theme 2 do not overtly measure key aspects identified as mission fulfillment of student learning, faculty scholarship and knowledge of the cultures and environments of Southeast Alaska.

There also seems to be a lack of indicators that aim to assess program student learning outcomes. Interview responses and the self-study indicate program student learning outcomes are assessed, but the description of how that assessment influences planning was not clear. Additionally, the overarching strategies describe efforts to enhance learning through technology, offering new opportunities for faculty development, and continually updating library holdings and services. The indicators identified in the planning section do not address all of these overarching strategies.

Several new initiatives were described throughout the site visit by many stakeholders, and those initiatives address the stated strategies of this core theme. This suggests that assessments are completed and influence planning for Teaching and Learning. At the same time, there is opportunity to improve alignment of indicators used for planning in this core theme.

Concern: Identified indicators are not fully aligned with salient aspects of the Core Theme Two as described in the self-study. Specifically, there is not an objective related to assessing Program Student Learning Outcomes.

Standard 4.A Assessment – UAS systematically and regularly conducts assessment of this core theme using the 10 indicators outlined in the planning process. The self-study provides bar graphs and brief descriptions of each indicator and discussion of progress made toward improvement from 2013 to 2017 or 2018. There is one exception to this

practice, which is the Alumni Satisfaction Rating that was assessed once in 2014. This section suggests UAS is maintaining desired targets and all objectives are consistently fully met.

However, the report does not define the desired benchmark for each indicator. The strategies used to meet high levels of indicator achievement are minimally discussed. For example, UAS has made progress in hiring and retaining qualified faculty and staff representing diverse populations. The percentage of Alaska Native/American Indian faculty has increased from 5% to 6% between 2013 and 2017. Staff of color have increased from 18% to 25% between 2013 and 2017. The report suggests financial incentives and release time have contributed to this success, but minimally describe the efforts used for this success and does not indicate whether a target was met or not. Another example briefly described in the self-study indicates a decision to suspend the Honors Program, which was the result of the regular program reviews.

All indicators provide comparative results with the statewide Alaska system. UAS consistently meets or exceeds the statewide results for each indicator. The on-site visit included a demonstration of a new dashboard system that will aid in the tracking of indicator data used to assess objectives. This should help better define targets and progression toward each objective.

The information contained in this dashboard, the self-study, and the on-campus interviews present a convincing case that UAS is doing an excellent job in assessing the identified indicators used to measure this core theme. As mentioned previously, there is a need to review the indicators for Teaching and Learning so that the assessment strategy includes regular review and analysis of program Student Learning Outcomes. The Provost acknowledged that indicators currently used will be reviewed and revised to more fully align with mission fulfillment for this core theme.

Standard 4.B Improvement – There is evidence that UAS uses identified objective indicators for improvement. UAS consistently highlights its low student-to-faculty ratio as a strategy that promotes delivery of high-quality programs and services, academic excellence, and committed and quality faculty and staff. Examples of improvement initiatives and results based on the planning and assessment process include:

- Development of a new interdisciplinary program culminating in an Interdisciplinary Bachelors' degree.
- Becoming a leader in offering online and e-Learning programs using up-to-date digital technologies and educational best practices.
- Creating the digital fellow's program to engage faculty in best practices of e-learning/distance education.
- Creation for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT) which in collaboration with the Library provides professional development opportunities for faculty, and assist with course design and application of best practices for e-learning/distance courses.

Another indication of the extent of assessment-based improvement in academic programs was provided by students in the on-campus interviews. Many students provided anecdotal narratives describing faculty efforts to assist students with their learning goals. One student shared her experience of wanting to present her research project at a conference, but there was not funding for travel. A faculty wrote a grant to provide the funding. Several students shared narratives describing field experiences, internships, local community engagement activities and other experiential learning opportunities designed and facilitated by faculty to help students achieve their individual learning goals.

Compliment: The committee compliments UAS on the progress made toward develop metrics used to measure GERs. Additionally, the commission compliments UAS on designing and facilitating learner-centered experiential academic opportunities for students across all campuses.

Core Theme 3: Community Engagement

Standard 3.B Core Theme Planning – The core theme of “Community Engagement” is well aligned with the UAS mission and was included in the 2018 UAS Annual Priorities. Engagement with the Advisory Council, which includes members from K-12 education, US Coast Guard, mining industry, local TV/radio, the Goldbelt Heritage Foundation, Northwest Coast Arts, local IT businesses, and other partners ensures that the planning for this core theme is relevant to community stakeholders.

The Advisory Council stakeholder group indicated to the evaluation committee their interest in seeing the next phase of planning include the following: continued and enhanced collaboration with the US Coast Guard through maritime-related creative and intellectual programs, expansion of health care education, additional dual-credit opportunities for high school students, and increased opportunities for the community to learn the Tlingit language.

It is unclear whether or not the data collected in relation to this core theme was communicated back to the community Advisory Council, or other similar groups that are advisory to the Provost and Chancellor.

Standard 4.A Assessment – UAS collected data for six metrics related to the two Community Engagement objectives as the basis for evaluating the accomplishment of this core theme. The data are assessable and verifiable and in some cases meaningful to evaluation of this core theme. The metrics include: alumni and friend memberships; course enrollment in internships, practicums, independent studies, and individual research; community partnerships including a formal MOU or MOA; UAS-sponsored forums, lecture series and workshops; degrees awarded in high demand job areas; and degrees awarded from distance programs.

Of the five metrics above, perhaps “alumni engagement” and “community partnerships” might be re-evaluated regarding how meaningful these data are in assessing achievement of the Community Engagement core theme. In addition, “high demand job areas” and

“awards earned from distance programs” are currently benchmarked against the University of Alaska (UA), which may not be the best method for determining achievement due to the uniqueness of UAS compared to the other two UA institutions.

The SPBAC and the Advisory Council appear to have input on the assessment of these metrics, and SPBAC has one faculty member (the Senate President). However, it seems appropriate that the Community Engagement core theme would center on advisement from community stakeholders.

Standard 4.B Improvement – The metrics assessed for this core theme demonstrate improvement over time in most of the target areas. The self-study documentation was corroborated during the site visit. At the student forum, in which approximately 150 students attended or called in from their remote locations, students indicated that they found the many internships, practica, independent study and individual research experiences to be of high quality and pivotal to their learning experience. They believed the opportunities for them at UAS for high impact experiential learning exceeded what would be available at other institutions.

Students also commented regularly on the opportunity for distance learning. Many mentioned their remote location (when calling in) and how higher education would be literally out of reach if it were not for the UAS distance education courses and degrees. Lastly, both the student forum and the Advisory Council described the importance of the degree programs, courses and workforce credentials in high demand job areas for the region. Students and community stakeholders commended UAS for its agility and innovation in order to meet the needs of the labor force in unique and timely ways.

The meeting with the Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Alaska Native Education provided additional insights into the core theme of Community Engagement. They are hoping to continue working with UAS for “ancestry-driven, future focused” planning. They suggested the following areas for continued growth related to Community Engagement: elimination of tuition of native language classes for Alaskan Natives, and to train all faculty how to invite Alaskan Native Elders into their courses and curriculum. In general, the site visit revealed extensive efforts made by UAS to support Indigenous peoples.

Commendation: The evaluation team commends the University of Alaska Southeast for the recognition and inclusion of Alaska Native language, art, history and individuals into the buildings, curriculum, and administration. The involvement of Elders and culture-bearers has created an extremely important connection between the Alaskan Native community and UAS's goal to be a place of cultural safety and equity.

Core Theme 4: Research

Standard 3.B Core Theme Planning – This core theme is described as follows: Provide programs and services that support research, scholarship, and creative expression by

faculty and students. Core Theme 4 relates directly to the mission elements of “faculty scholarship” and “undergraduate research and creative activities”. The institution has identified two associated objectives:

- Engagement: Faculty and students are engaged in research, scholarship, and creative expression.
- Learning Impact: Research, scholarship, and creative expression informs learning

These objectives indicate the institution’s intent to see faculty and students engaged in research, scholarship, and creative expression, and the desire to see those efforts create a positive impact on learning. The evaluation committee observed the institution’s commitment in these areas.

UAS has established meaningful and verifiable indicators of achievement for this core theme. These include the engagement indicators of new grant awards, new submitted grant proposals, grant-funded research expenditures, and publications and creative expressions of tripartite faculty. Other indicators focus on learning impact, such as Undergraduate Research, Experiential & Creative Activity (URECA) presentations, and full-time students that are research assistants.

The Strategic and Assessment Plan indicates a number of strategies for making progress on Core Theme 4. In general, these strategies appear to be sound approaches and demonstrate planning related to the core theme. There is a conscious effort to incorporate UAS’ unique location into its research and creative efforts. There is an opportunity for continued alignment of the indicators and the strategies, which are outlined below:

Engagement Strategies

- Faculty and student research and creative expression opportunities
- Alaska Coastal Rainforest Center partnership
- Connections between scholarly engagement and student learning

Learning Impact Strategies

- Focus on Southeast Alaska
- Incorporation of Alaska Native cultures into education
- Tongass National Forest as a natural laboratory
- Global perspectives
- Undergraduate Research and Creative Expression Student Awards

Compliment: The UAS is effectively incorporating their spectacular location, environment, and history into the research and creative expression efforts of their faculty and students.

Standard 4.A Assessment – The UAS self-study report demonstrates that the institution has the ability to collect data on the indicators identified for this core theme. Similar to the other core themes, the self-study included a series of bar charts showing how the values of each indicator had varied over time. The data indicated that new grant awards, as well as new submitted grant proposals have been down since higher figures in 2014-2015. In contrast, grant funded research expenditures and publications and creative

expressions of tripartite faculty have increased in recent years. Undergraduate research metrics have been relatively constant.

The evaluation committee noted that some indicators lack target values, and in many instances the target was set simply to compare with performance on the same metric at other UA locations. While these comparisons can sometimes be beneficial, they could also move UAS away from its desired focus on what is unique in Southeast Alaska.

The evaluation committee also observed a general consensus among administrators and faculty that the core theme indicators may not always be useful in monitoring progress towards core theme achievement. There was also a perceived readiness to update the indicators and further develop the associated assessment processes.

Standard 4.B Improvement – The self-study notes that grant activity at UAS has remained relatively stable. Grant-related activities are moving forward in several areas. UAS faculty are involved in a major research project funded by the National Science Foundation’s Experimental Program to Stimulate Competitive Research program. Other faculty participate in the Alaska Coastal Rainforest Center and USDA Forest Service grants. Undergraduate research coordinated through the URECA program continues to be a significant university priority.

UAS faculty are also involved in the Alaska State Committee on Research, and future direction for research and creative activity is outlined in the BOR theme of “Grow World Class Research.” It would be helpful to outline a clear plan for increasing grant activity at UAS specifically in the coming years.

X. Mission Fulfillment, Adaptation, and Sustainability

Standard 5.A Mission Fulfillment

The four UAS core themes are closely aligned with the mission of the institution. As UAS has diligently worked to fulfill its mission, alignment of efforts with its core themes has taken place in meaningful ways. There is significant evidence that the four core themes are well understood and deeply ingrained on the UAS campuses. It also appears that the core themes have had a significant impact in helping the university to track its achievement of key priorities.

In support of mission fulfillment, there were good indications of progress on assessment at UAS:

- Learning outcomes are published for all courses.
- The program assessment includes program learning outcomes and has been regularly performed for a number of years.
- As noted earlier, the Provost’s Assessment Committee (PAC) has developed strong general education learning outcomes (GELOs) that are being assessed systematically.

- There was clear evidence that program assessment has been used for program improvement. The evaluation committee observed evidence that the five-year program review cycle has resulted in program continuance, program suspension, and program augmentation.

For each of the four core themes, data were outlined in tables comparing numbers from 2013-2014 to 2017-2018, and these were juxtaposed with the goals for each indicator. One area of noted success was in the improved retention rate of 65%. This was credited to reconfiguring Student Affairs, mandatory student advising, early alert systems, and attention to students' mental health needs.

The continued improvement of student success efforts will be strengthened as UAS increases its efforts to analyze and use more specific student data.

Recommendation: The Evaluation Committee recommends that UAS expand on the strong progress made in the analysis and use of disaggregated demographic and learning outcomes data in order to support the evaluation of mission fulfillment (4.A.1; 4.A.6; 5.A.1).

Standard 5.B Adaptation and Sustainability

UAS has adapted to the recent trend of declining enrollment and decreasing state support through sharp management of operating expenditures and costs. The institution has the Strategic and Assessment Plan based on its core themes, the Campus Master Plan, and the Strategic Enrollment Plan (which includes specific sub-plans for retention, recruitment, and marketing). These plans are evaluated regularly by senior administration, the SPBAC, the Master Plan Implementation Committee, and the Enrollment Management Committee. (5.B.1)

Planning assessment is accomplished through performance measures, indicators, and objectives. Many of these assessment tools have been identified by the institution as needing revision and/or refinement. (5.B.2)

Current emerging internal and external patterns, trends, and expectations are identified and assessed by the chancellor's executive cabinet, the chancellor's cabinet, and the SPBAC through interactions with the UA system, the BOR, government relations, and the Chancellor's Advisory Committee made up of community leaders. (5.B.3)

Recommendation: The Evaluation Committee recommends that UAS revise and refine its objectives and indicators to better inform its future planning and decision-making (5.B.1; 5.B.2).

XI. Summary

As noted in the introduction, the evaluation committee was inspired by the comprehensive efforts of UAS faculty, staff, and administrators to support student learning and success. There is a culture at UAS of going the extra mile to help students in any way possible, and this commitment is felt and deeply appreciated by students.

In every aspect, it was clear that all UAS employees took the NWCCU review very seriously, and the conscientious efforts and attention to detail in the self-study and site visit were exemplary. The high value placed on intentional planning, data analysis, and continuous improvement will serve UAS well for years to come.

XII. Commendations and Recommendations

Commendations

The evaluation team commends the University of Alaska Southeast for the recognition and inclusion of Alaska Native language, art, history and individuals into the buildings, curriculum, and administration. The involvement of Elders and culture-bearers has created an extremely important connection between the Alaskan Native community and UAS's goal to be a place of cultural safety and equity.

The evaluation committee commends the university for its warm and gracious hosting, as well as its robust participation in the accreditation process. Faculty, staff, and student forums were all standing-room only events in which many constituents shared their dedication to and appreciation for the university.

The evaluation team commends UAS, and in particular the Student Success Committee, for its efforts and commitment to student retention and student success. The creation of the Strategic Enrollment Plan and identification of student barriers of access is enabling a more efficient and operational framework to measure student needs and achievement.

The evaluation team commends UAS for optimizing distance education opportunities across a vast geographical area. Students have access to strong programs of study and student services that support their educational goals. Additionally, students on all UAS campuses are provided with meaningful experiential learning opportunities in a variety of community-based settings.

The evaluation committee commends UAS for its success at integrating three campus locations into one university with shared vision and values. The level of collaboration and consistent support among the three campuses is remarkable.

Recommendations

The Evaluation Committee recommends that the University of Alaska Southeast:

1. Stabilize its administrative team and structure, as well as employ a sufficient number of qualified personnel, in order to fulfill its mission and achieve its strategic priorities (Standards 2.A.9; 2.B.1).
2. Expand on the strong progress made in the analysis and use of disaggregated demographic and learning outcomes data in order to support the evaluation of mission fulfillment (Standards 4.A.1; 4.A.6; 5.A.1).
3. Revise and refine its objectives and indicators to better inform its future planning and decision-making (Standards 5.B.1; 5.B.2).