

**Testimony of Laci Michaud, Projects Manager**

**University of Alaska Board of Regents Meeting February 10, 2020**

Thank you for the opportunity to present. My name is Laci Michaud, and I am a Project Manager at the Alaska Miners Association.

AMA is a professional membership trade organization representing the mining industry in Alaska. We have more than 1,400 members that come from eight statewide branches: Anchorage, Denali, Fairbanks, Haines, Juneau, Kenai, Ketchikan/Prince of Wales, and Nome. We represent not only large scale mining operations, but also exploration and development projects, small family placer mines, and the vendors and contracting sector that support our mines.

I am here today to express support for the University of Alaska (UA) Mining and Geological Engineering programs, and the Mining and Petroleum Training Service (MAPTS).

AMA understands that UA is facing its most significant fiscal challenge in history, and that you and your team face a tremendous task in downsizing administration and consolidating duplicative programs. However, we must consider the unique mining related programs housed in the University system that are successful and in high demand. To that end, in the beginning of this year the AMA Leadership approved the following position:

* Maintain a highly trained Alaskan workforce through support of all mining and geology related degree programs in the UA system, the UAF Mining and Geologic Engineering program, and vocational training programs like MAPTS.

An ongoing issue of concern for the mining industry is the shortage of experienced miners available for hire. Many of the jobs in the mining industry require specialized skills, and with job locations in remote areas finding qualified employees can be very challenging. MAPTS’ programs provide the training necessary to gain entry into the mining industry – an invaluable service as there is great potential for the industry to grow, increasing its contributions to the state economy at a time we need it most. The MIN-GE program is one of only 14 mining programs offered across the country, 13 of which are ABET accredited, including ours. In particular, the programs have tailored instruction on mining in Arctic regions and cold climate engineering.

These programs are absolutely critical to the core mission of the University, which is to serve the State of Alaska.

Alaska currently has seven operating large-scale mines, and dozens of exploration projects with high potential to become operating mines. The operations and projects all have a significant and continued need for a skilled workforce, which UA programs have been supplying for many years. Mining in Alaska is estimated to grow 5% per year through 2024, which will likely result in significant growth in employment and the need for workers.

Recognizing an immense need for the UA programs that create and train Alaska’s miners, the mining industry has participated in support for UA in a number of ways. The Mining and Geological Engineering Department has at present a research endowment totaling over $4 million, mines have invested heavily in scholarship funds, and mining companies across Alaska have provided substantial financial contributions, equipment donations, and more. Mining industry contributions have also provided for match funding that is estimated to have brought in five dollars for every dollar spent in external research funding, the most recent being an $8.1 million U.S. Department of Labor Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) grant received by the Mineral Industry Research Lab for workforce development.

Over the past four years, the MAPTS program has produced over 300 miners. MAPTS graduates see a 95% rate of employment following graduation, and an 87% retention rate following hire. In addition, MAPTS trains approximately 650 miners in the required Mine Safety Health Administration (MSHA) certification annually. Nearly all of our state’s small placer mining operations and sand, gravel, quarry rock, and other industrial mineral miners rely on MAPTS to obtain this required certification.

We ask that you consider that these programs are not duplicative, generate positive returns for UA, and meet the University’s mission of serving the State of Alaska. Thank you for the opportunity to present our support of UA mining programs, and please contact us at any time that AMA can be of assistance.