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University Board of Regents

Re: Feedback for University of Alaska Expedited Review

The Alaska Miners Association writes to provide feedback to the University of Alaska Board of Regents (BOR) as requested through the Expedited Review Process.

AMA is a professional membership trade organization established in 1939 to represent the mining industry in Alaska. We are composed of more than 1,400 members that come from eight statewide branches: Anchorage, Denali, Fairbanks, Haines, Juneau, Kenai, Ketchikan/Prince of Wales, and Nome. Our members include individual prospectors, geologists, engineers, vendors, suction dredge miners, small family mines, junior mining companies, and major mining companies. We look for and produce gold, silver, platinum, molybdenum, lead, zinc, copper, coal, limestone, sand and gravel, crushed stone, armor rock, and other materials.

AMA has long been on the record in submitting letters and testimony regarding the program changes being made across all University campuses. We have done so keeping the core principle in mind that has been adopted by the AMA Leadership:

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.

We have reviewed the recommendations put forth in the March 10 Program Review Committee announcement. It was with great disappointment that we saw that not only were the degree programs associated with mining eliminated or suspended, but even the programs that provide vocational training were deleted, with haste and without open engagement with the industries they serve. In fact, upon reviewing the entirety of the recommendations across all degree programs, it appears the majority of all opportunities within the University system to provide the kind of vocational training that immediately puts Alaskans to work were eliminated, while longer-term programs with much more limited employment opportunities were retained.

Alaska is a resource state, and the employment opportunities in mining, construction, and other industries are incredible. Alaskans that have access to direct training opportunities can go to work in a matter of months, and earn a family wage at Alaska's mines and other industrial development projects. This element of Alaska jobs must be considered by the Board of Regents before making any permanent changes to our University programs.

We have said many times that 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, such a task should not be done in haste, and should consider viable employment that corresponds with the programs you are evaluating.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Deantha Crockett