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Shaping Alaska's Future:

Setting Strategic Directions for the University of Alaska

A solid, balanced university system is crucial to a state's healthy growth and development....As a university system, the value we bring to Alaska depends on the quality of our graduates at every level. Our success in offering a premier education and world-class research opportunity will substantially drive Alaska's future.

University of Alaska President Pat Gamble

This paper outlines an approach to setting strategic directions for the University of Alaska System that combines listening intently to what our students and the people of Alaska tell us they want and need from their colleges and universities, along with a tough minded examination of what we do now and how well we do it. The outcome of this process should be a vehicle for bringing positive change to the University of Alaska System that further aligns it with the priorities of students and the people of the state and results in an even more effective System overall.

"Guidepost Measures"

Setting strategic directions, then actually pursuing them, represents a journey through time featuring specific achievements along the way that mark progress toward the overarching goal of improving our performance in serving the people of the state. We use the term guidepost measures to suggest the dynamic character of this process. Some of these guidepost measures are identified below; others will emerge as the result of discussions, achievements along the way and our collective experience with this change process.

Guidepost measures of progress in this direction-setting process would include:

- x A concise, readable document that outlines the broad strategic directions for the System, its colleges, universities and research and service units, as well as means of evaluating the change process itself. This document, of about 10 pages, would be written to provide a clear message describing the strategic directions of the UA System to a broad audience of Alaskans
- x A set of five to seven strategic direction shaping priorities that grow out of the series of listening sessions held throughout the state

- x Selection of a few, critically important guidepost measures of success that will tell us and the people of Alaska how well we are realizing our mutual priorities
- x A management model that aligns college and university plans aimed toward achieving the selected priorities, but looks to the institutions and their leaders to determine the best way to achieve the overarching goals. The idea of alignment includes policies to avoid unnecessary duplication of programs and services, integration with the Academic Master Plan as well as campus strategic, capital and related plans
- x A new leadership development program within the System administration aligned with this direction-setting process. The current project to evaluate senior staff through a 360-degree review underpins this direction-setting effort
- x A straightforward communications program directed to students and the people of Alaska, elected representatives as well as other formal and informal leaders, defining what the University does to merit their support and the standards by which the System holds itself accountable to all Alaskans

Major Themes for the Statewide Conversation

The top priorities will be discussed and weighed through the course of extensive conversations with people of the state not directly connected to the University as well as students, faculty, and staff within the System. Several broad themes that are part of the dialogue within the state.

strategic plans with the System's top priorities; and selecting the right measures to evaluate success in achieving the priorities. These groups would be engaged in the