

Statement

The University of Alaska (UA) and the State Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) are stepping up to strengthen alignment between their two education systems. Our goal is to dramatically improve educational attainment in Alaska and, thereby, improve our economic competitiveness and our quality of life.

In September, the UA Board of Regents met with the State Board of Education. Both boards made the commitment to work together on this important goal and charged the UA President and the Commissioner of DEED to work together on building a culture of education in Alaska. In addition, the boards have created a subcommittee that will be meeting in December in support of our joint purpose.

There are several elements of the plan being developed. Two of the most essential elements are college readiness and teacher preparation. DEED's focus will be to work with Alaska's 54 school districts to strengthen high school graduates' readiness to take the next step in their education by attending some form of higher education, whether career and technical training or a university degree. UA's focus will be on increasing its production of top quality teachers for Alaska's schools. Additional areas of collaboration include dual and concurrent enrollment, new teacher mentoring, professional development, and research into a wide variety of issues that, if understood, could be improved.

One area of research on college readiness was recently conducted by the Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program (ANSEP) at the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA). The transcript study used available Alaska institutional data—so it applies directly only to students from Alaska who attend a campus of the University of Alaska—and found several serious shortcomings in student readiness for university-level work. The transcript study found that high schools across the state vary a great deal in the extent to which their graduates who attend a UA campus require preparatory course work.

Alaska's children deserve the best education possible as well as the attendant economic and social benefits. They need the tools provided by an excellent education to move Alaska forward. The study shows that for many of our students, this is not the case. We are determined to work together with school leaders across the state to mitigate the problem. It will require years of effort and collaboration with students, parents, teachers, professors, administrators, and government officials. We are nevertheless committed to this critically important goal.

Initially, we will begin by setting some long term goals and milestones. We will then move to align the academic standards between K-12 and the university, and implement a quality control plan that provides useful feedback for all.

The focus of this effort is on the future and our collective potential to provide the best for our students and the state of Alaska.

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James Johnsen, EdD
President
University of Alaska

Tom Case
Chancellor
University of Alaska Anchorage

Michael Johnson, PhD
Commissioner of Education
State of Alaska

Herb Schroeder, PhD
Vice Provost for ANSEP and Founder
Professor of Engineering
University of Alaska Anchorage

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For additional information about UA and Alaska DEED collaboration, contact:

James Johnsen, EdD

President

University of Alaska

Michael Johnson, PhD

Commissioner of Education and Early Development

State of Alaska

For additional information about the study, please contact:

Herb Schroeder, PhD

Vice Provost for ANSEP and Founder

Professor of Engineering

University of Alaska Anchorage

University of Alaska Transcript Study¹

Introduction

The number of students in need of developmental coursework² arriving at all University of Alaska campuses has been unacceptably high for many years. The persistence of these students within the university has likewise been unacceptably low. This study examined the 10-year historical rate of required developmental coursework for all schools in the state with ten years of data from which ten or more 2015 graduates enrolled at all campuses of the University in Fall 2015³:

A sub-group of schools with developmental coursework rates above 71% was evaluated by examining ten years of high school transcripts for every student to determine:

1. the average GPA for all students,
2. the final math and English classes taken in high school,
3. the average grades earned for those final math and English classes,
4. the percentage of students successfully completing college preparatory math and English courses.

All schools in study

Total students from the study group: 15,016

Rate of students requiring developmental course work: 60.8%

Study sub-group

Number of schools with a 71% or greater number of students requiring developmental coursework: 5

Total students attending UA from study sub-group: 1,550

Average high school cumulative GPA⁴: 3.16

Rate of students requiring developmental coursework: 74.1%

Rate of students requiring developmental coursework in English: 39.5%

Rate of students requiring developmental coursework in math: 69.1%

Rate of students successfully completing algebra 2 or higher in high school⁵: 70.4%

Rate of students successfully completing English 4 or equivalent in high school⁶: see note 6

Why is this important?

- Students are passing college preparatory courses in high school with high grades, then repeating those classes when they arrive at the university.
- The state is spending millions of dollars annually for students to take classes in high school and then paying again when the courses must be repeated at the university.
- Students and their families are spending millions of dollars in additional college costs because their students are arriving at the university under prepared.

What can we do to improve the situation?

1. Develop joint long term goals and milestones for improvement within K12 and the university.
2. Align the academic curriculum between K12 and the university.
3. Implement a quality control system that provides useful feedback for all.

ANSEP is working productively with the following school districts to improve the situation: Anchorage, Mat-Su Borough, Bering Strait, Kashunamiut, Lower Kuskokwim, Lower Yukon, Northwest Arctic Borough, St. Mary's, and the Kenai Peninsula Borough.

¹ All data compiled from University of Alaska records by the University of Alaska Anchorage Office of Institutional Research and the Alaska Native Science & Engineering Program (ANSEP).

² Developmental coursework is considered intermediate algebra or below and English below written communication

³ 37 high schools were included in the study.

⁴ 1,550 transcripts were evaluated for GPA and student performance. 64 transcripts or 4.06% of the sub-group data set are unavailable.

⁵ Students who successfully complete algebra 2 or higher should require no developmental coursework upon arrival at the university.

⁶ Successful completions of English 4 or equivalent should mean no developmental coursework required at the University. Due to a lack of consistent English curriculum between schools, it is impossible to determine this number for the study sub-group.

UA Transcript Study

UA First-time Freshman¹ with Developmental Education Courses by High School

Schools with 10 or more graduates in 2015 enrolling at the University of Alaska

Students taking at least one developmental course in math or English²

Data for Fall 2006 through Fall 2015

	Rate of developmental coursework	Average High School GPA	
Bartlett High School	71.0%		
Bethel Regional High School	61.7%		
Chugiak High School	51.7%		
Colony High School	57.0%		
Dillingham High School	45.8%		
Dimond High School	59.3%		study group
Eagle River High School	48.9%		15,016 total students
East Anchorage High School	69.2%		9,124 total developmental students
Eielson High School	45.1%		60.8% total developmental percentage
Frontier Charter School	55.4%		
Galena Interior Learning Acad	77.6%	3.44	study subgroup
GED (Alaska)	72.7%		1,550 total students
Grace Christian School	47.9%		1,150 total developmental students
Homer High School	55.0%		74.2% total developmental percentage
Houston High School	61.0%		
Juneau-Douglas High School	75.1%	3.05	
Kenai Central High School	56.7%		
Ketchikan High School	71.5%	3.21	
Kodiak High School	74.0%	3.26	
Mount Edgecumbe HS	74.4%	3.19	
Nenana High School	59.8%		
Nikiski Jr/Sr High School	55.9%		
Nome Beltz High School	67.7%		
North Pole High School	53.8%		
Palmer High School	64.1%		
Raven Correspondence School	58.2%		
Service High School	58.2%		
Sitka High School	68.8%		
Soldotna High School	45.3%		
South Anchorage High School	56.9%		
Steller Sec Alternative	49.2%		
Unalaska High School	51.2%		
Valdez High School	31.1%		
Wasilla High School	67.5%		
West Anchorage High School	67.1%		
West High School Anchorage	63.6%		
West Valley High School	47.4%		

¹First-time freshman includes both FF and FR categories and students who enrolled within one year of graduating high school.

²Developmental math is Intermediate Algebra or below. Developmental English is any course below English 111