

System Office Administrative Review Report

Charge

The UA President charged the committee with evaluating System Office (Statewide) administrator positions, functions, and roles. The committee was reminded that they are not reviewing individual incumbent performance or compensation. President Pitney's interest is in transparency and in addressing concerns with the system office. More specifically, the review is meant to advise the president as to improvements or efficiencies that might be made to administrative structure and positions that might lead to budget savings.

This is the first comprehensive review of administration structure at the University of Alaska System Office, and the first review to examine management redundancies across systems. This review may lead to an optimization of administrative management by revealing opportunities to improve efficiency, increase collaboration, and reduce or eliminate tasks and operations that are not central to the University of Alaska system's mission. This review, and any resulting reduction in administrative management in the University of Alaska system, supports long-term economic stability and will help restore public confidence in our institution.

Committee Representation

Each staff and faculty governance group nominated one representative to serve on the System Office (Statewide) Administrative Position Review Team. The representatives were:

UAA: Ian Hartman (faculty), Tania Rowe (staff)

UAF: Debu Misra (faculty), Michael Szidloski II (staff)

UAS: Kevin Krein (faculty), Gwenna Richardson (staff)

SO: Monique Musick (staff)

The committee selected Ian Hartman and Monique Musick as co-chairs.

The review team was supported by CHRO Steve Patin, with input from Paul Layer, David Bishko, and administrative support by Jim Wolverton.

Contents:

- Process for Review
- How Information is Presented
- System Office Observations and Recommendations
- Position-Specific Recommendations
- Conclusion

Process for Review

The committee held its first meeting Dec. 3 and met weekly throughout the Spring Semester.

One of the first actions of the committee was to develop guidelines for the [review process](#). While the charge was to look at the administrative positions, it was determined that looking at the entire department budget, addressing any possible overlap with activities that should be an academic function, overlap with university offices, and evaluation of any functions or duties that could be discontinued or eliminated was also necessary. In particular the committee wanted to understand any consulting fees paid to individual contractors, contracting firms, and search firms as well as other contractual expenses. Actual budget data was critical to the review process, and included comparison data of FY10 and FY20 as well as a ten-year comparison of staffing levels in the system office.

Budget documents: [FY10 vs. FY20](#), [System Office Revenue](#), [Position history FY10 and FY20](#), [Contracts and Consulting](#).

Additional resources included the [Statewide Transformation Team report](#) and discussions with David Bisko and executive leadership.

The committee also determined that not all executive positions would be included in the review process. These fell into two categories: self-funded enterprise operations including the UA Foundation, Alaska 529/UA Scholars, Chief Investment Officer; and some unduplicated positions including the UA President, and Executive Officer for the Board of Regents.

In order to gather relevant feedback from the universities, in particular in respect to possible areas of overlap and the perceived value of service from the system office, a [survey](#) was developed and distributed to 39 senior leaders across the university system. The survey had 20 responses which provided great insight into certain areas, but did not provide feedback on all areas under review.

VP Paul Layer and CHRO Steve Patin were present at most committee meetings and provided insight into their areas of oversight. The co-chairs also held and recorded interviews with additional senior executives to get a deeper understanding of their roles and the activities of the

offices which they oversee. In addition, they were asked to provide insight on expenses, in particular contractual services.

Since most of the representatives on the system office review were also members of the university-based administrative review teams, the majority of meetings included updates on the progress occurring in the university administrative reviews.

On several occasions the committee received briefings from Bishko who is looking for synergies across and throughout the entire UA system to reduce costs in an effort complementary to this administrative review. This provided valuable context to the review committee.

How the Information is Presented

While all committee members had access to the same resources, a variety of factors led to very different views and interpretations. Personal experiences, roles within the university, input from university colleagues, time available to review and research the information provided, and level of interaction with the System Office all play a part in individual responses and recommendations.

The committee decided that capturing all of the input of the members of the review committee was more important than coming to consensus on recommendations. There are some areas where the committee was in complete alignment on recommendations, both in affirming some administrative positions, or recognizing potential for reorganization. There are also certain positions where committee members have opposing recommendations. ***In all situations the observations and recommendations offered by committee members are being included in the final report - even when they are conflicting or contradictory.***

System Office Role

The System Office implements UA Board of Regents policy and provides direction and cost-effective administrative management for the University of Alaska system as a single legal entity and employer. The System Office is also responsible for services not duplicated elsewhere including land management, federal and state relations, audit, insurance and claims management, tax reporting, financial reporting, debt management, procurement and human resources functions.

The System Office's budget reflects costs borne on behalf of the University of Alaska system. For example, insurance premiums, network and internet connections for all 17 campuses, and the Banner Enterprise System. The System Office serves as a central point of contact to the Legislature, Congress, and numerous other external entities. The System Office also plays a key compliance role. The System Office sets consistent policies, regulations and internal control structure for the entire system. Managing these in a central office maintains consistency and reduces legal liability.

Committee Observations

- While many functions performed in the System Office are necessary and vital, the mission of the office is not always clear to staff, faculty, and university stakeholders. This has at times manifested itself in a lack of trust and understanding over the role of the System Office at the three separately-accredited universities.
- Leadership at the System Office and the universities have not always worked collaboratively to chart a path forward for the university system. This seems to have reached a low point during discussions of "One UA" and the attendant crisis management brought on by state budget cuts over the last several years.
- The need for the system to operate as a single legal entity and the needs of the universities to manage their own success initiatives and develop their own institutional identities is not inherently at odds. But the lack of commonly understood roles and responsibilities has fostered distrust of the System Office instead of seeing it as a vital resource.
- Too often, initiatives started at the system level aren't seen as adding value, but rather as simply adding work. Moreover, there remains a persistent belief that the System Office acts unilaterally to exert operational control over university functions and communications instead of providing administrative support or service.
- The three most critical areas of the System's Office for day to day business are the CFO (finance), HR, and OIT. Of those three, the CFO's office is the most highly regarded from feedback as well as being the most solvent.
- OIT is in a critical mission state, and without support will suffer cascade failure that will negatively impact the entire university system. There should be intense focus from leadership on resolving the issues of stability at OIT.
- HR, as a system, is in need of review. The leadership positions there are necessary, but the scope of HR is poorly defined with regards to where front of the house operations reside. If the front of the house operations are to be housed at the campus levels, clear lines/workflows need to be provided showing what areas are responsible for what, and accurate and effective training needs to be provided to campus HR coordinators to bridge that gap.
- The roles of the VP for University Relations and the VP of Academics, Students and Research are highly misunderstood. Their capacity is to act as a bridge of knowledge to the Board of Regents, the President's Office, and as liaisons of the university system to the state legislature. More emphasis should be placed on these roles reporting back to the campuses, and engaging in more dialogue with their campus counterparts. This closely models what is seen in the Chief Equity and compliance Officer position: providing that resource for not only the BOR/President, but relaying changes from legislative and other regulatory agencies to the campuses to efficiently and effectively adjust to changing realities. Additional value can be provided by these positions in providing foundational information to members of governance who are not well versed in the functions of the university. This will create the opportunity to maintain institutional knowledge of the functions of the university system as a whole, and provide a solid foundation of knowledge to incoming members of not only the BOR, but System and campus leadership as well.

- There is a general feeling that System Office should not grow, and could possibly be reduced. There seems to be a distrust of the office. System Office responsibilities should be more clearly defined and the operations of the System Office not extend beyond those areas of responsibility. Further, the System Office should operate primarily to support the three universities.
- There are widespread feelings that the System Office does not understand the needs of each university. We should be very careful about any recommendations to add positions or responsibilities to the office. A serious effort should be made to explain the role, services, and added value that the System Office provides. The office should make a serious attempt to meet with appropriate representatives from each university and to understand each university's needs. The universities in general want more positions, resources, and freedom.
- The committee observes that these impressions, while perhaps deeply held across the university system, are not unshakable. The majority of staff, faculty, and administration share a great deal of common ground and want Alaska's university system, as well as their respective universities and the communities with which they serve, to flourish. With skilled and patient leadership many, if not all, of the divisions that have been exposed over the previous years may be addressed and the university system may move forward with greater purpose and unity.

General Recommendations

In 2015, the Statewide Transformation Team, composed of leadership across the university system, noted that the System Office (or Statewide) should “shift from a model of control to one of facilitation and support.” In addition, the team’s final report suggested: “service to and active collaboration with universities must be incorporated in the SW mission and management philosophy.” This committee concurs with that sentiment and believes the interim president and incoming president would be well advised to formally adopt a mission statement for the System Office that explicitly affirms the role of the office primarily as one of support and collaboration rather than one of command and control.¹

The System Office is ideally suited to provide and manage a core selection of shared services and to facilitate collaboration across the system. The role and budget of the System Office should reflect a coordinative orientation to the Universities of Alaska Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Southeast. Strategic decisions are best developed and made by the executive leadership from each university, working in collaboration and consultation with each other, the UA President, and the respective faculty, student and staff governance bodies. This decision making structure would free the System Office to clarify its role and direct increasingly limited financial resources towards supporting the universities with core services that maximize the day-to-day experience for students, staff, and faculty.

¹ “Transforming the University of Alaska’s Statewide Office,” Statewide Transformation Team Report, Submitted to Jim Johnsen, September 2015, pg. 6.

The System Office is also uniquely situated to take advantage of economies of scale. The office should emphasize and leverage its role in managing risk, serving as the single payer for insurance across the three universities, and managing higher-level financial considerations of the university system. The System Office is also well positioned to centralize functions related to federal and state relations and land management. Human resources, public affairs, and tech support, if managed efficiently and sensitive to local feedback, are likely best coordinated through the System Office but with a distributed workforce throughout Alaska's universities and communities.

Beyond the above functions currently executed at the System Office, a few services that the office currently provides might be devolved to the respective universities or reduced in scope, particularly at the executive level. These include student and enrollment strategy, institutional research, and workforce development. The feedback that this committee solicited suggested modest levels of dissatisfaction and confusion in these areas. Likewise, duplication or confusion of mission is most likely to occur as each university hosts executive level administrative positions that purport to do much of the work located in respective position descriptions in these areas.

Where the System Office takes a lead role, it would be beneficial to ascertain clarity in the use of 'contractual services' and far greater transparency related to their budgetary expenditures. The committee gained much insight into the kinds of contractual services that have driven costs in the System Office. The committee notes that the costs associated with contractual services have continued to increase even as state support for the university system has declined. The committee recognizes that these costs are best borne by a central office, rather than three discrete entities, to ensure cost effectiveness and operational efficiency. Nonetheless, in an era of austerity and pressure to ensure academic mission alignment, the committee recommends that the president review and consider deeply ways to reduce or eliminate costs related to non-essential contracts, travel, commodities, and items labeled "other expenses" at the system office.

Summary Recommendations

1. Consolidate and reduce executive level positions and expand the use of highly trained and qualified staff.
2. Reclassify executive positions currently held by Vice Presidents (including the VP of Academics, Students, and Research, AVP of Student and Enrollment Strategy, AVP of Workforce Development, and the Director of Data Strategy & Institutional Research) under the President's Office as 'liaisons' to the respective Universities. These positions provide a useful informational link to the Board of Regents, as well as leadership across the universities.
3. Reorganize the President's Office to assume an explicitly coordinative rather than leadership orientation, one that champions the university system and issues direction over shared services but defers leadership initiatives to the separate universities.
4. Reorganize the System Office into five divisions, four with Chief Officers and one as the President's Office. Rationale: this may streamline operations, create clarity of the support

mission, reduce costs, and concentrate the span of control to fewer executive administrators (one goal could be the reduction or elimination of VP and AVP position classifications) with greater assistance at the staff level.

5. Strengthen offices that deliver shared services and enter into purchase agreements and contracts based on economies of scale, most notably OIT, HR, and Finance.

Position-Specific Recommendations

UA President

FY20 Department budget - \$880,792.65

Contractual Expenses - \$191,504.56

BOR Policy [Chapter 02.01. University President](#)

This position was not reviewed as part of this administrative review process. However the committee was interested in a deeper look at contractual expenses and opportunities to find savings.

EO Board of Regents

FY20 Department Budget - \$287,022.11

Contractual Expenses - \$77,474.21

This position was not reviewed as part of this administrative review process.

Chief Equity and Compliance Officer

Office of Equity and Compliance

FY20 Department budget - \$236,817.69

Contractual Expenses - \$51,718.53

Employees - 1

[Position Description](#)

Safety and compliance is a key role of the System Office and this position helps to ensure that cases are well managed, assists in making consistent processes across the university system and oversees annual student and employee training requirements at the system level.

The Chief Equity and Compliance Officer reports directly to the BOR Ad Hoc Committee on Title IX and leads on implementing Federal Guidance across the system.

Non-compensation budget items include shared case management software, student and employee training, and professional training.

Rationale for affirmation

- This position is required to support the compliance with the federal and state laws and should not be eliminated.
- There may be trust issues with the campus E&C Offices to overcome, but the process itself is vital and should remain.
- This is a small office that may be necessary for legal/federal regulatory reasons so, there's not much for us to change about its scope or span of control.

Rationale/Suggestions for reorganization

- There's a lack of clarity around this position now that the VRA is over.
- Potential for expansion:
 - With more support this office could oversee additional areas of compliance beyond Title IX, including Clery Act, Drug Free, FERPA, Minors and Campus, ADA etc. There's an opportunity to fold in some of the other compliance areas formerly under AVP Student Enrollment Strategy
- Potential for reduction:
 - This function may be reduced to Title IX compliance only

General Counsel

Office of General Counsel

FY20 Department Budget - \$1,329,584.17

Contractual Expenses - \$170,569.87

Employees - 7 (5 attorneys, 1 paralegal, 1 administrative staff)

Position Description

[BOR Policy](#) P02.02.030. General Counsel.

The General Counsel is the chief legal officer of the board and the university. The office serves the entire institution on legal matters ranging from contracts to employee matters. The office size has not changed in the 10 year period.

Contractual expenses are for the provision of legal services. They hire external attorneys as needed on a case-by-case basis when they need greater experience or must have an external representative.

Rationale for affirmation

- Overall responses indicate high approval of this unit.
- The General Counsel office was praised for increased interactions and assistance.
- We are fortunate to have their expertise and commitment to the institution. They manage a wide variety of legal tasks from policy review and guidance to legal representation and counsel.

Rationale/Suggestions for reorganization

- There seems to be a conflict of interest issue in the structure and responsibilities of the General Counsel office. The General Counsel office receives its funding from the state/tuition revenue/ICR etc. However, the office provides legal counsel only to administrators and not to faculty and staff. In internal disputes, this is ***conflict of interest***.
- The General Counsel office should be neutral in internal dispute resolutions. However, it should represent the university in external disputes and other legal functions required by the university.
- The office employs four Associate General Counsels, yet it outsources its functions to consultants at a high rate. If the General Counsel office focused only on legal functions that support the university, then 3 (of the 4) Associate General Counsel positions could be eliminated. The support for the General Counsel office (with one General Counsel and one Associate General Counsel) could be accomplished by additional para-legal staff recruitment and support.

Human Resources

UA Human Resources Office

FY20 department budget - \$5,142,841.83

Contractual Expenses - \$521,267.75

Employees - 50 (1 CHRO, 4 directors, 45 staff)

In 2019, UA underwent a system-wide redesign of human resources functions into a unified office organized by areas of functional expertise. Instead of maintaining three separate campus organizations and a System Office, a wholly new single human resources organization was organized to provide human resources service throughout the UA system.

Instead of separate HR Offices, the new UA HR organization utilizes functional areas:

- Operations
- Talent Acquisition
- Transition & Benefits
- Labor & Employee Engagement

By creating a single human resources organization with a unified presence on all campuses we benefit from the shared scope of services as well as utilize the knowledge on the local campuses.

A large expense under contractual expenses are background checks. Other costs include software systems, international taxes, recruitment advertising and facility leases.

Observations on the reorganization and function of Human Resources

- The HR reorg caused a lot of issues ranging from broken trust (because it was done "in secret") to a lack of understanding of new procedures. It's not that the current structure failed, but the process that brought it about was not transparent or inclusive. The process of implementation ultimately resulted in distrust and confusion about where to go for assistance.
- Human Resources needs to better communicate to employees and supervisors, better engage with the universities, and make it absolutely clear how employees and supervisors can get the help they need.
- Improve the answers available in Spoke, better explain how to use it as a resource, and focus on providing employees and supervisors the tools, training and guidance they need.
- There's an overall sense that we've taken the "human" out of human resources. The universities are not receiving the support or communication that is needed.
- One general observation has been that HR is inefficient at this point of time.
- HR should be a value added unit, and not just focusing on checking compliance boxes.
- Nobody at the universities seems happy with centralization. Did centralization save Money? Would it help to go back to campus run HR departments?

Rationale/Suggestions for modification or reorganization

- Perform a review of HR functions across the University. What functions have been lost at the campus level and how detrimental has that loss been? Assess where those functions could be added back in under the current HR model, or if the current HR model needs revision.
- Take labor and employment relations tasks away from general counsel when dealing with internal disputes.
- More efficiency could be accomplished by having easy two-way communications or someone available with a specific hotline to answer questions such as benefits or appointments, etc. Otherwise, this model may fail.
- Some of the administrators in HR are working from out of state. That should not be permitted by any means. HR is an important office and all administrators must be located in Alaska.
- There is a perception of a loss of support/functions/communication and a general feeling that HR exists solely to protect UA liability more than supporting employees. Whether or not that perception is justified, the fact that it is so prominent at all levels of the University system is indicative of action needed.
- Give HR Coordinators on the campuses more tools and a greater presence on campus so people can get direct services on demand.

Chief Human Resources Officer

[Position Description](#)

[BOR Policy](#) P02.02.040. Chief Human Resources Officer.

The chief human resources officer administers the university's human resource program including employee relations, labor-management relations, compensation planning, faculty and staff benefits, training, and development. The CHRO coordinates the development and implementation of regents' policy and university regulation regarding human resources and administers and interprets human resources policy and university regulation. The CHRO is responsible for the issuance of all HR procedures, directives, and manuals required, to coordinate workforce planning, and assists the board and the president in the recruitment and selection of university officers.

Rationale for affirmation

- CHRO function is a critical support function for the universities. Hence, this position should not be eliminated.
- Affirm administrative management position, but there needs to be a serious attempt to better clarify what employees need to do and where they go for the support they need.

Dir. Employee Transition & Benefits

[Position Description](#)

Rationale for affirmation

- The Director of Employee Transition and Benefits is a critical support function for the universities. This function needs to be strengthened further. The support for this position can be accomplished by additional staff recruitment.
- Need greater engagement from this position and less reliance on canned updates and newsletters from our vendors. This is a critical area for employees and knowing the team behind our benefits would help improve relationships. Erika held the position for a long time and was a well known and responsive leader. That relationship needs to continue under the new leadership.
- The Joint Health Care Committee is one of the most important councils in the system and needs to continue its role.

Dir. Talent Acquisition

[Position Description](#)

Rationale for affirmation

- This area is improving with the implementation of new software. There is a lot of pressure now on diversity and inclusion and a lot of opportunity for this area to provide greater leadership and effectiveness.
- Leadership in classification and compensation is also important on a system level.

Rationale/Suggestions for modification or reorganization

- While talent acquisition and classification are critical functions, those would be accomplished without a position of the Director of Talent Acquisition. This position should be eliminated and the functions should be assumed by the CHRO or combined with the Director of Operations. Individual universities are best equipped for talent acquisition and

they could work with the CHRO or a merged Director of Operations position to accomplish the goal. The classification system can be assumed by the CHRO with the support of more trained staff.

Dir. Operations

[Position Description](#)

Rationale for affirmation - with need for improvement

- This is a very critical part of the HR function. This is one area that better communication would be a huge help.
- If the expectation is that employees and supervisors are working with their HR Coordinators in exactly the same way they always were, why is there such widespread misunderstanding of where one should go for HR help?
- If Spoke is supposed to provide answers to common questions, how is it being managed, updated and audited to ensure that the AI is learning the right things and answering the right questions? What resources have been invested into teaching the UA community how to use Spoke? How do you overcome the sense of "impersonal" response when using Spoke as a ticketing and service application? There's nothing inherently wrong with using this system, but more needs to be done to ensure its accuracy and reassure the university community that HR will meet their needs.

Rationale/Suggestions for modification or reorganization

- The Director of Operations could assume the function of the Director of Talent Acquisition and restructure into a single position. The support for this position can be accomplished by additional staff recruitment.

Dir. Labor & Employee Relations

[Position Description](#)

Rationale for affirmation - with need for improvement

- Director of Labor and Employee Relations is critical for the unionized campuses. So, this position should not be eliminated.
- The labor relations element of this position is clearly vital and has been a long-time role of the system office. Union contracts and negotiations are mission critical.
- What needs to happen at a greater level is the "employee relations" side of this office. How do employees and supervisors address grievances? What is being done to enhance supervisor training? Employee development? Expanding the scope of this role beyond labor relations was an important first step, but the office is not yet meeting expectations for greater employee development and support.
- The Director must be a resident of Alaska and should be present in the state at all times.

Office of Finance/Audit/Procurement

Office of Finance/Audit and Consulting Services

FY20 Department Budget - \$3,035,056.94

Contractual Expenses - \$213,928.84

Employees - 20/4

Chief Finance Officer

[Position Description](#)

[BOR Policy](#) P02.02.020. Chief Finance Officer

The Vice President of Finance and Administration provides strategic direction and overall financial leadership for the university system's fiscal operations; overseeing budgets, revenues, expenditures, contracts, procurement, business services, financial investments, audit ratings, debt administration, physical asset accountability and staff benefits. This position supports the University's mission and strategic plan while ensuring compliance with all applicable laws, regulations and policies and establishing best practices.

Rationale for affirmation

- A Chief Financial Officer is vital to a large complex organization such as the university, not only to ensure that financial records are prepared according to GAAP principles, but also to ensure the proper use of financial resources.
- There is no way to be a single legal entity without maintaining financial records at the system office. In addition, the System Office manages endowments, debt, and other system-level finances that could not be managed at an individual campus level.
- The CFO is uniquely positioned to assume various functions across the university system. This should represent a core function of the system office.
- The CFO is critical to support the universities in budget and finance. Hence, this position should not be eliminated.
- Feedback on the CFO is positive and speaks to the indispensable nature of the position.

Rationale/Suggestions for reorganization

- There is duplicative work being done at the MAU level. There should be a clear split in what SW does and what the MAU level offices do.
- This office should either be leaned and most of the functions be transferred to the MAUs or the MAU based functions be leaned, and those functions be centralized.

Chief Audit Executive

[Position Description](#)

[Chapter 05.03. Audit and Consulting Services](#)

Rationale for affirmation

- The Chief Audit Officer does a fantastic job overseeing the audit functions of the university and updating the Board of Regents and UA leadership. The office provides vital functions for the organization and is an important part of reducing loss, mitigating financial risks and ensuring adherence to financial standards.
- This area is not duplicated on any of the campuses and is a necessary function of the university system.

Chief Procurement Officer

Procurement

FY20 Department Budget (Procurement) - \$1,361,755.04

Contractual Expenses - \$16,649.05

Employees - 12

[Position Description](#)

The procurement function was recently centralized into the system office, increasing the number of employees from 1 in the system office to 12, distributed across the university system, but managed as a single department.

Rationale for affirmation

- The benefits of centralized procurement for large items are being realized. Greater department-level empowerment for smaller purchases which this reorganization accomplished strikes a good balance between central (large) procurement and department-level control.
- The feedback from campus A/P is that the restructured procurement process is good.
- The Chief Procurement Officer is critical and should not be eliminated. The support for this position can be accomplished by additional staff recruitment.
- Centralization of Purchasing functions has, at least in appearance, rolled out smoothly.
- While the centralization of the Purchasing function has rolled out smoothly, there is a need for a centralized Procurement website in line with the centralized Human Resources page.

Chief Risk Officer (Vacant)

Risk Services

FY20 Department Budget (Risk Services) - \$8,013,244.96

Contractual Expenses - \$6,966,749.48

Employees - 8

Position Description not available

The System Office of risk services manages insurance and claims for the entire system. In addition they coordinate with Federal agencies on disaster aid funding and oversee the system's emergency communications platforms.

Non-compensation budget items include self-insurance costs and premiums.

Rationale/Suggestions for reorganization

- While on the one hand it seems the universities are managing Emergency Management well, on the other there needs to be some delegation of authority to someone to act as Chief Risk Officer, or this needs to be filled for the sake of legal agreements, MOUs, and strategic direction. This could be a matter of making a campus lead or designating the CFO or another individual as the signature authority.
- Assess if actual scope of position is currently in line with the PD. A member's personal inclination was that the job duties for this position are incompatible to be rolled up into the other positions under the CFO, and that the CFO's duties preclude taking on those duties. However, more review of this position would help to solidify that belief. A concern the member had was that, by having the tasks absorbed by other areas, critical risk management issues might not be given due diligence or scrutiny due to competing job duties in the other positions.
- Risk is clearly a cost that is most efficiently borne by the system office so as to maximize economies of scale, particularly for insurance purposes. However, this position is currently vacant, and its tasks absorbed by other positions. Might this be an opportunity to redistribute the work of this office across other positions in finance? If so, it suggests a way forward to reduce the number of executive administrative positions by consolidating, reducing level of work, and/or distributing the existing work across other positions. Perhaps a combination of the above options present the best way forward.
- Particularly notable feedback included: "Chief Risk Officer (Vacant) - while it has been a few years since I worked with this position I do feel it can be eliminated. Risk Management should occur at the university level, with the system office coordinating insurance policies on behalf of the three institutions. In this paradigm we would only need someone to manage the insurance office."
- With the current pandemic each of the universities had their Risk Management and Emergency Management folks working together. Is this a necessary position-considering the universities have people in place that communicate with each other?
- Each university needs a risk management officer to address specific concerns and issues. Before a decision is made to fill the currently vacant position, the university should carefully consider whether doing so will result in the duplication of work and responsibilities.

Not reviewed:

[Chief Treasury Officer](#)

[Dir. 529 & UA Scholars](#)

University Relations

VP Univ. Relations/Chief Strat. Budget

FY20 Department Budget (UR/Budget, Government & Federal Relations) - \$1,546,795.94

Contractual Expenses - \$85,483.02

Employees - 6

[Position Description](#)

[BOR Policy](#) P02.02.050. Chief University Relations Officer.

This position serves as the chief officer of the university for internal communications and external relations. Roles include responsibility for university public affairs, government relations, and development; representing the board, the president and the university with external constituencies, government relations and development; coordinating the development and implementation of systemwide policies and guidelines for the solicitation of private funds; and directing systemwide fundraising activities in coordination with the campus staff and the University of Alaska Foundation.

[BOR Policy](#) P02.02.080. Strategy, Planning and Budget Officer.

The strategy, planning and budget officer acts as top level advisor to the president, university officers, and the board on matters relating to the university's budget, strategic university organizational planning, and state accountability processes; develops the UA system operating and capital budgets required by the state; develops long-term strategic and corresponding financial plan, which provides annual budget financial stability and is responsive to future university fiscal forecasts; maintains a system of planning, analysis, performance assessment, state legislative liaison, and accountability processes that result in effective alignment of UA institutional resources and activities with board strategic direction; maintains systemwide management information and reporting in support of national and state accountability expectations, strategic planning, and decision-making processes; creates a strategic and operational planning team consisting of the Offices of State Relations, Facilities and Land Management, and Institutional Research and Analysis, closely coordinating with others who will support the office on a priority basis whenever necessary, such as the Offices of the Comptroller and Public Affairs. The strategy, planning and budget office works with the vice president for academic affairs and research on strategic direction initiatives that require resourcing a systemwide approach and/or budgeting/accounting/analysis expertise, so as to facilitate systemwide decision-making and implementation.

Rationale for affirmation

- This position is a key point for accountability in multiple areas including budget, land management, government relations/state relations, public affairs and development (UA Foundation.)
- Second to the University President this is a key figurehead for the university system and a primary point of contact for many stakeholders.

- Due to previous administrative consolidations this position oversees departments previously managed by two separate university officers. Further consolidation or expansion of scope is not recommended.

Rationale/Suggestions for reorganization

- This is a position that has taken on many related but somewhat disparate tasks. Clarity could be gained by streamlining the position.
- Reclassify from VP to Chief, adjust compensation accordingly (positions should not be built to fit any specific individual).
- If the job duties for this position increase, it may be untenable for one person to handle them all. Especially in light of the administrative burden that the land grant fulfillment will be providing.
- The VPUR function has two components: university relations and chief strategist for budgets. These two functions are separate in how they support the academic mission of the universities. Neither of the two functions directly support the academic mission but have a peripheral impact. This position could be eliminated and the functions can be accomplished as discussed in the following subsections.

Dir. Planning & Budget

Position Description not available

Rationale for affirmation

- The director of budget plays a key role in relationships with the State of Alaska OMB.
- At UAF, the OMB "forward planning" portion was broken out from the Financial Systems office (now known as OFA) around 2010. It has been extraordinarily useful to break out the forward planning from the day to day, and it feels counterproductive to try and merge those two very separate duties back into one role at the system's office level. So this is the liaison role to the legislature and is more a governance body.
- This is an important function that should have a presence at the System Office. Greater transparency in relation to CFO would be beneficial.

Rationale/Suggestions for reorganization

- The Director of Planning and Budget could exist as an EX or FR position but should report to the Chief Finance Officer (CFO). This will ensure that all financial and budgetary functions are efficiently handled through one office. The support for this position can be accomplished by additional staff recruitment.

Dir. State Relations

Position Description not available

Rationale for affirmation

- This is a necessary and unduplicated position. Greater emphasis on year-round advocacy will benefit the entire university system.

Dir. Federal Relations

[Position Description](#)

Rationale for affirmation

- The relationship with our Federal Delegation, funding agencies and offices is very strong.
- This is an important function that should be maintained at the System Office. Federal relations must be centralized and handled in the system office.
- No change is needed or possible.

Rationale/Suggestions for reorganization

- The Director of Federal Relations could assume the VPUR component of University Relations, the Director of State Relations and also the component of AVP public affairs. This position can exist as an EX or FR position reporting directly to the President. It could also be a senior staff person. The support for this position can be accomplished by additional staff recruitment.

AVP Public Affairs

Office of Public Affairs

FY20 Department Budget (Public Affairs) - \$565,379.14

Contractual Expenses - \$140,054.32

Employees - 3

[Position Description](#)

The role of the System Office of Public Affairs differentiates in scope and focus from the university relations/advancement functions on the universities in several key areas. This office oversees all Board and Presidential communications, assists in government relations, provides strategic counsel on matters of public relations and has been increasingly charged with monitoring and improving the reputation of the university. The AVP heads the PR Council, comprising university communications leads, and coordinates communications and system marketing efforts with the three universities and the UA Foundation.

Recent contractual expenses include the UA Strong advocacy campaign, public opinion research, media monitoring software and marketing efforts in collaboration with the universities.

Rationale/Suggestions for reorganization

- This is a key area that should remain in the System Office, but there is an opportunity to look at a revision of the position. The PD still has it listed as a Director with 25% duty for Federal Relations. The current occupant is an AVP and does not lead in that role. There

is opportunity to redefine this position as a Director level, effectively reducing the number of AVPs at the system office.

- Reclassify from AVP to Director.
- This position also has a high degree of utility, and much of the work must occur. However, the span of control seems to overlap in part with Chief Strategy and VP University Relations. Could highly-qualified staff take on the roles of executive level administration to carry out the same tasks? If so, here too would be an opportunity to consolidate executive leadership positions.
- Combine this position with a reclassification of the VP University Relations as Chief Officer of University Relations & Public Affairs.
- The AVP Public Affairs tasks are being accomplished by faculty, staff and administrators of each individual university through public service, outreach and community relationship. Hence, the function of this position is redundant and the position could be eliminated.

Chief Land Officer (Vacant)

Position Description

Rationale for affirmation

- The signature authority for this position currently resides with the VP UR/Chief Budget Officer. Removing the burden of oversight to that already large role could lead to efficiencies elsewhere.
- There's value in recruiting for this position especially if the UA Land Grant fulfillment progresses.
- The specific role of this position vis-a-vis the three different universities should be clarified. In other words, is each individual university a land grant institution? This should be made clear and how the function of this office interacts with each of the individual universities in the land grant mission should be clarified.

Pres. UA Foundation/Chief Development Officer

UA Foundation

Department Budget FY20 - \$1,245,338.83

Contractual Expenses - \$555,978.03

This position is key to the dual employment of all Foundation employees and the recent move to make Foundation employees removed from system accounting but still maintain employment benefits and payroll.

While this position was not reviewed as part of this process, we did receive a number of comments that indicate an urgent need for improved relationships in the development area.

- This relationship between the Foundation and the Universities has been especially fraught, and even more so with the advent of a Systemwide Campaign effort.
- Fundamentally, the Universities believe the Foundation exists to support the front-line fundraising efforts at the Universities, however the staff at the Foundation act as though the Foundation itself makes decisions for the Universities. This misalignment of understanding and expectations is a primary source of angst and grief on all sides.
- UA System Office and/or the Foundation could provide better support for the Universities by enhancing the quality and access to national trend info, constituent data, prospective donor research and increased reporting.
- Donors have an association with the universities, their students, and their programs. The Foundation should be managing the trust to meet the needs of the universities - it has felt the opposite for a while now.

Office of Information Technology

Chief Information Technology Officer

FY20 Department budget - \$13,599,287.35

Contractual Expenses - \$7,536,396.79

Employees - 53 (down 26 from FY10)

Chief Information Technology Officer

[Position Description](#)

[BOR Policy](#) P02.02.070. Chief Information Technology Officer.

Responsibilities, duties, and powers of the CITO include to advise the president, other university officers, and the board in matters related to information technology systems and services; be responsible for the university core information systems and services infrastructure including the integrity of data and the security of systems and services; be responsible for and coordinate the development and implementation of systemwide information technology standards subject to regents' policy and university regulation; oversee budget development, allocation coordination, and implementation of information technology capacities; represent the university with external information technology and telecommunications agencies and companies; administer and guide interpretation of regents' policy and university regulation concerning information technology; ensure effective procedures and controls for telecommunications, hardware and software purchases, and software license compliance; develop and maintain consistent measures for delivery of information technology services across the system; and coordinate with the campuses for planning and adopting best practices in the management of information technologies and services.

Many of the contractual expenses involve Internet connectivity for 17 campus locations, management of the data center, enterprise-level software, and more recently, increased need to outsource operations due to staffing shortages.

Rationale for affirmation - Additional Investment

- The Office of Information Technology is critical to the university. Recruitment, retention and competitive hiring practices will be vital for the university to continue to develop a more robust and streamlined online position. More needs to be done to support and improve our IT resources.
- This is an area where it makes the most sense for the System Office to lead and provide the necessary technical support to the respective universities. It's likely that we're understaffed in this office.
- OIT is critically understaffed, and is vital to university functions. Of more concern, is the fact that we are unable to hire enough techs to keep systems running and thus are contracting out duties to private entities that would normally be handled by staff. This feels like it is a stop gap measure, but the most important issue that needs to be addressed is employee acquisition and retention in OIT, due to its necessity for the functioning of the University system.
- This office is strategic to the academic mission of all the three universities. Hence, the current positions of CITO, ED Application Services and ED Infrastructure and Cloud Services should be retained and further strengthened with staff IT professionals. It is critical that the ED User Services (non-EX) function should be strengthened with more staff professional support. The Chief Information Security (non-EX) function is also critical to the academic mission of the universities.
- A member's general observation has been that the office is not being able to provide timely support to academic functions. This office needs to be more efficient or the functions may be served better on individual MAUs.

ED User Services

- This is a campus IT function and should retain campus-based leadership.

ED Application Services

- This area would benefit from increased staffing and support. Our information systems and enterprise programs are fundamental to the operations of the university and should get further investment and improvement.

ED Infrastructure and Cloud Services

- This office provides services to the entire university. Ensure adequate staffing.

Exec. Officer

- As a large enterprise operation it makes sense for OIT to have its own business office and an EO to oversee the finances, procurement and management of large contracts and services.

Chief Information Security

- Information security is a critical need for the university. Growth in this area is expected and necessary.

Academics, Students and Research

VP Academics, Students, Research

FY20 Department budget - \$671,141.80

Contractual Expenses - \$138,587.98

Employees - 3

Position Description

BOR Policy P02.02.017. Chief Academic Officers.

As chief academic officer the position oversees the university system's educational, research, and public service programs, assisted by the chief academic officers and research leads of the three universities. The chief academic officer responsibilities include articulating the overall academic mission internally and externally; assigning the scope and responsibility for implementation of the mission; the administration and supervision of overall planning for instructional, research and creative activity, and public service programs; academic development and program review; advising the board on the status of current academic, research, public service, and student service programs, the need for the addition or deletion of programs, and related facilities, funding, and equipment; facilitating student access to courses, programs, academic support and student services; the review, revision, and administration of faculty human resource policies and procedures; consulting with systemwide governance and university general counsel on matters of academic policy and university regulation; diversifying and expanding external funding, the development of intellectual property, and the engagement of undergraduate and graduate students in research; and consulting with the chief finance officer, the chief information technology officer, and the vice president for university relations on issues related to academics, student services, public service, and research.

The university chief academic officers will also be responsible for advising the chancellors and the chief academic officer on the needs and condition of the academic programs of the universities as well as the need for the addition or deletion of programs in the university service area.

Contractual expenses included facilitation of academic reviews.

Rationale for affirmation

- This is an important, but misunderstood position. Academic decisions are made at the individual campus level. This position provides a direct link to the Board of Regents and the Alaska Legislature from a system-level perspective. As chair of the BOR Academic and Student Affairs committee this is an important liaison between the universities and the policy-making board. Coordination happens largely at the university level, but there are system level efforts that this role oversees. As one of the few former faculty

members at the system level this position is able to provide key perspective and insight to the president's cabinet.

- As a liaison for the campus units engaged in these activities to the BOR and the legislature, this position serves a valuable role similar to the CFO/Title IX in disseminating information from those entities and coordinating/providing context and support for the campuses to move forward.

Rationale/Suggestions for reorganization

- Consider consolidating the executive positions currently in the Vice President's office (including the VP of Academics, Students, and Research, AVP of Student and Enrollment Strategy, AVP of Workforce Development, and the Director of Data Strategy & Institutional Research) into the President's Office and reclassify the positions as 'liaisons' to the respective Universities and could be retained at a senior staff or faculty level.
- The positions of VPASR, AVP Students and Enrollment Strategies and AVP Workforce Development are all functions that are assumed by individual universities. These positions should be eliminated from SW. All functions in this office can be transferred to individual MAUs where these functions can be most efficient and effective.

AVP Student & Enrollment Strategy (Vacant)

FY20 Department budget (SES) - \$522,844.67

Contractual Expenses - \$249,141.16

Employees - 2

Position Description not available

Contractual expenses include the implementation and marketing of MyFuture Alaska, and graduate surveys.

Rationale/Suggestions for reorganization

- Some of the duties previously done by this position can be moved elsewhere including ASR (surveys and research) and Equity and compliance (FERPA) .
- What needs to be returned is a Banner manager for student services and a position (less than AVP) to assist with student services tools, training and resources. Focus on improving current systems not bringing in top-down "solutions" that don't resonate with the campuses.
- Eliminate MyFuture Alaska and focus on UAOnline improvements (or replacement) and Banner Student support.
- Get backdoor functions coordinated, make Salesforce data shared instead of siloed, and really focus on streamlining student services in coordination with, not to or for, the universities. Move the resources currently under student and enrollment services into a more accessible location.

- This position could be "downgraded" to support Banner Student issues. That role is critical, while the rest of the roles have mostly been farmed out to various campuses. However, given short staffing at OIT, having a Student equivalent to FinSys banner support is a critical role.
- Consider reclassifying from executive level position within VPASR to liaison or director to MAUs with reporting line to the President's Office.

AVP Workforce Development

FY20 Department budget - \$260,220.85

Contractual Expenses - \$106,547.50

Employees - 1

[Position Description](#)

Rationale for affirmation

- This is an effective and necessary position for coordinating with the legislature and external agencies and representing the university in workforce initiatives. Good relationships with the Community Campuses have been built.

Rationale/Suggestions for reorganization

- Consider reclassifying from executive level position within VPASR to liaison to MAUs with a reporting line to the President's Office.
- Consider transferring the responsibilities of this position to the universities.

Director Data Strategy & Institutional Research

FY20 Department Budget (IR) - \$483,345.94

Contractual Expenses - \$111,191.00

Employees - 5

[Position Description](#)

Rationale for affirmation

- IR has struggled with staffing capacity, data consistency and timeliness of response because of the first two areas. Greater coordination between the system and universities would be highly beneficial. Making the system position more in-line/equal with the campuses was a good start. Pursue the collaborative Knowledge network presented by the IR team during Strategic Pathways:
<https://www.alaska.edu/pathways/files/3.2-IR-Report.pdf>
- Position was downgraded to director already, and appears to have moved entirely to a coordinating central role. Would like to see input from both the campuses and this position as to how the new structure is working out. Cautiously optimistic.

Rationale/Suggestions for reorganization

- The position of Director of Data Strategy and Institutional Research should be reduced to a senior staff position reporting directly to the President. This position should be restructured into a liaison staff position that interacts with the Provosts and gathers information to develop policies for the BoR. There could be two senior staff positions reporting directly to the President, one for Institutional Research and Data Strategy and the other for Academic, Student and Research policies.

Conclusion

Between December 2020 and May 2021, this committee reviewed the System Office with a particular focus on executive positions, mission alignment, and budgetary expenditures. After five months of research, discussion, and interviews, committee members have learned much about the internal workings of the office and gained a greater appreciation for the effort that occurs across the university system to ensure a quality student experience. The committee affirms that the University of Alaska system must always place students at the center of its mission, and that requires an effective and efficient administration.

The committee further recognizes that the modern university is at its core an institution that has two primary and interrelated functions: the education of students and the proliferation of scholarly research. Administrative tasks at the System Office that do not contribute to those core functions must be rigorously evaluated and, ultimately, curtailed or eliminated. This committee has provided loose guidance on where the System Office is uniquely situated to further the academic mission of the university system and support the three separately-accredited universities. However, it will be the interim and incoming president who we hope will take action on our recommendations.

Recommendations contained in this report broadly echo those advanced in the Statewide Transformation Team Report (2015), the Fisher Report (2011), and the MacTaggart Report (2008). The Fisher and MacTaggart Report correctly predicted that general fund support would eventually and perhaps significantly decline. In response, the three reports proposed that the System Office act with greater clarity and purpose, as well as with a reduced footprint. The Transformation Team suggested that the office adopt a mission statement that explicitly articulates its function as one of support rather than leadership. The committee affirms the need for the System Office to craft a clear mission statement that spells out in precise terms the purpose of the office, its span of control, and where it fits in the broader mission of the University of Alaska system.

Finally, the System Office might at once function better and improve its relations with the three universities if it streamlined its operations and emphasized an essential menu of core services. This would have the additional benefit of providing opportunities for reducing costs amid declining enrollments and budgets. We believe this report has shed light on where the office is

well positioned to focus its efforts and where it might be advised to defer administrative functions or leadership initiatives to the three universities.

The committee thanks those who participated in the review and reiterates the broad consensus of its members as grateful for the opportunity to explore the administrative structure of the System Office more deeply. This has been a positive and productive experience.

The committee recommends a periodic review process to remain adaptive to changing circumstances and ensure long-term institutional effectiveness.