

# Alaska State Legislature



October 7, 2019

John Davies, Chair  
University of Alaska Board of Regents  
PO Box 81781  
Fairbanks, AK 99708

James R. Johnsen, President  
University of Alaska  
P.O. Box 755000  
Fairbanks, AK 99775-5000

*Delivered Electronically*

RE: University of Alaska Intercollegiate Athletics

Dear Chairman Davies, President Johnsen, and members of the Board of Regents:

The difficult choices the University of Alaska is going to make in the next few months will have a profound and lasting impact on the way the University serves the students, residents, and businesses of the state of Alaska. As the Board of Regents and University Administration move forward in evaluating how to handle budget challenges through further consolidation, we want to emphasize our support for maintaining intercollegiate athletics at both UAF and UAA.

The college experience for students needs to be balanced and include more than academics. College athletics is an integral part of the total University experience. The presence of an athletic program on each campus helps to recruit and retain students from diverse backgrounds, both within Alaska and from locations around the globe. Many students, who might not otherwise experience Alaska, utilize athletic scholarships to take advantage of the opportunity to receive their four-year degrees at the University of Alaska. A significant number of these graduates remain in Alaska to pursue careers and raise families, providing a long-term benefit to our state.

Strong athletic programs and other activities that unify the college community and their alumni can significantly increase the levels of community and alumni support. Our athletes serve as brand ambassadors for the University of Alaska and are one of the most visible ways each campus interacts with their respective communities. Through training and competition, athletics help to prepare our next generation of leaders, while also building a sense of spirit and ownership in each community.

While we acknowledge different options exist, our preference is for the continuation of intercollegiate athletics as complementary programs at both UAF and UAA. Regardless of the Board of Regents' decision on the future structure of the University, the presence of both intrastate and interstate athletic competition should be an important component of that vision. That does not mean we will not have to

make changes, or that the expectations of campuses, programs, and donors will not evolve. However, we are concerned that consolidating athletics into a single community would complicate conference membership and jeopardize the very survival of intercollegiate athletics in Alaska.

We recognize that ultimately the Board of Regents and University Administration have the final responsibility for these decisions and do not wish to overstep our authority. However, we want to provide these comments as you contemplate what course to take. The Alaska House Majority supports the University of Alaska and looks forward to discussions in the upcoming legislative session about how to ensure its ongoing excellence.

Respectfully,



Rep. Bart LeBon  
House District 1 – Fairbanks



Rep. Steve Thompson  
House District 2 – Fairbanks



Rep. Adam Wool  
House District 5 – Fairbanks



Rep. Ivy Spohnholz  
House District 16 – Anchorage



Rep. Harriet Drummond  
House District 18 – Anchorage



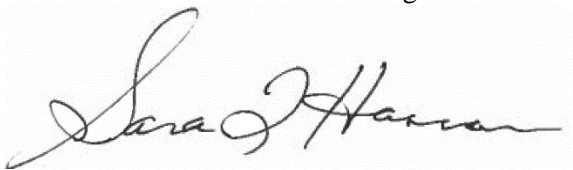
Rep. Matt Claman  
House District 21 – Anchorage



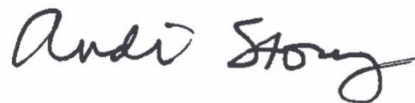
Rep. Chris Tuck  
House District 23 – Anchorage



Rep. Chuck Kopp  
House District 24 – Anchorage



Rep. Sara Hannan  
House District 33 – Juneau



Rep. Andi Story  
House District 34 – Juneau

Davies and Johnsen  
RE: University of Alaska Intercollegiate Athletics

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Rep. Daniel Ortiz  
House District 36 – Ketchikan



Rep. Bryce Edgmon  
House District 37 – Dillingham

CC: Regent Anderson, Regent Bania, Regent Buretta, Regent Garrett, Regent Hargraves, Regent Hughes,  
Regent O'Neill, Regent Parker, Regent Perdue, Regent Teuber