

Friday Focus: Responsibility, accountability and ownership

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— By Anupma Prakash, provost and executive vice chancellor

UAF began proactive [strategic enrollment planning](#) in the fall semester of 2018. Since then, our administrators, faculty, staff, and students have worked together to implement dozens of action plans that have improved our operations, enhanced our reputation, and increased our enrollment (and revenue) despite a nationwide decline in enrollment trends. And we know there is more we need to do. New data from the Census Bureau indicate not just one, but [two demographic cliffs](#), which will result in fewer high school graduates across the United States. In Alaska, when population figures are adjusted for the likelihood of attending college after high school, this results in a sharp enrollment decline that we are already witnessing. The University of Alaska Board of Regents has emphasized the urgency of addressing this challenge by increasing our share of new students in the competitive enrollment market and by focusing on retaining and graduating the students we enroll.

Last week, at a special meeting of the BOR Ad Hoc Committee for Recruitment, Retention, and Graduation, the Board's consultant, EAB Global, Inc., presented the [University of Alaska Systemwide Attainment Framework](#). The report provided a data-driven analysis of recruitment, retention, and graduation at UAA, UAF, UAS, and the system level, along with specific recommendations for growth in these areas. It also included a discussion on the resources needed to increase enrollment over time, as well as what the state can expect with greater investment.

Yesterday, the BOR Ad Hoc Committee met again and discussed at length the importance of a deliberate focus on instituting impactful practices in recruitment and retention. We will continue to embrace the Regents' priority by scaling up our enrollment and student success efforts to elevate the university, the system, and the State of Alaska. Achieving this will require leadership at all levels and collective effort to propel the university in the same direction.

What does such leadership look like? It requires no title. True leadership is when individuals take extreme ownership — taking initiative, laying out plans, and making things happen. Ownership goes far beyond responsibility and accountability. It's often said that at our university, enrollment and student success are everyone's responsibility. This responsibility is part of our jobs, but it's important to distinguish between responsibility, accountability, and ownership. This [video](#) explains it very well. Responsibility is typically task-focused and can be assigned. Many tasks have measurable outcomes through tangible metrics. A good employee will hold themselves accountable for the tasks assigned to them, and a good supervisor will hold both themselves and their team members accountable for results. Ownership, however, is internal and personal. It's about agency and cannot be assigned.

UAF's progress in enrollment and student success is due to the many silent leaders who take ownership, plan initiatives, embrace responsibilities, and hold themselves accountable for the outcomes. To scale up our efforts and successes in recruitment, retention, and graduation, we will need self-driven leadership from every member of our university community. Together, let's step up, take ownership, and drive the change that will move the university forward to even greater success.

Friday Focus is written by a different member of UAF's leadership team every week.



UAF photo by Eric Engman

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