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September 14, 2016

University of Alaska Board of Regents
c/o Ms. Brandi Berg, Executive Officer
P.O. Box 755300
Fairbanks, AK 99775

Re: Regents’ Agenda Item 9, Single vs. Separate Accreditation

Dear Members of the Board of Regents:

Dr. Dana Thomas’s report gives the Board quite extensive cautions about moving to single accreditation and recommends against proceeding. However, what is missing in this 75-page report is an exploration of why single accreditation has apparently worked so well for Arizona State University, which has become—as its highly successful president, Michael Crow, has presented—the “New American University” in its structure, access, and engagement with the state.

The report, page 3, states: “Separately accredited institutions and multi-campus institutions with single accreditation (public or private for profit [*sic—should be “not-for-profit”*]) typically have chancellors and a full contingent of vice chancellors at each campus of sufficient size so administrative cost savings related to single accreditation are not apparent. **Arizona State University is an exception, with a single president and provost and a single dean for each major area serving all its campuses.**”

Aside from three brief mentions later on—including one on page 23 conceding that Arizona State’s leadership model is “innovative”—the report does not include further analysis of the Arizona State example. This is a noteworthy omission given that the system currently provides access to over 91,000 students while simultaneously maintaining one of the fastest growing research enterprises, with 2015 research expenditures totaling \$450 million, and that it was able to consolidate accreditation **less than four months** after its evaluation team’s site visit in 2006.

Moreover, Arizona State is not the only major public university system to maintain single accreditation successfully. Penn State University has had a single accreditation for 24 campuses that span several Carnegie classes, from the research intensive main campus to the many small branch campuses, including those that primarily award associate’s degrees.

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University of Alaska Board of Regents

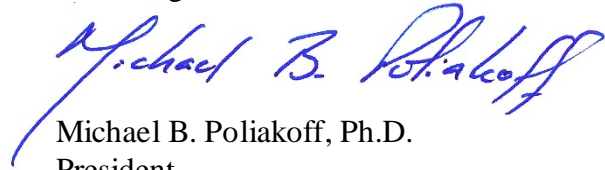
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Given the seriousness with which the Alaska State Legislature has asked the Board of Regents to determine the costs and benefits of pursuing single accreditation, the Board should insist on a much more detailed analysis of how and why these institutions have achieved such apparent efficiencies. Dr. Thomas's report includes extensive quotes from Dennis Jones, past president of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, Terrence MacTaggart, former chancellor of the University of Maine and Minnesota State University Systems, and Barbara Brittingham, head of the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, a regional accrediting agency, on the pros and cons of single accreditation. **The Board should likewise ask for statements from Arizona State personnel and Penn State personnel.**

Thank you for your service to higher education and to the people of the State of Alaska.

Warm regards,



Michael B. Poliakoff, Ph.D.
President

cc: Elizabeth D. Capaldi Phillips, Ph.D., Arizona State University