July 30, 2019

University of Alaska Board of Regents
2025 Yukon Dr,
Fairbanks, AK 99775
(via email: ua-bor@alaska.edu)

Dear President Bodnar,

Gov. Mike Dunleavy’s unprecedented $135 million (41 percent) state funding cut for the University of Alaska and, specifically, his decision to completely cut the state appropriation to the UA museum and all of the University’s annual investments in research is colossally shortsighted and defies understanding. His two-year ‘step-down’ plan would be catastrophic for the state of Alaska and the science community as a whole.

The American Anthropological Association echoes UA President Jim Johnsen’s assertion that the cuts would, in effect, pose a risk to the universities’ accreditation, the funding reduction is still “too much too fast,” it attempts to usurp the constitutional authority of the regents, and it makes unrealistic assumptions about money that could replace state funding.

We can’t overstate the impact this will have on the university and the community at large. Research discovers, elucidates, and evaluates new knowledge, ideas, and the technologies essential in driving the future of society and humanity.

And we certainly don’t have to point out the impact it will have on the students – the future leaders of Alaska. When our next generation of practitioners and leaders engage in research, with its deliberate process and requirements for critical thinking skills, they become better students and are best prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the future. Regionally, nationally, and internationally, research activities and services have critical economic, societal, and environmental impacts.

Zeroing out state funding will be especially devastating for the UA Museum of the North – a treasure trove of the state’s vast and diverse people, places, and wildlife. The museum is a ‘must see” for any visitor and showcases the full spectrum of Alaska’s culture – from ancient ivory carvings to contemporary paintings and sculpture, both Native and non-Native.

We respectfully request that you do what is within your power to ensure the University considers the most appropriate response to these circumstances and how best to transition the UA System.

Sincerely,

Dr. Alex Barker
President, AAA

Dr. Edward Liebow
Executive Director, AAA