

Karen Carey, PhD
Provost & Dean of Graduate Studies
Provost Office
University of Alaska Southeast

Serving Students: GE Assessment and Remote Technology at the University of Alaska Southeast

The University of Alaska Southeast is a regional university serving all of Southeast Alaska through campuses in Juneau, Ketchikan, and Sitka. All three campuses share in the university's decision-making processes and contribute to advancing student achievement and success. UAS is one of three separately-accredited universities that make up the University of Alaska (UA) system. With no community colleges in Alaska, UAS has a broad purpose – providing 'community college' (including occupational endorsements, certificates, and associate degrees), baccalaureate degrees, and graduate degrees within a single institution. Programs are offered either in person or online, in order to meet student needs across the state. UAS is also an open enrollment university and provides developmental education for students not fully prepared for college success.

Southeast Alaska geographically remote from the rest of Alaska and is accessible only by water or air. As the ancestral home of the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples, nearly 20% of the students at UAS are indigenous Alaskans. The overall population of students is over 2,500 and the majority of students are non-traditional who attend part-time. Because of the remote location of UAS, over three decades ago UAS began offering distance courses and programs. Over 50% of the students at UAS take an online course and many are in online programs. Students are allowed to remain in their villages, often in remote locations to complete their educational programs.

In order to meet the needs of students across the state, program description and program student learning outcomes are fully described in the Academic Catalog. Syllabi are published on Blackboard and are available through the UAS online portal. Each syllabus provides a course description and student learning outcomes for every course at UAS and a consistent structure and format is used across courses, programs, and campuses. The Curriculum Committees, both undergraduate and graduate ensure that every course meets these guidelines.

UAS has also devoted a significant amount of time to establish the Provost's Assessment Committee for General Education Learning Outcomes (PAC-GELO). The committee is charged with developing assessment tools (rubrics) and a process to assess the extent to which UAS undergraduate students can demonstrate academic knowledge and skills through the completion of UAS prescribed General Education Requirements (GERs) coursework. General education courses are reviewed and revised as needed to assure at least one of the GERs is addressed in each general education course. The work done by the PACGELO has created the foundation for developing authentic learning assessment for all courses and programs.

Again, due to the remote locations of the UAS campuses as well where students reside and work students have been provided with iPads for the Fisheries Technology program. This program allows students in very remote areas or students on fishing boats to take classes and complete assignments (uploading them back to the faculty member when they have a Wi-Fi connection). Students can download the entire course with one click, complete writing assignments, and create artifacts that they upload and return to the faculty member. For their creative projects, students were asked to use an App or several to find a creative way to teach one of the learning outcomes from their previous lessons. For example, several used Keynote (something like PPT) to re-envision topics, one created a comic strip using drawing tools, one a cartoon creator called Flip a Clip, and one narrated climate change issues over a SIM type video game using a screen capture App called Jing. This program has been very successful and last spring 75 iPads were sent to students around the state. UAS is looking to expand the use of this technology to other programs.