

*Drumbeats 6—Haaghezetolno’
We Will Live Well*

An Evaluation of the Higher Education Project
Sponsored by the U. S. Department of Agriculture at the
University of Alaska Fairbanks

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Prior grants received from the USDA Alaska Native Serving and Hawaiian Serving Institutions Educational Grants Program by the College of Rural and Community Development (CRCDD) of the University of Alaska Fairbanks allowed the college’s five ANSI campuses—acting as a Consortium—to engage in regional needs assessment and to develop place-based career certificates in response to identified needs. Each campus in the Consortium developed a certificate in a specific area of concentration in a USDA discipline.

This specialization resulted in the development of courses, certificates and degrees in the following areas: Veterinary Science (VTS), Ethno-botany (EBOT), Environmental Studies (ENVI) and High Latitude Range Management (HLRM). The VTS and HLRM certificates and the Associate of Science degree were approved in 2007 by the UA Board of Regents. Environmental Studies and Ethnobotany were approved at the September 2009 Board meeting. Certificates have been designed to articulate into an Associate of Science degree.

Drumbeats 6 has been directed at continuing these certificate and associate degree programs and at strengthening the Consortium by providing staff, inviting other ANSI institutions to join and formalizing planning and resource sharing among Consortium members. Because development work on the selected certificates has been largely accomplished, the Consortium also sought input from communities as to new areas in which the university can be of assistance in addressing the needs of rural Alaska. To frame this discussion, the Consortium adopted a focus on subsistence sciences—those USDA target sciences that assist individuals and communities to better understand and improve food, shelter, fuel, transportation and other material aspects of rural/village life.¹

The program had three goals. The first is directed at building the capacity of the

A final measure under this objective in the grant document was for the development of written procedures/MOAs among ANSI campuses covering student/faculty sharing, course delivery and program development. This measure was in response to an earlier evaluation finding that some CRCD directors felt that these issues needed to be addressed region-wide.

Based on the information available from attendance at monthly and quarterly meetings, interviews with USDA directors and regular communication with the program manager, the evaluator finds that these outcomes have been met. All of the CRCDCD USDA campus directors indicated that the Consortium is functioning very effectively and is providing a high degree of coordination and collaboration. This was a considerable change from the 2007 evaluation, when directors expressed concern over the effectiveness and usefulness of the Consortium. All directors attributed the increased effectiveness largely to the work of the program manager and all indicated that they foresaw even greater benefits this coming year, now that the manager has had the experience of one complete grant cycle.

The evaluator notes the smooth development of the grant proposal for 2009/10 as evidence that the Consortium is able to engage in cooperative and coordinated planning; in particular, as one interviewee noted, the group's willingness to allocate resources to areas of need such as the meat packing facility at Northwest Campus and the Alternative Energy position at Bristol Bay. This allocation is quite different from earlier grant cycles when the total was simply divided up equally among the campuses. The Consortium support for cross-regional science faculty meetings, discussed below, is another indication of coordinated planning in the subsistence sciences.

Finally, the evaluator concludes based on the discussion of Consortium members that sufficient procedures exist for sharing students, faculty and courses across both the CRCDCD region and UA as a whole. From earlier conversations and knowledge from evaluations of other programs, however, the evaluator finds that there exist institutional barriers to fully utilizing these procedures, primarily in the metrics used by the system both for budgeting and for reporting to external audiences. These barriers are beyond the control of the individual campuses but could perhaps begin to be addressed through cooperative action by a body such as a system-wide ANSI Consortium.

Objective 2: Strengthen CRCDCD subsistence science courses/degrees through cross-regional science faculty joint academic program development, delivery and review.

The grant supported two cross-regional science faculty meetings which included both USDA-certificate science faculty and basic (biology and chemistry) faculty from all five campuses.

The grant proposal indicated several measures for this objective. The first was for standard course syllabi for general science courses across the region. However, faculty chose instead to focus on ways in which the labs for distance-delivered science courses could be more standardized and improved. This topic was selected because of its great importance not only to the certificates but also to th

distance-delivered science courses. A final measure was for faculty review and comment on new courses and degrees. This has been accomplished through the CRCD science faculty meetings and the science representative on the CRCD curriculum review committee.

The grant document listed as outcomes for this objective the following:

- Coordinated and standardized general and subsistence science curricula across CRCD region
- Cross-listing of courses
- Region-wide review of proposals for new courses/ degrees, including UAF science faculty

The evaluator finds that the first outcome was partially addressed through the discussion and planning for improved science labs for distance science courses. The other two outcomes have been met, as described above.

Objective 3: Enhance the ability of Consortium members to seek out and respond to community needs as they relate to subsistence sciences.

The Consortium chose to address this objective primarily through a community dialog process, building on the expertise of the Cooperative Extension Service. Six dialogs—one in each campus region and one for CRCD as a whole—were planned for the grant period. Four dialogs were completed, in Dillingham, Kotzebue, Bethel and Tok. The Northwest Campus at Nome indicated that it was already engaged in an on-going dialog and so did not schedule an additional community outreach activity. The CRCD region-wide dialog was replaced by the Consortium Advisory Committee meeting in Kotzebue, due to time constraints.

A total of 65 people participated in the dialogs which were facilitated by Bill Hall from Cooperative Extension Service. Fifty-

The evaluator finds that the first outcome was achieved, as evidenced by the number of community members and organizations that participated in the dialogs. The Bristol Bay campus activities following the dialog, described above, indicate that the dialog did provide suggestions for further activities, particularly with respect to environmental issues. The other dialogs were conducted too recently for there to be a university response.

Objective 4: Increase local campus effectiveness in assisting residents in rural communities to

The VTS program supported a total of seven students in AY2008/09; five

Student persistence is a more complicated matter, although overall persistence should increase now that all of the certificates have been approved. A review of student progress to date indicates that most students have focused on content courses—that is, the courses specific to the individual certificates—and have not yet attempted the writing, communication, computation and general science courses that also make up the certificate. And several of those attempting these courses have had to take incompletes although all students have successfully completed the content courses. This finding is not surprising. Evaluations of other certificate and degree programs in CRCDC yield much the same results, most likely because students are engaged in the content but much less interested in general skills courses. This situation is more problematic once students enroll in an associate degree, where the general educational requirements are much more substantial. The efforts to strengthen science labs may help somewhat. However, attention needs to be given to the larger issue of retention.

Summary

Through observation of Consortium activities throughout the grant period, review of documents and student data and interviews with key Consortium members, the evaluator has collected information that documents Consortium success in meeting its goals and objectives.

There is ample evidence that the first goal—that of increasing ANSI capacity to assess and respond to community-identified needs—has been greatly enhanced over the past year. Securing the services of an experienced program manager has allowed the Alaska USDA Consortium to conduct more frequent meetings, engage in joint planning and marketing and reach out to other, non-CRCDC ANSI campuses as well as the Hawaiian USDA Consortium members.

Cross-regional science faculty meetings provided an opportunity for regional faculty to discuss areas of concern and to identify ways in which lab sessions for distance science courses

can be enhanced. (vi)-2(e)-6(w3coC)-2(o)-1(c)4(i)-2(e)4(e)4(ds)]TJ 6.31 -1.1.09C /P <</MCID 7 >>BDC -4.4

In all, 87 students received USDA support during the year. In the two established certificates—

Recommendation 3: