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TO: News Room: ATTN: Schools Section
Peninsula Clarion <safe:morris>

FROM: Suzie Kendrick
Kenai Peninsula College

RE: Weekly Schools Column (published Wednesday, February 14, 2007)

KPC Student Union representatives give legislators an earful

Despite weather that forced their plane to be diverted to Sitka and then to Ketchikan, KPC Student Union officers and representatives arrived in Juneau to participate in the 22nd annual University of Alaska Southeast Legislative Affairs Conference.

“We missed the legislative training session completely, arriving late Saturday night. We weren’t the only students who didn’t make it; all 16 UAF student representatives and the sole Prince William Sound Community College representative were on our plane,” said Danielle Pettijohn, Student Union president at the Kenai River Campus. “On Sunday, the entire group of students who traveled to Juneau came together on the UAS campus for the Coalition of Student Leaders meeting. Many issues were discussed but the main goal was to formulate a common message to deliver to the legislature.”

The message devised by the group revolved around securing full funding of the capital budget request the University of Alaska has submitted to the legislature and the Governor. The slogan “Fund the University-Educate the State; Build Alaska’s Future-The University IS the Pipeline” was the mantra for the students’ lobbying efforts.

According to Pettijohn, the group received a lot of mentoring from current and past legislators who briefed them on how the legislative wheels turn.

“Duncan Harris, our vice-president, was able to get us time with Senator Johnny Ellis and Ellis took us under his wing counseling us on where the budget currently stands. We also interacted with Joe Hayes, a former legislator and alumni of the Coalition of Student Leaders. Mike Davis, also a former legislator, gave us good advice as to what to expect, how to dress and general etiquette advice,” said Pettijohn.

One of the most important meetings that Pettijohn and her group of students had was with Representative Mike Chenault. As co-chair of the Finance committee, the group

recognized that communicating their concerns regarding fully funding the UA budget to Representative Chenault was critical.

“Representative Chenault is a very sharp guy and in his position on the Finance committee he is fully aware of how the budget is laid out. He was clear that ‘his baby,’ in terms of funding education, is K-12. Our job was to always try and remind him that unless the University of Alaska is thriving, successful high school graduates will leave the state to go to college. Just like I did,” said Pettijohn. “I just didn’t believe my Mom when she tried to tell me what a fantastic school KPC is. My Mom graduated from KPC and she has been a sixth grade teacher for a long time. It took two years and \$50,000 for me to realize that going to college in Oregon wasn’t for me. Now I know that KPC is awesome.”

Although they didn’t get an audience with the new Governor, Pettijohn’s group met with Lynn Smith, assistant to Governor Sarah Palin. Their goal was to give Smith a clear understanding of why the University of Alaska is vital to the future of the state.

“We told her that we are the future leaders of the state and that we should be considered a resource to the state that is as important as oil or gas. The University refines us in order to be ready for the leadership roles we will have to fill. Keeping us in the state by providing for facilities that are of the same high caliber as the faculty we have is important. If our building is falling apart and the roof is leaking, it’s hard to take pride in our University. We hope our message is clearly conveyed to Governor Palin,” Pettijohn said.

“The experience was valuable and everyone who went from KPC, including student representatives Kristin Veselsky and Chris Pepper, did a really good job. Duncan Harris was unbelievably professional in all his interactions. Pat Ivey, the executive director of the Coalition, said this year’s contingent of students was the most prepared and professional she has seen. That was a great compliment,” said Pettijohn.

KPC nursing graduates land jobs at Central Peninsula General Hospital

According to Scott Kraxberger, department chair of the Business and Industry division at KRC, seven nurses from the first graduating class of KPC/UAA’s nursing program are now employees of CPGH.

Four nurses are working in the medical/surgical unit, two in the operating room, and one in the emergency department. Kraxberger says that according to CPGH policy, all the nurses are working under preceptors for the first three months of employment.

The other graduates of the first class of nursing graduates are working in hospitals out-of-state and in other local health care settings.

Natural History of the Kenai Peninsula class offered

This one-credit class, taught by Ted Bailey, begins this evening, 4-6:45 p.m., and will meet on Wednesdays through March 14 in room 115.