



Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education

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MEMORANDUM

To: Members, Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education
Through: Diane Barrans, Executive Director
From: Kerry Thomas, Internal Auditor
Date: March 20, 2015
Subject: Internal Auditor/ANSWERS Update

Over the past quarter, my primary focus has been ANSWERS project management and preparation for program implementation later this year. I also continue to participate in the senior management team and perform very limited internal audit activities.

ANSWERS Update

The FY12 SLDS grant project is scheduled to end on June 30, 2015. The ANSWERS implementation team is currently working with the grant funding entity, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), to obtain approval for a one-year no cost extension. The no cost extension will provide an additional year to carry forward and use remaining grant funds and complete project activities in state FY16.

Since the start of legislative session, ANSWERS staff have presented to House and Senate Education Committees, met with individual legislators and staff, and responded to multiple inquiries. ACPE's budget increment to fully fund the ANSWERS program management office (PMO) was removed in the version of House Bill 72 (state operating budget) passed in the House and now under consideration in the Senate. Management is currently evaluating options for administering ANSWERS post grant if this funding is not restored in the final adopted budget bill.

As mentioned in prior reports to the Commission, there is a potential new funding opportunity for ANSWERS. NCES recently issued a request for application (RFA) for a FY15 SLDS grant. Applicants may apply for funding up to \$3.5M per priority area in two of six priority areas and have up to four years to complete the proposed activities. The project team is currently evaluating the grant opportunity and will be discussing this matter with the Department of Education and Early Development to determine if Alaska will submit an application and, if so, under which priority areas.

Project efforts are currently focused on completing system development by April 2015 and publishing the first two public-facing information products for the public by fall 2015. Other activities include planning for sustainability, recruiting for PMO staff, and preparation for transition from a project focus to program implementation.

I look forward to our discussion and seeing you in Juneau at the April meeting.