



# INstitution INsight

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## GREETINGS!



Horsetail Trail, Fairbanks by K. Kussart

In this issue, we spotlight Spirit Path Yoga & Wellness, announce the upcoming Alaska CAN conference, congratulate NIT on achieving accreditation and more! As always, I invite you to send me your feedback or suggestions for future topics.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Kussart'.

## SPOTLIGHT ON...

### Spirit Path Yoga & Wellness

Spirit Path Yoga and Wellness LLC has been authorized since 2013 to offer Ayurvedic education and since 2015 to offer Yoga Teacher Training (YTT). Ayurveda is a Hindu system of traditional medicine, with the goal of assisting the body toward optimal health through the use of herbs, diet, lifestyle changes, yoga, and meditation.

In July, Spirit Path opened at a new location at 505 W. Northern Lights Blvd. in Anchorage. The new facility has a yoga studio, Ayurveda classroom, reception area and multiple small treatment rooms. The treatment rooms are for sublease to practitioners of healing and wellness. Current renters include massage therapists, acupuncturists, a psychiatrist, therapists, a reiki master and ayurvedic counselors.

This expansion of treatment options is in line with owner Cassandra Lidin's goal of "growing Spirit Path Yoga and Wellness LLC to be a leader in the field of alternative health care and education."

At the October 24th meeting, the Commission approved the new location of Spirit Path Yoga & Wellness. Congratulations!



Spirit Path

## **Institutional Authorization program review underway, 1st phase completed**

A project team formed in 2016 to evaluate institutional authorization (IA) regulations. The purpose is to determine if existing processes and requirements are meeting the goals of consumer protection and ensuring minimum standards in an efficient manner. This broad scope review of the IA program will incorporate best practices and efficiencies into the process and identify any associated regulatory changes needed. The goal is not to just make incremental improvements, but to restructure components of the program to best meet current needs in Alaska.

The project is being conducted in phases corresponding to the four major IA processes as follows:

1. Exemption from Authorization
2. Initial Authorization
3. Renewal of Authorization and Amendments to Authorization
4. Complaints

In October, the team presented the outcome of the first review to the Commission. To summarize, the language of the statute is very broad, requiring that almost all entities offering educational credentials or postsecondary education beyond high school meet minimum standards. However, statute also provides for certain exceptions, at the discretion of the Commission, called exemptions. The policy goal in providing exemption is to minimize costs or regulatory barriers for institutions or programs that pose low risk to education consumers. Exemptions are described in the statute and further refined in regulation where a requirement to apply for staff determination of exemption is added. In brief, the team found that the exemption regulations needed improvement in clarity, utility and functionality; and that the regulatory requirement of an application for exemption is time consuming and often duplicative of other oversight without adding value. The team recommended:

- No longer requiring the application for exemption
  - Creating a stand-alone IA website that allow for an automated self-certification of exemption and registration with ACPE, with staff following up if there is a question
  - Providing for a formal staff determination of exemption for those institutions that need such documentation, for an increased fee
- Revising, reordering and simplifying the regulations to bring greater clarity and utility
- Removing exemptions not in use or adding exemptions in use by other states that are allowed under the statute and make sense for Alaska

Any recommended regulation changes must be distributed for public comment prior to being approved by the Commission. Due to the length and complexity of the IA regulations the review is expected to take two years with proposed regulations changes coming at the end of the project.

## **Northern Industrial Training (NIT) granted accreditation by the Council on Occupational Education**

Last fall NIT began the accreditation process with the Council on Occupational Education (COE), a national accrediting body recognized by the US Dept. of Education. COE has a history in Alaska as they are also the accreditor for AVTEC. At the November 2017 meeting of the COE Executive Committee, NIT was granted accreditation for 6 years, the maximum period.

NIT, a family-owned vocational school located in Palmer, primarily offers programs preparatory to employment in the oil, gas, trucking and construction trades. Programs include Professional Truck Driver Institute-certified training and construction courses accredited by the National Center for Construction Education & Research. NIT is also accredited by the American Welding Society (AWS), another national professional organization, as a Test Facility. The approval of these professional organizations verifies that the training is consistent with national training standards.



Congratulations to NIT on achieving accreditation!

## Recent Commission Actions

### October 24, 2017 Meeting

#### Renewal of Authorization

- Southern New Hampshire University (Anchorage)

#### Program Addition

- Alaska Career College (Anchorage ) - Surgical Technology Specialist

#### Change in Location

- Spirit Path Yoga and Wellness LLC (Anchorage)
- Northern Industrial Training LLC (Palmer), addition of auxiliary location at JBER

## Upcoming Events

### January 9, 2018

- Quarterly Commission Meeting (Anchorage and via teleconference)

### March 1 - 2, 2018

- Alaska Postsecondary Access and Completion Network Conference (Anchorage)

**IMPORTANT DATE: January 16, 2018**

**Deadline for receipt of materials for items to be presented at the April 3, 2018 Commission meeting**

## Financial Aid tip - Accreditation not needed to accept the GI Bill

When we think of Federal student aid, we generally first think of Title IV funds that require accreditation. But there is another source of Federal aid, specific to veterans, the Post 9/11 GI Bill. Out of the 17 authorized but not accredited Alaska institutions, 9 have gone through the application process and can accept GI funding. For more information about the requirements to be an approved school for GI benefits click [here](#). To see a list of schools or apprenticeship programs that are approved, you can find the VA's WEAMS Institution Search Tool [here](#).

## Fourth Alaska Network Conference to be held in March Alaska Can - Alaska Will!

The fourth annual Alaska Postsecondary Access & Completion Network Conference is taking place March 1 - 2, 2018, at the Downtown Marriot, in Anchorage, AK. The Network was formed to address Alaska's low ranking (49th in the nation) in postsecondary access and completion and brings together organizations and individuals invested in bettering Alaska's performance. The Network's goal is to increase the percentage of working-age adults holding a high-value certificate, college degree, or other industry-recognized credential to 65% by the year 2025. We invite you to join in this effort.



As the theme "Alaska Can - Alaska Will!" articulates, the Network conference is a time for Alaskans - professionals in education, business, industry, public service - to unite and work together to increase the number of Alaskans enrolling and succeeding in postsecondary education. Our goal is for conference participants to leave the conference:

- \* Motivated by what we can achieve and with a clear purpose for what we do.
- \* Having had the opportunity to network with others committed to this work.
- \* Having learned something new
- \* Committed to collaborating with others

Visit the conference event page [here](#) for complete conference information. The Network is also seeking presenters. You can find the proposal application [here](#). We hope to see you there!



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