September 21, 2010

Dear University Employees:

Yesterday, the university received a copy of ASEA's notice to the Alaska Labor Relations Agency stating that the union is withdrawing its petition to represent university staff. Jim Duncan also wrote a message to staff in which he said that a major reason the union had difficulty in communicating the value of a union to staff was that the university has "actively oppos[ed]" staff's effort to organize and that the university had misstated ASEA's positions on issues. The decision to withdraw its organizing petition was ASEA's decision to make. The university neither misstated facts nor acted in any way to discourage staff from organizing. The union knows how serious their charges are. The truth is that the university presented information and issues for employees to consider, asked employees to research the relative advantages or disadvantages of being represented and asked employees to vote.

Since ASEA announced the withdrawal of its representation petition, many employees have had questions about what the decision will mean to them.

It is important to know that ASEA's action was not merely a request to postpone the election. The petition itself has been withdrawn and cannot be reactivated. The filing of a new representation petition would need to be based on a new showing of interest (at least 30% of members of a proposed unit signing representation cards, submitted to the Agency).

Following a withdrawal of the petition, ASEA and other unions could start a new organizing drive at any time. If an election had been held and had resulted in a majority voting "no union," there would have been a 12 month waiting period before any union could file a new petition. ASEA's withdrawal of the petition creates a situation in which there is no minimum length of time before any union could file a new petition.

Employees have asked about the impact of the petition withdrawal on the university's FY12 budget development, regarding a proposed compensation increase for staff. In the next few days, the university expects to receive formal confirmation from the ALRA that the representation petition has been dismissed. After that, the university can develop a proposed increase in compensation for staff according to its normal processes, for consideration by the regents and inclusion in the regents' proposed FY12 budget. University Regulation provides that the Board of Regents will annually review the staff salary schedule. The university consults with Staff Alliance and considers internal and external factors, including the Consumer Price Index in determining annual salary adjustments. See Board of Regents' Policy 03.01E.2 and University Regulation 04.05.043.

Although the union organizing campaign is over, the university will continue to actively communicate with staff regarding issues the campaign raised. A number of employee communications the university was working on are on topics that are still relevant to employees, such as UA health care plan. Also, the Statewide Administration Assembly (SAA) collected
additional questions from employees at the September 3 union organizing forum and asked the union and the university to prepare written responses. The university will provide its responses to SAA, because employees indicated they would still like answers. The university will also be actively working with staff on the development of the FY12 budget recommendation and on a continuing basis regarding issues such as employee health care.

If you have other questions on these topics, please send me an email.

Sincerely,

Beth E. Behner
Chief HR Officer