Date: May 5, 2016

To: Ardith Lynch, Interim Chief Human Resources Officer

From: Faye Gallant, Chair, UA Staff Alliance

Re: Proposed Revisions to University Regulation 04.07.115 Employee Furlough

The members of the University of Alaska Staff Alliance have reviewed proposed revisions to University Regulation 04.07.115 Employee Furlough and would like to propose the following change to Section E.1. (new wording in red):

The Statewide Office of Human Resources will distribute notice of the president’s approval of a furlough plan to affected employees and staff governance at least sixty (60) days prior to implementation. The furlough plan will specify the amount or percentage of furlough time and the applicable time period.

Staff Alliance believes that an open and transparent evaluation of each furlough is needed, given the hardship such furloughs may impose on staff, and opposes the change to Section E.2.

Additionally, Staff Alliance proposes the reintroduction of limits to furlough, which were included in the final draft of the original regulations reviewed by governance.

Rationale:
Governance and staff representatives were an integral part of the initial creation of furlough regulations and included what were seen as protections for employees including the involvement of governance representation in the utilization of furlough. The rationale for change presented to Staff Alliance during the April 12 meeting does make sense from a management perspective—that governance is not generally involved in that level of budget decisions and that governance should not be notified about personnel decisions prior to affected employees. If the intent of the process is that the President approves each department-level decision to use a furlough, the change noted above may be sufficient. However, if the President will be approving the use of a furlough to be implemented as needed by units, Staff Alliance recommends that governance consultation occurs prior to approval.
Retaining governance representation in the furlough policy is still seen as critical for staff relations. Staff at the University of Alaska are unrepresented, unlike faculty who have unions and a negotiated CBA to help protect their interests. Staff governance would like to track the use of furlough as it becomes more common at the University of Alaska so they can provide members representation, assist with processes and communications, help answer questions and otherwise offer the benefit of support that our representative system provides. Much like a faculty union must be notified if furloughs will affect their members, staff governance needs to know when our constituents are affected.

The proposed changes also remove the requirement for a committee to review furlough, which would allow governance and administration to have an informed discussion regarding furlough implementation and effects. This review process was initially included as a protection for employees and a way to foster trust and transparency; the rationale for removing it is unclear.

Finally, Staff Alliance would like to take this opportunity to propose inclusion of a maximum number of furlough days in regulation. As discussed, a thirteen (13) day limit was present in the final draft version of the regulation that governance reviewed and endorsed, and was a factor in our support. Peer systems and institutions (Oregon State, U. Hawaii system, UNC) include a limit on furlough days, which provides a basic protection to employees, allows employees to understand the worst-case scenario of a furlough for planning purposes, and ensures that furloughs are not taken at a level that substantially impair business operations.

Should you have any questions, I can be reached at fsgallant@alaska.edu.

cc: James R. Johnsen, President, University of Alaska
Daniel M. White, Vice President, Academic Affairs and Research
Tara Ferguson, Director, Compensation