

Pat Pitney
Interim President

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Dear UA employees,

With all adult Alaskans now eligible for COVID vaccines and case rates in our communities relatively stable, President Pitney and the Chancellors are working on planning for more traditional operations in summer and fall, beginning this transition in mid-May. This change is, of course, contingent upon continued progress in managing the pandemic in Alaska's communities, and changes in state and local guidelines. With this shift, we expect on-site work, in-person classes, and full occupancy of our residence halls for the Fall semester.

Over the last year, the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically changed where and how university employees work. We are doing work in ways that we never thought were possible. There have been advantages and disadvantages to working from home, and employees and supervisors all have opinions on how well it works for them and their departments. Post-pandemic, the university would like to allow some flexibility to continue remote work, provided business needs are met.

Starting in mid-May we expect to return to in-person work at certain locations, with remote work available as determined by the chancellor of each university and the UA president for the system office. It is time to also consider what a future UA workplace could look like. I have asked UA Human Resources to lead an inclusive team to develop recommendations. With representation from the system office and all three universities, the [Post-COVID Workplace Team](#) is reviewing current regulations for opportunities to adapt them to guide long-term onsite, remote, and hybrid work opportunities. The team has interviewed senior leadership and started researching what other institutions are doing. They are meeting weekly to develop regulation and procedure recommendations that will allow supervisors the flexibility to make the best business decisions for their departments and allow greater employee engagement. We are anticipating that updated regulations and related guidance will be finalized no later than August 1, 2021.

Employee engagement, feedback and input is vital to the project's success. In addition to the work team, the universities have identified subject area experts to advise on issues including technology and information security, risk mitigation, accessibility standards, facility impact, communications and employee engagement. Another group with representatives from governance groups and advisory councils will keep a pulse on faculty, staff and student employee concerns and general feelings about the post-COVID workplace and to provide feedback to the project team. Important milestones, feedback opportunities and updates will be emailed to all employees as the project moves forward. All communications will be posted on the [project website](#), along with draft regulation changes.

This project is a major undertaking, but I believe it to be the best way forward in a modern and changing higher education landscape. Thank you to everyone for being involved and engaged in this process and for your continued service to the University of Alaska.

Sincerely,
Pat Pitney
Interim UA President