



UNIVERSITY  
of ALASKA  
*Many Traditions One Alaska*

Minutes

**Staff Alliance**

**Special Meeting**

Monday, April 25, 2022

1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

[Join Zoom Meeting](#)

ID: 889 9011 7414

Password: **887113**

(Please mute unless speaking.)

Voting Members:

**Juella Sparks**, Vice President, UAF Staff Council; Chair, Staff Alliance

**Dawn Humenik**, Co-President, UAA Staff Council; Vice Chair, Staff Alliance

**Monique Musick**, Representative, System Office Staff Council

**Lauren Hartman**, President, System Office Staff Council

**Ronnie Houchin**, President, UAF Staff Council

Eric Lingle, President, UAS Staff Council

**Tania Rowe**, Co-President, UAA Staff Council

Michelle Nakamura, Vice President, UAS Staff Council

Call to Order and Roll Call

1. Adopt Agenda

2. Guests

2.1. UA Regents John Davies, Lisa Parker, Scott Jepsen

2.2. Others as Invited

3. Introductions and DISCUSSION

3.1. Each staff governance representative will state their name, university, university department, years of service and greatest concerns for the university

**Chair, Staff Alliance Juella Sparks** has been with the University for 19 years. The budget cuts were pushed to department level. This was not a planned reduction or a downsizing of the mission and the workloads. Staff are overloaded which will slow down our ability to recover and

presents some additional challenges. The biggest concern is that the University will not recognize the impact of these changes on staff and the infrastructure.

**Vice Chair, Dawn Humenik:** Staff has a morale problem and a perception problem, which are closely tied together. The Faculty and community also does not have a point of pride in the University. It would be great to build up morale. We would love to see more UA bumper stickers and more people supporting us by wearing our brand. The current UAA bookstore is tucked away into a small space, which isn't the vibrant space it used to be.

**Regent John Davies:** I was sad to see the bookstore go away. There is no reason why we cannot work with other companies to start to carry our merchandise.

**Dawn:** This is one of the reasons these conversations are so important. It takes teamwork to keep us working in the right direction.

**Lauren:** My greatest concerns for the University are Staff Retention, Staff Capacity, and Staff well being. Every week more Staff members are deciding to leave or deciding to go to a new position with a different University. One of the biggest opportunities would be to let staff know that remote work is a viable option. System Office, HR and OIT have been severely understaffed for quite some time.

**Regent Lisa Parker:** Mr. Boucher is trying to fill OIT positions and it has been a challenge. We need the funds to upgrade our aging IT system.

**Ronnie:** The University is no longer the Employer of Choice for the State. Years of budget cuts have stagnated our wages. The benefit package hasn't shifted much. There has been a reduction in the number of positions without a reduction in scope, mission, or duties. Working at the University isn't what it once was. I would love the University to put more effort into recruiting more employees, tending to compensation and benefits.

**Tania:** Morale has plummeted. No one is impressed with employment at the University. It is so sad, I love UAA. With Staff leaving, we've lost institutional knowledge.

**Dawn:** We are solving the Interim problem but the impact is longer lasting. Chancellor Parnell is in a good position to start building his cabinet. The fact that we are replacing the Interims with permanent positions is positive.

**Matthew Mund:** How can governance work better building trust within the constituents? We continue to have a rough patch in our history. We are all still here doing important work for the mission of the University. The leadership needs to work on supporting staff. We have great supervisors and we have terrible supervisors. The terrible supervisors are the ones that will pump out bitter former employees. We are having a hard time recruiting for governance positions because employees just do not have more time to take on more responsibilities. Deciding to hire President Pitney without due process damaged the trust between governance. When a big decision comes up, it's so important to include governance.

**Regent Lisa Parker:** I hope in 2023 when I am no longer on the board of Regents, whoever is chairing the organization continues to have governance groups actively participate. To all the

governance groups, I have reached out and asked for input on issues and asked for ideas and everyone has been open, providing me with input and feedback.

**Chair Staff Alliance, Juella Sparks:** There might be better onboarding of governance leaders in conjunction with Regents to start building a bridge of communication and clarifying the roles. I've never been asked a question during my testimony during the Board of Regents meetings. Chair Buretta has made comments multiple times to put people at ease. I've appreciated her kindness in her role as Chair.

**Regent John Davies:** The idea of onboarding is a good idea. Governance leaders are encouraged to raise their hand if they have a comment. The Regents fully understood they were departing from the normal process, but did so because of the urgency of the timing. The idea of governance was not forgotten. Because of the position we were with the budget in the legislature, it seemed like the best for the institution to move forward. We do need to move thoughtfully with good governance. I am chairing an ad hoc committee on tuition where we are making decisions about the timing for more governance input.

**Monique Musick:** Governance is the most critical thing that we have for staff to contribute their ideas and thoughts. It's important to model and build integrated decision making.

**Regent Lisa Parker:** My term ends January 2023. I encourage the University to reach out to middle school and high school to educate young students about the opportunities at UA Universities.

**Regent John Davies:** My life focus has been the University. We are trying to stabilize things and build things up after the drastic budget cuts. I hear very well your concerns and will continue to work to make the University a better place. We need to continue working on shared governance.

**Regent Scott Jepsen:** The State had to reshape itself. We are not through the fiscal issues. We don't have the resources to continue operating as we did before. I haven't heard what Staff thinks they could do to decrease their workload. UA is a great University, unique in the United States and in the world. We have continuing budget problems that will take all of us to solve.

**Chair Staff Alliance, Juella Sparks;** We need a vision that is going to solve a lot of disparate problems, which we do not have. The budget cuts without a plan have impacted the University. The problems are multilayered and overlapping. We still have thousands of people that need to get paid, we still have the federal grand fund requirements, the Federal funding requirements. I participated in expedited administrative management committees, expedited program review management. We are a unique University. We have so much we can offer. We are losing ground with a lack of vision and a lack of oxygen. We have a shrinking high school population and graduating numbers to a flaky legislature who might grant funding this year but next year might not.

**Monique Musick:** On a positive note, we've been talking about the concept of a common table. We've been talking about an ombuds office, a place to get solutions for bad managers and issues that drive away the good employees. HR can only do something if someone has broken policy.

**Regent Scott Jepsen:** It would be good to have a conversation about what it would take to make the University a place that would attract and retain talented individuals.

**Chair Juella Sparks:** Slide 7 on the compensation presentation was a complete surprise. We did not know those were being put forward to the Board of Regents. Yes, we hope to have a conversation about that.

Adjourn

Lauren motions to adjourn. Ronnie seconds.