

Pat Pitney
UA President

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RE: Recognizing Juneteenth

June 20, 2022

Dear University of Alaska community,

While many people prepare to celebrate the anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, Black people in the United States celebrate June 19 as their Independence Day. Through the critical advocacy of Black men, women, and youth across the country, Juneteenth is now a federal holiday. Officially recognized on June 20 this year, Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States.

The celebrations held in Alaska communities across the state this past weekend honored the journey Black Americans have traveled in seeking racial justice. It is a time for assessment, self-improvement and for planning the future, for only then can we make significant and lasting improvements in our society. Juneteenth is a day to remember the past and also look forward to how we can continue to provide a safe, equitable and just future for our Black students, faculty, staff, and all Black Americans.

We still have a long way to go on our journey to achieve freedom, equality, and justice for all those still oppressed.

I ask that you take time to think about the history of racial injustice and what we can do in our own lives to address injustice and better serve our communities.

Sincerely,
Pat Pitney, President
University of Alaska