

Pat Pitney

President

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Dear UA Community,

It has been an exciting week across the UA system as the new academic year gets underway. Overall enrollment is better than expected and new student enrollment is up; faculty and students are back in class; researchers are filling the laboratories; and chancellors are preparing for their convocations. In the coming weeks, I will hold a systemwide town hall to share plans and ideas and hear directly from you. More information on this date soon. I hope you will attend.

Despite the excitement that accompanies every new academic year, the recent actions by United Academics (UNAC) have created uncertainty and concern in the university community.

Unfortunately, you may have heard that UNAC filed a complaint with the Alaska Labor Relations Agency (ALRA) earlier this week. The university will respond to the filing in the coming weeks. Once the university responds, the ALRA will look into the issues raised by both parties and ultimately render its decision. This may take months to resolve.

While unfortunate, it is normal for administrative actions like this to take place when unions and management disagree. In fact, this provides a neutral process to resolve such disagreements. However, UNAC's request has impacts. Specifically, UNAC has asked the ALRA to set aside the May 16 implemented contract that is currently in place and revert to working under the expired CBA that was in effect during the budget crisis. The implemented contract contains compensation increases – the expired CBA does not. Reversion to the expired CBA also precludes the university from seeking an appropriation through the normal budget process and timeline.

In a recent news article, UNAC President Abel Bult-Ito, in explaining reasons for filing a claim with the ALRA, stated, "And so we want to increase the pressure on the university." I am disappointed that UNAC has chosen to use the ALRA as a tool to attempt to advance its position in negotiations.

The university will continue to act and bargain in good faith and will continue to seek agreement on all issues – monetary and non-monetary. At the last mediation session on August 31, UNAC presented a series of proposals, which we are reviewing. The next scheduled mediation session is September 19.

Sincerely,  
Pat Pitney, President  
University of Alaska