



## ***Exercise: Preparing for Effective Advocacy Anywhere***

**Directions:** Below are four themes that we are trying to communicate to legislators and the general public to emphasize the importance of our work throughout the UA System. In this session, participants will be broken up into eight groups. Each group will be assigned one theme, and all participants will develop an elevator speech based on their theme. Each speech should be unique to the individual crafting it, but groups can work together to develop key points about the theme. One person from each team will read their elevator speech to all attendees at the end of the exercise, to help prepare everyone to speak on each theme.

Government Relations is a year-round job that requires educating our fellow Alaskans about the university's importance. The goal of this exercise is to find clear ways to communicate that a great state needs a great university – and that it is up to every Alaskan to help support our missions, that in turn, support Alaska communities.

- The University of Alaska drives economic growth and innovation (Groups 1&2)
- The University of Alaska develops Alaska's skilled workforce (Groups 3&4)
- The University of Alaska engages in world-class research, driving discovery and innovation to improve our future (Groups 5&6)
- The University of Alaska improves lives by providing higher education to Alaskans and elevating knowledge of our economic opportunity statewide (Groups 7&8)

Once you are in your group, use the prompt below to develop your elevator speech!

### **What is your Elevator Speech?**

An elevator pitch is a brief, persuasive speech used to spark interest in an organization. They are interesting, memorable, and succinct, and explain what makes the University of Alaska important to all Alaskans. A good elevator pitch should last no longer than a short elevator ride of 30 seconds to a minute.

#### **1. Identify Your Goal**

Start by thinking about the theme your group has been assigned and the audience you are trying to reach. Brainstorm specific examples of how the University of Alaska performs that function. What will resonate with an acquaintance you see at a grocery store, or your colleagues at a Rotary luncheon?

#### **2. Explain What You Do**

Start your pitch by explaining how the theme your group is working on is critical to Alaska's future. If you can, add information or a statistic that shows the value in what you do. Include your personal role in that mission, and at the university. What do you want your audience to remember most about the University of Alaska?



### 3. Communicate Your USP

Your elevator pitch also needs to communicate your unique selling proposition, or USP. Identify what makes the University of Alaska uniquely situated to serve Alaskans.

### 4. Engage With a Question

After you communicate your USP, you need to engage your audience. To do this, prepare open-ended questions to involve them in the conversation.

### 5. Put It All Together

When you've completed each section of your pitch, put it all together. Read it aloud to see if you can say it within 30 seconds to a minute. Then, try to cut out anything that doesn't absolutely need to be there. The shorter it is, the better!

### 6. Practice!

Like anything else, practice makes perfect. Remember, how you say it is just as important as what you say. As you get used to delivering your pitch, it's fine to vary it a little – the idea is that it doesn't sound too formulaic or like it's pre-prepared, even though it is!

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### Postcard Reminder:

Each table has a stack of postcards. These postcards play a crucial role in reminding legislators of the wide range of reasons to support the university.

Please take a minute and write a brief message outlining the reasons why the University of Alaska is important to YOU.

Your message should be one or two sentences that that explain why you personally support the University of Alaska -- whether it's because it serves as an economic engine, prepares Alaskans for the workforce, serves as a center for research and innovation, or offers Alaskans the opportunity to better ourselves and our communities. Be specific! This is our chance to ensure that Alaska lawmakers hear directly from stakeholders about the value the university system brings to our state.

Consider taking a few postcards back to campus with you and encouraging colleagues, friends, and community members to write a message. You can put all the postcards in an envelope and mail them to the UA Government Relations address on the postcard. They'll be delivered to legislators throughout the legislative session.