

UA Board of Regents Office

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UNIVERSITY
of ALASKA
Many Traditions One Alaska

May 1, 2026

Dear UA Community,

I'm pleased to share that the Board of Regents has selected former UA General Counsel and long-time Alaskan **Matthew Cooper** as the next President of the University of Alaska. His start date will be August 3, 2026.

President-Designee Cooper has 13 years of experience at UA, including as General Counsel from 2020 to 2024. He has deep knowledge of the University of Alaska System and is well-versed in federal policies that affect the state. He is also committed to promoting innovation, enhancing the university's Arctic presence, and strengthening student enrollment, retention, and graduation. He currently serves as Of Counsel at Davis Wright Tremaine LLP, a national law firm with offices in Anchorage.

The Board chose **President-Designee Cooper** following a national search led by a search committee, and supported by the executive search firm WittKieffer. The Board considered input from constituent representatives across our three universities, our community campuses, and the system office, who met directly with each finalist in April. **President-Designee Cooper's** background, skill set, and commitment to UA shone through during his interviews and were noticed and embraced by stakeholders. I am grateful to everyone who participated in the listening sessions, the search committee, and the representative meetings.

President-Designee Cooper's professional approach centers on solving conflict through consensus and collaboration, an orientation that has shaped his work as a trusted advisor to public entities, nonprofit organizations, and business leaders across Alaska. He previously served on the Fairbanks North Star Borough Assembly, including two years as Presiding Officer. He has also served on the boards of the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce and the KUAC Friends Group, and is a member of the Rotary Club of Fairbanks.

President-Designee Cooper earned his Juris Doctor from the University of Washington School of Law and his Bachelor of Arts from the University of Puget Sound. His university leadership experience, community engagement, and dedication to the University of Alaska make him the right choice to serve as UA's 18th president, and I look forward to working alongside him and President Pitney to facilitate a smooth transition. We will share more about his plans and engagements across UA in the coming months.

Since President Pitney's last day is May 21, 2026, the Board also appointed Vice President of University Relations Michelle Rizk to serve as interim president between President Pitney's last day, and **President-Designee Cooper**'s start date.

Please join me in welcoming **President-Designee Cooper** back to the University of Alaska.

Sincerely,

Scott Jepsen
Chair
UA Board of Regents

Read more about President-Designee Cooper and the announcement at alaska.edu/pres/pres-search.