



UNAC Connection September 2021

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Covid-19 Update

UNAC continues to await a response from UA Administrators regarding our Step 4 grievance, filed on August 20, concerning worrisome health and safety violations that are directly impacting United Academics members. While UA Administrators have until October 1 to respond, we have requested an expedited resolution, given the unsafe working conditions that some of our members are being forced to endure, such as crowded classrooms (e.g., 130 students in one room at UAA) and denied requests to switch modality from face-to-face to online (e.g., faculty with immunocompromised family at home). We have also implored UA Administrators to improve our institutions' COVID-19 mitigation policies through the following actions.

On August 28, the Representative Assembly passed the following motions:

Motion for vaccine mandate (18 Yea, 1 Nay, 1 Abstain):

United Academics calls on the UA administration to require all students and employees to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19, or have a valid exemption, before being physically present inside university buildings.

Motion to follow CDC Guidelines (20 Yea, 0 Nay, 0 Abstain):

United Academics calls on the UA administration to adhere to all CDC guidance pertaining to COVID-19 for Institutions of Higher Education.

We communicated these motions to the UA administration and received a response stating that they continue to consider their options. Next, we sent the following suggestions to the administration (and received a similar, non-committal answer):

To reduce the strain on our healthcare system, the following strategies should be implemented as recommended by healthcare experts to mitigate the burden of COVID-19 on Alaskan communities:

- *Establish regular onsite testing of employees and students*
- *Establish robust contact tracing and notification systems for all in-person activities*
- *Open on site infusion centers for monoclonal antibodies*
- *Offer 24/7 nursing line to monitor COVID-19 positive employees and students at home*
- *Hire mobile technicians to monitor symptomatic COVID-19 positive employees and students at home*

- *Establish and enforce a COVID-19 vaccine requirement for all in-person activities on campuses*

The non-committal responses, together with the delayed response to our Step 4 grievance, led us to file a complaint with AKOSH (attached below) on September 9 regarding violations of workplace safety in the University of Alaska System. The violations include failure to follow [CDC guidance for Institutions of Higher Education](#) to maintain 6 feet of social distancing for schools without a vaccine mandate and to institute a comprehensive diagnostic and screening testing program.

We are taking these actions because we hear the calls of desperation from our health care workers, some of whom are our members. Our hospitals are at or past capacity, and they are short-staffed. UA should not be contributing to community spread of COVID-19, but current policies undoubtedly are leading to COVID-19 infections with the potential to further burden our overstressed health care workers.

We have also heard the call for stricter Covid-mitigation plans and a vaccine mandate from various faculty groups, including UAA's Faculty Senate Executive Board, UAF's Biology and Wildlife Department, and UAF's Faculty Senate COVID-19 Committee, as well as individual faculty members with expertise in virology, aerosol particulates, filtration systems and healthcare. It is our responsibility to lead the way out of this pandemic by following science.

Please [contact us](#) if you have any questions or concerns.

AKOSH Complaint Insert

Negotiations and Member Actions

Mark your calendars for these upcoming negotiation sessions:

- Monday, September 13 and Tuesday September 14 on Zoom
- Monday, September 20 and Tuesday, September 21 on Zoom
- Monday, October 4 and Tuesday, October 5 possibly in person with Zoom

This Monday, we expect the UA administration team to start by presenting counter-proposals to the 12 articles we presented during the first round. We are also prepared to present three more articles, including a counter-proposal to a partial-article they presented.

Please find some time to log on to hear how things are going. Your presence makes a big difference and shows that faculty members care about the contents of their Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA). This document will govern the next three years of your career, and we can get a stronger CBA with your visible support.

We have requested that the Zoom link stay open the entire day, with an 'on break' message displayed during breaks. The link may be closed during lunch, which we expect to be approximately 12:00-1:00 each day.

Please log on when you have time. We'll resend the link on Monday and Tuesday morning, too.

Here's the Zoom link:

[https://alaska.zoom.us/j/86569278504?
pwd=TEJpdk1wczI4bVdkSVJZS1lTUWVuZz09](https://alaska.zoom.us/j/86569278504?pwd=TEJpdk1wczI4bVdkSVJZS1lTUWVuZz09)

Meeting ID: 865 6927 8504 Passcode: 186474

One tap mobile +12532158782,,86569278504# US

Meeting Reminders



UNAC General Membership Meetings

October 5, 2021 (Tuesday)

5:30-7:00 p.m. AKT

General Membership meetings will be held the first Tuesday of each month from 5:30-7:00 via Zoom for dues paying members. A separate email with meeting information will be sent to dues paying members.

UNAC Executive Board Meetings

Second and Fourth Wednesdays of each month
9:30-11:30

Dues paying members are welcome to observe these meetings. Contact the [union office](#) for the Zoom link.

Welcome to our New Staff

United Academics is pleased to belatedly announce that in April, 2021, we hired Melanie Arthur, PhD, as our new Contract Manager. Melanie replaces Cyndee West, who unexpectedly passed away in January. In August, 2021, we hired Kate Quick, MFA, as our Assistant Contract Manager. Both Melanie and Kate have previous experience as faculty members at UAF and both were active in United Academics, making them familiar with our CBA, workloads, faculty life, and university operations. Our office is now fully staffed and here to help when you need it! Melanie and Kate's contact information is on our website: [Support Staff – United Academics AAUP/AFT](#).

Executive Board and Staff Contact

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Contract Manager - Melanie Arthur, Ph.D.

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Assistant Contract Manager - Kate Quick

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United Academics Local #4996 (UNAC) is the bargaining unit that represents all full-time faculty at the University of Alaska. UNAC is an affiliate of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

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