



Dear United Academics colleagues,

United Academics Local 4996 (UNAC) would like to thank University of Alaska President Pitney for expressing the urgency for reaching a timely agreement on the next Collective Bargaining Agreement in her email [sent directly to all UA employee groups](#) on 22 March 2022. The UNAC team shares President Pitney's desire to reach a fair agreement as quickly as possible and has been actively working towards that goal since negotiations formally began in August 2021. While it is highly unusual for leaders who are not members of the negotiation teams to comment publicly on negotiations, in the spirit of open dialogue and transparency, UNAC would like to offer this response and verifiable account of negotiations.

The UNAC team has done extensive research on other union CBA's, peer university budgets, and cost-of-living differentials. We compiled years of feedback from our members through multiple methods, and we examined economic analyses for the state and the country. Our proposals and our [campaign platform](#) are all available on the UNAC [website](#), along with supporting materials. [Here is a brief summary](#) of our proposals in [Article 15](#), which would be distributed over the three years of the contract.

University of Alaska faculty have only had one 1% raise in the past five years, which represents a loss of purchasing power of over 10% through the end of 2021 with another 7% projected for 2022 due to annual [inflation](#). The UA management team's proposal does not address the accumulated decline in purchasing power of the last five years, let alone that anticipated during the life of the next contract. We are heartened to hear President Pitney reiterate that she supports increasing compensation. We do not believe that we are as far apart on compensation as President Pitney seems to think we are.

Unfortunately, the UA management team has not proposed any compensation increases that were not "packaged" with other non-monetary changes to the CBA, yet President Pitney states, "(a)lthough there is a desire for non-monetary changes, I reiterate the urgency necessary to meet the Legislature's deadlines to ensure funding." These UA management proposed changes include unlimited, unilateral furloughs for any faculty member, anywhere, at any time, and for any real or "possible" budget shortfalls ([BOR regulation 04.07.115](#)). Even a minor furlough would completely erase the 2% increases proposed by the UA management team.

Since we all agree that compensation increases should occur, it is now up to the two teams to negotiate how so and how much. Regardless of the agreed upon amount it is the responsibility of both teams to seek funding for that amount from the Alaska Legislature. UNAC stands ready to advocate on behalf of full funding for our next CBA upon agreement and ratification by our voting members.

The UNAC team never asserted, as President Pitney regrettably claimed in her [March 22, 2022 letter](#), that “funds for this massive increase are available through 1) research grant revenues.” As we have pointed out numerous times, our members are a great investment, in part because of the [revenue](#) they generate for the UA system, but also in the essential [value of their work](#) to the mission of all three universities.

President Pitney went on in her [March 22, 2022 letter](#) to claim that increased compensation could not be accomplished through reallocation. However, [net revenue](#) for the UA system increased last year, and the state budget has dramatically [improved](#). In addition, the legislature can make special appropriations and currently expects a [very large budgetary surplus](#). The timing is right to seek full, fair compensation for our bargaining unit members by all reasonable means.

The UNAC team has acknowledged at the table that reallocation is a management right and ability. In fact, UA leadership has used reallocation numerous times to fund priorities. We believe that the faculty should be a priority. Furthermore, UNAC members have raised and will continue to raise [concerns](#) about how UA leaders choose to allocate funding, and those concerns should be addressed. [Public trust in the University of Alaska](#) is a major concern for us all.

In [her letter](#), President Pitney seemed to imply our team’s proposals to improve the collective bargaining agreement were frivolous in that they were numerous. While we dispute the [UA management team’s quantification scheme](#) because it exaggerates the number of changes, we believe our proposals stand on their merits. Our CBA has served well over its 25-year history, but the merger of UAFT and UNAC in 2018 necessitates numerous changes to the current language. The UNAC team has presented proposals that are meant to reduce turnover (e.g. [Article 9](#), [Article 13](#), [Article 16](#), [Article 17](#)). President Pitney and her staff [presented](#) to the Board of Regents that among UA employees, turnover is currently almost double the Alaska average and nearly triple the national average. Certainly, the monetary aspects of the CBA are a major means of addressing turnover, but non-monetary proposals are [important to our members](#) and also help address our [mutual concerns](#) of [recruiting](#) and [retaining](#) highly-qualified faculty.

The [proposals the United Academics negotiation team](#) has made are reasonable, fair, and competitive and will ensure that UA provides students an excellent and vibrant learning and research environment. We remain committed to the negotiations process and will continue to respond in a timely fashion to all UA management team proposals that are put on the table. We invite all interested to review all the proposals, presentations, and tentative agreements thus far on the UNAC website (<http://unitedacademics.net>).

Alaska deserves a quality university system and UNAC proposals put UA back on that path – it is time to rebuild and reinvigorate the University of Alaska.

Faculty working conditions are student learning conditions.

In solidarity,

Dr. Abel Bult-Ito, United Academics President

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United Academics Local #4996 (UNAC) is the bargaining unit that represents all non-tenure track, tenure track, and tenured faculty teaching more than 51% FTE for the University of Alaska system. UNAC is an affiliate of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

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Website

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