



UNAC Connection - March 2022

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Honor Our Differences

Faculty Matter

That's right. Your work matters. The United Academics Negotiation Team is fighting to maintain and advance the quality of your working conditions, including but not limited to your compensation packages. Bargaining is taking longer than normal; we had hoped to have a new CBA for dues paying members to consider ratifying by this spring, but we are still 11 articles away from a new agreement.

As many of you know, the sessions have been tedious and stressful, with the Administration's Team disregarding all of UNAC's substantial proposals. We have not stopped fighting for those things—real cost of living adjustments, post-tenure reviews as formative not summative, increased retirement contributions, multi-year contracts for non-tenure track faculty, and protections of academic freedom, among

other items—and we will keep fighting until we can reach a fair and competitive contract.

You Can Help UNAC Get a Fair Contract

- Complete this [Faculty Testimony form](#) to tell us how different bargaining proposals would impact your life (real COLAs, UA-proposed furloughs, multi-year contracts, etc).
 - [The image at this link](#) is a sample of what your testimony will look like.
- Write more letters to [President Pitney](#) and [members of the BOR](#) about the tone of bargaining and/or the importance of a fair contract.
- Fill out UNAC's short form to help us collect [personal cell phone numbers and/or personal email addresses](#). We will use these in the future for communications but will not bombard you with messages.
- Follow UNAC on Facebook (United Academics AAUP/AFT local 4996) and Twitter (@unac4996AK)
- Post the three attachments below in your workplace. Fill out [this form to order copies of the fliers from UNAC](#), or print them on your personal computer or at a local print shop. The fliers focus on important items from the bargaining table.

Post the fliers in the following places:

- on your office door
- on bulletin boards
- in your colleagues' mailboxes
- anywhere other fliers are posted
- we want colleagues, students, and administrators to see these
 - To avoid fliers being removed, ask permission from your building supervisor or campus employee responsible for approving fliers.
- Take a photo after you hang fliers up and share the photos with your Organizational Vice President (contacts at bottom of page).




FACULTY ARE COMMITTED TO UA STUDENTS

OVER 1/3 OF UNAC MEMBERSHIP ARE DENIED YEAR-TO-YEAR JOB SECURITY

- 320+ faculty work on 9-month contracts that expire every year and may or may not be renewed
- These members teach many of UA's students or bring in large research grants; in both cases, they earn their wage but get no job security
- Terminal work contracts make it harder for people to apply for housing, childcare, bank loans, and professional opportunities
- Terminal contracts create annual stress of potential job loss for these faculty members, which can have negative effects on health and well-being

WHERE IS THE UNIVERSITY'S COMMITMENT TO EDUCATORS?	ALASKA'S STUDENTS DESERVE BETTER.
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UNAC values multi-year contracts for non-tenure track faculty members across the UA system.
(Proposal - Article 9.1.3 in the QR code)



UA ADMINISTRATION PROPOSES FURLOUGHS FOR FACULTY

The UA administration proposed faculty furloughs in any unit with a budgetary shortfall. At the same time, the Board of Regents voted unanimously on 2/24/22 to end furloughs for administrators.

FACULTY FURLOUGHS ARE NOT THE ANSWER. THE ANSWER IS INVESTMENT IN UNITED ACADEMICS FACULTY.

WHAT WOULD A FURLOUGH MEAN?



FOR FACULTY:

- An unspecified number of days without pay, to be determined by administrators, based on actual or projected budgetary shortfalls.
- Faculty would still be expected to teach their classes and complete research/creative work, or face unsatisfactory evaluations.

FOR STUDENTS:

- Furloughs would be timed during non-teaching contract days
- Lost time for faculty members to prepare for class, lead research, grade student work, and conduct university business
- QR faculty would be forced to work without pay.

FACULTY WORKING CONDITIONS ARE STUDENT LEARNING CONDITIONS




IT'S TIME TO INVEST IN EDUCATORS

- Faculty make less now than they did five years ago
- Faculty have had only ONE 1% raise in the past five years
 - No step increases either
- Cost of living in the last 5 years has increased by more than 10%.
 - In 2021 alone, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for urban Alaska increased by over 7% (Bureau of Labor Statistics)
 - Faculty feel the pinch of this increase with every purchase and monthly bill
- >10% loss of purchasing power results in decreased spending by faculty, negatively impacting local Alaskan economies
- Faculty morale suffers and is reinforced by continued insistence from the Administration's Bargaining Team that the UA system can't afford to invest in faculty

UA CURRENTLY HAS A 10.4% ANNUAL TURNOVER RATE FOR EMPLOYEES:	ALASKA'S STUDENTS DESERVE BETTER.
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THIS IS MUCH HIGHER THAN THE TURNOVER RATE FOR ALASKA (5.8%) AND NATION (3.9%).
(2/24/22 BOR Compensation Update & Philosophy Statement)

United Academics is asking for annual cost of living adjustments of 3% or the current CPI, whichever is greater, to keep faculty salaries competitive and on pace with inflation.
(Find compensation proposals (article 15) on our website)



AAUP Letter Supporting Shared Governance and Union Work

In mid-January, the UA General Counsel's office published an opinion memo citing

conflicts of interest when union leadership participates in shared governance work. Our lawyers reviewed the memo and called it ‘word salad.’ We also asked our affiliate organizations, AAUP and AFT, to review the memo and provide us with a response.

The AAUP and AFT agreed with our lawyer that the memo was faulty, and AAUP wrote a [five-page letter rebutting the General Counsel’s opinion memo](#). [AAUP and AFT jointly endorsed](#) the document. The AAUP letter, along with the endorsement of the letter from AAUP and AFT, are posted on our website and linked here in blue.

Here are a few choice lines from the [AAUP’s letter](#):

“In the section that follows, “Separation of Union and Governance Roles,” however, fact is abandoned for unsubstantiated opinion, and the author (General Counsel) makes several novel assertions sharply at odds with (AAUP) principles and standards, not to mention evidence and logic. Chief among these is the claim that, because “participation by union leadership in governance roles would create a structural conflict of interest whenever governance matters affect union interests,” a faculty union “has no role in governance.”

“The underlying argument, as best as we can make it out, is that faculty members cannot participate both in academic governance and in their faculty union because governance decision-making areas may overlap topics subject to bargaining, such as terms and conditions of employment. This argument is flawed in numerous respects.”

Weingarten Rights

If you find yourself called into a meeting with your direct supervisor that you believe could result in discipline, you have the right to request union representation at that meeting. Contact your Organizational Vice President for guidance. From the [National Labor Relations Board](#) website:

Any meeting may be an “investigatory interview” provided that the following occur:

- A manager, representative of management, or supervisor is seeking to question an employee.
- The questioning is part of an investigation into the employee’s performance or work conduct. During an investigatory interview, a representative of management may require an employee to defend, explain, or admit misconduct or work performance issues that may form the basis for discipline or discharge.
- The employee reasonably believes that the investigation may result in discharge, discipline, demotion, or other adverse consequence to their job status or working conditions.
- The employee requests a union representative. Employers are not required to advise employees of their right to representation and third parties (including union representatives) may not make the request on behalf of the employee.

Prioritize the Academic Mission

The Great UA Resignation

We know that many of our bargaining unit members are feeling burned out. You helped the university weather the storm of 10+ years of state budget cuts culminating in the 3 year "compact," plus the ever-evolving demands of the pandemic; you worked extremely hard without extra compensation and indeed without a cost of living raise in the last five years.

Then, you logged on and watched negotiations, which may make you feel more burned out. The lack of commitment to faculty-essential members of the UA community-being shown at the bargaining table by the administration's team is not helpful.

In [this article](#) from *Inside Higher Ed*, it is pointed out that people are leaving their jobs for a myriad of reasons. Of note, the article calls on supervisors to reflect on how their actions may be contributing to employee departures. To help employees stay in their jobs, the author, Ray Schroder, suggests, "The small things, repeated daily, build an environment that no one wants to leave." If those "small things" existed throughout the UA system – compliments, listening, giving faculty a voice without fear of retribution – it would go a long way towards stemming the high annual turnover rate of [10.4%](#) that UA is currently experiencing.

If you are thinking about leaving academia or just UA for any reason, please talk to UNAC before you go. There are important things that you need to know about your separation from the university system.

One important note is that you have paid for and should have health insurance through August. If HR discontinues your health insurance before then, please contact your Org VP and/or UNAC staff (contacts listed below).



Academic Freedom and Dual Enrollment Students

As dual enrollment students (high schoolers taking college classes) increase, we have been receiving more frequent inquiries about how the presence of minors in the classroom affects academic freedom. The bottom line is that it does not.

No professor needs to change course curriculum due to the presence of minors in classrooms, unless you choose to do so. These students have made the decision to sign up for college classes and should be treated equally to all other college students. Middle College and other dual enrollment students do not diminish professors' academic freedom in the classroom.

In addition, please know that you are not required to speak with any students' parents, even if the student has signed a FERPA release form; the release form *allows* faculty to speak with parents, but it **does not require** such communications.

Faculty Spotlights

On Why We Teach

Dr. Lisa Hoferkamp, UAS Professor of Chemistry



“I liked the individuality that an academic position offered. In an industry job, people are expected to fit into a groove and follow the company line. An academic position allows one to use their unique personality traits as they work toward their goals. I admire individuality among faculty and believe it is what makes for a rich student experience and a strong university. Industry jobs pay more and agreeing with ‘everything industry’ is a part of it. In academia, you typically prove your worth among your faculty colleagues and they in turn give you a certain amount of job security. That’s rewarding and encourages one to try new ways to get better at what they do. If you are always afraid of losing your job, you are not going to take chances and try different things. UNAC has and always will defend tenure.”

On Simultaneously Performing Union and Senate Work

Mara Bacsujlaky, UAF Cooperative Extension Assistant Professor

“Throughout my 15 years as an assistant professor of Extension, I have served both as a faculty senator, a UNAC Representative Assembly member, and most recently and currently as the Organizational Vice President for UAF. I am also currently serving as a senator. My experience serving in both of these entities has given me a deeper understanding of how a healthy academic institution can and should function. Our faculty senates and union each occupy important roles in supporting, implementing, and at times, fighting for true shared governance.

Shared governance with involved faculty is what sets academic institutions apart from businesses, corporations and other non- and for-profit organizations in terms of their organizational and operational climate. Our faculty senates and our faculty union complement each other and ensure that faculty have the academic freedom and fair, equitable working conditions that are essential in a high-quality, fully-functioning university.

Well-represented faculty governance directly contributes to student satisfaction and student success, as well as to excellence in research and service to the university and to the larger community within which it resides.”

Jennifer Ward, UAA Egan Library Associate Professor of Library and Information Science



"For as long as I have been a UA employee, I have also been a member of UNAC—that's twenty years! I've always believed in shared governance and in principles of academic freedom. Together from each of our chairs we can make the university stronger. I am the Outreach Services Librarian and Associate Professor at UAS Egan Library. Last year I decided it was time to share my perspective from decades of experience serving on institutional committees and living and working in Alaska, so I ran and was elected as UAS Faculty Senate President-Elect and as a Representative Assembly Member for United Academics.

I have already learned so much. As Senate President-Elect I also attend the Faculty Alliance, and work with my faculty colleagues from UAA, UAF, and UAS to better understand some highlights of their work and the challenges they face. A few Saturdays each semester I attend United Academics meetings and get updates on negotiations, which is important: a strong and equitable contract for faculty is an essential part of the success of our institution. We are all working to create a brighter future for Alaska and for higher education, and I hope to be of service in moving us all forward and evolving. After I serve as Senate President in AY23 I will serve as UA Faculty Alliance Chair in AY24."

Student Loan Forgiveness reminder

If you have student loan debt, have made regular payments, and have worked full-time for ten years anywhere in the University of Alaska system or at other public

institutions, you should qualify for loan forgiveness under the newly revamped Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program. Our national affiliate, American Federation of Teachers (AFT) has partnered with a non-profit organization, [Summer](#), to help our members apply for and receive PSLF. Go to [this website](#) for more information.

Faculty Member Feedback on Using Summer to get Loan Forgiveness

Dr. Zeynep Kilic, UAA Professor of Sociology

“After paying continuously for 16 years and getting rejected twice, I assumed I had no chance of receiving loan forgiveness and that I would be paying student loans even after retirement. Then I saw a mention of Summer.org in one of the UNAC newsletters. With Summer.org's help, I finally got the PSLF on Dec 23rd- best Christmas ever. I feel \$68K richer.

They sent me an expedited email address and a response to the rejection. It worked immediately. I thought I would get the overpaid sum back (paid diligently for 6 additional years, even during covid to make sure it wouldn't make me ineligible due to stopping payment). However, I was told that since I didn't have the loans consolidated through FedLoan (had to do it to apply for forgiveness in November 2021) I would not receive a reimbursement. That was a sad surprise but regardless, I am beyond grateful.

I am debt free, finally! I even shared the information with a colleague in another state who was told if she pays \$1,000 per month for one year, she would receive forgiveness. Upon using the same response through the expedited line she got forgiveness and a 14K reimbursement check. A million thanks go to AFT, UNAC, and the Borrower Success Team at Summer.org!!!!”

Build for the Future

Legislative Actions

HB 21: A Faculty Regent on the Board of Regents

The Alaska [House Finance Committee](#) is currently reviewing a bill that would add a voting faculty regent to the Board of Regents. [Here is a link to the bill.](#)

On February 19, the UNAC RA passed a [motion in support of HB 21](#). We encourage all of our members to write to their legislators, or members of the house finance committee (contacts below) to voice your opinion of this bill.

To aid you in writing to legislators about this bill, UNAC's Legislative Relations Committee developed [these talking points](#) for your use when writing to legislators regarding HB 21.

HB 220: Retirement Systems-Defined Benefit Option

This bill is aimed at improving the Alaska PERS and TERS systems. [Here is a link](#)

[to the bill.](#) The bill currently sits in the House Finance Committee.

On March 10, the UNAC RA passed a [motion in support of HB 220](#). We encourage all of our members to write to their legislators, or members of the house finance committee (contacts below) to voice your opinion of this bill.

House Finance Committee email addresses:

- Representative.Neal.Foster@akleg.gov
- Representative.Jennifer.Johnston@akleg.gov
- Representative.Dan.Ortiz@akleg.gov
- Representative.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov
- Representative.Bart.LeBon@akleg.gov
- Representative.Adam.Wool@akleg.gov
- Representative.Cathy.Tilton@akleg.gov
- Representative.Kelly.Merrick@akleg.gov
- Representative.Colleen.Sullivan.Reynolds@akleg.gov
- Representative.Ben.Carpenter@akleg.gov

Bargaining Update

Our bargaining updates are all available on [our website](#), under the communications tab. The update for our most recent session will be sent this Friday, March 18.

To summarize in brief, UNAC's Negotiation Team countered the Administration Team's package of all remaining articles with [our own package](#) of all remaining articles. We made some significant concessions while maintaining our most important proposals. Friday's update will go into more detail.

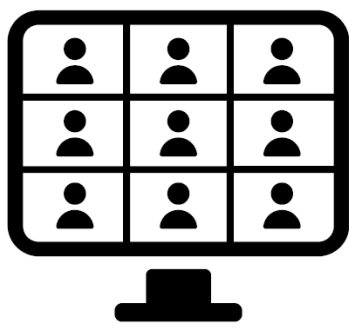
We have two and a half more weeks before our next bargaining session on April 4, due to conflicts on the Administration Team's side. During that time, please help us by doing some or all of the items listed under the heading "You Can Help UNAC Get a Fair Contract," at the start of this newsletter.

- Request copies of our fliers or print them on your personal printer and hang them around your worksite.
- Contribute a faculty testimony to our social media campaign to help educate the public about our working conditions.
- Use our images on Zoom and social media.
- Write letters to [President Pitney](#) and [members of the BOR](#).

Stay tuned for more opportunities, but don't wait. Help us now! Thank you for all you have already done. Along with winning real compensation gains for faculty, UNAC is committed to protecting academic freedom, fair working conditions, and job security for all members. Faculty deserve investment, commitment, and respect.

How To Log On

We send the Zoom link each morning of negotiations, and it's available on our website and our social media accounts.



Upcoming Bargaining Sessions

(9:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.)

April 4-5

future sessions yet to be determined

We will attempt to keep our website and social media accounts updated with the current status of negotiations.

You can also use our social media accounts (see below) to make comments and see what your colleagues think about the negotiations in real time.

UNITED ACADEMICS ON FACEBOOK AND TWITTER

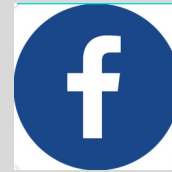
We will use these accounts as another venue to keep our members updated on union activities. In addition, everyone is invited to use these as modes of communication during negotiation sessions. Please keep the discourse civil.



Twitter Account:

UnitedAcademics4996AK
@unac4996AK

Click to logo to be taken to our new Twitter account



Facebook Page:

United Academics AAUP/AFT
local 4996

Click on the logo to join our new Facebook group

USE OUR SOCIAL MEDIA AND ZOOM PROFILE PICTURES



To make the UNAC logo be your profile picture in Zoom:

1. Right-click on the image to download it to your computer
2. Go to your Zoom account settings and locate your profile
3. Click on your current profile picture to change your photo
4. Upload the UNAC image and click save
5. Log on to your next Zoom meeting

OR

1. In a Zoom meeting, click 'participants'
2. Find your name and click the blue 'more' button
3. Select 'edit profile picture'
4. Click 'change picture'
5. Find the saved UNAC image, select it and upload
6. Use your mouse to position the picture and Zoom's toggle bar to resize
7. Click 'save'

If you follow this process, you should be able to turn our logo into your profile picture. We hope you'll use it when you attend negotiations and other work-related meetings.

**This process may need to be repeated occasionally if Zoom reverts to previous images or no image.*

MEETING NOTICES

UNAC General Membership Meetings

NEXT MEETING: Wednesday, April 6, repeat Tuesday, April 12, 5:30-7:00 p.m. AKT

Separate emails with meeting information, including the agenda and Zoom link, will be sent to all members before each meeting.

Next UNAC Representative Assembly Meeting

April 2, 2022 (Sat) 10:00am 2:00pm AKT via Zoom.

UNAC Executive Board Meetings

Second and Fourth Wednesdays of each month, 9:30 a.m.-11:30 a.m.

Dues paying members are welcome to observe the RA and Executive Board meetings. Contact your Org. VP or the union staff for the Zoom link.

Executive Board and Staff Contact

President - Abel Bult-ito, Ph.D.

abel.bult.ito@unac4996ak.com

Treasurer - Nelta Edwards, Ph.D.

nelta.edwards@unac4996ak.com

Secretary - Charla Brown, Ph.D.

charla.brown@unac4996ak.com

UAA Organizational VP - Tara Palmer

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UAS Organizational VP - Jill Dumesnil, Ph.D.

jill.dumesnil@unac4996ak.com

UAF Organizational VP - Mara Bacsujlaky

mara.bacsujlaky@unac4996ak.com

Extended Sites Organizational VP - Rick McDonald

rick.mcdonald@unac4996ak.com

Contract Manager - Melanie Arthur, Ph.D.

melanie.arthur@unac4996ak.com

Assistant Contract Manager - Kate Quick

kate.quick@unac4996ak.com

United Academics Local #4996 (UNAC) is the bargaining unit that represents all non-tenure track (term), tenure track, and tenured 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).

www.unitedacademics.net

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