

## MEMORANDUM

Date: February 18, 2021

To: Mathew Mund, Chair, UA Staff Alliance

From: Juella Sparks, SA Staff Compensation Committee Chair  
Mae Delcastillo  
Elizabeth Lilly  
Gwenna Richardson

Re: FY22 Compensation Recommendation

As you are well aware, the University of Alaska has been taking budget cuts or flat budgets for the last several years. Of particular concern to staff is that these cuts did not necessarily come with comparable reductions in workload. When staff have been laid off or departed, more often than not, the workload has been distributed to remaining staff. These increasing workloads and uncertainties as to the future of the university have led to low morale among staff. With these facts in mind, the Staff Compensation Committee recommends that Staff Alliance push for the following initiatives and changes in benefits.

### UAF Staff Council Employee Recognition - Resolution 2020-313-1:

This resolution requests that UA adopt UAF Policy 04.05.001 as a statewide HR practice for the purposes of establishing standards, considerations and approval processes for recognizing employees that do not exist in Regents Policy and Regulation. Without such a practice in place, disparity and inequity inherently exist.

### Flexible work schedules:

According to a recent staff survey and a survey by [Zenefits](#), 73% of employees said flexible work arrangements increased their satisfaction and productivity. Encourage supervisors to work with their staff to allow a flexible schedule as much as is possible based on the position, to help boost morale and productivity. This should be formalized in the post-pandemic working groups initiative.

### Provide mandatory supervisor training related to working in a pandemic:

UA HR should create and provide updated training materials for supervisors to educate them on relevant UA policies and regulations. Topics to be covered should include: work-from-home office equipment/furnishings, flexible work schedules, use of leave, health-related questioning of employees (what is and is not allowed), etc. This training should be mandatory and completed within two weeks of being offered. Training should be updated on a regular basis, as warranted.

Allow calendared time during the workday for mental/physical well-being:

As staff juggle working from home, homeschooling their children and the many extra stressors associated with the pandemic, allowing staff to schedule 30-60 minutes per day, or on 2 or 3 days per week for mental and/or physical well-being should be encouraged. There is a great deal of research showing that healthy, happy employees are more productive and likely to stay with their employer.

Increase/improve opportunities for professional development:

Staff like to stay current in their fields and obtain certifications to help further their professional development which benefits both the individual and the university. UA HR should implement an awareness campaign that educates both employees and supervisors on the importance of professional development and resources available.

Require supervisor training:

New and current supervisors should be mandated to take supervisory training or a refresher available through UA, with UA-specific information included. Build on this required training and create an ad hoc committee in collaboration with Staff Alliance and Statewide HR professionals to ensure diverse, equity, and inclusion practices in performance management such as identifying and reducing bias in performance appraisals, job classification and compensation, and employee recognition.

Formal letter/memo of appreciation for personnel file:

UA HR should implement an awareness campaign that educates both employees and supervisors on the value of employee recognition. One idea for this campaign would be information on how to write a letter of appreciation and put it in the employee's personnel file.

Allow supervisors to reward employees with annual leave hours added to leave bank:

Implementing UAF Policy 04.05.001 as a statewide HR practice would make supervisors aware of the option to give leave hours to reward exceptional staff. The recognition and reward will boost morale, employee health and increase retention.

Increase Personal Holidays

Staff are straining under increasing workloads due to staff layoffs and departures. Consider a one-time increase in the number of personal holiday hours. Staff are more likely to use them for a well-deserved break because they expire and the university gets credit for supporting staff in their health and welfare without a significant cost.

Adding Veterans Day as a Paid Holiday/Leave to former military servicemembers

As a military-friendly and veteran-friendly institution, UA will make a meaningful show of support by providing a paid holiday or leave to staff who are military veterans.

Include Parental Leave as eligible for leave donation

Allow UA employees to donate sick leave to staff for the purposes of parental leave. This would be a minimal cost but demonstrate that family matters.

Paid leave for structured volunteering in community

Allow up to four hours of leave, each year for volunteering in the community. Developing a policy of Volunteer Leave Time would benefit both the university and employees by enhancing the visibility and reputation of the university in the community, increasing opportunities for dialogue with the community to identify and address community needs, and by increasing employee morale, loyalty and retention.

Commit to and Formalize Staff Development and Appreciation Day that includes orientation, training, and fun:

The contributions of time and resources by the various administrations in support of a staff development day have been shrinking over the last few years. Done correctly and with clear support, this day could be a very visible celebration of staff's hard work and contributions to the university.

This year, now that staff are connecting online daily and working remotely, it would be the perfect time to organize a systemwide staff development and appreciation day. We recommend incorporating all campuses into an event to increase morale and more widely share the knowledge and talents of our staff.

Formal off-boarding process as tool to collect info, identify problems:

The Compensation Committee suggests making the exit interview mandatory and standardized. This information would be beneficial in identifying problem supervisors or departments and other issues that might be negatively the work environment and recruitment and retention. This information should be useful and shared with UA HR, Staff Governance and the department.

Roth as retirement savings option:

Making this option available better equips employees in financial planning.

Rollover of unused FSA (flexible spending accounts) funds

We are requesting that HR allow rollover of unused funds in dependent care FSA accounts. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (HR 133) allows for employers to amend dependent care FSA plans to allow for unlimited carryover of unused funds for plan years ending in 2020 and/or 2021.

In summary, we believe by implementing these recommendations the administration will demonstrate their commitment to creating a work environment where staff are recognized, valued and invested in. This is an important and necessary, first step to improving morale and rebuilding our UA community.

Finally, because the university is facing at least another 10% budget cut for FY22, and because this committee realizes these initiatives and benefits will only go so far in improving employee retention, health and morale, the committee feels it is time to encourage honest, realistic conversations about whether or not a department or function should continue. If it isn't being or can't be adequately funded, stop assuming the staff can keep it afloat.