

UAS Staff Council November Meeting

Wednesday November 3, 2021, 8:30–10:00 a.m.

[Zoom link](#)

[Committee Updates](#)

I. Call to order

- A. Eric Lingle, President 20-22
- B. Ke Mell, Vice President 21-23
- C. Colin Osterhout, Secretary 20-22
- D. Traci Taylor, Member-At-Large Juneau 21-23
- E. Jessica Driscoll, Member-At-Large Ketchikan 21-23
- F. Kimberly Davis, Member-At-Large Sitka 20-22
- G. Members of the Public
 1. Erika Porter
 2. Yolanda Cordero
 3. Judy Daxootsu Ramos
 4. Michelle Nakamura
 5. Jodi Van Kirk
 6. Greg George
 7. Cody Bennett
 8. Kiwana Affatato
 9. Denise Carl
 10. Mallory Nash
 11. Courtney MacArthur
 12. Kimberly Matsuura
 13. Amy Bannerman
 14. John Ingman
 15. Jon Lasinski
 16. Mae Delcastillo
 17. Clair Fitzpatrick
 18. Leah Gregg
 19. Shayla Sulser
 20. Kayti Coonjohn
 21. Aimée Richards
 22. Tyler McMichael
 23. Claire Ligsay
 24. Donovan Grimes
 25. X'unei Lance Twitchell
 26. Beverley Keefe
 27. Mark Thompson
 28. Trisha Lee
 29. Marjean Ragsdale
 30. Abby Kosmos
 31. Tessa Nelson
 32. Michelle Lampton
 33. Russell Peterson

II. Adopt agenda (2 minutes)

- A. Motion: Ke Mell

- B. Second: Kim Davis
- III. Approve [minutes of October 2021 Meeting](#) (2–3 minutes)
 - A. Motion: Kim Davis
 - B. Second: Traci Taylor
- IV. Staff By-laws election results
 - A. To correct different wording between the constitution and bylaws concerning filling in a vacancy by the President.
 - B. Bylaw passes by a vote of 22-3
 - C.
- V. 845a: Lance Twitchell's presentation on his proposal to rename "Thanksgiving Closure" to "Fall Break Closure".
 - A. Lance:
 1. Indigenous Studies Program was contacted by administration to think about ideas about decolonizing Thanksgiving
 2. Primary way to do that is hosting a feast, as well as talk about traditions
 3. Why should the break be called "Thanksgiving" if we're talking about decolonization
 4. Many families in the community do not celebrate the holiday
 5. Gives folks a choice to celebrate Thanksgiving, not trying to take anything away from anybody
 6. Perhaps we should name our academic breaks after seasons, since holidays have their roots in particular groups. Other groups can feel excluded as a result.
 7. We are not a white Christian organization, we are a university
 8. Lance's focus is for students to focus on resting up for the remainder of the fall semester
 - B. Eric: has no issue making the change
 - C. Aimée: in agreement. Wants to know about the process. Can this be a learning opportunity.
 - D. In chat:
 1. Michelle Lampton: I'm all for changing it
 2. Mallory Nash: Lance, thank you for explaining that so well. I really appreciate your transparency.
 - E. Lance: this is really meant for the southeast. A similar shift [statewide] happened for Columbus day. Feels that this trend started with UAS students. People still should get together. Wants to have annual education campaign as this is a problematic holiday. The holiday also coincides with the anniversary of the bombing of Anoon by the US Navy. Positive shift would be each semester having a traditional feast. In the fall, faculty provide a feast to students, in the spring, students host a feast for the fall.
 - F. Trisha Lee: Sits on the UA Common Calendar committee at UA. Megan Buzby also sits on the committee. Can come up with a recommendation.
 - G. Lance: has raised this with Megan as well.

- H. Tyler McMichael: A lot of students end up not going home for Thanksgiving and stay on campus. The majority of our students recognize this time as less for learning outcomes, and more of a time for spending with family. If we're looking to change this for students, how are we going to also service students who are isolated on campus and away from their families. They're not looking at Thanksgiving as a political item but more as a family time. and not just participants in something that is culturally different than them. What are your thoughts on how to approach this?
- I. Lance: We're trying to address homesickness [in general]. Some of the disconnects that come about are coming from a particular population. The concept of removing something from them is something that we should explore. A feast shouldn't be exclusive; should be inclusive. Should be made more accessible as some may not know that this exists. This year we anticipate this being pretty large, should be inclusive to feed everyone that can come. This year will be at the Noyes' Pavilion and be an opportunity to share cultural traditions. We have a lot of diversity on campus. We're looking to include more students in harvesting activities such as a deer hunt for instance to help provide food to the community. Can have discussions on the campus — "why wouldn't we call it Thanksgiving?" along with histories.
- J. Michelle Nakamura, in chat: We wouldn't be taking away their Thanksgiving though. We would just be more inclusive to those who don't celebrate. Renaming this fall break, in my mind, is no different than saying winter break (as opposed to Christmas break).
- K. Ke: in the history long ago (early 20th, late 19th centuries), there was an Easter holiday including Good Friday.
- L. Cody: What's the scope of the ask?
1. One ask: don't celebrate "Thanksgiving"
 2. Another ask: don't call this "Thanksgiving Break". The UA HR calendar mentions Christmas as a holiday and then refers to the [closure] as winter break, so there is a coexistence of the colonial and decolonized perspective.
 3. Depending on the scope of the ask, does this provide a slippery slope for other things, "Summer Break" instead of "July 4th" holiday or [hypothetically replacing] "Memorial Day".
 4. Seeks clarification on the ask — is it just asking staff to refer to Thanksgiving Break as Fall Break. A little hesitant on the scope and if this will lead to other things. Does this impact another population?
- M. Lance: We (NRSC, Indigenous Studies Program) don't see this as telling people what to do. Wants to emphasize mainly that students should get rest as this is a big change from high school. Doesn't see this related to any larger movement, outside of perhaps Columbus Day as these are two holidays in particular that impact Native peoples. Thanksgiving feast is often portrayed as a feast between Native peoples and settlers and this is inaccurate. Sees us as having 4 major breaks: summer, fall, winter, spring break. Doesn't see any other particularly

problematic holidays in terms of Indigenous Studies or the university. As a university these conversations “do lean towards well now we're telling people what to do and what not to do”. Decolonial work sometimes means unlearning things which were not true that we learned. We can share each others' customs and learn.

N. Eric: next steps — we should put together a motion to support this proposal and bring it forward to the next staff council meeting.

O. Ke: get your comments in, contact Staff Council!

P. Cody, in chat: so, the goal is to bring it forward after fall break?

Q. Eric: Yes, these things take time

R. Jessica: This change would be for next years calendar

VI. Advocacy Updates

A. Compensation Concerns brought to the Chancellor

1. Eric: We requested a step increase for all staff and cost of living increases for all staff, extra holiday, plus a review of positions statewide.
2. President Pitney came back with an offer of 1% increase for all staff plus a 1% increase to be divvied out by a process not yet determined
3. In addition, offered to swap the personal holiday for another (Indigenous Peoples' Day or Juneteenth)
4. Ke: Chancellor Carey reiterated her concern for staff. Ke forwarded information about the cost of living increases across the state to Chancellor Carey to be forwarded on to President Pitney
5. Eric: Action item for members: Board of Regents is accepting written testimony for the next BOR meeting
6. Jodi, through chat: Compensation across the board is desirable. I've heard that UAS employee are automatically set at less pay than UAA and UAF due to MAU size.
7. Cody, through chat: Or, each individual BOR member contact info is at <https://www.alaska.edu/bor/members/index.php>
8. Ke: her feeling is that with a larger hierarchy there's a greater chance for pay
9. Jonathan: sometimes there's one person in a job with a larger budget at the different MAUs. Often there's also a discrepancy between our different campuses (Juneau to Sitka, Ketchikan)
10. Denise, through chat: If there is a comparison of how many raises faculty have received over the period of time that staff have not had one may be helpful
 - a) Colin: [attachment](#) that Ke had researched re: raises across faculty and staff over the past couple of decades
11. Cody, through chat: If there is a comparison of how many raises faculty have received over the period of time that staff have not had one may be helpful
12. Denise: In the ad-hoc committee there has been discussion that the reduction in overall staffing means an increase in workload and

responsibility without an increase in pay.

13. Eric: get your testimony in!

B. Opportunity to submit written testimony to the BOR regarding compensation: ua-bor@alaska.edu

VII. Invite comments on Pat Pitney's vaccine mandate.

A. Eric: Backstory — survey was sent out to staff re: vaccine mandate, results were ~75% in favor, ~25% against. Since then, UAF specifically is impacted by the vaccine mandate due to federal contracts. Eric thought this would apply to the entire UA system. UAS is not under a mandate per his understanding.

B. Cody: On this topic, I'm curious about how the governor's action will impact UA: <https://gov.alaska.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/11.02.21-Administrative-Order-325-Rejecting-Federal-Overreach.pdf>

C. Jonathan Lasinski: Governor's in support of what other states are done. Pitney is in support of the governor's order. Is moving forward anyhow just to make sure we're in compliance. This does not affect UAS and UAA, specifically UAS since we don't have contracts at the federal level.

D. On this topic, I'm curious about how the governor's action will impact UA: <https://gov.alaska.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/11.02.21-Administrative-Order-325-Rejecting-Federal-Overreach.pdf>

E. Jodi to Everyone (9:17 AM)

F. The differences between the University presidents email and the HR email caused me some confusion if the mandate applied to UAS

G. Cody Bennett to Everyone (9:18 AM)

H. (though, the mandate might impact folks we know at the UAF Lena Point facility, and may impact UAS employees (our facilities services folks have a contract with UAF for some services I believe.))

I. Denise Carl to Everyone (9:18 AM)

J. "The university is also monitoring several legal challenges to the executive order. The Arizona and Florida attorneys general have both challenged the order in federal court and requested temporary restraining orders to halt implementation. Late last week, Alaska joined several other states in challenging the order. Pitney said she supports the State of Alaska's efforts to challenge the scope of the executive order."

K. Ke Mell to Everyone (9:18 AM)

L. Cody, re Facilities, I can ask.

M. Cody Bennett to Everyone (9:19 AM)

N. I took Pitney's comment about supporting the state's effort was related to a lawsuit (not the administrative order recently announced).

O. Cody Bennett to Everyone (9:20 AM)

P. the lawsuit: <https://gov.alaska.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/Lawsuit.pdf>

Q. Kayti Coonjohn to Everyone (9:20 AM)

R. The only thing that would really impact us under that Administrative Order seems to be Nos. 5 and 6, which reference "constitutional rights" and "free speech." To my knowledge, a vaccine mandate doesn't fall under either one of those legal

protections.

- S. Trisha Lee to Everyone (9:21 AM)
- T. In ADN: "The restrictions on state agencies do not apply to the University of Alaska, which announced Tuesday that it will require some employees to be vaccinated against COVID-19 starting Dec. 8."
- U. Jodi to Everyone (9:21 AM)
- V. Thank you for linking that Kayti. I recalled there are currently about 10 states on the lawsuit.
- W. Trisha Lee to Everyone (9:21 AM)
- X. <https://www.adn.com/politics/2021/11/02/alaska-gov-dunleavy-forbids-state-agencies-from-following-federal-vaccination-mandates/>
- Y. Eric: we are not a state agency, and this order from the governor does not apply to us.
- Z. Mark Thompson: his understanding is that Michael Ciri emailed general counsel to get some clarification.
- AA. Cody, in chat: I also would note that #3 on the admin order reads, "to the extent allowable by law, no state agency shall participate in, or use state funds or personnel, to further a federal vaccine mandate for employers".
Ultimately, it's just murky of what UA's responsibility to the admin order will be. It'll be interesting to see how it unfolds.
- BB. Eric: at this time there's lots of confusion. At the last meeting there was not any action to move forward with any mandate. Nothing one way or another. Thought at this moment — we're not in a position to move forward with a request for a mandate. Personally surprised that the order from the president doesn't cover the entire system.
- CC. Colin: was under the impression that UA was a single employer.
- DD. Jodi: I'm under the impression that UAS employees are vaccinated at a higher ratio than UAA or UAF employees. However, I do not want to see UAS lose more employees due to a lack of clarity or a mandate.
- EE. Eric: A lot of Biology employees have a joint appointment from UAF and UAS
- FF. Ke: we don't have enough information to resolve anything.
- GG. Cody: Does anyone know if UAS is at risk of losing employees from *not* establishing a mandate? (I happen to know of staff who may leave at the introduction of a mandate...) Either way, with medical/religious exceptions to any mandate, it will be unlikely we reach 100% vaccination.
- HH.

VIII. Staff Development Day

- A. Eric: we've received money to do staff development, sent to all the councils, divvied up by proportion. Roughly \$6000 to UAS (one time), with more available as a matter of routine UAS funding. One idea that we really liked was professional headshots for all staff members. Could perhaps cover Sitka and Ketchikan campuses as well. The past effort came out looking well. Setting up career navigation as well may be a good use of funds as well. Either hiring, working with a consultant, working with HR, would be nice to have career

counseling to see opportunities within the university.

- B. Ke: lots of ideas in the last meeting
 - C. Colin: would appreciate an emphasis on team building and collaboration
 - D. Ke: feeling distancing of COVID, hopes that by next year wants to meet face to face.
 - E. Eric: introduces Mallory
 - F. Mallory: would love to contribute to professional development — has experience in this area in previous jobs (professional development for age 20–40 young professionals). Previous work involved seeking out presenters to learn things like how to advocate for ourselves, develop mentorship skills. Wants to know next steps
 - G. Eric: we'll send you an invite
- IX. Adjourn (2-3 minutes)
- A. Motion: Ke Mell
 - B. Second: Kim Davis
- VIII. Parking Lot
- A.