

Nov. 22, 2016

Dear UA Community -

As Thanksgiving approaches, I want to express my sincerest thanks to all of you for the wonderful work you do on behalf of the University of Alaska.

Thanksgiving is a time to celebrate the goodness in our lives, to set aside our troubles, and to focus on what we are most grateful for, including our service to others. We reflect on the lessons we've learned and how we might make an even greater difference in the year ahead.

Yet even as we gather to celebrate the values of our courageous ancestors, including those who sought freedom from religious persecution here, I hear voices from across our university expressing fear over the outcome of our recent election. I want all of you to know that our university will always thrive on diversity, respect, and openness. Our campuses will offer an atmosphere of inclusiveness where everyone has the ability to express their views and opinions free from oppression or discrimination. The university is, and will always be a place where the pursuit of knowledge is protected and celebrated, and where we remain grateful for each other and for the bounty that we share as Americans.

I am grateful, too, for those who serve our country and for our freedoms they work so hard to protect. I am grateful for your service to the university and to our state. Whether you've been a part of our university community for 20 years or two weeks, whether you are faculty, student, or staff, please know that you are making a real difference in the future of Alaska by choosing to lend your talents and service to our journey. You inspire me every day.

I am also grateful for your patience. Change surrounds us and no one among us can be certain of any outcome - be it budget, reorganization, or the impact of national events. Your participation in the process shows how much you care and your perspectives are crucial as we make difficult decisions that will influence the future of the university and its role in Alaska. Thank you for joining the conversation and for your very important voice.

Finally, I encourage you all to take a much deserved break. Truly, take time this Thanksgiving holiday to focus on family, friends and the wondrous blessings in life - big and small - that give real meaning to our lives.

Have a joyous Thanksgiving.  
Jim Johnsen