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DATE: 1/29/2020
TO: Mark Kondrak, UA CITO
FROM: Josh Watts, Statewide Administration Assembly President
SUBJECT: OIT Concerns

Statewide Administration Assembly (SAA) would like to raise awareness of a number of issues that have been brought forward to us by the SW employees that we represent.

SW OIT currently has 16 vacant positions out of a total of 59. This equates to 27% of our positions being vacant on top of a large reduction in positions over the past few years.

Six of these vacancies fall on a single team that has a total of 10 positions budgeted. We currently have 4 staff members on this team and, as of next week, no Database Administrators (DBA), since the last DBA decided to seek opportunities outside of OIT. This team had 21 positions 10 years ago. With the exception of one vacant position currently in the recruitment stage, the remaining positions are being intentionally left unfilled.

These positions are crucial to a number of critical, enterprise-wide services, including Oracle and Banner. The responsibilities associated with the maintenance and upkeep of these systems are too numerous and complex to list here, but have succeeded in driving away staff members. Some employees have left the team, citing severe health issues resulting from the long hours and stress associated with the job, and inability to see any relief in the future.

As a result of the current staffing levels, OIT is seeking to outsource some of these responsibilities. Purchase Orders for consultants to assist with our critical lack of Database Administrators are being expedited by the IT Business Office with the hope of avoiding the catastrophic failure of one of our most pivotal and important OIT-provided services. The Purchasing Officer has stated that the IRS negatively views educational institutions such as UA hiring consultants to perform the work of staff. Hiring outside consultants to replace UA employees may also have a negative impact on the university's reputation, because it demonstrates the university is not committed to hiring Alaskans, and impacts the morale of the employees who remain.

The SAA has also received feedback regarding the lack of communication from the CITO regarding the current state of OIT and its services. The increasingly frequent outages of Banner (and its related services) and perceived lack of action on the part of OIT is jeopardizing not just the reputation of OIT and our relationship with groups like HR and Finance, but per the Registrar and Admission offices, it is jeopardizing our ability to recruit, educate, and graduate students.

SAA understands the challenges our organization faces in the current political and financial climate. However, one of the charges of the Board of Regents and President Johnson was that we make staffing decisions strategically in order to maintain the integrity of our teams and the ability of those teams to do work in support of our collective mission. The current approach of allowing attrition to drive staffing decisions has resulted in a loss of some of our most talented staff members, and also a marked decrease in the morale, engagement, and productivity of the staff still working here. With no clearly communicated plan that deviates from the recent perceived practice of declining Exceptional Placement and Retention requests, and declining to fill desperately needed vacant positions, SAA is concerned that this trend of declining morale, engagement, and productivity will continue, and likely get worse, and negatively impact the health and well-being of remaining staff who are forced to absorb the additional workload.

SAA would like to invite you to our next scheduled meeting from 1:30-3:30 p.m. on Thursday, February 13 in room 208 E of the Butrovich Building to discuss the following concerns and recommendations:

- Strategic Staffing & Resource Allocation
- Expedited Recruitment
- Outsourcing vs. Staff Recruitment
- Banner
- Communication (Internal OIT and External)