

Staff Alliance

202 Butrovich Building
P.O. Box 755000
Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-5000



UNIVERSITY
of ALASKA
Many Traditions: One Alaska

Phone: (907) 450-8055

Fax: (907) 450-8002

Date: May 3, 2024

To: Pat Pitney, President

From: Ronnie Houchin, Chair, Staff Alliance

DocuSigned by:
Ronnie Houchin
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Cc: Paul Layer, Vice President for Academics, Students, & Research; Luke Fulp, Chief Financial Officer; Memry Dahl, Chief Human Resources Officer

Re: FY26 Compensation Recommendations

The Staff Alliance is pleased to submit the FY26 compensation requests for your consideration.

The Ad Hoc Staff Total Compensation Advisory Committee worked closely with human resources in the past months to discuss University of Alaska staff compensation and benefits. One action the committee took was to evaluate historic requests from the Staff Alliance, along with the formal responses, in order to better understand what issues the requests were attempting to address, the financial, practical or political reasons why some requests were denied, (cost, complexities, best practices, comparison with state employees, etc.) and explore those areas that could be addressed at the individual supervisor level but possibly need more training or easier processes to accomplish.

The work of this committee is critical for staff. Pay and benefits were highlighted as the number one area for improvement by staff in the 2023 Employee Engagement survey. Our compensation and classification system has remained largely the same since the 1990's, and although we have enjoyed increased funding and financial stability in recent years, salaries were compressed and stagnated during years of budget cuts and fiscal constraints. In addition, there have been many requests for more supervisor training, but they lacked specific guidance on the areas of management most needing to be addressed, especially in terms of pay and benefits.

As a result of these months-long discussions, the committee presented the following recommendations to the Staff Alliance for their approval and official transmission to university leadership. Some of these are novel ideas, a fresh perspective on addressing salary compression and rewarding exceptional performance; some are aimed to address long-time concerns; and some are intended to build additional value in our total compensation package. All of these recommendations would benefit staff, potentially increasing engagement and retention while increasing the university's competitiveness in the marketplace.

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FY26 Recommendations

- 1) Across-the-board 3% grid increase for all staff.
This is intended to address inflation and cost of living increases and keep the university's compensation schedule competitive.
- 2) Performance-based step increases tied to annual evaluations.
Departments are not always in a financial position to reward exceptional staff with in-grade adjustments, performance bonuses or reclassifications. As a result, high-performing employees are not equitably rewarded for exceptional work. In addition to across-the-board grid market increases, annual step increases should be tied to annual performance evaluations. Since steps are tied to the 1% grid, the solution would be to reward exceptional performance with commensurate increases. A score of 3 would earn 1% (1 step), a score of 4 would earn 2% (2 steps), and an exceptional score of 5 would earn 3% (3 steps).
- 3) Expanding the UAF bonus policy system-wide.
There should be a single process for bonuses across the system, based on the UAF policy. Approvals would still be managed at the local level, but the process would be managed by HR through NextGen with built-in approval and notification steps. Bonuses are an extremely valuable way of providing meaningful recognition, but the tools, processes and awareness need to be equally available to all managers.
- 4) Recalculating length of service for recognition events.
We propose including a person's entire university service record when calculating length of service for recognition events regardless of leaves of absence, times in temporary positions or other interruptions that cause the count to be re-started. No one should be receiving their 4th 5-year pin, or getting recognized for a 10-year milestone when they've cumulatively worked for the university for nearly four decades.
- 5) Extending the break in service that an employee can have up to one year to return to a benefited position at the previous level of accrual. Currently, if a person leaves, or even moves into a temporary position, for more than two weeks, their rate of leave accrual goes back to the beginning when they take on a new position at UA.

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- 6) Add additional day(s) for parental leave to get closer to the 10-day average.
UA recently created a parental leave category with 5 days of paid leave. The national standard is 10 days. We request that an additional day or days be added each year until we meet the national average.
- 7) Continued support for remote and hybrid work.
Many staff highly value the option for remote or hybrid work. Many in staff governance participated in the post-COVID remote workplace policy committee with the understanding that it was to be a revolution in workforce management expected to last long after the pandemic ended. If a department has the flexibility, and the supervisor and employee are in agreement, pressures from outside the department should not be interfering with this process or denying approvals.
- 8) Enhance Career Development Planning resources for employees and supervisors, including enhanced support for internal job placement or relocation in the case a department doesn't have a need for the advanced skills an employee desires. Outline a clear process for developing skills necessary for a higher classification and aid in the process of finding suitable work for aspiring employees.
- 9) Supervisor training
A review of many commonly shared concerns helped us highlight specific areas where better training and clearer processes would benefit supervisors and employees alike, in particular: in-grade adjustments, market benchmarking, modifying position descriptions/re-classification, bonuses, and remote work supervision.

These recommendations demonstrate the Staff Alliance's commitment to UA staff. By providing fair and competitive compensation, we can improve employee morale, increase job satisfaction, and ultimately boost productivity and performance to the benefit of students and the state.