

University of Alaska System  
Academics, Students & Research  
202 Butrovich Building  
P.O. Box 755000  
Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-5000



UNIVERSITY  
*of* ALASKA  
*Many Traditions One Alaska*

Phone: (907) 450-8019  
Fax: (907) 450-8002  
[www.alaska.edu/research/](http://www.alaska.edu/research/)

April 5, 2024

University Leadership, Deans, and Directors,

Today, we're sharing an update on the status of UA's negotiations with the Alaska Graduate Workers Association (AGWA). Negotiations began just over 2 months ago, and UA is continuing to negotiate in good faith. Unfortunately, AGWA recently voted to authorize their bargaining team to call a strike if circumstances warrant.

While we are disappointed with this premature action and will continue negotiating in good faith regardless, the vote has caused uncertainty for some of our faculty and staff. We want to assure you that the University is taking all necessary steps to minimize the impact of a potential work stoppage.

While we don't believe a strike is imminent, the University has an obligation to protect the integrity of our educational mission for the undergraduate student body, and our institutional teaching, research, and service commitments. Any strike will impact our faculty and staff and may disrupt our undergraduate student experience and research enterprise.

The situation is very dynamic—we do not yet know the extent to which individuals will participate in AGWA's strike call. **To that end, we've developed the enclosed guidance for you, your faculty, and your staff as you begin planning to ensure the continuity of University operations.**

Our top priority is to protect the integrity of our educational mission for our undergraduate students and to uphold our institutional teaching, research, and service commitments. We are committed to ensuring continuity in teaching, research, and administrative responsibilities.

We appreciate your leadership and partnership as we work together to support our students and our educational and research mission. As the situation evolves, we will continue to provide direct updates and guidance. More general information and FAQs can be found at [alaska.edu/gseu](http://alaska.edu/gseu).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul W. Layer".

Paul W. Layer, PhD  
Vice President for Academics, Students & Research  
University of Alaska

**enclosure:** University of Alaska - AGWA Strike Planning Guidance

# University of Alaska - AGWA Strike Planning Guidance

April 5, 2024

The following guidance is designed to help faculty, staff, and University leadership plan for operational continuity in the event of an AGWA strike. **If you have further, specific questions, please direct them to the Dean of the Graduate School at UAA or UAF or the Provost at UAS so there is a single point of contact and communication for these inquiries at each University.** The situation remains dynamic, and University Leadership will continue to provide updates and guidance as it develops.

## ***Planning and Availability***

1. Like any other absence from work, it is expected that individuals who intend to strike report their intended absence to their direct supervisor. **Supervisors MAY ask employees if they intend to work, but they MAY NOT ask employees if they intend to participate in a strike.**

## ***Teaching Continuity***

2. Regardless of the scope of any labor action, **our institutional accreditation, federal and state regulations, and our core mission demand that, to the best of our ability, we support our students' academic experience by continuing to communicate relevant content, assess student performance, provide academic guidance, and complete other related duties.** This is true for both our undergraduate students and graduate students who may not participate in a strike.
3. Given the wide diversity of courses, pedagogies, and teaching roles across our colleges and campuses, individual instructors of record, as well as deans and directors, bear immediate responsibility for this work. **Communication with your provost is critical to best understanding the scale and impacts of any potential strike and minimizing negative outcomes. If AGWA chooses to strike, the Provosts will work with the Faculty Senates and academic leadership to ensure academic continuity.**

## ***Research Continuity***

4. University research faculty leaders continue to ensure our research operations (including critical procedures, processes, or equipment management requiring regular attention) are productive and help create effective plans for the upcoming field season. **If faculty or staff have questions about potential impacts on research operations, they should reach out to the Dean of the Graduate School at UAA or UAF, or the Provost at UAS, who will serve as the points of contact for these questions.** Research leaders should identify essential personnel who can perform critical procedures, processes, or equipment management that require regular attention. We recommend reviewing the bulleted list below to ensure your personnel needs are fully met:
  - Personnel responsible for ensuring the safety and security of research facilities under more restricted conditions,
  - Personnel responsible for animal welfare (both those involved in PI-managed areas and centrally supported),
  - Personnel responsible for equipment maintenance that, if not done, could result in damage or high-cost equipment repairs (e.g. computing servers, lab equipment),

- Researchers working on experiments that have a small window for completion (e.g., the ability to make a specific measurement only a few times a year),
  - Faculty and/or research staff necessary to maintain research materials that are perishable and not easily replaced. For example, primary cell lines, and long-term experiments for which there would be considerable cost and/or time associated with requiring the experiment to end (e.g., an ongoing, continual one-month experiment that requires regular measurements or maintenance otherwise all previous data is lost), and
  - Infrastructure services (e.g., delivery of liquid nitrogen, waste treatment processes, IT, safety, or security).
5. Supervisors with field research personnel should ask their essential individuals if they will be available for planned research field activities. Like other absences from work, individuals who intend to strike are expected to report that intended absence to the direct supervisor. **If the responses received are insufficient to allow for research continuity in the event of a labor disruption, they should reach out to the Dean of the Graduate School at UAA or UAF, or the Provost at UAS, who will serve as the points of contact for these questions.** It is the University's expectation that supervising faculty and their managers will make operational decisions that ensure the integrity and continuity of research.
- For those involved in **maritime research efforts**, faculty should share their specific expectations about the scope of work with those participating in maritime research activities when confirming their availability to work. **(They MAY ask if an employee will be available for work, but MAY NOT ask whether an employee intends to participate in a strike.)**

### ***Administrative Responsibilities***

6. Labor actions have important administrative and fiscal implications. Any employee, including graduate student workers, who does not work and is not eligible for annual or sick leave, cannot be paid for hours not worked. Many graduate student workers do not record time; therefore, time off (such as annual leave, sick leave, etc.) does not currently apply to these student employees. **Thus, time not worked under their expected hours would need to be recorded as "Leave without Pay."** It is the supervisor's responsibility to manage work schedules and departments need to ensure the time not worked by employees is recorded appropriately. Under the Alaska Executive Branch Ethics Act, Misuse of Official Position (AS 39.52.120), employees may not be compensated for partisan political activities.