

August 29, 2017

Dear UA Students --

Welcome back to campus! I hope you had a relaxing and rejuvenating summer. I know many of you have been conducting field research, taking summer classes, working, and traveling near and far. Whether you are starting your first year as a student or are finishing graduate studies, I hope you are excited by the opportunities in the coming year. Thank you for your commitment and hard work, and may it bring you success this semester. As classes begin, I wanted to share with you some important information.

Living our values

The recent violence in Charlottesville at the University of Virginia has prompted questions about the university's perspective on such important social issues as racism and hate. First let me assure you that our university welcomes and is strengthened by people of diverse experiences and perspectives, including those of different ethnicities, races, religions, political views, sexual orientations, and gender identities. We must explore, learn from, and celebrate our differences. The university's leadership rejects the bigotry, hatred, and violence espoused by Neo-Nazis, white supremacists, and similar groups. Their objectives are antithetical to a just, ethical, and democratic society and the very concept of a university. In response we must ensure that our actions are guided by principles of equality of opportunity, justice, inclusiveness, and tolerance. While we permit and encourage non-violent freedom of expression—to include views we find objectionable—our university must be a place where truth emerges from the contest of ideas.

Please join with university leadership and your fellow students in rejecting simple answers offered by fear, hate, and bigotry. Instead, I encourage you to embrace, support, and practice the values that distinguish democratic societies like ours. In doing so we each have the power to broaden and strengthen our community, and ensure that our university, our society, is the best it can be. There is no better way to enjoy and benefit from the rich and diverse community that is UA.

Sexual Harassment/Title IX

The university remains dedicated to your safety. That's why we are raising awareness and preventing instances of sexual harassment and sexual assault. Resources are available to both students and employees, and the university is sponsoring a variety of trainings designed to inform all members of the UA community of the protections guaranteed by Title IX. Our dedication to safety and raising awareness means students and employees are required to complete annual Title IX training. For additional resources on reporting incidents and understanding your rights and responsibilities under Title IX visit <https://www.alaska.edu/stopthesilence/>.

Your campus Title IX offices have additional resources and prevention programs. Sexual assault and harassment is a serious problem throughout Alaska. We need to build a safer, more

supportive community on our campuses and lead our state in bystander awareness, prevention, outreach, and compassionate response.

To that end, a new chapter has been added to Board of Regents policy on [Sexual and Gender-Based Discrimination](#) that provides clear guidance for students and employees on definitions, standards of conduct, reporting information and contacts, established timelines, and equitable processes. The new policy is explained here: <http://www.alaska.edu/voice/2017/July-2017/system-news/sex-discrimination-policy/>.

Share your thoughts with the regents

The UA Board of Regents will hold a public testimony call-in session on Tuesday, September 5 from 4-6 p.m. for anyone who wants to call in and share ideas, good news, or concerns with them. The regents value hearing from you, so please participate by calling [1-866-726-0757](tel:1-866-726-0757). Finally, with the institution of a common calendar, we are all starting this academic semester in unison across the state. The emphasis on coordination promises to bring more opportunities and better service to you.

The University of Alaska has the potential to change everything – your life, your possibilities, your future, and our state. Let’s look forward to an exciting, challenging year.

Best wishes,
Jim Johnsen