

Pat Pitney

President

Butrovich Bldg, Ste. 202, 2025 Yukon Drive
P.O. Box 755000, Fairbanks, AK 99775-5000
Phone: (907) 450-8000; Fax: (907) 450-8012
Email: ua.president@alaska.edu
www.alaska.edu



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Announcing VP & Chief Academic Officer Finalists

I am pleased to announce that we have identified finalists for a new Vice President and Chief Academic Officer to succeed Paul Layer, who has announced plans to retire after a 35-year career at the University of Alaska, and more than 7 years in his current role. He'll be missed.

The search for the role – retitled Vice President/Chief Academic Officer – has been thorough, and a hiring committee representing the entire system has selected three finalists.

- **Laurie Shanderson** is the founder and CEO of Accreditation Insights, and previously served as the chancellor of Methodist College.
- **Lester Sandres Rapálo** most recently served as the president of Rockland Community College, part of the State University of New York (SUNY) system.
- **Brian Smentkowski** is the founding director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at the University of Idaho, where he is also a professor of political science.

The candidates will be visiting Fairbanks October 23-25 for meetings with different stakeholder groups. To learn more about the finalists, including links to their CVs, please visit the [VP-CAO finalists website](#).

We are planning a [webinar forum](#) for each of the candidates at 11 a.m. each day, set up as a Zoom webinar with governance members as panelists, and the webinar will be available to view for all other university affiliates; you will need to be logged in to your UA zoom account to access the webinar. Faculty Alliance Chair and search committee member Jennifer Carroll will host/moderate the forums.

We've also set up a [question submission form](#) where UA affiliates can submit questions to ask any/all of the candidates. A [feedback form](#) will be open from October 23 through October 30.

Following the candidate visits, in consultation with the committee and the Board of Regents, I will select a candidate and make an offer. We hope to have the new VP-CAO identified by mid-November. Vice President Layer has agreed to stay on for a period of time to help ensure a smooth transition.

Please visit the [VP-CAO finalists website](#) if you have any questions or want more information.

Sincerely,

Pat Pitney
President, University of Alaska