



## **UNAC Connection - January 2024**



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## **UNAC Helped Save My UA Contributions & Retirement Vesting**

*By Kirsten Grond*



In May 2020, I started a new three-year postdoc position at UAA. This really meant three one-year contracts, but I was perfectly fine with that because I had a great PI who had funding in place for the full period. For a postdoc, a three-year position is pretty rare, so I considered myself lucky. This was not my first academic position, but it was the first time I was able to qualify for retirement with an employer contribution, which was great. Postdocs at UA only qualify for one plan, which is the ORP T3 plan. This is an all-or-nothing plan, meaning that you only get the employer contribution if you stay

three years or more.

When my third and final contract ended, you can imagine my confusion when I noticed my benefits showed that I was three days short of the required three years and was therefore not eligible for the employer contribution. This made me lose out on \$22K. This is when I found out that my annual contracts had been processed as 364 days to match pay periods. While understandable from a payroll perspective, the consequences of missing those three days was very large.

I contacted HR, but there seemed to be no good solution for figuring this situation out, other than I would have to get another benefited position at UA to make up for the three days. The discrepancy between what my PI requested and what was given to me did not sit well with us, and I contacted UNAC to see what my options were. UNAC's President, Jill Dumesnil, and Contract Manager, Melanie Arthur, were extremely helpful, which made me feel like there was a chance I could fight this. \$22K is a lot of money to lose from a retirement account!

I don't know what UNAC did behind the scenes, but they had successful conversations with the right administrators, and we found a solution! UNAC worked with HR and my PI to secure a short extension to my original contract, which added enough days to my time at UA to ensure I was vested in my full retirement benefit. I am so thankful that UNAC was there and willing to work with me on this. I would not have known how to handle this alone and was close to giving up.



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## **Update on Remaining Back Pay Discrepancies**

We have good news. HR has assured us that the 167 UNAC bargaining unit members who were underpaid when everyone received the FY23 back pay, will finally get the money owed to them in the Feb 23, 2024 payrun (R4). This pay correction will go to those UNAC members still working at UA as well those who have since left UA. Those who were affected by this mistake should check their Feb. 23, 2024 paystub to ensure the amount is correct.

This back pay correction is happening because individual UNAC members noticed the discrepancy in their back pay amounts and brought it to our attention. Resolution still wouldn't have been reached without advocacy from our UNAC Executive Board, and our Contract Manager, Melanie Arthur's thorough understanding of our CBA, grant administration, and employment best-practices.

It also took cooperation from members of UA's HR and Labor Relations team; this was not an easy correction for UA's Payroll department to pull off, but they did it. Special thank you to our affected members for being patient while we worked our channels to resolve this mistake.

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## UNAC Talks with Alaska's Legislators

Four UNAC members from around the state—Jill Dumesnil, UAS; Mary Wegner, UAS; Pete Praetorius, UAA Mat-Su Campus; and Abel Bult-Ito, UAF- as well as UNAC Organizing Manager Kate Quick, attended the annual AK AFL-CIO Legislative Fly-In Conference on January 24-25.

While there, they also visited dozens of state legislators in their Juneau offices to advocate for UNAC's membership and the UA system.

## UNAC's Legislative Priorities

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Full funding of our negotiated and contractually obligated compensation increases</li><li>• Full funding of the BOR's operating and capital budget requests</li><li>• A significant increase to the Base Student Allocation (BSA) for K12 schools to ensure our future students are prepared for UA and our bargaining unit members' children can again enjoy well-funded and well-staffed public schools</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Passage of <a href="#">House Bill 236: UA Major Maintenance and Modernization Fund</a> to assist with deferred maintenance of UA infrastructure</li><li>• Passage of <a href="#">Senate Bill 88: Retirement Systems: Defined Benefits Option</a> to allow all current and future public employees enrolled in PRS and TRS the choice of switching from defined contribution to defined benefits</li></ul> |
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## Representative Assembly & Organizational Vice President Elections

Nominations for our Organizational Vice Presidents and members of our Representative Assembly closed on January 11, 2024. Voting opened on Monday, January 22, 2024, and will close on Monday, February 5, 2024. Results will be announced shortly thereafter.

All members-in-good-standing should have received a ballot from Election Runner at their @alaska.edu email. Contact Sharon Chamard, chair of our Elections Committee, at [elections.committee@unac4996ak.com](mailto:elections.committee@unac4996ak.com) or talk to your Org VP if you didn't get the ballot.

Members-in-good-standing are bargaining unit members who have been paying dues for at least three months or within 30 days of hire. Willingness to pay dues shows a person's support and investment in our union. UNAC wouldn't exist without dues payers, just like it wouldn't exist without faculty members willing to step into union leadership roles.



## UA's Unions

### Did you know there are five separate unions in the University of Alaska system?

- United Academics (UNAC)
- United Academics-Adjuncts (UNAD)
- Alaska Higher Education Crafts and Trades Employees (6070)
- Alaska Graduate Workers' Association (AGWA)
- UAF Firefighters (IAFF-1324)

Each of these unions has separate union leadership, CBAs, founding documents, and membership. The only non-unionized groups of employees at UA are undergraduate student workers, staff, and administration.

#### **UNAD**

Although United Academics and United Academics-Adjuncts have very similar names and are both affiliated with the same state and national organizations, our bargaining units are separate according to the Alaska Labor Relations Agency, and we have different support staff and CBAs that are negotiated separately with each union and UA Labor Relations.

If you work with or supervise adjuncts, it's a good idea to familiarize yourself with the [adjunct CBA](#) to ensure that you know their rights and their workplace rules. If adjuncts are required to attend meetings or

#### **AGWA**

This group is UA's newest union, and they are bargaining their first CBA this spring. They are affiliated with the United Auto Workers (UAW). Their CBA will be separate from ours when it's ratified by AGWA membership and the UA BOR.

Some of our postdoc members share offices and/or lab spaces with AGWA members; nothing drastic about the day-to-day operations in these spaces is expected to change. Other UNAC members—our research faculty and our tri-partite faculty—supervise AGWA members. Issues are likely to arise between supervisor and student

trainings or other non-teaching, work-related events, their CBA says they should be paid a minimum of \$35 per hour ([article 11.1](#)). In these situations, our members could show solidarity by proactively notifying those who determine the budget that the adjunct CBA states that adjuncts should be paid for their time.

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### **6070**

When the facilities crew comes to your office to move furniture or fix your heater, remember that they're your union siblings too. The Crafts and Trades Employees keep our buildings, offices, labs, studios, and classroom spaces functioning. Their union is affiliated with the same state and national unions (except AAUP) as UNAC and the adjunct union. You can show your solidarity with this group by being friendly and respectful to these UA employees whenever you interact.

employee, and we'll guide our UNAC members through these situations as they arise. Nonetheless, UNAC officially supports AGWA in their efforts to secure a new CBA. If any UNAC members have questions about what AGWA means for them, contact your Org. VP, President, or UNAC staff.

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### **IAFF**

This is UA's smallest local, with just 10 members, and is connected with the larger Fairbanks Firefighters Union. Members of IAFF work at UAF's fire department and train UAF students to become firefighters. IAFF's members keep our UAF buildings safe and show up in emergencies. Their trainees may come to UAF classes in uniform, with their radio on and ready to leave class to go to a call if needed; affected UNAC members should accommodate this whenever possible. These students are training to be firefighters, and all of our communities need more of those!

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## **When to Contact United Academics**

### **Annual Evaluation Responses**

All returning UNAC bargaining unit members should have received an annual evaluation on or before January 15, 2024, for work performed during the previous academic year. All members are allowed and encouraged to respond to annual evaluations, especially if the evaluation was unsatisfactory or inaccurate. Responses will be attached to the relevant evaluation, and both go into personnel files. Members are also entitled to the right to file a formal

### **Promotion and Tenure Reviews**

For members currently undergoing promotion and/or tenure review, at each step in the process, you have a right to respond in writing to reviewers' assessment of your file.

For members considering promotion in the future, review [CBA Article 9](#) and our promotion trainings, located on [our YouTube channel](#).

### **Other Work-Related Questions or Concerns**

Any time you have a question or concern, a good person to reach out to is your UNAC Org VP, President, and/or your UNAC staff.

Even if these individuals can only offer advice or suggest the right person to talk with, UNAC is a good first stop when you have a work-related question or concern.

All officer and staff contact information is located on our website:

complaint through UNAC if  
there are errors in a  
supervisor's evaluation.  
This process is detailed in  
Article 7 of our [CBA](#).

[unitedacademicsak.org](http://unitedacademicsak.org)

## **Your Weingarten Rights**

If you are called into a meeting with your supervisor that might result in discipline,  
**This statement could save your job:**



**"If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated, I respectfully request that my union rep be present at the meeting. Without my union rep present, I choose not to respond to any questions or statements."**

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## **Reminders**

### **Workloads for AY25**

It's time to start thinking about next year's workloads. The March 1 deadline for most members to submit workloads to Department Chairs or Program Coordinators will be here soon. Members of each department and program should meet to discuss needs and priorities for the next academic year.

### **FTO Cash-In**

After UNAC members have taken five days of FTO, you may cash-in up to five days of FTO in lieu of taking time off. To cash-in FTO, follow the directions on this [UA webpage](#) and complete the form linked at the bottom of the page.

### **UNAC Sick Leave Bank**

The Sick Leave Bank application can be found under 'forms and guidelines' on this [UA Labor and Employee Relations](#) webpage.

The UNAC sick leave bank was formerly the UAFT sick leave bank; when the two unions merged into UNAC in 2018, the sick leave bank became the UNAC sick leave bank. It was incorporated into our most recent CBA (article 16.8).

### **Current Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA)**

Our CBA is available on our United Academics website:  
<http://unitedacademics.net/collective-bargaining-agreement-cba/>

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## **Meeting Notices**

### **UNAC General Membership Meetings**

- Regularly scheduled meetings: every second Tuesday of the month from 5:30-7:00 p.m.
- Separate emails with meeting information, including the Zoom link, will be sent to all bargaining unit members before each meeting.

### **Next General Membership Meeting**

Tuesday, February 13, 2024, 5:30-7:00 p.m. AKT

## **Next UNAC Representative Assembly Meeting\***

Saturday, February 17, 2024, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. AKT

## **UNAC Executive Board Meetings\***

First and third Wednesday of each month, 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. AKT

*\*Dues paying members are welcome to attend the RA and Executive Board meetings. Contact your Org VP and/or office staff for the Zoom link.*



## **Executive Board and Staff Contacts**

**President - Jill Dumesnil, Ph.D.**

jill.dumesnil@unac4996ak.com

**Treasurer - Nelta Edwards, Ph.D.**

nelta.edwards@unac4996ak.com

**Secretary - Abel Bult-Ito, Ph.D.**

abel.bult.ito@unac4996ak.com

**UAA Organizational VP - Tara Palmer**

tara.palmer@unac4996ak.com

**UAS Organizational VP - Kathy DiLorenzo, D.A.**

kathy.dilorenzo@unac4996ak.com

**UAF Organizational VP - Douglas Cost, Ph.D.**

doug.cost@unac4996ak.com

**Extended Sites Organizational VP - Cindy Trussell, Ph.D.**

cindy.trussell@unac4996ak.com

**Contract Manager - Melanie Arthur, Ph.D.**

melanie.arthur@unac4996ak.com

**Organizing Manager - Kate Quick**

kate.quick@unac4996ak.com

**United Academics Local #4996** (UNAC) is the bargaining unit that represents post doctoral fellows, non-tenure track (term), tenure track, and tenured faculty at the University of Alaska. UNAC is an affiliate of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

United Academics AAUP/AFT | P.O. Box 755895, Fairbanks, AK 99775-5895

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