



## UNAC Connection - July 2025



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### Vocational Awe

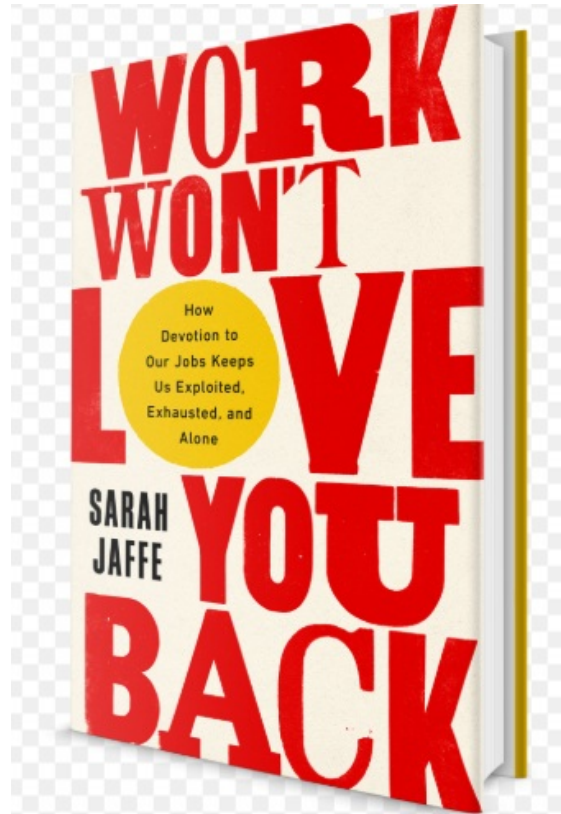
Is your job your calling, not simply your livelihood? Are you willing to be overworked and underpaid because your work is *just that important*? Academics tend to feel passion for their work and their students, making us an easy target for management abuse. [Librarian Fobazi Ettarh](#) defines vocational awe as:

*"the set of ideas, values, and assumptions librarians have about themselves and the profession that result in beliefs that libraries as institutions are inherently good and sacred, and therefore beyond critique....thus requiring absolute obedience to a prescribed set of rules and behaviors...allowing anyone to deploy a vocational purity test in which the worker can be accused of not being devout or passionate enough to serve without complaint."*

Maybe your work *IS* your calling. You *still* deserve to be fairly and competitively compensated for your work! **Vocational awe can lead to burnout, under-**

compensation, and **job creep**. In the end, it can make it harder to do the thing you love—your job!

The following book is great reading material for the end of summer, to help you push back against vocational awe and the inevitable work creep that happens during an academic year: *Work Won't Love You Back* by Sarah Jaffe (<https://workwontloveyouback.org/>)



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## **Welcoming New Faculty and Post Docs**

Will your department, program, or campus be welcoming new faculty and postdocs in the coming weeks? Make sure you tell them about UNAC and invite them to become dues paying members. Our office staff is not informed of new members until those members receive their first paycheck a month or more into their new job. That also means they don't receive our newsletters or email updates during their first weeks here; please forward them!

During previous rounds of negotiations, we bargained for UA to provide us with a list of new members in August and January, but to-date they have failed to include a complete update of new hires on those lists. While union leadership argues with management about it in Meet and Confer meetings, *you can help us circumvent the lag by talking to new faculty and post docs near you about our union.* Tell your new colleagues about [our CBA](#), [our website](#), our [YouTube channel](#), and our [membership form](#). Encourage them to join as a dues-paying member by completing our membership form.

UNAC Videos to share with new members:

- [5 Reasons to Pay UNAC Dues](#)
  - [We Are UNAC](#)
  - [When to Call United Academics](#)
  - [Your Weingarten Rights](#)
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## Grade Change Autonomy

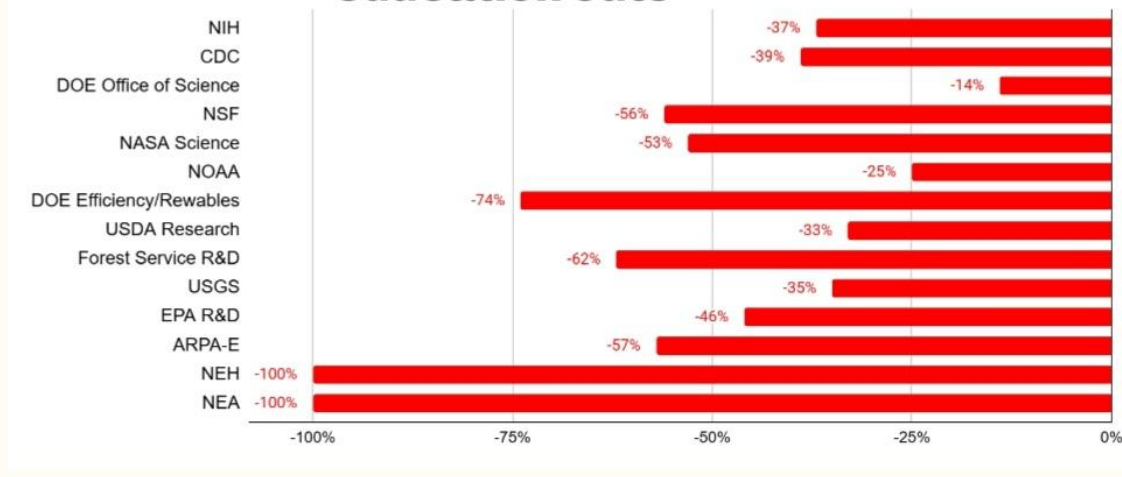
It has come to our attention that administrators are increasingly feeling emboldened to recommend student grade changes despite the faculty member's prerogative. A faculty member's autonomy over course grades is *central* to the tenets of academic freedom and shared governance, without which universities as we know them would not exist.

*If you are being pressured to change a student's grade for any reason, including disability claims, contact our office immediately at [contract@unac4996ak.com](mailto:contract@unac4996ak.com).*

## Federal Funding Update

The chart below is from our graduate student workers' union, AGWA/UAW. It shows the devastating proposed budget cuts to federal agencies that fund competitive grants and contracts earned by our members. If these cuts go through, current awards may be retracted and future awards will be far fewer. If the chart below becomes reality, the ripple effects within UA and Alaska's communities will be vast and unprecedented.

### 2026: Trump proposing massive science and education cuts



***If you care about your colleagues' ability to maintain their jobs and conduct their research or community work while contributing to UA's overhead, contact our federal delegation today.***

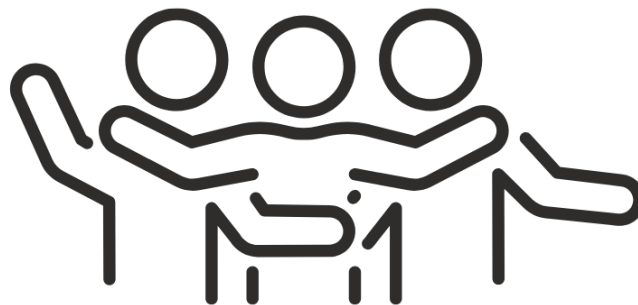
[Senator Murkowski](#)

[Senator Sullivan](#)

[Representative Begich](#)

These funding cuts aren't final. Contact our federal delegation now, before they begin voting on agency budgets in a few short weeks. Ask Senators Murkowski and Sullivan, and Representative Begich, if they want to be complicit in destroying so much quality research and investment in the UA system and the state of Alaska, as well as hundreds of individual Alaskan livelihoods.

For more on the topic, read *Inside Higher Ed's* article "[Congress diverging from Trump's cuts to science.](#)"



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## **Training Opportunities for Dues-Paying Members**

### **Student Debt Clinics with American Federation of Teachers (AFT)**

If you have student debt and you're a dues-paying member of United Academics, [sign up today to attend one of AFT's upcoming Student Debt Clinics](#).

You will learn up-to-date information about student loan repayment options, Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF), the status of legal challenges to student loan repayment and forgiveness plans, and more.

You should also read this [brief summary from Federal Student Aid](#) of how the "One Big B- Bill" may affect your student loan repayment options.

*\*Not a dues-paying member but you'd like to attend one or both of these trainings? Fill out our [membership form](#) and we'll help you get signed up!*

### **Travel Safety and Security Training with AFT**

Are you currently overseas and traveling back to the United States later this summer? The AFT is offering a one-hour information session with the Democracy Security Project (DSP) on *how you should mitigate both cyber and physical vulnerabilities while traveling*. The team at DSP will offer practical and pragmatic solutions on a number of subjects like handling your devices, data privacy, and border security best practices.

AFT will offer the same session twice, on July 28 at 8:00 p.m. ET and July 31 at 10:00 a.m. ET.

To make this session available to our higher education members, AFT is partnering with the Democratic Security Project (DSP), a nonprofit group dedicated to providing safety and security solutions at a time when harassment, threats and intimidation are on the rise.

**[Register for July 28 meeting](#)**  
@4pm AKDT

or

**[Register for July 31 meeting](#)**  
@6am AKDT

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## **UNAC at The Grace Carroll Rocky Mountain Labor School**

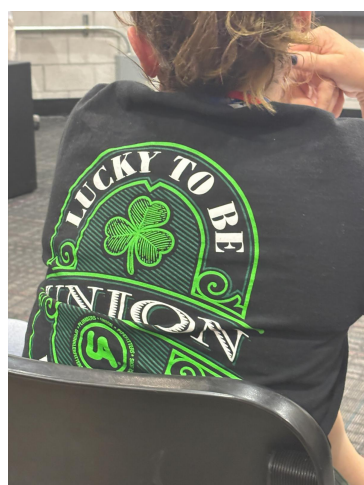
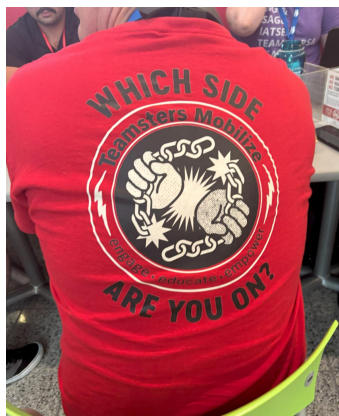
United Academics' president, treasurer, and organizing manager spent a hot week at the University of Nevada, Las





Vegas, together with unionized workers from many different fields and a dozen different states. We all shared one goal: *respect and a living wage for workers in exchange for a day's work.* The labor school began in 1956 and was founded to empower workers.

The instructors led classes on labor law, union leadership, internal organizing, union communications, collective bargaining, union stewardship, and more. Despite the heat, the crowded cafeteria, and the double-occupancy dormitory lodging, the school was worth it. It armed UNAC's attendees with tools and knowledge we'll need in the coming years as we strengthen our union for the fights ahead.



**pictured above: t-shirts from various attendees at the labor school; graduation**

*Top left - Chicago Teachers Union AFT local 1*

*Top middle - Teamsters "Which side are you on?"*

*Top right - Alaskan elevator mechanic "I'm an elevator mechanic. I can't fix stupid, but I can fix what stupid does."*

*Middle left - United Association of Plumbers & Pipefitters "Lucky to be union."*

Middle right - Union shirt "I'm union. You're welcome."

Bottom left - Kate Quick graduating

Bottom middle - Jill Dumesnil graduating

Bottom right - Sharon Chamard graduating

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## **Strike Solidarity Corner**

Workers around the world share one common goal: to be respected for the work we perform. In the U.S., strikes won us weekends (1938), the 40-hour work week (1940), an end to child labor (1938), a plethora of safety rules, and improved wages.

Following is a sampling of current workers striking for better working conditions and better pay:

- 50,000 resident (junior) doctors in the British Medical Association are preparing for an unprecedented 5 day strike at the end of July. They are demanding a 29% pay raise to make up for a decade of declining wages. *Does this salary compression sound familiar, long-term UA faculty?* ([More here](#))
- Nurses at the University Medical Center New Orleans went on an Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) strike to protest retaliation against nurses for their union activities and patient advocacy. ([More here](#))
- Advanced healthcare workers organized with Minnesota Nurses Association (MNA) at 69 Essentia health facilities across Minnesota went on an open-ended ULP strike. The ULPs are centered on bad-faith bargaining (refusing to negotiate), unsafe working conditions and workplace violence, denying access to union representation, and surveilling private meetings. ([More here](#))
- Hospitality workers at Fenway Park announced plans to strike during a Red Sox series against the LA Dodgers. They collect tickets, serve hot dogs, pour beers, and help create the atmosphere baseball fans love. They are represented by Unite Here and are fighting for better wages and protection against automation. ([More here](#))



## **Meeting Notices**

### **UNAC General Membership Meetings**

Regularly scheduled meetings: every second Tuesday of the month from 5:30-7:00 p.m.

All bargaining unit members will receive the Zoom invite in your @alaska.edu inbox approximately 48 hours before the meeting.

### **Next General Membership Meeting**

Tuesday, August 12, 2025, 5:30-7:00 p.m. AKDT on Zoom

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

Saturday, August 16, 2025, 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. AKDT

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

First and third Wednesday of each month, 9:00 a.m.-11:00 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.*

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## **Reminders**

### **UNAC Website**

Please visit our United Academics website: [unitedacademicsak.org](https://unitedacademicsak.org) for helpful resources including:

- UNAC Membership form
- Executive Board officer contact info & Representative Assembly roster
- A pdf version of our current CBA
- Zoom backgrounds and profile pictures
- An archive of our monthly newsletters
- E-Board and RA meeting minutes
- Our union by-laws and constitution
- Union member benefits
- And more

### **Social Media**

- Follow us on [BlueSky](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#)
- Like and share our posts, and tag us in your own posts

### **YouTube Channel**

Our [YouTube channel](#) (@United Academics\_4996\_AK) has short member-to-member video messages, videos explaining union rights, training videos for promotion and workloads, and other informational content. Contact us if you have additional training or other video requests.

### **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:

<https://unitedacademicsak.org/resources/collective-bargaining-agreement-1>



## Executive Board Contacts

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

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**Treasurer - Sharon Chamard, Ph.D.**

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**Secretary - Richie Berndt**

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**UAA Organizational VP - Ryan Harrod, Ph.D.**

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**UAS Organizational VP - Andrea Dewees, Ph.D.**

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**UAF Organizational VP - Ingrid Johnson, Ph.D.**

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

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

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**Organizing Manager - Kate Quick**

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**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), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the Alaska Public Employee Association (APEA), and AFL-CIO.

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

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