May 25, 2016

FAQs on Extension office closures

Which Extension offices are closing?
The chancellor has approved a plan to close the Anchorage and Sitka Extension offices by the end of October.

What prompted this decision?
The university is facing steep cuts in state funding. If the current proposed state budget is passed, Extension will need to cut about $1 million next year. That comes after cutting about $1.2 million the previous two years. With cuts of that magnitude, closure of some locations was likely.

How was this decision made and why?
A committee of faculty and staff has been looking at a reorganization of Extension for six to seven months with the knowledge that steep budget cuts were likely. There have been several options explored. Several things factored into the decision to move forward with this option:

• The rent for the Anchorage office is nearly $250,000 a year. Saving that money will allow Extension to preserve more services and locations throughout the state.
• The clients of smaller, rural offices have fewer resources to draw upon than those in Anchorage. Extension has a long history of reaching underserved audiences.

Will Extension serve Anchorage and Sitka residents?
Yes. Like all residents throughout the state, Anchorage and Sitka residents will have access to online resources and publications. Many of Extension’s courses are available via distance delivery and residents throughout the state can call any district office for assistance. In the Anchorage area, volunteer 4-H leaders will be supported via other 4-H offices. Extension is exploring options for serving Anchorage residents and Sitka will continue being served by the Juneau District Office. Anchorage residents can also visit the Palmer office at the Matanuska Experiment Farm for assistance.

What faculty and staff will be affected?
The Anchorage District Office has 12 employees and the Sitka office has one. One Anchorage employee will retire June 30.

The remaining employees will be affected in a variety of ways:

• Layoffs
• Transfers to other vacant positions in Extension
• Assistance in identifying other university positions

A few grant-funded employees in the Anchorage area will continue to serve the area. Extension is working on a plan for where to house them.

What happens now?
The restructure committee will contact the individual offices to involve members in a transitions committee and to plan details of the review and the timeline for changes and closures.

How can I find out more information?
We will post updates and information online at http://bit.ly/uaf-extension. In addition, anyone with questions or comments can email them to Extension Director Fred Schlutt at snre-comm@alaska.edu.