


April 8, 2020

To: UAF Staff Council – Executive Board

FROM: Daniel M. White 
Chancellor

RE: Finding from COVID-19 UAF Staff Remote Accessibility Survey

Thank you for sending me the staff survey data around remote accessibility during the COVID:19 pandemic. I appreciate your bringing staff concerns forward. It is important that staff have the necessary resources and consistent, reliable communication to continue working remotely, wherever that location may be.

With the current changing environment around COVID:19, employees should work with their supervisors to establish their remote working needs and their expectations regarding hours, workload, supplies, and campus access (if necessary and allowable). Campus leadership is encouraging supervisors to work with staff on approaches that best fit the job duties and the department's needs.

All buildings remain locked on campus but are accessible by employees via card swipe or key entry. Employees should only be in a facility if they are gathering items to conduct work remotely or if authorized to work on campus. Employees authorized to work on campus either full time or in a reduced hours manner should have received a letter with this information from their supervisor. If they have not, it is important that they contact their supervisor.

With respect to accessing confidential information while working from home, this is also an issue that should be addressed by supervisors. It will likely vary by nature of the materials, the work that is being done, and by whom. Limitations on accessibility to confidential information may restrict the ability of certain staff positions to operate remotely.

I also understand that connectivity is often limited in Alaska, making remote work difficult. The office of information technology (OIT) has made several resources available to staff to make remote work more accessible:

- OIT has [coordinated with ACS](#), who has agreed to offer free internet service to employees and students and waive any installation fees.

- OIT has [coordinated with MTA](#), who is waiving all installation fees, and offering free upgrades to the highest possible bandwidth and no data caps for the rest of the school year for all university students and employees.
- GCI has several current offers available: Free upgrades to the next level for current customers through May 31, a free month to try GCI and several other offers that can be accessed here: <https://www.alaska.edu/virtual-campus/internet/>
- Human Resources has set up a system to provide employees a taxable allowance to offset the incremental cost of internet connectivity for business use. The allowance must be for business needs and is not intended to reimburse employees for existing internet capacity or for personal use. Use [this form](#) to apply for the allowance, here is the [authorizing procedure](#).
- Curious about your internet speed and whether your setup is good enough? You can test the performance of your internet here: [Test your internet connection speed](#)
- To further optimize your internet set-up, check out these tips and tricks: <https://www.alaska.edu/virtual-campus/#optimize>
- Explore options to securely connect to your work remotely, including working with Banner and shared drives: <https://www.alaska.edu/virtual-campus/#access>
- Learn about getting the most out of your Zoom sessions: <https://www.alaska.edu/virtual-campus/zoom.php>
- If internet is not possible in your area, the next best approach is to use your cell phone as a hotspot and request increased data from your provider at no cost. Learn about cell phone hotspots here: <https://www.alaska.edu/virtual-campus/internet/hotspot.php>
- As a last resort, there are a few MiFi devices available to loan; these require a good Verizon cellular connection and are essentially the same connectivity you will get by using your phone as a hotspot. Check out obtaining internet first, next try your cell phone as a hotspot, and if all else fails, apply for a loaner MiFi device here: <https://www.alaska.edu/virtual-campus/loan-equipment.php>
- OIT has extended Wi-Fi outside as drive-in WiFi-enabled parking lots on the Fairbanks campus to provide UAF students access to secure wireless from the comfort of their car and while practicing social distancing. <https://news.uaf.edu/wi-fi-added-to-parking-lots/>.
- Cisco phones can be remotely configured to forward to another number as well as access your voice messages; see details [here](#). UAA implemented Cisco's Jabber add-on product long before there was a need for a COVID-19 response; it is not a solution UAF has available today. To discuss possible solutions to specific challenges you may be experiencing, please submit a request with OIT Telecom [here](#).

Again, thank you for your efforts to address staff concerns and provide clarity around areas that need additional guidance. If additional information is needed, please contact executive officer, Nickole Conley at nlconley@alaska.edu or 907-474-5626.

DMW:jdp

cc: Nickole Conley, UAF Executive Officer