



**For immediate release**

**March 30, 2020**

**Media contacts:**

Kirstin Olmstead, 907-748-1682 (cell), kbomstead@alaska.edu

Austin Osborne, 907-350-6673 (cell), alosborne@alaska.edu

## **New UAA report recommends suite of COVID-19 measures to avoid overwhelming Alaska's health care system**

*Epidemiologic modeling with Alaska data provides support for new measures implemented by state and municipal leaders*

**Anchorage, Alaska** – A team of public health researchers at the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) delivered a report to state and municipal leaders that predicts the number of COVID-19-related hospitalizations in the Anchorage/Mat-Su area and Alaska will rise exponentially between March and September 2020. However, current and additional mitigation measures put in place March 28 are likely to "flatten the curve" and buy additional time for preparation in upcoming weeks.

The Municipality of Anchorage requested the team assess the COVID ACT NOW model and review a recent Imperial College of London paper and quickly report back with recommendations and considerations. Both employ epidemiologic methods to predict the impact of varying degrees of virus transmission and social distancing on the number and timing of COVID-19 hospitalizations.

"Quality data and quality data analysis allow us to project the course of the outbreak so we can put forward appropriate policy and deploy resources in the most effective manner," said Mayor Ethan Berkowitz. "The UAA modeling team gathered data, synthesized best practice modeling and provided critical analysis. We will continue to work with them to inform decisions moving forward, and are appreciative that we can share this information and methodology with the governor and the state team so that municipal and state actions are coordinated in the time ahead."

(MORE)



(UAA COVID-19 REPORT TO MUNICIPALITY, PAGE 2 OF 2)

Based on epidemiological models, the report supports current actions and recommends strengthening state and municipal social distancing measures and mitigation efforts. Similarly, the models predict that if containment measures are relaxed or eliminated prematurely, Alaska’s medical infrastructure would not be able to handle the surge in COVID-19 cases.

“These mathematical models—along with the experience of other cities and countries around the world—show us how quickly this virus can spread,” said Dr. Tom Hennessy, who led the UAA research team. “What we’re seeing is that if we do too little, we will overwhelm our hospitals and break our health care system. To save lives, we need to do as much as we can, as soon as we can, to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in Alaska.”

The team evaluated state and local mandates and interventions and considered appropriate and feasible thresholds for triggering policy actions. Among the recommendations were to strengthen social distancing by mandating shelter in place, restricting nonessential in-state travel and reevaluating the list of essential businesses in the Alaska Essential Services and Critical Workforce Infrastructure Order.

Study findings were shared with Anchorage Mayor Ethan Berkowitz, Alaska Gov. Mike Dunleavy and Alaska Chief Medical Officer Anne Zink on March 25. The team is now reviewing next steps and conducting additional research to support a coordinated COVID-19 response moving forward.

###

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA ANCHORAGE

*The University of Alaska Anchorage is Alaska’s largest university, educating more than 15,000 students annually. UAA’s mission is to discover and disseminate knowledge through teaching, research, engagement and creative expression. Learn more at [uaa.alaska.edu](http://uaa.alaska.edu).*