

# Bigjim lauds choice of O'Rourke

BY FRED BIGJIM

The appointment of Dr. Patrick O'Rourke as chancellor for Community Colleges/Extension and Rural Education is a very positive move by the University. His appointment could have substantial impact on the delivery of higher education to rural Alaska and with the continued expansion of community colleges in Alaska.

Dr. O'Rourke has proven himself as a capable administrator and sympathetic to rural higher education concerns and desires. His experience and achievement in both areas (rural education and community colleges) are enviable in the sight of his colleagues in Alaskan education affairs. Dr. O'Rourke's awareness of the problems involved with establishing community colleges and delivering higher education opportunities to rural Alaskans should enhance the outlook of higher education in all areas of Alaska. Dr. O'Rourke has a unique opportunity to change the atmosphere of higher education pertaining to rural Alaska and community colleges.

The University of Alaska has been concerned primarily with the expansion of higher education in the urban centers of the state. The economic and social concerns of rural Alaskans are constantly being studied and discussed by educators with no active solutions implemented to alleviate the poor conditions rural people exist in.

The University of Alaska must be responsive to the needs and requirements of economic and social advance, and must be so organized as to make it possible for rural Alaskans. This can only mean a strong and responsive chancellor for rural education's activities. The university can be successful if it reposes strong and responsible power in those individuals directing the affairs of rural education. These individuals must be well experienced and educated with the unique requirements that go with understanding the problems of rural education and establishment of higher education's schools in rural Alaska.

If an aggressive higher education plan were thoroughly developed for rural Alaska, the results would surely be a reduction of poverty, unemployment, under employment and inequality of education opportunities for rural Alaskans. Other results could be political power which would greatly influence the inequality of rural people in terms of their ability to speak their minds and develop a strong rural personality.

Dr. Patrick O'Rourke has a position within the university system that is unique and needed for all Alaskans. Higher education in rural Alaska should be a top priority of the university because of the changes that are occurring there. Dr. O'Rourke has proven himself as an educator; his talents are needed for the development of higher education in rural Alaska, and for that matter, all Alaska.