

More Natives Succeed To Higher Education

FAIRBANKS — More Native students are succeeding today in Alaska's colleges than ever before, yet this is still not enough, say Karen Kohout and Judith Kleinfeld, authors of a recent University of Alaska report, "Alaska Natives in Higher Education."

Kohout and Kleinfeld of the Institute of Social, Economic and Government Research at the university found that more than four times as many Native students are entering college in Alaska today than 10 years ago.

And the number of Native students succeeding in college has increased five times since the early 1960's.

The trend over the last 10 years has been for more Native students from the rural villages to enter and succeed in college.

Both recruitment and assistance programs, such as the Tlingit-Haida Central Council's Talent Search and the university's Student Orientation Services

(SOS), have contributed to this improvement, according to the study.

On the other hand, there is still a need to further improve the college success of Native students. Their rate of success in college is still far below that of white students. There are nowhere near enough Native students succeeding in college to fill current job demands.

The authors conclude that further changes in college course work would probably have little effect on success rates of Native students; further efforts to increase rates of college success for Natives must be made in areas of Native identity and transition to college life.

Dr. Kleinfeld is currently doing research on the social environments of colleges and church-related boarding schools in Alaska. She expects this research may indicate some non-academic factors that influence the success of Native students in college.