

Pilot Program Aims to Help Natives

A pilot program aimed at bringing academic and career programs closer together, will begin this fall on the campus of Anchorage Community College.

The college has received a \$30,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to develop courses that will help to "liberalize" or "humanize" the vocational-technical pro-

grams on the campus.

"The objective is to provide students in our vocational-technical programs with a more rounded and diversified curriculum which is tailored to their real needs and experiences," said James Irany, assistant professor of sociology and director of the Division of Community Services, who will direct the project.

"The program will place special emphasis on the needs of Alaska natives," he said, "many of whom feel alienated on the campus because they do not necessarily share the views of the dominant "white" culture."

Courses are being prepared to help these students feel a sense of identity and to ameliorate the "cultural shock" experienced by the Alaska native in a modern urban society.

"Many of our standard academic courses seem too theoretical and too unrelated to any previous experience of these students," he added.

A new sociology course, "The Alaska Native in Contemporary Society," will point out the great cultural diversity of the state, discuss the problems of minorities and sub-cultures and the stresses placed upon marginal man trying to live in a modern, urban, industrial society.

Another course, in the political science area, will discuss the development of cities and the impact of urban societies on rural or village cultures.

"Hopefully," Professor Irany said, "the project will develop a sense of confidence in the student by placing a fund of information and a set of conceptual tools at his disposal enabling him to reduce his individual frustrations and to increase his own effectiveness in this rapidly changing world."

Professor Irany noted that "Alaska is a state in swift transition" and that it has "one of the most fragmented, and varied, populations of any state in the nation."

Sixty-five per cent of native students on the ACC campus are enrolled in vocational-technical programs, he said, and many of these students, who come to Anchorage from bush areas, experience severe adjustment problems.

As an example, he said that the advent of the trans-Alaska oil pipeline will require the training of several thousand technicians — welders, mechanics, etc. — many of whom will be native Alaskans being introduced into a totally new way of life.

"These students are people, not cattle, and they must be prepared to live and to make an appropriate social adjustment to the society as well as to work in it. Their attitudes to society are at least as important as the technical skills they will be learning."

Two professors, one from the humanities area, the other from the social sciences, will be released part-time for the project which will be evaluated at the end of the year.