

North Slope Higher Education Center to be extension of University of Alaska

On Thursday, Jan. 30, 1986, Mayor George Ahmaogak of the North Slope Borough and President Jacob Adams of the North Slope Borough Assembly, signed an agreement with Chancellor Patrick J. O'Rourke of the University of Alaska-Fairbanks in which UAF agreed to provide higher education opportunities to the people of the North Slope.

This agreement is the culmination of a year of frequent meetings between UAF and North Slope Borough personnel to discuss the need for expanded opportunities for academic postsecondary education for people who live in villages and towns in the North Slope Borough. To that end, the North Slope Borough Assembly passed an ordinance creating the North Slope Higher Education Center as a unit of the North Slope Borough to be affiliated with the University of Alaska-Fairbanks. Courses, certificates and degrees that meet UAF standards can be developed and offered by the center. Center faculty will meet UAF qualifications for affiliate appointments.

The Borough ordinance states that "the center will become the major training facility to provide locally professionally trained personnel for the complex North Slope organization and governments. As a major goal, the North Slope Higher Education Center will develop into a totally controlled, and independently accredited public institution of higher education of the North Slope." The ordinance also establishes a North Slope Higher Education Board to administer and set policy for the center.

At UAF, the dean of the College of Human and Rural Development (CHRD) has been appointed to coordinate UAF's involvement. The College of Human and Rural Development is responsible for offering on-and off-campus instructional, research and public service programs aimed at developing Alaska's human resources, particularly with regard to the rural areas of the state.

The North Slope Borough considered a number of models prior to a decision. Dr. Robert Harcharek, the North Slope Mayor's liaison on this project, indicated that Sinte Gleska College of Rosebud, S.D., served as one of these models. After six years of affiliation with the state university, Sinte Gleska became a candidate for accreditation, and after 13 years, became the first college from a predominantly Native American community to be accredited at a four-year level. The model provides local control, academic integrity, cultural responsiveness and the opportunity for independent operation within a continued satellite relationship.

Four academic programs have been identified that will provide the necessary training and education to fulfill important needs of the North Slope. They are: 1) in-service education; 2) college programs for accelerated high school students; 3) pre-baccalaureate certificates and 4) UAF baccalaureate degree in teacher education and later in other areas of need.