

# AFN, Inc. Presents Proposal For Higher Education to UA

**FAIRBANKS** — A proposal for a major new program of higher education in the rural areas of the state has been presented to the University of Alaska by the Alaska Federation of Natives, Inc. The program, calling for establishment of a headquarters unit in Anchorage and 10 regional centers in rural Alaska, would cost an estimated \$2.9 million for the first year of operations.

Dr. Robert W. Hiatt, president of the university, said the "concept was received very "favorably" by university administrators, and he has directed members of his staff to work with the AFN "to flesh it out for presentation to the Board of Regents."

Under the AFN proposal, a vice president for rural education would direct the statewide

program. This would be a new position under the president of the University.

"The person in this position wouldn't necessarily have to be designated a vice president but he would have to be at the highest level in the university administration to insure the program would get the necessary consideration," said Roger Lang,

(Continued on Page 11)

# AFN, Inc. Presents . . .

(Continued from Page 1)

president of the AFN, who outlined the proposed program at a recent (Jan. 16) meeting with Hiatt.

Attending the meeting with Lang were Emil Notti, director of the Alaska Native Foundation; Eric Ekvall, former member of Lang's technical staff and now acting director of the university's Alaska Native Human Resources Development Program; Dennis Demmert, director of native studies at the university; and Vic Fischer and Dr. Frank Darnell, directors, respectively, of the university's Institute of Social, Economic and Government Research and Center for Northern Educational Research.

The Alaska Native Human Resources Development Program is financed by a \$681,461 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, which is to be allocated over a five-year period.

Its objective is to help Alaska Natives develop the skills needed to manage their increasingly complex affairs. The first year of the program, begun in 1973, was devoted to assessing the higher education needs of natives.

Lang, Notti, Fischer and Darnell serve on the Kellogg program's seven-member Policy Council, which has approved the AFN proposal. Dr. James Matthews, director of the university's Cooperative Extension Service, is overall head of the program.

The new AFN proposal "in many ways stems from work of the Kellogg program's Policy Council," said Hiatt. "In my inaugural address I recommended the reduction of tuition at our community colleges to little more than a token amount to extend the collegiate experience to many more Alaskans.

"The University of Alaska is the people's university, and the decade of the 1970s will mark the era of universal postsecondary education in this state, which means that every citizen who has completed high school or has reached a certain age, and who desires a chance for higher education should find that chance somehow, somewhere in the university system."

The AFN proposal, said Hiatt,

"fits in precisely with this concept and therefore I have viewed it very favorably. I've asked some of our principal staff members concerned with Native education to work with Mr. Ekvall to flesh it out for presentation to the Board of Regents."

The university president and Lang stressed the AFN proposal would not eliminate existing university programs in rural areas of the state.

The AFN president expressed hope that the proposal to broaden higher educational opportunity in rural Alaska could be implemented this year.

A "flexible and adaptive educational delivery system" is needed in rural Alaska, and "it is our firm belief" the University of Alaska can provide such a system, says AFN in its proposal.

Basic to the plan is that higher education must be offered where rural Alaskans live and work and must consider "the needs of life styles of the people concerned."

With the various regions now developing under terms of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, their manpower needs are growing and "it is imperative that those who are presently working in rural Alaska retain their jobs and stay where they can be most effective," says the AFN.

Because of the unprecedented development in rural Alaska, higher educational programs "must be geared to the expressed needs of the consumer population." Both degree and nondegree, and on-campus and off-campus programs must be considered.

Under the AFN plan, 10 service areas, which might follow existing Native regional corporation boundaries, would be delineated. A local learning center would be established in each area to provide higher education services.

A policy board comprised of locally elected members would give final approval on hiring of the center director and would formulate policy for the center.

"I look forward very much to implementation of this idea," said Hiatt. "It would be one of the most important activities of the university in the next few years.