

# Center for Northern Education Established at Univ. of Alaska

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In the past few years, many exciting new developments in cross cultural education have be-

gun at the University of Alaska.

Bilingual language programs, the Alaska reader, Rural Schools Project, research into the needs of boarding home students all began in its Department of Education, linguistics and Institutes.

Yet, at present, these programs are isolated, receive separate funding and lack an important element - means to include input from the native people who will be involved in the programs.

Cross cultural education is an important concern of educators in Alaska today. With its large Eskimo, Indian and Aleut population not only in the rural villages but also in the urban centers, Alaska has unique educational problems.

In order to coordinate native opinions with professional focus on these problems, the University of Alaska Board of Regents last week created a new unit - the Center for Northern Education.

The Center will be an interdisciplinary research and planning organization, similar to the University's various research institutes. It will focus on re-

searching the educational needs of native Alaskans and developing programs to fit these needs.

"The Center represents a recognition on the part of the University that as much emphasis has to be put on the human needs of Alaska as on the physical," commented UA Department of Education Head Frank Darnell.

Integral to the research, program development and program support purposes of the Center will be its further goal - to act as a platform from which "the Native population may join with the 'educational establishment' and governmental agencies in the development of cross cultural educational programs."

The Center will be an integral part of the University.

Its permanent staff, as visualized in a proposal to the Ford Foundation, will consist of only five people. They will be supplemented by Program Associates who will work with the Center for various periods of time on specific research projects or programs.

"In essence," writes Dr. Dar-

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nell, "the Center would hope to assume leadership in the long range coordinated educational planning now lacking in public education in Alaska. Thus, the Center would have the fundamental function of asking the central, but neglected questions on goals, control, and process and applying the best of scientific investigative methods in co-operation with a broad cross section of society in quest of answers."

Program associates, the working members of the Center, might come from University faculty or Institutes, or from such groups as the Alaska Federation of Natives, state and federal agencies, graduate students and visiting scholars.

The Center expects to devote at least one full year to pre-operational planning, beginning its work in the summer of 1972.

During this time, Dr. Darnell is contacting native groups, State School Boards and other groups and individuals concerned with Alaska's multicultural educational problems to give them the opportunity to influence the Center's scope and direction.

He hopes to invite these individuals and groups to the University at various times to discuss ongoing plans for the center.

Some funding will come from contracts now held by the University, such as the bilingual

language program, teacher corps and rural schools which will be incorporated into the Center.

Near the end of April, representatives of the Ford Foundation will be in Alaska to discuss Foundation funding with members of the University. The University is requesting a Ford Foundation grant of \$654,000 to support the central staffing and operational functions of the Center, to initiate early program development and to disseminate findings.

An important part of the Center's work will be to chart a direction to education in the North. In a state faced with the complex problems of emerging native people and a super-imposed economically dominant, culturally different group, the Center hopes to provide a planning focus - responsive to the needs of the native people.

Important questions on the values of assimilation, the learning styles of Alaskan Native children and what leads some of them to success in school and others to problems will all be pursued.

Interested individuals desiring more information about the center or with pertinent ideas should contact Dr. Frank Darnell Department of Education the University of Alaska College, Alaska.