

O'Dowd explains need for restructuring

by Donald D. O'Dowd
University of Alaska President

I wish to take this opportunity to answer some of the many concerns which have been expressed regarding the impending restructuring of the University of Alaska.

Since many of the readers of the *Tundra Times* are Alaska Natives and many live in rural areas, I shall give particular attention to aspects of the plan which I believe might be the concerns of these individuals.

Let me first note that the need to restructure the University of Alaska was created by a drastic decline in funding.

In June 1985, the Board of Regents' working budget was \$167.8 million. In September 1985, the regents requested \$176.8 million for Fiscal Year 1987; however, the working budget for FY87 was set in June 1986 at \$153 million, and by August it had shrunk to \$143.7 million.

In March, the regents approved an FY88 budget request of \$140.8 million. Currently, the governor's FY88 budget request for the university is \$135.7 million.

Faced with this grim economic picture, the Board of Regents early last year directed the administration to develop a cost-cutting proposal for the university that would maintain the missions and functions of the community colleges and university centers and protect academic programs in all sites that are currently served through university centers or community colleges.

The restructuring proposal which the Board of Regents adopted in December meets these criteria. In implementing this proposal, the Board of Regents and the university administration are determined to ensure the following, and to do so by establishing policy and dedicating funds to these

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ends:

- Educational services will continue to be provided at all current community college locations.

- Access to education will be maintained throughout the university system with open admissions.

- Local advisory involvement will be specified, as it is now, in regents' policy.

- Vocational and technical education will be provided at university sites throughout the state.

- Remedial and developmental education programs will continue to be offered at all sites.

- Mission elements of existing institutions will be included in the mission statements of the new institutions and will be developed with the participation of representatives of various constituencies of the university.

- The restructured administration will include units with responsibility for programs and services presently provided by existing community colleges.

- Reporting requirements will be established to ensure that allocation of instructional resources by site and program delivery by site is commensurate with conditions prior to restructuring.

- Guidelines will be developed for the level of funding and support required for a community to maintain an

independently accredited community college.

In addition to the details specified above, the university's commitment to providing services in the rural areas is evidenced by the fact that in spite of greatly decreased funding, none of the \$4.4 million in program support reductions which we have had to make this year have come from rural programs, and we still hope for increased instructional funding at all rural units.

Task forces which are being developed to work out the details of implementing the restructuring proposal will include Native and rural representation.

Wherever possible, in making the many changes which must take place to accommodate restructuring, we hope to improve the services of the university.

One of the areas slated for strengthening is that of vocational and technical education. We expect to be able to offer to communities the training they need when and where they need it by maintaining continuing programs locally and being prepared to deliver quick start and on-demand programs when and where new needs develop.

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There is no doubt that both systems would have to eliminate programs to finance the increased administration needed to maintain a new, separate system.

In closing, let me emphasize that in spite of restructuring, programs and services shall be maintained in all sites that are currently served through university centers or community colleges; local citizens' input shall be maintained; and the missions and functions of the community colleges and the university centers shall be continued.

In short, the University of Alaska shall continue to serve the higher educational needs of the citizens of Alaska, but shall do so while spending less on administration.

If we anticipate the future with optimism, I believe that as increased revenue becomes available it can be dedicated to improving the quality and quantity of services, rather than reinstating the administration.