

Demmert named to direct UF native program

Dennis Demmert, a Tlingit Indian, has been appointed director of Alaska Native Programs at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks. The new position combines eight specialized programs into one administrative unit.

According to Demmert, the various programs are being combined only administratively. They will continue to function as before, but the new administrative grouping will improve coordination among the individual programs.

With one administrator Demmert feels that the university will be more successful in recruiting Native students and keeping them in school until they graduate.

Reporting to Demmert are Alaska Native Studies, Cross Cultural Communications, Special Services, Alaska Native Language Program, Festival of Native Arts, Tuma Theater, Alaska Native Art Center and the Alaska Native Film Heritage Project.

Demmert has no plans to institute any immediate changes in the programs. He said, "We really have a lot of experience in Native education at UAF. But the way the different programs have been divided administratively has thwarted the effective utilization of that experience."

While the university has considerable experience that can be harnessed, Demmert feels that there is a serious shortage of information on Native students. One of his prime objectives is to develop a data base. From such an information base, he feels that Native perceptions of the university, their likes and dislikes, can be determined. The same information can be used to determine which programs work and which don't.

Alaska Native Studies and Alaska Native Language Program are degree-oriented courses of study leading to a BA. Cross Cultural Communications stresses intensive writing and communications skills, while Special Services provides tutorial services for students.

Tuma Theater is a university-sponsored Native dance group. The group gives shows of Native dances and story telling. The annual Festival of Native Arts brings Native cultural and art groups to campus every spring for a five day series of programs.

Alaska Native Arts Center is dedicated to the preservation and training of traditional Native arts and skills. The Alaska Native Film Heritage Project is involved in recording on film Native subjects.

Demmert joined the university staff in 1974 as director of Native Studies. In 1979 he moved to the state administration of the university as a special assistant to the president.

Dr. Patrick O'Rourke, UAF chancellor, said, "I'm pleased Dennis will be back at UAF. We have a variety of good pro-



Dennis Demmert

grams that need better coordination and overall leadership direction. This consolidation will provide greater focus and visibility to these programs and facilitate the exploration of new directions.

Demmert is a graduate of Harvard University with a Master's degree in education.