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Richard Johnson, interviewee

Karen Cedzo, interviewer

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Richard Johnson, deputy director of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), talked about the demonstration states looking at planning efforts in graduation education. WICHE was established in 1953 to help the thirteen western states work together to provide high quality higher education programming. Johnson said WICHE has operated a student exchange program which now involves fifteen different fields. WICHE makes it possible for a student in Alaska to have tuition offset in a program such as dentistry, veterinary medicine or law to go to one of the schools in one of those schools in one of the western states. They broker the finances between Alaska and what they call the receiving schools for that student. Johnson met in February at the University of Alaska Fairbanks with university deans and directors whose departments will be involved with a new program of the organization that focuses on the five states in the Northwest which are part of the graduate education project. Johnson said in 1977 with the support from WICHE and additional support from the Carnegie Corporation of New York WICHE undertook a project called the Graduate Improvement Project. Within the context of the student exchange contract to explore new avenues for cooperation among the states and among institutions at the graduate level. Two aspects of the project include a data collection and an analysis service for the thirteen member states and a more positive aspect of reciprocity at the graduate level for regional graduate programs. Each of the graduate level institutions in the five state area were asked to nominate several of its programs that would serve as regional graduate programs. They were asked to nominate programs that were unique or programs where there weren't more than two such programs in the five-state area. They are programs which they call demonstrable strength and they are programs that the institution are willing to make available on a broader basis for students from the five-state area by waving the non-resident tuition which within each of the five states is considerable. In its application the University of Alaska Fairbanks nominated one area of emphasis, cold region studies with its fourteen different programs which makes the university unique. Johnson said Fairbanks is the only campus which had a kind of coordinated approach across a number of different departments. It stresses the distinctiveness of the institution. They hope this model will be looked at by other institutions. This demonstration project will be in operation in the fall of 1981 with a five-year program. They will look at the program at the end of five years. The WICHE Commission consists of three commissioners from each state and are appointed by the governors. In Alaska Glenn Hackney, T. Green, and Terry Romsberg are on the commission. The program was approved by WICHE in June. There is also an advisory committee working with the Alaska program and it also has three members: Terry Romsberg, Mildred Vansfield, and Senator Arliss. They approved the design of the regional graduate program and determined that it

would be a five year experimental program. WICHE will work with the institutions and promote the program to prospective students. They will evaluate the program annually.

Karen Cedzo talks about the campus calendar and activities