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Patrick J. O'Rourke, interviewee

Karen Cedzo, interviewer

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Karen Cedzo said Dr. O'Rourke assumed his duties as chancellor of the University of Alaska Fairbanks on August 3rd. He was previously chancellor for the community colleges rural education and extension. He also served as head of the Upward Bound program. Dr. O'Rourke said he has run into people who once lived in Fairbanks who are always looking for the right opportunity to return and they always considered this home. He said this speaks well of the community and he is happy to be home. Applications and acceptances have increased 17 percent over the previous year. The dorms, classes and core sections will be crowded and O'Rourke said the university will have to improve enrollment projections. O'Rourke said because of the tightness of the federal budget and the reduction of certain programs they aren't sure what will happen over the course of the coming year. Approximately 80 percent of the university's research efforts have been supported by the federal government. They will be seeking some in state support so their research activities may reflect the state's needs. O'Rourke wants the summer sessions to improve to attract more students. He said they are probably not doing the job in the development of Alaska Native leadership. After two decades their progress appears minimal. In 1963 81 percent of Native students did not re-enroll. In 1975 that figure was 75 percent. O'Rourke believes an identity crisis exists at the university. Less than ten years ago the University of Alaska Fairbanks was the University of Alaska, but they have not yet fully made the transition. He feels this campus has not put forward its own strengths and has had some difficulties defining what these unique features are and have not capitalized on them enough. What they must fully realize is the University of Alaska Fairbanks is the statewide residential campus, the heart of all organized research for the university system and it is an equal partner with the University of Alaska Anchorage and the University of Alaska Juneau. This is a statewide system of higher education headed by a president with reasonably autonomous campuses throughout. Those campuses are competing with us at the University of Alaska Fairbanks for a finite set of financial resources. It might be believed that because of the state's wealth these finances are infinite. This a myth. The governor and the legislature decide how much will be spent on higher education each year. The internal disbursement of these funds becomes a competitive process across the various campuses. For us to compete our product must be better, more effective, and more efficient to justify the increased support. Cedzo said there are efforts to improve the physical appearance of the campus. There is a plan to improve the area between Constitution Hall, the library and the Gruening Building.

Karen Cedzo reports on the campus calendar and activities.