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Dr. O'Rourke, interviewee

Karen Cedzo, interviewer

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On February 9th the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) will become the second institution to sign a long-term agreement with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Office of Marine Pollution Assessment. The memo of understanding to be signed with NOAA is for cooperative work on the identification of environmental hazards and the analysis of ecological systems that are affected by the exploration of oil and gas. The first agreement was signed with the Stony Brook campus of the state university of New York. President O'Rourke said it is significant that NOAA initiated the process at UAF. He said other universities have requested similar agreements with NOAA and have been declined. He thinks it is a national statement of the significance of some of the research activity and the quality of the science that we do at UAF. Cedzo said the memo of understanding signifies confidence in UAF the agreement with NOAA will foster a long-term cooperative approach to Arctic science. Rourke said it will not automatically result in money for research projects. Each contract with the agency will still be negotiated separately. He said the agreement establishes long range trust for their science as it would pertain to cooperative arrangements with NOAA and OMPA. Contracts negotiated in the future would enhance the objectives of the agreement. They hope that the formalization of the agreement would result in more scientific research dollars for UAF, but everyone knows the federal budget is unstable at the present time. Cedzo said the memorandum will be signed in Washington, D.C. It does not conflict with Senator Murkowski's initiative to develop a coherent U.S. policy on the Arctic. UAF and NOAA officials can work closely with the Senator's office and Murkowski will be present at the signing. Several UAF research institutes have worked with NOAA in the past. The relationship has been advantageous. The formal agreement according to O'Rourke will enhance the already outstanding national and international reputation of many of the university's research institutes. He said this will have an impact on the Institute of Marine Sciences and the Geophysical Institute. The agreement signifies recognition locally, state-wide, nationally and internationally that the University of Alaska Fairbanks is involved in solving complex marine pollution issues which have more than just scientific interest and have a major impact on the welfare and improvement of the state of Alaska and on the nation. Cedzo said part of the goals of the memorandum of understanding are to improve the understanding of Alaskan coastal marine and continental shelf areas including the high Arctic, the ability to predict changes induced by human use, and the ability to manage to oceanic and coastal waters to conserve their multi-use character.

Karen Cedzo reports on the campus calendar and activities.