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UNIVERSITY  
of ALASKA  
*Many Traditions One Alaska*

## News Release

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For Immediate Release  
Friday, Jan. 20, 2005

### **Study Shows Majority of Alaskans Support UA**

Nine out of 10 Alaska parents of school-age children say they would encourage their kids to attend the University of Alaska, a new study by the McDowell Group shows.

The study also found that over half of Alaska residents believe state funding for UA should be increased, compared with only 4 percent who believe it should be decreased. Further, four out of five Alaska residents believe that the university is “very important” to the state, while another 15 percent said it was “important.”

UA President Mark Hamilton said the university commissioned study shows significant improvements over a similar 1999 study conducted by McDowell, a Juneau consulting firm. Alaska parents with school-age children who say they’d “encourage” or “strongly encourage” UA as a college choice, for example, jumped 12 percent from the 1999 study to the current 88 percent.

“It’s not a matter of cheerleading and saying ‘hooray for UA.’ It’s a matter of looking at the data, and the data tell us we’re on the right path,” Hamilton said. “It really is an excellent report card on the university.”

Hamilton, who announced the study’s findings Thursday in Anchorage during his regular monthly teleconference meeting with the press, said some national studies that rank public colleges and universities sometimes don’t take into account the unique attributes of Alaska’s university system. For instance, graduation rates at UA campuses are often lower when compared with other state colleges and universities, and many national rankings look at graduation rates as a key performance measure.

Hamilton noted many of UA’s students are part-time and take classes for workforce credentials, specific training, job promotions, or just for general interest. “In many cases, students at UA aren’t here for a degree, but for a specific skill or set of skills that will enable them to get a job or move up in a current job,” Hamilton noted.

The combined community college and university missions in Alaska provide many advantages for students and the public, Hamilton said, but makes national comparisons difficult. While universities are measured on the completion rates for students in degree programs, the UA system is interested in measures that reflect the needs of the state’s diverse student body.

“Most states have separate community college systems and not the single system Alaska enjoys,” said Hamilton.

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The McDowell study also shows that most Alaska residents believe that UA is as good or even better than comparable public colleges Outside, and a third said their impression of UA is better or much better compared to the past.

For a complete look at the McDowell study, go to [www.alaska.edu/pres](http://www.alaska.edu/pres).

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For more information, call Kate Ripley, 907/450-8102 or 907/388-3506.

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