

THE ANCHORAGE CAREER CENTER

by

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Anchorage now boasts a new educational facility. The new \$4.5 million Anchorage Career Center, which was created to provide career counseling and vocational training for high school students in grades 10-12, is designed with a curriculum that is as impressive as the school's physical plant.

The facility encompasses 125,897 square feet, and is open and spacious like a mall. Bearing walls are situated within the structure in order that the plant size of the nine career training areas can be modified as job markets expand. Oriented to individualized instruction, the career clusters (personal services, transportation, business technology, health occupations, hospitality and tourism, home economics, communications, natural resources, and construction) are designed to model actual work environments. The print shop not only looks like a print shop, but it is fully operational and capable of producing any printing job required by the school district. The balance of the clusters are similarly equipped - the business technology cluster is outfitted with keypunch equipment, the school cafeteria is operated by students in the hospitality and tourism cluster, and the construction cluster sports the city's largest indoor sandbox, where forms and footings can be constructed even in mid-winter.

The Career Center, part of the Greater Anchorage Borough School District, is currently prepared to offer instruction in approximately 35 careers. Training activities for these careers are centered in the 9 major areas physically clustered in the facility. The selection of 9 areas of concentration was determined by a Citizens Advisory Board appointed by the school board, and the direction of each of the individual areas is presently controlled by an advisory board, whose members are selected from the business community by the Superintendent of Schools.

Potential job applicants must be trained in skills that are compatible with the present and future needs of the business community. In the course of identifying

occupational demands and developing curricula recommendations, the advisory boards can draw upon their considerable business experiences as well as the resources of the State and local governments - one such resource is the Occupational Employment Statistics (OES) program that is administered by the Alaska Department of Labor; information compiled from the OES survey is published in the Occupational Employment Estimates and Projections publication which projects future demand for many diverse occupations.

By all appearances, the administration and faculty typify the open and friendly mood of the school. Most of the business is conducted on a personal basis outside the office. The total staff of 23 includes 17 instructors, many of whom are not academicians but are thoroughly experienced in the careers in which they are instructing students.

The student body is presently composed of 800 students. The students, mostly bussed from district high schools, attend the career center in two shifts on a half-day basis. Ultimately, the facility will accommodate 1,260 students, handled in three shifts.

The Career Center is attuned to helping students select and prepare for careers. Though the school was not conceived to provide special assistance to dropouts, the Center does offer a viable alternative to the academic school system; students who have dropped out of the regular secondary program may enroll at the Center if they are under 19 and registered in the Borough school system.

Since the Career Center grants credits towards graduation, and to that extent is integrated into the regular school system, the requirement for grades still exists. Likewise, some academics are required; however, emphasis is placed on the policy that everything done in the school relates to what is done on the job. Most importantly, the Career Center programs provide work experience which enables a student to make basic decisions about planning a

career — first of all, the student can decide whether or not he likes his career; secondly, he can determine how far he wants to pursue the career.

For the student who wishes to begin his career upon graduating from high school, Career Center programs will provide the skills and experience necessary to enable the student to enter an apprenticeship program, often with some of his apprenticeship time excused, or enter directly into a job in his chosen field. Ostensibly, the student may wish to enter a field at a higher level than can be prepared for at the Center, but the Center can help him make a career decision and provide him with skills he could market while pursuing further education.

With its consolidation of services and its central location, the Anchorage Career Center fills a need present in the community that would be too expensive and too specialized to provide at every secondary school. The pleasant atmosphere and the positive attitudes of the students are the most striking characteristics of the school. Students will still eventually have to hunt for jobs, but after completing programs at the Career Center, they should know what they are getting into and should possess marketable skills they can offer employers.

ALASKA'S ECONOMY IN FEBRUARY

Employment — Unemployment: Total employment in Alaska registered a gain of 1,700 in February. The services industry and trucking and warehousing lead the way in the month-to-month change with increases of 600 and 500 respectively. Total unemployment in February, which declined 200 from the corresponding year ago level, increased 6 percent from January — although the number of unemployed continued to grow, the rate of increase slowed over the month.

Mining: Mining employment increased by 100 from January to February; year to year, industry employment rose 50 percent. Petroleum exploration continued to expand in February, with wildcat wells accounting for a major share of the drilling activity during the month.

Construction: Employment in contract construction rebounded from the drop experienced in January, and rose 3 percent in February. Much of the construction activity this winter centered along the pipeline route. Work on the Valdez pipeline terminal moved ahead as construction proceeded on the foundations for the huge crude oil storage tanks.

Manufacturing: In the manufacturing sector, many cannery operations were idle because of the poor market for tanner crab. Though the pulp market was also quite soft in February, the Southeast timber industry should begin to recover from its lull as huge inventories of lumber and cants are worked down in Japan. Manufacturing employment declined by 700 from the February level one year ago.

Transportation: Communications and Public Utilities: Since January, industry employment has increased by 200. The 21 percent rise over last February is due largely to gains in the utilities sector and air and trucking transportation sectors, which have been mobilized to transport equipment and supplies to pipeline camps north of the Yukon River.

Trade: While statewide retail trade suffered the secondary effects associated with the general seasonal downturn, wholesale trade experienced a month-to-month increase of 3 percent in employment. Against February, 1974, all trade employment increased by 2,300 workers.

Finance, Insurance & Real Estate: F.I.R.E. employment rose by 100 from January to February and increased 13 percent over the year ago mark. Pipeline prosperity has benefited industry growth in Anchorage and Fairbanks.

Services: Emerging from the seasonal slowdown, services chalked the largest month-to-month increase in nonagricultural employment. Year to year, the services industry increased by 900.

Government: During February the bulk of the increase of 500 workers in total government employment occurred in state government. Local government accounted for 68 percent of the total government increase from year ago figures.