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## Bethel, Fairbanks to gain new clinical research facilities

Submitted by [Diana Campbell](#)

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The National Institutes of Health has awarded the University of Alaska Fairbanks a \$7.5 million grant to create new health research facilities in Fairbanks and Bethel.

The money will fund renovations at two buildings and will support ongoing research at the Center for Alaska Native Health Research aimed at eliminating health disparities among Alaska Natives.

In Bethel, the empty Vocational Technology Building at the UAF Kuskokwim Campus will become a 1,378-square-foot clinical and nutritional assessment suite, which will include space for phlebotomy, physical activity measurements, body measurements and nutritional data collection. The renovation project will also create a facility to allow long-distance research interviews between Yukon Kuskokwim delta communities and the Fairbanks campus. Renovations in Bethel will use nearly \$3.8 million of the grant.

"This means so much to the Bethel and the YK delta as far as providing jobs and education opportunities," said Mary Pete, director of the Kuskokwim Campus. "This also means community members will have a physical location where they can go to help find solutions to many of the health problems our people face."

On the UAF campus, \$3.6 million in renovations will create mirror facilities in the Arctic Health Research Building and build a stable isotope analysis lab there. The project will fill in the atrium area at Arctic Health and add 1,566 square feet of research and office space, said Bert Boyer, CANHR's acting director.

"The new labs and offices will build on the relationships we have with the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corporation and the Yup'ik communities where we've all been working for the last eight years to reduce health disparities," said Boyer. "We view our research participants as partners and this project will give us more opportunities to build on that partnership."

CANHR researchers study myriad health issues, including the genetics of human obesity; nutrition; drug, alcohol and suicide prevention; contaminants and nutrients in Alaska's subsistence food; and Yup'ik ways of coping with stress.

Thanks to a substantial commitment by the National Institutes of Health, UAF's biomedical and health research programs have grown in the past 10 years, said Brian Barnes, director of the Institute of Arctic Biology, which oversees CANHR. NIH's backing demonstrates UAF's success in health research on a national level, he said.

The \$7.5 million award is the latest chapter in an eight-year relationship between UAF and NIH's National Center for Research Resources. An \$11 million grant from the agency in 2001 established CANHR. In 2007, NCRR granted another \$11 million to continue CANHR's research work for another five years.

"This growth and success means an increased demand for high-quality research and education facilities," Barnes said. "These new CANHR facilities complement the proposed Life Sciences building and will allow our faculty members to build on their vital research projects and prepare the next generation of scientists."

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ON THE WEB: <http://canhr.uaf.edu>

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