

**Statement from the University of the Arctic to the Arctic Governments on the Day of Higher Education
Akureyri, Iceland, April 8, 2003**

Honourable Minister, esteemed representatives of Ministries of Higher Education and Science in the Arctic States, Members of the Council of the University of the Arctic, Friends and Colleagues,

The University of the Arctic would like to use this occasion to express its gratitude to the Arctic governments for their support that has enabled the creation of a new kind of educational institution for our region. The early commitment from the Arctic Council, Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, and the Circumpolar Ministers made the difference to the initial steps in the development of our organizations. A sincere thanks to all the governments of the Arctic states who have made important contributions to this development. A special thanks for the commitments from the governments of Finland and Canada, for coordination and curriculum development respectively.

This is a moment to reflect on what has been accomplished already: students are already taking circumpolar courses which were not even ideas five years ago, and have new opportunities to travel to other parts of the circumpolar region to learn first hand. The University of the Arctic is already delivering on its promise to bring together the learners of the Arctic and provide better opportunities for their higher education. The Arctic is clearly emerging as a region, and the notion of Circumpolar Citizenship is not a distant dream.

This is also a moment to ask what more needs to be done. The institutions and organizations that make up the membership of the University of the Arctic have done their part by committing their own resources to developing the programs and structures of the University of the Arctic. The goals envisioned by the Arctic governments, our communities, and ourselves have always reached beyond just the creation of new programs and increased cooperation. To raise ourselves to the next level requires the Arctic states to make an investment in the future of the region.

We now call upon the authorities responsible for Higher Education and Science of the Arctic states to demonstrate this commitment by:

- Continuing their commitment to circumpolar mobility through the support of the *north2north* student exchange program;
- Working cooperatively to abolish barriers to mobility between the Arctic states, including multilateral agreements on credit exchange and tuition, and commitments to interdisciplinarity within national degree structures;
- Reducing physical barriers to education in the north by developing information and communications infrastructure in peripheral areas, including facilities that can serve as community learning centres for online access to UArctic courses;
- Building capacity in small northern institutions, to facilitate their participation in UArctic programs and to support their ability to work cooperatively with international partners;

- Building the capacity for the Indigenous Peoples to participate in UArctic programs
- Engaging in cooperative projects with UArctic and indigenous peoples organizations to address the educational and training needs of the region's indigenous peoples;
- Developing a common Arctic policy on language education to ensure the continuation of small Arctic languages;
- Committing sustained funding to the core administration of the University of the Arctic, to ensure continuity and stability for students

Higher education is now clearly at the forefront of the circumpolar agenda. We would like to conclude by asking each of the Arctic states to nominate an official responsible for overseeing issues of Higher Education and Research in the Arctic, as well as on the University of the Arctic, to act as a regular liaison to their country's Senior Arctic Officials at the Arctic Council.

Thank you.