

Letter from Finnish Minister of Education Maija Rask. Helsinki, 19th October 2001.

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MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
FINLAND

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Helsinki, 19th October 2001

Dear Colleague,

As you surely know, the University of the Arctic and the Circumpolar Mobility Program were officially launched last June in Rovaniemi, Finland, during the meeting of SAO of the Arctic Council. With this letter I would like to ask for your cooperation in the development of the University of the Arctic and especially its Circumpolar Mobility Program.

The University of the Arctic is not a degree-granting institution, but a network of Universities, colleges and other institutions of higher education operating in the Arctic Council member states. Its mission is to make higher education more accessible in the circumpolar area and more relevant to northerners, with a strong emphasis on the need of the indigenous peoples of the region.

Within the Arctic University Network the Finnish Government has taken an initiative for a Circumpolar Mobility Program called *north2north*. This program - which has received strong support from the members of the Arctic Council and representatives of the indigenous peoples - aims at increasing interest in the northern region, to improve opportunities for students who do not traditionally participate in exchanges and to promote understanding of Arctic cultural diversity, but also of the common bonds between Arctic regions and peoples.

In the *north2north* program, the period of study at the host institutions is typically 3-12 months. Students will receive sufficient linguistic and cultural preparation prior to their visit, as well as a study grant and a travel grant to cover the expenses. Credits gained at the host institution will count towards the student's degree. Please find enclosed the booklet about *north2north* program published by the Circumpolar Coordination Office of the University of the Arctic.

So, a great deal has been done to promote the mobility of Arctic students, but much remains to be done. After having put in place the administrative structures and the core services of the University of the Arctic, we now need financial contributions and strong political commitment from the member states and member institutions to keep the Circumpolar Mobility Program alive and dynamic. I therefore kindly ask you to join Finland both financially and administratively in the further development of the *north2north* program.

Yours sincerely,

Maija Rask
Minister of Education