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Virgil Sharpton named Acting Chairman of the US Arctic Research Commission

Arlington, VA - Dr. Virgil "Buck" Sharpton, President's Professor at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, was designated by President Obama to serve as Acting Chair of the US Arctic Research Commission, effective August 13, 2010. Sharpton, who was originally appointed to the Commission in 2008 by President Bush, will advance federal arctic research, and will coordinate such efforts with the State of Alaska and international partners.

"I'm honored to have been selected to this important post. I will do my best to ensure a smooth transition in leadership and to expedite the development of an integrated arctic research policy. I'm also looking forward to helping implement the recent Presidential Memorandum that assigns responsibilities for coordinating the activities of the Interagency Arctic Research and Policy Committee to the White House National Science and Technology Council."

Sharpton recently completed his tenure as UAF's vice chancellor for research, and returned to his professorial duties where he plans to direct the university's participation in the proposed NASA Radar on Venus project, which will map the planet's surface. He will continue to be principal investigator on several other projects, including the Geographic Information Network of Alaska and the Pacific Area Climate Monitoring and Analysis Network cyber infrastructure program.

In 2001, he was named a President's Professor for his work in remote sensing, after former University of Alaska President Mark Hamilton sought to recognize Alaska's top research and instructional faculty. Sharpton was awarded one of only six such professorships.

According to UAF Chancellor Brian Rogers, "Buck has been an effective advocate for the university's research interests. I appreciated his willingness to temporarily leave his own research projects to build the Center for Research Services and to advocate for science."

Sharpton obtained a Ph.D. and Sc.M. in Geological Sciences from Brown University and a B.S. with high honors in Geology from Grand Valley State University.

The Commission, which sets goals (http://www.arctic.gov/publications/2009-10_usarc_goals.html) for the approximately \$400 million annual U.S. Arctic Research Program, has urged a new federal emphasis on integrated Arctic Ocean research, renewed programs related to the prevention of and response to oil spills in ice-covered waters, and to strengthen Arctic health and indigenous language research.

The Arctic Research and Policy Act of 1984 established the U.S. Arctic Research Commission (www.arctic.gov). Its principal duties are to develop and recommend an integrated national Arctic research policy and assist in establishing a national Arctic research program plan to implement the policy. Commissioners also facilitate cooperation between the federal government, state and local governments, and other nations with respect to Arctic research, both basic and applied.

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