

# Money

## UAJ offers budget class

### Duncan to teach how the budget process works

By KIRK McALLISTER  
Empty Staff Reporter

In two weeks, the University of Alaska, Juneau will offer a graduate business class on the politics of the budget process. The instructor is someone who should know — Rep. Jim Duncan, D-Juneau.

Duncan, a 10-year legislative veteran and a member of the House Finance and Budget and Audit committees, will teach the class beginning Sept. 6. The class is a graduate level business course, which can be applied toward a masters in business or masters of public administration degree, and is also open to the general public.

Duncan has taught before on the college level so is no stranger to the classroom and worked as an accountant prior to his involvement in politics.

"I think the budget process is something the public doesn't have a full understanding of," said Duncan. "I hope we can increase awareness about the legislative and budgetary process. This is an important time in Alaska's history and how to spend state money wisely and meet the needs of the state in the face of declining revenues will be a challenge."

Since this is the first time such a class has been offered at UAJ and no textbook exists on the subject, Duncan had to do a lot of research on the subject for background material.

The course will trace the development of the Alaska budget process for the 25 years since statehood. The budget priorities of the Egan, Hickel, Miller, Hammond and Sheffield administrations will be analyzed along with the political climates of the 13 state legislatures and its effect on the budget process.

The political and economic metamorphosis of the state will be analyzed along with such things as revenue forecasting and statutory and public influences on the budget process.

How revenue forecasting is done will be examined as well as oil taxation policies, the abolishing of the state personal income taxes, the constitutional spending limit, the creation of the permanent fund and how departments and agencies create budget requests.

Duncan plans to call on guest speakers familiar with the budget process to speak on various subjects. People involved with previous administrations and legislatures are expected to speak along with officials from the Permanent Fund Corp. and perhaps members of last session's, Republican majority.

"The problem with this kind of course is that I've got my own biases," said Duncan. "In order to balance that, I'm going to try to bring in people with differing viewpoints from my own."

Students will be required to write a paper analyzing a current public policy issue such as how to use the permanent fund, changes in revenue-sharing, how to best handle educational funding or the merits of the splitting the state budget between the House, Senate and governor's office.

"Besides business students, I'm hoping members of the public will be interested too," Duncan said. "The course is designed to get more people to understand the budget process past and present. We'll be discussing some difficult problems — I just might find some beneficial suggestions."

The course will run from Sept. 6 to Dec. 22 and will meet Tuesday and Thursday from 6 to 7:15 p.m. at the Bill Ray Center. The cost is \$150 for graduate credit and \$60 auditing, non-credit students.



Jim Duncan: from the legislature to the classroom.  
Photo by Mark Keeler