

**Associate of Arts Program**  
**School of Arts & Science, University of Alaska Southeast**  
**2015-16 Annual Report on Assessment of Program Learning Outcomes**

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**Introductory Comments:** In her April 22, 2014 response to the most recent AA five-year program review, Dean Sousa stated that the AA Program serves the same purpose as the General Education Requirements (GER) Program. For this reason, she suggested that the assessment plan for the GER Program would suffice for the AA Program. It is important to note, however, that neither the GER nor the AA Programs have assessment plans. This is presumably because the focus to date has been on preparing assessment plans for programs that have well-defined faculty “homes.” Neither the GER Program, nor the AA Program has ever been assigned well-defined faculty “homes.”

The AA assessment coordinators plan to work in collaboration with Brad Ewing, the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (IE) Director, and the Associate of Science (AS) Program assessment coordinators to identify meaningful data that can be used to assess the two associate degrees.

For the past year (Fall 2016 – present) the Provost’s Action Committee on General Education Learning Outcomes (GELO Committee) has been working on developing student learning outcomes along with accompanying rubrics for purposes of assessing student learning in the area of general education requirements. The hope of the AA assessment coordinators is that a meaningful student learning assessment plan for the AA Program might be prepared in close collaboration with the Associate of Science (AS) Program, and along the lines of what the GELO Committee prepares.

This annual report, the first such report for the AA Program, should be considered the first step in arriving at an AA Student Learning Assessment Plan.

**Goals/Objectives:** The UAS Academic catalog describes the Associate of Arts degree as follows.

*The Associate of Arts degree provides students with a broad general education. It is also designed to be a transfer degree to bachelor degree programs.*

This is accomplished by providing students with learning opportunities in the core academic areas of mathematics, natural and social sciences, humanities, fine arts and communication. It is worth observing that this description is almost identical to that of the AS degree.

For the AA Program further advice is provided for students seeking to transfer to a baccalaureate degree program.

*If a student intends to transfer to a bachelor degree program, he/she should consult the requirements for the advanced degree as some special general education and lower division courses are required in bachelor degrees.*

These descriptions provide a strong argument in favor of using the GER assessment plan for a major portion of the AA assessment plan.

**Data Collection and Analysis:** The Office of UAS Institutional Effectiveness (IE) provides some data for annual reports and five-year program reviews. However, as stated in the most recent AA Program review and in Dean Sousa's comments, much of the data do not provide for a meaningful analysis of the program, or of an assessment of the program's learning outcomes. Other data, on student learning, is not available.

The AA assessment coordinators plan to work in collaboration with Brad Ewing, IE Director, and the AS assessment coordinators to identify meaningful data for the assessment of associates degrees that can be provided by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. For the present report, only selected summaries of enrollments and completion rates are provided in the next section.

**Key Findings and Measures:** Since the AA Program does not have an assessment plan, any discussion of measures is not meaningful and student learning cannot be assessed at this time.

Considering the enrollment data for the 2016 fiscal year, 218 students enrolled with the AA Program as their primary major. Of these, 66% identified themselves as female, 34% as male, and 90% as being from Alaska. While the Fall-to-Spring persistence rates were reasonably high at 84% (compared to 84% for UA) the Fall-to-Fall retention rates were fairly low at 56% (compared to 62% for UA). A total of 37 students graduated with an AA degree in May 2016. It is unclear what proportion of the original cohort this number represents.

**Proposed Program Changes/Measures Based on Assessment Results:** At this stage actions, along with proposed timelines, worth mentioning include:

1. The assessment coordinators will prepare a student learning assessment plan for the AA Program by the end of Spring 2018.
2. At least some portion of the assessment plan will be tested during the 2018-2019 academic year.

**Assessment Plan Changes Based on Assessment Results:** Since no assessment plan has existed for the AA Program to date, there is nothing to report with respect to changes to the assessment plan. However, it is hypothesized that: a) students typically declare their intent to earn an AA degree in their last year; and b) some students who declare their intent to earn an AA change their minds and switch to a baccalaureate degree program before graduating with an AA degree. So, it seems worthwhile to obtain IE data on:

- The proportion of students who graduate with an AA in the same academic year that they declare.
- The proportion of students who declare, and who do not graduate with an AA even after completing AA requirements.
- The proportion of students who declare, who do not graduate with an AA even after completing AA requirements, and who continue on to a UA or UAS baccalaureate degree program.
- The proportion of students who graduate with an AA and who continue on on to a UA or UAS baccalaureate degree program.