

MEMORANDUM

28 March 2016

To Karen Schmitt, Dean of Arts & Sciences
From David Noon, BA Social Science Portfolio Coordinator
Copy Erica Hill, Chair of Social Science
Re Bachelor of Arts in Social Science Program Report – Catalog Year 2014-15

This memo provides continuing assessment of student learning outcomes and the Bachelor of Arts in Social Science (BASS) degree program for the academic year 2014-15. The principal finding is that the BASS program continues to be robust with enrollments of degree-seeking students and numbers of graduates among the strongest in the School of Arts and Sciences (second only to the Bachelor of Liberal Arts, in which Social Science faculty also actively participate). Faculty evaluation of BASS graduate portfolios demonstrates that students perform at a high level (above average).

1. Assessment Methods

The Student Assessment Portfolio (SAP) is the principal tool used for the final evaluation of BASS graduates. The following competencies are evaluated:

University and Social Science Competencies being assessed

- W = Written Communication
- O = Oral Communication
- T = Critical Thinking
- Q = Quantitative Reasoning
- I = Information Literacy
- C = Computer Usage
- P = Professional Behavior
- D = Appreciation of Cultural and Social Diversity

Each assessment area is evaluated on a five-point scale

- 1 = Inadequate Performance (Limited Understanding)
- 2 = Somewhat Acceptable Performance (Some Understanding)
- 3 = Acceptable Performance (Satisfactory)
- 4 = High Performance (Above Average)
- 5 = Excellent Performance (Superior Analysis or Synthesis)

Over the course of their degree program, BASS students are assessed at the level of individual coursework in interdisciplinary Social Science Core (SSCI) courses and in a Primary Concentration and two Secondary Concentrations from the disciplines of Anthropology, Economics, Government,

History, Psychology and Sociology. The SAP is completed and evaluated by multiple Social Science faculty members in the BASS student's graduating semester.

2. Assessment Data

Student enrollment in the BASS degree program (Sp. 2015): 76 (source: UAS Institutional Effectiveness)

Enrollments in Primary Concentration Area (source: UAS Institutional Effectiveness)

Anthropology	15
Economics	3
Government	6
History	8
Psychology	36
Sociology	8
Total	76

Complete information about all concentrations for all BASS students is on file at the Arts & Sciences Student Advising Office.

Final Portfolio Review Summary Data

AY 2015 - Number of Graduating Students Evaluated: 7; total number of B.A.S.S. graduates (Summer 2014, Fall 2014, Spring 2015): 12.

For the past several years, we have been using UAS Online/Blackboard to facilitate online portfolio submissions. Despite repeated attempts over a period of three years (since 2011) to work with IT Services to create a workable online final portfolio system, the effort was a failure. In 2014-2015, we allowed students to submit portfolios via e-mail or in physical form. In AY16, the SSCI 200 course began using Dropbox, a cloud-based application, in place of UAS Online. We have also significantly reduced the number of required items in future portfolios.

Competencies Assessed: (W, O, T, Q, I, C, P, D).

Evaluation Scale: 1–5. Score Range: 1–5.

1. Program Evaluation Essay #2	Competencies Assessed (W, C, P)	Avg. 4.28
2. Social/Cultural Diversity Essay #2	Competencies Assessed (W, C, D)	Avg. 4.14
3. Written Communication		
a) Research Paper(s)	Competencies Assessed (W, T, C, P, D)	Avg. 4.14
b) Analytical Paper(s)	Competencies Assessed (W, T, C, Q)	Avg. 4.28
4. Oral Communication		
a) Two Informal Presentations	Competencies Assessed (O, T, Q, D)	Avg. 4.57
b) Formal Presentation	Competencies Assessed (O, T, Q, C, P, D)	Avg. 4.28

The principal finding of this data is that graduates in the BASS program continue to display High Performance (above average) across all assessment categories and competencies. These numbers are consistent with what past assessments have revealed.

3. Faculty Evaluation of BASS Program

The final Student Assessment Portfolios are evaluated by at least two Social Science faculty members annually. In addition to the SAP assessment, the entire Social Science Faculty participate in the oral exit interviews presented by all graduating BASS students that term.

From the written exit surveys completed in 2014-15, we know that BASS graduates:

- Plan to move on to graduate studies;
- Plan to seek employment or directly enter the workforce after graduation;
- Participated in an array of extra-curricular activities at UAS.
- Worked during an average of seven semesters during their studies;
- Worked anywhere from 3-40 hours per week, with more than half employed more than 20 hours per week

From the written exit surveys, we also know that BASS graduates are highly satisfied with our program.

- Overall satisfaction (1-5 scale): 4.71
- Satisfaction with faculty: 4.85
- Satisfaction with other students: 4.14
- Satisfaction with departmental advisor: 4.71
- Satisfaction with administrative staff: 4.28

Distilled from the comments made by the BASS graduates in the written exit survey and oral interviews:

Student-identified strengths of the BASS program:

- Variety in the curriculum
- Strong faculty performance in the classroom
- Faculty advising/mentoring
- Small classes, emphasis on discussion in upper-division
- Emphasis on diversity
- Interdisciplinary orientation of the program
- Courses challenged students to develop qualitative and quantitative analytical skills

Student-identified weaknesses of the BASS program:

- Too much breadth (i.e., requiring three areas of concentration)
- Disjunction between some lower- and upper-division courses
- Desired or required courses sometimes conflicted with one another

Student-identified improvements to the BASS program:

- Add another psychology professor
- Offer more team-taught courses
- More internships

4. Recommendations

Over the next two years, the Social Science faculty should continue to implement and assess the use of Dropbox for online portfolios and continue to develop and implement student competencies that align with the university's Mission Statement. Although faculty have always found the semester-end presentations from/conversations with graduating seniors to be useful, student availability has been a challenge in recent years. In AY15, for example, several graduating seniors were not in Juneau for one reason or another during the scheduled meeting time; others had work or child-care conflicts that prevented them from attending (or made their attendance somewhat burdensome). If these scenarios become more of the norm rather than the exception, faculty should consider alternative formats for these presentations.