

**MEMORANDUM**

March 1, 2017

To Karen Carey, UAS Provost  
From David Noon, Associate Professor of History  
Copy Paula Martin, Acting Dean of Arts and Sciences  
Re Bachelor of Arts in Social Science Annual Assessment Report – Catalog Year 2016-2017

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This memo provides continuing assessment of student learning outcomes and the Bachelor of Arts in Social Science (BASS) degree program for the academic year 2016-2017. The BASS is a single, interdisciplinary degree program that combines multiple disciplinary concentrations (Anthropology, Economics, History, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology). The principal finding of this annual assessment report 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. Faculty evaluation of BASS graduate portfolios demonstrates that students perform at a high level (above average). The BASS Program Assessment Plan needs to be updated to accommodate changes in the Student Assessment Portfolio (SAP) reflected in this report. The department continues to need a new tenure-track Economics professor, the absence of which hinders our ability to offer a comprehensive social science program to our students. Moreover, with the departure of Amanda Sesko at the conclusion of AY 18, the department most certainly needs to conduct a tenure-track search to meet the strong demand for psychology courses and concentrations at UAS.

**1. Assessment Methods**

The Student Assessment Portfolio (SAP) is the principal tool used for the final evaluation of BASS graduates. Over the past few years, the SAP has shifted from a competencies-based assessment (previously used across UAS degree programs) to a program outcomes-based assessment aligned with the UAS Mission Statement. The new program learning outcomes assessment form consists of the following criteria:

**Program Learning Outcomes.** Upon completion of the BASS degree, students will be able to:

- 1: Define academic and personal goals through application of knowledge of the social sciences.
- 2: Demonstrate interdisciplinary competency in three social science fields.
- 3: Conduct independent or collaborative research in the social sciences.
- 4: Apply academic social science knowledge to community engagement.
- 5: Situate social science knowledge within the cultures or environment of Southeast Alaska.

**Assessment.** These program outcomes are aligned and assessed through materials submitted by students in their SAP:

- 1: Program Learning Outcome 1: BASS Professional Portfolio.
- 2: Program Learning Outcome 2: BASS Academic Writing (3 Social Science Disciplines).
- 3: Program Learning Outcome 3: Research.
- 4: Program Learning Outcome 4: Community Engagement.

### 5: Program Learning Outcome 5: Cultures and Environment of Southeast Alaska.

Items within each portfolio category are evaluated on a five-point scale:

- 1 = Minimal Evidence (inadequate)
- 2 = Some Evidence (underdeveloped)
- 3 = Meets Expectations (satisfactory)
- 4 = Exceeds Expectations (above average)
- 5 = Superior (high-level of presentation, analysis or synthesis)

Over the course of their degree program, BASS students are assessed at the level of individual course work 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 each BASS student's graduating semester.

## 2. Assessment Data

**BASS Enrollment 2016-2017.** By the end of FY17, 131 students were enrolled in the BASS degree program (source: UAS Institutional Effectiveness). This represented an increase from 116 in FY16. (Note that previous year's assessment reports have included Academic Year [AY] data. This year, however, Institutional Effectiveness was unable to provide us with AY17 data.)

**BASS Graduates 2016-2017:** BASS Graduation numbers have remained strong, with 19 in the current assessment year and averaging more than 13 graduates annually over the past five years. The constancy is notable given the overall decline in enrollment at UAS during the same period. Despite this general decline in enrollment at UAS, BASS student numbers remain strong.

## Final Portfolio Review Summary Data

### Number of Graduating Students Evaluated: 19

**Program Learning Outcomes.** Upon completion of the BASS degree, students will be able to:

- 1: Define academic and personal goals through application of knowledge of the social sciences.
- 2: Demonstrate interdisciplinary competency in three social science fields.
- 3: Conduct independent or collaborative research in the social sciences.
- 4: Apply academic social science knowledge to community engagement.
- 5: Situate social science knowledge within the cultures or environment of Southeast Alaska.

**SAP** items are evaluated on a five-point scale (1-5). Average scores are listed below.

- 1 = Minimal Evidence (inadequate)
- 2 = Some Evidence (underdeveloped)
- 3 = Meets Expectations (satisfactory)
- 4 = Exceeds Expectations (above average)
- 5 = Superior (high-level of presentation, analysis or synthesis)

### Program Outcome 1: BASS Professional Portfolio

BASS Outcomes Essay	3.89
Language Competency & Diversity Statement	3.47
Professional Portfolio Overall	3.78

**Program Outcome 2: BASS Academic Writing**

Primary:	ANTH	ECON	HIST	POL	PSY	SOC	3.84
Secondary 1:	ANTH	ECON	HIST	POL	PSY	SOC	3.68
Secondary 2:	ANTH	ECON	HIST	POL	PSY	SOC	3.73
Overall Quality of writing across the disciplines							3.78

**Program Outcome 3: Research**

Research Methods example	3.36
Quality of upper-division Research example	3.63

**Program Outcome 4: Community Engagement**

Strength of Social Science engagement or perspective	3.52
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**Program Outcome 5: Cultures & Environment of Southeast Alaska**

Analytical or interpretative Social Science perspective	3.31
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**3. Student Evaluation of BASS Program**

In addition to the SAP assessment, graduating BASS students each term individually complete a written exit survey and participate in a group oral interview with the entire Social Science Faculty.

From the written exit survey (N=13), we know that BASS graduates

- Are “very satisfied” with the degree program
- Believe they have “very good” knowledge and analytical understanding of their respective social science emphasis areas.
- Can situate social science knowledge within the cultures and environment of Southeast Alaska.
- Most (10 of 13) engaged in internship, field research, study abroad, or community service projects

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

Student Satisfaction with the BASS Program:

- Very rewarding.
- Concentration areas intersect well – multiple fields.
- Online classes in UA system helped a lot
- A rewarding program
- Appreciated the extra learning opportunities outside BASS requirements
- The interdisciplinary aspect was perfect for me
- Liked data collection – what I learned was immediately implemented
- Good breadth of course options (frequency sometimes a problem)
- Like the incorporation of current issues across all social science disciplines
- SSCI courses keep you on track

Particularly Good Experiences BASS Program:

- Liked individualized interactions with professors.

- Awesome, informed professors – knowledge content
- Exceptional course delivery – on campus and online
- BASS intake advising appointment
- Like the holistic program
- Moral and ethical guidance from professors in research reporting
- Enjoyed course content
- Courses with clear guidelines
- Dedicated faculty
- Legislative internship program
- Internship at Sealaska Heritage Institute
- Collaborative research projects with other students
- Benefitted from Alaska Native culture

Student-Identified Weaknesses of the BASS Program:

- Wider diversity of courses – note enough upper-division classes
- Scheduling conflicts; competing courses on the same day and same time
- “Alternate” course topics were actually narrow (the same themes kept repeating – crime, terrorism, protest)
- More interdisciplinary options (courses that count across disciplines)
- Early non-faculty advising did not enroll me in the courses I needed
- Lost Economics professor Brian Vandernaald – no replacement
- The orientation class (SSCI 200)
- The Honors Program – liked it, but requirements changed
- Doing the same kind of assignments in multiple courses

Student Suggestions for Improvements in the BASS Program:

- More course options – especially upper-division courses.
- More emphasis on future graduate studies (preparation, applications, timelines)
- “Tell more people we’re here! – whether in Juneau or Los Angeles” (marketing)
- Schedule distance course meeting times; didn’t like asynchronous online classes
- Closer, complementary relationship between topics that cross disciplines (build upon each other)
- Like the language requirement – more support for languages
- Improve initial staff advising
- Better advertise internship opportunities
- More administrative staff support for social science faculty
- More research opportunities for undergraduates
- Combine research methods with orientation class
- Make summer courses available during the academic year
- Can’t do night classes – more day offerings
- More methods
- More outdoors experiences
- Make sure classes fulfill degree requirements
- Offer all SSCI courses online (SSCI 373)
- Continue coming up with fun, creative classes (Sociology of Terrorism, Personality Theories)

General information about BASS graduates:

- Half of BASS students were enrolled at UAS for 7-10 semesters; three quarters finished their degrees in 5-8 semesters after being admitted to the BASS program.
- Over half of BASS graduates on the Juneau campus took courses exclusively on campus; others had a blend of local and distance delivery methods for instruction.
- More than two-thirds (10 of 13) participated in some form of experiential learning (research or field work; internship; study abroad).
- Half plan to pursue graduate studies. The identified universities for graduate study: UAS, UAA, University of Massachusetts-Dartmouth, Adams State University, and Cambridge University (UK).
- Most BASS graduates were financially independent throughout their studies.

#### **4. Recommendations**

Within the next year, the Social Science faculty should:

1. Better coordinate social science courses between the Juneau and Ketchikan campuses (by semester, according to the six-year course sequence) to maximize offerings for BASS students each semester to assure progress towards degree completion.
2. Conduct searches in AY 19 to hire tenure-track professors in Economics and Psychology for AY 20 to assure the full complement of Ph.D. faculty across all disciplines in the BASS degree program.
4. Better identify courses and experiential learning opportunities for students that address program learning outcomes that emphasize research, community engagement, and social science knowledge situated within the cultures or environment of Southeast Alaska.
5. Strategize how to provide students with increased disciplinary perspectives within the social sciences (e.g., additional faculty, visiting faculty, visiting speakers and programs).