



**UNIVERSITY
of ALASKA
SOUTHEAST**

**DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL SCIENCE**

MEMORANDUM

March 29, 2021

To Maren Haavig, UAS Interim Provost
From Lora Vess, Chair of Social Sciences
Copy Paula Martin, Interim Dean of Arts & Sciences
Re Bachelor of Arts in Social Science Annual Assessment Report – Catalog Year 2019-2020

This memo provides continuing assessment of student learning outcomes and the Bachelor of Arts in Social Science (BASS) degree program for the academic year 2019-2020. 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 (just behind the BBA in Business Administration). Faculty evaluation of BASS graduate portfolios demonstrates that students perform between a satisfactory and an above average level. We anticipate that with a new two-year term Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Alaska Native Studies (Juneau), the new tenure-track Assistant Professor in Anthropology (Ketchikan), and a tenure-track Assistant Professor in Psychology (Juneau), the degree will benefit with regards to recruitment and retention. The psychology hire in particular should help strengthen the program by helping us meet departmental service and advising needs, given the loss of tenure-track faculty in Juneau in recent years.

1. Assessment Methods

The Student Assessment Portfolio (SAP) is the principal tool used for the final evaluation of BASS graduates.

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, Government, History, Psychology Sociology, and Economics (which no longer serves as a Primary Concentration, only a Secondary Concentration). The SAP is completed and evaluated by multiple Social Science faculty members in each BASS student's graduating semester.

2. Assessment Data

BASS Enrollment 2019-2020. At the start of fall semester 2019, 97 students were enrolled in the BASS degree program (source: UA Institutional Effectiveness). This is consistent with the year before (98 students).

Enrollment by Primary Concentration (source: UA Institutional Effectiveness):

Anthropology	18
Economics	5
History	21
Political Science	9
Psychology	50
Sociology	15
BASS Enrolled (Undeclared)	1

BASS Graduates 2019-2020

Completed the SAP: 16 (Source: Dept. of Social Science)

Confirmed BASS Graduates: 18 (Source: UA IE)

BASS Graduates by Concentration (Source: UA IE)

Primary Concentration		Secondary Concentrations	
Anthropology	2	Anthropology	9
Economics	n/a	Economics	1
History	4	History	7
Political Science	0	Political Science	4
Psychology	11	Psychology	3
Sociology	1	Sociology	12

Concentrations at the time of graduation roughly follow overall enrollment distributions.

Psychology is the dominant concentration area, followed by Anthropology and History. Political Science enrollments and graduates have grown and stabilized. Sociology is consistently a strong secondary concentration. Without a full-time instructor, Economics enrollments in the BASS continues to be the least enrolled secondary concentration area.

BASS Graduation numbers have remained strong, with 18 in the current assessment year and averaging 16.4 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: 16

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). The average is the **median** (mid-range; equal distribution of scores above and 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 3.23

Program Outcome 2: BASS Academic Writing 3.38

Program Outcome 3: Research 3.65

Program Outcome 4: Community Engagement 3.19

Program Outcome 5: Cultures & Environment of Southeast Alaska 3.26

Faculty Narrative Assessment of Overall Portfolio:

Correlation between stated close relationships with faculty mentors and portfolio performance. Detailed and regular communication between chair and students aids in portfolio completion. Research evidence varied enormously; actual research, proposals or design.

Solid-to-excellent writing skills.

Portfolios reflect a wide range of interests and varieties of academic engagement.

Local internships and research were not always recognized by students as community engagement.

Some students state that they are unsure of what papers/assignments qualify as “Community Engagement” and “Cultures & Environment of Southeast Alaska.”

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. Nineteen students completed the written survey.

From the written exit survey, we know that BASS graduates (median average on a 5-point scale):

- Are very satisfied with the program--Of 19 responses, 18 are “very satisfied” with the degree program (score: 4-5); one was “satisfied” (score: 3)
- Are very satisfied with BASS faculty--Of 19 responses, 18 are “very satisfied” with the BASS faculty (score: 4-5); one was “satisfied” (score: 3)
- Can articulate main concepts in their social science emphasis fields (N18 score: 4-5; N1 score: 3)
- Believe they have “very good” knowledge and analytical understanding of their respective social science emphasis areas (14/18 score: 5)
- Can mostly situate social science knowledge within the cultures and environment of Southeast Alaska (N3 score: 3; N13 score: 4-5, one outlier N1 score: 1)

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

Student Satisfaction with the BASS Program:

- Coursework was interesting.
- Course content was good (solid) and relevant.
- Course availability and options worked out well.
- Faculty were professional and accommodating.

Student Dissatisfaction with the BASS Program:

- Not enough courses, especially in political science
- Desire for more field trips, field work, and opportunities for independent studies
- Scheduling of classes sometimes problematic

Particularly Good Experiences BASS Program:

- Positive interactions with Social Science faculty (instruction, advising, and support).
- Appreciate the opportunity to work on independent projects and develop research skills.
- Research experiences (sociology, SSCI 300, psychology classes)
- Having two take classes outside of their comfort zone or original disciplinary area of interest

Student-Identified Weaknesses of the BASS Program:

- Limited number of offerings (upper-division; political science courses; more choices).
- Not enough disciplinary breadth (single faculty disciplines).

Student Suggestions for Improvements in the BASS Program:

- Increase number of course offerings (more variety; more topics).
- Hold regular meetings for students taking online classes; increase peer-to-peer support.
- Preference for SSCI 200 to be taught by a full-term faculty member.
- Split SSCI 300 into two classes.
- More field work.
- More faculty (two per discipline minimum; more perspectives).
 - Require SSCI 200 Orientation to the Social Sciences early in 1st or 2nd year (for effective degree planning).
 - More archaeology courses.

General information about BASS graduates:

- A great majority (80%) completed the BASS degree within 8 semesters.
- The percentage of students completing coursework through a mix of in-person and online courses is higher than previous years.
- A little less than half (42%) of all students participated in some form of experiential learning (research or field work; internship; study away).
- Demographically, over half of our enrolled students identify as female (65%); 38% are age 24 or younger (41% are 30 or older); and 14% identify as Alaska Native.
- Over half (53%) of our students are part time status
- Eighty-two percent of our students are returning.
- A majority (90%) of our students work during the academic year.
- Over half of our graduates intend to pursue graduate school or professional programs in areas of study including counseling or social work, history, archeology, law, and psychology. The identified universities for graduate study: UA Anchorage; UA Fairbanks, John Jay College, Baylor University, and American Military University.
- Almost half plan to seek entry-level career or professional employment upon graduation, with two students intending to take a break to consider their options.

4. Recommendations

Within the next year, the Social Science faculty should:

1. Better coordinate social science research courses, especially offerings of SSCI 300 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. Update the B.A. Social Science Portfolio requirements to reflect the change in the UAS mission.
3. 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.

4. Provide greater opportunities for students to interact, including online and face-to-face; as well as providing forums for students to learn more about career options and graduate school.
5. Maintain and expand term hires in Economics and Alaska Native Studies.