



**UNIVERSITY**  
**of ALASKA**  
**SOUTHEAST**

DEPARTMENT OF  
SOCIAL SCIENCE

## **MEMORANDUM**

March 1, 2023

To: Maren Haavig, UAS Provost  
From: William Urquhart, Chair of Social Sciences  
Copy: Carin Silkaitis, Dean of Arts & Sciences  
Re: Bachelor of Arts in Social Science Annual Assessment Report – Catalog Year 2021-2022

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### **1. Program Overview**

The Bachelor of Arts degree with a Major in Social Science is a single, interdisciplinary degree program that combines social science orientation courses and research methods courses with three disciplinary concentrations (students graduating in 2021-2022 chose three from Anthropology, Economics, History, Political Science, Psychology, and/or Sociology). Students select the degree for a number of goals, which commonly include preparation for graduate degrees in counseling, social work, and teaching certification in secondary history, government, and/or social studies; or to earn employment qualifications in social services, government, or tribal organizations; or for adult degree completion or for personal enrichment.

The 2021-2022 graduates rated the program as personally and culturally rewarding, effective in meeting their educational goals, and rated their experience with faculty teaching and advising at UAS highly. Faculty evaluation of student portfolios noted particular strengths in mastery of content in their social science concentrations and in research methods, but lower than in past years in community engagement (likely due in part to COVID-19 impacting community access during these students' past two years). The number of graduates decreased from the large graduating class in 2020-2021, and there has been a modest decrease in total headcount.

This past year the department has had some staffing/position changes. Two term faculty positions ended in 2021-2022, during which time successful national searches were completed for a tenure-track Assistant Professor of History in Juneau (the successful candidate, Dr. Nguyet Nguyet, began in Fall 2022) and a tenure-track Assistant Professor of Political Science and Sociology in Ketchikan (by Dr. Kasia Polanska, a long-time term faculty). Late summer 2022 saw the resignation of tenured Associate Professor of Sociology Lora Vess. The department proposed modifying the position to an emphasis on Indigenous sociology, but this request was not approved and the faculty line was moved to a different department in Fall 2022. The department is well-positioned with stable faculty across a range of career stages who are highly collegial and integrated regionally to pursue opportunities for continued success. In terms of regionality, it is notable that 2021-2022 marked the first time that an elected Chair of Social Sciences was located in Ketchikan (William Urquhart). We believe the Department of Social Sciences represents an ideal model of regional collaboration and planning.

## 2. Program Level Learning Outcomes

**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 S.E. Alaska.

## 3. Assessment Indicators and Data Collection

The Student Assessment Portfolio (SAP) is used for the final evaluation of BASS graduates. BASS students are assessed at the level of individual course work in interdisciplinary Social Science Core 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 by each student with guidance from a faculty advisor, and then the SAPs are evaluated by Social Science faculty members in each BASS student's graduating semester.

**Student Assessment Portfolio artifacts associated with each Program Learning Outcome:**

- Program Learning Outcome 1: BASS Professional Portfolio
- Program Learning Outcome 2: BASS Academic Writing (3 Social Science Disciplines).
- Program Learning Outcome 3: Research.
- Program Learning Outcome 4: Community Engagement.
- Program Learning Outcome 5: Cultures and Environment of Southeast Alaska.

### Student Evaluation of BASS Program

Graduating BASS students complete a written exit survey and participate in the BASS Graduate Conference with social science faculty.

## 4. Assessment Data

### BASS Enrollment 2021-2022

At the start of fall semester 2021, there were 79 students enrolled in the BASS, a decrease from the 89 students reported in the previous year (Source: UAS Institutional Effectiveness). Part of this change was due to a large graduating cohort of 22 students in 2020-2021. However, in fall of 2021, over 100 students were listed in Banner as active majors BASS degree; this figure includes BASS students as a "Secondary Major" (such as students finishing an AA as their "Primary Major" while concurrently working toward the BASS).

**BASS Graduates 2021-2022:** 8 students (compared with 22 in 2020-21)

### Concentrations at the time of graduation

Sociology was the subject with the most student concentrations (all eight graduates had a sociology primary or secondary), with Psychology the most common Primary Concentration.

BASS Graduates by Concentration (Source: Banner SHR90MM Commencement Reports)

Subject	Primary Concentrations	Secondary Concentrations
Anthropology	0	4
Economics	n/a	1
History	2	0
Political Science	1	3
Psychology	3	2
Sociology	2	6

**Final Portfolio Review Summary Data, including mean evaluation score for each item:**

<b><u>Program Outcome 1: BASS Professional Portfolio</u></b>	<b><u>4.04</u></b>
<b><u>Program Outcome 2: BASS Academic Writing</u></b>	<b><u>3.84</u></b>
<b><u>Program Outcome 3: Research</u></b>	<b><u>3.6</u></b>
<b><u>Program Outcome 4: Community Engagement</u></b>	<b><u>2.75</u></b>
<b><u>Program Outcome 5: Cultures &amp; Environment of Southeast Alaska</u></b>	<b><u>3.13</u></b>

### **Student Evaluation of BASS Program**

BASS graduates rated their median experience 4 or 5 out of five in every category; examples are as follows:

- **Are very satisfied with the program**--Of 8 responses, 50% (4) are “very satisfied” with the degree program); 38% (3) were “satisfied”; and 12% (1) were “neutral”
- **Are very satisfied with BASS faculty**--Of 8 responses, 38% (3) are “very satisfied” with the BASS faculty (score: 5); 62% (5) were “satisfied” (score: 4)
- **Can articulate main concepts in their social science emphasis field**-- of 8 responses, 63% (5) are “very satisfied” with their ability, 36% (2) are “satisfied” with their ability; and 12% (1) were “neutral”
- **Can apply analytical categories across social science emphasis fields (e.g., class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, power)**--Of 8 responses, 75% (6) are “very satisfied” with their ability, 25% (2) are “satisfied” with their ability
- **Can situate social science knowledge within the cultures and environment of Southeast Alaska**-- Of 8 responses, 63% (5) are “very satisfied” with their ability, 37% (2) are “satisfied” with their ability

From the narrative evaluation portion students wrote in the written exit survey, here are some examples of student comments on their experience in the BASS degree:

For particularly good experiences:

“I couldn't have thought up or imagined a better course of study than the BASS program did”

For aspects that did not turn out as the student had wished:

“I don't like that the University in Ketchikan is on a giant hill, as I have no car and am overweight”

For suggestions on how the BASS degree program might be improved:

“In light of budget cuts...don't know.”

“I have no suggestions”

## **5. Evaluation of Program Learning Outcome Assessment Data**

### **Faculty Narrative Assessment of Overall Portfolio**

Student portfolios this year were particularly strong in the category for the BASS Professional Portfolio, substantially increased over the previous year; while Research and the mastery of content in the three concentration areas of students' degrees continued to be very strong. As in the previous year, community engagement remained the weakest, although it should be noted that this and last year's graduates completed their upper-level work during the COVID-19 pandemic when community involvement presented many challenges; and some students were still able to perform at a high level in this category through social science internships offered through the department.

At BASS Graduate Conferences (including those held in Fall 2021, Spring 2022, and Summer 2022), students expressed great appreciation for faculty in their program and for their experiences with staff advising. Students encouraged faculty not to entertain major changes to the program, and to expand course offerings in more topics within each social science discipline. Students especially were thankful for independent study, directed study, internships (including the Ted Stevens Legislative Internship coordinated Statewide by Glenn Wright and other faculty-arranged internships placing students outside of UAS), and other unique opportunities available in the department; and on the high capability of instructors teaching face-to-face in Juneau and on the high quality and flexibility of online courses offered through both Ketchikan and Juneau. When discussing program ideas, students responded very favorably to the proposed Secondary Concentration in Economy, Subsistence, and Sustainability that will allow students to include economics courses as well as cross-disciplinary courses with related content, with some commenting that they would have selected the broadened concentration had it been available during their start at UAS.

## **6. Recommendations**

Within the next year, the Social Science faculty should:

1. Request that the university develop a marketing and recruitment plan for the BASS degree, and that the university consult with the Social Sciences Department for ideas to implement into marketing; and most importantly, for the university to then market the program.
2. Continue effective regional coordination of schedule planning and breadth of offerings.
3. Explore options to continue sociology offerings both online and on campus in Juneau, especially that sociology was the most common concentration area for graduates.
4. Follow through with submitting the Economy, Subsistence, and Sustainability Secondary Concentration option for the 2023-2024 catalog.
5. Continue to develop partnerships with other UA schools and departments for curricular and course sharing improvement, such as through the UAF-UAS political science initiative and the Master of Marine Policy program.