



UNIVERSITY of ALASKA SOUTHEAST

Certificate in Indigenous Language Speaking Assessment Report: AY 2021-2022 & AY 2022-2023

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Overview

The certificate in Indigenous Language Speaking prepares students to work in the growing language revitalization field, including within tribal organizations, tribal corporations, school districts, and non-profit organizations. It also supplements students' learning goals within the Indigenous Teaching Certificate and supports tandem enrollment in the Bachelor of Liberal Arts in Alaska Native Languages & Studies, or in the new Bachelor of Indigenous Studies degree. 11 credits fulfill the GER requirement for certificates, with the rest of the courses focused on language communication, understanding & human relations, for a total of 31 credits, depending on the track chosen.

This report provides assessment for the certificates initial year (AY 2021-22) and its second year (AY 22-23). It also discusses program strengths, challenges, opportunities for growth, and continued goals.

Program Level Learning Outcomes

Current PLOs as they exists within the UAS Course Catalog:

1. Students will increase their own fluency and will contribute to the health and vibrancy of Alaska Native languages.
2. Students will become speakers of Alaska Native languages, and will assume leadership roles in language documentation, language gathering and use, curriculum development and program planning, and the teaching of Indigenous languages to others.
3. Partner organizations will begin looking at ways to incorporate language speaking certification into job descriptions and will work to incentivize language speaking abilities within their organizations.
4. Students will commit to lifelong learning and use of Indigenous languages, and will network with other speakers to create communities of language use and learning.

As a new certificate program that requires a 3 year course sequence, we've yet to see our first cohort of graduates. As a new program we also find our current PLOs need to be revisited to better account for current faculty workload capacity, and to better align with program-specific outcomes. A series of work sessions have been scheduled in spring 2024 to address those revisions, with the goal of submitting revised PLOs to Courseleaf in early Fall 2024 for implementation in the next assessment cycle.

We believe however that the core values of the current PLOs, and thus the program, remain the same.

We recommend changing the PLOs to the following:

1. Demonstrate increased Indigenous language fluency.
2. Enter the workforce as language speakers, researchers, documentors, curriculum developers and program leaders in partner organizations.

Assessment Criteria

Current assessment criteria as it exists within the UAS Course Catalog:

1. We will assess participants and produce reports of fluency levels and the rates and speeds that students are moving up the adopted ACTFL scales of fluency.
2. We will conduct exit interviews in the program and will conduct annual surveys of program graduates to document their activities in language documentation, language gathering and use, curriculum development and program planning, and the teaching of Indigenous languages to others.
3. We will conduct studies of the economic impacts of becoming a speaker of Alaska Native languages through a certification program, by documenting specific organizational shifts and how those result in the economic elevation of Indigenous languages.
4. We will conduct exit interviews in the program and will conduct annual surveys of program graduates to document their activities in organizing and attending Indigenous language events, and will remain connected to them so they can in turn assist with future language learners.

How is data collected on the PLOs (rubrics, portfolios, etc.)?

We similarly find that our assessment criteria would need to be updated to better align with new PLOs and faculty workload capacities. This will similarly be addressed in Spring 2024 and then updated in Courseleaf in early Fall 2024.

We do recognize however that **increased proficiency** within the three languages will remain a core component of the PLOs, and thus what's being assessed. With that in mind, a short [questionnaire](#) will be sent out to current Indigenous language instructors to gain qualitative feedback on how students were progressing in proficiency from beginning to

advanced language sequences in late April, with further development of assessment criteria and data collection forthcoming.

We recommend changing the assessment criteria to the following:

1. We will assess participants and produce reports of fluency levels and the rates and speeds that students are increasing linguistic proficiency, by utilizing adapted ACTFL scales of fluency, self assessments, and instructor assessments.
2. Program graduates employment placements will be tracked and updated yearly, utilizing exit interviews, surveys, and/or self-reports.

Data & Evaluation

The program is in the process of collecting initial data from program graduates, and will be using this information to assess the program and determine what changes need to be made to improve effectiveness and eliminate barriers and redundancies.

This data will be analyzed in program completion meetings that will take place after the semester ends and before faculty go off contract.

Goals & Recommendations

The Certificate in Indigenous Language Speaking needs a stronger process to allow for specific student input as to the direction and identity of the program, while also allowing for an internal analysis of the effectiveness of the program. The most difficult part of this process is the fact that all Alaska Native languages are in various states of decline, and ongoing language loss creates a continuous state of crisis with too few people trying to do too much with too few resources.

Nevertheless, we believe a process of ongoing analysis can be implemented that allows for increased cohort activities and program flexibility, even as we continue to accept and graduate certificate holders.

Ideally, this program will serve as a stepping stone to the Bachelors in Indigenous Studies, with the Indigenous Studies Program at UAS in a state of growth. We will increase the opportunities for students to participate in interviews and collectively review the courses and overall certificate program in a way that is decolonized and free of hierarchies.

In addition, the upcoming efforts to achieve WINHEC accreditation will allow for site visits by faculty members who have constructed similar programs, and will also allow for collaborations and increased internal review.