MEMORANDUM
March 1, 2022

To Maren Haavig, UAS Interim Provost
From Bill Urquhart, Chair of Social Sciences
Copy Carin Silkaitis, Dean of Arts & Sciences
Re Bachelor of Arts in Social Science Annual Assessment Report – Catalog Year 2020-2021

This memo provides continuing assessment of student learning outcomes for the Bachelor of Arts in Social Science (BASS) degree program for the academic year 2020-2021. The BASS is a single, interdisciplinary degree program that combines a core of introductory and research methods courses with three disciplinary concentrations (students choose from Anthropology, Economics, History, Political Science, Psychology, and Sociology). The principal finding of this annual assessment report is that the BASS program showed a substantial increase in the number of students who graduated compared against the previous year, and student program learning outcomes remain positive. The number of students declared in the major from fall-to-fall is stable, with a slight decrease during the COVID-19 pandemic, but also with an increase in new student applications and newly-enrolled students. The BASS 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.

This past year the department filled open/vacant positions, including filling a vacant tenure-track Assistant Professor of Alaska Native Studies and Anthropology position in Ketchikan (Jennifer Brown), filling a vacant tenure-track Assistant Professor of Psychology position in Juneau (Melissa Dolese), and a term Assistant Professor of Alaska Native Studies and Anthropology in Juneau (Forest Haven). We have opened a search for a tenure-track Assistant Professor of History in Juneau to replace former Professor Robin Walz (in what has been held for the past three years by a temporary term faculty position). All other faculty positions in Ketchikan and Juneau are filled with tenured faculty, with the exception of a long-time term Assistant Professor of Political Science and Sociology (Kasia Polanska). Overall, the department is well-positioned with stable faculty, soon-to-be-filled lines, and new opportunities for continued success. We anticipate that with new partnerships with faculty at UAA (sociology) and UAF (political science), our successes will continue to become institutionalized and opportunities for continued growth and improved retention will follow.
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 2020-2021.** At the start of fall semester 2020, there were 84 students enrolled in the BASS, a slight decrease from the 88 students reported in the previous year (Source: UAS Institutional Effectiveness). However, in fall of 2020, 179 students were listed in Banner as active majors BASS degree; unlike the figure of 84, the 179 number includes students with a declared BASS degree who have something other than the BASS as their “Primary Major” (i.e. not non-duplicated headcount, such as students finishing an AA as their “Primary Major” while doing their BASS as their “Secondary Major”), students taking all
classes through Ketchikan and Sitka and/or campuses elsewhere in UA and have not taken
classes from the Juneau Campus (it appears only students taking Juneau classes are counted in
the 84, excluding non-Juneau UAS students), etc (source: Chair’s review of Banner enrollment
data).

Enrollment by Primary Concentration (source: Chair’s review of Banner SGR2STD report data):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Concentration</th>
<th>22</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BASS Enrolled (Undeclared)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**BASS Graduates 2020-2021**

Confirmed BASS Graduates: 22 (compared with 18 in 2019-20; Source: Banner)

Completed BASS Exit Survey: 22

Completed the SAP: 21 (compared with 16 in 2019-2020; source: Dept. of Social
Science; note the 22\textsuperscript{nd} student had completed the portfolio in a prior year)

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Primary Concentration</th>
<th>Secondary Concentrations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concentrations at the time of graduation roughly follow overall enrollment distributions. Psychology was the most common Primary Concentration area for graduates, followed by Anthropology and Sociology. Sociology and Anthropology are the most common Secondary Concentrations, followed closely by History, and overall Political Science enrollments and graduates have grown and stabilized. Psychology was the lowest Secondary Concentration after Economics. The Economics Primary Concentration was suspended in 2019, and one of three students in the teach-out graduated this year. Economics continues to be the least enrolled secondary concentration area, but required courses continue to be supported through long-term adjuncts instruction in Ketchikan.

BASS Graduation numbers have grown, with 22 in the current assessment year, 18 in the previous assessment year, and averaging 16.4 graduates annually over the five years prior to that. This is notable given the overall decline in enrollment at UAS during the same period.
BASS Applications, Admitted Students, and Newly Enrolled Students grew from the previous year, with new applicants increasing to 40 from 30 in the prior year, admitted students increasing to 29 from 23 the previous year, and newly enrolled students increasing 10 - 12 from 10 the previous year (note the Newly Enrolled students likely reflect BASS students who took classes through Juneau Campus in their admit term, rather than all new BASS students who enrolled (including Ketchikan, Sitka, etc):

Final Portfolio Review Summary Data

Number of Graduating Students Evaluated: 22

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 mean score of items in each portfolio category based on the following levels:

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 3.67
Program Outcome 2: BASS Academic Writing 3.69
Program Outcome 3: Research 4.29
Program Outcome 4: Community Engagement 3.29
Program Outcome 5: Cultures & Environment of Southeast Alaska 3.80

Faculty Narrative Assessment of Overall Portfolio:
Student portfolios this year were particularly strong in the category for Research and the category for Cultures & Environment of Southeast Alaska. Other scores were similar or slightly improved over the previous year, with Community Engagement remaining the weakest (notably, a handful of students had a “0” score in this category, having not submitted a representative work or having submitted a work inappropriate to the category requirement in this section).
Portfolios demonstrate overall strong research across qualitative and quantitative approaches, strong literature review skills, adequate writing performance, good critical thinking, and good cultural integration. Correlation between stated close relationships with faculty mentors and portfolio performance. Detailed and regular communication between chair and students aids in portfolio completion. Portfolios reflect a wide range of interests and varieties of academic engagement. Several students missed entries for Community Engagement, in part because students often do not recognize their internships and community-based research in classes are community engagement.

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. All 22 graduates completed the written survey.

From the written exit survey, we know that BASS graduates rated their median experience 4 or 5 out of five in every category; examples are as follows (5 = very satisfied, 4 = satisfied):

- Are very satisfied with the program—Of 22 responses, 45% (10) are “very satisfied” with the degree program (score: 4-5); 50% (11) were “satisfied”
- Are very satisfied with BASS faculty—Of 22 responses, 59% (13) are “very satisfied” with the BASS faculty (score: 4-5); 36% (8) were “satisfied” (score: 3)
- Can articulate main concepts in their social science emphasis field—Of 22 responses, 64% (14) are “very satisfied” with their ability, 36% (8) are “satisfied” with their ability
- Can apply analytical categories across social science emphasis fields (e.g., class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, power)—Of 22 responses, 73% (16) are “very satisfied” with their ability, 23% (5) are “satisfied” with their ability
Can situate social science knowledge within the cultures and environment of Southeast Alaska – Of 22 responses, 55% (12) are “very satisfied” with their ability, 32% (7) are “satisfied” with their ability

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

Student Satisfaction with the BASS Program:
• The BASS program is great the way it is– don’t make major changes other than increasing course availability and range of new courses
• Coursework was interesting and relevant
• Instructors were very high quality and cared about student success
• Academic advising was good and advisors were responsive, especially for transfer students compared against their previous schools
• Students’ cultural backgrounds were honored and respected

Student Dissatisfaction with the BASS Program:
• Not enough courses, especially on campus (face-to-face Juneau and Ketchikan) and especially for methods courses
• Some classes could be more interactive, including more field work, and opportunities for independent studies
• Scheduling of classes sometimes problematic to work around jobs; students liked online classes with live meetings, but can make asynchronous courses work more often for their schedules

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)
• Opportunity for multiple concentration areas rather than a single subject major

Student-Identified Weaknesses of the BASS Program:
• Limited number of offerings (upper-division; 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)
• Offer a follow-up methods course to carry out research proposed in SSCI 300
• More faculty (two per discipline minimum; more perspectives).
• Don’t change anything on the structure of the degree or the overall program.

General information about BASS degree for this year:
• The percentage of students completing coursework through a mix of on-campus and online is increasing, but was also mostly required in fall 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
• The percentage of Alaska Native students in the program has gradually increased to 17% in fall 2020, compared against 13%, 11%, and 13% in the three prior fall semesters. Given that Alaska is 17% Alaska Native, and that by fall 2021 has increased to 19%, the BASS degree has reached and now exceeded parity between our student population and the percentage of Alaska Natives in the state. Further, with two Alaska Native full time faculty in the department, approximately 17% of our faculty are also Alaska Native.

• The age demographics have remained consistent over the past four years, with between 43-45% of students being age 24 and under, 15-22% being age 25 to 29, and 33-41% being age 30 and older.

• Males comprise 33-40% of BASS students each over the past four years.

• Approximately half of BASS students are part time each year for the past four years. Graduate comments indicate most work regular jobs off campus and/or care for children or elders while going to school.

4. Recommendations

Within the next year, the Social Science faculty should:

1. Continue to coordinate six-year schedule planning and expand breadth of offerings.

2. Fill open positions, especially tenure-track faculty lines, to continue to expand course offering schedules.

3. Better highlight to students components of courses that contribute to community engagement.

4. Add additional research methods course options to the catalog, and/or a more inclusive definition of what counts as a methods course (e.g. including ANTH S430 Ethnographic Methods).

5. Build relationships with social science partners at UAA and UAF for course sharing to enhance enrollments and expand options for UAS students.

5. Work closely with Arts & Sciences advisors to resume smooth transition of students from staff advisors to faculty advisors as key to continued success in high numbers retained and high numbers of graduating seniors, given a recent resignation of a key staff advisor.