

MEMORANDUM

May 11, 2010

To James Everett, Acting Dean of Arts & Sciences
From Robin Walz, BLA Coordinator (Juneau Campus)
Copy Roberta Stell, UAS Provost (outgoing)
Rick Caulfield, UAS Provost (incoming)
Jane Terzis, Humanities Chair
Dan Monteith, Social Science Chair

Re Bachelor of Liberal Arts End of Year Report – Catalog Year 2009-2010

The revised BLA degree program was launched this year. While student enthusiasm for the degree is strong, measured by 76 students enrolling in the BLA during the degree program's first year, institutional resources and faculty lines to support the program are practically non-existent.

Unless fundamental changes are implemented in the immediate and short terms to provide the BLA with the faculty and material resources required to keep the degree program viable, the previous BLA program review and degree restructure will flounder and possibly fail. This will lead to an even greater crisis in the Department of Humanities, which lacks sufficient faculty to support the degree program. Within one or two years, this will have a sharply negative impact upon student recruitment, retention, and completion in what, by head count, should be one of the most robust baccalaureate degree programs in the School of Arts and Sciences.

In greater detail:

1. BLA Enrollment under Catalog Year 2009-2010 (as of May 10, 2010)

BLA Interdisciplinary Studies Majors	35 Students
BLA Independent Design Majors	1 Student
BLA Pre-Majors	40 Students

This one-year enrollment nearly equals the balance of 81 BLA students from the previous program currently active over the past four semesters (20 BLA students graduated in May 2010).

As the past reservoir BLA students continues to dwindle, either through program completion or from being dropped due to inactivity, the institutional need to service the large number of new BLA students will become increasingly pronounced. As one of the most frequently chosen baccalaureate degrees by undergraduates in Arts and Sciences (ranked between first and third, depending on how degree enrollment is counted), failure to support these new students in the BLA program will adversely impact student retention and degree completion at UAS overall.

2. Advising and Orientation

The system of intake advising established in Fall 2009 was continued in Spring 2010. All students admitted to the BLA Major (typically Interdisciplinary Studies) receive general advising from the BLA Coordinator and are assigned a faculty advisor from either the Primary or Secondary fields. In addition, students enrolled in HUM 210 BLA Portfolio Review established working relationships with faculty advisors to approve their degree plans and completion schedule. DegreeWorks is proving to be a powerful tool for this advising and planning. All distance students continue to be advised by BLA Distance Coordinator, Bill Urquhart.

In June 2010, I will prepare an eight-page, bi-fold Faculty BLA Advising Manual to distribute to all Arts and Sciences faculty during Fall Convocation. Estimated cost for production of 100 eight-page manuals: \$180.00 plus shipping (quote provided by Alison Caputo, 4/30/2010).

3. Orientation to the Liberal Arts (HUM 200) & BLA Portfolio Review (HUM 210)

In Spring 2010, 15 new BLA Majors completed HUM 200 Orientation to the Liberal Arts and HUM 210 BLA Portfolio Review. Student response to the Orientation course was largely positive, with suggestions for course improvement made in written evaluations. Students strongly benefitted from the BLA Portfolio Review. Each student completed a degree plan and completion schedule that required faculty advisor approval. Each student established an electronic portfolio for purposes of assessment and student learning outcomes.

Given the robust enrollment this year in the BLA degree program, HUM 200 and HUM 210 are scheduled for each semester on the Juneau campus, and once a year each fall semester via distance from the Ketchikan campus.

However, this presents an immediate resource challenge: there is an insufficient faculty pool to draw upon to teach these required courses in the Liberal Arts Core. To have a healthy, viable Liberal Arts Core, at least 3 to 4 regular faculty (tenure-track or continuing term) are needed on the Juneau campus and 2 on the Ketchikan campus, whose workloads can accommodate teaching these courses.

4. Selected Emphasis Areas

Of the students enrolled in HUM 210, 15 selected the Interdisciplinary Emphasis and one the Independent Design. Two are pursuing a Tlingit Language Minor. The emphasis areas are:

Communication	6	Biology	1
Anthropology	4	Environmental Studies	1
Art	3	History	1
English	3	Humanities	1
Psychology	3	(Legal Studies*	1)
Creative Writing	2	(Spanish*	1)
Sociology	2	Theatre	1

(*These emphases were abandoned due to lack of courses and faculty.)

While no trends can be established from a single instance, several things are noteworthy here:

- Selected fields come primarily from the Humanities, secondarily from Social Science, and rarely from Natural Science. This accords with past results (BLA Program Review).
- Communication appears to be the anchor discipline in the BLA. However, the Humanities Department only has one tenure-track Communication faculty member. If trends continue in this direction, student demand will soon outstrip resources.
- In two instances, Legal Studies and Spanish, students were unable to pursue their interest areas, due to perceived insufficient resources.

5. BLA Faculty Work Group

The BLA Faculty Work Group became active in Spring 2010. The members are:

Robin Walz, BLA Coordinator & Associate Professor of History (Juneau)

Kevin Krein, Associate Professor of Philosophy (Juneau)

Rod Landis, Associate Professor of English (Ketchikan)

John Radzilowski, Assistant Professor of History (Ketchikan)

Bill Urquhart, BLA Distance Coordinator & Assistant Professor of Sociology (Ketchikan)

Jenifer Vernon, Assistant Professor of Communications (Juneau)

The major issues that the BLA Work Group addressed in Spring 2010 were:

- Catalog Revisions: The Secondary Field requirements in the Interdisciplinary Emphasis were streamlined to 15 credits in a single discipline, with a minimum of 6 credits at the upper-division level. The previous design to have Secondary Fields follow the guidelines of established Minors in Arts and Sciences proved impractical; some minors are inactive, some minors lack faculty, many minors have course requirements that cannot be currently fulfilled at UAS.
- Scheduling HUM 200 Orientation to the Liberal Arts & HUM 210 BLA Portfolio Review: on both the Juneau and Ketchikan campuses, workloads were reorganized by the Dean and Campus Director, so that instructors originally designated to teach HUM 200 and HUM210 this Fall 2010 were given other disciplinary course assignments. Tentative replacement instructors have been identified for Fall 2010.

However, there is no identified professor to teach HUM 200 or HUM 210 on the Juneau campus in Spring 2011. Given the large number of students currently enrolled in the BLA, this is a major, immediate concern. It requires searching for, selecting, and revising the workload of either a Humanities or Social Science professor during Summer or early Fall 2010 to teach the courses in Spring 2011. This speaks yet again to the above concern about the insufficient number of designated faculty to service the BLA degree.

- Develop a BLA Assessment Plan: a workshop to develop the Mission, Objectives, and Assessment Plan for the BLA is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, August 24 (the day before Fall Convocation). I will conduct the workshop with the BLA Work Group and other invited faculty members from Humanities and Social Science.

In preparation, I will review the Mission, Objectives, and Assessment plans of four Northwest Universities with Liberal and Interdisciplinary Studies programs: Western Washington University (Bellingham, WA), The Evergreen State College (Olympia, WA), Portland State University (Portland, OR), and Oregon State University (Corvallis, OR). Personal appointments have been arranged to visit Departmental or Institutional Assessment Directors on each of these campuses in May 2010. The plans and summary notes from each of these universities will be compiled and distributed to participants in the BLA Assessment Workshop in August.

6. Program Crises with Immediate and Short Term Recommendations

As mentioned at the beginning of this memorandum, while it is encouraging that early student enrollments in the redesigned BLA degree are strong, the program is quickly headed for immediate crisis: there are insufficient faculty in the Humanities and no designated resources in Arts and Science to service this rapidly growing degree program, driven by student demand.

- One immediate crisis concerns having an available faculty member to teach HUM 200 Orientation to the Liberal Arts and HUM 210 BLA Portfolio Review in Spring 2011.
- Another crisis concerns insufficient Language faculty to provide language options for the required “Cultural Diversity” courses (two courses): the first option is modern languages, the second option cross-cultural courses, and the third gender diversity courses. In terms of world languages, there are no options at UAS other than Spanish (a term appointment).
- A near crisis concerns not having sufficient faculty to guide nearly completion students through their required Capstone courses (HUM 499 Capstone seminar, or 400-level internship, practicum, independent study).
- Structural crisis: the lack of designated faculty in the BLA program, particularly in Communication and Modern Languages.

Recommendations

- Immediate Term: Have the Dean of Arts and Sciences work with the Chair of Humanities and the BLA Coordinator to assign a Humanities faculty member to teach HUM 200 and HUM 210 in Spring 2010.
- Immediate Term: Hire a half-time French instructor to supplement the Spanish language program. Student demand warrants this, as in the past three academic years 5 students have completed a French Minor despite the decimation of that language program over these same years (i.e., from full-time term French Professor to single-course adjunct).

- Short Term AY 2010-2011: Identify and mentor the next BLA Coordinator (AY 2011-2012). Toward this end, I will attend Humanities Department meetings during the AY 2010-2011 to cultivate faculty interest in this Humanities-based degree program.
- Short Term AY 2010-2011: Conduct a faculty search to hire a tenure-track faculty member in Modern Languages (begin date: AY 2011-2012). Ideally, this faculty member would be bi-lingual in modern language instruction, fluent in one language and competent to teach the first-year sequence in another (e.g., Spanish and French). This faculty member would be responsible for coordination of the Modern Language program, including the hiring and supervision of part-time and adjunct language faculty. This faculty member would also commit to servicing the BLA degree program (e.g., teaching Core classes, serving on a BLA Portfolio Review committee).
- Short Term AY 2011-12: Conduct a faculty search to hire a second tenure-track faculty member in Communication (begin date: AY 2012-2013). The lone Assistant Professor of Communication current cannot even cover the number of Communication courses currently being taught at UAS. Student interest this year suggests that demand for offerings in this discipline will only increase in the future. This faculty member would also commit to teaching Core courses in the BLA degree program (e.g., HUM 200 and HUM 210). Since the BLA is the primary degree program for Communication faculty, this hire could be made with the understanding that in the future the BLA Coordinator role could be alternately served by either tenure-track Communication faculty member.