MEMORANDUM
May 13, 2011

To Marsha Sousa, Dean of Arts & Sciences
From Robin Walz, BLA Coordinator (Juneau Campus)
Copy Rick Caulfield, UAS Provost
Carol Hedlin, UAS Vice Provost
Jane Terzis, Humanities Chair
Dan Monteith, Social Science Chair

Re Bachelor of Liberal Arts End of Year Report – Catalog Year 2010-2011

The revised BLA degree program has completed its second year. Several positive developments occurred: student enrollment in the degree program remains strong; graduation rates have tipped in favor of students in the revised BLA program since Fall 2009 over those retained from previous catalog years; the BLA Program Assessment Plan has been completed and submitted to the Vice Provost; curricular changes to improve student retention have been initiated by the BLA Work Group; the Ketchikan campus put forth its first cohort of BLA graduates from the distance-delivered program; and an increase in core BLA faculty on the Juneau campus is underway. In sum, the BLA program is heading in productive directions and is beginning to stabilize. Should trends set in motion over the past four years continue to develop in concrete and meaningful ways over the next two years, the BLA degree will establish a firm foundation as the only fully integrated, interdisciplinary Liberal Arts degree program in Arts & Sciences.

1. BLA Enrollment under Catalog Year 2010-2011 Fall 2010 Spring 2011

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<tr>
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<th>Fall 2010</th>
<th>Spring 2011</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BLA Majors (Total)</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>59*</td>
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<tr>
<td>New BLA (AY 2009-2010 to current)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Old BLA (previous to AY 2008-2009)</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>34*</td>
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<tr>
<td>BLA Non-Majors (Total)</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>22*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-Majors (AY 2009-2010 to current)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Undeclared (previous to AY 2008-2009)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>12*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLA Graduates (Total)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New BLA (AY 2009-2010 to current)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old BLA (previous to AY 2008-2009)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
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*This significant dip in numbers may be attributed to “clearing out” old BLA Majors and Non-Majors who remained “on the books,” but in fact were not actively enrolled at UAS. That is, between Fall 2010 and Spring 2011, most old BLA students had not attended UAS during the past four contiguous semesters.
Four positive trends emerge from these figures:

1. Students languishing under the old BLA degree program are finally being taken “off the books,” which provides a more realistic picture of active degree-seeking students in the program.

2. A shift has already occurred in active BLA students from old to new degree programs.

3. BLA Pre-Majors are actively being converted into BLA Majors, whose numbers continue to grow.

4. Completion numbers under the New BLA are already healthy.

Challenge: Initial enthusiasm for the revised BLA degree program has likely already been captured. An active recruitment program to encourage student enrollment in the BLA Major needs to be developed.

2. Completion of the BLA Program Assessment Plan

Over AY 2010-2011, the BLA Work Group developed and submitted a Program Assessment Plan to the Vice Provost. The previous BLA degree program effectively had no assessment plan (i.e., what was posted as the assessment plan effectively carried the message, “there is no plan or way to assess this degree program”). This BLA Program Assessment Plan is ready for full implementation during AY 2011-2012 and will be reviewed for purposes of on-going program assessment beginning Fall Convocation Fall 2012.

The members of the BLA Work Group: Robin Walz, BLA Coordinator (Juneau); Bill Urquhart, BLA Distance Coordinator (Ketchikan); Kevin Krein, Philosophy (Juneau); Rod Landis, English (Ketchikan); Sol Neely, English (Juneau); John Radzilowski, History (Ketchikan); Jen Vernon, Communication (Juneau).

The BLA Program Assessment Plan was developed in these stages:

1. Information Gathering: In May 2010, BLA Coordinator Robin Walz reviewed Liberal Arts assessment plans and conducted interviews with assessment coordinators at the public universities Western Washington University (Bellingham, WA), The Evergreen State College (Olympia, WA), Portland State University (Portland, OR), and Oregon State University (Corvallis, OR). Summary findings were presented to the Interim Dean of Arts & Sciences and were considered by the BLA Work Group in developing the program assessment plan.

2. Workshop: On August 24, 2010, the BLA Work Group had a full-day workshop retreat at the Schaible House to begin developing the program assessment plan. In the morning, the work group reviewed the BLA degree structure, discussed the composition and goals of BLA students, and reviewed the Liberal Arts assessment plans from the four
Northwest public universities visited in May. In the afternoon, the work group defined the BLA mission, core values, and program objectives.

3. Rough Draft: On November 9, 2010, BLA Coordinator Robin Walz met in Ketchikan with the members of the BLA Work Group and other concerned faculty and staff to develop a rough draft of the program assessment plan.

4. Rough Draft Review: On January 21, 2011, the entire BLA Work Group reviewed, corrected, and approved the program assessment plan rough draft during Winter Convocation. Assignments were given to develop supplemental materials to accompany the plan, including sample syllabi, the BLA Portfolio evaluation rubric (measures program objectives), the rubric for final narrative evaluation of the BLA Portfolio (measures core values), and a BLA graduate exit interview form.

5. Submission: On April 26, 2011, the completed BLA Program Assessment Plan and attachments were submitted to Vice Provost Carol Hedlin.

For purposes of continuing assessment, the assessment plan and attachments will be reviewed by the BLA Work Group during Fall Convocation 2011.

3. Curriculum Changes toward Degree Enrollment Management

During Spring 2011, for the first time HUM 200 Orientation to the Liberal Arts and HUM 210 BLA Portfolio Review were under-enrolled. HUM 499 Humanities Capstone was also cancelled due to low enrollment. At the same time, there were students who needed all of these courses: new BLA Majors and Pre-Majors ready for full admission should take HUM 200 & 210, and potentially the 9 students who graduated in Spring 2011 under the new program should have been enrolled in HUM 499 (i.e., alternate capstone options, such as an internship, independent study, or practicum, were approved instead).

Towards resolving this issue, during Winter Convocation the BLA Work Group recommended these changes to help manage degree enrollment and completion:

1. Offer HUM 200 & 210 only during Fall semesters on both Juneau (local) and Ketchikan (distance) campuses. This will enable us to capture new BLA Majors and academically prepared Pre-Majors once every year, with the knowledge that all students will be able to schedule in these courses (locally or via distance). If enrollment continues to lag, we will consider putting a hold on new BLA Major and Pre-Major student registrations next year.

2. Require HUM 499 Humanities Capstone for all BLA students, offered each Spring semester on both Juneau (local) and Ketchikan (distance) campuses. The text of the 2011-2012 Academic Catalog has been revised to reflect this change. From this point forward, requiring HUM 499 will be the rule, and alternate capstone options will become a non-advertised exception. Further, the final BLA Portfolio and presentation of capstone projects will be tied to the HUM 499, which all graduating BLA students will have to follow the same final portfolio submission and presentation schedule (i.e., creates further incentive to enroll in HUM 499).
Challenge: Creating and maintaining an archive of BLA Portfolios. While all BLA students create an initial electronic portfolio in HUM 210 and then complete it during HUM 499, a problem remains about how to migrate those completed portfolios to a permanently maintained archive for accreditation purposes. Due to issues of student and instructor confidentiality, questions remain about who has access to and supervision over the migration of portfolios to such a permanent site.

4. Ketchikan BLA Program and Graduates

One of the most exciting developments has been its growth of the BLA program on the Ketchikan campus. Much of the success is due to the efforts of BLA Distance Coordinator Bill Urquhart, with the nearly universal support of Ketchikan A&S faculty for the distance-delivered baccalaureate program. Two sections each of HUM 200 & 210 were offered in Fall 2010. HUM 499 was not offered this past Spring, but BLA Distance Coordinator Bill Urquhart oversaw the individual completion of capstone projects and the electronic submission of final BLA Portfolios. On April 27, 2011, three Ketchikan BLA graduates participated in pilot portfolio presentations delivered via Elluminate. Next academic year, HUM 499 will be offered from the Ketchikan campus for the first time, and final portfolio submissions, presentations, and exit interviews will be routinely conducted.

Challenge: A&S faculty on the Sitka campus have not yet been fully integrated into the distance-delivered BLA degree program. This is an issue for the BLA Work Group to take up during Fall Convocation 2011.

5. BLA Faculty Development on the Juneau Campus

One of the most serious issues in relation to student success and program sustainability concerns the sub-minimal number of A&S faculty dedicated to the BLA degree on the Juneau campus. To date, only two tenure-track faculty members in A&S – Jen Vernon (Communications) and Kevin Krein (Philosophy) – participate as core BLA faculty without commitments to other baccalaureate degree programs (i.e., B.A. Art, B.A. English, B.A. Social Science). In previous reports, I have strongly emphasized that student success will fail without additional faculty with a primary commitment to the BLA degree program.

With this in mind, it is very good news that approval has been given for a second, tenure-track Communications faculty line (search AY 2011-2012 to begin AY 2012-2013). Serious discussions are also underway toward approving a Spanish faculty line (search AY 2012-2013), which would also be dedicated to servicing the BLA degree program. Once there are four tenure-track BLA faculty on the Juneau campus, the minimal foundation of dedicated faculty support will have been achieved.

Challenges: First, to secure the fourth dedicated faculty line in Spanish (Modern Language Coordinator). Second, once the foundational base of BLA faculty is secure, the BLA Work Group should strategize about how to best use ancillary term and adjunct faculty to deliver the comprehensive, interdisciplinary Liberal Arts degree curriculum.
**In Sum:** Over the first two years of implementing the revised BLA, good progress has been made toward student enrollment (sustainable numbers) and success (graduation rates). It is also a good sign that the BLA faculty is rebuilding; should this effort be continued, we have greater confidence that support for the degree program will be sustainable.

This said, since the development of multiple independent B.A. and B.S. degrees since 2003 within A&S, perennially the BLA has flagged just below the critical mass required to support and sustain student success in the degree program – which is the only interdisciplinary degree program at UAS specifically designed with the needs of transfer, non-traditional, and distance students in mind, as well as those students who select an interdisciplinary liberal arts degree as their preferred degree program. While positive strides have been made over the past two years, sustainability for this invaluable interdisciplinary baccalaureate program has not yet been realized.

**Recommendations:**

1. Create a BLA line within the Humanities budget (i.e., fully institutionalize the degree program).

2. Complete the process of building a cadre of core, tenure-track faculty dedicated to the BLA degree program.

2. Develop a system for advertising and recruiting new students into the BLA program.