

# Enhancing the Baccalaureate Experience



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

## Fall 2017 Faculty Work Group

Ernestine Hayes, English (ANS)

Kevin Krein, Philosophy (BLA, ODS)

Richard Simpson, English (Geography)

Sherry Tamone, Biology (Nat Science)

Lora Vess, Sociology (BASS)

Glenn Wright, Poli Sci (Leg Internship)

Ali Zeigler, Psych (Distance BASS/BLA)

Facilitator: Robin Walz, History

# Enhancing the Baccalaureate Experience

## Recommendation

**Create a single, interdisciplinary Bachelor of Arts degree program in the School of Arts and Sciences.**

## Benefits

**A single, interdisciplinary B.A. degree program would:**

- **Establish a distinctive baccalaureate identity for UAS within the UA system.**
- **Facilitate a truly interdisciplinary (methodologically & theoretically) and transdisciplinary (holistic) curriculum.**
- **Provide yet another opportunity to integrate decolonization and indigenous knowledge into our academic programs.**

# Enhancing the Baccalaureate Experience

- Increase clarity about how an interdisciplinary course of study works.
- Strengthen innovative approaches to social issues and community engagement.
- Provide more opportunities for students to draw directly upon faculty academic and research expertise.
- Provide more flexibility for students to craft a program of study.
- Provide a clear pathway to high impact learning.
- Better incorporate experiential learning and fieldwork opportunities into a student's degree program.
- Create a student sense of common identity (pride in UAS).

# Enhancing the Baccalaureate Experience

## Background

- AY 16: President Johnson, “Strategic Pathways – “Lead Campus” Identity and programs for each UA University.
- January 2016: Chancellor Caulfield, Draft Memo “Streamlining UAS Baccalaureate Degree Programs” – “*interdisciplinarity* and *high-impact learning* as a core value of the UAS baccalaureate experience.”
- Spring 2016 (January, March): “Enhancing the Baccalaureate Experience at UAS” Workshops - solicited suggestions and established priorities in terms of existing enhanced experiences in UAS baccalaureate programs, ways to strengthening opportunities, and possibilities for innovation.

# Enhancing the Baccalaureate Experience

## EBE Work Group, June 2016

- **Maintain and strengthen robust UAS baccalaureate programs through experiential and high-impact learning.**
- **Effectively market UAS as the UA system's high-impact, experiential and student-learning university.**
- **Prioritize interdisciplinarity within and across programs.**
- **Decolonize and indigenize the curriculum.**
- **Affirm that academic authority resides primarily within the faculty (shared governance).**

**Recommendation: Fall faculty work group to consider a single, interdisciplinary B.A. within Arts & Sciences.**

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## EBE Work Group, June 2016

### Rationale for creating a single, interdisciplinary BA:

- **Interdisciplinary Studies: one of UAS's "lead campus" identities.**
- **Strength in Numbers: one degree with 64-87 graduates annually, instead of eleven degrees ranging 1-28 (AY 11-16).**
- **Flexibility to establish BA degree tracks for nascent programs (e.g., Alaska Native Studies) and emerging A&S emphases (e.g., cultural geography, sustainability).**
- **Reduce disciplinary "silos" and organizational barriers to degree credit (e.g., "incorrect" cross-listing, appeals)**

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## EBE Work Group, Fall Semester 2016

### Strengths within Existing B.A. Degree Programs

- Student oriented.
- Many faculty teach across degree programs.
- High impact learning already occurs in all programs.
- Best degree programs are scaled & carefully designed.
- Flexible degrees meet a variety of student needs.
- Interdisciplinarity already occurs in many degree programs.

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## EBE Work Group, Fall Semester 2016

### Limitations & Challenges within Existing B.A. Degree Structures

- The relationships between departmental faculty and interdisciplinary degree programs not always well articulated (undertheorized, institutional roadblocks).
- Not all degree programs are aligned with the UAS mission (which is place based).
- Confusion among students about interdisciplinary degrees.
- Lack of institutional support for interdisciplinary programs (lack of resources, poor marketing, few or no designated spaces).
- Assessment of interdisciplinary programs is a challenge.



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## EBE Work Group, Fall Semester 2016

### Interdisciplinary B.A. Degree Designs Considered:

- **Design #1: Combining BLA & BASS degrees.** The BLA and BASS are closely related *multidisciplinary* degree programs, but not identical. What would a common B.A. in Humanities & Social Sciences look like?
- **Design #2: Interdisciplinary B.A. with thematic tracks.** A common *interdisciplinary* B.A. degree structure that permits multiple thematic emphases (transdisciplinary, decolonized, conceptually integrated).
- **Design #3: Student-designed.** Create a *self-designed* B.A. degree that provides better focus and guidance than the current Independent Design option within the BLA.

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## EBE Work Group, Fall Semester 2016

### Interdisciplinary B.A. Degree Program Outcomes (Preliminary):

Students who complete this interdisciplinary degree program will:

- Understand how various disciplinary approaches may interact within a bigger picture (a conception of the whole, not just particular pieces).
- Benefit from an educational experience that is both systematic and tailored.
- Develop critical association skills to generate practical approaches toward addressing real world problems.
- Know how to engage in robust dialogs that engage diverse and indigenous perspectives.
- Develop and complete a culminating experience project.
- Engage in an intensive, high impact educational experience.

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## EBE Work Group, Fall Semester 2016

### Interdisciplinary B.A. Degree Design (Preliminary Structure):

#### 1. Common Core (1+ Year)

- 1<sup>st</sup> Year Seminar: Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies
- Language Sequence
- Alaska Native Studies Requirement (Local Knowledge)
- Designated GERS (with a focus on the interdisciplinary degree)

#### 2. Emphasis (2-3 Modules) (Current BLA, BASS, Interdisciplinary BAs)

- Alaska Native Language & Studies
- Interdisciplinary Studies (Multidisciplinary)
- Interdisciplinary Studies (Thematic & Transdisciplinary)
- Outdoor & Adventure Studies
- Social Science
- Self-Design
- (English?)
- (Geography & Environmental Studies?)

#### 3. Culminating Experience (e.g., Internship, Research, Creative Project, Thesis)

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## EBE Work Group, Fall Semester 2016

### Next Steps:

- The EBE work group continues to discuss program outcomes and possible emphasis tracks in the interdisciplinary B.A. with A&S faculty in Spring 2017.
- A Faculty B.A. Interdisciplinary Degree Design Group (4-5 members) convenes in May/June 2017 to complete degree proposal (purpose, program outcomes, degree design, assessment, etc.). Financial compensation a must.
- The School of A&S reviews, revises, and adopts or rejects the degree design.
- UA Board of Regents approval 2017/2018.
- Fall 2018: New Interdisciplinary B.A. with its own A&S budget.

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**Discussion**

**Questions for  
Work Group?**

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