



UNIVERSITY
of ALASKA
SOUTHEAST

DEPARTMENT OF
SOCIAL SCIENCE

MEMORANDUM

March 1, 2019

To Karen Carey, UAS Provost
From Glenn Wright, Associate Professor of Political Science and Government
Copy Tom Thornton, Dean of Arts and Sciences
Re Bachelor of Arts in Social Science Annual Assessment Report – Catalog Year 2017-2018

This memo provides continuing assessment of student learning outcomes and the Bachelor of Arts in Social Science (BASS) degree program for the academic year 2017-2018. The BASS is a single, interdisciplinary degree program that combines multiple disciplinary concentrations (Anthropology, Economics, History, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology). The principal finding of this annual assessment report is that the BASS program continues to be robust with enrollments of degree-seeking students and numbers of graduates among the strongest in the School of Arts and Sciences. Faculty evaluation of BASS graduate portfolios demonstrates that students perform at a high level. The program's most significant weakness is the absence of a tenure-track Economics professor, without which we lack the ability to offer a comprehensive social science program to our students.

1. Assessment Methods

The Student Assessment Portfolio (SAP) is the principal tool used for the final evaluation of BASS graduates. Over the past few years, the SAP has shifted from a competencies-based assessment (previously used across UAS degree programs) to a program outcomes-based assessment aligned with the UAS Mission Statement. The new program learning outcomes assessment form consists of the following criteria:

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, Economics, Government, History, Psychology and Sociology. The SAP is completed and evaluated by multiple Social Science faculty members in each BASS student’s graduating semester.

2. Assessment Data

BASS Enrollment 2017-2018. In Fall 2017, 98 students were enrolled in the BASS, with 93 enrolled in Spring 2018. This represents an increase over the previous year (92 Fall, 95 Spring) and over 2015-2016 (93, 88).

BASS Graduates 2016-2017: BASS Graduation numbers have remained strong, with 18 in FY 2018 and averaging 15 graduates annually over the past five years. The constancy is notable given the overall decline in enrollment sat UAS during the same period. Despite this general decline in enrollment at UAS, BASS student numbers remain strong.

Final Portfolio Review Summary Data

Number of Graduating Students Evaluated: 18

- 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). Average scores are listed below.

- 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

BASS Outcomes Essay	3.4
Language Competency & Diversity Statement	3.6
Professional Portfolio Overall	3.5

Program Outcome 2: BASS Academic Writing

Primary:	ANTH	ECON	HIST	POL	PSY	SOC	3.8
Secondary 1:	ANTH	ECON	HIST	POL	PSY	SOC	3.7
Secondary 2:	ANTH	ECON	HIST	POL	PSY	SOC	3.7
Overall Quality of writing across the disciplines							3.8

Program Outcome 3: Research

Research Methods example	3.1
Quality of upper-division Research example	3.2

Program Outcome 4: Community Engagement

Strength of Social Science engagement or perspective	3.7
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Program Outcome 5: Cultures & Environment of Southeast Alaska

Analytical or interpretative Social Science perspective	3.3
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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.

From the written exit survey (N=12), we know that BASS graduates

- Are, on average “very satisfied” with the degree program
- Believe they have “very good” knowledge and analytical understanding of their respective social science emphasis areas.
- Can situate social science knowledge within the cultures and environment of Southeast Alaska.
- Most (8 of 12) engaged in internship, field research, study abroad, or community service projects

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

Student Satisfaction with the BASS Program:

- “Very rewarding” or “very satisfied”
- Program allowed students to better understand the world around them
- Frustrations with availability of some course options

Particularly Good Experiences BASS Program:

- Excellent assessments of BASS faculty
- Collaborative experiences with other students

Student-Identified Weaknesses of the BASS Program:

- Frustrations with availability of courses
- Some concerns noted with inconsistency of online delivery platforms

Student Suggestions for Improvements in the BASS Program:

- More course options – especially upper-division courses.
- Greater emphasis on BASS portfolio
- Streamline online platform (single platform)

General information about BASS graduates:

- About 60% of students attended UAS for nine semesters or more, around 45% attended for more than 11 semesters. About 60% attended UAS for more than 9 semesters.
- Most students graduated having taken exclusively distance courses at UAS. Around 40% took a mix of distance and on-campus courses.
- More than two-thirds participated in some form of experiential learning (research or field work; internship; study abroad).
- About 60% plan to pursue graduate studies. The identified universities for graduate study: UAS, UAF, Western Washington University.
- Most BASS graduates were financially independent throughout their studies.

4. Recommendations

Within the next year, the Social Science faculty should:

1. Conduct a search to hire a tenure-track professor in Economics to assure the full complement of Ph.D. faculty across all disciplines in the BASS degree program. UAS' continued failure to permit the hire of a tenure-track economist has substantially impeded our ability to deliver the BASS, and to continue the expansion of our program.
2. Better identify courses and experiential learning opportunities for students that address program learning outcomes that emphasize research, community engagement, and social science knowledge situated within the cultures or environment of Southeast Alaska.