

**MEMORANDUM**

March 1, 2024

To: Maren Haavig, UAS Provost

From: David Noon, Chair of Social Sciences

Copy: Carin Silkaitis, Dean of Arts & Sciences

Re: Bachelor of Arts in Social Science Annual Assessment Report – Catalog Year 2022-23

## **1. Program Overview**

The Bachelor of Arts degree with a Major in Social Science is a single, interdisciplinary degree program that combines social science orientation courses and research methods courses with three disciplinary concentrations (students graduating in 2022-2023 chose three from Anthropology, Economics, History, Political Science, Psychology, and/or Sociology). Students select the degree for a number of goals, which commonly include preparation for graduate degrees in counseling, social work, and teaching certification in secondary history, government, and/or social studies; or to earn employment qualifications in social services, government, or tribal organizations; or for adult degree completion or for personal enrichment.

The 2022-2023 graduates rated the program as personally and culturally rewarding, effective in meeting their educational goals, and rated their experience with faculty teaching and advising at UAS highly. Faculty evaluation of student portfolios noted particular strengths in mastery of content in their social science concentrations and in research methods. The number of graduates (13) increased slightly from a smaller graduating class of eight in 2021-2022; total majors have declined slightly, consistent with enrollment losses across the University.

This past year witnessed a personnel changes within the Social Science Department. Dr. Forest Haven, who completed her Ph.D from UC-Irvine while serving as a Term Assistant Professor of Anthropology and Alaska Native Studies on the Juneau campus, accepted an appointment into a tripartite, tenure-track position (also in Anthropology and Alaska Native Studies) by the end of summer 2023. With the resignation of Dr. John Radzilowski in Ketchikan, the Social Science Department conducted a national search for a bipartite position in World/US History in AY23; although interest in the position was strong, a combination of factors resulted in a failed search. (Nevertheless, in AY24 we were able to fill that position; although this is an AY23 program evaluation, the hiring of Dr. Taylor Rose will shape our goals for AY25, listed at the conclusion of this assessment.) As well, in the Spring of 2023 the Department initiated a process that would ultimately result in the acquisition of Sarah Neicko's grant-funded term position in Behavioral Health, a position that had previously resided in Career Education. During AY23, we also learned that Dr. Erica Hill would likely be returning to UAS after

several years working in Washington, DC, with the National Science Foundation. Her return was officially confirmed in Fall 2023.

## **2. Program Level Learning Outcomes**

**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 S.E. Alaska.

## **3. Assessment Indicators and Data Collection**

The Student Assessment Portfolio (SAP) is used for the final evaluation of BASS graduates. BASS students are assessed at the level of individual course work in interdisciplinary Social Science Core 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 by each student with guidance from a faculty advisor, and then the SAPs are evaluated by Social Science faculty members in each BASS student's graduating semester.

**Student Assessment Portfolio artifacts associated with each Program Learning Outcome:**

- Program Learning Outcome 1: BASS Professional Portfolio
- Program Learning Outcome 2: BASS Academic Writing (3 SSCI disciplines)
- Program Learning Outcome 3: Research.
- Program Learning Outcome 4: Community Engagement.
- Program Learning Outcome 5: Cultures and Environment of Southeast Alaska.

### **Student Evaluation of BASS Program**

Graduating BASS students complete a written exit survey and participate in the BASS Graduate Conference with social science faculty.

## **4. Assessment Data**

### **BASS Enrollment 2022-2023**

At the start of fall semester 2022, there were 72 students enrolled in the BASS, a decrease from the 79 students reported in the previous year (Source: UAS Institutional Effectiveness). Those numbers remained steady throughout the year, with 76 students enrolled in Spring of 2023; this figure includes BASS students as a "Secondary Major" (such as students finishing an AA as their "Primary Major" while concurrently working toward the BASS).

**BASS Graduates 2022-2023:** 13 students (compared with 8 in 2021-2022)

### **Concentrations at the time of graduation**

<i>Total by Primary Concentration</i>	
Psychology	7
History	2
Government/Political Science	1
Economics	1
Anthropology	1
Sociology	1

Total by Secondary Concentration	
Sociology	10
Government/Political Science	5
Psychology	4
History	3
Anthropology	2
Economics	2

**Final Portfolio Review Summary Data, including mean evaluation score for each item:**

**Program Outcome 1: BASS Professional Portfolio 4.13**

**Program Outcome 2: BASS Academic Writing 3.92**

**Program Outcome 3: Research 3.55**

**Program Outcome 4: Community Engagement 3.3**

**Program Outcome 5: Cultures & Environment of Southeast Alaska 3.21**

**Student Evaluation of BASS Program**

BASS graduates rated their median experience 4 or 5 out of five in nearly every category. Among the highest rated experiences, students indicated they were

- **Very satisfied with the program.** Of 13 responses, seven graduates were “very satisfied” with the degree program (score: 5); five were “satisfied” (score: 4); and only one was “neutral” (score: 3).
- **Very satisfied with SSCI faculty.** Of 13 responses, eight graduates were “very satisfied” with the SSCI faculty (score: 5); four were “satisfied” (score: 4).
- **Able to articulate main concepts in their social science emphasis field.** Of 13 responses, six were “very satisfied” with their ability (score: 5); five were “satisfied” with their ability (score: 4); and two were “neutral” (score: 3)
- **Able to apply analytical categories across social science emphasis fields (e.g., class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, power).** Of 13 responses, nine were “very satisfied” with their ability (score: 5); the remaining four were “satisfied” with their ability to apply analytical categories across their fields of interest (score:4)
- **Able to formulate research questions and develop methods for addressing them.** Of 13 responses, seven were “very satisfied” with their ability (score: 5); four were “satisfied” (score: 4); and the remaining two were “neutral” (score: 2).

BASS graduates indicated they were somewhat less satisfied with their access to internships, field research projects, or community service. Of 13 responses, seven were either “very

satisfied” or “satisfied”; three were “neutral”; and three were either “dissatisfied” or “very dissatisfied.”

From the narrative evaluation portion students wrote in the written exit survey, here are some examples of student comments on their experience in the BASS degree:

Narrative comments suggested that students appreciated small classes, variety and flexibility in course offerings, and the program’s focus on diverse cultures and experiences:

I felt like the BASS was a rewarding program for me because I gained an understanding and empathy for people. I feel like before I would say things or think things that weren't very understanding of others but the classes taught me so much about others' experiences and the importance of being anti-racist and anti-sexist. I wish that some of the classes had me interact with my classmates more, like group projects or breakout sessions.

For the most part I am very happy with everything. most of my classes were available when i needed them and when one was not, arrangements were made to find me an alternate class.

I really appreciate the professors and the small class sizes. I was not too excited to attend college with what I thought would be a lot of young people, but I have truly enjoyed learning from all ages and stages. The classes were both challenging, interesting and learning more about subjects that interest me is always fine.

I enjoyed learning ways that my three concentrations were connected. Also, I enjoyed that learning more about these subjects provided a lot of context for several aspects of the country and world of today.

Students offered critiques of the program as well. Several indicated that the language requirement did not seem to clearly enhance their program outcomes, while a few others identified the assessment process as burdensome

The language requirement was the only drawback for me. I really wanted to do ASL but my first ASL class was so far in the past that I would need to repeat it, but that was not an option so I had to take a language I was not really interested in and I struggled with it.

I really wish I didn't have to learn a language. I'm not good at languages and I failed elementary Spanish like 3 times before passing. I don't know anyone that speaks the language and it's not helpful to me, but it completely demotivated me from getting a degree at all until I was able to complete it this year.

I don't know anyone else that speaks other languages and that was honestly the only thing holding me back for so long. I won't even use the language that I learned for the degree for this reason.

Not to be too grumpy, but to have to put all of this exit work in in order to graduate is pretty frustrating. We have enough assignments we're dealing with towards the end of the semester as is.

The stress between our school lives, our work lives, our social lives, and having to land a career in the near future without any clear prospects compounds in a way that is almost unbearable.

For suggestions on how the BASS degree program might be improved, several students identified engagement in online courses as one area for improvement:

Make the online classes more engaging with other students besides discussion boards.

I would suggest more consistency among classes. For example, some classes had regular assignments and projects, while others had maybe one or two essays. It might make things a bit easier going from class to class if there are certain expectations that are met all across the board.

My biggest suggestions revolve around student engagement and discussion. First, perhaps consider revamping how students can engage with the material and other students. I understand, with the nature of online classes, this is especially challenging, however I don't think that most of the discussion forums quite met the mark either.

## **5. Evaluation of Program Learning Outcome Assessment Data**

### **Student Commentary from Exit Interviews**

At BASS Graduate Conferences (including those held in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023, students expressed great appreciation for faculty in their program and for their experiences with staff advising. Student-identified strengths of the BASS program include variety and interdisciplinarity in the curriculum; strong faculty performance in the classroom as well as in advising and mentoring; small class sizes (a perpetual strength of the program) that facilitate discussion especially in the upper-division courses; content emphasis on cultural diversity, issues of power and privilege, and social justice; methods courses that expose students to qualitative and quantitative analysis; and flexibility of options of online, in person, and hybrid courses.

## **6. Recommendations**

Within the next year, the Social Science faculty should:

1. In response to student feedback from AY23 exit surveys, identify more opportunities for students to engage in community service, field research, and internships.
2. Revisit last year's recommendation (from the AY22 Program Assessment) that the university consult the Social Science Department in developing and implementing a marketing/recruitment plan for the BASS degree.
3. Reintegrate Erica Hill into the department, with additional course offerings in Anthropology and Archaeology while utilizing her NSF to increase grant-supported research and programming in Social Sciences.
4. Integrate Dr. Taylor Rose, Assistant Professor of History (Ketchikan campus) into the department; revise the History curriculum and Six-Year Course Sequence in view of his areas of specialization and interest.

5. Continue to cross-list departmental offerings across Social Science disciplines as well as with Humanities.
6. Continue effective regional coordination of schedule planning and breadth of offerings.
7. With Dr. William Urquhart's move into the Ketchikan Campus Director position, it will be of continuing importance to explore options for building sociology offerings both online and on campus in Juneau, especially since sociology remains of interest to our students, in the very least as a secondary concentration.
8. Continue to develop partnerships with other UA schools and departments for curricular and course sharing improvement, such as through the UAF-UAS political science initiative and the Master of Marine Policy program.