



Date: February 21, 2020

To: John Stalvey, Interim Provost

From: John Petraitis, Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

Cc: Simon Kattenhorn, Professor; Director, Geological Sciences
LeeAnn Munk, Professor

Re: AY20 Expedited Program Review Findings

Program/s in this review: Applied Geological Sciences MS

Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable): None

Campuses where the program is delivered: Anchorage

Members of the program review committee:

Simon Kattenhorn, Professor and Department Director
LeeAnn Munk, Professor

Centrality of Program Mission and Supporting Role

UAA's mission is to discover and disseminate knowledge through teaching, research, engagement and creative expression. UAA is committed to serving the higher education needs of the state, its communities and its diverse peoples. It is also committed to instruction at multiple academic levels, success of all students regardless of their higher education goals, and service to the diverse peoples and communities of the state. UAA's core themes are (1) Teaching and Learning, (2) Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity, (3) Student Success, (4) UAA Community, and (5) Public Square. UAA values international and intercultural education, diversity of experiences and perspectives, and the diversity of our unique location in Southcentral Alaska that comes from the Alaska Native peoples of this area.

The College of Arts and Sciences contributes to UAA's mission with a suite of programs that provide, among other things,

1. general education courses for undergraduates in CAS and other Colleges,
2. opportunities for undergraduates to pursue majors in the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, and the arts, and

3. opportunities for faculty and students to pursue research and creative activities in CAS's academic disciplines,
4. graduate programs for advanced studies.

Given decreased enrollments across UAA and significant budget cuts to CAS, the challenge is to serve UAA's and CAS's missions with only 75% of the funds it had in 2018-2019. CAS's shrinking budget is especially challenging for programs that rely on state financial appropriations through CAS because the programs have a gap between (a) the total costs of everything the program does and needs, and (b) the tuition CAS receives to cover those costs. This describes most programs in CAS: most rely on state appropriations and CAS has 30% less than it had two years ago.

The MS in Applied Geological Sciences started admitting students in Spring 2018, providing graduate studies and research opportunities in one of Alaska's most important industries and with generous support from industry partners.

Program Demand (including service to other programs), Efficiency, and Productivity

Program demand is growing. The initial cohort of students started their courses in Fall 2018 and the program already had 15 majors by 2019 and the program awarded three degrees by December 2019. Student credit hour production rose dramatically in the past year. As the number of majors ramped up, so too did the average class size. Program efficiency is helped by stacking the program's 600-level courses with 400-level courses, and by having graduate students take some of their coursework in other graduate-level departments, like Geomatics. Generally, student tuition in graduate programs does not cover the instructional costs of the program. This is particularly true with this new program; according to Institutional Research data, the tuition that CAS receives from students only covers 35% of the instructional costs of the program. By comparison, the average in CAS's masters-degree programs is 53%. The program's productivity is impressive, with three graduates between the program's first class in Fall 2018 and December 2019.

Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success

An important feature of this MS program is that it offers a non-thesis option, thereby allowing so-inclined students to earn a professional masters degree quickly and get into the workforce faster.

Program Duplication / Distinctiveness

Although UAF offers an MS in Geoscience with some overlap with UAA's Applied Geological Sciences MS, UAA's program has a much more applied emphasis, offers a non-thesis option for a professional masters degree and, most distinctively, has the strong backing of employers in Southcentral Alaska.

Commendations and Recommendations

The faculty are commended for launching an important program with clear workforce applications that respond to state needs. They are also commended for graduating the first three students so quickly. The faculty should also be commended for the hard work they put into their expedited program review submission.

Decision

Continued review. When all of the Department's costs and all the revenues are considered, there is a steep financial gap that CAS fills with state appropriations that are far above average in CAS's departments. Budget cuts are making it harder for CAS to give as much support to programs as it once did. Therefore, the Department must explore ways it can close the fiscal gap and rely far less on state appropriations through CAS's budget. Perhaps the MS program can implement a tuition surcharge; alter faculty workloads so that fewer contingent faculty are needed, and/or foundations can be established for an endowed chair position. The program should report on its progress by Spring 2022.