



Date: February 21, 2020

To: John Stalvey, Interim Provost

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

Cc: Gloria Eldridge, Professor
Eric Murphy, Professor; Director, Department of Psychology

Re: AY20 Expedited Program Review Findings

Program/s in this review: Clinical Psychology MS

Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable): None

Campuses where the program is delivered: Anchorage

Members of the program review committee:

Gloria Eldridge, Professor
Eric Murphy, Professor and Department Director

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.

CAS's MS in Clinical Psychology contributes to CAS's and UAA's mission by preparing students to meet masters-level licensing requirements in Alaska as either Licensed Professional Counselors (LPC's) or Licensed Psychological Associates (LPAs), and contributing to the behavioral health workforce needs in the state, particularly Southcentral Alaska. Its onsite mental-health clinic (the Psychological Services Center) provides low-cost counseling to the community with supervised graduate students as interns. The program is a common destination for graduates of UAA's BA/BS program in Psychology, and the faculty who are core to the MS program are embedded in the Psychology Departments BA-BS program and its PhD program, contributing to much-needed instructions in both of these programs.

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

With the exception of 2019, program demand dropped steadily since 2013, with only 2/3rd the number of students in 2018 as 2013. Student credits hours dropped every year since 2014, and average class sizes have trended downward for the past few years. Some of this drop is due to CAS's inability to provide stipends and tuition waivers for students in the program, a reality that will not likely change in the next few years. As to efficiency, instructional costs routinely exceed the instructional revenues by a considerable amount. As to productivity, the number of graduates dropped steadily from 17 in 2013 to 7 in 2019. Two things are noteworthy about the number of MS degrees awarded in recent years. First, some of those degrees are awarded to students who are matriculating through Psychology's PhD program, so the MS numbers do not just reflect MS-degree seeking students. Second, during the same review period, the number of Masters of Social Work degrees grew to the point where 33 MSW's were awarded in 2019.

Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success

The program provides high-quality masters-level training in mental health services, giving student direct experience as therapist under professional supervision in the Psychology Services Center. The MS program has also integrated more of its courses with Psychology's PhD program which has some overlap with the MS program but some distinctive features. Graduates of the MS program do well in filling positions in Alaska, especially Southcentral Alaska.

Program Duplication / Distinctiveness

The program is distinctive in training students to be Licensed Professional Counselors and Licensed Psychological Associates, but it is facing competition from programs that offer different licensure paths to jobs in the mental-health workforce. The MS program, with its emphasis on LPC and LPA training, requires 48 credits, a number that is professionally justified but unusually high. This likely hurts the MS program, and students seem to be going elsewhere for graduate training into the mental-health workforce. The MSW program at UAA, for instance, had 71 students in 2019 whereas the MS in Psychology had only 29.

Commendations and Recommendations

The faculty are commended for providing a high-quality program that gives students professional supervision as they learn to work with clients in a mental-health clinic. They are also commended for nurturing a program that started in 1971, UAA's first graduate program. The faculty should also be commended for the hard work they put into their expedited program review submission.

Decision

Deletion. Unfortunately, this program faced increasing competition from other programs at UAA. Furthermore, budget cuts are forcing CAS to offer fewer programs to students in the future, especially programs where the tuition students pay does not cover the costs of the program. Although unfortunate, CAS likely cannot sustain this program beyond its current cohort of students. However, the Psychology Department still needs the faculty who were the core of the MS program to cover current and future gaps in the BA-BS and PhD programs. Program deletion requires approval by BOR and NWCCU.