



Date: February 21, 2020

To: John Stalvey, Interim Provost

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

Cc: Elizabeth Arnold, Associate Professor; Chair, Department of Journalism and Public Communications
Paola Banchemo, Associate Professor
Joy Chavez Mapaye, Associate Professor

Re: AY20 Expedited Program Review Findings

Program/s in this review: Journalism and Public Communications BA

Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable): None

Campuses where the program is delivered: Anchorage

Members of the program review committee:

Elizabeth Arnold, Associate Professor and Department Chair
Paola Banchemo, Associate Professor
Joy Chavez Mapaye, Associate 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 Department of Journalism and Public Communication does not contribute significantly to general education: only 30% of its student credit hours are with students outside of the JPC major, a rate that is half of the CAS average. Instead, its focus is on undergraduates who are interested in becoming professional journalists or strategic communication specialists.

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

As stated, students who take JPC course are disproportionately JPC majors instead of students in other majors.

Since 2013 many CAS programs experienced a decrease in the number of awards; JPC, however, was relatively unique in that time period and experienced a notable increase, and in the past two years it increased from 19 graduates to 26-27. It is unclear, however, if this trend will continue because the program has seen a 33% drop in the number of majors. Of CAS's 19 baccalaureate programs, JPC is CAS's 7th most popular program with 101 current majors, and 6th most declared major among incoming first-year students. Clearly, the program is in demand.

However, the program is not efficient and has excess capacity. Its student credit hour total is far below average in CAS and its credits hours per faculty is also well below average. As a result, in 2019 it only covered half of its instructional costs with tuition, necessitating CAS to cover the other half with state appropriations. Furthermore, when the full salaries and benefits for everything faculty do (instruction, research, and service) are considered, the Department has the steepest deficit of any undergraduate program in CAS, and a steep deficit that required state appropriations. Contributing to this is the fact that JPC courses have class sizes that are well-below average (just 13.8 in 2019), and that the courses draw relatively few students from other majors, doing so at a rate that is half the rate across CAS. Overall, the program is relatively insular and while having a respectable number of majors, it does not have enough majors to sustain the program without steep help in state appropriations.

Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success

Small class size is a fiscal challenge, but also is a benefit for student success. JPC majors have small classes (by CAS standards) that are taught by faculty with real-world professional experience and that give students hands on experience with reporting and strategic communications.

Program Duplication / Distinctiveness

UAF offers a BA in the Department of Journalism and Communications. While there is overlap, there are differences and UAA's program graduates about nine times the number of graduates per year.

Commendations and Recommendations

The program is commended for generous support from the community, and the careful mentoring its professionally-experienced faculty provide students. The faculty also should be commended for the hard work they put into their expedited program review submission.

Decision

Revision.

To its credit, the program draws students to UAA and graduates quite a few more. To its detriment, however, it is not sustainable with the level of state appropriations CAS receives. Therefore, I recommend that this program undergo major revision in the following ways:

1. Recently the curriculum was revised, but it might need to be revised again with an eye toward more online offerings that could reach students outside of Southcentral Alaska.
2. The number of faculty be limited to three full-time faculty.
3. Faculty workloads must be revised so that research time is greatly reduced or eliminated, allowing the remaining faculty to cover more courses while reducing the program's overall costs.
4. A tuition surcharge should be proposed for upper-division courses in JPC, thereby having students contribute more to the cost of this low-enrollment, high-impact program.
5. Multi-year partnerships with the community and industry should be established to create a stable and significant source of funds for the program.

The net result should be a program that eliminates the gap between its costs and its revenue. If these and/or other steps do not eliminate the gap, the program should be reviewed for deletion in 2021.