

Submission date: February 10, 2020

Program/s in this review: Justice BA \_\_\_\_\_

Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

Campuses where the program is delivered: Anchorage \_\_\_\_\_

**Members of the program review committee:**

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**1. Centrality of Program Mission and Supporting Role (700 words or less)**

The UAA Justice Center was established by the Alaska Legislature in 1975 with a statewide mandate to provide justice education, research and service. The Justice Center is an interdisciplinary unit that provides undergraduate and professional education; conducts research in the areas of crime, law, and justice; and provides services to government units, justice agencies, and community organizations throughout urban and rural Alaska to promote a safe, healthy, and just society.

The Justice B.A. curriculum has evolved as the requirements needed to provide professional education, research, and service to the state have changed. The Justice B.A. has recently responded to these demands with curriculum revisions to better prepare our graduates to support our vision of leading Alaska to a safer, healthier, and more just society. Starting in Fall 2020, our required course sequence will offer students more opportunities to explore career paths in the criminal justice system, juvenile justice, crime prevention and victimology; learn applied research; and engage in community service. Reviewing our active Justice Alumni Chapter reveals students engaged in a variety of Justice careers at the federal and state level, as State of Alaska Legislators, crime analysts, attorneys, magistrates, directors of non-profits, UAA professors, etc. Indeed, it would be difficult to find a justice career sector operating in Alaska without a Justice B.A. graduate.

The Justice B.A. is essential to UAA because it contributes to an educated work force addressing problems that lie at the nexus of public safety and public health while also providing policy-relevant research and service. The Justice B.A. provides the basis for pursuit of advanced degrees and for students interested in a broad and diverse range of social and behavioral concerns. This broad range of offerings is in keeping with the diverse population of Alaska and the extreme conditions imposed on the justice system. The Justice B.A. directly contributes to UAA's mission to discover and disseminate knowledge through teaching, research, and engaged service and to UAA's 2020 Strategic Priorities.

The Justice B.A. supports other academic programs at UAA. Seven Justice courses (including three capstone courses) are general education courses. The Justice B.A. contributes to the College of Health mission of advancing the health and well-being of people and communities through our engaged teaching, research, and service.

The Justice B.A. assists in workforce development by producing graduates knowledgeable about Alaska Justice issues and policies. Our empirical foundation is an asset to employers considering the growing reliance on evidence-based practices in our field. The Justice B.A. prepares students for myriad jobs in each of the sectors of the criminal justice system (police, courts, corrections) and at all levels of government (city, state, and federal). Justice graduates are also prepared for positions in organizations associated with public health and public safety including victim advocacy. Students

in other disciplines who complete our general education requirement courses can understand questions that impact every person in the United States: why people commit crime, how society reacts to crime, and how the legal system works.

Faculty members who teach in the Justice B.A. program have more than 75 community partners, including research and service partners. These extensive research and service partnerships mutually benefit our students and community partners.

Tripartite faculty members teaching in the Justice B.A. program are successful seeking extramural funding to support their research projects. This research funding supports faculty and creates opportunities for students to assist faculty on research projects as paid research assistants while directly contributing to the criminal justice policy environment within the State of Alaska. Ten different UAA Justice Center PIs have secured 42 awards worth \$4,375,059 from 2012 through 2019.

Demand has been stable for justice careers overall. Despite the state's budget crisis, moderate growth is expected in many justice-related careers in Alaska. For example, police officer positions are expected to grow by 7.09% from 2018-2028. The State of Alaska's criminal justice reform (SB91) and its more recent revision (HB49) will provide new employment opportunities in probation and reentry services as well as correctional officers.

## 2. Program Demand (including service to other programs), Efficiency, and Productivity (7 year trend; 1400 words or less)

The number of JUST B.A. graduates has been steady during the review period, with an average of 38 graduates per fiscal year. JUST B.A. students took 4.9 years to graduate, on average, compared to an average time-to-completion of 6.2 years for all UAA Bachelor's graduates.

The number of JUST B.A. majors has changed during the review period. **Two administrative changes during the review period significantly impacted the major counts: 1) the introduction of admission requirements; and 2) the introduction of a LEGL B.A. by the Justice Center.**

The JUST B.A. introduced admission requirements (a "pre-major") in the 2013-2014 Academic Catalog. These pre-majors are not included in the counts included in reports from Institutional Research, and their exclusion accounts for half of the decline in majors during the review period. The addition of pre-major status was made to ensure that major counts better reflect students who intend to complete the JUST B.A. Prior to the introduction of admission requirements, JUST BA major counts included unknown numbers of students who officially declared as JUST majors, but who were not making progress toward a JUST B.A. degree. Adding admission requirements has successfully ensured that students who appear in various reports as JUST majors have completed introductory courses in the discipline and intend to continue pursuit of a JUST BA while also enabling us to direct services to exploratory and early students. **In 2019, there were 117 enrolled Justice "pre-majors." In combination with the 43 majors, the total enrollment for 2019 is 160 students.**

The LEGL B.A. program was created in the 2013-2014 academic year. This new program offers students an additional track for those who are interested in law and legal careers. It is likely that many LEGL B.A. students would have been JUST B.A. in the past. The LEGL B.A. program had 56 majors and pre-majors in 2019.

These administrative changes have not impacted the number of JUST B.A. graduates, which has remained steady during the review period.

During the review period faculty instructional FTE has adapted to changing SCH by increasing faculty workload in research, prioritizing state and federal sponsored projects.

### 3. Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success (1500 words or less)

#### **Currency of the curriculum:**

The Justice B.A. has a diverse faculty and professional staff that bring a breadth of knowledge spanning criminal justice and social science. All core courses are taught by either tenured or tenure-track faculty. The benefit of exclusive reliance on tenured or tenure-track faculty ensures success of the program and that students learn from experts in their respective knowledge areas. All Justice faculty have a terminal degree (Ph.D.) in their relevant disciplines. Moreover, most Justice faculty have had prior experience as practitioners in research, justice, and related organizations. The academic experience of students in the Justice B.A., both in and outside of the classroom, is strengthened by engagement in research and professionally based community service. The high-quality Justice faculty contribute to quality outcomes reflected in the production of knowledge by our students and faculty. The educational level, experience, and diversity of substantive expertise strengthens the quality of instruction and academic integrity of the program.

Over the course of the past two years, the Justice B.A. faculty have undertaken a comprehensive review of the Justice B.A. program. The goal of this programmatic review is to align the Justice B.A.'s structure and content with the current state of the field. The program revisions submitted in AY 2019-20 for Fall 2020 implementation addresses what the Justice B.A. faculty have agreed constitutes the essential core of professional baccalaureate education in criminal justice in the United States. The revisions to the Justice B.A. program will provide graduates with a more comprehensive understanding of the adult and juvenile justice systems, the causes, correlates and consequences of crime and criminal victimization, the development of criminal and juvenile justice policy and practice, and the methodological foundations of criminological science in the twenty-first century.

#### **Availability and indications of quality of distance offerings (e.g., Quality Matters, C-RAC standards, etc.):**

The Justice B.A. program has a nascent online program with a limited but expanding number of course offerings. All offered courses were developed in accordance with Quality Matters course design standards. Additionally, all instructors have participated in and taken their course(s) through the rigorous QM Improving your online course review process. As part of UAA's Title III Robust Online Learning Grant Justice 110 was redesigned as a GER online master course. All instructors are full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty with terminal degrees in their disciplines and have completed at least one QM or related training in online instruction. The Justice B.A. faculty have taken a deliberate approach in designing online course offerings to ensure that all online courses meet evidence-based standards of quality design and academic rigor. The online course offerings are designed as a complement to the face-to-face course offerings and provide expanded opportunities for a broader range of students to move efficiently through the program.

#### **Program Student Learning Outcomes assessment: Describe your key findings, actions taken to improve student learning, and evidence that these actions are working.**

Embedded in the programmatic and course-level revisions, discussed above in the *Currency of the curriculum* section, are revisions to the program's student learning outcomes reflecting the substantive changes being made to the structure and content of the B.A. program. Revised Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLOs) are:

- a. Assess and critique the structure, operation, and administration of the adult and juvenile justice systems.
- b. Explain the essential principles of justice research and evaluate the results of social science research.
- c. Assess and critique the different theoretical perspectives in criminology.
- d. Evaluate methods of crime control and prevention.
- e. Evaluate historical and contemporary philosophies and practices of justice
- f. Describe processes of justice policy development and the requirements of evidence-based policy making.
- g. Describe the justice, health, and safety impacts of crime victimization on individuals and communities.

The second and last PSLO are tied to the programmatic revisions to be implemented in Fall 2020 and as such are not included in current program assessments.

**How well the program is doing on Student Success and what it is doing to facilitate it.**

Justice B.A. graduates achieve significant mastery of justice knowledge and related issues and are well-prepared to succeed in graduate school, law school or in a justice or related profession. Critical thinking skills are emphasized in student learning outcomes. Graduates are prepared to enter the work force and address complex problems that lie at the nexus of public safety and public health. Our students' independent research has been highlighted in showcase papers, received university financial support, and has been presented at conferences. Justice students often have internship opportunities when they elect to do so.

Faculty are actively engaged in research, so they are attuned to the key debates in the literature. Strong connections to local and state justice agencies make them aware of emerging key issues. The criminal justice system is dynamic, and the program keeps up with changes through regular curriculum review.

There is growing reliance in the justice field on evidence-based practice. Our students are well-equipped to interpret research because of our strong focus on quantitative skill development. Data analysis and research methods are required, and students learn practical applications of those skills in courses teaching data collection in the field, the use of GIS in crime mapping, and crime analysis.

We use our strong connections to bring practitioners and other experts into classrooms or other forums to share their insights on the rapidly changing justice system and interact directly with students. This includes a series of events for National Criminal Justice Month each March, jointly organized by Justice Center faculty and student groups. Many of these events are open to the community, which helps to expand and enhance the "Public Square" aspect of UAA.

Students can become engaged in course-based research. For example, in crime prevention courses, students leave the classroom and collect data in the field, and coupling their observations with the scholarly literature, make recommendations to stakeholders about proposed methods to reduce crime in those areas.

The Justice B.A. contributes to the Center for Community Engagement and Learning by requiring students to conduct service-learning projects in our crime prevention courses. As an example, students have twice assisted a local community housing development organization, NeighborWorks Alaska, conduct a visual survey of land parcels in the Russian Jack community. Justice B.A. faculty members support UAA's Honors College by serving as Honors Thesis advisors and on graduate theses committees for the Master of Public Administration, Nursing, and other programs. Justice B.A. faculty also assisted with the development and have team-taught Interdisciplinary Exploration of Alaska's Critical Behavioral Health Issues, a course that serves students in four other undergraduate and three other graduate programs and was one of the first courses with a College of Health Interdisciplinary (COHI) prefix.

Students have opportunities for one-on-one research mentoring, sometimes resulting in presentations at the UAA Student Showcase, Undergraduate Research and Development Symposium, and national conferences.

Students can work with faculty on sponsored and non-sponsored research projects. Students have routinely been employed as research assistants on the Mat-Su Borough Community Survey project, where they were involved in all aspects of conducting a mail survey, including data collection, entry, and analysis. Students have also been involved in systematic social observation of Anchorage Police Department police-citizen interactions that facilitated faculty research on the prevalence of alcohol and marijuana in police-citizen interactions.

Service-learning is incorporated in the curriculum, so students have a guided real-life opportunity to practice skills acquired in course work.

**Student accomplishments such as successful institutional honors, exit exam pass rates and subsequent enrollment (Up to 10 specific examples)**

A student received funding from the U.S. Department of Justice to attend a missing and unidentified persons conference.

During the period of review, 87 Justice graduates were inducted into the Criminal Justice Honor Society Alpha Phi Sigma.

Two May 2016 Justice Center grads were awarded UAA Leadership Honors at commencement.

A Justice BA '15 graduate from the Honors College, was selected as the commencement speaker for the December 2015 commencement ceremony.

A student received funding from UAA to present research at an international criminology conference.

A student presented a paper at a national criminology conference. The paper was developed with a faculty member, based on a community-engaged research project with a criminal justice agency partner. The student has gone on to pursue their doctorate in criminology.

A student presented a paper at a regional criminology conference.

**4. Program Duplication / Distinctiveness (300 words or less)**

The B.A. in Justice offered at UAA is unique in comparison to the B.A. in Justice offered at UAF in the following ways:

- 1) UAA's course offerings encompass a broad range of topics related to the science of criminology, policing, corrections, law, justice, and evidence-based policymaking. Over the past two decades, evidence-based policymaking — the development, use, and evaluation of scientific findings to advance policy — has transitioned from a curiosity to standard best practice. UAF's JUST B.A. program focuses on the management of criminal justice agencies and administration of justice. The two programs therefore have complementary, not duplicative content;
- 2) UAA's location in Anchorage provides diverse opportunities for internships and other community-engaged learning;
- 3) Instruction by UAA Justice faculty is strengthened by extensive research experience with State of Alaska criminal justice agencies, faculty engagement in the public policy making process in the State of Alaska, and publication in the peer-reviewed literature;
- 4) All UAA Justice Center tenure-track or tenured faculty have terminal degrees in their disciplines, and all core courses in the UAA Justice B.A. are taught by tenure-track or tenured faculty.

**5. Summary Analysis (500 words or less)**

We recommend continuation of the UAA Justice B.A. program.

From 2013 to 2019 the Justice B.A. program has produced an average of 38 graduates per year. In a period of uncertainty and disruption for state of Alaska and UAA, the Justice B.A. program remains a model of consistency, efficiency, and productivity. The Justice B.A. academic program is enhanced through the research productivity of the faculty. During this same time period Justice Center faculty obtained over four million dollars in external funding. These data present substantial evidence that the Justice Center contains an excellent academic program and productive research enterprise.

Nonetheless, despite obvious success, the Justice B.A. program faces several future challenges. Recognizing these challenges, the Justice faculty have taken deliberate action in several areas. First, in response to declining enrollments the Justice B.A. program has initiated a multi-pronged strategy. This includes adjusting faculty workload allocations dedicated to instruction and prioritizing sponsored research, enhanced academic advising, and revisions to

the Justice B.A. program. Improvement in academic advising was addressed both through faculty training and through clearer integration with the COH Academic Advising Center.

The Justice B.A. academic program has undergone a significant revision intended to better prepare students for careers in a rapidly changing criminal justice system and to stimulate the interests of contemporary students. Changes include both new course offerings such as Crime, Victimization and Justice and revised courses for example Theories of Crime and Criminal Offending. These changes represent the first substantive revision to the Justice B.A. in over a decade.

Academic program assessment has been improved and enhanced in several critical areas. The standard Exit Exam was reengineered to better match existing course content and the revised PSLOs previously discussed.

The Justice B.A. program is likely to face continued challenges in the short term including the uncertain fiscal environment of the State of Alaska and UAA. One obvious consequence has been declining enrollments at UAA. A less obvious consequence has been an increase in the percentage of underprepared students. The Justice Center and Justice B.A. possess limited ability to address declining state appropriations and associated negative public perceptions. The Justice B.A. program has undertaken programmatic changes that implicitly recognize and begin to address the academic challenges many of our students must confront.

The conclusion to the AY17 Cyclical Program Review of the Justice B.A. reached the final decision of program continuation and stated that the "Program is successfully serving its students and meeting its mission and goals." In the interim the identified areas of concern in the AY17 Cyclical Program Review have been addressed. These areas of improvement include revising the assessment plan, a substantial overhaul of the curriculum and a modest increase in the number of online course offerings. Taken together these represent meaningful improvements to an already strong academic program and further improvements are planned and in process. If the Justice B.A. was a viable academic program in 2017 it is substantially better in 2020.