



Date: February 21, 2020

To: John Stalvey, Interim Provost

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

Cc: Natasa Masanovic, Professor; Chair, Department of Languages
Patricia Fagan, Associate Professor

Re: AY20 Expedited Program Review Findings

Program/s in this review: Languages BA

Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable): None

Campuses where the program is delivered: Anchorage

Members of the program review committee:

Natasa Masanovic, Professor; Chair, Department of Languages
Patricia Fagan, 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 appropriates and CAS has 30% less than it had two years ago.

CAS's Department of Languages contributes to CAS's and UAA's mission by offering lower-division general education courses in seven languages: American Sign Language, Chinese, French, German, Japanese, Spanish, and Russian. It offers upper-division courses that lead to a Languages BA in only four languages: French, German, Japanese, and Spanish. Of the four languages that lead to the BA, three (French, German and Japanese) are staffed with a single tenure-track faculty member whereas one (Spanish) is staffed with three fulltime, tenure track faculty member. Of the other three languages, two (ASL and Russian) are staffed by adjunct faculty while one (Chinese) is staffed by a tenure-track faculty member.

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

Program demand slipped in recent years. Since 2013 program demand remained relatively stable with about 11 incoming first-year students selecting the Languages BA as their initial major, a number that is slightly above the median for CAS's bachelors programs. In 2019, the department produced 5700 student credit hours, doubling the median across CAS's baccalaureate. However, by one measure, number of majors, the program's demand has dropped since 2016. As to efficiency across the entire department, student tuition modestly covers the instructional costs of the courses. However, when considering all costs for all that faculty do (namely, teaching, research, and service), the department operates at a deficit that requires state appropriations through CAS. As to productivity, it varies across the seven language offerings. Two languages in particular – Chinese and Russian – served very few students in 2019, and student credits hours were likely suppressed in German because the sole tenure-track professor of German has taught less because of her duties as department chair. The number of awards decreased steadily since 2016, but the number (16 per year since 2013) is still higher than the number of incoming students who select the Languages BA as their initial major (11 per year since 2013).

Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success

The program is a center of excellence, producing the highest rate of graduates earning competitive international scholarships. For instance, 14 program graduates earned Fulbright Scholarships, with 11 of these students having a concentration in German.

Program Duplication / Distinctiveness

UAF offers an BA in Foreign Languages. Like UAA's program, UAF offers concentrations in French, German, and Spanish. Unlike UAA, UAF offers a concentration in Russian but no concentration in Spanish. Duplication has general merit in languages because they are best taught in a face-to-face setting where students interact with each other in real time under the tutelage of a faculty member. Further, languages are particularly important in Anchorage given the diversity of languages spoke by students and families in the Anchorage School District.

Commendations and Recommendations

Faculty are commended for the award-winning work they do with students. Further, three of the four concentrations that lead to degrees (namely, French, German and Japanese) are covered by a single tenure-track faculty supported by adjuncts. This is commendable. It also poses a burden on these faculty when they are the department chair. Therefore, I recommend that the chair position be put on a rotating basis in 2020-2021. The faculty also should be commended for the hard work they put into their expedited program review submission.

Decision

Revision. Under UAA's program review decision type, revision is defined as follows:

Program will be revised using existing resources, which might entail a reallocation of resources within the program. (Areas for revision might include, for example, faculty or staff workloads and assignments, curriculum, program delivery, student success initiatives, outreach and/or partnerships with the community or industry, program promotion and marketing, and facilities.) Depending on the level of changes, curricular revision may require approval by BOR and NWCCU.

Given that Chinese (a) served the fewest students of any language and (b) does not lead to a BA degree, I recommend that Chinese either be dropped as a language entirely or the instruction is covered by adjunct faculty, as is the case with the other two languages (namely, ASL and Russian) that do not lead to the BA degree. I also recommend that faculty workloads are adjusted so that the chair position is rotated. The program should report on its progress by Spring 2021.