



Date: February 21, 2020

To: John Stalvey, Interim Provost

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

Cc: Terry Kelly, Associate Professor; Chair, Department of Philosophy  
Stephanie Bauer, Associate Professor

Re: AY20 Expedited Program Review Findings

**Program/s in this review:** Philosophy BA

**Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable):** None

**Campuses where the program is delivered:** Anchorage

**Members of the program review committee:**

Terry Kelly, Associate Professor; Chair, Department of Philosophy  
Stephanie Bauer, 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 CAS 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.

In its most important role, CAS's Department of Philosophy contributes to CAS's and UAA's mission by providing Tier 2 and required courses for students in other majors (such as International Studies) and other colleges (especially the College of Health and the College of Engineering). It also provides opportunity for a small number of students to major in this discipline and learn from faculty who conduct research in philosophical questions, most of which are very applied in nature.

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

One indicator of program demand is the number of incoming high school students who select Philosophy as their initial major. That number is quite small: only 2-3 students per year. Also quite small is the number of students who currently are majors in the department. At only 29 majors, it is CAS's major with the lowest demand. However, while the Philosophy BA is not in high demand, Philosophy courses are. In 2019 the department produced nearly 4,500 student credit hours, nearly double the median for courses in CAS. Consequently, the fiscal situation in the department is such that it is one of the few departments in CAS (or the entire university) where the tuition CAS receives from its courses not only covers the instructional costs of the courses, but also covers the costs of everything that faculty do (namely, instruction, research and service). This makes the department productive by one measure. However, by another measure – number of degrees awards – the department is far less productive, generating an average of only 6.6 awards per year, putting it at the bottom of CAS's baccalaureate programs on this measure. Overall, this picture is of a program that attracts and graduates few majors, but is remarkable in its service to students in other majors and colleges.

### **Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success**

The program honestly uses its annual assessment data to inform program revisions. Increasingly, courses are offered online to bring the classroom to students rather than bring students to the classroom.

### **Program Duplication / Distinctiveness**

UAF also offers a Philosophy BA with a much smaller set of faculty. Between UAA's and UAF's programs, 30 students were awarded BA's in Philosophy, with 26 of those awards coming from UAA. Given the small size of both programs, they started collaborating on ways where courses taken at one university would transfer more easily to a degree from the other university.

### **Commendations and Recommendations**

Program faculty are commended for courses that serve majors in other departments and colleges, and commended for its collaborative work with the Philosophy Department at UAF, collaboration that helps students at both universities. The faculty also should be commended for the hard work they put into their expedited program review submission.

### **Decision**

Continued review. Much of what the Philosophy Department does is in service to other majors and colleges. With the current program review process going on in Spring 2020, it is possible that programs that rely on Philosophy courses might be discontinued, thereby impacting the role and necessary size of the Philosophy Department. Therefore, the program should be reviewed again in Spring 2021 to determine how many faculty are needed.