



Date: February 21, 2020

To: John Stalvey, Interim Provost

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

Cc: Forrest Nabors, Associate Professor; Chair, Department of Political Science
James Muller, Professor
Kimberly Pace, Term Assistant Professor

Re: AY20 Expedited Program Review Findings

Program/s in this review: Political Science BA

Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable): None

Campuses where the program is delivered: Anchorage

Members of the program review committee:

Forrest Nabors, Associate Professor and Department Chair
James Muller, Professor
Kimberly Pace, Term Assistant 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 appropriations and CAS has 30% less than it had two years ago.

CAS's Department of Political Science contributes to CAS's and UAA's mission by providing general education classes in the social sciences, opportunities for students to pursue more in-depth study of political sciences and its connections to other disciplines (such as History and Philosophy), and collaborate with faculty on research in that field.

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

One measure of program demand is the number of incoming students who declare Political Science as their initial major. Since 2013, 9 incoming high-school students made this choice, a number just below the median (10) for CAS baccalaureate programs. Another measure of demand is student credit hours. This number fell considerably during the review period, largely because of a reduction in the number of faculty and, correspondingly, the number of course sections available to students. Average class size, however, has dropped. One noteworthy index of demand is the number of majors in the program. That number increased from 72 in 2018 to 81 in 2019, one of the few CAS programs to show growth in its demand.

As to efficiency, there was a gap in 2019 in the tuition CAS receives for Political Sciences classes and the costs of instruction for those classes. In addition, when all costs for the Department are considered for everything faculty do (namely, teaching, research, and service), the department operates at a deficit that requires coverage by state appropriations through CAS. The efficiency was better and the budget gap was smaller in 2018 when the program had 3.3 full-time faculty instead of a higher number. As to productivity, the department typically awards about 11-13 degrees per year.

Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success

The program is small but the faculty are accomplished authors. Recognizing that previous versions of the program required too many credits in the major that proved to be barrier, faculty revised the program, reduced the number of credits, and offered more courses online after receiving training in online delivery. Students have an impressive list of accomplishments, including recently a Rhodes Scholarship and a Truman Scholarship.

Program Duplication / Distinctiveness

UAF also offers baccalaureate training in Political Science. Between UAA's and UAF's programs, an average of 15 students earned Political Sciences degrees since 2016, with 75% earning them at UAA.

Commendations and Recommendations

I commend faculty for providing rigorous training where students are pushed to read a lot, provide thoughtful written analysis of the material, and develop strong critical thinking skills. They are commended for presenting the annual Model United Nations conference which brings together UAA students (not just Political Science majors) with high-school students from around Alaska (and beyond)

of three-days of high-impact experiences. I also commend them for the hard work they put into their program review document.

Decision

Continued review. The program operates with a deficit that might be difficult for CAS to cover with shrinking state appropriations. Faculty should monitor ways to control their costs even more, and make sure they have the right number of faculty to cover the curriculum in the most efficient manner. The program should report on its progress by Spring 2022.