



Date: February 21, 2020

To: John Stalvey, Interim Provost

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

Cc: Zeynep Kilic, Professor; Chair, Department of Sociology  
Karl Pfeiffer, Professor  
Chad Farrell, Professor  
Nelta Edwards, Professor

Re: AY20 Expedited Program Review Findings

**Program/s in this review:** Sociology BA-BS

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

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

**Members of the program review committee:**

Zeynep Kilic, Professor and Department Chair  
Karl Pfeiffer, Professor  
Chad Farrell, Professor  
Nelta Edwards, 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 Sociology contributes to CAS's and UAA's mission by offering four options for general education credits in the social sciences, providing students the opportunity to major in the discipline, and for faculty and students to do research in that area.

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

Since 2013 the program averaged 12.3 awards per year, but in three of the past four years that number of awards dropped that average. Additionally, the number of majors and student credit hours both dropped by 35% since 2013. To its credit, the Department became more efficient in this period, covering all of its instructional costs with tuition from students. However, when the full salaries and benefits for everything Sociology faculty do (namely, instruction, research, and service) are considered, the Department has a deficit that required state appropriations to fill. Another challenge for the Department is that it draws the attention of comparatively few first-year students: since 2013 only 28 high-school students selected Sociology as their initial major, averaging only 3.5 per year, putting it 18<sup>th</sup> of CAS 19 baccalaureate programs in attracting first-year students.

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

The program quality is strong. The curriculum is up-to-date and streamlined. Students perform remarkably well on a national test for sociology majors. The four faculty are committed to student success in their general education offerings and in other courses. Applied research in the Department has been noteworthy in its contributions to the community. Although the program is small, the faculty provide impressive opportunities for undergraduates in research mentorship and community connections.

### **Program Duplication / Distinctiveness**

In Alaska, there are no other BA/BS programs in sociology.

### **Commendations and Recommendations**

The program is commended for (a) narrowing the gap between its total expenses and the tuition it generates, (b) providing excellent course-based instruction, (c) unusually strong commitment to individualized student experiences, (d) highly valued applied research, and (e) converting non-majors into majors. Faculty are commended for their instructional contributions to other BA programs, particularly International Studies. Without the contributions of Sociology faculty these other programs and their students would suffer. The faculty also should be commended for the hard work they put into their expedited program review submission.

### **Decision**

Deletion of the BA/BS major but retain a smaller set of faculty for continued contributions of general education courses and courses for Political Science and International Studies majors. This recommendation is particularly difficult because the faculty do so many things right. Exhibit A could be that 3-4 incoming students declare Sociology as their major but 10-12 graduate with degrees in Sociology. However, budget cuts are forcing CAS to offer fewer programs to students in the future. Despite all that this program does well, deleting the Sociology BA/BS will likely have relatively modest impact on the number of students who come to UAA in the future. Unfortunately, fewer future students will discover this vibrant program and its strong faculty in the future, and fewer will switch their major to Sociology. Fortunately, keeping at least one Sociologist will ensure that future students have the opportunity to experience the value that this discipline has and experience a core of International Studies. Program deletion requires approval by BOR and NWCCU.