

AY20 Expedited Program Review – Optional Program Response to the Dean’s Findings Form

Date: February 28, 2020

To: John Stalvey, Interim Provost

From: Clare J. Dannenberg, Chair of Anthropology and Associate Professor of Linguistic Anthropology

Cc: John Petraitis, Interim Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
Diane Hanson, Associate Professor ; Sally Carraher, Assistant Professor

Re: AY20 Expedited Program Review: Optional Program Response to Dean’s Recommendation

Program/s in this review: ANTHROPOLOGY MA

Program response to dean’s findings:

SUMMARY STATEMENT: Due to dwindling CAS support for the program, the Anthropology Department asks for a **suspension** of its MA program so that it may be resumed in the future. Whereas the Dean has recommended the MA program in Anthropology be deleted, in the following document, we strongly suggest that recommendation is unsubstantiated. The table below arranges Anthropology’s response by category of evaluation.

CATEGORY OF EVALUATION	DEAN’S SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS	DEPARTMENT RESPONSE
Mission	The CAS’s Department of Anthropology MA contributes to CAS’s and UAA’s mission with graduate-level disciplinary content that easily ties to the history and culture of Alaska generally and Southcentral Alaska in particular, and with faculty whose research focuses on regional issues. The program’s graduate student theses almost invariably focus on Alaska’s culture and its heritage.	The MA program in Anthropology was built as an applied program specific to the needs of Alaska . The MA is <u>intentionally designed</u> to serve the broad demand for Anthropologists who are educated and trained in the policies, practice, culture, and procedures unique to Alaska. Anthropology jobs in Alaska require an MA; our applied program allows hands-on, practical, and community-centered experience in order to allow our graduates to move right into Anthropology positions in State, Federal, Nonprofit and For-profit Agencies throughout Alaska. Every aspect of the MA program is designed to meet and serve the needs of Alaska.

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<p>Program Demand (including service to other programs), Efficiency, and Productivity</p>	<p>For a number of reasons, the program has experienced declining demand: the number of graduate majors is down, and student credit hours are down. Consequently, the gap between tuition and instructional costs remain high, program tuition does not cover the program’s instructional costs, and the number of awards granted (typically 3-6 per year) is well below the average (13.8) and median (11.4) of CAS’s masters programs. Overall, the Anthropology Department was unable to cover all of its costs with its BA/BS program and its MA program because the MA does not have enough students and tuition to cover its costs.</p>	<p>Anthropology has not “experienced declining demand.” In fact, the interest in the UAA Anthropology applied MA continues to be strong. Twelve students have begun applications for AY 2020-2021 alone. The demand is very strong and the local need for the program is great. What appears to be “declining demand” is instead <u>directly correlated to several years of pulled support by the College of Arts and Sciences</u>. CAS has consistently disinvested from Anthropology during this reporting period. Faculty who have retired or left for other positions have not been replaced. CAS has removed term and adjunct appointments from Anthropology, all the while raising caps on undergraduate GERs and encouraging faculty to teach more sections. At the same time, graduate student support has disappeared. CAS approved 5-10 GTA’s consistently pre-2014, while in AY 2019-2020, the program was granted only 1/3 of one GTA. The resilience and creativity of the faculty in the face of extreme lack of college support is the reason why the demand for our program (and our MA graduates) remains so great.</p> <p>To compare Anthropology’s MA production writ large to other CAS programs is also misleading. Our MA students are often already professionals with full-time jobs. The ratio of Anthropology MA students to faculty is higher than other departments who have more faculty lines, and the types of projects our students work on in our applied program (e.g., excavating sites, 3-D mapping, community-based interviews) takes time. Moreover, the MA in Anthropology also requires a substantial thesis that demonstrates the depth and breadth of an MA student’s work. Agencies who hire our graduates seek a standard of professional capacity that our students meet and exceed. Our program is appropriately scaled and rigorous in order to best serve our Alaskan community. To increase degree output, CAS should seek to invest in faculty lines and student support.</p>
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<p>Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success</p>	<p>In the past several years the program replaced retired senior faculty with a new generation who made a point of revising the program, decreasing the time to graduation and improving student success.</p>	<p>Three hires were made in 2013, and two hires were made in 2014. Since that time, one senior faculty has retired, and two other faculty left to seek other employment as it became clear that CAS would continue to cut the resources to Anthropology’s programs. One additional faculty, who contributed to teaching and the MA program, left as well. The issue of the small number of remaining MA faculty, however, has been compounded by the imbalance of department expertise. Where the department once had a balanced representation of the four fields of Anthropology, the program now lacks support in Archaeology. Again, the resilience and creativity (and the foresight) of Anthropology faculty has allowed the program to thrive, despite the lack of CAS support. Anthropology has always been centered around our students; the recent example of program revision is just one example of our dedication to the students and to their success.</p>
<p>Program Duplication / Distinctiveness</p>	<p>UAF has both a MA and PhD in Anthropology. At the masters level, UAA’s program and UAF’s program produce fewer than 10 awards per year (with comparable numbers at each university). Combined, the number of masters degrees in Anthropology is modest and below the median number of awards (11) in CAS’s masters programs. Although there are differences with UAF’s MA in Anthropology, there are overlaps, as well, and the combined number of UAA + UAF degrees suggest that two masters programs in this discipline might be too much.</p>	<p>UAF does indeed have both an MA and a PhD in Anthropology, which is precisely why, in 1999, the UAA Anthropology Department worked in consultation with UAF faculty to create an MA that would both complement and supplement their degree programs. The MA in Anthropology at UAA is an applied program that is directly geared to meet the needs of Alaska. Applied, in this sense, pertains to using Anthropological knowledge to create solutions for community issues or problems. When Alaska seeks to expand roads, drill, build, create or change policies, for example, Anthropologists must be directly involved in those processes. UAA’s Anthropology MA trains applied practitioners of Anthropology to go to work for Alaska. UAA and UAF MA programs are similar (have “overlaps”) only in the sense that they both convey the tenets and practice of Anthropology, much like nursing programs in various states share the same tenets and practice. The outcomes for our programs are quite distinct, and we do not compete for students. Two MA programs in the State is not “too much.”</p>

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<p>Commendations and Recommendations</p>	<p>The program is commended for revisions in recent years that improved student success and for a program that focuses so much on Alaska and its people. The faculty should also be commended for the hard work they put into their expedited program review submission.</p>	<p>We appreciate the commendation.</p>
<p>Decision</p>	<p>Deletion: Deleting this program will affect relatively few students and will help with the long term sustainability of the BA/BS program. With this deletion the number of full-time faculty should eventually be reduced to four. Program deletion requires approval by BOR and NWCCU.</p>	<p>The Anthropology Department argues against deletion in favor of program suspension. Student success, as is viewed by the faculty in Anthropology, is not simply a numbers game; each MA student is value-added to Anthropology’s program, CAS, UAA, and the State. At the same time, the “relatively few students” whom the deletion of the MA would affect, are fewer Anthropologists who are serving the needs of countless State, Federal, Nonprofit and For-profit agencies across Alaska. The program is closely tied with these agencies, and they rely on its graduates.</p> <p>It is unclear how the deletion of the Anthropology MA should help with “the long term sustainability of the BA/BS program.” In light of the systemic and sustained lack of CAS support for Anthropology since 2012, even the creativity and thoughtfulness of the faculty with regard to program streamlining and the faculty’s careful stewardship of resources are not enough. The Anthropology MA warrants <u>enhancement</u>. Given the current parameters, however, the Anthropology faculty strongly supports program suspension at this juncture.</p>