2021 ANNUAL ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT REPORT FORM
(Due October 15 to the dean)

PROGRAM SECTION (Due to the dean on October 15)

Submission date: 10/15/2021

Submitted by: Forrest Nabors, Associate Professor & Chair, Department of Political Science, fanabors@alaska.edu

Program(s) covered in this report: Political Science BA

If you selected "Other" above, please identify. *(100 characters or less)*

College: College of Arts and Sciences

Campuses where the program(s) is delivered: ☒Anchorage ☐KOD ☐KPC ☐MSC ☐PWSC

Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable): Select Specialized Accrediting Agency or N/A.
  If explanation is necessary, such as only some of the certificates and degrees are covered by the specialized accreditation, briefly describe:

INSTITUTIONAL STUDENT LEARNING CORE COMPETENCIES

In 2020, UAA launched a consensus-based, deliberative process to identify the key skillsets that help students achieve academic and post-graduation success. After a year-long process that included students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni, and employers, the UAA community identified four "core competencies" at the heart of a quality UAA education. Students develop mastery of these competencies through curricular (e.g., courses), co-curricular (e.g., internships, conferences), and extra-curricular (e.g., student clubs) learning experiences.

After the stakeholder-based process in AY20, UAA conducted a pilot project focusing on the core competency of Personal, Professional, and Community Responsibility (PPCR). This decision was based on input from the 2020 Annual Academic Assessment Retreat.

Question #1 below is designed to engage program faculty in thinking about how they can or already do promote student learning in this core competency.

1. **Personal, Professional, and Community Responsibility: The knowledge and skills necessary to promote personal flourishing, professional excellence, and community engagement.**
    - **What would you hope a student would say if asked where in your program or support service they had the opportunity to develop proficiency in this Core Competency?** *(500 characters or less)*

        Internships. Students are placed in legislative and executive branches of local, state and federal government, where they learn that good policy outcomes and personal success reward effective professional conduct.

        Model UN. Students learn skills necessary to collaborate, partner and compete.

        PS A101 & PS A102 - These courses emphasize the principles of democratic citizenship encompassing the duties owed to society.

    - **Do you have an example that could be a model for the university of an intentionally designed course, assignment, or activity that showcases the student learning in this core competency? ☒Yes ☐No**
        If yes, please briefly describe. *(500 characters or less)*
        In different ways, Internships, Model UN and PS A101 & PS A102 all showcase development of this core competency. For example, prior to students' departure to Juneau to take their internship with a legislator's office, we arrange a meeting on the Anchorage campus for all interns and at least one legislator who explains the tie between good professional conduct and positive legislative outcomes.

    - **Do you have any ideas about where your program or the university might develop other intentionally designed opportunities for students to develop proficiency in this core competency? ☒Yes ☐No**
        If yes, please briefly describe. *(500 characters or less)*
        The revival of the Forty-Ninth State Fellows program. This program offers honors-caliber students more opportunities to learn directly from leaders in the community to prepare these students for anticipated future leadership.

PROGRAM STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

2. **Please list the Program Student Learning Outcomes your program assessed in AY21. For each outcome, indicate one of the following: Exceeded faculty expectations, Met faculty expectations, or Did not meet faculty expectations.**

Example: Communicate effectively in a variety of contexts and formats – Exceeded faculty expectations.
Demonstrate the ability to write clear and precise English prose. - Met faculty expectations
Demonstrate the ability to understand basic principles of American Government. - Exceeded faculty expectations.

Demonstrate the ability to understand the relationship between the United States and the larger world. - Did not meet faculty expectations

Demonstrate the ability to identify and criticize competing political science arguments. - Met faculty expectations.

Demonstrate the ability to identify and interpret important political texts. - Met faculty expectations

Demonstrate the ability to write a satisfactory senior-level research paper. - Met faculty expectations

Demonstrate a knowledge of each recognized field within political science. - Met faculty expectations.

3. **Describe your assessment process in AY21 for these program student learning outcomes, including the collection of data, analysis of data, and faculty (and other, e.g., advisory board) conversations around the findings.** *(750 characters or less)*

The source of our data is the capstone course to the major program, PS A492 Senior Seminar. By the time students take the senior seminar, they will have successfully completed a required course for each subfield of political science. During the term, each faculty expert in a subfield of political science presents a review of that subfield to the class. By the end of the term, students will have completed a comprehensive exam, co-authored by all faculty, and a major research paper. Faculty jointly assess the exams and papers against our program's seven outcomes. These scores are then compiled and analyzed.

4. **What are the findings and what do they tell the faculty about student learning in your program?** *(750 characters or less)*

For the last ten years the department has not been permitted to replace departing faculty, with the result that the quality of our program has been sacrificed. Remaining faculty are award-winning, demonstrably competent and have many years of experience, but have been dragooned into teaching courses outside that faculty member's expertise. As a result, our assessments sometimes show cracks in student learning. For example, in AY21 the average student score fell below our expectations on one metric, precisely that area corresponding to the expertise of a recently departed faculty member who was not replaced. Faculty are aware of this problem and work together to maintain the integrity of our program.

5. **Based on the findings, did the faculty make any recommendations for changes to improve student achievement of the program student learning outcomes? Please describe the recommended action, what improvement in student learning the program hopes to see with this change, the proposed timeline, and how the program will know if the change has worked. If no recommendations for changes were made, please explain that decision.** *(750 Characters or less)*

Yes, we are once again (for the second time in five years) reviewing our curriculum so that our

currently available faculty are not spread too thin. We expect to look for opportunities to reduce the number of courses that qualify for fulfillment of required courses in each subfield of political science. This will allow faculty to concentrate on fewer courses. Unfortunately, students will have fewer choices of courses, but they will gain a more important advantage, that required courses will be more available. We expect to continue to use our assessment instruments to measure the success of this expected reform. Our assessment regime has effectively supported key decisions by our department, to meet recent challenges.

PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS AND ASSESSING IMPACT ON STUDENT LEARNING

6. **In the past academic year, how did your program use the results of previous assessment cycles to make changes intended to improve student achievement of the program student learning outcomes? Please check all that apply.**

☒ Course curriculum changes

☐ Course prerequisite changes

☐ Changes in teaching methods

☐ Changes in advising

☒ Degree requirement changes

☐ Degree course sequencing

☐ Course enrollment changes (e.g., course capacity, grading structure [pass/fail, A-F])

☐ Changes in program policies/procedures

☐ Changes to Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLOs)

☐ College-wide initiatives (e.g., High Impact Practices)

☐ Faculty, staff, student development

☐ Other

☐ No changes were implemented in AY21.

If you checked "Other" above, please describe. *(100 characters or less)*

7. **Do you have any information about how well these or other past improvements are working? Are they achieving their intended goals? Please include any data or assessment results that help you demonstrate this. *(750 characters or less)***

Yes, despite the challenges to our department driven by constant budgetary and health crises, we have been able to maintain the integrity of the major program in political science. Our assessment regime has assisted the department in identifying and strengthening weaknesses in our program, and also in showing us where we are best supporting student learning. Our department meets weekly and regularly discusses our success metrics. As a result, on an ongoing basis we are able to consider possible decisions that will improve our teaching and student learning.

STUDENT SUCCESS AND THE CLOSING OF EQUITY GAPS

8. Programs are not required to respond to question #8 below for their report due on October 15, 2021. Question #8 will be required for the next round and moving forward.

9. **Do you have any examples of post-graduate success you want to highlight? For example, major scholarships, the percent of students who pass licensure examinations, the percent of students accepted to graduate programs, the percent in post-graduation employment in the field or a related field.** *(750 characters or less)*
Yes, one recent graduate was just elected in November, 2020 to the Alaska House of Representatives. The first Rhodes Scholar from a UA university was a UAA major in Political Science, as were two recent Truman Scholars and most Alaska legislative interns

DEAN SECTION (Due to the program on January 15)

1. **Based on the program's responses above, what guidance and support do you have for the program moving forward? Is there a particular area the program should focus on?**
     Streamlining curriculum to match the expertise of the faculty is encouraged. A proposal for a new model for the 49th State Fellows program to exist within the Department is welcomed.

     It is recommended that all programs review their Program Assessment Plan to ensure clear inclusion of the new UAA Core Competencies and in particular to address the closing of any equity gaps in the program.

2. **Is there something the program is doing particularly well in terms of its processes for the assessment and improvement of student learning, including the closing of equity gaps, that might serve as a model for other programs? If yes, please explain. You may skip this question.**
     The engagement of students in internships as well as in Model UN is applauded.

Dean's signature: *Jenny McNulty*   **Date:** December 14, 2021