

Climate and Arctic Sustainability – Bachelor of Arts

Current Compliance Year: 2024-2025

Mid-Cycle review

Recent Recommendations

Feedback will include recommendations from the last Expedited Review or from your most recent review by your school or college. You may not see any feedback or recommendations until you have completed your first full or mid-cycle review.

Increase enrollment, Increase retention/persistence, Increase graduates

Overall, the department of Arctic and Northern Studies appears to be developing their B.A. program in a thoughtful and targeted way. They have identified the need to address student retention and GIP while working on a large restructuring to continue growing their undergraduate majors. While we did reference some of the data in above comments, we note the issue of it accurately representing the department's efforts due to the small data pool. Since the program is largely curated via courses offered in other departments, it would have been interesting to see information on how those curatorial decisions were made and what measures are in place to ensure cohesion over time. It will also be interesting to see in what ways course offerings change (if at all) given their plan to rebrand the program to a more specialized focus. The committee strongly advocates for the implementation of B.A. – ACNS 201 Circumpolar North: An Introductory Overview to the GER offerings in order to increase student reach and amplify general learning experiences in this topic. The program offers diverse learning and student experiences in consideration of indigenous learning, global learning, community partnerships, opportunities for original research, and in the fact that this program is in and of itself a unique entity offered only at UAF. The committee has expressed concern regarding the pertinence and effectiveness of the CLA portal data in contributing to our assessment due to outlying factors and extreme circumstances from the covid pandemic.

Response to Previous Recommendations (if any):

We thank the committee for its thorough review of the Arctic and Northern Studies (ACNS) B.A. program. We have made significant progress with our restructuring of the program over the past two years. The B.A. program is continuing to offer a degree where classes are taken in person, via zoom, and asynchronously online.

In response to our plan to restructure, we have moved forward with three exciting developments, discussed in detail in the responses below. These include a rebranding, a revised curriculum, and a proposal to make a refreshed ACNS 201 The Circumpolar North: An Introductory Overview into a GER course.

As part of these significant B.A. reforms, we have cultivated a specific list of courses which meet the learning outcomes of our degree and the specialized interests of our students. While this is discussed in detail in the curricular section below, it is instructive to mention some highlights here as the review committee expressed its curiosity in how these classes were selected. With our new name change and focus on sustainability, the ACNS Director and Assistant Director reviewed all classes offered at UAF

and selected the most pertinent for inclusion in our program. We evaluated factors such as modality and time offered, frequency, and relevancy. Ultimately we selected classes such as HIST 453 Fire, Ice and the Fate of Humanity: A History of Energy and Climate, ACNS 466 The Russian Arctic, and ANS 111X History of Colonization. As a program we are committed to a specialized curriculum focused on sustainability (broadly conceived) throughout the circumpolar North.

Student Learning Outcomes

The previous Student Learning Outcomes Assessment has been submitted as its own report. Going forward you will use the following prompts to discuss the success of your most recent SLOA plan and address your assessment activities since your last SLOA report (typically the past two years or since your last program review).

Learning outcomes feedback from last review:

Strong alignment with SLOA plan, Compelling learning story

The program engages strongly with its SLOA plan via its writing intensive courses, the opportunity for original research, and their capstone course which requires the demonstration of intellectual synthesis. The committee is curious to know how re-focusing the program to "Climate and Arctic Sustainability" will impact the program's SLOA, and what those changes may be. Additionally, the SLOA accounts for the ACNS offerings only while many student requirements are fulfilled through courses offered by other programs. It could be useful to the department to consider providing a breakdown of those external courses and what the general expectations for learning and development may be through those courses. Additionally, more specificity in direct student outcomes (which courses uphold which writing and oral communication development, etc.) may be useful to the program.

Discuss your SLOA findings, changes you are making and what you hope to see as a result:

With our program name change and greater focus on sustainability, we are revising our SLOA Plan. Based on feedback from the accreditation team, we are creating a new SLOA Plan that will be complete by the end of AY 25. However, we can share here that the revised Plan will include goals such as:

*Students will investigate various meanings of sustainability and its historical and contemporary practice throughout the circumpolar North

*In ACNS 201, students will examine case studies from throughout different Northern communities. They will study controversial issues such as Arctic oil and gas development, wind turbine development in Sampi, electric vehicles in Norway and Denmark, wildfires in Alaska and Canada, and waste incineration in Sweden.

*In HIST 453, students will have the opportunity to take field trips to local energy facilities, including the UAF combined heat and powerplant, as well as the ACEP's Energy Demonstration Facility.

Our program remains focused on other core aspects of our SLOA Plan through writing intensive courses, the opportunity for original research, and a capstone course which requires an extensive final

project. We have uploaded 3 examples of draft research papers with professor/ TA comments to demonstrate several core aspects of our SLOA Plan.

In discussions with existing and prospective students, as well as interest from adjacent programs such as Climate Scholars in the Honors College, our program is very aware that students are increasingly interested in environmental studies and concerned about the climate crisis. CLA does not have an environmental studies BA program, and to better meet student need and interest, we have reformed our B.A. degree into one focused on climate change and sustainability in the circumpolar North. This combines our existing specialty in area studies (i.e. regional Arctic focus) with the expertise in environmental science found in numerous colleges throughout UAF.

The ACNS B.A. was renamed in AY 2023-2024 to better reflect student interest in climate change and sustainability in the circumpolar North. Our new degree name is “Climate and Arctic Sustainability.” In addition to a revised curriculum (discussed below), this change enables us to rebrand the program and achieve a more specialized focus as outlined by our updated SLOA Plan.

Discuss the curricular changes made based on assessing your SLO. If you haven’t made any curricular changes, please explain why not and address what you did notice in the review, including strengths of your curriculum through the assessment of your outcomes:

Our revised curriculum is currently undergoing review and approval. We have streamlined our degree requirements and widened our class offerings to include more courses focused on climate change, environmental studies, and energy history. The ACNS Director and Assistant Director reviewed all classes offered at UAF and selected the most pertinent for inclusion in our program. We evaluated factors such as modality and time offered, frequency, and relevancy. We still retain a strong focus on the circumpolar North, and many of our classes are taught by professors who also teach in the ACNS M.A. program.

Our revised course offerings reflect our new focus on sustainability and environmental studies. These courses come from a wide variety of programs, departments, and colleges at UAF. We believe that this makes our program the most interdisciplinary B.A. within the College of Liberal Arts.

Supporting Documents

Please ensure that all relevant supporting documents, such as artifacts, rubrics, and student data, are uploaded to your designated Google folder in WorkZone or directly into Google Drive. *Note: Do not include any information that may identify students in your data.*

Updated SLOA?

If you are updating your SLOA document, please include it with your report and other supporting documents in your designated folder. It does not need to be filed separately in the “SLOA” folder.

Are communication outcomes embedded in the SLOA Plan?

As of 2017 all Baccalaureate programs were required to embed the communication outcomes within their SLOA Plans, this is optional for non-Baccalaureate programs. Please mark the appropriate box below.

Embedded:	X
Not Embedded:	

Student Success

To access the Student Success Dashboard please sign into a UA computer with VPN connection (if not on campus). You will need your UA credentials and it is best accessed with the most updated version of Chrome, Edge, Firefox or Safari browsers; Internet Explorer is not supported. You will need to filter the data to see your programs. If you need assistance in finding the data for your programs, please contact your data liaison or [Julia Manfredini](#) in the PAIR office.

Data Liaisons

Each school or college has a team of Data Liaisons to help you analyze the data provided in the portal and may be able to help you see your data in multiple contexts. You can find a list of data liaisons on the resources page for Program Review.

The college or school level committee will also have access to this data with the goal that by providing these visualizations data availability will be increased.

Data supplied within the dashboard linked below is intended for Academic Program Review and not for any other purpose.

[Student Success Data Dashboard](#)

Previous Feedback

The number of B.A. students between 2018-2022 ranged 4-10 students trending upwards (4 students in 2018 up to 10 in 2022). They graduated 2 students in 2020. Their average pass rate for undergraduates was at its lowest in this period at 50% in 2018, increasing to 74% in 2020, and dipping again in 2022 to 62.5%. Furthermore, GIP has ranged from 40%-86%. The large fluctuations are clearly driven by the small data pool which the program also recognizes. The program relies heavily on course offerings from other departments to complete B.A. requirements noting that a large portion of the student curriculum is "beyond control." They do indicate a desire to add their course, ACNS 201 Circumpolar North: An Introductory Overview to the GER list, which would be beneficial for both the program and its students, while also serving as a potential site for attracting new majors.

Student Success Data Trends:

Trend	Increase	Decrease	No Change
Persistence	X		
Pass Rates	X		
Student Credit Hours			X
Majors	X		
Degrees Awarded	X		
Other Trends (Explain in narrative below)			

Equity Gaps

Please discuss any equity gaps identified in your disaggregated student success data and explain how you plan to address them. Please contact your data liaison or make an appointment with [Julia Manfredini](#) to learn more about analyzing your data.

After examining the demographic data in the Student Success Data Dashboard, we do not notice any significant equity gaps among groups.

Optional Data Explanation

Feel free to share more of your thoughts on the data provided.

In 2020, the BA in ACNS had 8 majors. In AY 24, the ACNS BA had 7 legacy majors, and we have 5 new CAS majors, for a total of 12 total. We have been trending upward, although some years (AY 2023) saw even more majors (13).

Our pass rate has been trending upwards, from 62% in 2022 to 93% in 2023 and 85% in 2024. The relatively few majors makes this trend statistically less significant. As review committees have noted in the past, “The large fluctuations are clearly driven by the small data pool which the program also recognizes.”

Between AY 21 and AY 24, the BA has increased its GIP rate from 50% to 84.8%.

According to student credit hours, we have an even mix of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] students and have remained evenly split for years. Gender by majors shows that 63-68% of our majors are [REDACTED]

Our age demographics continue to vary over the past few years, with students under 20 taking the most credit hours in AY 23 but older students taking the most in AY 24.

Although not differentiated by graduate/undergraduate degree, our racial demographics show a diversity of student backgrounds. Between 2020-2022, 10 percent of our students were of [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] background. More recently, that number has declined while the program has enrolled more [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and race not reported students. Over time, our proportion of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] students has also increased from 13% in AY 22 to 23% in AY 24.

High Impact Practices

According to the AAC&U, High-Impact Educational Practices “have been widely tested and have been shown to be beneficial to college students from many backgrounds.” UAF is particularly interested in Undergraduate Research and/or Scholarly Activity because it is one of our mission fulfillment indicators, but all of these researched High-Impact Educational Practices should be reflected in your program’s student learning outcomes and curriculum.

Previous Feedback

The B.A. program engages in wide ranging high-impact practices including an orientation seminar (which seems crucial given this particular area of study), writing intensive courses (ACNS 201 & 484), participation in department research, and a capstone course that is stacked with the M.A. intro course. Furthermore, the department recognizes ways in which its geographical specialization can have global impact via historical, geographic, and political lenses, therefore allowing students more flexibility in specializing towards their professional pursuits. This program should be recognized for its uniqueness as it is the only B.A. in Arctic Studies offered in the country (stated in the program

narrative). Furthermore, they hope to attract more majors with their intent to rename their program to "Climate and Arctic Sustainability."

High-Impact Practices Used in this Program

Please select all high-impact practices your program is currently using from the list below. For any practices you select, provide details in the corresponding narrative section. In the narrative, discuss how your program is implementing these practices, including any successes, known issues, and solutions. If you are considering incorporating any of these practices in the future, share your plans. If your program is not using any of the listed high-impact practices, please use the 'Other or None of These' field to explain how your program supports student success.

Capstone Courses & Projects	X	Research (Graduate Level)	
Collaborative Assignments & Projects		Writing-Intensive Courses	X
Diversity/Global Learning	X	Publications	
ePortfolios		Communications	X
First-Year Seminars & Experiences	X	Publications	
Internships		Scholarly Activities	X
Service or Community-based Learning		Other (Please describe in box below)	
Undergraduate Research	X		

Collaborative Assignments & Projects

N/A

Undergraduate Research

Several of our offered classes require or encourage students to conduct their own research. This includes, but is not limited to, primary source historical analysis in the Alaska and Polar Regions Archives and Collections at the Rasmuson Library. We also encourage our students to apply for URSA funding.

Diversity/Global Learning

We are an interdisciplinary program focused on one of the world's regions. We incorporate a diversity of perspectives from and on the Arctic in our curricula. Our student body is diverse, consisting of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students, men and women, and traditional and nontraditional students. We also encourage studying abroad in another part of the Arctic.

ePortfolios

N/A

First Year-Seminars & Experiences

Our gateway class, ACNS 201, provides an overview of the circumpolar North and sustainability for students. This can be taken by first year students but is also open to students in any other year. We often have [REDACTED] students who take the introductory course. It is a flexible class that is meant to be accessible for all students. We take a local field trip to the UA Museum of the North and explore what it means to be in a Northern location. We are in the process of submitting this class to become a GER this academic year, as recommended by previous year SLOA reviews.

Writing-Intensive Courses

Many of our classes are writing intensive and require students to craft extensive research papers. Students complete a thesis or project as the final component of the degree. As History and Political Science are two of the core departments which contribute to the program, classes are often focused on reading, data analysis, and written exposition.

Service-Learning and/or Community-based Learning

Internships are not built into the program, but students can pursue internships for academic credit that can be incorporated into their degree.

Internships

N/A

Capstone Courses & Projects

All undergraduate students take our capstone course, ACNS 484 Perspectives on the North (see attached for syllabus). The final assignment is a 15-page research paper on a topic of their choice. Students write a research proposal for this paper and receive feedback from the instructor as part of this process. The final paper must include at least 15 sources and demonstrate competence in argument and analysis.

Other or None of these (explain)

N/A

Program Profile and Financial Data

The following feedback was received during your last full program review. **You are not required to respond to this feedback, but we encourage you to review it as it may provide valuable insights.** This feedback will also be available when your program undergoes its next full review in two years.

Previous Financial Feedback

High Tuition Revenues, Operates at Low Cost, Productive Faculty

Previous Profile Feedback

Program is mission-centric to UAF or college/school, Program is unique in the state, Strong post-graduation success for students, Strong ties to the community or industry

Submission

Submitter & Collaborator Names

Philip Wight

Submitter Email

pawight@alaska.edu

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS
Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan
B.A. in Arctic & Northern Studies
 College of Liberal Arts
 August 2020

Expanded Statement of Institutional Purpose	Intended Objectives/Outcomes	Assessment Criteria and Procedures	Implementation (what, when, who)
MISSION STATEMENT: The mission of UAF's Arctic & Northern Studies is to educate students and others on the Arctic region and circumpolar North, with focus on their peoples and communities, social systems, and environments in a rapidly changing context due to climate change, and prepare them to work on Arctic issues. GOAL STATEMENT: The goal of UAF's Arctic & Northern Studies is to elevate significantly the interdisciplinary knowledge and curiosity of and appreciation for the Arctic region and circumpolar North among students and others and to provide an academic structure for learning about the Arctic region and circumpolar North for the UAF and wider academic and policy communities through high quality teaching and mentoring; innovative research and scholarship; and service, outreach, and networking.	Students will learn interdisciplinary ways to conceptualize and think about the Arctic region and circumpolar North.	B.A. students must take and pass the introductory / orientation seminar to the ACNS B.A. program, ACNS 201 The Circumpolar North.	Students typically take this in their first year.
	Students will learn about the region's peoples, communities, political systems, policies, histories, geographies, economies, ecosystems, literatures, and art forms.	Students must take and pass courses in a variety of disciplines. *Students must demonstrate synthesis of these perspectives in the senior seminar, ACNS 484 Perspectives on the North.	Students will complete an essay in the senior seminar, ACNS 484 Perspectives on the North (the capstone course) which should demonstrate broad, interdisciplinary understanding of the Arctic and circumpolar North. *This is typically taken in the senior year. *In addition to the course instructor, the ACNS SLOA committee will evaluate these essays for accreditation purposes.
	Students will explore original research, scholarship, and creative activity that focus on the Arctic region and circumpolar North.	Students will be exposed to such literature in their various classes, especially upper division classes.	Students will complete an essay embedded in the senior seminar, ACNS 484 Perspectives on the North (the capstone course), in which they must become familiar with, evaluate, and synthesize literature based on original research. *This is typically taken in the senior year. *In addition to the course instructor, the ACNS SLOA committee will evaluate these essays for accreditation purposes.
	The program offers opportunities for experiential, applied, and other out-of-classroom learning. This includes participation in the Model Arctic Council, research and scholarship, field trips, lectures and presentations by visiting scholars, and participation in ACNS social and academic events.	These opportunities will be announced through the ACNS Facebook page, ACNS website, and email. Students will be encouraged to participate, but they will ultimately self-select into these opportunities.	Students will have the opportunity to participate in the Model Arctic Council and other opportunities as they are provided. *ACNS leaders will inform students of these opportunities.

Submitted by: Professor Brandon Boylan and Tyler Kirk

			*ACNS will collect information on participation in some events (e.g. Model Arctic Council).
	Students will achieve academic growth in their understanding of the Arctic region and circumpolar North.	Student program evaluation includes an open-ended questionnaire administered towards the end of or shortly after their degree.	Students will complete a program and self evaluation close to or upon graduation. *ACNS faculty will evaluate these questionnaires.