PROGRAM REVIEW

B.A. in COMMUNICATION

February 2013

Assessment Plan: A revised assessment plan is attached to this file.

Assessment Information Collected: According to the Department’s assessment plan, we collect data on student performance in the form of final papers and digitally recorded presentations in the entry level COMM180, Introduction to Human Communication course as well as in the senior level COMM 482, Capstone Seminar in Communication. These data are reviewed each May in a meeting of the entire faculty. In this meeting we examine the pre-post data for each graduate for that academic year and the results from a student survey we administer in April to all majors in the program. Each faculty member who has worked with the graduating student contributes his or her insight and evaluation of the student’s performance in the program. Another part of the assessment involves reviewing this entire set of individual student assessments for strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum and in instruction. The focus of our evaluation is on the intended outcomes/objectives. The faculty reviews the survey results to reflect on strengths and weaknesses in our teaching, course selection, and advising. We have found over the past several years that the survey provides rich, detailed information regarding program need for improvement as well as the program’s success.

Summary of Student Learning Outcomes and of Programmatic Revisions for the Previous Five Academic Years: Over the past five years, we continue to find evidence that majors have achieved the intended outcomes for the B.A. Program. Objective One, which focuses on continued development and improvement of public address beyond the Core Required public speaking courses, has been catalogued and reviewed with evidence of student success. Objective Two, which stipulates that students demonstrate their understanding of the ontological and epistemological grounds of social and human sciences, continues to help students build the disciplinary foundation for future employment and admission to graduate school (approximately 10 percent of graduates have entered graduate programs). Objective three, which focuses on students’ ability to apply knowledge of human interaction from interpersonal to professional contexts, continues to serve students well in internships and training and development practica. Our internships program continues to grow from its inception in 2009. Objective Four, which focuses on majors’ ability to address challenges in human communication in diverse (including gendered) contexts, is addressed across our curriculum. In Spring of 2011 we offered a new upper division course, COMM 380, Communication and Diversity, to enhance student learning in diversity issues. The course was a success according to student evaluations and reports. Objective Five, which focuses on understanding and applying knowledge of ethical dimensions of communication, is being addressed in our curriculum on an ongoing basis. The department has had the same faculty member offer COMM 300X, Communicating Ethics, every semester as an online offering as well as face-to-face during Summer Sessions since 2009. The new Chair of our department has brought with him much experience in Public Relations (PR), international relations, and mediation. He is building PR and
international relations into our departmental curriculum. He will teach a course in Management Communication Summer 2013 to continue with its development.

The 2010 Program Review noted four aspects of student learning in the B.A. Program. First, the research project and final report in the Capstone course, COMM 482, continues at this time to be an integrative experience and key indicator of student success for our graduates in the program. Secondly, the social science group research project in the introductory course, COMM 180, continues to introduce students to research in a productive, engaging way. The first year of the project’s inception 2010 had students plan and implement a video-recording of a social science experiment that was administered to 12 sections of the COMM 131 and COMM 141 courses for data collection. The students analyzed the results together which made for an in-depth learning experience regarding social science research reporting. The research projects in 2011 and in 2012 continued to help students learn how to conduct social science research. The project has served to create a cohesive classroom experience as well as educate students regarding the process of social science research. Student evaluations of the introductory course and its course project have continued to be positive. Third, effective student writing continues to be an area of focus for our department. We routinely refer students to the Writing Center. And both the introductory course and capstone course focus on the development and effectiveness of the written research report. Fourth, advising in the department been highlighted being instrumental in student success. One of our faculty has taken an additional assignment by working two hours a week in Academic Advising. She has shared advising information and taught the faculty how to log their advising appointments into UA Online to keep better track of advising over the academic years.

**Undergraduate Service Instruction:** The Department of communication offers service courses in the Core Curriculum in direct support of the State Postsecondary Commission’s requirement that all Bachelor’s degree recipients have one, three-credit course in oral communication. Assessment for student learning outcomes in the two courses that fulfill this requirement, COMM 131X and COMM 141X, are reviewed biennially in a separate report to the Core Curriculum Committee. Over the past five years, the reported outcomes continue to show strong empirical evidence of success with intended outcomes in both of these course offerings. Our service courses are taught by supervised graduate teaching assistants. Every semester we conduct an inter-rater reliability session to preserve consistency across the service courses in regard to speech evaluation. We invite the new branch campus adjunct professors who teach our service courses to attend at least one of our sessions. We use an embedded assessment technique to gather data on student learning outcomes. We have uniform participation with data collection with the on campus service courses. However, the participation from the rural campuses is less consistent on an ongoing basis. We will continue to encourage the rural instructors to collect the data we require.

The Department also provided support to instructors of the upper division oral intensive courses in the Core Curriculum (approximately 40 sections per semester). Assessment of these course offerings is the responsibility of the Core Curriculum Committee. In the Fall of 2008, the Department was authorized to implement and conduct on an ongoing basis a Speaking Center in support of all students and faculty on campus who deliver or assign oral presentations in their courses. The Speaking Center collects data from every student and faculty member who uses its services. An internal assessment of the Speaking Center services demonstrates that the Center is providing effective practical support to students and faculty.
The success of the Speaking Center has been instrumental in UAF Summer Sessions funding of one staff person during the summer to operate the Center.

NARRATIVE RESPONSES ON SELECTED ISSUES:

(a) **Prospective market for B.A. Program graduates**: The Alaska Career Ladder of the State Department of Labor lists a number of careers projected to grow by at least 10% or more. Our graduates can and will continue to find employment in these jobs, which include: specialists and managers in Human Resources, Public Relations, Training and Development, and Social and Community Service. According to research, effective communication abilities and skill in both interpersonal and professional contexts as well as in oral presentation are skills most sought by employers (Courts & Zaid, 2002; Winsor, Curtis, & Stephens, 1997). A liberal arts degree, the B.A. in Communication, provides students with these valued skills. Also, graduates from our program continue to be successful in gaining admission to Master’s level programs both within and outside the discipline (e.g., M.B.A., M.Ed, M.S.W.).

(b) **Significant service achievements by faculty**: In spring of 2009 one faculty member was a co-founder of a UAF Toastmasters Club and continues to participate and advise. During 2009-2010 one faculty member directed graduate students in a campus fundraising campaign for the United Way. Also, during 2009-2013, one faculty member served as advisor to the winning team in the Statewide high school Academia competition. In 2012/2013 we organized and hosted the regional tournament for this competition. One faculty member is the Immediate Past President of the Association for Rhetoric, Science, and Technology. One faculty member is a member at-large Legislative Assembly member for the Western States Communication Association (a two-year elected position). One faculty member is a member of the Editorial Board for *Science Communication*, which is the journal that has the 10th highest impact rating in our field. One member has taken an additional assignment to for two hours a week in the Academic Advising Center to help our department improve with advising of students. One faculty member is a member of the American Communication Association Academic Accreditation: KIMEP University, Almaty, Kazakhstan, School of Journalism and Mass Communication Graduate and Undergraduate Programs, September 2012. A faculty member was a keynote speaker at “Bridging Cultures of the Personal, Local and Global: Health Communication through Distance Learning,” KIMEP University, Almaty, Kazakhstan, in September 2012. Also a faculty member is an editor of *Alaska Journal of Dispute Resolution (AJDR)*, University of Alaska Fairbanks, November 2011 to present. One faculty member has received the Civil Air Patrol Commander’s Commendation Award, Fairbanks, AK 2012.

(c) **Similar Programs**: The Department of Communication offers the only B.A. in Communication in the State. UAA offers division service courses and some upper division coursework, but not a Bachelor’s degree in Communication. UAS offers a Bachelor of Liberal Arts degree with an emphasis in Communication, but not a B.A. in Communication.

(d) **Demand and SCH productivity summaries**: For the five-year period of this review, student credit hour production as well as service teaching for the first four years showed a steady increase. In FY 12 the numbers dropped slightly. Student credit hour production outside the department showed a
significant increase over the past 5 years. Majors in Communication stayed about the same over the past five years with a significant jump in FY10, but dropping back down over FY 11 and 12. The Department’s FTE of 2.99 equates with four-tenure track faculty members.