

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Summary

Anthropology, Bachelor of Science

College of Liberal Arts

AY 14-15 and AY 15-16

Submitted by: Jamie Clark
Contact Information: jclark7@alaska.edu
Date: May 2016

1. Assessment information collected

Per our 2012 SLOA plan:

- All students enrolled in the capstone course (ANTH F411: Senior Seminar) are given a standardized, summative exercise designed to assess facility in four areas:
 1. A basic understanding of the history of the discipline, including sub-disciplinary perspectives and approaches
 2. An understanding of methods in archaeology and biological anthropological research
 3. Understanding of human evolution, the development of human cultures, and the development of human settlements and culture especially in the circumpolar North
 4. Exhibit effective skills in written and oral communication
- All students enrolled in ANTH 411 will be given an exit survey with emphasis on student's overall assessment of the content and quality of education received in anthropology.
- Alumni survey will be sent to graduates the year after they complete the program with emphasis on success in continuing education and/or employment in a related field.

2. Conclusions drawn from the information summarized above

- **Summative exercise:**

The standardized, summative exercise was administered to a total of 5 BS students enrolled in ANTH 411 in 2015 and 2016. The exam consists of ten questions; given that it is offered in-class (and thus time is limited), students are only required to answer five questions each, although we ask that they answer more if they have time. In response to recommendations from the 2014 assessment report, three of the questions were reworded for purposes of

clarity and to more directly address the learning outcomes. The resulting essays were scored by the BS Coordinator and another BS faculty member (Ben Potter) on the following scale: W= substantial wrong information; U= unsatisfactory; UP= unsatisfactory but partial; SP= satisfactory but partial (missing some pertinent information); S= satisfactory; VS= very satisfactory. Below, we summarize student performance on questions relating to each student learning outcome.

1. A basic understanding of the history of the discipline, including sub-disciplinary perspectives and approaches
 - 4 questions on the exercise addressed this learning objective; three of them were not answered by any of the students (these were also the last three questions on the exam). The question in this category that the students chose to answer was also the most broad and related to the most important idea the student had learned as an anthropology major. All students wrote essays that scored as "Satisfactory" (5) or "Very Satisfactory" (6).
2. An understanding of methods in archaeology and biological anthropological research
 - 3 questions on the exercise addressed this learning objective; two related to archaeological research methods and one relating to biological anthropology research. All five students answered both archaeology questions, and the average score for each fell above 5.3, meaning the students primarily received scores of "Satisfactory" (5) or "Very Satisfactory". The question on methods in biological anthropology was not answered by any of the students.
3. Understanding of human evolution, the development of human cultures, and the development of human settlements and culture especially in the circumpolar North
 - 3 questions on the exercise addressed this learning objective; of these, one (regarding the concept of race in biological anthropology) was only answered by one student (who received a score of "satisfactory but partial" by both evaluators). The other two questions were answered by at

least four of the five students, and they performed quite well, with average scores of 4.7 and 5.1, meaning the students were scored between “Satisfactory but Partial” (4) and “Very Satisfactory” (6).

4. Exhibit effective skills in written and oral communication

As discussed in our 2014 assessment report, given the format of the summative exercise, it does not seem the best way to judge communication skills; in order to account for the new Communication Learning Outcomes, the department has drafted a new assessment plan that will involve multiple faculty members evaluating a semester-long research/writing project prepared by Senior Seminar students. The new SLOA plan will be submitted once the department received feedback on its draft Communications Plan (presumably in Fall 2016).

Given that students are not required to answer all questions on the summative exercise—and because the BS students who finished during the current evaluation cycle were primarily archaeology-focused—many of them chose not to answer the questions that focused on biological anthropology, making it difficult to assess their experience/exposure to method/theory in that field. However, when taken as a whole, students performed quite well, and for those questions answered by at least four students, the average scores were consistently higher than those in the previous assessment period.

- **The Exit Survey**

In our 2014 outcomes assessment report, we noted that due to extenuating circumstances, an exit survey had not yet been administered. For this assessment cycle, an exit survey was developed by Brian Hemphill (Senior Seminar instructor) and was provided to Senior Seminar students at the end of the semester. The exit survey comprises eight questions that ask student to reflect upon their experiences in the program.

Completion of the survey was optional, and we received surveys from three BS students during the current assessment period (all of whom indicated a concentration in archaeology). Responses are summarized below:

- Re: their overall experiences in the program: all three students were overwhelmingly positive, mentioning the quality of instruction and support from faculty.
- Re: department strengths/weaknesses: students enjoyed the diversity of course offerings and the focus on critical thinking. One student felt that there was not a lot of communication between the different subfields, which promoted a lack of cohesion and connection between the BA and BS students. This lack of cohesion seemed apparent in another student's survey—they stated that the part of the program that they enjoyed least was having to take a sociocultural/linguistic anthropology course.
- Re: curriculum: as discussed above, students appreciated the diversity of offerings, but two felt that more classes that were either co-taught or incorporated material from multiple subfields would be helpful. Two students thought having more applied anthropology classes would improve the program. Students generally felt challenged by their courses, although one mentioned that the degree of difficulty tended to vary more based on the instructor than on the specific course-level.
- Re: preparation for the job market: all three students felt that their experiences had helped prepare them for jobs in the field (all were archaeology students), mentioning the value of the hands-on offerings in the program, but, as indicated above, they indicated a desire for more applied offerings.

Although the sample size is small, we are encouraged by the fact that students expressed satisfaction with the quality of education and felt that the degree had helped prepare them for future work/study in the field.

• **The Alumni Survey**

After the 2014 assessment summary, we intended to remove the alumni survey from our SLOA plan, as the department did not prove successful at obtaining a current email addresses for past majors from the alumni office. The revised SLOA has not yet been submitted; however, the SLOA must be revised to include the new Communications Plan learning outcomes, so we will remove the alumni survey from our SLOA plan at the same time (submission Fall 2016).

3. Curricular changes resulting from conclusions drawn above

Given the comments on the exit survey regarding the perceived lack of communication between the sub-disciplines, it seems imperative that the department re-evaluate the recommendation from the 2014 assessment report that students be required to take the 200-level “Fundamentals” courses in all four sub-fields (they are currently only required to take 3 of the 4). This will ensure that students have exposure to all of the sub-disciplines of anthropology, something that is part of our mission statement. This would also promote more contact between the BA and BS students, which will improve the overall sense of community among our students.

In terms of applied course offerings, the department will offer a Cultural Resource Management course in Spring 2017 (i.e., an applied archaeology course); this class used to be offered on a more regular basis, and we hope to once again make it a more regular offering.

4. Identify the faculty members involved in reaching the conclusions drawn above and agreeing upon the curricular changes resulting

Jamie Clark, BS coordinator

Patrick Plattet, BA coordinator

Brian Hemphill, Senior Seminar Instructor

Ben Potter, Department Chair