

# Report of the 2014 Academic Program Review of the Liberal Arts & Integrative Studies Baccalaureate Degree Programs

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## Introduction

In 1964 the University of New Mexico (UNM) established the Bachelor of University Studies (BUS) degree. For this degree undergraduate students, with the support and advice of professional advisors, designed their own curriculum from courses offered by any other UNM academic unit. The BUS degree program did not have its own faculty but was overseen by a faculty advisory committee.

This new degree quickly became popular and during the decade of the 1970's was the second largest bachelor's degree program. Over its 45 year history some 5000 students have earned the BUS degree, and may have gone on to distinguished post-graduate careers.

Last year UNM began replacing the BUS degree with the Bachelor of Liberal Arts (BLA) degree and further added the new Bachelor of Integrative Studies (BIS) degree. Together these constitute the new Liberal Arts & Integrative Studies (LAIS) program.

The BUS degree was never subjected to evaluation under the Academic Program Review (APR) initiative, probably because there was no program faculty. Accordingly, this APR is partly historical, in that the new BLA degree largely resembles the precursor BUS degree, and partly projective, in that we hope to provide some suggestions for the new BIS degree.

Our site visit occurred on September 15 and 16, 2014.

## Program Strengths

### History of Success:

The former BUS Program has been in place over 40 years, resulting in many successful graduates to alumni (US House of Representative, President's chief of staff, Associate Dean in Anderson School, etc.). The current BLA and BIS majors offer students an opportunity to design an undergraduate degree that is flexible, incorporating all or most previous college credits earned, with a curriculum structure that will result in an individualized degree completion. These degrees will continue to be popular with students who have not been successful with other degree options at UNM or elsewhere, and will also help UNM increase overall graduation rates. These success stories now need to become well documented to educate others on the significance of this program.

### **Unit Leadership:**

The review team is impressed with the leadership provided by Dean Kate Krause. Dean Krause communicated her desire to involve faculty back into the program for curriculum planning, etc. She believes this will add more credibility to the program and enhance the academic reputation of the LAIS degrees. Dean Krause indicates there is a strong collaboration between LAIS staff members and the UNM athletics department. Dean Krause indicated a desire to increase the awareness and documentation of how LAIS degrees directly impact the overall retention and graduation rates for the institution, as well as connecting the LAIS majors to other established university programs such as the Innovation Academy.

### **Academic Advising:**

The academic advising office in the LAIS department is a significant contributor to the overall success of the program. The current advising team demonstrated tremendous commitment and a caring approach when discussing their current processes and procedures in advising students. The major declaration process for the BLA and BIS majors requires students to spend a good deal of time with the advisor to prepare their plan of study, essay and certified signatures prior to declaring the major. In viewing examples of these documents, as well as speaking with a current student, it is evident students must develop a clear thought process on how their degree will assist them in meeting their academic goals. The peer advising offices from other academic units were very complimentary of how the LAIS advising team collaborates with all advisors at UNM, including the UNM athletics department. One colleague stated this advising office was the “model advising unit” on campus. Another example of the dedication by the advising team is the creation of a soon to be released BLA/BIS online advising manual. This manual will be made available to all advisors who may have any interactions with potential BLA/BIS students at UNM.

### **Extended University:**

LAIS degree options have historically been, and continue to be critical to the UNM branch campuses. Data indicates clear evidence LAIS degrees are very popular outside of the main campus, and representatives from these campuses don't see this changing in the near future. The BUS, now BLA major, is the most popular major on many of these campuses. Our interactions with individuals representing several branch campuses communicated their appreciation for strong collaborations with LAIS academic advisors and administration. The desire was expressed to have increased visits by BLA/BIS advising staff to branch campuses for academic advisor training and direct contact with branch campus students. We highly support increasing BLA/BIS advising team members becoming more visible at UNM branch campuses for visibility and program assessment purposes.

### **Program Success:**

Although there was not clear data made available to this review team, we expect that if UNM were to begin comparing institution graduation rates and retention rates excluding previous successes of LAIS majors, the impact of not having these degree options would become clear. There was data indicating higher success rates for LAIS programs than the university rates for minority

student graduation rates, including 15% American Indian/Alaskan Indian (3X university rate) and high Hispanic student success rate.

## **Program Concerns/Opportunities and Recommendations:**

### **Faculty Involvement**

For the first 35 years of the BUS degree there was an active faculty advisory committee. About 10 years ago this faculty oversight disappeared. The review team strongly encourages UNM to re-establish this committee, perhaps as a subcommittee of the Faculty Senate Undergraduate Committee. Faculty members should be sought who bring expertise and interest in interdisciplinary academic work. The new BLA and BIS degrees should not remain the only baccalaureate degrees at UNM not overseen by faculty. In particular, the new courses and curriculum for the BIS degree should have strong faculty involvement from this point forward. For example, creation of a capstone course for each degree should be considered and, if necessary, designed by faculty. Without true faculty involvement the LAIS program will not reach its full potential.

We also suggest that a tenured faculty member be identified and hired to direct these academic degrees. This person might well be an Associate Dean reporting to Dean Krause, and the BLA/BIS advising group would report to the new Associate Dean. Senior Advisor Dr. Tracy Skipp has worked hard and effectively to create and oversee the new degrees (and heroically directed the BUS program nearly alone for the last 10 years), but he should not continue much longer in this role without having faculty involvement in the curriculum processes. Particularly as the LAIS program grows the administrative responsibilities will increase, so one additional faculty administrator will be needed. A half-time appointment for this new person might suffice.

### **Program Visibility**

The old BUS degree and the new BLA/BIS degrees have substantial visibility at the branch campuses, but are less well known as degree options on the main campus in Albuquerque. We recommend that a marketing strategy be devised and implemented to remedy this deficiency. This plan could use student success stories like those we sought out during our review. The program web page needs to be improved with current program information, and data about the degrees should be obtained (see below) and incorporated. The new degrees should be linked to other university programs, such as the Innovation Academy and the Graduation Project.

### **Support Staff**

Currently there is no receptionist for the LAIS program or anyone to handle routine clerical tasks. The advisors have to do most of their own document copying, which takes them away from advising. We recommend hiring one additional staff member to carry out these duties.

### **Advising Process**

One of the great strengths of the LAIS degrees is the intensive face-to-face advising the expert and dedicated advisors provide. This should continue, but the workload could be lessened somewhat by utilizing alternate formats for information sharing (web homework, videos describing the program, etc.). Strategies to make the BLA/BIS advisors more accessible to the other Extended University sites should

be developed. The current advisors should continue their valuable alliances with colleagues in other academic units, including Transition Advising and University College advising.

The LAIS advisors should also have more access to more professional development activities, both at UNM and through NACADA or other professional associations.

### **Program Facility and Location**

The current location of the LAIS program within the Dean's suite is not optimal or ideal. There is no place for the new receptionist, and students have to find their way down a long hall to locate the advisors. We recommend moving the program to a more suitable space. This space might be found where the CNM instructors formerly had office space. This location is near Career Services, and that proximity would be excellent. Further, better space for the program would help with the visibility issues we have identified.

### **Admission of Freshmen**

Currently students may not be admitted to either degree in the LAIS program until they have 26 hours completed and finished the English requirement. Since the rest of the university degrees are now admitting freshmen directly, we recommend that this be considered also for the BLA and BIS degrees. The first semester could be used productively to guide students through the application process where they design their degree program.

### **Data Issues**

There is a lack of clear data on the direct impact of the new degrees have on university-wide retention and graduation efforts. We believe the impact of these programs is substantial, but data to document our belief are scarce. UNM Institutional Analytics should provide resources to gather specific data to educate the UNM community about the benefits of these majors. For example, how many "Graduation Express" students chose the BLA/BIS major to complete their degrees? What would happen to retention and graduation rates if UNM did not have these options? Why do some students who declare these majors simply leave or do not graduate? Answers to these and other questions will help faculty and advisors shape these evolving degrees.

We also recommend collection of data regarding alumni would be very beneficial. More success stories could then be collected, perhaps as short videos, to address the visibility issues, and alumni could be an option for students to fulfill the qualified signature process for declaring the majors.

### **Technical Support**

The LAIS program needs improvement to its web page, and we recommend access to a college or university web master be facilitated. Currently advisors spend a great deal of time certifying athletes for eligibility, but properly utilized the DARS software already in use could do this much more easily. That would free up valuable advising time.

### **Acknowledgements**

Our site visit was very well organized and we received all the support we needed. We thank each of those we interviewed and met with for their time and their frank and open comments. In particular we

are grateful to Ms. Bessie Gallegos (APR Specialist) for her help, and to Dr. Nancy Middlebrook (University Accreditation Director) for expert oversight of the APR program. We thank Dean Katherine Krause, Provost Chaouki Abdallah, and Associate Provost Greg Heileman for enlightening interviews.

## APPENDIX F

### ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW TEAM WORKSHEET

This worksheet should be used to document any department/program shortcomings relative to the UNM Criteria for Program Review. For each criterion, please note whether shortcomings exist in the criterion. If a shortcoming is identified, please note it as Met, Met With Concerns (MC), Marginally Met (MM), or Not Met (NM), (refer to manual –page 8 - for descriptions). For any shortcomings, please summarize the basis for your conclusion in the appropriate box. If a potential shortcoming changes in level or is resolved during the campus visit, provide an explanation for how it was resolved or changed.

Visit Dates: September 15, 16, 2014.

Department/Program: UNM's Bachelor of Liberal Arts (BLA) Program -University College      Evaluator(s): Dr. Richard Holder  
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Criterion	Assessment (M/MC/MM/NM)	Comments
<b>1. PROGRAM GOALS</b>		
Published goals/educational objectives for each program (undergraduate and graduate)	Met	Goals and SLO's are self-evident in self-study
Consistent with mission (UNM's and unit's) and the needs of constituents	Met	
Students are aware of program goals	Met with Concerns	Programs need to become much more visible to UNM community, especially students.
<b>2. TEACHING AND LEARNING: CURRICULUM</b>		
For each program, adequate coverage of program-appropriate curricular components, and consistent with the learning goals of the program/university	Not Applicable	Degrees are individually designed based on student interests and skills.
Contributions to other units are adequately coordinated (with other units) and appropriate for the offering unit	Not Applicable	Do not offer courses for other departments
Extracurricular programs/activities are sufficient and consistent with program goals/educational objectives	Not Applicable	Possible future collaboration and involvement with Innovation Academy
Program delivery modes are of sufficient quality and address student needs	Met	Examples; Online delivery to branches and others, etc.
<b>3. TEACHING AND LEARNING: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT</b>		
Regular use of appropriate, documented processes for assessing and evaluating the extent to which the program educational objectives are being attained	Not Applicable	Currently don't offer own courses.
Regular use of appropriate evaluation tools for assessing teaching effectiveness	Not Applicable	Currently don't offer own courses
Results of evaluations systematically utilized as input for the continuous improvement of programs	Not Applicable	Plan has been approved for future course offerings, pg. 46 in self-study.
<b>4. STUDENTS</b>		

Policies for accepting new and transfer students (including transfer credits) are in place and are enforced	Met	Current process includes essay, plan of study, qualified signatures to assist student in understanding overall value of the degree towards their educational goals.
Student performance and progress are adequately monitored	Met	Initial advising processes, 100 credit evaluation check, academic standing follow up, etc.
All students receive adequate and appropriate advisement and referral to student support services	Met	Application process is academic advising intensive.
Student success and retention initiatives are appropriate for the unit and evaluated for effectiveness	Met	Self-study includes data on graduation success, particularly high for American Indian and Hispanic students.
The success of graduates is tracked and assessed	Met with Concern	No systematic process for tracking graduates
<b>5. FACULTY</b>		
Sufficient number and competencies to cover all program and curricular areas	Not Applicable	No current faculty in program however recommendations will include future involvement with faculty for curricular and administrative oversight.
Appropriate qualifications	Not Applicable	
Adequate levels of research and creative activities	Not Applicable	
Adequate levels of student-faculty interaction, student advising and counseling	Not Applicable	
Adequate levels of university/professional service activities	Not Applicable	
Adequate levels of professional development	Not Applicable	
<b>6. RESOURCES AND PLANNING</b>		
Unit engages in resource planning and allocation, possibly with use of external advisory board	Not Met	Need to address immediately, see report for detailed recommendations.
The unit has sufficient resources and institutional support to carry out its mission	Marginally Meet	Unit is surviving but is in need of additional resources, especially with anticipated growth.
Staff composition and deployment is adequate	Met with Concerns	Current staff fulfil their roles at high levels, however additional staff resources are needed to meet program goals.
Unit solicits and receives appropriate levels of external support	Not Applicable	Outside funding sources are not known at this time.
<b>7. FACILITIES</b>		
Facilities are adequate to support student learning, along with scholarly and research activities	Not Applicable	
Office space for faculty, staff and graduate students is appropriate	Marginally Met	Attention is needed for reception area to greet and direct students and visitors.
Adequate library services, compute infrastructure and information infrastructure	Not Applicable	
Laboratories (if appropriate) contain modern tools and equipment, are available, accessible, and systematically maintained and upgraded	Not Applicable	
<b>8. PROGRAM COMPARISONS</b>		
Institutional support and leadership sufficient to assure quality and continuity of the program	Met with Concerns	Need to implement faculty involvement with program curricular planning and administrative functions.
Institutional services, financial support, and staff adequate to meet program needs	Met with Concerns	Concerns with salary structures for advisors, lack of support staff and/or student support staff.

Sufficient to attract and retain a well-qualified faculty and provide for their professional development	Not Applicable at this time.	Future considerations strongly recommended
Sufficient to acquire, maintain, and operate infrastructure, facilities, and equipment	Met	No known deficiencies
Sufficient to provide an environment to attain student outcomes	Met	Current program meets expectations. Future recommendations may warrant improvements in this area.
<b>9. FUTURE DIRECTION</b>		
Unit engages in strategic planning	Met	Evidence exists in self-study, i.e., revisions to <u>BUS</u> program to become <u>BIS</u> and <u>BLA</u> programs
Unit make use of appropriate data, including peer comparisons, in strategic planning	Met	Good comparisons to other institutions regarding program structure. Future data needs include demonstrating program value to University graduation and retention rates.
Unit is aware of its strengths and weaknesses, and prioritizes its improvement activities accordingly	Met	Current leadership demonstrated knowledge of issues to be addressed.