UCC Program Review Committee summary of review

Program – Associate of Arts & Associate of Science

This program includes the following degrees, minors, and certificates:

- A.A. Associate of Arts
- A.S. Associate of Science

Recommendation

This program is found to be viable, see report for commendations, concerns, and recommendations.

Date of last review – AY 2009

Date of this review – AY 2017

This review has been sent to school director and the dean, their responses are attached.
Associate of Arts (A.A.) and Associate of Science (A.S.)
Program Review
November 18, 2016

Review Committee:

External Reviewer: Michelle Buchberger, Assistant Professor, Department of Interdisciplinary and Communication Studies, Miami University

Internal Reviewers: Hayley Haugen, Associate Professor, English, and Academic Division Coordinator, Ohio University Southern; Sarah Poggione, Associate Professor and Graduate Director, Political Science, Ohio University

Executive Summary

The review committee finds both the Associate in Arts (A.A.) and Associate in Science (A.S.) offered via University College (UC) to be viable programs. In coming to this conclusion, the review committee met with the Director of Degree Programs, the Assistant Dean of Regional Higher Education (RHE), the Director of eCampus, various groups of advisors, and students in these programs from the Athens and regional campuses as well as eCampus on November 16 and 17, 2016 and reviewed the self-study report. The review includes analysis of the following programs offered by the college:

- Associate of Arts (A.A.)
- Associate of Science (A.S.)

We commend the Director of Degree Programs, the degree program advising team, and the eCampus partners and advisors on their excellent work on guiding students to and advising them through these programs and often on to careers or additional degree programs at OU and other institutions. There are some areas of concern of which program personnel are aware and are actively involved in moving towards a solution. These challenges include coordinating advising across the Athens, regional campus and eCampus settings and developing and implementing ongoing assessment of program curriculum and student learning to improve program quality. Many of these challenges stem from the heavy advising demands currently managed by program personnel. The committee also have some recommendations that build on the highly effective core advising and would enable the programs to contribute in meaningful ways to the mission of University College and the broader university.

Questions for reviewers:

1. The program as a whole:
   
   a. Is the current number and distribution of faculty sufficient to carry out the broad overall mission of the Department (Teaching; Research; Scholarship and Creative Activity; Service).
N/A

b. Is the level of the Department’s RSCA appropriate for the program given the size of the faculty and the resources available to the Department? Is the Department’s level of external funding at an appropriate level?

N/A

c. Is the level of service, outside of teaching, appropriate for the program given its size and the role that it plays in the University and broader communities it interacts with? Is the Department able to fulfill its service mission?

N/A

d. Does the Department have an appropriate level of financial resources, staff, physical facilities, library resources, and technology to fulfill its mission?

No, the primary need is staffing. The advising load for the degree program advising team is quite high. The degree program advising team is comprised of three people, including the Director of Degree Programs, who have positions with one half of their time dedicated to advising, and one individual with a 9-month advising appointment. This team advises all Athens campus students for all the degree programs in University College, including the A.A. and A.S. degrees. The advising loads for the degree program team exceed the loads of other advising teams in University College.

The heavy load and decentralized nature of A.A. and A.S. programs across regional campuses and eCampus make coordinating advising and communicating between the program and advisors across the Athens, regional, and eCampus contexts very difficult. The heavy load and lack of faculty dedicated or identified with the degree programs make curriculum development and review more difficult as well. Faculty who teach courses in which A.A. and A.S. students are enrolled are often unaware that they have Associate degree seeking students in their courses. These same factors make developing and implementing direct and indirect assessment strategies for student learning difficult.

Based on student responses, technological and library resources available to associate degree students are sufficient. Students report that the availability of courses within their programs is sufficient, but some would like to see a wider variety of online options. Students enjoy the variety of formats through which courses are offered. While one student prefers
face-to-face instruction, for example, others note that online options are essential to their success. Students agree that they are well-supported by their faculty and that there are ample campus resources to support their academic success.

2. Undergraduate Program:

The internal review committee had an opportunity to meet with a cross-section of students engaged in associate degree programming. One student is an Associate of Arts student seeking a degree in Arts and Humanities. This student takes courses exclusively through e-Campus and will receive a Bachelor’s in Communication Studies next year. Another student, on the Chillicothe campus, is completing work in the Associate in Applied Science Human Services Technology program. This student seeks an associate degree for career advancement and does not plan to pursue a Bachelor’s degree in the near future. The third student, from the Athens campus, explored various associate degree program options to help find an academic focus in Sociology, in which the student will ultimately earn a Bachelor’s degree. Finally, a second student on the Chillicothe campus, who works full time in the healthcare industry, is pursuing an Associate of Art degree for career advancement and plans to go on for a Bachelor’s degree in management.

a. Is the Department fulfilling its service role, adequately preparing non-majors for future coursework and/or satisfying the needs for general education?

Based on the responses of the students the committee interviewed, University College is successful in fulfilling its service role. Students are adequately prepared to take on further coursework. However, there is a significant lack of assessment data related to general education outcomes. The committee notes that this is one of the goals of the Director of Degree Programs, who is seeking the opportunity to partner with other departments to begin assessment of both General Education and Program level outcomes.

b. Is the program attracting majors likely to succeed in the program? Is the number of majors appropriate for the program? Is the program attracting a diverse group of students?

The A.A. and A.S. degrees are not well publicized to incoming or existing students. The lack of recruiting for these programs at BSO, Ohio Discovery Days, and the majors fairs means that potential candidates for these programs may not be aware of them at critical times. A.A. and A.S. students indicate that they largely sought out options and found the A.A. and A.S. programs on their own, primarily
through the OU website. This means that the programs may be smaller than optimal and that students that are well-suited for these programs may go elsewhere or be relegated to non-degree status or temporarily opt for a degree program that is a poor fit, creating potential retention issues and delays in the time to degree. Students also report a lack of camaraderie among their associate degree-seeking peers because there is no way to identify these students from other degree seekers.

Data on retention in the associate degree programs was not available. Collection and access to this data would be helpful to identify points where students tend to drop out or stop associate programs.

A.A. and A.S. programs are typically diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, and age. Given their current small size, however, they are likely to have a limited impact on the diversity of the overall student body at OU.

c. Does the undergraduate curriculum provide majors with an adequate background to pursue discipline-related careers or graduate work following graduation?

Given the heavy advising load of key programs’ personnel, the ability to assess the fit between program curriculum and career development or further education is limited. In addition, the ability to develop and implement meaningful direct and indirect assessment of student learning in the program is also hampered by the limited staffing resources.

Students note their associate degrees help them advance in their current or future work positions, move up in paygrades, or serve as prerequisites for Bachelor’s programs. Developing more publicized, visible tracks that facilitate movement from the associate to bachelor degree programs would provide opportunities to maximize retention and graduation rates.

d. Are the resources and the number of and distribution of faculty sufficient to support the undergraduate program?

We did not evaluate the distribution of faculty within the associate degree programs, but we do see an insufficiency of advising staff within University College for the degree programs including the A.A. and A.S. degrees. Students report that their UC degree program advisors and eLearning advisors have been instrumental in helping them focus their academic and career goals. However, with the heavy
advising load of the Athens campus split among three individuals with half-time advising appointments and one individual with a full-time advising load for a 9 month appointment, there is a lack of resources to coordinate advisors across the Athens, regional, and eCampus settings. Curriculum development and student learning assessment are also hampered by this workload issue.

e. Are pedagogical practices appropriate? Is teaching adequately assessed.

According to the self study document, “During the last program review in 2008, student learning outcomes were not required nor developed” (p.9).

Although there are “no required UC courses that all students must take across all campuses” (p.9), there are tiers and option from which students must pick; A.A. and A.S. students take different courses of study from A.I.S., and therefore there seems to be an opportunity to compile broad outcomes that reflect the different tracks pursued by these students accompanied by metrics that would measure the efficacy of students’ performance in these areas.

f. Are students able to move into discipline-related careers and/or pursue further academic work?

Both student and other groups interviewed indicated that the A.A. or A.S. to B.A. or B.S. tracks were not explicit, i.e, it is not obvious which Bachelor’s degrees are well-aligned with particular associate degrees. This is problematic because students who are completing a particular associate degree could be taking classes more strategically if they were able to identify which Bachelor’s degree could be completed early on in their associate programs. A pertinent example one student raises is the need to fulfill a foreign language requirement for a B.A. degree in Arts and Sciences. There is an opportunity to provide more information in one place to students in the UC program so that they are more aware of the options they have once they are in an associate program.

Students remarked that the careers advice received from UC advising was excellent but that it would be beneficial to receive this advice earlier in their academic careers. A more centralized view of associates to bachelors advising (or just more information in one location) would provide more opportunities to help students choose associate tracks with particular careers in mind.
3. Graduate Program (not relevant to this report)

4. Areas of concern.

The self study recognizes a need for better coordination among advisors university-wide (p. 10). We echo this concern.

Unique outcomes or goals for students pursuing the A.A., A.S., and A.I.S. tracks would provide a better opportunity to measure success and indicate areas for improvement.

Better access to data regarding student satisfaction with advising would also provide opportunities for improvement as well as recognition of excellent performance.

Data gathering of student employment rates, how students proceed after completion of associate degrees would also provide useful information for planning and quality improvement.

At present, it is difficult to identify the number of students in associate programs or if students are Bachelor’s-seeking students who have completed or are completing an associate degree. Data is also not available to reflect the number of Appalachian students, a population that adds to the diversity of the university and who often receive grants and scholarships based on their underserved status.

The requirement that all first-year students in University College including A.A. and A.S. students enroll in Learning Communities currently disadvantages A.A. and A.S. students. For example, required courses in these Learning Communities do not count towards A.A. or A.S. degrees, increasing time to degree for associate degree-seeking students. Offering a learning community designed for associate degree-seeking students (online and on campus) would provide an opportunity for students in associate programs to find each other. At present, it is often impossible for students to recognize other associate program peers in their classes. This opportunity (an associate degree learning community) would facilitate a network among these students, which could promote retention, as well as provide a more customized experience for associate degree students, so that classes taken as part of this learning community would more likely be applied to meeting graduation requirements.

5. Recommendations

- Increase advising staff capacity to allow program core staff and the Director of Degree Programs to focus on other efforts. Converting the 9-month position to a 12-month position and funding a possible graduate assistant position are alternatives to creating new positions. This would allow the Director to focus on
centralizing communications across regional campus faculty and eCampus advisors who advise these students. It would also allow core program staff and the Director to develop learning assessment strategies and implement them across the Athens, regional, and eCampus venues. The additional capacity would also allow the staff and Director to explore pathways into the A.A. and A.S. programs for College Credit Plus (C.C.P.) students.

- Increase the visibility of A.A. and A.S. programs with potential and incoming students (majors fair, BSO, Discovery Days, increased web site presence) and the visibility of these academic programs in UC. While U.C. has a presence at these events, it focuses on their services to students and not degree programs. These outreach efforts would help to earlier distinguish students interested in associate degrees and to better service these students by minimizing degree completion time. Identifying and promoting these programs might attract appropriate students who may not want the traditional B.A. or B.S. programs upon entry to OU and might improve retention. Given that A.A. and A.S. programs are often more racially and ethnically diverse, expanding these programs might also be part of a diversity strategy. Increased visibility of these programs will also provide those students enrolled in A.A. or A.S. programs with a better sense of identity and belonging. The opportunity for better “branding” of UC and its degree programs to raise its profile at the university also exists.

- Develop an abbreviated Learning Community opportunity or substitute opportunity geared toward A.A. or A.S. degrees, to allow these students to take courses that count for their associate degree programs, work with their program advisors in their first year, and develop a community with one another. Given the abbreviated nature of these programs, this is imperative.

- Since a good portion of A.A. and A.S. students who are advised through eCampus are within the incarcerated program, consider participation in the pilot Pell Grant program, for this would likely increase participation. The eCampus advisors note that a donor-funded scholarship program for incarcerated students has a high number of applicants which indicates the need and interest in funding opportunities for these program from this student population. The print-based (and online where permitted) associate programs for incarcerated students are obviously popular and have the potential to be transformative. This should be better recognized and valued, as it is a differentiator for OU – a program that is not offered at many public institutions. This program also contributes to the diversity of the university.

- Increase access to staff professional development. Degree program advisors on the Athens campus exhibit a strong commitment to developing and implementing new and effective advising models. Increased and transparent access to professional development funds for workshops would support advisors in these efforts.
6. **Commendations**

We commend the Director of Degree Programs, the degree program advising team, and the eCampus partners and advisors on their excellent work on guiding students to and advising them through these programs and often onto careers or additional degree programs at OU and other institutions. The students indicate that they feel supported by the programs’ advisors and that they have had close contact through a variety of means with their advisors.

7. **Overall judgement**

The review committee finds both the Associate in Arts (A.A.) and Associate in Science (A.S.) offered via University College to be viable programs.
December 12, 2016

Professor David Ingram
University Curriculum Council
Ohio University
Alden Library 301G
Athens, Ohio 45701

Dear Professor Ingram:

I want to express my gratitude to you, Dr. Patrick Barr-Melej, Peter Mather and our internal and external reviewers for the time and care put into our Associate of Arts (AA) and Associate of Science review process. As a new director of degree programs, I’m grateful for the recommendations provided by the reviewers that were driven by both the self-study data and review visit interviews.

Our program reviewers’ suggestions are wonderful opportunities for excellence within the program. Regarding increasing visibility of the programs, I do echo Dean Mather’s comments that the visibility focus is most needed with students who have already matriculated to Ohio University. The visibility of a “front door” to our programs is especially needed on the regional campuses, which will be a priority in the coming years to create. Nearly all of the program reviewers’ recommendations support the improvement of such visibility via focusing our marketing, developing curricula partnerships, and implementing onboarding strategies.

In closing, I want to thank you and Drs. Patrick Barr-Melej, Peter Mather, Elizabeth Sayrs, Sarah Poggione, Hayley Haugen and Michelle Buchberger for the opportunity for the program review. Our AA/AS degree programs play an important role for Ohio University students. I am dedicated to effectively stewarding the growth opportunities ahead for our AA/AS degree program students.

Warmly,

[Signature]

Julie A. Cohara
Director of Degree Programs, University College
Professor David Ingram  
University Curriculum Council  
Ohio University  
Alcón Library 301G  
Athens, Ohio 45701

Dear Professor Ingram:

I have read the report on the Associates of Arts (AA) and Associate of Science (AS) degree programs. I am grateful for the care taken by internal reviewers Drs. Sarah Poggione and Hayley Haugen, and external reviewer from Miami University, Dr. Michelle Buchberger, in both reviewing our programs and writing the report. I am also grateful to Julie Cohara, our new Director of Degree Programs, for her leadership of the programs and for writing the self-study. Indeed, I want to acknowledge all faculty, staff, and students who were involved in the process.

It was affirming to see the viable rating and commendations signaling the dedication of our University College staff and faculty partners. Additionally, the recommendations were not surprising, and were perceived as opportunities for program growth for our two-year degree seeking students.

One recommendation focused on improving visibility of the program. Given the proximity of our campuses to nearby Washington State Community College, Hocking College, Southern State Community College, Belmont Technical College, Central Ohio Technical College, Zane State Community College, and Rio Grande Community College, it is not our intention to develop recruitment strategies for our AA/AS programs. Our plans for visibility will be focused on the regional campuses and e-campus students already matriculating to campus. Specifically, over the next two years, our director of degree programs will assess and develop the advising information on each campus for our degree programs to ensure it is equally represented in the array of two-year degree programs to our students.

A second recommendation suggested that incoming AA/AS students receive a first year experience. On Athens campus, we will be offering an AA/AS track within Bobcat Student Orientation starting summer 2017. A learning community would be appropriate for our two-year degree seeking students once a critical mass reliably matriculates on the Athens campus. In the meantime, an onboarding class specifically for our AA/AS students on all campuses will be offered for student cohort development and assessment planning. It is our intention to develop this course within three years.
A third recommendation was to participate in the Pell Grant pilot program as an institution that offers coursework for incarcerated students. With a renewed institutional commitment to the program for incarcerated students, we are interested in pursuing the next opportunity to opt into the Pell Grant program.

A fourth recommendation for professional development is being implemented. All of the degree program advising team have been approved for relevant professional development opportunities during this academic year. In addition, a University College committee is currently examining the role of professional development across the college. This committee’s work is intended to be comprehensive, assessing and responding to professional development needs across units and staffing levels.

The final recommendation was to provide more resources temporarily to the degree programs team so they may focus on centralizing communication across campuses and identifying curricular collaborations with the College Credit Plus and bachelor degrees on the regional campuses. Upon her arrival January 17, 2017, I will ask the new Assistant Dean of University College Advising to evaluate the advising system, including the allocation of staffing across advising teams with an eye on the concerns raised in the recent program reviews.

In closing, I want to thank you and Drs. Patrick Barr-Melej, Sarah Poggione, Hayley Haugen, and Michelle Buchberger for discharging this important task. We are proud of the AA/AS degree programs and the important role they provide as a direct pathway to our baccalaureate degrees, transfer opportunities, and beyond. We will dedicate ourselves to addressing the opportunities that have been identified in the AA/AS program review. We will be pleased to update University Curriculum Council on our progress in the years to come.

Respectfully submitted,

[Signature]

Peter C. Mather, PhD
Interim Dean of University College and
Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education