

# UNC Asheville MLAS Program Review

Answers to Questions and Review Criteria as Charged by  
The 2019-20 Session of the UNC Asheville Faculty Senate

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## Charge

***It was moved, seconded, and approved that*** the APC and IDC be charged with reviewing the MLAS Program by seeking answers to the questions listed below, with the understanding that those committees' chairs have authority to decide which body will consider which questions.

## Questions and Criteria

The following questions are to be applied in performing the review. Any information needed to craft adequate responses to these questions will be sought from the appropriate sources as necessary.

1. **How does the program enhance the university's mission? Specifically, how does the program purport, through its stated vision, mission, and outcomes, to support the mission of the university? Furthermore, how does the program purport, through its stated vision, mission, and outcomes, to support the university's strategic plan?**

**MLAS Mission/Purpose:**

The goal of the Master of Liberal Arts and Sciences Program is to complement the UNC Asheville's liberal arts mission while exploring human nature, human values and the quality of human life. The broad-based theme integrates studies ranging from the humanities and the arts to the natural and social sciences. Its diverse scope allows students to choose from a wide range of courses, and the interdisciplinary nature of the program acts to promote a broad, enriched experience in the study of the human condition. The MLAS Program allows graduate students to develop their intellectual passion within a community of thoughtful peers and under the direction of faculty members who champion the value of liberal learning.

*Source: Masters of Liberal Arts & Sciences Program Assessment of Learning 2017-18 through 2019-20 Academic Years, IREP*

According to our UNC Asheville mission (<http://catalog.unca.edu/content.php?catoid=16&navoid=953>), as an institution, we aim to respond to the conditions and concerns of the contemporary world both as individuals and as a university. Further, the university's mission statement holds that, "we incorporate economic, social and environmental sustainability into our institutional practices and curriculum." Our institutional strategic plan lists sustainability of the natural environment and of human communities as one of its three core values.

The MLAS program's mission expresses a commitment to understanding the human condition and to interdisciplinarity. This commitment directly aligns with our UNC Asheville mission which states that as an institution we aim to respond to the conditions and concerns of the contemporary world both as individuals and as a university. In reviewing the content of the MLAS website, The Program Overview Review, and The Fifth-Year Interim Report to SACSCOC, it appears that the MLAS program takes the university's core values and missions to heart in terms of the curriculum they offer. The program offers concentrations and seminars on Environmental and Cultural Sustainability, Climate Change & Society, Globalization Past & Present, Humanities & Creative Writing, and Science & Human Values, all which address pressing issues in the contemporary world. The focus of these offerings on sustainability directly mirrors a portion of the university's mission.

The MLAS program also seems committed to an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary curriculum that unequivocally embraces our institution's non-negotiable priority of

offering a strong liberal arts education. The 2019 MLAS Program Review introduction also notes that the seminars in the program are “humanities-driven,” which corresponds with the humanities core in our undergraduate curriculum.

While much more information can be found on the website, in the program overview, and in other documents, the MLAS mission statement in its current form is admittedly light on content and somewhat abstract. As noted the mission statement directly addresses our institutional core value of Sustainability. It does not address our institutional values of Diversity and Inclusion and of Innovation, and it joins the rest of the university in struggling with attracting and retaining a diverse population of students. As many departments across our campus are reviewing departmental and program value statements, we expect the MLAS program will also accept constructive feedback in revising its mission and crafting a vision statement.

**2. What inefficiencies/redundancies, if any, could be eliminated from this program? For example, could this program be combined with a similar or related program in the present department or in another department? Could variation in course enrollment be addressed?**

While there are proposals for new graduate programs, at the time of this review the MLAS program is the only graduate level program offered by UNC Asheville. At first glance, it does not seem like the MLAS program could be combined with any other programs or departments effectively since all other academic departments and programs are undergraduate. Further reflection generated ideas that include (1) incorporating graduate level course offerings in the UNC Asheville Honors Program and (2) integrating course offerings with the programs offered by the [UNC Asheville Osher Lifelong Learning Institute](#) (OLLI).

It does not appear that there are major redundancies in course offerings within the program—there is variation in the offered courses both within and across semesters. Although some course numbers may repeat within an academic year, similar to the special topics course offerings in the undergraduate program, the course topics vary without a concerning regularity. As with special topic courses in the undergraduate program, students can enroll in courses with the same prefix and number multiple times, provided that the topic varies.

The MLAS class enrollments have decreased over time as has our university-wide enrollment. There are a large number of single-person classes and it is difficult to distinguish independent studies or research courses from regular offerings. If the program continues, we recommend the following considerations:

- Can any class be offered less frequently to address low-enrollment courses?
- Is there a strategic way to rotate required courses so that each is not offered every semester?

- How can experts from area businesses who possess appropriate academic credentials be invited to serve as faculty in the program?

**3. Do courses in this program contribute to LAC or other programs (e.g. the Honors Program or certificates)? Which courses offered in the program are required courses for other majors?**

As this is UNC Asheville's only graduate program on campus, it does not specifically cater to the undergraduate LAC or other undergraduate programs. However, on a case by case basis, undergraduates have been given the opportunity to take MLAS classes to meet major requirements. Perhaps this possibility could be expanded and advertised more to introduce more of our capable undergraduates to graduate studies. This might help increase enrollment in MLAS courses. Procedures and policies will need to be established to determine the program's framework and the minimum qualifications required for undergraduates to enroll in these courses.

As mentioned previously in question #2, we might also consider embedding appropriate MLAS classes into the Honors program or elsewhere in the undergraduate curriculum, as deemed appropriate.

**4. How does this program impact other programs (faculty, students, staff, curriculum offerings)? What percentage of their teaching load does a faculty member teaching in this program contribute to the program, on average?**

The impact of the MLAS program on other institutional programs is minimal. This is not necessarily a positive statement. Table 1 shows the number of faculty teaching courses in the MLAS program within Academic Years 2010-2019. Each faculty offering is at most 0.25 FTE, a single course release for the faculty member during a semester. Note that these numbers also include summer offerings. As the table reveals, the MLAS program has the greatest impact on the English department, which is understandable considering a concentration of English courses are explicitly listed for the MLAS program in the UNC Asheville catalog.

<b>Table1: Faculty MLAS Offerings By Department</b> <b>Source: This summary was produced using</b> <b>MLAS Classes and Instructors, 2010-2019*</b>	
<b>FTE Dept.</b>	<b>Number of Faculty Offerings within 2010-2019</b>
English	29
History	15
Math	12
Health & Wellness	11
Mass Communication	9
Atmospheric Sciences	6
Physics	5
Psychology	5
Drama	4
Economics	4
Sociology & Anthropology	3
Art & Art History	2
International Studies	2
Management & Accountancy	2
Philosophy	2
Chemistry	1
Computer Science	1
Environmental Science	1
Music	1
New Media	1
Political Science	1

\*Based on "MLAS Classes and Instructors, 2010-2019 Aug222019" from the MLAS Office

5. Is the program supported by a cohesive, consistent, and supportive intellectual community?

**Is the MLAS program supported by a cohesive and consistent support from the intellectual community? (Answers from the MLAS Program Review)**

**No: Faculty concerns:** “In Fall 2017, the MLAS Program submitted a proposal to Faculty Senate for a dual degree program (also known as accelerated degree, or 4+1 program), recommended by the Graduate Council and supported by Chancellor Mary Grant. ...Despite the Chancellor’s support and the fact that [some vehemently expressed faculty] fears were unfounded, the idea for a 4+1 program never made it to a full Faculty Senate vote.”

*MLAS Program Review pages 20-21*

**No: Mixed Messages:** “In 2017, the MLAS Program was charged with developing a certificate in nonprofit management by Chancellor Mary Grant and Provost Joe Urgo. This effort was performed in collaboration with Management & Accountancy faculty members.... This effort was halted due to a number of reasons.”

*MLAS Program Review page 21*

**No: Money-making strategy opinion:** “Given funding challenges, demographic challenges and the educational needs of the community, IDC is open to receiving thoughtful applications for new master’s programs at UNC Asheville.” In a May 2018 Faculty Senate Meeting, Dr. Brian Butler explained that IDC “realized the benefits if UNC Asheville graduates 50 Graduate Students a year funding for the university goes up significantly.”

*MLAS Program Review page 21*

Despite the faculty willingness to contribute indicated in Table 2, in reading the MLAS Program Review and in reviewing faculty senate minutes, it is abundantly clear that throughout its existence the MLAS program has struggled to receive cohesive and consistent support from our intellectual community. The above text box gives three instances that clearly reveal the mixed messages the program has received and the challenges of faculty concerns regarding institutional identity. It is possible that the fact that the program’s curriculum is delivered by a large and inconsistent body of faculty, each contributing a small percentage of their time to the program, militates against the development of a cohesive intellectual community.

6. As an indication of institutional support, please provide the following data regarding the resource implications of the program:
- number of faculty, including rank, teaching load, and home department, for this program;
  - number of faculty FTE (credit hours taught/12) and student FTE (enrollment x credit hours taught/d, where  $d = 12$  for undergraduate programs and  $d = 9$  for graduate programs) devoted to the program per term, on average, over the past five years;
  - amount of staff time dedicated to the program's administration per term, on average, over the past five years; and
  - program's contribution to the intellectual life of the faculty.

**Table 2: Current Full-Time Faculty who have contributed to the MLAS Program**  
**Source: This Table was produced using IREP's MLAS Classes and Instructors**

Instructor	Current Title	# of MLAS offerings	Instructor	Current Title	# of MLAS offerings
Gerard Voos	Director of Graduate Studies & Continuing Education	25	John Crutchfield	Lecturer (Languages and Literatures)	2
Tommy Hays	Lecturer (Asheville Graduate Center)	24			
Steve Patch	Professor (Mathematics)	10	Kirk Boyle	Associate Professor (English)	2
Ameena Batada	Associate Professor (Health and Wellness)	6	Lyndi Hewitt	WGSS and Associate Professor (Sociology and Anthropology)	2
Chris Hennon	Chair and Professor (Atmospheric Sciences)	6	Mary Lynn Manns	Professor (Management and Accountancy)	2
Randy Booker	Chair and Professor (Physics)	5	Surain Subramaniam	Professor (International Studies)	2
Dan Pierce	Distinguished Professor (History)	4	Amy Lanou	Chair and Professor (Health and Wellness)	1
Don Diefenbach	Chair and Professor (Mass Communications)	4	Christopher Oakley	Chair and Associate Professor (New Media)	1

Michael Neelon	Associate Professor (Psychology)	4	John Brock	Associate Professor (Chemistry)	1
Tracey Rizzo	Chair and Professor (History)	4	Kathleen Lawlor	Assistant Professor (Economics)	1
Erica Abrams Locklear	Professor (English)	3	Keya Maitra	Howerton Distinguished Professor	1
Gary Ettari	Associate Professor (English)	3	Lise Kloeppel	Chair and Associate Professor(Drama)	1
Sarah Judson	Associate Professor (History)	3	Mark Gibney	Belk Distinguished Professor (Political Science)	1
Sonya DiPalma	Associate Professor (Mass Communication)	3	Melissa Burchard	Chair and Professor (Philosophy)	1
Anne Slatton	Senior Lecturer (Mass Communication)	2	Patrick Bahls	Honors Director and Professor	1
Cynthia Canejo	Associate Professor (Art and Art History)	2	Robert Tatum	Owen Distinguished Professor (Economics)	1
David Hopes	Professor (English)	2	Samuel Kaplan	Chair and Professor (Mathematics)	1
Heidi Kelley	Professor (Sociology and Anthropology)	2	William Bares	Associate Professor (Music)	1

While the MLAS Program Overview notes that adjuncts compose the bulk of its faculty FTE, Table 1 shows that in the recent past (2010-2019), the MLAS program has benefited from the expertise and contributions of a number of full-time faculty across twenty-one disciplines. Tables 1 and 3 are summaries of the spreadsheet MLAS Classes and Instructors, 2010-2019, which was produced by our Office of Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Planning and whose details show that colleagues across the ranks of Lecturer, Assistant Professor, Associate Professor, and Professor have offered course sections, tutorials, seminars, and project advising. For example, most recently Dr. Dan Pierce, Professor of History; Dr. Heidi Kelley, Professor of Sociology and Anthropology; Dr. Ameena Batada, Associate Professor of Health and Wellness; and Dr. John Crutchfield, Lecturer of German have advised capstone projects, supervised directed research, or offered MLAS course sections in the Spring 2019 offerings. Table 3 gives further evidence that colleagues across ranks have interest in teaching MLAS courses or supervising graduate work in the MLAS program. It should be noted that these



colleagues contributed their expertise and time with 0 FTE. This practice is aligned with our campus undergraduate culture in which faculty generously and frequently offer undergraduate research opportunities to our students with 0 FTE.

IREP has also produced a spreadsheet, "Appropriations generated by Graduate Courses at UNC Asheville", that reports the faculty FTE and Student Credit hours for academic years 2010-11 to 2018-19. This report shows that the program has been running a slight deficit in terms of faculty FTE during the period reviewed, with slightly more faculty FTE devoted to the program, per year, than generated.

**7. How do the available spaces and equipment meet or not meet the program's needs? Specifically, how many classrooms are dedicated to the program per term, on average, over the past five years? What has been the cost, per year, of new equipment, supplies, etc., on average, over the past five years?**

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of the MLAS Program, classes are not held in one specific building, but are instead spread across several campus buildings. Classroom spaces are sometimes selected based on availability and class size. The MLAS Program Office, previously located in Owen Hall, temporarily moved to 109 Zageir Hall beginning in Fall 2018 due to building renovations.

*MLAS Program Review page 18*

Resources are shared with the rest of campus and are subjected to the same vicissitudes faced by other academic programs. Notably, the program has not received consistent support in material resources, with its offices and classroom space subjected to relocation most recently due to renovation. Stability of office location may increase should the [Office of Graduate Studies and Professional Education](#), which currently houses the MLAS program, the Graduate Certificate in Climate Change and Society, and the Great Smokies Writing Program, be expanded to centrally house future graduate programs.

**8. Are there committees associated with this program? If so, which ones, and how many faculty serve on these committees?**

Based on our conversation with Gerard Voos and information on the UNC Asheville website, there are two committees:

- 1.) The UNC Asheville Graduate Council is responsible for advising and assisting the MLAS Program Director in the overall administration and functioning of the Master of Liberal Arts and Sciences Program. These responsibilities include advising and assisting the Director in overall planning for the academic curriculum of the program: course development, faculty recruitment, and revision and development of program design. Council members will also assist the Director in interviewing and making admissions decisions on all program

applicants. The council will advise and assist the Director in administering the program and maintaining its academic excellence. Faculty terms will be for three years, with one faculty member rotating off each year. The faculty members will be elected by the Senate, and one will serve as Chair of the Graduate Council.

Academic Year 2019-2020 Members as listed on UNC Asheville website:

- **Erica Abrams-Locklear** (English faculty)
- **Randy Booker** (Physics faculty)
- **Tommy Hays** (MLAS faculty)
- **Kate Zubko** (Humanities faculty)
- **Michael Neelon** (Graduate Council chair; Psychology faculty)
- **Gerard Voos** (Director)

2.) [The MLAS Alumni Advisory Board](#). Members listed on MLAS website as of November 2019 are as follows:

- **Becca Chambers**, Business Process Specialist, ITS; English Instructor, A-B Tech -- M.L.A.S, UNC Asheville
- **Renee Eli**, Philosopher, Writer -- Ph.D. California Institute of Integral Students, M.L.A.S. UNC Asheville, B.S. Medical University of South Carolina
- **Tina Masciarelli**, Photographer, Entrepreneur -- M.L.A.S. UNC Asheville
- **Sam Gibbs**, Deputy Secretary for Technology and Operations, North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services -- M.L.A.S. UNC Asheville
- **Marie Hefley**, Sales and Marketing Executive, IBM(retired); Managing Editor, *The Great Smokies Review*. -- M.L.A.S UNC Asheville

9. What are the course enrollments for the past five years, vis-a-vis original targets and/or predictions, if available? How does this enrollment compare with national trends? Specifically,
- a. How does the enrollment of our university's program compare with the enrollments in cognate programs elsewhere, both in absolute numbers and relative to the home institution's size?
  - b. What percentage of the program's courses are under-enrolled, on average, over the past five years?

**Table 3: 2019 data that show the number of students enrolled in MLAS, MALS, and GLS programs at NC Universities.**

<i>Institution</i>	<i>Total students</i>	<i># of MLAS, MALS, or GLS students</i>	<i>The MLAS/MALS/GL % of total enrollment</i>
UNC Asheville	3,582	20	0.56%
Coastal Carolina	9,617	26	0.27%
UNC Charlotte	29,615	20	0.07%
UNC Wilmington	17,490	50	0.29%
UNC Greensboro	16,712	100	0.60%
Duke	14,756	105	0.71%

**Table 4a** These data are derived from the MLAS enrollment 2010-2019 spreadsheet provided. This table excludes Independent Study experiences, Capstone, and research projects.

<i>year</i>	<i># of courses offered</i>	<i>% under-enrolled (less than 8 students)</i>	<i>%under-enrolled (less than 5 students)</i>
2015	9	55%	33%
2016	8	75%	0%
2017	8	75%	38%
2018	9	67%	44%
2019	6	83%	33%

**Table 4b** These data are derived from the MLAS enrollment 2010-2019 spreadsheet provided. This table includes Independent Study experiences, Capstone, and research projects.

<i>year</i>	<i># of offerings</i>	<i>% under-enrolled (less than 8 students)</i>	<i>%under-enrolled (less than 5 students)</i>
2015	14	86%	64%
2016	13	92%	54%
2017	10	90%	50%
2018	9	89%	55%
2019	16	88%	88%

While the low enrollment of MLAS courses is troubling and suggests a revisitation of the MLAS curriculum and its delivery to ensure more efficient use of faculty time, as Table 3 shows the number of enrolled students is on par with other North Carolina institutions.

**10. How many degrees have been awarded in the past five years, vis-a-vis original targets and/or predictions, if available?**

Program enrollments for the past five years have varied from 48 in 2013-1014 to 26 in 2017-2018. The UNC System defines "low-productivity" master degree programs as awarding fewer than 35 degrees within the past five years. As seen in this table, the MLAS program, in awarding 61 degrees in the last five years, is above the UNC System's threshold for "low-productivity" master's programs. Furthermore, in the originating Faculty Senate document, it was anticipated that the program would graduate eight students per year after the first few years, a number roughly in line with the program's current graduation rate.

<b>Table 5: MLAS Degrees award in the past five years.</b>			
<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>Fall/Summer</b>	<b>Spring</b>	<b>Total</b>
2013-2014	9	1	10
2014-2015	8	1	9
2015-2016	13	6	19
2016-2017	4	2	6
2017-2018	3	6	9
2018-2019	3	5	8
<b>Total</b>			<b>61</b>

**11. What is the educational mission of this program?**

The goal of the Master of Liberal Arts and Sciences Program is to complement the UNC Asheville’s liberal arts mission while exploring human nature, human values and the quality of human life. The broad-based theme integrates studies ranging from the humanities and the arts to the natural and social sciences. Its diverse scope allows students to choose from a wide range of courses, and the interdisciplinary nature of the program acts to promote a broad, enriched experience in the study of the human condition. The MLAS Program allows graduate students to develop their intellectual passion within a community of thoughtful peers and under the direction of faculty members who champion the value of liberal learning.

*MLAS Program Assessment Plan 2017-1018 and 2019-2020*

**12. How does this program distinguish UNCA regionally, system-wide, and/or nationally?**

A marketing plan or branding strategy to position the MLAS graduate program locally or regionally does not appear to exist within the data provided. An effective marketing strategy would have included an assessment of the competitiveness of the MLAS program compared to other graduate program offerings within Western North Carolina.

From the data provided, major strengths of the MLAS degree include an appeal to lifelong learners and non-traditional students. Within the Program Overview, the

following characteristics of the MLAS program appear to distinguish it nationally, system-wide and regionally:

- Member of the Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs (AGLSP).
- Program builds upon the university's humanities core
- 70% of UNC Asheville AY 2013 enrolled students (529 respondents) considered schools which offered graduate degrees to be more prestigious and hold higher reputations than those that do not (Stamats survey page 24, 2013).
- 81% of UNC Asheville Alumni (333 respondents) agreed that schools offering graduate degrees are more prestigious and enjoy stronger academic reputations than those that do not (Stamats survey page 44, 2013).
- Growing demand for knowledge of sustainability concepts, and for skills and the technological tools for engaging in meaningful decision-making and communication about it.

Admittedly, some of these data (e.g., results from the Stamats survey) can serve merely as rough proxies for the prestige accruing to the university through the MLAS Program. Further information would be needed from community stakeholders (e.g., potential employers and prospective students), administration (both on-campus and down-state), and others in order to determine this specific program's true distinction.

### **13. Is the program attractive for outside funding?**

Potentially. Alumnus Stagg Newman established the Lee and Martha Newman Fund Scholarship, a five-year annual gift of \$10,000 for scholarships and professional development funds. Regarding NEH grants, MLAS Director Gerard Voos reports that no NEH grants are connected directly to the MLAS program. He verified this with the Sponsored Program Office. Beyond the generous support of Mr. Newman, it is unclear whether the university's Advancement Office has promoted the program as a target for endowment, or whether faculty or staff in the program have applied for grants or other funding opportunities.

**14. Is the program competitive in various markets?**

- a. **Specifically, what information can be found on the program graduates' employment?**
- b. **What percentage are employed in positions in which the degree(s) conferred by the program offers the graduate a demonstrated advantage/employment benefit?**
- c. **What percentage are employed in positions in which the degree(s) conferred by the program offers the graduate a demonstrated advantage/employment benefit?**

A market analysis of the competitiveness of the MLAS regionally does not exist. Anecdotal information on MLAS graduates exists but according to the Alumni Office, detailed information on alumni is self reported through LinkedIn or by graduates contacting the Alumni Office. The MLAS Program Overview includes yearly highlights of MLAS graduates.

It appears the university does not collect or maintain data that would support an analysis of this. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain whether a given student entered the MLAS program with a professional position or if the degree assisted in obtaining the position.

It is worth noting that a substantial number of the program's current students are UNC Asheville staff, who take advantage of the opportunity to enroll in a small number of courses without charge.

**15. How has the quality of this program been assessed or are there currently plans in place to assess it (through external review, accreditation, etc.)?**

The MLAS Program Director, in his discussions with subcommittees and in the MLAS Program Review, reported that the program faculty and staff desired and requested assessment but administrative flux did not allow for programmatic review. Prior to the SACS Fifth-Year Interim Report, there is no evidence of programmatic assessment beyond a narrative describing the number of graduates, the interdisciplinary teaching model, the lack of faculty diversity, and the need for additional full-time faculty lines.

The SACS Fifth-Year Interim Report (August 2017) indicates that the MLAS program was scheduled to complete assessment as a part of Cohort 3, and planned to move to a more student-centered assessment plan. At this time, the program developed student learning goals with corresponding learning objectives which are shown in Table 6 in the following question.

Although it is not a formal accrediting organization, the MLAS program is also a member of the Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs.

**16. Specifically, how and when has the program assessed their curriculum and student learning outcomes, both internally and externally? What were the findings of those assessments? What changes have been made in the curriculum in the past five years? Why did the program make these changes, and on the basis of what evidence (e.g., student, alumni, employer survey results)?**

<b>Table 6: MLAS Student Learning Goals and Objectives</b>		
<i>Source: Masters of Liberal Arts &amp; Sciences Program Assessment of Learning 2017-18 through 2019-20 Academic Years, IREP</i>		
<b>Student Learning Goal</b>	<b>Student Learning Objective</b>	<b>Assessment Method</b>
Students will demonstrate an understanding of the intellectual connections among the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities.	Students will demonstrate an understanding of the discipline of natural science.	Capstone/Portfolio Rubric -- Under Development
	Students demonstrate an understanding of the discipline of social science.	Capstone/Portfolio Rubric -- Under Development
	Students demonstrate an understanding of the discipline of humanities.	Capstone/Portfolio Rubric -- Under Development
	Students will integrate knowledge and modes of thinking drawn from more than one discipline.	Capstone/Portfolio Rubric -- Under Development
Students will produce interdisciplinary research, analysis, and writing.	Students will communicate ideas through argument.	Capstone/Portfolio Rubric -- Under Development
	Students will articulate a relevant and researchable research question.	Capstone/Portfolio Rubric -- Under Development
	Students will use evidence to develop a thesis, analysis, or research project.	Capstone/Portfolio Rubric -- Under Development
Students will understand and interrogate the relationship between different perspectives and systems of power.	Students will analyze systems of power.	Capstone/Portfolio Rubric -- Under Development
	Students will apply different perspectives to issues of representation, aesthetics, or sustainability.	Capstone/Portfolio Rubric -- Under Development



In 2017, the MLAS program collaborated with Institutional Research to craft a mission statement, student learning goals, and an assessment plan, however we have not gained access to the data generated from that assessment. We also do not have access to the links to the data used in the assessment report for 2012-13 through 2014-15. Some curricular changes were made in Fall 2019 due to lack of faculty resources.

In the initial APC document, the proposed evaluation procedure was to conduct both an “academic audit” as a quantitative measure and “student evaluations, interviews, and classroom observation” as qualitative measure. It states, “In relation to the MLAS program the judgments of the various ‘audiences’ (students, faculty, administration) will be considered along with the perceptions and judgments of external reviewers.” However, we have no evidence of such assessment.

**17. Would the university rather spend the program's resources on other programs/activities?**

Since each of us are part of the university, this question is to be answered by each individual senator through their vote after reviewing the data provided to all senators, this summary review, and consulting with their constituents.

## Considerations

Our subcommittee discussions generated multiple ideas, considerations, and recommendations regarding the Master of Liberal Arts and Sciences Program and regarding all categories of studies (graduate and undergraduate). Table 7 presents these ideas which could be implemented pending the results of the December 2019 vote.

Table 7: Considerations/Ideas/Recommendations from Individual Reviewers	
Ideas involving programmatic restructuring of the Master of Liberal Arts and Sciences Program	Ideas involving the formal program elimination of the Master of Liberal Arts and Sciences Program
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Restructure the MLAS program to include concentrations from disciplinary departments interested in offering graduate level courses and research opportunities. This idea is a modification of COPLAC Institution <a href="#">Southern Utah University's Masters of Interdisciplinary Studies</a> which requires students to complete a 12-hour liberal arts core, 18 hours from two (9 hours each) specialized concentrations, and master's level capstone. Multiple concentrations from a variety of disciplines may help increase program enrollments. Another COPLAC institution, Henderson State College in Arkadelphia, AR offers a <a href="#">Master of Liberal Arts</a> in which degree seekers complete a nineteen-hour liberal arts core and then choose the remaining hours from nine disciplinary tracks.</li> <li>2. Revisit the 4+1 accelerated degree program. During Session 2 of the October 28, 2019 Common Grounds session Chancellor Cable expressed support of this idea in which undergraduates could earn their baccalaureate degree and, within one additional year, complete the requirements of the Masters of Liberal Arts and Sciences Degree. This program could be enhanced by establishing a pathway to the dual degree through the Honors Program or other university</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Eliminate the MLAS Program as a formal entity and either <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• retain one or more of its certificate programs independently or</li> <li>• develop one or more of its certificate programs into stand-alone graduate programs.</li> </ul> <p>Enrollment patterns suggest that the MLAS program's certificate programs (in Climate Change &amp; Society and Environmental and Cultural Sustainability) may be more successful as independent entities.</p> </li> <li>2. Eliminate the MLAS Program in favor of pursuing an MFA program in a discipline (or disciplines) in line with UNC Asheville's overall mission (e.g., creative writing). While the MLAS Program may not have the market demand to compete with other nearby universities' graduate-level offerings, many potential enrollees may be attracted to other programming explicitly related to the liberal arts.</li> </ol>

<p>departments and programs, as appropriate.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>3. Restructure the MLAS program as an online program that combines some of the ideas from other recommendations on this list. As with any online offerings, both undergraduate and graduate, faculty development in designing, implementing, and assessing online courses would be required.</li><li>4. Establish and market an MLAS focused on the Western North Carolina market for life-long learning opportunities in graduate studies and advanced mid-career development. The MLAS alumni who are staff/employees of UNC Asheville offer strong support and advocacy for the strengths of the program. Additionally, during a recent presentation to the UNC Faculty Assembly, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs and Chief Academic Officer for the UNC System, Kimberly van Noort, stressed that during the next ten years, with the declining population of 18-24 year olds, the UNC system will need to focus more on serving the adult learning population and mid-career students who seek additional certificates and degrees.</li></ol>	
<p><b>Other recommendations:</b></p> <p><b>These recommendations hold for all UNC Asheville academic programs -- graduate and undergraduate.</b></p>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Update website, brochures, pamphlets to reflect revised mission, vision, and student learning outcomes.</li><li>2. Place student learning goals and learning objectives on course syllabi.</li><li>3. Complete the design and implementation of an assessment process that allows for regular data gathering, analysis, and reporting of process.</li></ol>	

## Recommended Ballot for December's Vote

Senators will be asked to vote for one of the following determinations:

- This Masters program has not received the necessary support and feedback needed to thrive or revitalize, and it is expected that this pattern will continue in the future. Therefore, the program should be discontinued.
  
- This Masters program should continue, but with the understanding that its limitations identified in this review are redressed, and the program will adopt a revitalization plan, considering some of the changes and modifications listed for its continuation. It is expected that, with this vote to continue the program, a revitalization plan would receive the necessary support and feedback needed for successful adoption.