

Philosophy Faculty Response to Program Review Evaluation Team Report

Submitted by:

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I. Recommendations/Commendations

In addition to their overall summary that "...the Philosophy program demonstrates consistent excellence in its teaching and service roles at Weber State University," the Review Team discussed seven aspects of the Weber State Philosophy Program: (1) mission, (2) curriculum, (3) student learning outcomes and assessment, (4) academic advising, (5) faculty, (6) program support, and (7) relationships to external communities. We are quite pleased that the Review Team has deemed the program excellent in teaching and service roles, and are appreciative of their specific comments. Here are our responses to their conclusions:

1. Mission

They write, "the program's mission statement is clear and appropriate, though the committee notes that the program should also include in its statement that, along with providing methodological training in logic and analysis, it also provides training in clear and accurate exposition as well as oral communication skills."

- a. Program response: we agree with this recommendation and will modify our mission statement accordingly.
- b. Timeline: as we have one faculty member on sabbatical this term, we will revisit our Mission Statement in fall 2012.
- c. Assessment of action plan and evidence of results: not applicable.

2. Curriculum

Recommendation/commendation: they write, "...given the program's staffing and its large participation in general education, sometimes not enough upper-division courses are offered to meet student demand. We tag this as an area for concern. Faculty have been meeting the additional needs of students through offering independent-study courses, but this is an ad hoc solution, and the demand is certainly sufficient to warrant an additional faculty member (as argued further in E, below)."

- a. Program response: we are in complete agreement with the Review Team, and we note that the 2006 Review Team made the same recommendation. Our consistently high student credit hours and the fact that the number of students pursuing either a major or minor in philosophy has increased both support the addition of tenure-line faculty. Historically, a majority of our

students taking upper division courses have been drawn from intro-level courses taught by tenure-line faculty, rather than those taught by adjuncts. There are two conclusions to be drawn from this. (1) We cannot simply meet the Review Team's recommendation that we offer more upper division courses by shifting the burden of teaching lower-division courses onto adjuncts. Doing so will likely decrease the number of students choosing to take upper division courses. (2) The Addition of tenure-line philosophy faculty will yield more SCHs at both the lower and upper division levels. Thus adding philosophy faculty will be cost effective.

b. Timeline: the timing of this is not in our hands.

c. Assessment of action plan and evidence of results: not applicable.

3. Student learning outcomes and assessment

They write, "the program has developed a straightforward and intelligent system for assessing student learning, both for its general education offerings and for the classes taken for the major. Results from assessment measures indicate that the program is very effective in delivering the education it aims to provide.

Moreover, our conversations with students (including recent graduates) indicate that the program has created a vibrant culture of learning, discovery, and friendly inquiry. Students are welcomed to think critically, challenge their instructors, and think through questions with them. All of the students we met expressed, with hearty enthusiasm, the positive difference the Philosophy program has made in their lives. The steady successes of Ethics Bowl and NOUS further demonstrate the program's success in cultivating a learning environment that extends beyond the classroom.

The review committee also commends the faculty in its efforts to recruit female students to the major, as Philosophy programs are often dominated by male enrollments."

a. Program response: There is no recommendation here. We are appreciative of the positive feedback.

b. Timeline: not applicable.

c. Assessment of action plan and evidence of results: not applicable.

4. Academic advising

They write, "it is clear that the faculty members make themselves readily available to students to advise them about curriculum planning and graduate school opportunities, and students make use of their availability. The program has not developed a formal means for assessing its advising effectiveness, but, for a program of this size, it is not clear that any formal assessment for advising is needed. Conversations with the students amply testify to the helpfulness and availability of advising from the faculty in the program."

a. Program response: while this does not explicitly make a recommendation, we plan on discussing advising assessment to determine whether something a more formal procedure is required.

- b. Timeline: as we have one faculty member on sabbatical this term, we will discuss this matter in fall 2012.
- c. Assessment of action plan and evidence of results: not applicable.

5. Faculty

They write, "... we tag the small number of faculty as an area of concern. The faculty are providing a great service to the university in their general education offerings, but the cost of this service is fewer and less frequent upper-division offerings for Philosophy majors and minors. It is clear that adding one additional tenure-track member to the faculty would go a long way toward meeting this need. Furthermore, by adding a member, the university would also receive additional general education courses, which are surely in great demand as Weber State's enrollments grow. "

- a. Program response: we are in full agreement with this recommendation. Here we would simply reiterate what was said above in our response to the Review Team's recommendation regarding curriculum
- b. Timeline: again, the timing of this is out of our hands.
- c. Assessment of action plan and evidence of results: not applicable.

6. Program support

They write, "the program is well-supported in its operations, including facilities, equipment, and library support. The building in which the program is housed is aged, but renovations are being proposed."

- a. Program response: There is no recommendation here.
- b. Timeline: not applicable.
- c. Assessment of action plan and evidence of results: not applicable.

7. Relationships with external communities

They write, "the program as a whole reaches out to the wider community through its NOUS meetings, Ethics Bowl participation, and its involvement with the Richard Richards Institute. Moreover, it is a "good citizen" among Philosophy programs throughout the state, as it has hosted the Intermountain Philosophy Conference and actively encourages other institutions to participate in Ethics Bowl. It should also be noted that each faculty member is also active with broader community engagements."

- a. Program response: There is no recommendation here. We are appreciative of the positive feedback.
- b. Timeline: not applicable.
- c. Assessment of action plan and evidence of results: not applicable.

II. Department/Program Plans Beyond Program Review Evaluation Team Recommendations

Our immediate and long-term plans are to (1) continue to grow the Philosophy program (by, among other things, recruiting majors and lobbying for additional

tenure-line faculty), (2) further refine our methods of assessment (for example, our capstone assessment tool is being revised to meet changes in content taught, etc.), (3) continue with the extracurricular cited in our self-study, and (4) continue our on-going scholarly agendas.