

Academic Affairs Council Response to the Philosophy Program Review (2016)

I. Introduction

The Philosophy Program at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay offers a disciplinary major and minor. Undergraduate students must complete 11 philosophy courses (33 credits) for a major and 7 courses (21 credits) for a minor. The Program offers 5 courses at the 100 level, including a First-Year Seminar, 10 courses at the 200 level, 6 courses at the 300 level, and 3 courses at the 400 level. Various topics in Philosophy are presented through the courses offered, including ancient through contemporary philosophy, ethical issues, Western and Eastern philosophy and philosophical figures, and interdisciplinary relations with sciences, politics, laws, and more.

There are currently 3 full-time faculty members (1 full professor, 2 Associate Professors). The numbers of declared majors (15~20) and minors (7~20) have been consistent for last 7 years and so have been the number of graduated majors (3~6) and minors (2~5). Highlighted careers after graduation include teaching K-12 grade level and pursuing a higher degree in law, education, or science.

The Philosophy Program provided the Self-Study Report and the supporting materials on April 11, 2016, and the AAC reviewed and discussed the document on May 5, 2016. The AAC notes that the self-study document describes a clear mission statement that shares and supports the mission of the UW-Green Bay. It explains the program's efforts to increase the value of the Philosophy Program inside and outside the campus.

II. Assessment of Student Learning

The program has used the same 5 student learning outcomes for an extended number of years. The program's assessment plan consists of three traditional methods: an exit interview with graduating seniors, feedback from faculty, and comparison between early and late-in-program writing assignments. The program feels that the results have been satisfactory.

III. Program Accomplishments

- Several new courses have been developed and others modified with an interdisciplinary focus to gain student engagement and accommodate growing student interests. As a result, the student enrollments in Philosophy classes have increased from 599 in 2009 to 754 in 2015. This is a remarkable number given the small department.
- The Philosophers Café, an outreach program, has been active since 2000.
- All faculty members are committed to their academic career as scholars. Dr. Jeffreys has published two books and received a grant to teach a new course on punishment. Dr. Kim has published and is working on several works including Asian philosophy of education. Dr. Martin's scholarly work includes selected conference presentations and participation in the University's GPS program.

IV. Program Strengths and Areas in Need of Attention

Strengths:

- The Philosophy program has made significant contributions to General Education requirement at UWGB. In particular, Philosophy offers one course as a First-Year Seminar, two courses (PHILOS 216 & 351) for fulfillment of the Global Culture requirement, 11 courses for fulfillment of the Humanities requirement, and one course (PHILOS 103) for fulfillment of the Quantitative Literacy requirement. The average size of each class is about 40.
- The Philosophy program pays great attention to its students' future after graduation and it has been fairly successful in keeping track of graduates in their careers.
- The program cultivates a culture of developing strong relationships with its students resulting in a positive impact on students' GPAs.

Areas in Need of Attention

- Although the number of students for each Philosophy class meets size expectations, the number of students participating in the philosophy program major and minor are still small.
- The current assessment methods are not quantitative and the actual exit interview questions are not specified.
- The program needs to consider the issue of inclusivity by developing methods to attract and retain students from diverse backgrounds of gender, class and race.
- There appears to be a low rate of participation in undergraduate research.

V. Conclusions and Recommendations.

The UW-Green Bay's Philosophy program is a healthy and meaningful program to undergraduate students. The program is invested in its students and finds ways to serve and lead students not only during their stay on the campus but also after their graduation.

The size of the program is small but its contribution to the University is not, in particular to the area of General Education. The AAC appreciates the faculty members' effort to maintain and enhance its contribution to UW-Green Bay, and recommends the following to continue to optimize the betterment of the program:

- The AAC recommends that the Philosophy Program keeps its current level of contribution to General Education.
- Expand opportunities for undergraduates to participate in research with faculty.
- The Philosophy program enrolls a large number of students in General Education courses, however, few students continue on to major and minor in Philosophy. Students may have bought into the widely held notion that there is little practical value to a major or minor in Philosophy, but we believe this is a misperception. Members of the AAC note the value of the discipline of Philosophy in developing critical thinking and ethical perspectives in students. These skills and perspectives have great value to many different career paths, including medical and law school, to name just two. We urge the Philosophy program to develop new ideas to attract students towards the major and

minor by sharing this information more strongly within its General Education courses and Freshman Seminar. Another possible direction is to promote integration with other majors through an interdisciplinary approach, and finally, another approach may be to develop another First-Year Seminar in order to engage students early on for higher retention rates in the field of Philosophy as a major or minor, especially among under-represented student groups.

- The current traditional assessment methods have worked because of the size of the student body. However, the program needs to develop a better and stronger assessment plan to accommodate for the growing average philosophy course size which has now increased to 34.2 per class. It should show an analysis quantitatively and each learning outcomes should be assessed on various courses regularly.
- We encourage the program to consider revising the student learning outcomes to include measurement of the outcomes for students who take philosophy courses for General Education, and possibly look at separate/different learning outcomes for majors.