DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
PROGRAM REVIEW

REVIEW PROCESS

The Department of Philosophy prepared a self-study following program review guidelines. A two-person external review team visited the campus; reviewed the self-study documents; interviewed unit personnel, university administrators, undergraduate and graduate students; and submitted an external review report. The Program Review Committee (PRC) studied all written materials. The PRC liaison for the Department discussed the self-study materials with the department chair and faculty. The PRC discussed the Department with the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. This document reflects the PRC’s findings and recommendations.

SUMMARY OF THE SELF-STUDY

Mission & History

Mission. The Department of Philosophy is dedicated to enriching the Bowling Green State University learning community, the national and international philosophical community, and society at-large through a vigorous program of scholarship, teaching, and community service. The Department concentrates these efforts on issues in applied philosophy as well as related theoretical issues. The Department purports to carry out this mission through:

- A vigorous program of philosophical scholarship and publication;
- An innovative doctoral program that prepares philosophers well to address significant philosophical issues in a variety of careers;
- A stimulating and lively undergraduate program that prepares majors and minors both to understand philosophy and think philosophically, and to utilize this training throughout their lives;
- An extensive involvement in general education at both the introductory and more advanced levels designed to enable students to identify and think critically about philosophical issues in general, and evaluative issues in particular, that lie at the heart of many of the problems and question they will need to deal with in their lives.

History. The Philosophy Department arose out of the decision in the early 1970s to develop a series of service courses, primarily in support of the programs in the newly formed College of Health and Human Services. In 1978, the Department decided to move its master’s program in an applied direction—the examination of philosophical theories and concepts as they apply to issues that arise in primarily professional contexts.
Concurrent with these developments, the Social Philosophy and Policy Center was established and took its place, along with the Philosophy Documentation Center (publisher of The Philosopher’s Index, the major indexer of philosophical journals and books) as an important player in the philosophical community. In the early 1980s, the Department established its Ph.D. program in applied philosophy. The Department views the most recent seven-year period as one of solidifying and refining the new environment.

Description of the Unit, its Programs, and Relevant Policies

Program Identification. No programs are included in this self-study that are separate from the Department. However, the Department’s programs are greatly enhanced by the Social Philosophy and Policy Center. The Center has also assisted faculty recruitment by providing research appointments and the attendant released time for research to strengthen some of the start up packages offered by the Department.

The Department has four main instructional areas—graduate, undergraduate, general education, and service. Students can earn both the Ph.D. and M.A. in applied philosophy at the graduate level, and the B.A. in philosophy at the undergraduate level. Students can also minor in philosophy. The Department teaches approximately 900 students in the fall and 700 students in the spring in its general education programs at the 100 level. The Department also teaches a series of courses at the 200 and 300 levels that are either required or strongly recommended in other programs. The Department participates in the Honors Program by typically offering 4-5 honors sections of its courses; it also cross-lists courses with several interdisciplinary programs.

Faculty Resources. The Department has the same number of faculty positions now as it did in 1994-95. Three faculty resigned to take positions at other universities, while six new faculty were hired, including one senior hire and two younger faculty who were hired to fill one of the vacated senior positions. All faculty teach both graduate and undergraduate courses and serve on departmental committees. The standard teaching assignments in the Department is four courses per year.

Graduate Assistant Resources. Graduate assistant resources provided by the University were $3,343 less at the end of the review period than at the outset. The number of graduate students supported decreased by 17, or 38.6%.

Staff Resources. The Department began the review period with three secretaries and a part-time administrative assistant, but lost one of its secretaries in September 2001 as part of the University’s cost cutting measures. The Department terminated the administrative assistant line and used the funds to facilitate the hiring of two junior faculty.

Majors and Graduate Students. The number of philosophy majors has ranged between 18 and 26 throughout the review period. The ACT scores and high school GPA of philosophy majors is consistently above that of the university average, with the exception of one year where the GPA was slightly below average.
Starting in fall 2000, graduate students were admitted directly to the doctoral program (except for those only seeking a master’s degree). Since 1988, the Department has admitted 141 students from 123 institutions to do graduate work. Domestic students have out-numbered international students by approximately 3 to 1—105 domestic students versus 36 international students. The average overall GPA of the students admitted is 3.36, and the average GPA in philosophy is 3.65. The Graduate Record Exam scores over the last seven years for students admitted to the philosophy program are significantly above the university average.

Over the last seven years the number of domestic students enrolled in the graduate program has generally remained in the low to mid 30s. The number of ethnic minorities and women has remained fairly constant, with both experiencing slight increases over the seven year period.

Student Credit Hour Production. Student credit hour production has remained fairly consistent, and is similar in 2001-02 to what it was in 1994-95.

Recruitment and Retention Efforts. At the undergraduate level, the Department’s recruitment efforts focus on making students aware of what philosophy is, and the value and excitement of its study through (1) general education offerings at the introductory level; (2) honors sections of the introductory classes; (3) the Great Debate series; and (4) maintaining a visible presence at Preview Day and Major Mania.

The Department has paid increased attention to student retention in the last few years by reviving the Philosophy Club, a student-led group with a faculty advisor; introducing a welcome gathering for all students early in the fall semester and a farewell party at the end of spring semester; and holding its first annual Undergraduate Student Innovation and Research Awards Conference, which gives undergraduates the opportunity to submit original papers that, if selected by a blind review process, are presented at a conference.

Graduate recruitment efforts revolve around the website, with follow-up contacts with prospective students by-e-mail and telephone. All those who inquire about the program receive an information and application packet. Every effort is made to bring students the Department wants to admit to the program to campus for a visit before they make the final decision as to which university to attend. Currently, students receive a stipend of $12,000 ($10,000 for the academic year plus $2,000 for the summer), as well as a full scholarship covering both tuition and the general fee.

Retention efforts focus on trying to ensure that students are successful in the program. Another factor promoting retention is that the Department encourages students to do an outside internship. The Social Philosophy and Policy Center also typically offers an opportunity for one to two students a year to work at the Center.

Vision and Values Initiative. The Department has a strong interest in, and commitment to, the university’s Vision and Values Initiative. One department member served on the planning committee that conceptualized and proposed the initiative, and one taught in the pilot program.
Facilities and Equipment/Instrumentation. The Department has been able to provide all faculty and staff with appropriate computing capability. Graduate teaching assistants have older computers in their offices. The Department, in conjunction with Information Technology Services, created a computer laboratory used primarily by students whose programs are housed in Shatzel Hall. The Department recently purchased state of the art equipment for the seminar room in which it holds most graduate classes and colloquia, enabling the videotaping of student and faculty presentations as well as the enhancement of lectures and presentations with PowerPoint and other software.

Information Resources. Starting in the late 1960’s the Jerome Library built an excellent collection of contemporary philosophy books and journals because the Philosophy Documentation Center donated the more than 300 journals it indexed annually to the library. It also donated all books and journals that they retrospectively indexed while being affiliated with the University. With the departure of The Philosopher’s Index in the late 1990’s, and the University’s severance of its relationship with the Philosophy Documentation Center in 2000, this source of books and journals disappeared.

The Department has developed a modest collection of its own which is housed in the Richard H. Lineback Reading Room. This collection, which contains monographs and textbooks donated by faculty, and a handful of journals to which the Department subscribes, is available to faculty and students.

Financial Resources. The Department used a significant part of the funds provided by the Academic Challenge awards it received to increase it operating budget. Total operating expenditures averaged approximately $59,000 per year throughout the review period. In addition, through the generosity of a faculty member, an internal endowment has been created that is nearing $100,000. When it reaches that amount, the Department will begin using the income from the endowment.

The funding the Department has received through sponsored programs and external grants during the review period is limited to grants for graduate student support, faculty research leaves, and a few projects.

The Department has a small account at the BGSU Foundation. It includes one endowed scholarship and some unrestricted funds. Because of the limitations imposed by the small number of majors, fundraising has not been a priority for the Department, although the Department recently received a generous donation of $5,000 to support the Richard H. Lineback Reading Room.

Self-Evaluation of Program

Faculty Quality and Productivity. There are 17 full-time members of the Department, including three probationary faculty who were hired in August 2002. In addition, the Executive Director of the Social Philosophy and Policy Center has a 25% appointment in the Department and teaches one course per year.
Research Focus. The Department believes that its strength is its highly unusual focus in the applied and theoretical areas of moral, social, and political philosophy. The strength of the focus in moral and political philosophy is, in another way, a weakness. The Department includes only one historian, who is a scholar of ancient Greek philosophy, and it includes only three people with a current research interest in the core areas of philosophy.

Reputation and Competitiveness. One measure of the Department’s reputation in the discipline is its ranking in the 2001-2002 “Leiter Report”, which is an annual ranking of doctoral programs in philosophy. The report is widely considered to be reliable; it is the only ranking of its kind in the discipline. The Department’s ranking for 2001-02 is consistent with the ranking the Department has received for the last several years.

The Leiter Report currently does not place the Department among the top 50 doctoral programs in philosophy, but it mentions the Department specifically as a department with a “specialty niche where it is prominent.” This strength is said to be in applied moral and political philosophy. In this area, the doctoral program is rated as “Excellent” and ranked among the top three programs in the world. In Metaethics, the Department is rated “Good” and ranked among the top fifteen programs worldwide and among the top dozen programs in the United States. In Political Philosophy, the Department is rated “Notable” and ranked among the top 26 programs worldwide, and among the top 21 in the country.

Productivity. During the five calendar years, 1997 to 2001, the current members of the Department had a total of 113 publications in philosophy journals, encyclopedias, or anthologies. Members of the Department also published two books. One member of the Department wrote and produced a television program for WBGU/PBS and another has written and produced several radio scripts. Several of the faculty work as editors of philosophy journals.

Nine members of the Department published at a rate of one major publication (an article or book) per year or better, and four published at a rate of better than two articles per year. Three members of the Department had one or fewer than one publication during the five-year period.

Diversity. There are now four females and one African-American among the full-time faculty.

Quality of Curriculum, Instruction, and Support Services. The Department states that it offers a fairly standard undergraduate curriculum for general education and majors/minors, as well as an unusually broad range of applied philosophy courses, primarily for students in other majors. At the graduate level, basic coverage of the traditional areas of philosophy is provided, but the focus on the issues of applied philosophy and the theoretical issues directly related to them gives the program its unique identity.

General Education Service (100 level). The Department teaches about 1600 students per year in its introductory general education program. The Department’s desire to have the students in general education courses taught by experienced regular faculty competes with the desire to have small classes, which in turn competes with the institutional and collegial pressure to teach classes in a cost-effective way.
Service to Other Majors (200 and 300 level). The applied philosophy courses that primarily focus on value issues arising in the professions and other disciplines are an important area of strength for the Department. Student evaluations for these courses tend to be above the department average and faculty and advisors in the programs they serve tend to speak of them highly. Most of these courses are offered every semester in classes of approximately 45.

Undergraduate Major (B.A.) and Minor. Although the number of majors and minors is small, graduates report being quite pleased with their choice to major or minor in philosophy and the education they received. However, because of the small size of the program, many of the more specialized undergraduate courses (typically offered at the 400-level) that are important to majors and minors often had to be cancelled because of low enrollments, a situation that causes the quality of the program to suffer.

The Department is attempting to address these problems by (1) strengthening the requirements for the major by now requiring two courses at the 400-level; (2) getting an agreement with the College to allow two small 400-level courses to be offered each term as long as there are at least three or four students enrolled; and (3) setting a goal of increasing the number of majors to between 39 and 46, which would allow a more varied selection of specialized 400-level courses to be offered.

Graduate (Ph.D. and M.A.). In 1998, the Department began a systematic review that resulted in a number of changes being implemented in fall 2000, with the most significant changes being:

• Creation of a unified five to six year Ph.D. program with students earning the M.A. at the appropriate stage in the program;
• Creation of an M.A. option for students not interested in earning the Ph.D.;
• Restructuring of the qualifying examination; and
• Fine-tuning and systematizing the course requirements for the degree.

Vision and Values Initiative. The Department aspires to continue playing a significant role in this initiative.

Quality of Graduate Students and Their Learning Experience in the Program. The primary indicators of the quality of students and their learning experience in the program are the students’ entry attributes, and their placement and publication record upon completion of the program. Even with a decline in the size of the applicant pool in recent years, the Department still admitted only one out of every six and a half applicants for the fall 2001. However, the Department is concerned that some of its top applicants are going to other programs.

Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes. The Department has six learning outcomes for its majors and minors.

• Read and comprehend sophisticated philosophical texts.
• Critically evaluate philosophical arguments.
• Construct and defend philosophical arguments in well-organized, clear, and concise prose.
• Demonstrate mastery of basic philosophical concepts and methods in both oral and written contexts.
• Apply critical thinking and argument-evaluation skills to those philosophical issues and arguments that present themselves in everyday life.
• Engage in rational, civil discourse about complex and emotionally laden topics in a manner that is respectful to others.

The Department assesses student learning in the following ways:
• All courses involve writing papers and/or essay exams that are evaluated in terms of the relevant learning outcomes.
• Students are encouraged to participate in philosophical discussion in class and during office hours. Faculty responses to the ideas presented are based upon the relevant learning outcomes. Faculty are encouraged to include the learning outcomes on their syllabi and discuss the outcomes and methods of achieving them in their classes.
• Recent graduates are surveyed to ascertain their perception of the philosophy program and the value of their course of study since graduation.
• Faculty are encouraged to conduct mid-semester or periodic informal evaluations of their classes in which students are asked to anonymously assess their achievement with regard to the learning outcomes for the class. Students are also asked to suggest ways of improving the course so as to better achieve learning outcomes.
• Students complete course evaluation forms at the end of each semester in every course. The form includes a self-assessment of progress on the Department’s learning outcomes.
• Undergraduate Student Innovation and Research Awards Conference (undergraduates submit original papers which, if selected by a blind review process, are presented at a conference sponsored by the Department).

The main findings of the Department’s assessment program to date are:
• Students enjoy doing philosophy. However, a greater number of courses that challenge majors and minors is needed.
• Student achievement of the learning outcomes was clearly evident in the papers and presentations for the Undergraduate Innovation and Research Awards Conference.
• Graduates perceive that their study of philosophy contributes to their success after graduation.

The Department has introduced the following as a result of its assessment of the undergraduate program:
• The inclusion of the learning outcomes on syllabi.
• The use of mid-term course evaluations.
• The Undergraduate Student Innovation and Research Awards Conference.

The Department’s assessment of graduate student learning involves its M.A. Examination, its Ph.D. Preliminary Examination, and the oral defense of the dissertation. However, the Department believes the heart of its assessment of doctoral students lies in its internal grading system and bi-annual graduate student review. Because the Department believes that the University’s grading scale of A, B, C, D, and F does not allow for a realistic assessment of graduate student work in individual courses, faculty also submit an internal grade utilizing
plusses and minuses as appropriate for each graduate student taught. Along with this grade, a brief narrative describing the strengths and/or weaknesses of the student’s performance is provided. Once each semester, the graduate faculty meet to review the progress of graduate students. With the internal grade reports serving as the backdrop, the degree progress of each student is discussed. Both strengths and things the student needs to work on are noted and, in some cases, appropriate ways of addressing problems are recommended. The director of graduate studies communicates the results of the graduate review to each student.

*Quality and Focus of Service Program.* In addition to the services provided to the University community, members of the Department have also participated in a number of more specialized and focused service efforts throughout the review period.

*Instructional Demand.* With the exception of specialized courses offered for majors, philosophy courses are in high demand. General education courses invariably fill. Many of the service courses offered primarily for philosophy majors have significant enrollment, while the specialized advanced courses are hard to fill.

*Employment Demand for Program Graduates.* At the undergraduate level, philosophy helps one develop a set of skills that are crucial for many careers: problem solving, communication (written and oral), analytical (critical and reflective) reading, and persuasiveness. These skills allow philosophy majors to typically do better on the LSAT than others, as well as outpace all other majors in acceptance to medical schools.

The University has awarded the Ph.D. in applied philosophy to a total of 34 graduates since 1993 when the first degree was awarded. Eleven of the 34 (32.4%) are female and 12 (35.3%) came to the program from other countries.

Thirty of the 34 (88.2%) graduates are employed in an area directly related to their degree including 27 (79.4%) who are in university or college teaching positions. Six of the program’s graduates with continuing teaching positions are employed in departments other than philosophy.

This placement record exceeds the expectations set down by the Ohio Board of Regents Advisory Committee on Graduate Study in it’s “Guidelines and Procedures for Review and Approval of Graduate Degree Programs” that “more than 75% of the graduates find employment related to their field, consistent with the mission of the program, within three years after graduation.”

Two students have enrolled in the (terminal) master’s degree program since its inception. One works in a local hospital setting as a bioethicists/counselor. The other is a recent University graduate who wants to study more philosophy but does not want to pursue a Ph.D.

*Centrality to the University Mission.* The Department aspires to provide students with philosophical skills and understandings that will broaden their perspectives and enhance their ability to reason carefully and to make thoughtful decisions throughout their lives.
The Social Philosophy and Policy Center helps to enhance the visibility of the Department within the discipline. The Center is an invaluable ally in recruiting and retaining excellent faculty to the Department.

Financial Resources and Adequacy of Resources. Expenditures per student credit hour in the Department, although on a downward path, are well above the College average.

The Department has a four course teaching load which is about average for doctoral departments in the discipline, albeit a little on the high side for top rated programs.

The Department tries to limit general education courses to 30 students in discussion sections of lecture classes, and 35 students in other sections. Services courses offered for other majors are limited to 45. Most of the courses for philosophy majors attract 15-30 students, although the two per term offered on more specialized topics invariably have fewer than 10 students enrolled. Graduate courses are scheduled for a projected average enrollment of seven students.

Adequacy of Resources. The Department believes its computing needs have been adequately met thus far, but that their computers are now in need of memory and operating system enhancements and should be replaced within two to three years at most. The Department believes that the laboratory maintained by ITS needs upgrading and that the graduate teaching assistants need newer computers.

The library support for philosophy is judged “adequate” by the library staff, and the Department concurs. However, the Department hopes priority will be given by the library to the need to support the doctoral program in applied philosophy.

The Department believes its budget should remain adequate for the next several years because of the internal endowment that will increase the operating funds available to the Department by three to five thousand dollars per year when it comes on line. The Department’s funding priorities for the next few years will be establishing a one week scholar-in-residence program and working with ITS and the College of Arts & Sciences to develop and implement a plan to upgrade its desktop computing capabilities.

Available funds support 15 to 20 percent fewer students at the end of the review period than at the beginning because of the increase in the amount of stipends; the Department desires an increase in University support so that it can support the same number of students it supported at the beginning of the review period.

In the next five years, the Department will most likely experience a number of retirements, and the Department believes that a failure to replace any of these would result in a weakening of the Department’s expertise in the retiree’s area of specialization and result in a reduction of course offerings at all levels.
Unit Planning the Next Seven Years

The Department has established a number of goals and with detailed strategies to meet those goals, which are summarized as follows:

Goal I. Maintain and continue to promote faculty excellence in teaching, research, and service.
- Continue to recruit outstanding new faculty as positions become available.
- Continue to promote faculty publication and presentations.
- Maintain diversity of faculty.
- Implement scholar-in-residence program (2003-04).
- Continue to support colloquia and conferences.
- Maintain adequate desktop publishing capabilities for faculty and staff.
- Continue enriching the intellectual life of the community through activities such as the Great Debate series.
- Continue to encourage team teaching and other forms of scholarly collaboration as appropriate.
- Continue to encourage faculty working in applied areas to engage in teaching, research and service activities that facilitate internship opportunities for graduate students.

Goal II. Maintain the high quality and status of the doctoral program.
- Maintain and promote faculty excellence in teaching and research.
- Secure and maintain appropriate faculty coverage and strength for the doctoral program in applied philosophy.
- Maintain and improve the quality of graduate students and placements by increasing size of applicant pool; securing acceptances from more of the program’s top choices; maintain the competitiveness of assistantships; maintaining diversity of graduate students; and adding electronic teaching portfolios to placement dossiers (2003-04).
- Increase doctoral enrollments to the critical mass necessary for optimal graduate student learning by securing institutional support for additional graduate assistants to reach level of seven admissions to the doctoral program per year (2003-04).
- Maintain and improve the quality of the curriculum and student learning by maintaining the internship program at its current level of vigor; securing appropriate hardware and software upgrades for the Shatzel Hall computing lab (2002-03); initiating graduation exit surveys and interviews to secure continuous feedback on the program (2004-05); and systematically reviewing the graduate program (2007-08).

Goal III. Strengthen major/minor program and increase the number of majors to 39-46 (an increase of 50-75%) within the next seven years.
- Consult with colleagues at peer institutions (Ohio University and Kent State) that have more majors per total student credit hours in philosophy to develop appropriate strategies for increasing the number of majors (2002-03).
- Implement strategies for increasing the number of majors (2003-04).
- Continue to support and emphasize quality instruction in the general education and honors courses that are feeders for the major (ongoing).
• Continue to support enrichment activities such as the Philosophy Club, the Undergraduate Student Innovation and Research Awards Conference and the Great Debate series.
• Re-establish the part-time administrative assistant position (2003-04).
• Continuously monitor the program to insure that it is of high quality and meeting the needs of students.
• Initiate graduation exit surveys and interviews with majors to secure continuous feedback on program (2003-04).

Goal IV. Increase enrollment in the master’s program to 1-2 new students per year.
• Develop and implement a marketing plan for the program in the northwest Ohio region (2003-04).
• Continuously monitor the program to insure that it is of high quality and meeting the needs of students (ongoing) by initiating graduation exit surveys and interviews to secure continuous feedback on program (2004-05) and systematically reviewing the graduate program (2007-08).

Goal V. Continue playing a central role in the vision and values initiative.
• Create a separate course number to meet the proposed values course requirement (2002-03).
• Contribute four sections per year to the vision and values initiative (2003-04).
• Contribute three additional sections per year to the vision and values initiative for each additional faculty positions authorized (as available).

RESULTS OF PREVIOUS REVIEWS

This is the first cycle of academic program review for the Department of Philosophy.

SUMMARY OF THE EXTERNAL REPORT

Gerald Dworkin and Wayne Sumner, the external reviewers, visited the Bowling Green campus during November 20-22, 2002. They reported that they had been supplied in advance with the department’s self-study plus extensive supporting documentation. During their visit they met with the Vice Provost for Academic Programs, the Dean of the Graduate College, the Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, eight faculty members from the Department (including the Chair, the Assistant Chair, the Graduate Advisor, and the Undergraduate Advisor), and separate groups of graduate students and undergraduate majors.

The reviewers devoted separate sections of their report to the four main areas under review—the faculty, the graduate and undergraduate programs, and the Department administration—and to their recommendations.

External Report Findings

Faculty. The reviewers noticed an unusual concentration of resources in the normative area that results from the Department’s specialized doctoral program in applied philosophy. They
found that the faculty range from those who have only a local reputation and relatively little research output to those who have a national/international reputation and are very productive, with a tendency for seniority and reputation to be inversely related. They noted that by the standards of the discipline, the more productive members of the Department are doing very well.

The reviewers found that the Department has sufficient faculty with good reputations to have gained some national recognition, and also cited the Department’s rankings in the Leiter Report referred to in the Department’s self-study.

The reviewers see opportunity for the Department to build on the quality of the faculty already in place to enhance the Department’s reputation and thereby its ability to attract first-rate graduate students as they replace retiring faculty.

**Undergraduate program.** The reviewers stated that the current number of philosophy majors has been too small to support an adequate number of 400-level courses tailored specifically to their needs, noting that the majors with whom they met would clearly welcome more such courses. These students expressed dissatisfaction with upper-level courses shared with students from other programs, whose lack of preparation in philosophy lowered the level at which the course could be pitched.

The reviewers mentioned that despite the fact the Department had already put in place some initiatives designed to attract students to philosophy, there was a feeling on the part of both students and some faculty that not enough faculty were willing to participate in these events.

The reviewers found that the department members had a standard teaching load, although a sizeable proportion of its undergraduate courses, especially at the lower level, are being taught by graduate assistants or other part-timers. If the Department wishes to attract more majors then it might be wise to have more of its undergraduate instruction, especially at the 100-level, done by regular faculty.

**Graduate program.** The reviewers stated that the Department’s national reputation, and ability to attract high-quality graduate students, is clearly a function of its niche identity as an applied philosophy program and its strength in the broad normative area. They felt the present level of graduate funding ($12,000/yr guaranteed for 5 to 6 years) should be competitive, especially when the relatively low cost of living in Bowling Green is taken into consideration.

The reviewers found that morale among the current graduate cohort appears to be good, with the atmosphere felt to be collegial. They assessed the Department’s placement record in recent years as good.

At the same time, they noted there was some division of opinion among the students with whom they met concerning the present orientation of the program. Some felt that the hiring that had been done in recent years was causing the Department to lose its primary focus on such applied areas as bioethics and environmental ethics. Others supported the recent hiring on the ground that good applied ethics presupposes a solid grounding in ethical/political theory. No one suggested that the program should abandon its niche identity in applied philosophy; rather, the
disagreement seemed to be about how applied philosophy is best understood and practiced. The reviewers therefore felt compelled to emphasize that they endorse the view that working to a high standard in applied ethics requires a strong background in normative theory (as well as the other traditional areas of philosophy, such as metaphysics and epistemology).

One of the unique aspects of the Department’s graduate experience identified by the reviewers is the internship program, although they said the current status of the program appears to be in some doubt.

The reviewers commented that some other programs have adopted a shorter norm of five years (from B.A.), and the Department might wish to consider whether it really needs to dedicate three years to course work and then a further three to thesis preparation.

Department administration. The talent and dedication of the current chair, assistant chair, graduate advisor, and undergraduate advisor impressed the reviewers. They agreed with the generally shared opinion among the faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates that they were all doing a good job, particularly the chair.

The reviewers stated that the Department appears to be well served by its present location in Schatzel Hall, but did not feel qualified to comment on the Department’s self-expressed need for additional administrative staff and resources.

External Report Recommendations

Faculty. The Department must replace all of its losses, and there is a special need to bring in a historian of modern philosophy, who is necessary in order to be able to provide a well-rounded program at both the graduate and undergraduate level. It will also be necessary to replace the retiring faculty member in ancient philosophy. However, most appointments will inevitably be in the normative area to build on the Department’s current strength. Appointments outside the normative area should be made only in order to provide enough breadth of coverage to ensure a well-rounded education for graduate students whose primary strength will continue to be in ethics/applied ethics. Within the primary area the ideal hires will be philosophers with demonstrated strength in ethical/political theory plus a serious and sustained commitment to some applied area.

Instead of focusing on particular applied areas as the need arises, the Department should shop the market opportunistically, hiring the best candidate available in a particular year regardless of area of applied specialization. It would also be desirable, if possible, to make a senior appointment to replace the loss of the Eminent Scholar and add immediate prestige to the program.

Undergraduate program. The Department needs to thoroughly review its undergraduate program, with the aim of finding a way to significantly increase the number of its majors. Among options worth considering the external reviewers suggest:

1) The Department should be particularly well-positioned to sell itself to students through it introductory applied ethics courses. Many of these are at the 300-level with prerequisites, so
one or two of them might be moved to the 100-level to create interest in the program. Alternatively, new 100-level courses could be devised to broaden the appeal of philosophy to first-year students.

2) The Department should consider developing combined or interdisciplinary majors in which philosophy is a principal ingredient.

3) The Department should consider staffing as many of its introductory courses as possible with regular faculty, especially those who have demonstrated the ability to teach effectively at this level, while ensuring that every faculty member assumes a fair share of undergraduate teaching by rigorously enforcing the existing norm of one graduate course per academic year.

4) The Department should undertake a sustained commitment to the kinds of activities (such as public lectures and debates) designed to showcase philosophy on campus, while providing strong support for the activities of the undergraduate Philosophy Club.

5) The Department should decide what sort of role it sees for itself in the Values Initiative Program.

Graduate program. The program should be monitored during the course of the next review cycle in order to determine whether incremental changes would be advisable. Areas appropriate for rethinking include:

1) The Department needs to either take the internship program more seriously and help students find assistantships, or drop the internship program.

2) It is unclear what the function of the MA examination is. If the MA exam is meant to ensure breadth of competence across the discipline, then this goal might be achieved by means of distribution requirements for courses. If, on the other hand, it is meant to identify students who should be terminated at the MA stage then it will need to be given more teeth.

3) The Department should consider either shortening the official length of the doctoral program, reducing the time allocated to the dissertation, or both.

4) The Department needs to intensify its recruitment efforts by maintaining its standing in the Leiter Report and by advertising its wares on its website. It should consider appointing a new Recruitment Officer to organize campus visits, follow-up contact with potential recruits, etc.

5) The Department might find it advantageous to seek some flexibility in the packages for graduate student support, with top-up funds available to provide additional inducements in cases where very promising students might otherwise be lost to rival institutions.

The external report emphasized that the Department needs to hire the best faculty available to fill the vacancies that will occur during the next review cycle to maintain the integrity of its program. It also commented that the MA program should be better marketed to attract an appropriate pool of qualified applicants.

Administration. The external report advises the chair to continue to play a strong leadership role. It also advises that a Recruitment Officer should be hired whose mandate would be to ensure the quality of admissions to the graduate program.

In conclusion, the external report advises the Department to take advantage of its opportunity for further improvement over the next few years, both in its faculty complement and in its teaching programs.
PROGRAM REVIEW COMMITTEE FINDINGS

A clear strength of the Department is the stature of its applied philosophy doctoral program, which is rated as “Excellent” and ranked among the top six programs in the country by the most recent “Leiter Report,” the most authoritative ranking of philosophy departments. Another strength is the national reputation earned by some of the members of the Department, along with the strong publication records of these members. A third strength is the Department’s links to the honors program, teaching four to five honors sections per year, as well as its participation in interdisciplinary programs. The Department should also be commended for its very thorough unit plan.

We also note the positive and supportive relationship the Department has with the Social Philosophy and Policy Center. Currently, the Center provides increased prestige for the Department, offers a limited number of internship opportunities for graduate students, and aids the Department in recruiting new faculty through research opportunities made available through the Center.

Findings Requiring Action

1. Number of undergraduate majors and minors. The number of undergraduate majors is too small for the faculty to provide a sufficient number of courses to meet the needs of the students in the major. Having courses that combine majors with graduate students—or with non-majors who have taken no prerequisites—does not adequately meet the needs of the majors, and does not seem to be a solution to this problem. And when there is strong demand for service and general education courses taught by the Department, allowing the Department to teach specialized courses for majors each semester as long they have at least three students (as is currently being done by agreement with the College) is not an efficient solution.

Similarly, there are fewer minors than one would expect at a university of this size. An increase in the number of both majors and minors would be desirable.

2. Requirements for major. The requirements for the major do not constitute a curriculum, if a “curriculum” implies more than a collection of courses. The major has very few courses solely for majors, no required sequences of courses, and no capstone course or culminating experience.

3. Assessment. The Department’s primary assessment methods currently include faculty evaluations of student performance on course evaluations and papers, surveys of graduates, end-of-semester student course evaluations, informal mid-semester student assessments of student progress toward meeting course learning outcomes, and the Undergraduate Student Innovation and Research Awards Conference. These methods are minimal, focusing on the course level rather than the program level. These methods do not provide the Department with sufficient information to help them revise their undergraduate curriculum.

4. Graduate student recruiting. The number of Eastern European graduate students has declined near the end of the review period.
5. Faculty Productivity and Workload. Some faculty are extremely productive, but others are not. Some faculty seem to have teaching loads out of balance with their low level of research productivity. A second workload issue has to do with reassigned time for administrative duties. The Department grants an unusual and generous amount of release time for administrative and service duties. For example, a one-course release is given to advising of majors, but there is a relatively small number of majors. Given the small number of major advisees, the person receiving a one-course release for advising could also be working on undergraduate retention by undertaking activities such as organizing the Great Debate series. The case for additional resources is not consistent with the Department’s use of reassigned time.

6. Values Initiative. The PRC agrees with the external reviewers that the Department has played a only small role in the nascent values initiative program. One of its faculty members has served on the advisory committee, while another taught one of the pilot courses.

7. Internship program. The internship program is an excellent idea. However, it is not being run very effectively. Students are largely responsible for finding their own internships, and only a limited number find such internships. Given the success of the applied program, the development more links with other hospitals and medical centers is an obvious priority.

8. Length of the doctoral program. An expectation of three years of course work and three years to complete the dissertation is longer than what is expected by some philosophy departments. While the Department explains this extra time by citing the internship program, most students do not appear to have internships.

9. Balance Between Applied and Theoretical Applied Philosophy. The Department has a clear strength in the applied area and at present has a minimum number of faculty with strength in theoretical areas. The external reviewers had some specific suggestions for how to structure this balance in terms of specific hires. The PRC relies on the department’s judgment as to how well these suggestions will help achieve the desired balance.

PROGRAM REVIEW COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on reviews of the self-study and external review documents, and consistent with the major findings that resulted from these reviews, the PRC makes the following recommendations. For detail about the rationale for each recommendation, see the finding with the corresponding number, just above.

1. Number of undergraduate majors and minors. The Department should establish as a high priority greater faculty involvement in activities designed to recruit and retain majors. One step the Department has discussed and should take by spring of 2004 is to move some of the 300 level courses to the 100 level where potential majors could be exposed to philosophy. The Department should assign tenured and tenure track professors, who might be able to attract more students to the major, to its 100 level courses.

The Department should develop a strategy to attract more majors and minors and should discuss this plan with the Dean of Arts & Sciences by the end of fall semester, 2003.
2. Requirements for major. The Department needs to complete a comprehensive review of its major. By spring 2005, the Department should have revised the requirements for its major, incorporating either a core curriculum or culminating activity, so there is more cohesion to the major.

3. Assessment. The Department should develop additional methods of assessment that will give them information they can use when they revise their major. Assessment tools need to be developed that can help the Department determine how to revise its major requirements. Assessment needs to be treated as an integral part of the program, not as an add on. Plans for assessment should be incorporated into the curriculum revision, referred to above.

4. Graduate student recruitment. Because the Department states that the graduate program was financially and academically enhanced by the presence of Eastern European students, and because federal funding for such students is no longer as widely available, by the fall of 2005, the Department should develop a strategy for recruiting high quality graduate students, including an appropriate mix of international students.

5. Faculty productivity and workload. By spring of 2004, the Department should develop a comprehensive policy for determining work loads. Under this policy, access to the 2-2 teaching load should be dependent on proof of research productivity. Similarly, the policy should ensure better use of the release time that is granted. The policy should be presented to the Dean of Arts & Sciences for his approval by the end of January, 2004.

6. Values initiative. By the fall of 2004, the Department should determine whether it will participate in the values initiative. If the decision is to participate, the Department should develop a specific proposal for how they will contribute to the objectives of the values initiative, while trying to recruit more majors and minors.

7. Internship program. Either a faculty member needs to get more involved in the internship program to help the students get internships, or the Department should explore the possibility of working with the university co-op and internship program. The Department should communicate its plan for commitment to the internship program to the Graduate Dean and the Dean of Arts & Sciences by the end of spring semester, 2004.

8. Length of the doctoral program. The Department should create a firmer expectation for students to finish the doctoral program in five years. As one component of this plan, a committee should re-examine the policy for treatment of credit that entering students with masters’ degree receive for the coursework they took in pursuit of that degree, and should draft a policy by the spring of 2005 that will increase the amount of credit that students who enter with a Master’s Degree will receive for courses taken in pursuit of that degree.

9. Balance Between Applied and Theoretical Applied Philosophy. In future hires, the Department needs to ensure that it maintains its unique niche in applied philosophy by hiring faculty with expertise in applied areas, but without losing strength in theoretical areas.
The Department of Philosophy should report annually to the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, with a copy to the Provost, on the implementation of these recommendations.