SOCIAL PHILOSOPHY AND POLICY CENTER
PROGRAM REVIEW

REVIEW PROCESS

The Social Philosophy and Policy Center 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 students, 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 Center personnel. The PRC discussed the Center with the Graduate Dean. This document summarizes the self-study and the external reviewers’ report, and adds the PRC’s findings and recommendations.

SUMMARY OF SELF-STUDY

Introduction

The self-study provides a description of the Center, an interdisciplinary research unit of Bowling Green State University, from 1992 to the present. The document also projects its activities into the near future.

History of the Social Philosophy and Policy Center

Established in the fall of 1981, the Center reports to the Vice Provost for Research and Dean of the Graduate College. The Center has continuously grown throughout the years, initiating new programs and publications in the 1980s, and inaugurating the Resident Scholars Program and the Distinguished Research Fellows Program, which have attracted external funding.

The past decade has been a highly productive one for the Center and its programs. The Center has sponsored 32 conferences, with over 250 scholars participating as invited speakers and many more times as participants. The journal, Social Philosophy & Policy, has published 22 issues containing a total of 265 articles. The Resident Scholars Program has hosted 71 visitors with 84 separate awards. The directors, Resident Scholars, and Senior Research Fellows of the Center have published a total of 85 books and numerous journal articles. Its many programs and publications are purposefully interdisciplinary. In support of these activities the Center has raised $7,331,676 in external grants since its founding in 1981.
Throughout its history, the Center has supported the Department of Philosophy. For instance, the Center played a significant role in the establishment of the doctoral program in applied philosophy. The Resident Scholars program has helped attract faculty to the Department, and the Center contributes to funding and training of graduate students.

**The Center’s Mission**

The mission of the Center is “to promote advanced scholarly research in political philosophy and public policy.”

The Center strives to produce research that reflects the belief that policy questions cannot be addressed adequately by empirical investigation alone; it focuses on ethical issues. Methodology is interdisciplinary in that researchers are influenced by the disciplines of philosophy, economics, jurisprudence, history, and political science.

The Center’s mission relates to that of the University at many levels, as follows:

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<th>Mission</th>
<th>Center's Support of Mission</th>
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<td><strong>Department of Philosophy:</strong> “aims to enrich not only the BGSU learning community, but the national and international philosophical community as well as society at large.”</td>
<td>Supports Department of Philosophy through publications, conferences, colloquia, and lecture series, and its Resident Scholars Program.</td>
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<td><strong>Graduate College:</strong> “promotes life long learning, research, creative activity, and social and professional responsibility and growth.”</td>
<td>The Center has published 85 books (50 of which have been completed by participants in the Resident Scholars Program), sponsored 104 colloquia and lectures, 32 conferences.</td>
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<td><strong>College of Arts and Sciences:</strong> “foster liberal education, to encourage the generation of knowledge, and to contribute to the good of the community.”</td>
<td>Strives to enrich the environment in which our graduate and undergraduate students grow both intellectually and spiritually.</td>
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<td><strong>University Mission:</strong> “Bowling Green State University aspires to be the premier Learning Community in Ohio, and one of the best in the nation. Through the interdependence of teaching, learning, scholarship, and service, we will create an academic environment grounded in intellectual discovery and guided by rational discourse and civility.”</td>
<td>The Center makes an invaluable contribution to the university mission though its regional, national, and international connections, and its reputation for excellence.</td>
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**The Center’s Governance and Personnel Structure**

Long-term planning is the responsibility of the directors, who establish and fine-tune the Center’s programs. Objectives are set annually. The directors meet regularly to select topics and
participants for conferences, the journal, and the Center’s various series. Both long-range planning and execution of the Center’s program are carried out in consultation with the Center’s Board of Advisors and with an advisory council of university faculty, composed of the Senior Research Fellows in the Department of Philosophy. The Board of Advisors also makes recommendations to the directors regarding topics for conferences and journal issues.

The Center has one assistant director and three classified staff members. Additionally, two or three graduate assistants and an undergraduate assistant support the Center staff each term (including summers).

Graduate assistantships are funded by external grants. This experience helps prepare students by providing them with experience in a professional academic environment. There are also funds allotted to hire an undergraduate assistant.

**The Center’s Major Programs**

The Center has seven major program areas.

1) *The journal, Social Philosophy & Policy, and the Cambridge University Press book series.* The self-study states that the journal “is widely recognized as one of the three major political philosophy journals in the English-speaking world.” During its 11-year history, the journal has published two issues a year, each focusing on a specific theme chosen from a wide range of interdisciplinary topics. The journal’s editorial process is of excellent quality and has been a major reason for the journal’s success. Each issue is also published in book format by Cambridge University Press.

2) *The Transaction and SUNY Press book series and other Center-sponsored books.* The Center conducts two other book series, one titled *Studies in Social Philosophy and Policy,* and the other titled *Economic Rights and the Constitution.* The Center also sponsors individual book projects, some of which result from the Resident Scholars Program and the Senior Research Fellows Program.

3) *Conferences.* The self-study states that the Center’s conferences are most responsible for contributing to the reputation of the “BGSU philosophical community.” The Center offered 32 conferences from 1992 to 2002. The Center has struggled, however, to secure appropriate space to hold the conferences on campus with the necessary 18-24 month lead time.

4) *The Resident Scholars Program.* External grants support up to 10 visiting scholars each year. The self-study provides testimonials from several past scholars regarding the importance of the program to their research. The program also has positive effects on the Department of Philosophy, notably its ability to recruit faculty.

5) *The Colloquia and Lecture series.* One hundred four lectures, all funded through external grants, have been offered by the Center during the last 10 years. The self-study notes that attendance at these lectures “occasionally flags.” To address this, the self-study suggests “perhaps holding them on site at other departments or inviting departmental members to introduce the scholar, would produce a more active interest among faculty from other departments.”

6) *The Senior Research Fellows Program.* The primary purpose of this program is to involve the faculty of the Department of Philosophy in the activities of the Center.
7) *Graduate and Post-Graduate Assistantships.* The Center provides assistantships for graduate students in the Department of Philosophy. Graduate students work in the Center as research assistants, working directly with the Resident Scholars.

**Contribution to Instructional Mission**

The Center is consistently linked to the university’s instructional mission in the following ways: (1) teaching—Center directors have taught a total of 46 courses within the past decade and served on a total of 29 doctoral dissertation committees; and (2) graduate and post-graduate assistantships.

**The Center’s Institutional Home and Its Physical Resources**

The self-study notes: “All of the general operations of the Center as well as all of its programs, plus the salary of the Managing Editor, and the tuition and stipends of the graduate and wages of the undergraduate assistants are funded by external grants raised by the Center’s directors. External grants are also utilized to purchase and maintain all of the computers, copiers, and other equipment that facilitates the work of the permanent staff and the Resident Scholars.”

Institutional support for the Center consists of salaries for some of the staff and the facilities on Troup Street. The Center has been housed in this building since 1984. The building is frequently used in publicity photos and toured by visiting dignitaries. There are an adequate number of offices, a kitchen, and a library/conference room. The self-study notes that funding agencies comment positively on the level and consistency of institutional support.

The Jerome Library holds an impressive collection of philosophy resources due to the generosity of the Philosophy Documentation Center. This collection is consistently expanded by the $1000 the Center uses to recommend titles to the librarial staff, as well as a similar fund from the Philosophy Department in the amount of $5000.

The Center itself has an ever-growing collection of works, including books, journals, law reviews, and current case law references. Its Resident Scholars also recommend works to the Center.

*A Winning Formula: The Success of the Center in Leveraging Institutional Support to External Funding for All Center Programs*

The Center is supported by the University and external funding. Institutional support comes in the form of staff salaries and provision of a building. The Center has raised $3,099,019 in external funding during the past seven years (e.g., Proctor & Gamble, The Rockefeller Foundation, and The Harry Bradley Foundation). This funding supports all of the Center’s programs, operating expenses, building improvement costs, graduate student assistants, editorial assistants, conferences, colloquium lectures, publications, Resident Scholars, Senior Research Fellowships for university faculty, graduate and post-graduate fellowships, and the managing editor’s salary. These funds are provided by both public and private sources.
In the Shadows of the SPPC: The Fate of other Philosophy-Based Research Centers

The self-study compares the Center to other philosophy-based research centers favorably. The self-study notes the following comparative advantages and unique characteristics of the Center:

- Consistent success in raising external funding
- Resident Scholars Program
- Production of accomplished professionals such as Stephen Macedo, Director of the University Center for Human Values (Princeton University), Eric Mack, Faculty Member of the Murphy Institute of Political Economy (Tulane University), and Nathan Tarcov, Director of the John M. Olin Center for Inquiry into the Theory and Practice of Democracy (University of Chicago)
- The University is home of the number-one ranked doctoral program in applied philosophy
- University commitment coupled with the Center's excellence
- Most productive institute of its staff size

Outlook for the Future: Goals and Strategies

The directors, in consultation with the senior research fellows and the Center’s Board of Advisors, have established the following “Goals and Strategies:”

1. Continue to promote the quality and reputation of the journal, Social Philosophy & Policy, and the Cambridge University Press books
2. Continue to promote the quality of the resident scholars program and its new interdisciplinary focus
3. Continue to promote the quality of the conference program
4. Continue to enhance the symbiotic relationship with the Philosophy Department
5. Continue to promote the high quality and status of the Philosophy Department's doctoral program
6. Continue to promote the university’s vision and values initiative through involvement of the university community in Center programs

Questions for the External Review Team

The self-study poses seven questions to the external review team, addressing such issues as balancing fellowships, expanding the Center’s library collection, increasing the number of women in the Resident Scholars Program, encouraging participation from faculty of other departments, possible challenges of the Internet era, new strategy implementation, and the problems associated with securing space for conferences.

RESULTS OF PREVIOUS REVIEWS

This is the first cycle of academic program review for the Center.

SUMMARY OF THE EXTERNAL REPORT

Two external reviewers visited campus in January, 2003, and interviewed the provost, the Dean of the Graduate College, the Dean of Arts & Sciences, the Chair of the Philosophy Department,
faculty members of the Philosophy Department and other departments, and graduate students. The external reviewers report that the self-study document was "exceptionally well prepared" and comprehensive.

**Mission and History**

In reviewing the mission and history of the Center, the external reviewers emphasized the fact that the Center was created in an effort to support and expand the university's research efforts. The reviewers praised the Center for its "impressive record of external funding;" noted the university's consistent support for the Center; and verified that the Center has established a reputation for "professional excellence."

**Programs**

The external reviewers state that the Center's conferences are well known. They characterize the conference program as "the most publicly visible and intellectually stimulating component of its educational mission." They also praise the Center's journal, *Social Philosophy and Policy*, characterizing it as "one of the leading political philosophy journals in the country." They note that the journal is known for its wide representation of different points of view. Both with the journal and with its book programs, the Center has attracted top academic publishers, including Cambridge University Press, Harvard University Press, and Oxford University Press. The external review finds the Resident Scholars program to be of high quality and impact, noting the many excellent scholars who have been attracted to the program.

**Leadership and Productivity**

In comparison with research centers at other universities, the external reviewers state that "the SPPC ranks highest among the half dozen or so … with which it may fairly be compared." They note that the other centers receive substantially more institutional support than the Center. They attribute the success of the Center to "the good judgment, hard work, sound planning and decision making, and professional and academic integrity of its founding directors." They evaluate the Center's success in obtaining external funding to be an "extraordinary achievement."

**Contribution to the University**

The external report notes the major contribution the Center makes to the doctoral program in the Department of Philosophy, which it does through its support for faculty appointments in the Department, visiting scholars, and graduate student fellowships. They identify a positive synergy between the Center and the Department.

**Recommendations**

In keeping with their findings of a high-functioning unit, the external reviewers had few recommendations beyond maintaining the existing high quality. Their principal recommendation is that "the University continue to provide the critical institutional support" that has contributed to the Center's efforts throughout its history.
A second concern was that the Center directors care for themselves through taking sabbatical leave. Understanding that the directors fear negative effects might stem from their absence, the external reviewers suggest that the directors and university administration together seek a practical means to make a leave possible.

The external reviewers noted a potential problem in perceptions of the Center. The local community may not have an accurate understanding of the contributions of the Center. Consequently, they suggest that the Center attempt to draw allied departments into the planning and activities of the Center, although they note this is not a major concern.

**PROGRAM REVIEW COMMITTEE FINDINGS**

The Center is a high-functioning, high-quality unit deserving of continued support. Specifically, the Center has a continuous record of external funding, a successful series of highly visible conferences, and a journal that has an excellent reputation and international impact.

**Findings Requiring Action**

1) *Space for conferences.* The most intractable problem the Center faces is scheduling space for their conferences.

2) *The University context.* The Center is, by design and practice, interdisciplinary in nature. It serves the university community broadly. However, the Center and its activities are not well known on campus, being better known to external constituencies than to internal ones. The Center should seize the responsibility for this and work proactively and persistently to engage University faculty and students in its programs.

3) *Professional development for Center staff.* The Center’s faculty have not taken faculty improvement leaves. Taking time away from the Center for purposes of widening and enlarging professional capabilities and increasing the expertise of the faculty would help keep the Center at the cutting edge of the discipline.

**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 rationalization of each recommendation, see the findings with the corresponding number, just above.

1) *Space for conferences.* The Center should work with the Provost and the Vice President for Student Affairs to seek a solution to the perennial problem of not being able to schedule conferences on campus with sufficient lead time.

2) *The University context.* There are several courses of action that could improve the Center’s connection with and contribution to the mission of the University.
a) To facilitate the integration of the Center into the broader university community, the Center should expand its advisory board to include faculty from additional units (e.g., the A&S College office) and departments. These changes should be implemented by December 2003.

b) In addition, the Center should identify ways and means of collaborating (e.g., on research proposals) with other centers and academic units on campus. The Center should develop a plan for expanded collaboration to the Vice Provost for Research, by May 2004.

c) The Center should explore ways of connecting to the University’s Academic Plan. In particular, these connections should address opportunities for community engagement and cultivation of undergraduate inquiry. A plan for contributing to the Academic Plan should be communicated to the Vice Provost for Research by May 2004.

3) **Professional development for Center staff.** The Center should devise a strategy that would free the Center’s directors to take faculty improvement leaves and give their research the attention it needs. For instance, the Center should explore bringing in an outside scholar or a University faculty member on an administrative internship. A plan for this faculty development effort should be presented to the Vice Provost for Research by May 2004.

*The Social Philosophy and Policy Center should report annually to the Dean of the Graduate College, with a copy to the Provost, on the implementation of these recommendations.*