

UNM Program Review

Philosophy

Participants

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Introduction

We would like to thank the University of New Mexico for the invitation to be part of its collegial planning for the future. We are honoured to take part in this enterprise. We would also like to thank the members of the University for their careful and systematic planning for the event. In particular, we wish to thank Mary Domski for preparing the thoughtful and meticulous APR Self-Study guide.

The UNM Philosophy Department teaches and researches in three distinctive areas: Asian Philosophy, Western Continental Philosophy, and Western Analytic Philosophy. It is unusual to find a Department offering all three of these areas. And indeed, in many places there is friction and tension between the proponents of these three areas. The Department is notable for the lack of such tensions. The members of the Department work harmoniously together, and many members of the Department are active in crossing these divides.

The Department certainly faces challenges, which we will address below. However, in general, we found the Department to be running smoothly, collegially, and functioning very well.

Finally, a word about what follows in the report. In our meeting with Associate Provost Pamela Cheek we were urged to advise on how best to further the goals, aims, and mission of the Department, the College, and the University. Hence we have interpreted our brief as more general than just addressing the questions posed on the Worksheet. We have answered them, and a completed sheet is attached as an appendix. But in order to concretely address the situation and mission of the department, we have also addressed six more general issues. They will be discussed as follows. 1. The undergraduate program. 2. The postgraduate program. 3. Faculty development. 4. Research profiles. 5. Climate issues. 6. Resources.

1. The Undergraduate Program

The undergraduate program is robust, with a well-balanced curriculum and a dedicated faculty. It is noteworthy that many of the introductory courses, especially at the 200-level, are taught by tenure-stream faculty. The commitment of faculty to undergraduate teaching is reflected in the department's strong third-semester retention rate of Philosophy Majors. In our interviews with them, the faculty were enthusiastic about their undergraduate teaching at a majority-minority campus and it was evident that their engaged research and scholarship informed their teaching. Philosophy, as a field of study, statistically has not attracted women; 30% of the degrees

awarded for a B.A. in Philosophy at UNM were women, which is comparable to the national average. We were pleased to see that the Philosophy Department is continuing to take initiatives to address critical issues that have limited the number of female students who earn B.A.s in Philosophy.

We were impressed with the undergraduate curriculum and the faculty; therefore, our suggestions below seek to enhance what we already evaluate as a strong undergraduate program.

The Philosophy Department has recently hired two tenure-stream faculty who specialize in the Asian tradition, making the department unique in the nation for its strengths in Continental, Analytic and Asian philosophy. In order to highlight these strengths, we suggest that the department consider adding a required introductory Asian tradition course to the undergraduate major. As the new faculty develop additional courses for the undergraduate curriculum, we also suggest that any courses taught with general topics course numbers be quickly converted to permanent numbered courses in the catalog in order to highlight the department's strength in the Asian tradition. Because of the importance that faculty placed on their teaching in a majority-minority environment, we also suggest that the department consider developing a new course focused on human identity. That course could draw from Continental, Analytic and Asian traditions to engage with the tensions that students experience in incorporating a multi-cultural world as a part of their individual identities. When we talked with faculty, they were in favor of exploring more possibilities of team teaching, which we suggest would help integrate these distinct philosophical traditions.

The Philosophy Department teaches a number of 100-level introductory courses through the use of graduate teaching assistants. We suggest that the department consider teaching larger 100-level courses with sections that are taught by graduate teaching assistants. This would allow undergraduates to have more opportunities to take classes where the research faculty are the instructor of record. Teaching fewer but larger introductory courses could also free faculty to teach more upper-division and graduate courses in their research areas and provide greater opportunities for graduate students to work with experienced faculty in classroom teaching.

In order to increase the number of student majors and encourage their entrance into the graduate program, we suggest that the department explore the creation of a combined major/master curriculum (a 4+1). This type of program has specific advantages for students who are New Mexican residents, as it allows them to use the New Mexico State Lottery Fellowship for their fourth year, which also would serve as their first year of the MA program. For strong students, then, a combined major/master program would allow them to complete the MA program with only one additional year of study. Other departments at UNM have recently created this type of program.

Finally, to enhance undergraduate student experience, we suggest that the department explore the possibility of more faculty-led student groups and to enhance its coordination with the university's career center in order to place recent graduates in local employment.

2. The Postgraduate Program

The Department's postgraduate program is functioning well: the quality of research supervision is high, and the students are, for the most part, very happy with life in the Department.

However, the Program does face challenges. The most serious of these concerns the PhD program. The program is currently admitting two PhD students a year. This is not enough for a viable PhD program. The norm for a good program is about five or six admissions a year. The Department needs to achieve this intake. (We note that in the last, 2008, review of the Department, the expansion of the Graduate Program was signaled as very important. This has not happened.) An increase can be achieved, we feel, by a combination of relatively small measures.

First, the Department currently admits only students for which it can provide Fellowships. In general, this is a sensible policy. However, it may need to be relaxed in the short term.

The Department has a small amount of money for graduate teaching assistantships and graders through the Barrett Endowment. We encourage the Department to review this Endowment to determine whether a slight redistribution might provide money that could support another Fellowship.

We would also encourage the Department to investigate other sources of funding, such as: national level fellowships; FLAS (Foreign Language and Area Studies) scholarships; and online teaching.

We also urge the University and the College to support the Department in this regard. The injection of a very small amount of cash would have a transformative impact upon the quality of the PhD program and its national reputation.

Modifications in the MA program are independently desirable, but would also help to build a stream into the PhD Program. Specifically, we recommend that the Department implement the "4+1" model, as do some other departments. This might effectively provide an additional source of funding for postgraduate students.

In addition, we suggest that the Department offer, as well as its general MA, specialist MAs in Continental Philosophy and Asian Philosophy. This recommendation is resource-neutral, since the Department's current offerings could already accommodate this. It is just a matter of rebranding, and advertising these as the significant strengths of the Department (not present in many North American Departments).

Finally, we wish to make a number of related, but independent suggestions:

- We feel that there is presently inadequate mentoring of postgraduate students. The current students expressed a desire for more guidance, especially in their pre-dissertation years, and in their teaching. This matter is easily addressed by appointing faculty mentors.
- Relatedly, there seems to be little postgraduate input into Departmental decisions, and we had a sense that the students do not really understand why the Department does many of the things

it does. We suggest that the Department introduce student representation into Departmental meetings; or at the very least, that it establish a faculty/postgraduate consultative committee.

- The gender balance of the students is currently about 70% male to 30% female. This is about standard in most North American universities. But the Department should monitor this matter, and aim at a more equal balance.
- At present, the Department's proseminar comprises members of faculty coming in and talking about their research. The present students felt that this was not working very well. What would work better, we feel, is a seminar which showed how particular topics could be approached from various different perspectives (Asian/Western, Analytic/Continental). This plays to a strength of the Department, and also furthers the goal of boundary-crossing.
- We feel that the Department should be more pro-active in encouraging students to undertake appropriate language training early in their careers. For students working on French or German philosophy, resources for this are available in the Language Departments. Asian languages are not taught on campus, but there are resources available, e.g. FLAS scholarships, and the Department should make use of these.
- We note that the Department has recently introduced new qualifying exam procedures. We feel no concern about these, but, like most new schemes, they should be reviewed in a year or two to determine how they are working.
- The Department currently teaches a number of split courses (advanced undergraduate with postgraduates). This is not ideal, but given the current resource of the Department, probably unavoidable. Hopefully, these can be phased out as the postgraduate program grows.

3. Faculty Development

We are impressed with the teaching and research profiles of the faculty in the department. We were asked by the provost's office to evaluate the status of associate professors to determine if departmental and university service assignments were limiting the ability of these faculty to advance in rank to full professor. We did not see that service obligations were a burden to associate professors. We do encourage the department to increase mentoring for junior faculty to support their research and teaching in order to assist them in their advancement to the rank of associate professor.

We were specifically asked by the department and the provost's office for advice on hiring priorities. We see strengths in the possible hires that were presented to us as options. A hire in Greek Philosophy will strengthen a core competency in the department. In order to enhance diversity in the department, we encourage the College of Arts & Sciences to include the Philosophy Department in the planned Native American Cluster Hire. We also see advantages in hiring a faculty member who specializes in Latin American Philosophy, which would connect the department to UNM's campus-wide focus on Latin America. While the Philosophy Department has benefited from its participation in the BA/MD program through shared hires, we note that there are limitations to hiring faculty who have shared teaching loads in other units. This practice limits the department's capacity to enhance its own curriculum and it tasks faculty with teaching courses that are not necessarily related to their research. As we noted in a previous section, both students and faculty felt strongly that the curriculum in the Philosophy department is exceptional because of the ability of faculty to bring their engaged research into the classroom experience.

4. Research Profiles

Several UNM Philosophy faculty have strong national, even international reputations, and several members are integral participants in current scholarly discussions and debates. In fact, the overall research profile of the faculty is so strong that we believe the department, with support from the College and Provost's Office, should attract more applications. To that end, we see a handful of opportunities.

- The department should participate in *The Philosophical Gourmet Report*, which ranks programs. The suggestion is not to take the rankings as an evaluative framework – its methodology precludes this. But it offers an advertising opportunity that the department should seize.
- The department should identify potential feeder programs at other schools with similar research profiles, including St. John's in Santa Fe.
- Faculty members should use speaking engagements at other schools as opportunities to advertise and discuss the program. A traveling brochure would make sense.
- The department should keep its website current and explore other social media opportunities, including a FaceBook page.

5. Climate Matters

Our comments concern climate resulting from dynamics within the department and climate that results from dynamics between the department and other units at UNM.

First, internal dynamics. At present, the faculty members work productively in their own areas. But we feel that a few small changes could help to encourage a community of enquirers, and so make the Department more than the sum of its parts. Specifically, we suggest:

- A weekly philosophy colloquium. There can be occasional visiting speakers, as at present, but on other weeks, faculty and students could present their work for discussion.
- The Asian and Continental philosophers could also hold research seminars in their areas every few weeks, where more specialist issues could be discussed.
- The formation of an undergraduate philosophy society, which promotes regular discussions, films, and other events. In the first instance, the initiative here would have to be taken by some faculty members.

These are all academic matters. However, there are also some social things that could be implemented. (Nor should one underestimate the importance of these for the collegial life of a department.) Specifically:

- The weekly colloquia could be followed by receptions with refreshments, such as coffee and cake.
- The Department should organise a social gathering, such as a potluck at the beginning and end of each semester.

External dynamics: We recognise that the University is working in difficult financial times. However, there are features of its operation which are impacting negatively on the Philosophy Department (and doubtless others). Over a period of some years, there has been a sequence of constant changes in the higher levels of University administration. This produces an atmosphere of uncertainty. Moreover, each new person on board will introduce new measures and procedures, giving a sense that the “goal posts keep moving”.

Not only does this make planning at the departmental level very difficult, it seems to have produced a sense of alienation amongst many of the faculty, who elect to get on with their own teaching and research at the expense of programmatic growth). Indeed some said that they thought that the morale of ordinary members of the university was now at an ‘all time low’.

6. Resources

The department needs and deserves increased investment. It already is excellent in certain ways and could become a very prominent program with relatively modest investment. We wish to indicate three specific areas.

At a minimum, the Philosophy Department needs an additional half-time staff person. The current staff person often has to come in on weekends in order to maintain basic administrative services for the department. This undue and uncompensated burden for the office administrator is unsustainable and creates an incentive for her to find employment in another unit, which would be devastating for the department. The need to increase current office staffing was considered a top-priority by faculty in the department.

We found that current support for PhD students is sufficient if not very competitive. But the number of lines cannot sustain a sufficient learning community, either at the level of cohort size or dedicated graduate offerings. We think the department, in consultation with the College, should develop a plan to add a PhD lines over time, perhaps, in the meantime, admitting unfunded students.

Faculty salaries are low, as everybody knows. Seven or years without a raise is tough on morale. But the deeper problem is that frozen wages create an incentive to seek employment elsewhere. The department has just lost two faculty members. Many current faculty members reported fears that various colleagues would leave. This would be a shame. Even with recent departures, the department has genuine areas of excellence, and it stands poised to develop in significant ways. The University should work with the Department to grasp this real opportunity. Without that kind of investment, we doubt this particular collection of faculty members and the somewhat unique community of inquiry they constitute, will remain.

Along the way, the department might also make or continue to make its own opportunities. A continued pursuit of grants seems essential. Also, the department should reach out and engage alumni and try to establish community partnerships. The department’s many talented teachers have undoubtedly left their mark on multiple students. Reestablishing those connections will prove meaningful and possibly profitable. Finally, the department should have a particular faculty member work with the UNM foundation to explore fund raising opportunities,

particularly as they pertain to undergraduate education. This can in turn fund graduate lines in the form of TAships.

7. Conclusion

The UNM Department of Philosophy does a great deal with limited resources, and at a very high level. It has the potential to achieve even more, however, and develop a national profile in keeping with the talents and commitment of its faculty. We realize that resources are strapped, but a little could go a long way in this case, and UNM would then have another graduate program with a top-flight national reputation, which would further secure UNMs reputation as a R1 university.

APPENDIX

REVIEW TEAM WORKSHEET

This worksheet should be completed by the end of the Site-Visit and used as a supplement to the Review Team Report to document any findings, shortcoming or issue relative to the APR Criteria. For each criterion, please assess whether the criterion is Met (M) if no shortcoming or issue exists in the Self-Study Report and/or during the Site-Visit. If a shortcoming or issue is identified for a criterion in the Self-Study Report and/or during the Site-Visit, please assess the criterion as Met with Concerns (MC) or Not Met (NM) (refer to p. 19 of the APR Manual for a description of the evaluation measures). For each shortcoming or issue, please summarize the basis of your assessment in the comments column.

Review Team Members: Kimberly Gauderman, UNM; John Lysaker, Emory; Graham Priest, CUNY

Unit: Philosophy **Site-Visit Dates:** October 5-6, 2017

APR Criteria	Evaluation Measures (M/MC/NM)	Comments
1. STUDENT LEARNING GOALS & OUTCOMES		
Demonstrated significance of the unit and its programs to UNM's mission and the UNM community	M	
Provided clear student learning goals and measurable outcomes for each degree/certificate program (undergraduate and graduate)	M	
Published and clearly communicated student learning goals and outcomes to the students and the UNM community	M	

Established student learning goals and outcomes are relevant, current, and sufficient in meeting the academic and professional aspirations of constituents	M	
Participated in outreach and/or community activities that were sufficient and appropriate in supporting the unit and its programs and students in achieving their goals	MC	The committee thought that more and broader engagement with non-academic communities would be valuable
Demonstrated the unit's diligence in taking steps that maximize its strengths and address shortcomings	M	
Demonstrated that the unit's strategic efforts have evolved with regards to its programs' goals and student learning outcomes, service of its constituents and stakeholders, and contribution to the university and UNM community	M	
2. TEACHING AND LEARNING: CURRICULUM		
Demonstrated that the curriculum for each degree/certificate program is adequate and consistent with its student learning goals and outcomes	M	
Provided clarity on the significance of the unit's contributions to or collaborations with other internal units within UNM	M	Strong core courses The faculty all reported great enthusiasm for teaching the full range of UNMs students
Demonstrated that the mode(s) of delivery for teaching courses for each program are efficient and necessary to address student demands and academic needs	M	
Provided clarity on the unit's future strategic planning efforts for improving its programs' curriculum as needed	M	
3. TEACHING AND LEARNING: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT		
Demonstrated that student learning goals and outcomes are clearly established and reflective of the skills, knowledge, discipline, etc. that students are expected to demonstrate for each degree/certificate program	M	

Demonstrated that the established assessment methods for each degree/certificate program are program-level and effective in measuring student learning and progression through the program	M	
Demonstrated the efforts of each degree/certificate program to improve, evolve and/or maintain its assessment structure and activities in order to maximize and/or sustain student learning	M	
Demonstrated use of assessment results from program-level assessment methods to inform and support quality teaching and learning in each degree/certificate program	M	The faculty might expand the way in which they receive feedback on instruction, e.g. by all employing midterm evaluations. This allows changes that improve the course as it happens.
Demonstrated use of assessment results to evaluate student learning and inform program improvements	M	
Demonstrated how each degree/certificate program monitors the short- and/or long-term impact of its changes or improvements on student learning and/or the quality of the program	M	
4. STUDENTS		
Provided clarity on the unit's processes and policies for recruiting and admitting students and the impact of them on enrollment	M	
Conducted a clear and accurate analysis of the unit's enrollment, persistence/retention, and graduation trends	M	
Demonstrated that sufficient efforts were made to address any significant issues in enrollment, persistence/retention, and graduation rates	M	
Established an efficient advising process that has been improved as needed	MC	The department might consider distributing undergraduate advising across the faculty Graduate students need better pre-major advising, particularly with regard to program requirements
Provided clarity on the adequacy, relevancy, and impact of the student support services available to students	M	
Demonstrated that graduates and their success are monitored and measured	M	

Provided clarity on the unit's future strategic planning efforts for improving or strengthening its recruitment, retention, and graduation processes and rates	M	
5. FACULTY		
Demonstrated that the composition, qualifications, and credentials of the faculty are appropriate and sufficient to cover all program and curricular areas as well as student demands	M	Excellent coverage in departmental specializations and sound coverage of undergraduate areas
Conducted a clear and accurate evaluation of the efficiency of faculty course-load assignments for lower division and upper division courses	M	Some faculty would like broader teaching opportunities at the upper division
Demonstrated that faculty actively and sufficiently participate in professional development activities that support quality teaching and student learning at the undergraduate and graduate level	M	Department might meet to share "best practices" Department could provide junior faculty with more mentoring
Identified and demonstrated that the research/creative work and efforts of faculty at the undergraduate and graduate level are adequate and/or significant	M	
Demonstrated that the majority of faculty diligently participate in efforts to retain, support, and/or mentor students (i.e., undergraduate and graduate)	NM	Graduate students need more guidance, particularly as teachers and in across the initial years of the program
Provided clarity on the unit's future strategic planning efforts to regarding its instructional staff	M	
6. RESOURCES AND PLANNING		
Demonstrated that the unit engages in effective resource planning and allocation	M	
Demonstrated that the unit have attempted to utilize faculty research to generate revenue	NA	
Conducted a clear and accurate analysis on the unit's budget including the sufficiency of the resources and support provided by the institution and external sources	Unhelpful question	The analysis was clear and accurate. The resources are, however, clearly insufficient, both with regard to non- instructional staffing, compensation, support for the PhD program.
Demonstrated that the composition and effectiveness of the staff are appropriate and sufficient to cover all unit, program, and curricular areas as well as faculty and student demands	Unhelpful question	The composition of the staff is insufficient. The department absolutely needs at least another 1/2 position.

Demonstrated that the library resources available to the unit are adequate	M	Through ILL.
Provided clarity on the unit's future strategic planning efforts to sustain the sufficient allocation of resources and institutional support towards its programs, faculty, and staff	M	The current allocation is not sufficient. That said, they are spending within its limits.
7. FACILITIES		
Conducted a clear and accurate evaluation of the appropriateness and adequacy of the space and facilities allocated to the unit, its programs, faculty, staff, and students	M	
Demonstrated that the current space and facilities are sufficient for meeting academic requirements	M	
Provided clarity on recent space management planning efforts of the unit	M	
Provided clarity on the unit's short- and long-term strategic planning efforts regarding space management and/or space allocation	M	
8. PEER COMPARISONS		
Conducted a clear and adequate evaluation of the quality and sufficiency of the degree/certificate programs within the unit based on comparisons with similar programs at other institutions (i.e., demonstrated examination of student enrollment rates, degrees/certificates offered, number of tenure-track faculty, research/creative work of faculty, etc.)	M	
Provided clarity on the unit's future strategic planning efforts to improve or sustain the quality of its programs with regards to similar programs at other institutions	M	The department, despite operating in survival mode, remains very strong.