

**Response of the UNM Philosophy Department
to Report Submitted by External Review Team**

**Philosophy Dept. Academic Program Review AY 2008-09
(Previous Response updated Spring 2010;
Current Response Updated Fall 2010)**

(Note: Fall 2010 updates, below, are simply added to the previous update as further text, in order to make clear our progress on concerns and recommendations.)

Introduction

The Philosophy Department was overall very pleased with the findings of the external Review Team. We would, first of all, like to extend our thanks to Profs. Beiser, Blattner, Caldera, and Garfield for the effort they put into this evaluation and the thoughtful document they have written. The Philosophy Department is especially gratified to learn that the Review Team thinks that the Department is “flourishing” and should be compared with departments such as Emory, Georgetown, Northwestern, Cal Riverside, and University of Memphis. We are also encouraged that the Review Team supports the growth of the Department, in particular, the addition of new TA-ships to expand its Ph.D. program.

In the sections below we address specific, constructive concerns raised by the Review Team about various aspects of our program. Once again, we find the observations of the Team in most instances insightful and cogent and are grateful for this input, which we hope will lead to the continued growth and improvement of the UNM Philosophy Department.

Concerns and Recommendations of the Review Team

1. The Profile of the Department

The Review Team believes that the Department characterizes itself in a misleading way in its advertising, as “a chain of philosophical boutiques,” while in fact the Department “has a great deal more cohesion than this, and consequently more strength in the areas it addresses.”

1a. Revision of website

The Department for the most part agrees with this criticism and has decided to revise its advertising material accordingly, especially its website, to present its programs as more cohesive and integrated. The Department received some money from the Office of Graduate Studies in Spring 2010 for recruiting that can be used for this purpose. **Fall 2010:** Revisions are substantially complete.

1b. Revise faculty profiles

We will look at the websites of other Departments to see how faculty describe themselves, especially the websites of the programs in our new comparison group. Certainly there should be

links to all faculty CV's and photographs of faculty; faculty should also possibly be presented in terms of Area of Specialization (AOS) and Area of Competence (AOC). Adjunct professors and lecturers should be included on the faculty list. **Fall 2010:** Revisions are substantially complete.

2. The Undergraduate Program

The Review Team notes that “there are ... some lacunae in the curriculum.” “The Department could use more courses – in particular more advanced courses – in social and political philosophy and logic.”

The Department feels that the Review Team somewhat underestimated our resources in these areas. Although we do not have a specialist in logic, Prof. Livingston, who was not yet on campus when the Review Team visited, is qualified to teach advanced courses in logic. To teach a full range of courses in logic, philosophy of logic, and philosophy of mathematics, however, we would need a new faculty member, but we doubt that that is our area of greatest staffing need.

2a. Expand course offerings in social and political philosophy, ethics

As for social and political philosophy, several faculty (Johnston, Thomson, and Goodman) have strong interests and even publications in this area. (Prof. Johnston has a book coming out on the political thought of the contemporary philosophers Žižek and Badiou.) The Department has, accordingly, now introduced a 400/500 level seminar in Social and Political philosophy. The Department also has strength in social and political among its adjunct faculty, in particular, Ann Cacoullos and Liz Rapaport. Both should be featured more prominently on our website, and the Department should prevail upon Prof. Rapaport, who is a professor in the UNM Law School, to teach courses in Philosophy of Law. Prof. Kalar has also indicated that he would be interested in developing a course in “Justice Theory.”

While there may be some justification for expanding our offerings in social and political philosophy, the Department believes there is an even greater need for more intermediate and advanced courses in ethics. With the addition of another faculty member specializing in ethics this year, Prof. Katsafanas, the Department is poised to begin offering more ethics courses. **Fall 2010:** Prof. Katsafanas has left the department for Boston University, but we have been approved to hire his replacement.

2b. Catalog revisions

The Review Team was encouraged that the Department is undertaking a complete revision of its catalogue courses. We are pleased to announce that all the curriculum changes submitted last fall have now been approved by the necessary committees (with minor revisions) and will appear in the 09-10 catalogue. **Fall 2010:** Further minor revisions have been approved, most notably the replacement of Greek Philosophy by a more general course, Greek Thought (201), to satisfy a UNM core requirement. Greek Philosophy will change from 201 to 211 and will remain a major requirement.

3. The Graduate Program

The Review Team makes several helpful suggestions for improving the Philosophy graduate program, all of which we embrace.

3a. Foreign Language Instruction

The Review Team urges the Department to provide students learning European languages support similar to that provided for students learning Sanskrit, especially “seminars or informal reading groups led by philosophy faculty members, focusing on reading philosophical texts in their original language.”

The Department has faculty who are quite willing to lead reading groups in German, at least. A German reading group was in fact conducted by Prof. Livingston this spring. (There is a perception, however, that students ought to be able to learn French on their own.) In general, more emphasis should be placed on language study from the outset. When graduate students enter the program they should fill out a "language inventory" to see where they are in language study and be informed of the various language study options available to them: courses in FLL, private tutoring (by Karen Frings), summer programs at St. Olaf's (Danish) and U. Wisconsin (Sanskrit, Tibetan), etc. Faculty advisors should get students started sooner on necessary language training. Moreover, in admitting students who express an interest in European philosophy the Admissions Committee should take previous language study into account, as is already done for students intending to specialize in Indian philosophy.

3b. Student Advisement

The Review Team notes that the graduate students “complained of a lack of feedback and advising,” and urged the Department to assign each incoming student to a faculty advisor, “chosen with reference to the student’s interest,” who will “take personal responsibility for the student’s acculturation, academic progress, and development as a teacher and a scholar.”

The Department is now in the process of designing a new advisement system that will assign students to individual faculty advisors when they enter the program. We expect to have the new system in place by Fall 09. Faculty advisors shall, among other things, be responsible for giving presentations on the students they are advising at the annual evaluation of graduate students every spring. The Department also plans to involve more faculty in the presentation "A Beginner's Guide to the Profession," which has been developed by Prof. Domski and is part of the fall proseminar for incoming graduate students. **Fall 2010:** The new advising system is in place, whereby each student is assigned his or her own advisor until he or she chooses a thesis advisor.

3c. TA Assignments

The Review Team thinks that it is important for graduate students to develop broader teaching competence and teach other courses besides just Phil. 101 and 156.

The Department agrees with this in principle, but if it is done too ambitiously without additional TA lines it will significantly reduce the number of sections of Phil. 101 and 156 the Department regularly offers. Two Ph.D. students who are beyond their TA-ships have now been scheduled to

teach sections of Phil. 343 (Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy) and 245 (Professional Ethics) this fall on part-time contracts (CHECK). The faculty noted that TA's could also teach a broader range or lower-level courses, e.g., 102 (Contemporary Moral Problems) and 108 (Introduction to Asian Philosophies). Only more advanced, experienced TA's should teach 300-level courses. The faculty are clear that we need to maintain the high quality of our mid-level courses. **Fall 2010:** We have recently and will continue occasionally to assign advanced graduate students courses to each other than 101 and 156. (For example, Ethan Mills will teach 202 in the spring, and Laura Guerrero is teaching 358 this fall.)

3d. Graduate Seminar Offerings

The Review Team notes that the Department should increase its graduate students in order to fill a sufficiently broad range of courses. To meet this demand, we will expand offerings of graduate seminars.

3e. Student Morale

The Review Team informs the Department that there continues to be “a deficiency in morale and a sense of isolation among graduate students.”

The faculty are dismayed to learn about this but feel that the problem is easily addressed. There has been an unspoken moratorium on socializing with students for several years. The Department should end the moratorium and begin having potluck socials approximately twice a semester at the homes of faculty, mixing faculty and students. We should also look at moving colloquium talks to earlier in the afternoon and having cheese and crackers in the Department afterward (and investigate obtaining permission to serve wine in the Department!). Meanwhile, we have already begun involving students more in hosting speakers, giving them the responsibility of taking them to lunch the day of the talk, and scheduling a Happy Hour after the talk off campus for everyone who wants to come. These changes have been enthusiastically received by the students. **Fall 2010:** Professor Becker met with graduate students to discuss their concerns about the program. The meeting went some way toward improving communication and relationships between faculty and graduate students.

3f. Female Graduate Students

The Review document states: “Gender imbalance in both the faculty and graduate student body exacerbates this situation [of low morale and isolation] for female graduate students, and positive steps to create a more comfortable and welcoming environment for them should be a priority.”

The faculty are particularly concerned about this deficiency as well. We hope that it will be partly rectified by steps taken to improve morale for all graduate students. In addition, the Department has now appointed a Departmental Ombudsperson outside the Department, namely, Prof. Elizabeth Rapaport of the UNM Law School, whom any graduate student may approach confidentially if he/she feels that his/her needs are not being met in the Department.

3g. Size of Program: Increase TA-ships

The outside Review Team recommends that the Department expand the size of its graduate program. They advise “a target graduate enrollment of approximately 40, comprising approximately 10-15 MA students and 25-30 Ph.D. students.”

The Department agrees with this but remains committed to the policy of admitting students only if it is able to provide 4-5 years of financial support. Thus, the Department will need an increase in TA-ships for its Ph.D. students (**Fall 2010** clarification: as opposed to extending funding for current PhD students) if it is to significantly expand the size of its graduate program. One of the main ongoing initiatives of the Department is to have Philosophy 156 recognized as satisfying the second semester of the undergraduate writing requirement, along with English 102. While serving a number of educational purposes, such a change would also require more Philosophy TA-ships so that more sections of Phil. 156 could be offered. (Prof. Taber is now involved in a Writing Task Force that is exploring this proposal.) The Department should also investigate ways of funding increases in TA-ships for students whose 4-5 years have expired. In particular, the Department should be aggressive in seeking English TA-ships for its students, through the interdisciplinary TA Program, after their Philosophy TA-ships have expired.

This spring the Department has admitted eight new students to the MA program and three to the Ph.D. program, bringing the total number of active graduate students next year to 15 M.A. students and 20 Ph.D. students. **Fall 2010:** In the current budget atmosphere, opportunities to expand are difficult to envision. But, given the APR Review Team's emphasis on growing the PhD program, our 8.2% rescission proposal targets our PTI expenditures and aims to keep our TAships at least intact for now.

3h. Barrett Fellowship

The Review Team chastens the Department for not having published procedures for awarding the Barrett Dissertation Fellowship.

We are duly chastened. The Department has now worked out guidelines and published them on its website.

Research Profile and Assessment of Research

The Review Team provided comments on the peer review portion of the self study and suggest some alternative peers. This may be useful for future program reviews.

4. Outcomes Assessment

4a. Streamline assessment procedures

The Review Team felt that the Department's outcomes assessment plan was too ambitious.

The Department has also been told this by the College outcomes assessment coordinator. The Department, led by its Outcomes Assessment Coordinator, Prof. Domski, has now revised its assessment plans for all of its undergraduate and graduate programs, introducing certain simplifications. These plans were approved by the Provost's Office this February 2010. In addition, the Department will begin developing a more complete database of its undergraduate majors and graduate students that it can draw on to respond to ad hoc requests for program

statistics from the Administration. **Fall 2010:** It is worth noting that the Department is one of but a handful of departments taking this seriously, even before the recent re-emphasis put on outcomes.

5. Future Hiring and Diversity

The Review Team recommends that “the top two priorities be hiring in social and political philosophy and logic.” It also advises that “in future hirings considerations of diversity be granted at least equal status as considerations of area of specialization.”

The Department mildly disagrees with the Review Team that its most urgent needs are in the areas of social and political philosophy and logic. As for social and political philosophy, the Department feels that the review team overlooked its considerable existing strength in this area. (See above, “Undergraduate Program.”) The Department does feel, however, that it would certainly be desirable also to have a tenure-track faculty member who specializes in feminist philosophy, which is considered to fall within social and political philosophy. (Currently, a full-time lecturer is teaching courses in this field.) As for logic, the Department does currently have a faculty member who is qualified to teach an advanced course in logic (Prof. Livingston). A logician would indeed complement the interests of faculty in several areas, in particular, those of Prof. Livingston (early twentieth-century philosophy), Prof. Johnston (Badiou), Prof. Katsafanas (contemporary ethical theory), Prof. Hannan (metaphysics), and Prof. Becker (epistemology), and also provide support for students working in Indian philosophy. But the Department believes, were it to add another faculty member oriented toward the mathematical and scientific disciplines, that it might make more sense to search for a candidate broadly trained in analytic philosophy, either someone working in metaphysics and epistemology or perhaps cognitive science, who also has expertise in logic.

Finally, the Department agrees with the recommendation that in future hiring diversity be given at least equal weight as area of specialization. In this connection, the Department will also seek approval for a Diversity Hire of a female faculty member through the Office of the VP for Diversity next academic year.

Fall 2010: As noted above, Paul Katsafanas resigned after Spring 2010 to take a position at Boston University. A replacement hire has been approved, for which the department/college and the BA/MD program will split the cost of the \$55,000 salary.

Formatting revisions completed Spring, 2010

Original draft authored by John Taber, Professor and Chair, Philosophy Department

Approved by the faculty of the Philosophy Department on May 6, 2009.

Minor revisions completed Fall, 2010.