

Annual Program Review
Unit Response Report
Academic Year 2017-2018
Department of Philosophy
University of New Mexico

October 8, 2018

On Thursday, October 5 and Friday, October 6, 2017, the Department of Philosophy at the University of New Mexico hosted its Annual Program Review site visit by a team consisting of John Lysaker (Emory University), Graham Priest (City University of New York), and Kimberley Gauderman (Department of History, UNM). In November 2017, the site visit team submitted its APR Site Visit Report. The Department of Philosophy tenure-stream faculty collectively discussed our response to this Report at two meetings on January 11 and 24, 2018. What follows is a summary of the official consensus reached by the faculty regarding how to respond.

The Department of Philosophy plans to act on the APR Site Visit Report's suggestions in relation to the following five major categories: the undergraduate program; the graduate program; departmental governance; departmental climate; and, publicizing the Department to the wider profession. In terms of the undergraduate program, we liked, to begin with, the Report's urgings of us to capitalize further on our unique strengths in non-Western philosophy by expanding our pluralistic, global, multicultural offerings at the undergraduate level. The first change we agreed to along these lines is one to our requirements for undergraduate majors: Now, majors must take four, rather than five, elective courses; In place of a fifth elective course, they now will be required to take one of our three-hundred-level courses in non-Western philosophy (i.e., PHIL 333: Buddhist Philosophy, PHIL 334: Indian Philosophy, or PHIL 336: Chinese Philosophy). As Chair, I will announce this change to the requirements for undergraduate majors in August 2018, with it officially to take effect for new majors starting in AY 2019-2020 (assuming the Department secures the requisite curriculum change approvals from the College of Arts and Sciences).

The faculty agreed on two other modifications/additions to the undergraduate program in light of the Report's encouragement to make the program's offerings even more diverse and inclusive. First, we now plan to offer, every year to year-and-a-half, a team-taught upper-division undergraduate course. Since we have a unique mix of faculty specializing in Western and non-Western philosophies, we intend this regular course offering to be taught specifically by a combination of one Western and one non-Western faculty specialist. This would provide more advanced undergraduate students with opportunities to explore the convergences and divergences between multiple philosophical traditions from various parts of the world.

Second, we have decided to start offering on a regular basis a tenure-stream-faculty-taught super-section of PHIL 101: Introduction to Philosophy. This super-section would be devoted each time to a pluralistic, global approach to philosophy, emphasizing a multitude of cultures and

traditions Western and non-Western alike. This would be a new way to introduce philosophy to lower-division undergraduate students.

In terms of the graduate program, the Department has a number of new plans inspired by the APR Site Visit Report. First of all, the faculty want the Chair to pursue establishing a 4 + 1 M.A. program in which UNM philosophy majors receive their B.A. in four years, take some graduate level courses during their fourth year, and stay an extra year to complete the requirements for an M.A. Evidently, both UNM's Department of History and the Department of Philosophy at Vanderbilt University have programs of this sort. I already am working with the Department of History on how to get started establishing such a program at UNM. I hope to have this in place before the end of my current term as Chair.

There also is a strong consensus amongst the faculty that, as the Report stresses, it is imperative for us to start admitting more Ph.D. students as soon as possible. For the past several years, we have been allowed by the College of Arts and Sciences to admit only two funded doctoral students per year. The Report pleads for four to six Ph.D. admits per year. Moreover, we agree that not only do the numbers of admitted students per year need to increase—the funding packages for each admitted Ph.D. student should be more generous in order for us to compete with the other graduate programs our applicants typically are considering. An increase of \$1000-\$2000 per year to each T.A. line would help significantly. Being able to offer more graduate-level only (rather than hybrid graduate/undergraduate) seminars would help with Ph.D. recruitment too.

Furthermore, to address graduate students' desires for more guidance, the faculty agreed that the Graduate Director, perhaps accompanied by the members of the Graduate Advisory Committee, will meet with graduate students at least once a semester. The Graduate Director will arrange for these meetings with the graduate students. However, this will not replace one-on-one mentoring of graduate students by individual faculty members.

Considering the APR Site Visit Report, as well as feedback from the graduate students themselves, we decided to completely revamp the proseminar requirement for graduate students. This is another change intended to address graduate students' demands for more guidance from the faculty. The proseminar will be reoriented from being about faculty members' current research (now to be showcased through in-house colloquia presentations instead) to focusing on mentoring apropos teaching and professionalization. We plan to hold approximately five workshops per academic year for the graduate students, with the exact number of workshops and the topics covered to be decided by a faculty sub-committee. Individual faculty members will take turns volunteering at the start of each academic year to run workshop sessions on various subjects relating to teaching and professionalization.

The last matter related to the graduate program I will touch upon here is that of our qualifying examinations for doctoral students. A few years ago, we changed from having a single, one-size-fits-all general reading list in the history of philosophy for Ph.D. students to customized reading

lists in individual students' chosen areas of specialization and competence. These lists are negotiated between the individual student and a faculty member with expertise in the given area. That faculty member then is responsible for orally examining the student on the selected readings. The APR Site Visit Report encouraged us to monitor the success of our relatively new qualifying exam format for Ph.D. students. Although we thus far are happy with the new format, we indeed will reassess it periodically as we move forward.

As for departmental governance, this came up in the Report apropos the graduate students and their perceived role (or lack thereof) in decision-making processes. So as to make the graduate students feel more included in departmental governance, our tenure-stream faculty voted to allow one or two non-voting graduate student representatives, to be selected by the graduate students themselves, regularly to attend the non-confidential portions of faculty meetings starting in August 2018. The graduate students ended up deciding to nominate one Ph.D. and one M.A. student representative to attend meetings during the 2018-2019 faculty meeting. Thus far, with the two recent faculty meetings attended by the two student representatives, this seems to be going very well.

As regards departmental climate, another area addressed in the Report, we took multiple measures during AY 2017-2018 to foster quantitatively and qualitatively greater social interaction within the Department community. These measures include: a philosophical happy hour in the Department Lounge once a month; an in-house speakers series; and, periodic student works-in-progress presentations. We have been aiming to hold two such events per month, with one involving a faculty member and another a graduate student. We feel these steps have been successful. As responses to specific recommendations in the APR Site Visit Report, we will continue these practices in the years to come.

Apropos the issue of publicity as raised in the Report, we already, at our August 2017 retreat, discussed immediately-actionable, cost-free initiatives for publicizing and further raising the profile of our graduate program. Nearly all of the Department's faculty promptly set about helping to revamp our website and reach out electronically to various relevant venues for disseminating information about us to the wider worlds of professional philosophy. Those of us who give invited lectures out-of-town make sure to discuss our Department with students and colleagues at other institutions. I am in the process right now of overseeing a significant updating of the Department website. We had further discussion about these sorts of efforts at our August 2018 retreat.

I will close by remarking upon those recommendations in the APR Site Visit Report that, after careful discussion, the tenure-stream faculty decided not to pursue. First, we do not want to start admitting Ph.D. students without funding. Doing so would create an undesirable caste hierarchy amongst the doctoral students between those with and those without funding. Particularly in a relatively small graduate program, such a hierarchy likely would be bad for the climate and sense of community. Moreover, considering the costs and job prospects facing Ph.D.s, we would feel ethically uncomfortable encouraging people to pursue a doctorate without a funding package.

Second, we do not wish to create speciality M.A. degrees in Continental and/or South-Asian philosophy in addition to a regular M.A. degree in philosophy. Our Department already is solidly established in the profession as having strengths in Continental and South-Asian philosophy. We already attract students with interests in these areas who are able to focus on these interests once here. Plus, such specialty degrees risk making us appear more marginal in relation to mainstream Anglo-American philosophy programs. We want to avoid any unnecessary self-marginalization.

Third, the Report mentions the “Leiter Reports” blog, encouraging us to seek publicity through it. The blog’s founder and overseer, Brian Leiter, is an extremely divisive and controversial figure in our profession. Having capriciously crowned himself an arbiter of our profession at the dawn of the internet age, he has continued to advance a slanted perspective and partisan agenda with problematic effects for the worlds of professional philosophy. He has been hostile and, arguably, even abusive toward those who do not agree with him. Relatedly, he is ill-disposed to some of the areas of strength represented in our Department. We have ethical and political objections to interacting with Leiter and his blog. And, even if we did not have such objections, Leiter likely would not deign to approve of our Department in his rankings given his biases against the sort of work done by us.

Fourth and finally, we would prefer to focus our web-based publicity efforts on our website rather than wading into the realms of social media. Venues such as Facebook were suggested by the Report. However, social media appears to encourage a lot of problematic on-line behavior and needlessly heated exchanges between people. We want to avoid the types of conflicts and other problems that seem inevitably to arise on social media platforms. So, no faculty wished to have to deal with running a Facebook page or something similar.