July 25, 2008

To: Phyllis Wise, Provost
        Douglas Wadden, Executive Vice Provost
        for Academic Affairs and Planning
        Office of the Provost, Box 351237

From: Suzanne Ortega, Vice Provost and Dean
        James Soto Antony, Associate Dean for Academic Programs

RE: Department of Philosophy 10-Year Review

At its meeting of October 18, 2007, the Graduate School Council met with members of the team that reviewed the Department of Philosophy (Robert Stacey, Professor, History, Julie Stein, Professor, Burke Museum and Anthropology, and Woodruff Sullivan , Professor, Astronomy), and with Kenneth Clatterbaugh, Professor and Chair, Philosophy, and Judith Howard, Divisional Dean for Social Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences. The program review included a charge meeting on January 9, 2007, between UW members of the review committee and administrators involved in the review. The site visit, held on January 25-26, 2007, included external review committee members Professor Alan Richardson, Department of Philosophy at the University of British Columbia, and Professor David Schmidtz, Departments of Philosophy and Economics, University or Arizona.

At the October 18 Council meeting Professors Stacey, Stein, and Sullivan summarized their findings from the Review Committee Report (submitted March 8, 2007). Compared to the last ten year review, the report noted the department's graduate program has gained national visibility with several program areas ranking in the top ten, graduate student support has increased making the Department comparable to other UW social science programs, faculty scholarly productivity is significantly high, the department has developed significant relationships within and outside the College, the quality of the undergraduate program has increased with program graduates being accepted to top graduate programs in the country, and student and faculty morale is high. The department's growth has occurred opportunistically but with deliberate strategic planning. However, recent and pending faculty retirements affect the department's sustainability of instruction in core areas of the discipline. The committee recommended that approval be given to the department to conduct searches to replace faculty in core areas rather than to rebuild the department in the future.

The Chair reported the department negotiated with the College of Arts and Sciences a search to replace faculty in philosophy of the mind or philosophy of science. Pending the area of the faculty hire, a second faculty search may be conducted to fill the other core area. With future faculty retirements, the history of philosophy and logic will be anticipated areas of

departmental need. Faculty replacements are crucial to maintaining the departments' areas of strength. Additionally, the department upgraded the curriculum coordinator position to the Director of Undergraduate Studies, which the review committee had recommended. The Honors track was also strengthened by adding a capstone course. Due to difficulty with situating instructors for the course, the department plans to limit enrollment by tightening Honors entry requirements.

The department would like to increase graduate student enrollment as suggested by the review committee, but additional resources would be necessary to do so. The addition of a $2,000 summer stipend has helped the department to attract top graduate students. Alternative sources of funding are being explored which will benefit graduate student funding. In response to the review committee's concern about student progress toward doctoral degree completion, the faculty instituted a writing seminar. The department also began other initiatives that support graduate student professional development. Finally, the newly developed governance structure and the appointment of a new Director for the Program on Values is a positive step in improving the department's relationship with that program and will help to move the program forward.

The Council questioned whether the quality of mentoring was a factor in graduate students' time to degree completion. Students expressed the desire for a clearer definition of what "good progress" means. While the review committee noted structural factors that may impact time to degree, students' concerns reflected more relational issues. Time in the program may be indicative of a more serious issue and placement after degree completion may need to be considered. The Council questioned what the job market was for Philosophy graduates since in 10-15 years no A-list institution placements have occurred. It is not unusual, however, that doctoral students in the humanities go into private industry. The Council commended the Chair for increasing gender diversity of department faculty, but urged that more productive efforts be taken to increase the diversity of minority faculty and look to other institutions for future faculty positions.

The Council recommended continuation of the Department of Philosophy's undergraduate and graduate degree programs, with the next review in the 2017-2018 academic year. The Council further recommended that the department focus attention on improving graduate student mentoring and funding to address time to degree completion, encourage more faculty engagement with students, and to be more proactive in faculty diversity efforts. The Council expressed support of the department in renewing faculty in core and emerging areas of the discipline and the importance of the core to undergraduate education.

We concur with these comments and recommendations.

c: Ana Mari Cauce, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences
        Judith Howard, Divisional Dean, Social Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences
        John Sahr, Associate Dean, Office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs
        Kenneth Clatterbaugh, Professor and Chair, Department of Philosophy
        Graduate School Council
        Philosophy Review Committee
        Augustine McCaffery, Senior Academic Program Specialist, The Graduate School