

**University of Washington
Program on Values in Society
Graduate Certificate Program Review**

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Executive Summary

This report provides our assessment of the Values in Society Graduate Certificate in the Department of Philosophy, as requested in the Graduate School memo of May 12, 2009 and charge meeting of May 16th, 2009, in which we were asked to assess the academic and educational quality of the certificate program and to provide constructive suggestions for strengthening it.

Our observations are based on the self-study report and related materials provided by the Program Director, as well as our one-day site visit with program faculty, Departmental administrators, and graduate students of the Certificate program. During the site visit, we met with the following: the Program Director; the Chair and Administrator of the Department of Philosophy; program faculty across ranks (senior, junior, and Research Associates); interdisciplinary graduates of the Certificate program; and a representative of the Graduate and Professional Student Senate, who also provided written input from one program graduate. The Committee met twice by phone prior to the site visit and in person at the end of the site visit. The report that follows is endorsed by all three members of the committee.

In presenting this report we would like to acknowledge the Program Director, Dr. Michael Blake, and POV faculty members for their helpful responses to our requests for additional information. We also very much appreciate the excellent support provided by David Canfield-Budde of the Graduate School.

Following a brief summary of the history and scope of the program, we provide an overall evaluation of the Program on Values and its curriculum offerings, followed by specific recommendations. Although our formal charge was narrowly focused on the Values in Society Graduate Certificate program, we have found it important to place this evaluation in the larger context of the Program's overall instructional, research, and scholarly contributions, within and beyond the University, since these seem highly relevant to the questions of impact, quality, and areas for program refinement at the heart of this review. Our observations and recommendations on these larger issues follow our comments and recommendations on the curriculum.

To summarize our conclusions: From an external perspective, the Program on Values is on the cutting edge of applied ethics programs nationally, comparable in quality and stature to peer programs at prestigious universities (e.g. Princeton, Harvard, and Stanford). We base this overall assessment of POV on several factors: its growing reputation as a national center of excellence in applied ethics; the quality of the faculty; the relevance and timeliness of the substantive areas being addressed by Program faculty (e.g. bioethics, global justice, information technology, and environmental ethics); the range of its program offerings (particularly in relation to its overall resources); the quality and reach of the Program's teaching and public events; and its thoroughly interdisciplinary nature. POV is clearly a very valuable, visible resource not only within the Department of Philosophy but for the campus as a whole.

Protecting and growing this important interdisciplinary resource should be a high priority for the University, the Graduate School, and the Department of Philosophy. At the same time, we see opportunities for the Program to revisit its teaching mission, more clearly define which aspects of its work carry most strategic weight, and, in concert with the Department of Philosophy and the Graduate School, ensure that it has the governance structures, institutional relationships, and faculty supports necessary to ensure its optimal development moving forward.

History and Scope of the Program

The Program on Values in Society, which sponsors interdisciplinary teaching, research, and outreach in the field of applied ethics, was funded by a University Initiative Fund (UIF) grant in 2003. The central aims of the UIF focused not just on increasing the number of ethics courses available on campus but on creating a larger awareness of the ethical dimensions of contemporary social issues across the university. Within the Department of Philosophy, the UIF was intended to support key strategic goals and to create interdisciplinary linkages, in the process transcending the perceived insularity of the Department. The UIF funding supports faculty lines, some administrative support, graduate and undergraduate curricular offerings, teaching assistantships in applied ethics courses, and a range of public events on topics related to applied ethics.

The heart of the Program is its faculty. Senior faculty hires have included environmental ethicists Stephen Gardiner (joint appointment with the College of the Environment) and Andrew Light (joint appointment with the Evans School), and global ethicist Michael Blake (joint appointment with the Evans School). Junior faculty hires are Sara Goering and Ingra Schellenberg, both of whom specialize in bioethics and have strong relationships with the Department of Bioethics and Humanities in the Medical School. Andrew Light left the university in academic year 2007-2008; Adam Moore, who specializes in the ethics of information technology and has joint appointments in the Department of Philosophy and the Information School, joined the core program faculty the same year. Given present constraints on hiring new tenure-track faculty, the Program currently has two post-doctoral research fellows: Brad McHose (from UCLA) and Lauren Hartzell (Stanford), both for two year terms. Other faculty members with formal affiliations with the Program (hereafter termed Faculty Associates, per the Program's terminology) include Bill Talbott (Philosophy), Maureen Kelley (Pediatric Bioethics), and Jamie Mayerfeld (Political Science).

The Values in Society Graduate Certificate program was established in 2007. The Program on Values also offers an undergraduate minor. Both curriculum offerings are "intended to motivate interdisciplinary research by students whose primary interests lie outside philosophical ethics" (Program self-study). Beyond these curricular offerings, and consistent with the focus of the UIF on university-wide outreach in applied ethics, program faculty are very actively involved in interdisciplinary teaching. Topical areas of applied ethics courses offered by POV faculty members include: international justice, environmental ethics, disability, bioethics,

animal welfare, leadership, privacy rights, and psychiatric practice. Many are new course offerings made possible by the hiring of POV faculty; others are standing courses that can be offered more frequently and/or to more students given the presence of POV faculty. In general, the Program has greatly increased the coverage of applied ethics in the university, via courses that are very popular with students across a range of disciplines.

In keeping with the aims of the UIF, the Program also sponsors an array of public events, “designed to foster ethical thinking and discussion on issues of public importance.” Areas of foci have included global justice, medical ethics, environmental ethics, and information technology. These public events, many of which have been organized in collaboration with non-university organizations (e.g. the World Affairs Council) have been very successful, attracting a wide array of campus and larger community participants, and crafting a presence and level of outreach that is unusual for a department of philosophy (and which reflects a significant departure from the insularity noted in the prior review of the department).

Graduate Certificate in Values in Society

The Certificate Program “aims to facilitate graduate research in ethics as it arises from the disciplines. The program is designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary for integrating ethics and ethics scholarship into their chosen field.” (program materials). To complete the certificate, students are required to take three courses offered by POV faculty members: (Values 511 (Ethics Matters, 5 credits), Values 512 (Justice Matters, 5 credits), and Values 513 (Capstone Workshop, 2 credits), along with two other graduate level courses specific to the student’s field of study. The core sequence (Values 511-12) “provides students with the necessary groundwork for pursuing ethics scholarship as it relates to their field of interest” (program materials). The capstone course provides students with a forum for sharing and collaborating on their ethics scholarship: program materials state that “the aim of the capstone is for students to develop a paper on ethics suitable for submission for publication.” POV faculty members thus offer 3 unique courses each year via the Certificate program, which attract graduate students from a range of disciplines. POV reaches out to potential students via a website, posters, and flyers.

Despite active interest in the POV course offerings, the Certificate program is a small program that consistently has been under-enrolled. Students participating in the certificate program have come from a range of units, including Public Affairs, Women Studies, Social Work, International Affairs, and Law. More students take certificate courses than complete the program (e.g., the fall quarter enrolment for Values 512 was 14 students from a wide range of disciplines and professional programs, whereas only a small handful of students have completed the full Certificate program).

Student Perspectives on the Certificate Program

Student feedback on the Certificate program is uniformly very positive: students reported that they value the program and its rigorous curriculum offerings; are very happy with the quality of support provided by the program and its faculty; appreciate its diverse, interdisciplinary nature; and would highly recommend the program to others. In particular students noted the importance of “ethical consciousness-raising” and the application of ethical perspectives to applied issues across a range of disciplines. As one student noted in written feedback, “Every future scholar and educator should take the time to participate in at least one applied ethics or justice course if for no other reason than to learn how to listen to diverse points of view while developing the skills required to articulate clearly what they think and why they think it.” The opportunity to workshop their writing in an interdisciplinary context was also much appreciated. Yet students also noted that the program was not well advertised and thus was difficult to locate, and recommended more active and visible marketing of the program and its offerings. They also suggested that the program would benefit from having a stronger program “identity” – to feel more like a “program.”

Our information on students’ experiences derives from 3 sources: written feedback provided by students (submitted with self-study); written feedback from 1 graduate provided by the Graduate and Professional Student Senate; and the committee’s meeting with 3 students.

Undergraduate Minor

POV’s undergraduate minor requires three components: coursework in applied ethics, many of which are regularly taught by program faculty, and one of which (Values 495) is always taught by program faculty; coursework from selected from an array of courses in other disciplines; and a project combining research and public service, in which the student “works to integrate ethical values and theories ... in a relevant project of fieldwork.” (self study). Although the undergraduate minor is currently very small (at the time of the self study, 4 students were currently enrolled and it had graduated 2 students), it appears to offer considerable potential for further development.

Interdisciplinary Teaching and Outreach

As noted above, POV faculty members have strong connections with other departments on campus and (in addition to teaching extensively within the Department of Philosophy), provide a range of interdisciplinary courses, all apparently very well-received. These include:

- Evans School: Michael Blake regularly teaches PBAF 506, Ethics and Public Policy, and has been asked to double his course enrollment in the coming year.
- College of the Environment: in addition to teaching 3 new upper division cross-listed courses (Philosophy and College of Environment), Steven Gardiner is extensively involved in giving guest lectures (as was Andrew Light before him). Post-doctoral fellow Lauren Hartzell will teach PHIL 243 (Environmental Ethics), cross-listed in the Program

on the Environment, to 100 students in winter quarter. This course draws students from across the university.

- Law School: Steven Gardiner is teaching a new course, Law B576, on Climate Justice.
- Bioethics: Sara Goering has created two new courses, PHIL 409 (Philosophy and Disability) and, with Janelle Taylor in Anthropology, a humanities course for the Simpson Center for the Humanities, “Diagnosing Injustice: Ethics, Power and Global Health.” Sara also regularly teaches PHIL 242, Medical Ethics. When Sara arrived at UW in 2003, this was a class of 40 students; it now enrolls 200 students, mostly from pre-med, pre-nursing, or other pre-health care professions. The self-study materials note that the level of interest in the course is such that it could probably be offered twice a year with double the enrollment. She also regularly provides guest lectures (e.g. in Disability Studies).
- Information School: Adam Moore has created seven new courses, all of which are cross-listed with the Information School, and has taught four other courses, each more than once, that are solely Information School courses. In the past two years, he has also provided guest lectures in nine Information School courses. Within Philosophy, Adam has taught PHIL 102, Contemporary Moral Problems, to approximately 200 students each year.

As these data make clear, POV and its faculty have unusually broad curriculum involvement across the university. The self-study materials show that from Fall 2007 to Spring 2009, Program faculty taught 2110 students, within and beyond the Department of Philosophy.

Findings: Curriculum

The committee came to the conclusion that the “official statistics” regarding the number of POV minors and number of graduate certificate students (which are also quite small) do not nearly capture the degree to which the POV makes a unique and important contribution to the curriculum across campus. In particular, as outlined above, POV faculty teach classes in applied ethics that are central to the curriculum of many other units, including: the Medical School, the Information School, the Jackson School, the Evans School, the Law School, the Program and the Environment, Law, Societies & Justice, and Disability Studies; POV courses are also important for pre-med students across the campus. Some of these courses are substantial in size. The fact that the POV fulfills this important curricular role – one that is very well aligned with the teaching priorities of the University – is not captured by the small number of undergraduate minors and Graduate Certificate students it currently serves.

Curricular Recommendations:

Larger impact: We strongly encourage POV administrators to highlight other features of their program, including the number of courses offered; enrollments in those courses; and new courses created, as well as POV conferences and guest lectures.

Undergraduate Minor: We have some thoughts about how to improve enrollments in the minor. Here, the central limitation, we suspect, is the lack of advertising and awareness across the campus. One simple remedy for this might include creating an attractive flyer and brochure that describes the minor, and making these materials available to advising staff in Mary Gates Hall and across the campus. Although some faculty expressed concern that the service learning requirement is the main obstacle to increasing enrollments in the minor, we are skeptical that this is the case; many majors and minors with relatively large enrollments have either an internship or service learning component. For this reason, we advise the POV faculty to focus on advertising and outreach first – and not to abolish the service learning requirement – in their initial efforts to bolster enrollments in the minor.

Certificate Program:

We are uncertain whether the Certificate program is the best way for the POV faculty to bring training in applied ethics to the University community, and specifically to the graduate community. On the one hand, the faculty with whom we spoke value their graduate courses very much, and felt that the capstone course provides a meaningful opportunity for graduate students, many of whom are in professional programs, to adopt a more reflective stance toward their chosen career and to develop their writing and analytic skills. This sense was shared by the graduate students with whom we spoke. Moreover, some students and faculty expressed the view that the certificate itself was useful for some graduate students. On the other hand, the number of students enrolled in the certificate program is quite small, and it is not clear that the certificate will be able to attract the professional students for whom it appears to be primarily intended. Certificate students are required to take a three course series to obtain the certificate, with the final course consisting of a writing-intensive capstone seminar. It is not clear to us that students in a two or three year professional program will have sufficient flexibility and time to add this curricular load to their already fast-paced (and often highly structured) programs. In addition, we note that most inter-disciplinary certificate programs, including POV, seem to have difficulty attracting students from the disciplines.

Taken together, these two observations lead us to believe that enrollments in the Certificate program are likely to remain very small. This raises central questions. Do the benefits of the certificate program for the small number of enrollees outweigh the teaching and administrative costs associated with continuing it? What is the added value of the certificate which in other ways has broad visibility and impact? We do not have the answers to these questions, but encourage POV faculty to consider the possibility of continuing to offer the first two courses in the graduate sequence, but foregoing the capstone and the Certificate. This would free POV faculty to offer more of the courses that would likely attract additional students to the minor.

Governance, Program Faculty, Development:

POV functions as a stand-alone unit within the Department of Philosophy. All faculty members have tenure-track appointments in the department. POV has a faculty director (Michael Blake),

administrative support from a graduate student RA, and an advisory board. Junior faculty members are tenured in their Departments, creating a need (where there are joint appointments) for careful attention to ensuring balanced demands and clarity of expectations. Junior faculty members receive research funding from the Program, and can access additional research support through the Department of Philosophy.

Working relationships between Program faculty and the Department of Philosophy seem on the whole to function well. At the same time, the potential for some push and pull over resources and visibility seems inherent in the Program's structure and funding, and questions re the Program's relative autonomy vis à vis its parent department inevitably emerge. These undoubtedly become more salient at a time of significant resource constraints, and will likely also need to be addressed forthrightly as the Program and the Department weigh different options for its curriculum offerings. As all concerned focus on strategically moving the Program and its contributions forward, we encourage attention to three programmatic areas in addition to the curriculum: 1) program governance, in particular the role of the advisory board; 2) an expanded role for advancement; 3) faculty support and retention.

Program Governance:

The Graduate School Review of the Department of Philosophy noted an urgent need to clarify the governance of the Program and to create an advisory board. Although the Program subsequently developed a governance structure, including an advisory board, our review suggests that it is time to rethink the nature and function of these entities, particularly given the challenges the program has experienced in marketing its certificate program and undergraduate minor. Other governance issues relevant to the Program's ongoing success and vibrancy include strategic thinking about program directions and investments, the development of a succession plan for the directorship, discussions re the scope and mix of affiliated faculty, and ongoing calibration of Program goals and activities with those of the Department of Philosophy.

Recommendation: We recommend that the Program develop an expanded interdisciplinary advisory board, charged with supporting the growth and outreach of the program across key units on campus, and with supporting, enhancing, and maintaining the Program's collective direction, coherence, and leadership. Membership should include a range of stakeholders, both people who are "passionate about the program," and key representatives from other departments (e.g. the professional schools) and campus organizations with access to students who are likely to make use of and benefit from the program's offerings.

Advancement:

Both POV in general and its curricular offerings would benefit from additional marketing. Given the value of POV to the wider university, as well as the contributions it makes in stimulating

public conversations on key issues, a stronger role and presence for advancement staff in relation to the program seems important.

Recommendation: We suggest that in concert with the Department of Philosophy, the program consider making greater use of advancement staff to assist with marketing program activities, increasing visibility, and garnering external support.

Faculty Involvement, Support, and Retention:

Faculty feedback and our own observation show this to be a highly dedicated, productive, and effective faculty across all ranks, with considerable investment also by Associate faculty. Faculty noted that the high degree of coherence and collegiality among the faculty provided important support and incentives for Program involvement. Retaining the excellent faculty currently affiliated with POV is a priority concern for the Department of Philosophy and for the Program; clearly without exception they are excellent faculty who have had a strong impact on the department and within the wider university. Many people who spoke with us noted the central importance to the success of the program of a critical mass of high caliber faculty with shared goals and strong collegial relationships. POV has already lost Andrew Light, a blow to the Program's emphasis on environmental ethics as a signature area for the program and the university. Given the quality of the faculty, the Program is constantly vulnerable to further faculty attrition. Demands on the junior faculty members are also a concern, particularly given the challenges of inter-disciplinary relationships. In general, this is also a group of faculty members who are balancing considerable demands, and are pulled in many directions.

Given this mix of evident strength but escalating demand, we encourage careful attention to three areas: 1) faculty retention and support, particularly for junior faculty; 2) the nature and scope of the Associate Faculty; 3) as noted above, where and how faculty teaching resources are used.

Recommendations:

- We encourage the Graduate School, the Department of Philosophy, and the Program to do all that is possible to ensure that the integrity of this faculty group is maintained. Given the level of demand on the junior faculty, we particularly encourage the provision of pre-tenure supports to Ingra Schellenberg (for example via a pre-tenure research leave).
- We recommend that the Program consider enlarging its roster of Associate Faculty.

Impact and Implications:

The committee wishes to strongly underscore the importance of the Program on Values, its faculty, and its teaching (broadly constructed) to the university, its mission, and its programs.

In an increasingly complex global world, public conversations and deep consideration of ethical issues are essential to both the development of our students as global citizens and to the university's public mission. Despite a somewhat slow start-up as faculty members were hired, the Program on Values has become a signature area for the Department of Philosophy and the university, with national prominence in environmental ethics, bioethics, global justice and human rights, and information technology. It includes a top-tier group of faculty, with a coherent, unified focus on applied ethics and deep investment in the content, quality, and success of the Program.

These evident strengths present challenges and opportunities. For the Graduate School and the Department of Philosophy, the key challenges will be to protect and grow the Program without inadvertently undermining the ingredients essential to its identity and reach. At the same time, it will be important to better articulate and support the Program's teaching contributions, within and beyond the certificate program and undergraduate minor and POV. We see considerable opportunities to both to more strategically define the program's core offerings and to market them more widely at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Given the programmatic constraints on professional school graduate students, a key target audience for the Program's courses, the Certificate program may not be the best way to package the Program's graduate offerings. We therefore encourage all involved to step back and consider two key questions: What is or should be the vision for the Program going forward? How can the Program best align its curriculum offerings with this vision, as well as with faculty roles/strengths?

Overall Recommendation:

Given the opportunity which this review affords for the Program has to revisit where and how its resources are best used, including the nature of its investment in the Certificate Program, we recommend continuing status for the Certificate Program with a subsequent review in 5 years.