

Report of the Ten-Year Review Committee
For the Department of Philosophy,
University of Washington

March 8, 2007

Introduction and Overview

Ten years ago, when the Philosophy Department was last reviewed, the Review Committee described a department with some strengths (particularly in ancient philosophy and epistemology), but with serious holes (in philosophy of science, in ethics, and in history of philosophy), low faculty morale, and (with some notable exceptions) low levels of scholarly productivity. The department itself was small (14 FTEs), and had few intellectual or programmatic connections with other academic units inside or outside the College of Arts and Sciences. Efforts to diversify the faculty had barely begun, and although the department's undergraduate degree programs were successful and well-regarded, its graduate program was characterized by high student attrition rates, low levels of financial support for graduate students, and widespread dissatisfaction on the part of faculty and students with the high failure rates on the department's MA papers requirement. The department was not nationally ranked in the 1993 NRC assessments, and did not have a national profile as a graduate department.

Ten years later, the current Review Committee finds a department that is almost unrecognizable from the one described in 1997. Under the extraordinary leadership of Ken Clatterbaugh (who has been chair continuously since 1996), the department now has twenty faculty members (18.5 FTE's), and a search is currently underway to add an additional full-time faculty member in BioEthics. Seven of the department's twenty current faculty members are women (35%). Five female faculty members have been hired since 1996, two at the full professor level. Due to a recent faculty resignation, the department does not currently have any African-American, Asian-American, or Latino/a faculty members. Efforts to identify and recruit candidates from underrepresented groups are ongoing, however, and are being taken seriously by search committees and by the Chair.

Ten years ago, the department had little national visibility at the graduate level. Today, it has a nationally significant graduate program with areas of serious, focused strength. In Environmental Ethics and Feminist Philosophy, the department ranks among the top five nationally; in Philosophy of Science, it ranks within the top ten,¹ with the possibility of moving higher in the years ahead if the right appointments are made. Levels of financial support for graduate students have also improved markedly; and although the department continues to struggle to compete for graduate students with better funded departments nationally, it is now at least competitive with most other Social Science departments at UW in its ability to support its graduate students. Scholarly productivity on the part of the faculty is remarkably higher than it was ten years ago, and

¹ If free-standing departments in History and Philosophy of Science are included in the rankings, then the UW program would rank in the top 20-25.

now compares favorably with the norms at the top Philosophy Departments in the country.

The department has also become much more actively engaged in the intellectual life of the University of Washington. It has built important connections within the College and outside it, to units that include the Comparative History of Ideas Program (CHID); Program on the Environment (PoE); Physics; Women Studies; Law, Societies and Justice; the Evans School of Public Affairs; the Information School; the Program on Climate Change; Anthropology; History; and Medical History and Ethics. The department's interdisciplinary "reach" is, at this point, quite exceptional by comparison with Philosophy departments elsewhere or with most other UW social science departments.

The undergraduate program in Philosophy, good ten years ago, is now even better. The department's Ethics Bowl teams (composed of undergraduates, and coached by the department's graduate students) have won national titles, and the best of its graduating majors go on to top graduate programs across the country. Improvements could and should be made to the department's honors program. We also recommend that the departmental curriculum coordinator become instead Director of Undergraduate Studies, with wider responsibilities for overseeing the undergraduate program and for acting as the primary advocate for the interests of undergraduate philosophers. These recommendations are spelled out in more detail below. On the whole, however, the undergraduate philosophy program is flourishing.

Morale among graduate and undergraduate students is good, and faculty morale is high (albeit not without some concerns for the future, to be discussed below). The department has, in short, done a truly remarkable job of seizing opportunities to make new appointments, build new areas of strength, and widen its intellectual reach, while increasing departmental unity and comity. The University should be careful not to take these successes for granted. They have been hard won, and they could be relatively easily undone.

Patterns of Growth: Past, Present, and Future

The department's growth over the past decade has been largely opportunistic. Several excellent people have been added to the department as a result of "partner appointments," and two extremely important senior appointments have been made with special help from the Provost's Office and the Dean's Office. Most significant in the department's growth, however, has been the success of the Program on Values. Funded by the University Initiatives Fund, the Program on Values has allowed the department to add four new faculty members, three in the field of Environmental Ethics and one in Bioethics. A search is currently underway for an additional colleague in Bioethics, also PoV funded. The addition of these four (soon to be five) new faculty members to the department's existing group of ethicists has made ethics (applied, historical, and theoretical) one of the department's strongest areas of specialization.

Although opportunistic, the department's growth has not been haphazard. Quite the contrary, the department has grown according to a very deliberate plan. Ten years ago, the last review committee recommended that the department build strength in ethics

and the philosophy of science. Ten years later, the department has done precisely that, and has created an additional area of excellence in feminist philosophy also.

But opportunistic hiring of this sort also has a price, and in this case the price has been to lessen the department's ability to teach the "core" areas of the discipline. Recent retirements have left the department without specialists in either philosophy of mind or metaphysics. Future retirements, likely to take place within the next two to five years, will remove from the department its primary specialists in epistemology, philosophy of language, logic, and ancient philosophy also. These are absolutely central areas in the study of philosophy and will remain so. They need to be maintained not only because of their intrinsic importance, but also because they are critical to sustaining the strength the department has built in philosophy of science, ethics, and feminist philosophy. This committee believes strongly that it will be possible to make appointments in these "core" areas that will also build additional strength in philosophy of science, ethics, and feminist philosophy. But the department cannot maintain its current position in the discipline, much less improve upon that position, unless it is permitted to replace retiring faculty in these core areas. To borrow language from another current UW campaign, we need to "renew the core." And this needs to be done promptly.

We recommend, therefore, that the Department be permitted to begin searching for replacement faculty in these core areas (mind, epistemology, logic, language, and metaphysics) as soon as possible. A start should be made next year. With the retirement of Robert Coburn (metaphysics) two years ago, the department is already "down one" in these core areas. Arguably, indeed, it is already "down two," after the retirement of Charles Marks in philosophy of mind; but because Marks' position was already mortgaged to support a new position in historical philosophy, it cannot be counted as a clear "loss" to the department. Nonetheless, these two retirements mean that at present the department has no one who specializes in either of these two core areas.

The Review Committee is strongly of the view that it would be unwise to wait until the department loses even more of these core positions to retirement before beginning this renewal process. It believes that the department will be able to attract much stronger candidates if it begins this renewal process now, while some of these key faculty are not yet retired, than it will be able to do if it waits until they are all gone and then tries to "rebuild." There is, therefore, much to recommend a hiring strategy that would permit the department to appoint a new epistemologist (for example) even before the current specialist (Laurence Bonjour, who is one of the department's most prominent faculty members) retires. Knowing that these retirements are coming, it should be possible for the department to conduct broadly defined searches that would allow it the freedom to advertise very broadly for candidates in mind, epistemology, language, or logic, so that, in any given year, the department would have the freedom to appoint in whichever of these areas produces the strongest candidates who fit best into the department's existing strengths.

It should also be possible to fill these "core" positions while strengthening further the department's existing emphases on ethics, philosophy of science, and feminist philosophy. Philosophy of mind, for example, opens naturally towards cognition, cognitive neuroscience, and the philosophy of psychology. All these fields would be powerful additions to the department's philosophy of science concentration. Philosophy of mind candidates might also link up with epistemology, another "core" area; and

potentially with feminist philosophy also. A search in metaphysics will produce candidates with competence in other areas, some of which would strengthen other areas of need (for example, ancient philosophy) or other areas of strength (for example, metaethics). Logic is another area with natural links to philosophy of science, epistemology, and metaphysics. And so on, almost without limit. The department will know best how to proceed on this, and we do not wish to dictate too narrowly how it should define these positions and run these searches. But the fact that there are going to be so many openings over the next few years that must (in our judgment) be filled, gives the department an opportunity to create some exciting new linkages between its various subfields that will position it well for decades to come.

The Undergraduate Program in Philosophy

As the Department's self-study notes, the UW Philosophy Department carries a significantly larger number of undergraduate majors, both in absolute terms and as a ratio of majors to faculty FTEs, than is customary in comparable schools with higher-ranked departments of philosophy (see table on p. 5 of the self-study). Large numbers of undergraduate majors characterize most UW social science departments; some, indeed, have substantially higher ratios of majors to FTEs than does Philosophy. But the fact that UW social science departments have grown accustomed to such high ratios of majors to faculty members should not lessen our appreciation of the burden this ratio represents for the Department of Philosophy.

Student demand for philosophy courses is high, and the department's faculty is hard-pressed to meet that demand at either the introductory or the advanced level. We were told that some introductory philosophy courses do not require that students write any papers at all; and that in other classes, even at the 300 level, only a single paper of 1-2 pages in length is required. Philosophy majors tend to be an intellectually ambitious group (witness the fact that fully half are double majors). The students with whom we spoke wanted the opportunity to write longer papers, especially in 300 and 400 level classes. The problem is that the kind of detailed faculty feedback that longer assignments would require is simply not possible when classes get too large (as they frequently must, to handle student demand for courses), nor are there additional Teaching Assistants available to help faculty in this task.

Faculty members take seriously the need to cover the basic courses in the undergraduate curriculum, and have shown an admirable willingness to step outside their particular areas of scholarly specialization to teach the basic courses the department needs them to teach. Some faculty have even reoriented their scholarly interests in response to the department's teaching needs. But the faculty, at its current size, is stretched already to meet its undergraduate teaching responsibilities. There is no "slack" in the system that would permit it to take on new disciplinary subfields. The department's highest priority for future hires must be to replace retiring faculty members in core subfields of the discipline. Despite expressed student desires that the department add faculty in continental philosophy and Asian philosophy, the Review Committee cannot see how such desires can be met without increasing the overall number of faculty in the department beyond its current size.

Undergraduate advising in the department seems to be working well, and the faculty Curriculum Coordinator, Ann Baker, together with the other faculty members on the curriculum committee, has done a very good job of organizing and managing the curriculum. As chair, Ken Clatterbaugh has also been an important advocate for the interests of undergraduate students. The review committee believes, however, that this role as advocate for undergraduate interests should not be presumed to be a fixed part of a future chair's duties. Instead, we recommend that the responsibilities of the Curriculum Coordinator be enhanced, and that that position be relabelled as "Director (or Coordinator) of Undergraduate Studies," with responsibility for overseeing the entirety of the undergraduate program and for acting as the principal advocate within the faculty for the interests of the undergraduate program.

The undergraduate program in History and Philosophy of Science has existed since 2000 and has had 19 graduates over the period 2002-2006. A combined effort by faculty in the History and Philosophy Departments, the program attracts serious, high-quality students, who go on to graduate school in significantly higher numbers than do their peers in the general UW undergraduate student body. Although a small program, the participating faculty find it valuable not only to students, but also in fostering faculty interactions. The capstone HPS 400 seminar is particularly important in this latter regard. We recommend that the History and Philosophy of Science program be continued in its current form.

We also recommend that the departmental honors program be strengthened (and we understand that the department is currently reviewing its honors program). At present, students are admitted into the honors program solely on the basis of their Grade Point Average, and the program itself consists of only a single additional required undergraduate "capstone" course (for which a graduate course can be substituted). The review committee believes that the high quality of the undergraduate philosophy majors as a whole would sustain and reward a more robust sequence of honors courses. It also believes that there would be advantages to identifying honors students before their senior year, so that these students could begin to "find" each other and develop a degree of camaraderie as they progress through the major. As noted above, even non-honors students expressed a desire to write longer and more elaborately argued papers than they are currently being asked to do. The honors program should at least offer such opportunities to its students, even if resource constraints made it impossible to offer such opportunities to all students in upper-level philosophy courses.

The Graduate Program

The department's graduate program is small, both in absolute numbers and in comparison to other comparable departments nationwide. Over the past ten years, the department's total graduate enrollments have held steady at around 28 students, with between one and four students receiving PhDs annually. No longer, however, is the graduate student cohort split between funded and unfunded students, as was the case ten years ago. All students in the department now receive five years of funding (contingent, of course, upon satisfactory performance in the program), mainly through teaching assistantships. In practice, students can generally count on support for six years. It is the

faculty's clear perception that the quality of the graduate students enrolling in the program now is substantially higher than it was ten years ago; that the department is attracting more students who have already earned Master's Degrees elsewhere; and that as a result, time to degree will improve rapidly as the last of the students from the "old cohort" graduate from the program. "Time-to-degree" has been a problem in the department, but the faculty seems confident that this problem will be resolved over the next several years, as the new cohort of funded, higher-quality graduate students replaces the older, less-well-funded and (generally) less able cohort that entered the department ten years ago.

The review committee does not dispute the department's perception that the quality of the entering graduate students is now markedly better than it was a decade ago, even though average GPA and GRE scores of entering graduate students (see Appendix A of the self-study) are almost exactly the same as they were ten years ago. GPA and GRE scores are, however, very inadequate gauges of the quality of philosophy students. A much better "test" of the perceived improvement in the quality of the department's students will be the department's placement record as these new students finish the PhD program and enter the academic job market.

Changes to the MA papers requirement in recent years have successfully reduced the high attrition rates that caused concern to the Review Committee ten years ago. This past year, every single candidate passed the MA papers requirement. There is a tendency for students to lose momentum during their third year of study, after passing through the MA paper requirement; but the Graduate Studies director is aware of this tendency, and is taking active steps (through increased advising) to counteract it. Students too spoke to us of this concern, and suggested that a departmental pro-seminar for 3rd and 4th year graduate students, oriented around the preparation of dissertation prospectuses and conference papers, might be an effective response to this pattern of "mid-graduate-years drift." The committee recommends that the department consider this proposal seriously.

The small number of graduate students in the department, combined with the reluctance of students from outside the department to enroll in graduate-level Philosophy courses, means that only a small number of graduate seminars can be offered in any given year (generally only 2 seminars per term are offered). Graduate students therefore have to fill out their course requirements with 400 level classes. A modest increase in the average size of the entering graduate class, from four to perhaps six students per year, would probably benefit the department, by making it possible to justify offering more graduate courses of an appropriate size (a recent effort to increase the number of graduate seminars from 2/term to 3/term is foundering on the problem of insufficient numbers of students). But such an increase in the size of the entering class should only occur if funding can be found to support these additional students. Another solution to the problem of low enrollments in graduate seminars (and hence the limited range of seminars that can be offered) would be to require 3rd year students to enroll in some regular graduate classes, even as they are working on their prospectuses. This is done at other nationally prominent Philosophy departments, and need not necessarily result in a lengthened time to completion of the PhD degree.

The UW Philosophy Department is now one that can expect its PhD graduates to compete seriously for academic positions around the country. The department needs, therefore, to devote more explicit and sustained attention to how it professionalizes its

graduate students and prepares them to compete on the academic job market. Graduate students need to be strongly encouraged to produce scholarly papers and present them at conferences; they need to be brought actively into the process of grant-writing (an area in which the department faculty could and should be much more active); and faculty members need to accompany them to conferences (especially the annual meeting of the APA) in order to introduce them to key people in the field. Ten years ago, such efforts would likely not have made much difference in the department's placement rate. Over the next decade, such efforts are much more likely to be rewarded.

Grants and Fundraising

Development efforts on the part of the Chair have already brought some significant successes. Just within the past few months, an alumnus gave the department a \$1.6 million endowment to support teaching and research in BioEthics. But at present, development efforts depend almost entirely on the efforts of the Chair. The department as a whole needs to make a greater commitment to external fundraising. This should not remain solely the Chair's responsibility. The Program on Values, with its emphasis on Environmental Ethics and BioEthics, is particularly well-placed to develop outside endowment gifts on a very significant scale, and should be active in doing so.

The department faculty also need to be more active in grant-writing. Current areas of departmental strength, especially philosophy of science and environmental ethics, make faculty members in these areas highly competitive for NSF and IGERT grants, each of which would provide (among much else) additional funding to support graduate students. Administrative support from the Dean's Office will be needed to assist faculty in applying for such grants, and to administer them when they are received. The department's excellent administrative staff cannot and should not take on these additional responsibilities. But the Review Committee is confident that such support would be forthcoming from the Dean's Office, if the department faculty take the initial steps necessary to apply for such grants.

Governance Issues and the Program on Values

The knottiest set of issues currently confronting the Department of Philosophy arises from the growth and promise of the Program on Values. PoV was established and funded by the University Initiatives Fund, a now-defunct mechanism for creating new, cross-disciplinary programs at UW. PoV's successes have been considerable. PoV funding has enabled the Philosophy Department to hire four new faculty members, with a search for a fifth faculty member currently underway: three environmental ethicists and one (soon two) bioethicists. As a result of these new appointments, the department has become a national leader in Environmental Ethics. In cooperation with the Department of Medical History and Ethics (located in the Medical School), it has the potential in the years ahead to become a major center for BioEthics also. PoV has recently received approval for its new Graduate Certificate in Values in Society, and hopes to revive a long-established (but currently moribund) joint PhD program in Medical Ethics with the

Department of Medical History and Ethics. In addition, the Philosophy Department has recently raised a \$1.6 million endowment to support the study of BioEthics.

Several of these new PoV faculty are jointly appointed between Philosophy and another academic unit: Blake and Light with the Evans School of Public Affairs; and the anticipated new appointment in BioEthics with the Department of Medical History and Ethics. But all PoV faculty are voting members of the Philosophy Department, and all serve actively on departmental committees in Philosophy. Merit evaluations and promotion and tenure processes are handled through the Philosophy Department, in cooperation with the Evans School and MHE and in keeping with the requirements of the Faculty Code. Teaching assignments for PoV faculty are negotiated between the Director of PoV (currently Assoc. Prof. Jean Roberts), the Chair of the Philosophy Department, and the chairs of these other appointing department. Salaries for PoV faculty are paid from dedicated PoV funds controlled by the Director.

There is universal admiration among the Philosophy Department faculty for the quality of the PoV appointees and for the active role all these new appointees have taken in the life and work of the Philosophy Department. This committee heard not even a hint of jealousy, dissension, or factionalism within the Department that was connected in any way with PoV (or indeed with any other issues; our impression was of a remarkably united department). There are, however, important questions about the membership and future direction of PoV that must be dealt with speedily if PoV is to maintain the forward momentum it has established.

- 1) Upon what principles should faculty membership in PoV be determined? Should the core faculty of PoV (ie, those with votes in the Program) be limited to those whose salaries are paid from PoV funds? If so, then what about the Director, who at present is not PoV funded? Or should the core faculty be expanded to include other members of the Philosophy Department who work in applied or theoretical ethics, even though they are not paid from PoV funds?
- 2) Should PoV be housed, administratively and intellectually, in the Philosophy Department? Or should it be a free-standing, university-wide program, albeit one without faculty appointive powers? And if the latter, should all PoV faculty continue in future to have appointments in the Philosophy Department? Or should PoV become an interdisciplinary group under the supervision of the Graduate School, open equally to all University faculty members with an expertise in applied ethics?
- 3) Is PoV's remit principally curricular? Does it exist primarily to ensure that a curriculum in applied ethics is taught at the graduate and undergraduate level? Or should PoV be thought of principally as a Center for Applied Ethics, drawing in faculty from around the University who have expertise in issues of environmental or medical ethics?
- 4) How active should PoV be in raising endowment funds to support its activities and continued growth?
- 5) How prominent a role should PoV play, across the campus and beyond the campus, in framing and promoting policy discussions relating to

environmental ethics? How much “outreach” of this sort should PoV be doing?

It is not surprising that such questions should emerge at this point in the growth of the Program on Values. What is surprising is the shocking absence of administrative definition as to how and by whom these questions should be addressed and resolved. Perhaps because of its origins as a UIF program, there is no agreed governance structure for PoV. There is not even any agreed-upon definition for membership on the Program faculty. Nor are there documents that adequately define the structural relationship between PoV and the other institutional entities with which it cooperates (not only the Philosophy Department, but also the College of Arts and Sciences, the Evans School of Public Affairs, the Medical School, the Information School, the Graduate School, or even the Provost’s Office). It is not even clear to whom the PoV Director reports, or who would have the authority to appoint a new PoV Director if the existing Director should resign. There is an External Advisory Board for the Program (composed of the Associate Dean of the Graduate School, the Chair of the Philosophy Department, the Divisional Dean for Social Sciences, the Director of the Program on the Environment, and representatives from the Evans School and the Department of Medical History and Ethics), but this Board has met only once in the five-year history of the Program, and its powers, like so much else about the Program, are completely undefined. But the fact that this External Board is chaired by the PoV Director makes it fairly obvious that the Board is not well-positioned to evaluate the performance of the PoV Director. So who is supposed to do this?

This Committee was not charged to review the Program on Values, and it does not propose to do so. Clearly, however, the success of PoV is integral to the present and future success of the Department of Philosophy. In our judgment, it is absolutely essential, therefore, that the College of Arts and Sciences impress upon the Provost’s Office the urgency with which these administrative and governance issues need to be resolved. **These governance issues need to be resolved before the end of the current academic year.** Fundamental differences of opinion about the future direction of PoV exist among the PoV faculty; some faculty feel strongly enough about the questions enumerated above that, if these questions are not resolved speedily and to their satisfaction, they are unlikely to remain at the University of Washington. These questions about the membership and future direction of the Program cannot be resolved, however, until some kind of governance structure has first been imposed that would permit them to be discussed by the appropriate decision-makers. At the moment, no one even knows who the appropriate decision-makers ARE. The imposition of such definitions must come from the Provost’s Office, and it must come speedily. No other administrative office has the authority to do so.

Summary of Recommendations

- 1) The Department of Philosophy's degree programs – the Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy, the Bachelor of Arts in History and Philosophy of Science, the Master of Arts in Philosophy, and the Doctor of Philosophy – should be continued without interruption. These degree programs should be reviewed again after a period of ten years.
- 2) The Department needs to “renew its core,” by replacing retiring faculty members in such key areas as philosophy of mind, metaphysics, logic, epistemology and philosophy of language. These appointments should be made with an eye toward strengthening the department's existing concentrations in philosophy of science, ethics, and feminist philosophy. Searches should be broadly defined, and need to begin right away.
- 3) The Department should not shrink below its current size of approximately 20 FTEs, unless its undergraduate enrollments should contract significantly.
- 4) The Department should upgrade the position of Curriculum Coordinator to a Director of Undergraduate Studies. The DUS should supervise all aspects of the undergraduate program and act as an advocate for the interests of undergraduate philosophers.
- 5) The Undergraduate Honors Program should be strengthened.
- 6) Both the undergraduate and the graduate program would benefit from a modest increase in the number of graduate students entering the program. Such an increase in the size of the entering cohort should only occur, however, if financial support for these additional graduate students can be secured.
- 7) Third and fourth year graduate students often lose momentum in their programs as they struggle to define a dissertation subject. The Department is aware of this problem, but should be encouraged to think creatively about solutions to it. Course requirements might be extended into the third year; and/or a departmental pro-seminar for prospectus writers might be offered.
- 8) The Department should focus more attention on how it mentors and professionalizes its graduate students as they prepare to enter the job market.
- 9) Department faculty, especially those in “grant-rich” areas like Environmental Ethics and Philosophy of Science, need to become more active in applying for outside funding, especially grant funding, both to support graduate students and to promote the visibility of the department's programs.
- 10) The Provost's Office should appoint a small committee of administratively-experienced UW faculty to design a governance structure for the Program on Values. This committee should consult widely with the involved parties, and its recommendations must have the support of the majority of the PoV faculty as well as of the faculty of the

Department of Philosophy. The committee's recommendations should then be speedily approved by the Provost's Office. A clearly-defined governance structure needs to be in place by the end of the 2006-7 academic year, so that the Program on Values faculty can then begin to discuss and resolve a series of fundamental issues having to do with the qualifications for membership in the Program and the future direction of PoV.

Respectfully submitted,

Department of Philosophy Review Committee:

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