



**Response to March 2019 Report of the Committee  
Department of Philosophy Program Review  
June 2019**

*Submitted by Andrea Woody, Professor and Chair, Department of Philosophy*

We thank the department's review committee – Professor Ron Irving (chair), Professor Leslie Francis, Professor Laura Ruetsche, and Professor Shirley Yee – for producing a thorough and helpful report, and for the detailed attention and commitment they brought to the site visit in February. This review has given the department a valuable opportunity to examine our practices and clarify our goals. We are especially happy to see the review committee endorse the department's vision of “engaged philosophy”.

The department agrees with the committee's recommendations overall. In particular, we are in complete agreement with the committee that our two largest needs are for more faculty in the department and a stabilization of the funding for graduate students. We will continue to advocate for these resources as we also continue our efforts to be even more effective and have greater impact moving forward.

In the memo that follows, we first respond to each section of the review committee report. Next, we provide clarifications or corrections to the report, and finally, we say a little about progress made since the site visit.

**I. Brief responses to each section of the review committee report**

**Undergraduate Program:**

We agree that enhancing our course offerings is the central goal for our undergraduate program. Doing so depends, of course, on having sufficient faculty and graduate student TAs to teach a large number and diverse range of courses. Our two lecturers, Ian Schnee and Paul Franco, are crucial to the current successes of our program, because of the large number of courses they teach. Expanding our offerings will require new faculty and a corresponding number of funded TA positions.

We are also glad to see the committee recognize the value of the University's Evidence-Based Teaching program and to recognize the central leadership role that lecturer Ian Schnee plays in that program. Our department benefits greatly from Ian's expertise and commitment to our undergraduate program.

**Graduate Program:**

We agree with the review committee that the department must stabilize the size of its graduate program by securing the funding streams for students. The committee correctly identifies one of our central challenges: cultivating and fully utilizing sources of funding other than TA positions, such as grant based funding, while maintaining a sufficient number of TAs to cover our curricular needs. This will be an ongoing challenge and we appreciate the committee's suggestions regarding this significant issue.

We also fully agree that recent downsizing of the department faculty has strained our ability to offer sufficient numbers of graduate seminars. As with the undergraduate program, a moderate increase in department faculty could address this issue straightforwardly.

We appreciate the committee's recommendations regarding how to more fully develop the department's vision of "engaged philosophy" in our graduate program. We will explore opportunities for broad training, internship experiences, and interdisciplinary work with other units on campus.

**Diversity:**

Our department commitment to diversity is steadfast. Creating an inclusive, supportive climate is a complex task. We will continue to take steps to enhance our environment for all its members.

**Engagement:**

The committee report underscores that the department needs to highlight and publicize our general vision of "engaged philosophy" and the specific innovative projects our faculty and students are already doing. We thank the committee for this recommendation. We have already started to discuss ways to make our website more effective in this regard and will look for other means to raise our visibility.

**Research and Scholarship:**

The committee's recommendations to explore ways to create synergy among the research projects of existing faculty, and to keep this issue in view for future hiring decisions, has already informed faculty discussions for the development of a 1, 3 and 5 year hiring plan requested for all units in the Social Science Division this spring. As the committee suggests, we should search for ways to work together, to complement efforts we already make to reach across campus.

Additionally, the department just this year implemented a course buy-out policy to allow faculty some possibility to reduce teaching obligations when obtaining grant funding for research projects. Pressures to maintain our curriculum generate real constraints in this regard, but any increase in the number of faculty will provide more flexibility and make teaching reductions more manageable.

**Faculty:**

As the committee report makes evident, the department has been strained as the number of department faculty decreased over the past several years due to retirements, moves, and highly restricted university hiring. We agree that the faculty size needs to increase by at least 3 over its current size of 15 (13 tenure track and 2 lecturer track). We look forward to hiring as soon as possible. Developing a hiring plan on the heels of the department review has allowed us to benefit from the discussion and reflection undertaken for the department review. We have especially used the site visit and the review committee's recommendations to think carefully about the areas of research strength that will most enhance the department's research profile in relation to current faculty areas of research.

The committee also recommends that the department think more strategically about efficiency with regard to department service, decision-making, and committee work. This is good advice, and we will be thinking more in the coming year about ways we can lessen the service burden on our faculty at a time when our small numbers invariably require lots of work from everyone (an issue perhaps most noteworthy for the associate professors).

**Program on Ethics:**

The Program on Ethics is a central component of UW Philosophy and an important contributor to the intellectual life of the university. We are glad that the committee recognized the important research undertaken by the set of highly productive scholars who are the core members of the Program on Ethics, the many excellent events that the Program on Ethics facilitates each year, and the Program's many contributions to the wider community. The Program looks forward to adding new faculty in the near future, according to the Department's hiring plan, which will increase the impact of the Program. The Program will take seriously and discuss internally the committee's recommendation that Program faculty may wish to explore doing more extensive collaborative work together, considering how this might be balanced with the Program's ongoing role in wider external engagement and the already substantial responsibilities of the faculty. In addition, the Program will continue to work, in coordination with the Philosophy Department, to increase enrollment in the ethics minor and the graduate certificate program. It is already making increased efforts with regard to fundraising and Advancement, and looks forward to more support in this regard.

**Staff:**

We are lucky to have a team of committed and highly capable staff. The committee report accurately noted that the department has a growing need for staff support of grant applications and administration. Hiring a new administrator, Chris Dawson-Ripley, will significantly enhance staff capacity to support faculty grant work. We also endorse the report's recommendation for staff cross-training and continuing skill development. The department will support training and continuing education for all members of our staff.

## **II. Clarifications**

There are a few minor points in the report that we would like to clarify or amend:

1. The department did provide financial support for the 200-level course we cross-list with GWSS, and we hope to be able to continue to do so. In recent years the small size of our graduate program has prevented us from providing a graduate student who could assume the TA role for the course.
2. Although not mentioned in the report, the O'Hara Lecture Series in the Philosophy of Physics is another important example of public engagement, focused on the foundations of physics, that has generated substantial interest in the Seattle area while also affording a nice opportunity for interaction with our colleagues in Physics.
3. Requirements for the department's undergraduate major are highly flexible, which is a primary reason for our stable number of majors and the fact that many of our students double-major. Constraints for majors currently arise primarily from the limited number of courses we can teach given the decreased size of our faculty.
4. We would like to acknowledge the contributions our lecturers, Ian Schnee and Paul Franco, make to the research mission of the department, even though this is not a requirement of their jobs.
5. The Department Fact Sheet was in the midst of being updated at the time of the site visit. An up-to-date fact sheet is now on our website.

## **III. Progress**

Finally, we would like to point out ways in which we have already begun some of the important work recommended by the committee:

1. In April, we hired a new department administrator, Chris Dawson-Ripley, who has significant experience with grant proposals and administration from previous positions in grant-heavy units on campus, including the Medical School. His experience is a wonderful resource for faculty pursuing grant funding. [Recommendation #27]
2. Prior to our annual merit review process in May, the department faculty discussed and clarified the role of research contributions by lecturers for merit consideration and promotion. The department values immensely the research productivity of our current lecturers, and at the same time, we will be careful to abide by the faculty code and university regulations regarding merit and promotion of those in lecturer positions. [Recommendation #23]
3. After meeting with the review committee and realizing more discussion would be beneficial, our PhD students met collectively multiple times and generated a document with recommended changes, which they presented to the department chair this spring. Currently, a committee of faculty and PhD students is reviewing the document and strategizing how best to implement positive changes. In particular, the graduate students are working with faculty to (i) meet curricular challenges for the PhD program, (ii) improve support structures for our qualifying process and (iii) enhance the training we offer for their teaching roles.

4. The department has implemented a course-buyout policy to facilitate faculty working on grant-supported research. This policy is one of the most generous in the college in order to encourage grant-based work by faculty. [Recommendation #17]
5. In the coming year, the department (alongside other units in Arts and Sciences) will be developing a document that outlines promotion guidelines for our unit. The review committee asked about such documentation, but it did not exist at the time of the site visit. [Recommendation #22]