

**THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENCE  
INTERDEPARTMENTAL**

**The Department of Philosophy**

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April 27, 2007

TO: Suzanne Ortega, Dean of Graduate School and Vice Provost  
Melissa Austin, Associate Dean for Academic Programs

FROM: Kenneth Clatterbaugh, Chair Department of Philosophy

SUBJECT: Department of Philosophy Response to the Report of the Ten-Year Review

The Department of Philosophy has received the report of the Ten-year Review Committee and would like to thank the Committee for its time and effort. We are in substantial agreement with the Committee's description of changes in the Department over the past ten years as well as many of the recommendations made in the conclusion of its report. We are concerned, however, by a tension that runs through the report. On the one hand the Committee notes that there is no slack in the system; faculty members are fully engaged with teaching, research, and service. But on the other hand, the report recommends that we do more on a number of fronts: increase the number of honors courses and advanced seminars we offer, admit more graduate students, expand our fund raising activities. These are initiatives we ourselves have thought desirable but we are concerned that, without additional resources, we will not be able to implement them without adversely affecting other parts of the program.

The faculty members in Philosophy are unanimous in their agreement with the Committee's recommendation that the Department must renew its core. The Department of Philosophy has suffered four retirements in recent years and at least four additional retirements are expected within the next three years. Only one of the last four retirements has been replaced; if this pattern continues and the upcoming retirements are not replaced, the Department will be unable to meet its curricular obligations, its interdisciplinary commitments, and its obligations to graduate students. Our recent losses have already taken a toll on the departmental offerings in metaphysics and philosophy of mind. History of philosophy, epistemology, and logic will be significantly reduced in the next wave of retirements. Each of these specialties is considered a core area in philosophy and is vital, not only for training graduate students who are competitive on the job market but also, as the report makes clear, each provides crucial support for our distinctive strengths in philosophy of science and ethics. Our weaknesses in core areas have cost the Department graduate recruits in the past; this year three of eight top candidates turned down offers of admission with support because of the lack of coursework available in metaphysics and philosophy of mind.

On the advice of its Hiring Priority Committee, the Department has developed a plan to address our immediate and short-range staffing needs, and has sought approval for two replacement positions, one in metaphysics and one in philosophy of mind, in each of the last three years. As additional retirements approach we will refine this hiring plan so as to

meet ongoing and future curricular needs. In the process we will be mindful of the Committee's observation that it is far better to replace faculty members in areas in which the Department has an established reputation before that reputation is compromised by retirements than to try to recapture strength after the fact.

In addition to renewing its core, the Department would very much like to explore the other recommendations made by the Committee, many of which were already under discussion internally at the time of the Ten-year Review. In pursuing them, we understand that we have a number of options to consider. For example, in order to free up resources that would allow us to offer additional honors classes, increase the number of advanced classes, admit more graduate students, or offer a pro-seminar, the Department might: (1) reduce the number of service courses and/or reduce the number of undergraduate majors; (2) increase class size and/or change departmental requirements for the major or, (3) limit the number of courses that faculty members in Philosophy teach through (or jointly with) other units. Our ability to implement this last option is limited because a number of faculty members in Philosophy hold joint positions and are obligated to teach some of their courses in other units. But where we can implement these options, each entails some loss in order to achieve the identified gains. While the recommendation to seek external grant funding suggests a strategy by which we might secure additional support for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, as well as summer funding for faculty, we note that this will not be appropriate for each faculty member, and we concur with the report that those faculty who would like to be more active in grant writing will require support from the Dean's office. We expect that hard choices will have to be made; nonetheless, we are committed to maintaining excellence, both in our interdisciplinary connections and in our core philosophical mission, at levels appropriate for a first-rate unit in a research university of the quality of the University of Washington.

With respect to the final recommendation concerning the Program on Values, the Department of Philosophy and the Program acknowledge the need for a PoV governance structure that clarifies the organization of the Program and its relationship to the Department. The faculty members currently involved in the Program are actively working on these issues and expect to ratify a set of PoV by-laws, in consultation with the Department, by the end of the spring quarter. Thus, we have reason to believe that the issues that gave rise to the Committee's final recommendation will be resolved within the time frame required by the report.

The Department of Philosophy is gratified by the strongly positive evaluation presented in this report. We are actively addressing the recommendations for improvement the committee has made, and will do our best to implement those we can within our current staffing and fiscal constraints.

cc Augustine McCaffery  
Beverly Wessel