

**College:** Fairmount College of Liberal Arts & Sciences

**Department/Program (s):** Philosophy

**Degree (s) Offered:** B.A. in Philosophy

**Triggers:** Low majors and degrees

**Brief Description of degree programs:** The Philosophy Department offers a traditional major emphasizing epistemology, metaphysics, value theory and the history of philosophy. The program serves three categories of majors:

1. Students desiring to pursue post-graduate education.
2. Students planning to attend law school.
3. Students seeking a well-rounded broad liberal education.

The students enrolled in the Philosophy program have significantly higher average ACT scores than the general Wichita State Undergraduate population. In addition, over the past twenty years, all program graduates that have applied to graduate programs have been successful in the quest for admission.

Beyond the major it provides in philosophy, the Department provides an important service to the University in terms of providing specific philosophy courses to professional colleges (e.g., logic, engineering ethics, bioethics).

**Assessment of Learning Outcomes:** There are three major learning outcomes for the program. These are:

- a. Development of knowledge of philosophical traditions, issues and positions.
- b. Development of critical reading, writing and analytical reasoning skills.
- c. Preparations of students to pursue post graduate education.

Assessment of the first two outcomes is accomplished by departmental members reading and reviewing approximately twenty writing samples and exams for students per year. Assessment of the third outcome is based on successful admission to graduate programs.

The outcomes reported on the first area indicated that those papers reviewed were at the “superior” level. The outcomes reported for the second area indicated “mastery” of the concepts involved. Regarding outcome three, during the three years covered by the review, all nine students who applied for post graduate programs were accepted.

At the present time, the Department does not use any post-graduation satisfaction measures.

The Department also tracks the performance of students in the classes that are taught as a part of the General Education program. A similar method of assessment is used as is found in the review of philosophy majors. Departmental reviewers indicate that the general education courses are performing as expected in providing background for non-philosophy majors.

**Placement of Graduates:** Mostly anecdotal information is provided. Some philosophy graduates go on to pursue graduate work at well-known schools. The program review document indicates that graduates who do not pursue graduate education are “employed in a variety of fields...including business, journalism, publishing, law enforcement, public relations, the computer industry and the military.”

**Sources of External Support/Faculty Comments:** No external support was reported; however, the faculty appear to be productive in terms of teaching and scholarship. The report indicates the faculty of the Department performs well in teaching research and service (no data is provided on teaching evaluations). In addition, their program review document, coupled with the “External Peer Review” from 2004 (that was attached to the review document) both indicate the sense of collegiality and shared governance that prevails in the Department.

### **Conclusions:**

#### Statements/Commendations:

- The Philosophy Department appears to be doing a commendable job at performing the functions expected of it by the University, mostly as a service department. This designation is essential in order for WSU to offer comprehensive philosophy content to its students.
- The Department's plans to increase enrollment in the major are adequate.
- The report indicates that tenured and tenure track faculties do an excellent job in both teaching and research.
- It is noted that the Department will utilize and evaluate student and graduate perception data the University now collects on graduates and alums. The University implemented an electronic undergraduate student exit survey in 2011 (by program) and will implement an alumni survey (by program) for this purpose in 2012.

#### By April 1, 2012 (send to the Office of the Provost):

- Efforts should be made to document that the program review process is a part of a continuous improvement approach involving all departmental faculty.
- The learning outcomes for the program should be further developed and a revised assessment process needs to be implemented to include the following:
  - Learning Outcomes: Statements that describe what students are expected to know and be able to do by the time of graduation. These relate to the skills, knowledge, and behaviors that students acquire through their program (e.g., graduates will demonstrate advanced writing ability).

- Assessment Methods: Direct measures used to identify, collect, and prepare data to evaluate the achievement of learning outcomes (e.g., writing project evaluated by a rubric). Consideration should be given at requiring the CLA, for example, as a requirement for all seniors.
- Targets: Expectations of students to achieve the desired outcome to demonstrate program effectiveness (e.g., 90% of students will demonstrate at least the benchmark performance on a writing project).
- Results: Actual achievement on each measurement (e.g., 94% of the students achieved at least the benchmark performance on the writing project).
- Analysis: An evaluation that determines the extent to which learning outcomes are being achieved and leads to decisions and actions to improve the program. The analysis and evaluation should align with specific learning outcomes and consider whether the measurement and target remain valid indicators of the learner.
- General education expectations should be further developed (and assessed) for both program majors and non-majors.
  - To measure student learning, assess a representative sample of student assignments (e.g., for writing or critical thinking abilities) using a rubric from selected courses (pre, at the beginning of semester and post, at the end).
  - Utilize processes listed above to evaluate the outcomes.