

## Philosophy Department Undergraduate Program Outcome Assessment

### 1. Degree Programs Offered [Undergraduate]

- Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy
- ‘2<sup>nd</sup> Major program’ degree conferred in another discipline  
(‘Double Majors’)
- Minor in Philosophy (18 Hrs. of Philosophy, 12 in Upper Division)

### 2. Numbers of Students Assessed

- Approximately 6-10 Majors and Double Majors/Year

### 3. Missions, Goals and Objectives of the Philosophy Undergraduate Program

Mission & Goals: The Philosophy Department seeks to provide students with a solid foundation in understanding and critically analyzing both classical and current philosophical works, as well as developing general critical abilities based on close readings of texts and the application of logical and analytical techniques for the assessment of arguments. A honing of general critical skills and analytical abilities are among the goals of *each* Philosophy class, and an important part of our commitment to General Education. Philosophy Majors are trained to develop these skills more rigorously in a wide variety of problem areas (for example, Philosophy is among the best preparations for Law school).

Teaching excellence has historically been, and continues to be, a major factor in determining promotion and tenure decisions within the department. A crucial aspect in assessing teaching excellence is determining an individual instructor’s ability to promote the missions and goals listed.

Objectives and desired Student Outcomes: The major objective of the Philosophy Undergraduate Program is to provide quality instruction, both introducing students to important philosophical literature and developing their critical and analytical skills. As with most Humanities classes, a crucial aspect of these goals is developed in terms of written assignments. All Philosophy classes except Logic involve essay exams and/or papers as an integral part of a student’s training and assessment. The ability to critically assess another’s arguments, and develop and defend arguments of one’s own, is a cornerstone of philosophical training. Philosophy majors typically have no one set of career goals. Some seek a general Humanities Degree for personal or professional reasons. Some apply to Law or Medical Schools (again, Philosophy is one of the best preparations for Law School). Some continue to pursue graduate studies in Philosophy. There are no standardized national tests in Philosophy (the specialized Philosophy test for the GRE was discontinued many years ago). So, career training in our Undergraduate Program involves the achievement of the above objectives, enabling students to benefit from their philosophical training *whatever* their particular career paths.

Specific objectives for Undergraduates include:

- Train students to develop critical abilities, especially in identifying, critically assessing, and developing arguments in a variety of areas
- Train students to develop their writing skills, particularly in relation to detailed critical assessment of arguments, and the development of relevant arguments in support of their own positions
- Train students to appreciate and critically analyze classical and current philosophical writings in a variety of areas

#### 4. Desired Student Outcomes

Basically, the following desired student outcomes are meant to reflect the goals and objectives listed above. Given the great variety reflected in our students' career plans, the goals *and* desired outcomes mostly reflect the students' development of critical skills undertaken in the reading and critical assessment of philosophical literature.

Philosophy Majors should:

- Demonstrate both a broad understanding of a variety of philosophical areas (ethics, social philosophy, philosophy of religion, philosophy of science, major movements in the history of philosophy, logic, etc.), *and* the ability to closely follow and critically assess particular arguments within these areas.
- Demonstrate the ability to write clearly, critically, and effectively.
- Demonstrate the ability to develop and defend positions, both orally and in written form.
- Be able to compete and find suitable employment and/or continue with professional training in Philosophy or other areas.
- Be able to put their philosophical training to practical use, whatever their particular career goals (basically, ...find the development of their critical abilities useful in whatever area they pursue).
- Express satisfaction with their educational experiences within the Philosophy Department.
- Express satisfaction with their training within the Philosophy Department *after* they have left the program.

#### 5. Assessment Methodology

Because of the wide diversity of post-degree activities engaged in by Philosophy Majors, and in order to best assess the achievement of the goals and desired outcomes listed above, both quantitative and qualitative data will be employed in our assessment plan.

- Questionnaires* distributed to graduating seniors by the Undergraduate Advisor, assessing (a) their satisfaction with their educational experiences within the Philosophy Dept.; and (b) asking for their future plans.

--*Writing Across the Curriculum* Assessment of their writing abilities in every class they take within the program, stressing their abilities to understand and critically evaluate both classical and current philosophical writings

--*Assessment of Oral Communication Skills* every Philosophy class involves discussion and class participation, and is assessed by the individual instructor each semester. Further, Phil 4991, a *Capstone Course*, is offered every Spring semester. All faculty members present and critically analyze pieces of philosophical writing, followed by each student choosing, presenting, and critically analyzing professional articles of their choice. These are presented to the other student and to participating Philosophy Faculty and Graduate Students, followed by open discussion. They are assessed by the Dept. Head and are (together with general class participation) used to determine the student's grade.

--*External Program Review* Periodic review of the entire Department by a team of three external reviewers. Philosophy should be ready for another review in years (2005 or so), finances permitting.

--*Participant in General Alumni Assessment* Philosophy participates yearly in the alumni questionnaire distributed by the Office of University Assessment. We also periodically mail specific questionnaires to our alumni. Here we are (a) trying to determine the satisfaction levels of students *after* they have left the program, as well as (b) their assessment of whether they have been able to put their training to practical use, whatever career path they followed. We will also try to keep track of success rates of those students entering Graduate Programs in Philosophy and related fields (Theology, etc.), as well as Law schools and other Professional Schools.

--*Exit Interviews* Undergraduate Advisors will be instructed to both distribute questionnaires for all graduating seniors during their last advisement and graduation check. They will also be instructed to ask the student what their immediate career plans are, and ask that they keep us informed concerning admission to any programs, etc. This will help us track satisfaction levels as well as rates of admittance to Graduate Schools and Professional Schools.

## **6. Analysis and Use of the Results**

The Department Head will collect and analyze results of all questionnaires, and also all teaching evaluations, faculty assessments, etc. He/she is also the supervising Faculty for the Capstone Course, and attends all class meetings. He/she will also elicit faculty feedback and initiate faculty discussions and assessments of all aspects of the assessment process. He/she will also prepare and submit reports to the Office of University Assessment.

Results will allow the Department Head, Advisors, and General Faculty to better determine how the well various goals and desired outcomes of our Undergraduate Program are being met. They will also allow us to continually monitor these goals, and to assess the quality of one of our main our professional activities.