

Indiana State University

2006 - 2007 Academic Annual Report

Department of Philosophy

Vision Statement

[View/Modify Vision](#)

Below is your vision statement from previous years. Please take this opportunity to review it and if necessary update it.

Philosophy aims to provide students with the skills to think critically, to question assumptions and presuppositions, and to see issues of current importance in the context of the rich history of philosophy itself. Its fields of study, besides critical thinking and logic, include aesthetics, epistemology, ethics and metaphysics. At ISU, the philosophy department aims to meet general education needs as well as those of its majors; to offer interdisciplinary courses that connect with other departments, such as philosophy of law and philosophy of psychology. The department aims to keep these multiple goals in proper perspective.

Year in Review

Accomplishments

As you have heard, increasing public awareness of Indiana State University's accomplishments is crucial to building student enrollment, influencing policy makers, and developing a place of pre-eminence in the Midwest. What do you consider to be your department's accomplishments for the 2006-2007 year that will contribute to this effort? [Please list in priority order and limit to no more than 8.]

1. Under the guidance of Dr. Brian Morton and Dr. Joseph Grcic, the "Ethics Bowl team" finished so high in the Fall '06 regional competition in Indianapolis to be invited to the nationals in February '07 in Cincinnati, where they finished in the top half of 32 teams from across the country. The team was Nathan "Hobbes" Woudenberg (team leader), Jason Carruthers, and Anna Kelly. 2. The number of our majors has increased to over 20 and we graduated four majors in May '07, the most ever (as far as I can tell.) 3. Our department continues to publish well overall. During the 2006-07 academic year (incl. summer 2006), we have 7 publications and 6 presentations from a department of four. Dr. Grcic published a book: A Logic textbook for undergraduate use. Dr. Gennaro continues to work as guest editor for a special issue of the Journal of Consciousness Studies, due to appear later in 2007. Dr. Gennaro also continues as Philosophy of Mind/Cognitive Science editor for the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. The Philosophy faculty also have numerous forthcoming publications. 4. The four PHIL faculty taught a rather high number of over 380 students during the Spring '07 semester (with no adjunct help at all). 5. We hosted two well attended Philosophy Spring Lectures on topics such as the Separation of Church and State and on Aristotle's view of friendship. 6. We are pleased to be able to offer at least one Religion course each semester, such as "World Religions." If we did not do so, those courses would not be offered at all since the Humanities Dept no longer exists and all related adjunct funding has been eliminated.

Research and Scholarship

What is your assessment of accomplishments in the area of research and scholarship that is focused primarily on contributions to practice and discipline-based scholarship? Are you satisfied overall? In which areas do you feel your department does particularly well? In which areas do you feel your department needs to improve?

We have significant accomplishments in the area of research/scholarship (see #3 under accomplishments). I am satisfied overall, though it is no secret that Dr. Brian Morton (who is pre-tenure) must publish more and present more papers at conferences. There is always room for improvement, e.g. more presentations at conferences would be best.

Grants, Contracts & Off Campus Professional Service

What is your assessment of accomplishments in the area of grants, contracts, and off campus professional service? Are you satisfied overall? In which areas do you feel your department does particularly well? In which areas do you feel your department needs to improve?

Grants and contracts are not very common in philosophy. However, we have done quite a bit of professional service. Dr. Gennaro is the philosophy of mind/cognitive science editor for the Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. He also regularly serves as a referee for a number of journals. Dr. Grcic gave lectures on Business Ethics to lawyers and other professionals at various locations. Dr. Morton is involved on a programming committee at the Unitarian-Universalist Church. There is room for overall improvement here (e.g. service on an APA committee), but opportunities are somewhat limited. So I am reasonably satisfied.

Teaching

We would like to highlight innovative approaches to teaching. Has your department developed any pedagogies or practices you'd like to share with us? Please describe briefly.

We have agreed to include our assessment goals more explicitly into our course syllabi, i.e. under "course objectives." We also continue the practice of isolating questions on these objectives in our department teaching evaluations. Some members of our department occasionally use course readings from respectable philosophy websites.

Course Scheduling/Enrollment Management

How is the department making sure that students are able to get the classes they need to graduate in a timely manner?

By keeping a proper balance of lower-level and upper-level course offerings across time periods, especially given the lack of adjunct funding. Given the small size of our department, it hasn't been too difficult to achieve this goal, though we have made sure not to offer too many sections of the same course and not to have our upper-level courses overlap at all. We also make sure to offer required upper-level courses in a very rigid two-year rotation as follows: Ancient Phil., Medieval Phil., Modern Phil., and Ethical Theory. Thus, even someone declaring the major before junior year should be able to complete the 30 credit program. If absolutely necessary, we'll offer an independent study, as Dr. Grcic did in the Fall '06.

Outreach

What are the outreach opportunities for your discipline? (non-traditional modes of delivery and timing, etc)

We do not yet offer any distance ed. or web-based courses. There may be some interest in the future from one member of the department to do so (especially for our Logic course). Members of the department do, sometimes, use web-based instruction to complement standard classroom instruction. Dr. Morton uses Blackboard for some classes. It is difficult for us to offer classes at very unusual times, given our limited faculty resources.

Assessment

Please share your stated student learning outcomes.

Over the course of their majors, students should become increasingly adept at the following (which explicitly appear on our assessment plan): 1. Thinking objectively about issues and arguments, not being swayed by emotion and irrational personal preferences. 2. Thinking independently rather than primarily relying on others' opinions. 3. Developing open-mindedness, including understanding opposing views and appreciating the need for this understanding. 4. Recognizing the myriad ways that philosophical principles apply to everyday experiences and life, such as how ethical theories apply to contemporary social issues. 5. Cultivating critical and analytical thinking: penetrate deeply and critically into issues, rather than merely settling for a superficial understanding. Synthesize and contrast various abstract ideas. 6. Accepting both personal and social responsibility. 7. Acquiring a broad perception of the world and the interconnectedness of its inhabitants, including a basic understanding of major historical philosophical figures and themes. 8. Communicating clearly and succinctly both orally and in writing.

Strategic Initiatives

Community Engagement I

Please summarize your faculty's efforts in community engagement this year.

1. We had two Spring '06 philosophy lectures that were open to the public and well attended. 2. The Department again co-sponsored Human Rights Day in the Spring '07. It was very well attended and open to the public. Dr. Morton worked with members of the steering committee and several Philosophy Club students participated as well. 3. We continue to explore the promise of an Ethics Internship program with the help of the Career Center and the Focus Indiana Internship Project. Dr. Barad has taken the lead here and she put together a department brochure. We are unsure right now as to its future. 4. Two members of the department are actively involved with the Center for the Study of Health, Religion and Spirituality. This often involves contact with members of the community and presentations which are open to the public. 5. Dr. Morton is involved with a local church and related organization, giving guest speeches and sermons. All of the above can certainly enrich the cultural life of the community.

Experiential Learning

What is your vision for experiential learning in your department?

Our vision is that, whenever possible, to get involved in various activities on campus which bring us in contact with members of the wider community. We will continue to do so with regard to the activities and events already mentioned: Spring Lectures, Human Rights Day, The Great Ideas Philosophy Club, Ethics Internship, the Center for the Study of Health, Religion and Spirituality. In addition, there are opportunities in Ethics which can be linked to specific courses, such as Business Ethics and Medical Ethics. We aim to be involved in local conferences on each topic, and to become better known to local businesses, hospitals, and related organizations. Whenever possible, faculty should try to bring students in contact with community members relevant to the topic of their courses. For example, Dr. Gennaro brought his Aesthetic Theory class to the Swope Museum. Ethics (PHIL 201) students are also encouraged to do volunteer work in the community.

Fundraising Activities

What steps have you taken to support fundraising activities in your department? How can your efforts be supported?

There are limited opportunities for fundraising in philosophy. However, the father of one of our

"ethics bowl" team members did contribute a substantial sum to our foundation account. The money is to be used to support students related efforts, especially ethics bowl trips. I spoke with him on the phone on two occasions. Efforts in this area can be supported by having the College and University give the Philosophy Department and Major its unequivocal support. Bad press, public threats, and negative perceptions can only hurt our ability to attract donors, or any kind of external support. Instead of trying to tear us down, some public backing of our program would go a long way. There are surely donors willing to help a Philosophy/Religion program, but it is impossible to approach potential donors in a serious way in the current climate.

Quality

Quality

Please provide 1-2 suggestions to increase the ability of your department or the University to meet the criteria above.

Regarding our department, please see the lengthy response under "feedback" for ways that we continue to "prepare our students/program for the future". See the responses under "assessment" and "teaching" for especially how we continue to do so in the areas of "student learning and effective teaching." Regarding the University, I wonder about the "integrity" issue in terms of bringing students here under false pretenses, e.g. making it sound like we have small classes and enough resources to offer certain courses often enough. Students frequently have trouble getting the courses they need to graduate in a timely manner. I am also very concerned with the perception that ISU is becoming a "vocational" school rather than fulfilling its Liberal Arts mission. Programs such as Philosophy are under constant attack and there is no longer a Humanities department. Faculty role in (shared) governance on key issues, policies, and economic matters is an illusion, more often than not. In addition, continued focus on retention is the key to enhancing overall enrollment figures. Let's find out why so many students don't come back to ISU, and then try to do something about it (to the extent we can). This is at least equally as important as trying to attract freshman students to ISU in the first place. Regarding budget challenges, top priority should ALWAYS go to our students/course offerings as well as faculty/adjunct and staff funding. This has certainly not been the case, especially lately, despite some rhetoric to the contrary. Dissatisfaction among faculty and students with some administrative decisions and spending priorities is of course common knowledge and well documented. Keeping qualified faculty here is crucial and faculty salaries are well below comparable schools.

Feedback

This section is to allow you to share your ideas for enhancing enrollment, dealing with budget and other challenges facing the university community.

The primary issue for our department this past year has been trying to preserve our major in the face of an unprecedented and very public threat (despite the fact that we were NOT recommended to be eliminated by the Task Force). This was a very time consuming and stressful task, which is still not quite over. I take this opportunity to paste in below most of the department plan given to Dean Sauer and Provost Maynard, which should enhance our enrollment and strengthen our program for the future. (I also point out here that our department has one of the lowest "cost per student credit hour" figures, just a bit over \$100.) _____ In light of recent developments and as was indicated in the email of March 14 2007 to Dean Sauer and Provost Maynard, the Department of Philosophy proposes the following plan in an effort to retain our major and the title "philosophy" in the name of some (yet unknown) department name. We also would expect the following to increase the number of our majors: 1. In the past we have contacted Open Preference students and invited them to consider majoring in philosophy. We will continue to do so as long as we have some kind of direct or indirect access to them. 2. The Departments of History and Political Science generously

began the policy last year of giving us access to their incoming student lists (in exchange for ours). We sent letters to those students inviting them to consider philosophy as a minor or second major. We believe that this has directly resulted in several freshman double majors. We very much want to continue this important practice and recruiting method. 3. We are heavily involved in two new College initiatives: The new University Honors Curriculum (especially the “great works/great ideas” track), and the Civic Leadership Minor being developed by Political Science/Legal Studies. Many of our courses will be electives for these important new liberal studies programs and one or two PHIL courses will also likely be required. Some of these courses would be difficult to offer frequently (or at all) if we either do not have a major or go below four faculty members. 4. We have been discussing an exciting new idea with Charles Amlaner. It primarily involves our courses in Medical Ethics, Environmental Ethics, and Philosophy of Science (but also perhaps an additional created course). From our current departmental point of view, it would serve as an important supplement to our major and could increase our number of majors by giving us important access to pre-professional (especially pre-med) students. We agree with Charlie that there is a significant void in this area that needs to be filled. Significant departmental changes and major revisions include the following and will result in a more streamlined program. For example, we will strive to offer each upper-level course once every four semesters (or five at the most). 5. We plan to allow the Capstone course in Legal Studies (PSCI 496) as an elective for the PHIL major. We usually recommend it anyway and have several double majors with Legal Studies as it is. Legal Studies also recently indicated that they would consider adding our PHIL 201 (Ethics and the Good Life) to their program requirements. This should result in an even closer relationship between our programs and additional double majors. (Legal Studies already requires our Introduction to Logic course.) 6. Our department has agreed to allow World Religions (REL 250) to count as a major elective. We schedule the course and plan to offer one section every Spring. 7. We will allow a maximum of 3 lower-level courses to count toward the PHIL major (instead of the current maximum of 2). We have three well enrolled lower level courses. This also makes sense in light of #6 above. 8. We will eliminate our separate “minor options” in Ethics and Cognitive Science. Very few students have declared them. 9. We expect to bank one additional upper level course (Ethics and Animals – PHIL 303) and possibly one more depending on where we end up as a department. Some discussion of this important topic can be found in other ethics courses. We have also recently banked three other courses. 10. We will likely eliminate our “ethics internship” program, which, thus far, has not generated the kind of interest we had hoped for. However, with the help of Nancy Rogers and Dianna Cooper-Bolinskey we might instead make one final effort to make it work, perhaps also in conjunction with Political Science. Faculty resources and time are factors here as is not currently having a key contact or two in the business community. 11. We plan to revive our Symbolic Logic course (PHIL 405), an area of specialty of Dr. Brian Morton. It is an important course for philosophy majors going on to graduate school as well as a wonderful preparation for all graduate school entrance exams. With the help of other departments (especially Political Science and History) we hope to reinvent the class, in part, as a helpful aid for LSAT and GRE preparation. The Department of Mathematics/Computer Science has also inquired about the course in the past. 12. Our department currently allows one course from outside the major to count toward it (with proper departmental approval). We have recently agreed, however, to allow up to three such courses in order to reflect the importantly interdisciplinary nature of philosophy (note that this is also part of the rationale for allowing the World Religions course and Legal Studies Capstone – see #5 and #6 above). We are in the process of compiling a list of 5-10 additional acceptable courses, which would be explicitly put into new catalog copy. A few possibilities are COMM 350 (Ethics and the News Media), CRIM 280 (Law and Criminal Justice), WS 450 (Student Activism in Theory and Practice), HIST 468 (History of Islam), PSCI 317 (American Constitutional Law). We would expect to add a few more. 13. Another possible significant change to our major is the following: Eliminate the disjunctive requirement of either PHIL 333 (Medieval Phil) or PHIL 401 (Ethical Theory). In its place, we would add a more explicit “Ethics” or “Values” requirement where majors must choose from a list of regularly offered ethics

courses. This is consistent with the requirements of many other comparable institutions. We may also consider adding an explicit “Religion” and/or “Knowledge and Mind” component to our requirements. Since this would be such a major change, more discussion among the faculty is necessary in order to achieve consensus. It is of course also important that we tailor our offerings to the specialties of our current faculty, keeping in mind that we expect to have one retirement in the next 3-5 years (Dr. Barad). Overall: We are generally willing to make significant changes to our program and would be willing to join a larger department (as we have tried over the past six months). Most of the above would be pointless if we do not have our major. Our only “conditions” remain (1) keeping our major, but in a way that preserves its integrity for the purpose of future external reviews, and (2) keeping the name “philosophy” in some department title (or at least “philosophical studies”). We would obviously also like to keep four T/TT faculty, but we are not asking for any additional lines. One of us could serve as “philosophy program coordinator” within a larger department. We have no other pre-conditions.