

Internal Reviewer Review Report – Philosophy Department California State Polytechnic University, Pomona

The purpose of this internal review of the Philosophy Department is to provide an unbiased examination of the quality of education and service in the program, and to identify opportunities for improvement and growth. After carefully reviewing the program’s Self Study, we took part in a virtual campus visit on March 14, 2023 with the Philosophy Department to review. This report is divided into sections based on the lines of inquiry and highlights the strengths, challenges, and recommendations.

Inclusive Polytechnic Identity	Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mission, Vision, and Values of the department are aligned to those of the University and the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences. The values of the Philosophy program are: Belonging, equity, and justice, in line with CLASS’ values on “equity, empathy, integrity, and diversity,” as well as “working towards a just, humane, and inclusive world”. Critical and creative thinking is also emphasized in the Department vision, which aims to cultivate “critical consciousness of the social worlds we inhabit” as well as to develop “courageous critical thinking.” <p>However, as stated in the study self-review, the mission of the department, “extends beyond the University’s and College’s focus in personal success and individual intellectual and ethical growth to prioritize values of community”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The program, inclusive in nature, has many initiatives that deliberately address the Polytechnic Identity through every course in the curriculum, which address a minimum of three elements of an Inclusive Polytechnic Education. Here, we could highlight several courses, <i>Ethics Bowl</i>, and <i>UJEPS Editors</i>, which address all eight elements. <i>Ethics Bowl</i>, is a small class where students work in teams to prepare for both regional and national Ethics Bowl competitions. In the newly created <i>UJEPS Editors</i>, students work on an undergraduate journal, the Undergraduate Journal of Ethics, Policy, and Social Justice (UJEPS). In addition, as a result of a curriculum redesign, the department has piloted 1 unit “Skills Labs” courses and seminar courses, where students focus on a core skill that pairs the lab with an existing content area course. • In addition, there are three extra-curricular and/ or co-curricular initiatives that are worth highlighting: two clubs (the Philosophy Club and Phi-Sigma-Tao), an annual event called World Philosophy Day, and some Undergraduate Initiatives.
	Challenges	<p>The department has pointed at two challenges regarding the recently piloted Skills Lap 1-unit courses. A curricular challenge is the ongoing debate about how to implement the labs across the Philosophy curriculum. Another challenge regards faculty WTUs: how to compensate faculty who teach fewer than three of the one-credit courses in an academic year and, consequently, falling short or exceeding.</p>

	Recommendation	<p>With respect to the first challenge, since this is a newly created set of courses, we have no doubt that the faculty will be able to achieve a system that works after trying out (or discussing the pros and cons of) different options. Regarding the second challenge, the department might want to discuss the situation with the Dean and achieve a solution, such as allowing WTUs to roll-over from one year to another. Another possible solution, which we are not sure is feasible, is to assign one faculty member to teach all Skill Labs in one year, so that each faculty member could accrue 3 WTUs in Skill Labs every year.</p>
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Department Structure and Organization	Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department strives to maintain an equitable workload. This is achieved by a consensus on what really matters to the program and its students. Usually, when a faculty member is interested in launching an initiative, it is an initiative that actually matters to the department and it receives the support of other faculty members and the Chair. The Chair does not push the faculty to take on initiatives that are not beneficial to the department. • One strength of this department is its collegiality, which helps to maintain an equitable workload.
	Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philosophy is a small department and that means that, while equitable, the workload is still heavy for all faculty as committee of the whole.
	Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request a search for a new tenure-line hire, at least at the time when Dr. Ding, currently in FERP, retires.

Assessment	Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Department has well-defined SLOs, with a clear understanding on which courses address each SLO, the course where SLOs are assessed (Proseminar final papers and presentations), and the faculty members involved in the assessment of each SLO. Assessment is conducted annually. The department also has identified some closing the loop strategies based on assessment results. Some of these strategies involved adding alternative assessments and assessment instruments. • The Department also has many opportunities to collect indirect evidence from students' feedback. • The department is very open and appreciative of the suggestions given by the Assessment Office, which have been very helpful to create a more systematic assessment process.
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	Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment results seem to be tied to students' grades, based on the evaluation / grading of the final papers conducted by the course instructor's and a second reader. The department has identified this process as one that could be improved by collectively evaluating the Senior Seminar theses according to a rubric. • The Department has also identified the need to assess SLOs at the developing stages to better track development and not merely mastery. • It has been difficult collecting more direct evidence with respect to the developmental stage. Mastery is easier to assess by the department through assessment of senior theses. • Balancing budget concerns and implementation of high impact practices
	Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We recommend the department to continue the work it has started or identified as necessary, namely, 1) assessing papers in the pro-seminar collectively with a rubric, and independently of grading; and 2) identifying courses where SLOs are addressed at developing stage and conduct some assessment at that level. • Continue seeking the feedback from the Assessment Office and ask for advice on specific issues the department might be interested to address. • The skills labs are a great way to collect direct assessment at the developmental stages. More support from the university or through external funding for teaching these classes as a high impact practice is recommended.

GI 2025	Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six-year graduation rates for Freshmen-incoming students have been increasing in the recent years, and four-year graduation rates for transfer students have been maintained more or less stable around 63%, with some increase in the three-year graduation rate. Equity gaps have been closing or even inverted in recent years, although the low numbers do not allow for statistical significance. • To improve student persistence and graduation rates, the department create cohorts, by strongly encouraging students to take the Philosophy Proseminar (PHL 2900) in their first Spring semester, and the Senior Seminar in Philosophy (PHL 4610) in the Fall semester of their graduating academic year. These classes tend to create a friendly and constructive environment that helps establish a cohort. A similar strategy is implemented for transfer students. In addition, the department organizes events, that, together with the Philosophy Club, create a community for students. • The Department also supports student persistence and graduation rates by faculty advising. The department organizes an advising event every spring term, which is required for all non-graduating students. In addition, all seven TT faculty serve as advisors, which students visit at their own initiative.
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To further improve student retention and graduation rates, the Department plans to work in conjunction with the CLASS Student Success Center to have more advising contact with students. To make advising more systematic, the Department is planning to increase required advising.
	Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low total numbers make it difficult to know the actual retention and years-to-graduation rates. The department cannot know whether students who do not graduate in six-years or less are students who moved into another campus. They also could have changed moved into another major, where they took longer to graduate.
	Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since the department seems to do an excellent job at creating strong cohorts, we would recommend using that setting to keep track of when and where students graduate. That way, the department would have a more clear picture of retention and years-to-graduation rate than what the CSU data can offer. These findings would, in turn, give the department a more clear idea of what types of initiatives to engage to.
	Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The department's idea of requiring seeing an advisor once a year seems also a good recommendation, as long as it is feasible in terms of workload.

Technology	Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The website contains all appropriate information, which is presented in a clear manner: Mission statement, equity statement, meaning-quality-integrity of the program, and faculty and advisors contact information. There is also a news page and information about the philosophy clubs, as well as catalog course descriptions. The department has good working relationships with the advising center and library
	Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are a few things that appear out of date. For example, although there is a mission/vision statement, it does not coincide with the Mission/Vision/Values that appear in the program Self-Study. The current curriculum sheets link leads to an old curriculum sheet, and the link to previous curriculum sheets is broken.
	Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do a little updating of the website: replace the mission / vision / values statement with the most recent one, include current curriculum sheets, and fix the link to the previous curriculum sheets. Advisors contact information could be updated to include office hours and/or CPP Connect link. Now there is only an email. If advisors find email as a good contact system, then there is no need to change it, but when students want to visit the advisor, it might be more effective to find office hours and/or a scheduler system. Office hours are posted in the faculty page, but students might not look at that page if they are looking specifically for an advisor.

Support	Strengths	•
	Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are challenges unique to a smaller department with respect to getting more support for high impact practices and more tenure track faculty • The Science, Technology, and Society program, run by Peter Ross, is a strength of the department, but represents a challenge as it requires a lot of his time and impacts the philosophy department
	Recommendations	Like probably most departments on campus, more tenure track faculty and SI support is needed.

Summary

The Philosophy Department has a strong program with challenges, some that are unique to a smaller department. It is readily apparent that faculty are fully engaged and working hard to address challenges, future goals, and student success. Their curricular redesign project should be commended. We thank the Department Chair, Program Review committee and all faculty for attending and contributing to the internal review.

Sincerely,

Reviewer 1: Amàlia Llombart

Signature/Date:



04/11/2023

Reviewer 2: Stephen Osborn

Signature/Date:



4/12/23