



Dean Response to Philosophy Program Review

May 26, 2022

General Evaluation

I have read the “General Evaluation Philosophy Program Review”, plus the “Response to Reviewers Comments” to the evaluation and would first like to thank the review committee members (Dr. Jenny Kokai, Department of Theater, Weber State University (WSU) and Dr. Chris Weigel, Department of Philosophy & Humanities, Utah Valley University) and the self-study WSU philosophy team members (Dr. Robert Fudge, Dr. Richard Greene, Dr. Paul Neiman) and the Chair (Dr. Mary Beth Willard) for the time and effort in providing a thorough review of the program. I strongly concur with the “general evaluation” by committee members who stated that the strengths of the program are:

1. A robust and challenging curriculum.
2. Supportive and welcoming faculty who are experts in their field and have an active research agenda.
3. A capstone portfolio that allows students to conduct original research and weave together concepts they have learned during their philosophy studies.
4. Strong departmental advising to support student success.
5. Interdisciplinary work that connects to other disciplines and the community.

Implementation of Recommendations from Previous Review

The philosophy director and faculty members are to be commended for their efforts in implementing the recommendations from the previous review, specifically with the hiring of a fourth tenure line, which has expanded course offerings, including interdisciplinary and honors courses.

Program Level Recommendations

I appreciate the thought and time that went into determining the recommendations for improvement as outlined by the external review committee and note the faculty response. My comments are summarized as follows:

1. Mission Statement
 - a. The well-defined outcomes for philosophy that have been thought about and discussed need to be incorporated into the official program outcomes and included in course rubrics. I would recommend that this be completed during AY 2022-2023.

- b. The philosophy program plans to modify their program mission statement to better align with current understandings of diversity, equity, and inclusion and the 2021-2026 WSU mission statement and strategic plan. I fully support the program undertaking this alignment in the next academic year (2022-2023).

2. Curriculum

- a. Ensure that the General Education classes align with the university mission.
- b. I support the direction of the program to ensure that “successful variable-title offerings are converted to regular elective courses”. This is in response to a specific recommendation from the review committee to publicize course offerings two years out, with special topics courses specified.

3. Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment

- a. Formalize learning outcomes and assessment tools to align with program and university strategic missions.
- b. I fully support that the program will be revising the “mission statement and strategic plan to include DEI outcomes, and to measure diversity and equity along numerous axes.”

4. Academic Advising - I applaud the high caliber of faculty advising and accessibility for program advisement. I was concerned that WSU students were not as enthusiastic about our college advisors. I would suggest that the main program advisor meet with the CSBS advisors and discuss how they can improve their interaction with our students.

5. Faculty

- a. With future hires, the philosophy program needs to be more intentional about attracting and hiring more diverse faculty.
- b. Administrative creep - I am in agreement with the reviewers that there has been an escalation of reports and other requests from upper administration. I am endeavoring to try and shorten some of the reports. This year's (AY 2021-2022) strategic planning report on goals was shortened to one-page to minimize time spent on administrative work. I too believe that our main focus should be on students.

6. Relationships with External Communities.

- a. The program is to be highly commended for the community outreach that occurs with the Ethics Slams and Bowls, the Richard Richards Institute, and other community engagement initiatives.
- b. I would recommend consulting with our new CSBS marketing specialist (Emily Rupp) to develop a strategic promotional campaign to bring awareness of what philosophy is and the types of careers that are available to graduates with a background in that discipline.

Finally, I would highly encourage the chair of the department and philosophy faculty to meet and determine a timeline for the above listed program improvements at the beginning of AY 2022-2023 and to have a followup meeting with the dean's office to discuss how the program

facilitators will intentionally move forward on these recommendations.

Thank you for your contribution of time and energy toward the review. This is a necessary process in order to strengthen and improve the course offerings and programs we offer our students in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Julie Rich". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Julie Rich, D.Phil.

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