

PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT
PHILOSOPHY
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND LETTERS

I. INTRODUCTION

This program review report (PRT) provides a synthesis of a three-day visit (2/5/2019-2/7/19) with Florida Atlantic leadership at the University (R. Ivy; K. Scarpinato, E. Pratt) and College (B. Barrios; M Horswell) level. In addition, the report incorporates information gathered during meetings with faculty (M. Banchetti, S. Glynn, C. Headley, L. Guilmette, C. Gould) and students in the Department of Philosophy and a tour of the facilities.

II.

meetings with the faculty and students, there was a recurring theme with respect to the research productivity of the department. The small number of full-time faculty in the department necessarily means that each member is required to engage in a high level of service. This substantial commitment to service is illustrated in Figure 17 of the self-study report. For example, during the 2016-2017 academic year, the faculty of the department served on 16 department, College, or University committee, which amounts to an average of three committees per faculty member in that year. In addition to this, the faculty served as members of 7 community or professional committees and as editors or referees for a total of 4 professional publications. This high demand for service activities from each member coupled with the 3-2 teaching load, which is the policy across all departments in the College of Arts and Letters, results in a significant lack of time devoted to research and scholarly work for each faculty member. This was noted by several faculty in the department and needs to be addressed. As more faculty are hired into the department, the demands for committee work on each member will presumably decrease allowing more time for research. However, it would be helpful if the opportunities for course-reductions and buyouts could be increased college-wide so that all of the faculty could benefit from a possible reduction of their college-imposed 3-2 teaching loads.

With respect to the visibility of the department, two decades ago, the B.A. program in philosophy was considered one of the strongest undergraduate philosophy programs in the Florida State University System (SUS), providing solid foundational training in philosophy as preparation for advanced graduate work, law school, theological seminary, and other careers. It was also known nationally and internationally for its strengths in continental philosophy, in particular Husserl. The former endowed Chair, Lester Embree, would often fund conferences that would bring scholars from all over the world and this enhanced the visibility of the department and its faculty, some of whom also work in Continental philosophy.

However, the loss of faculty over the last decade or so has made it difficult for the department to sustain their commitment to serving the lower-division Intellectual Foundations Program (IFP) and to providing their majors with a strong and solid foundation in philosophy. The teaching load for the Philosophy department is 3-2 and the committee feels this is a standard teaching load for departments without graduate programs. But because of their small numbers, the faculty are often teaching 4-5 distinct courses a year rather than teaching multiple sections of the same course. As noted above, their service load is also extremely heavy as the duties are distributed among a smaller number of faculty. Compared to other departments with comparable programs in the FSUS they are doing more with less.

According to the self-study their academic year headcount of Philosophy Majors is 67. Although this number may seem small compared to other departments, it is a fairly robust number for Philosophy. As the self-study notes and as national trends indicate, Humanities majors, in general, have seen a decline over the past 10 years. There is some indication, however, that this trend will change as more and more industries recognize the need for students with analytic and critical thinking skills and the department is already engaged in initiatives to build its majors and minors. Compared to other Florida SUS Philosophy departments their numbers are very good. With the exception of FIU, the other philosophy programs that offer only the baccalaureate degree have a much lower 2017 headcount than the program at FAU, and yet they have considerably more tenure-track lines.

The lack of tenure track faculty lines has also made it difficult for the remaining faculty to pursue their research and maintain their national and international reputation in the field. Our conversations with the faculty revealed that many of them have chosen not to pursue sabbaticals and research opportunities because they aren't sure who will be able to replace their teaching in the curriculum and they don't want to burden the remaining faculty with more service work. All of the tenure track faculty teach in the summer as well in order to make sure they are able to serve students and in order to augment salaries that are below the national average. This also contributes to the inability of faculty to pursue their research.

One of the department's main goals is to rebuild their program so that they can regain and maintain their former stature as one of the best undergraduate philosophy programs in the Florida SUS. One essential component of attaining this goal is to increase the size of the tenure-track faculty in the department. This issue of faculty hiring and recruitment is further addressed in the following section.

V. HIRES

The department argues in the self-study that they are seriously understaffed and we very much concur with this judgment. There are currently only five, and, with upcoming departures, there will soon only be four tenured and tenure-track faculty housed in the department. In our judgment seven is really the minimum number of tenured and tenure-track faculty needed to

tenure-track positions. Hiring at this level, the department could very reasonably hope to attract a large pool of excellent candidates who would be eager to make a full contribution to the

We are concerned more generally about the impact of the performance metrics on philosophy and other humanities disciplines in that the pressure to graduate in four years leads to students being discouraged from double-majoring. At other institutions, many philosophy majors are double majors. Students often benefit from pairing the general skills they learn in philosophy with other more straightforwardly vocationally relevant skills learned in other disciplines.

The other issue with respect to the curriculum that came up in

4. Make sure that your most engaging and dynamic faculty are teaching at the introductory level and look carefully at DFW rates in these classes as they may signify a need to rethink teaching methods.

VII. STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

The review committee met with nine students pursuing the major in Philosophy. The students were overwhelmingly positive about their experience as majors in the department of philosophy. When asked about the strengths of the department the students talked about the fact that there was a strong sense of community in the department. They feel welcome, encouraged, and comfortable amongst the faculty and their peers. They also commented on how caring the faculty are and the excellent advising they receive both regarding their flight plans but and tcoe

IX. SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

Strengths:

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XI. RESPONSES TO FACULTY QUESTIONS

On page 42 of the self-study the department posed several questions for the review team. Although some of these questions are addressed in our narrative above, we wanted to make sure that each question was addressed directly.

1. What can the department do in order to further develop productive and fruitful connections and collaborations between philosophy and other disciplines both inside and outside of our college?

The committee feels that the department is doing an excellent job trying to make connections with the STEM fields. In the future, the department may want to explore possibilities for joint hires that serve both philosophy and another discipline.

2. What can the department do to improve the performance of those students in our introductory level, writing intensive courses, who are being exposed to a highly conceptual subject for the first time in their academic career?

This is a challenge faced by virtually every Philosophy department across the country as Philosophy is not a subject taught in high school. There is, however, a growing body of literature on teaching philosophy (see for instance, the journal *P*) and several good resources.

