

**2020 Program Performance
Review Philosophy Department
California State University,
Fullerton**

[Response from the Philosophy Department]

Challenges and Recommendations

- 1. Hiring new tenure track faculty.** The TT faculty we interviewed expressed at best mixed feelings about hiring new TT faculty. Although they recognize the need for new TT colleagues, they worry that their longstanding 3-3 teaching load might be in danger if they add new TT faculty. The fear over losing their 3-3 teaching load, coupled with their different orientations toward philosophy, seems to prevent them from developing a vision for growth of the department. We recommend that the Dean's office meet with the entire philosophy faculty to assure everyone that their teaching load will not be impacted by the addition of new colleagues. It would be helpful in that context for the Dean to explain to everyone how various targets are constructed and how to interpret performance statistics.

We recommend that the department be allowed to fill two TT positions in consecutive years. The first TT position should be unrestricted as to the field, or with as few restrictions as economic reality allows. The reasons for this recommendation are four-fold. First, open-area job searches in philosophy generate large numbers of applications. A large applicant pool gives the department more choices in selecting diverse candidates for the short list. Second, a number of faculty and students have expressed an interest in hiring in early modern philosophy and/or in Latinx/Latin American philosophy. (Latin American philosophy is philosophy produced in Latin America or philosophy produced by persons of Latin American ancestry who reside outside of Latin America. Latinx philosophy is philosophical work substantively concerned with Latinxs, including the moral, social, political, epistemic, and linguistic significance of Latinxs and their experiences.) Both areas are difficult to hire in. By keeping the first search open, the Department can pick candidates purely based on quality and fit. The second search can be tailored to the areas that are not covered by the faculty hired in the first search. Third, hiring in two consecutive years allows the new faculty member to participate in the second search.

Fourth, since the department seems to be split between analytic and continental philosophy, it will most likely be difficult to come to an agreement which sub-disciplines of philosophy are the department's most pressing needs. It is our experience that it tends to be easier to agree on particular job candidates than on sub-disciplines of philosophy.

Response:

We have submitted a request without specification of AOS/AOC, as a replacement line. Once the hiring is approved, we will consider whether we can accept the recommendation of hiring in two consecutive years. We will wait until the line is approved to discuss the areas for hiring, as we feel our current resources are better devoted to other projects before we know we will be getting the line.

2. Because open-area job searches in philosophy generate a large number of applications the important task of evaluating applications and winnowing down to a short list should not fall entirely on the members of the search committee. **Instead the task could, and ideally should, be spread among the department's entire TT faculty who wish to participate at this stage, with each application being evaluated by at least two members.** The criteria for elimination of candidates should be clear and carefully applied. (These recommendations are in line with the *Best Practice Guide for Hiring Departments* issued by the American Philosophical Association (APA). In order to supplement the university's workshops for recruitment, we also recommend consulting the section on countering implicit bias in the APA's *Good Practices Guide*.

Response:

We are open to this idea, provided it is not barred by any UPS regulations.

3. **Imbalance of service load.** A number of faculty members expressed concern about the imbalance of service load. Because the size of the faculty has been reduced by its success in getting external grants and administrative appointments, the service burden is large. A few faculty members seem to shoulder a lot of the service load while others do little or no service. We recommend that the department hold a meeting to try to reach consensus on ways to share service work equitably based on individuals' different skills and interests. The discussion could include not only the time commitment required for current roles, but also potential new projects that interest faculty members. This could be followed up by department members sharing their progress at subsequent department meetings. If further assistance is required, the department chair could consult the Dean's office or other chairs.

Response:

When we have our next face-to-face meeting (due to the current Covid-19 crisis, we are looking at our fall retreat), we will discuss all committee work and assign a quantitative/qualitative value to the workload. We can make this evaluation once a year. We can also add a short report from each department member about what they did for service during that period.

4. **Department leadership.** It is laudable that faculty members rotate regularly through the role

of chair. The fact that each chair is, to some degree, passing through makes it difficult to establish clear and consistent policies and practices. Specifically, we encourage current and future chairs to take a visible, decisive role in identifying and addressing faculty concerns and complaints--such as around hiring, teaching load, and service imbalance--so that these issues do not fester behind closed doors. We also encourage current and future chairs to connect regularly with chairs of other departments to share knowledge and exchange strategies for leading the department and settling internal tensions or disagreements.

Response:

It is difficult for our department chair to establish authority. This is partly a by-product of the rotation system, but the department feels that the advantage of this rotation system outweighs its disadvantages.

5. The department apparently has some unresolved issues from its latest curricular revision that need to be discussed after the changes have been in place long enough to see patterns and results. Some faculty members are pleased with the changes. Others raised questions that include the following: (1) Are lower-division philosophy courses sufficiently rigorous, have consistent standards, and coordinate well with upper-division courses? (2) Must majors take enough philosophy courses that do not receive General Education credit? (3) Does the required writing course prepare students well enough for other upper-division coursework? (4) Do majors who plan to attend graduate school in philosophy acquire sufficient background in the field? Some of the curricular discussion should include both TT faculty and ongoing lecturers. Even before this discussion takes place, it would be helpful to have a mechanism for sharing syllabi easily, for example, a Dropbox folder.

Response:

We do have a DB folder containing all syllabi for each semester (at this point, the syllabi are not yet arranged by courses), and we can arrange for NTT faculty and new TT faculty to view these syllabi for respective courses. Each section should meet the course description in the catalogue and the GE requirements, with latitude for individual preference of topics/content. We can have workshops for multi-sectioned courses (100, 101, 105, 106, 300, 312, 315, 320, 323, 325) so that instructors for these courses can come to some consensus of the rigor and common core of each course). We already have had such a workshop for 105/106 in the summer of 2018, and this has proven to be very successful. We will repeat this model.

6. We understand that the department has an exit survey but that it is not being used. We suggest that the department consider making the completion of the exit survey a requirement for graduating with a B.A. in Philosophy; for example, it could be a necessary condition of receiving a grade in the senior seminar. The exit survey should include

questions about students' longer-range career plans. In order to prepare students well for their career goals it is important to know what they are. The data on career goals could be used to revise the curriculum, including the internship seminar. The survey could also ask whether classes were scheduled at times that enable students to complete their degree in the length of time they preferred. Students mentioned to us that they knew others who changed to a different major because they needed classes at times when upper-division philosophy courses are not offered. (Of course, we have no idea whether this is widespread.)

Response:

We already have a paper form of exit survey and can convert it to an electronic form via Survey Monkey. We will ensure that students complete the exit survey (both fall and spring) when we do grad check. They will not be approved for graduation unless they complete the survey.

Some of our majors complained that they do not have sufficient choices with our limited course offerings. Our course offerings have been restricted by the demands of target and enrollment. We ask that the Dean's office give us more leniency with regard to low-enrolled (under 10) upper-division courses for majors. We understand that in the immediate future, with the current health crisis, budget and enrollment could be greatly affected. So, we are expressing our opinion contingent on the rapidly changing situation.

7. To encourage interest in each other's work and improve collegiality the Department might consider starting a series of informal talks by its own faculty, for example, "brown bag" workshops in the Cave.

Response:

We are happy to accept this suggestion. We can have lunchtime brown bag alternatively on MW/TTH, and faculty can opt to zoom in for the talk if they are off campus. We can share the paper to be presented ahead of time, so that we can have more in-depth discussion. We can do it once a semester.

8. The Dean's office should explain that the promised 2-2 course load is guaranteed for all new philosophy faculty. The Dean communicated to the PPR committee that funds have been specifically allocated for this; if that is the case, this course load should not be negotiable.

Response:

We concur. We would love to see it in writing that 2-2 course load is guaranteed for all new philosophy faculty during the probational period (the first two years), and not just the vague language “3-units assigned time”.

9. The department should work with Mari Migliore in the Dean’s office to create a promotional video for the department featuring philosophy students discussing why they chose their major, the sorts of topics they study, and the long-term usefulness of the major.

Response:

We like this idea, and we plan to pursue it as a long-term project.

10. The Department, perhaps in consultation with the Dean’s office, should consider what kind(s) of mentor(s) all new faculty need and form a consistent policy.

Response:

We used to have a particular mentor assigned to a new faculty and will be glad to return to that practice.

11. The department should focus on better ways to share information as faculty members’ service roles are rotated to their colleagues. For example, in a Dropbox folder they could draft committee-specific manuals and suggestions to ensure continuity of service roles, preserve institutional knowledge, and avoid faculty members unknowingly replicating work already done by others. The folder might contain documents explaining assessment processes along with previous assessment reports and materials, roles of the student club advisor, search committee chairs, web administrator, etc.

Response:

We do have various folders with regard to different committee-specific manuals and records. Future committee members should be responsible for cleaning up the records, keeping records current, and sharing the information with the next committee members.

12. It is important to also include ideas and perspectives of staff and non-tenure track faculty in the PPR process. For the department’s next PPR, we suggest combining faculty into small groups for meetings (rather than having the team meet with each TT faculty member individually) in order to include time in the schedule for the PPR team to meet with department staff and non-tenure track faculty. If the faculty is doing curricular revision at the time of the next PPR, then they should consider showing syllabi to the reviewers.

Response:

We should consider having a two-day visit for future PPR external review. We are happy to schedule meetings with NTT faculty, but the advantage of having each TT faculty meet with the review committee alone is that each person can be free to open up to the Committee. However, given the time constraints, we could not allot NTT faculty to meet with them. We were also not aware of the committee members' expectations to see our syllabi. In the future, we will be prepared accordingly. We will share a Dropbox folder of all syllabi with the external reviewers in advance.

Summary

The Department of Philosophy at California State University, Fullerton is doing an excellent job in fulfilling its mission to advance students' understanding of and appreciation for rigorous philosophical inquiry and to develop students' skills in argumentation, analysis, and communication. Faculty in the department are universally committed to their teaching and research and to the success of their students. They have set a series of defined goals for the department and developed a strategic plan to attain them. They also recognize the challenges that lay ahead, especially around hiring new faculty and effectively balancing faculty service loads while maintaining their excellence in teaching and research. With the aid and support of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and the leadership of their chair, the department has the potential to make significant strides in growing their faculty, refining some of their practices, and adopting new strategies to further strengthen departmental community and collegiality.