

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

On February 6, 2020 the Program Performance Review team--Sven Bernecker, Professor of Philosophy, UC Irvine, Ann Garry, Professor Emerita of Philosophy, Cal State Los Angeles, and Carrie Lane, Professor of American Studies, Cal State Fullerton--met individually with each tenured and tenure track faculty member except one person on sabbatical, talked over lunch with five philosophy majors, met twice with Dean Sheryl Fontaine and Associate Dean Jessica Stern, and concluded with dinner with the faculty. We did not visit classes or speak with non-tenure-track faculty or staff.

Commendations

The Philosophy Department is doing an excellent job of meeting its first two goals: (1) to support excellence in scholarly and creative activity and external grant activity, and (2) to recruit and retain a highly qualified and diverse faculty. The level and quality of both scholarly and grant activity is higher than in philosophy departments at many comparable institutions. Their grants are especially noteworthy because of the very few opportunities for external funding in philosophy.

Their current tenured/tenure-track members cover a strikingly wide range of approaches and interests. In the discipline of philosophy, theirs would be called a "pluralist" department because they cover both Anglo-American analytic and continental European approaches. The department's pluralism is even broader because it includes Chinese philosophy. In addition, their interests span interdisciplinary approaches and engaged topics such as race, bioethics, and incarceration as well as traditional philosophical topics. We should emphasize that it is extremely difficult to obtain this kind of balance with a department this small. It serves CSUF's students well to have such a broad range of interests among the philosophy faculty members. As the department searches for new members, faculty members recognize the need to diversify the faculty and to diversify further their course offerings across subject areas of philosophy.

The faculty is committed to the success of students. Faculty members show this in several ways, for example, (1) their ongoing evaluation of the curriculum, (2) their work on improving grade inequities in certain classes, (3) their mentoring students who have potential interest in graduate work in philosophy and in the legal profession, (4) their ongoing attention to how best to share advisement, and (5) their openness to talking informally with students (which is facilitated by their welcoming physical space).

The students with whom we spoke value the faculty highly for their teaching, their accessibility, and their mentoring. We might even say that the students adore them.

The department's annual colloquium also merits commendation, especially because it integrates alumni and students at the same time it attracts excellent speakers and enhances the department's reputation. In this context we should also note that the department is more successful at fundraising than many CSU philosophy departments.

Challenges and Recommendations

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.

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*.)

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.

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.

Smaller issues and recommendations:

- 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.
- 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.)

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

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.