



Philosophy Program Review 2022-23

Closing MOU

Date: September 13, 2023

Overview

Degree/Certificate Programs Reviewed: Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy
Master of Arts in Philosophy

Department Chair & Dean: Dr. Cara Nine Department Chair & Dr. Casilde Isabelli


External Reviewers & Affiliation: Dr. David Reidy, University of Tennessee
Dr. Tom Holden, University of California Santa Barbara

Date of External Visit: March 12-15

Review Process Summary

The Philosophy program was scheduled for regular program review as mandated by the Board of Regents and University policy. A self-study document for the department and its programs was developed by the department faculty and completed in the Fall of 2022 for Philosophy programs. These respective reports were provided to the reviewers before they conducted a visit on March 12-15, 2023. The external reviewers reviewed the program and met with relevant faculty, staff, students and administrators to determine the department's accomplishments, examine strengths and weaknesses, and identify opportunities as it plans for the future. A final report was issued by the review team shortly after the review visit. In accordance with institution practice, responses to the review were solicited from the department and the dean. A final meeting took place on August 28th, 2023. This document represents the final MOU of recommendations and findings from the review.

Signatures

Executive Vice President &
Provost:


9/26/2023

Date:

Jeffrey S. Thompson

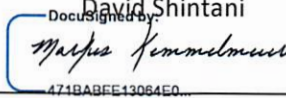
Vice Provost, Undergraduate
Education:


9/18/23

Date:

David Shintani

Vice Provost, Graduate Education
& Dean, Graduate School

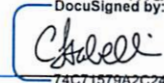
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Date:

Markus Kimmelmeier

Dean, College of Liberal Arts:

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Date:

Casilide Isabelli

Chair, Department of Philosophy

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Date:

Cara Nine

Major Findings and Conclusions

In the University of Nevada, Reno Department of Philosophy students navigate some of the deepest questions human beings have asked – questions about the basic character of reality, the limits of knowledge, the place of mind in nature, the best of life for a person and the most decent society for us all, among others. You will not find easy answers, but you will think clearly about the options while honing analytical and imaginative skills that will prepare you for a host of exciting careers. Upon graduation, many of our students go on to law school or medical school, or secure employment in business, policy institutes or nonprofits and governmental agencies.

The primary mission of the Department of Philosophy is to pursue, through research, and to disseminate, through teaching and publication, a deeper understanding of philosophical thought. There is an equal emphasis on research and teaching, which the department regards as mutually reinforcing activities. A secondary mission is to make contributions, through service, to life at the university and to the profession.

The UNR Mission includes excellence, inclusivity, integrity and collaboration. The department supports the UNR mission by emphasizing excellence in research and teaching, striving for inclusivity through service, and seeking a deeper understanding of philosophical thought through inclusive practice. The philosophical method demands integrity. Philosophy is, at its core, interdisciplinary, relying on and supporting the discoveries of other disciplines.

The review committee commented that over the review period, the department faculty has transformed dramatically. Significantly fewer in number than the previous review period (when there were seven (7) full-time equivalent faculty members), its current full-time faculty (sans the one faculty member serving full-time in the college's administration) are all early or mid-career and decidedly oriented toward contemporary analytic traditions in philosophy, with notable strengths in philosophy of science and in contemporary value theory. The chair is mid-career and newly arrived at UNR. She has taken charge of the department with vision and tact, and enjoys the support and confidence of her colleagues. With appropriate support from the university, we believe she will be able to provide effective leadership going forward. The department administrator is new but capable and committed. Among the permanent (non-LOA) faculty and staff, collegiality and esprit de corps are excellent and enviable. We were struck by the impression of a young and energetic

group of permanent (or tenure track) faculty, mutually supportive, integrated and coherent as a group. Faculty research productivity and professional visibility is good. In recent years, however, strains related to lower faculty numbers have adversely impacted both faculty and student morale. Still, students, both current and past, and across all programs, were very positive about the department, its faculty, and their academic experience in their respective programs. They clearly expressed their sense that over the review period the faculty have been giving 110% effort. We noted above that the department is strongly identified with the 'analytic' tradition in philosophy. This tradition dominates in the overwhelming number of philosophy departments in the English-speaking world and at all the top-ranked departments. What is distinctive about the analytic tradition is its emphasis on argumentative clarity and precision, and its employment of the methods of formal logic and conceptual analysis in order to clarify theses, arguments, and objections. At UN-R this orientation together with the specific faculty interests perhaps explain the department's success in offering an undergraduate program and undergraduate courses that attract considerable numbers of students with backgrounds in STEM-area subjects and/or the area of law or public policy. UNR is fortunate to have a Philosophy Department faculty that is not only young, bright, collegial, devoted, and productive, but is also well-positioned by training both to supporting strong philosophy programs and to contributing to other programs across campus (including the natural sciences, computer and cognitive sciences, political and legal studies, professional ethics, etc.). Below are the challenges the review committee have identified.

- The department needs more full-time faculty to sustain a strong program.
- The department must grow its graduate program, with better curricular offerings, marketing and recruitment, especially international.
- The department should be working with the college and the provost to secure better funding for graduate students.
- The department must stop relying on LOA faculty.
- The department must work with the college and university administration to ensure more reliable communication, coordination, and long-term planning.
- The total number of credit hours for both undergraduate and graduate programs should be cut.
- The department, college and provost should settle on a mutually agreeable and fair measure of the department's teaching contributions across campus.
- Urgent need for more full-time faculty (tenured). Both to offer essential courses in the undergraduate program and to build the MA program.
- Make a full-time (tenure-track) hire in ancient philosophy, to teach the required course, students are having to take the class on-line with other universities.
- More faculty to address the curricular needs in several areas such as, metaphysics and epistemology.
- More institutional support for undergraduate advising.

Next Steps for this Program/Department (topics will vary)

- We have designed a more streamlined set of catalog requirements for our BA programs. This will reduce the total number of credit hours and reduce the number of required history of philosophy courses.
- The MA in Philosophy is already 30 total hours of coursework, including thesis hours, for the thesis option. For the professional paper option in our MA, there are 33 total hours of coursework. We are investigating the possibility of lowering the professional paper option to 30 total credit hours.
- We agree that increased student funding, especially the creation of more GTA positions in the department, would benefit the program. It would increase enrollment, allow us to advertise the program more effectively, and provide more teaching and grading relief in the department. We will request more GTA positions in the future.
- We have a plan to market the MA program better. We have proposed an Accelerated BA/MA option that will hopefully be implemented by Fall 2023. This will increase the visibility and accessibility of our MA to UNR philosophy students. We have joined the WRGP (Western Region Graduate Programs), allowing residents of 16 western states to enroll in our MA at a reduced rate. We will work with the College to better market the MA.
- The department strongly support the externs' rationale for more faculty in our department and think adding at least two faculty to the department is an urgent priority. We have prepared position requests for new full-time tenure-track faculty to be submitted at the next opportunity.
- We will work with the Provost and Dean's offices to better understand how we can communicate our contributions for the purpose of resource measurement. We believe there are several important data sets to consider in resource allocation decisions, including: the amount of teaching philosophy does in the core curriculum and other departments, staff/student ratios, FTEs, total number of student bodies (not the same as FTEs) in our programs, and a target number of faculty required to run a department with multiple majors, minors and an MA, which should be the equivalent of at least 7 or 8 full-time faculty.
- The department has begun to design a mentor system for junior faculty. Ideally, this would be formally integrated into our departmental service or annual review structures, to ensure that it is implemented and maintained faithfully in the future.
- The undergraduate director/advisor should be better supported. The externs remarked that faculty and students singled out the current Director of Undergraduate Studies 'for praise as extraordinarily committed to student advising and as hard-working beyond any normal expectations.' Unfortunately, the current situation seems unsustainable with a high risk of burnout from the overload. Externs recommend institutional preparedness to reduce this risk.

Vital Statistics on NSHE Reports

Number of students with declared major in the program area:

2022-2023	BA Philosophy: General	27
	BA Philosophy: Ethics, Law, and Politics	35
	MA Philosophy	3

Number of graduates from the program for the following years:

2020-2021	BA Philosophy: General	7
	BA Philosophy: Ethics, Law, and Politics	15
	MA Philosophy	3

2021-2022	BA Philosophy: General	5
	BA Philosophy: Ethics, Law, and Politics	5
	MA Philosophy	2

2022-2023	BA Philosophy: General	3
	BA Philosophy: Ethics, Law, and Politics	8
	MA Philosophy	1

Program-level graduation rate using first-time, full-time, degree-seeking cohort at 150 percent completion time:

2020-2021	BA Philosophy: General	0%, n = 3
	BA Philosophy: Ethics, Law, and Politics	100%, n = 1
	MA Philosophy	100%, n = 2
2021-2022	BA Philosophy: General	0%, n = 1
	BA Philosophy: Ethics, Law, and Politics	n/a
	MA Philosophy	67%, n = 3
2022-2023	BA Philosophy: General	40%, n = 5
	BA Philosophy: Ethics, Law, and Politics	71%, n = 7
	MA Philosophy	n/a

Headcount of students enrolled in any course related to the program (duplicated):

2022-2023	BA Philosophy: General	1,342
	BA Philosophy: Ethics, Law, and Politics	1,342
	MA Philosophy	20