

Comprehensive Program Review Report



Program Review - Philosophy

Program Summary

2020-2021

Prepared by: Timothy Linehan & Tim Houk

What are the strengths of your area?: MAJORS

Philosophy majors have increased over the past 3 years by nearly 40%.

SUCCESS RATES

The program's overall success rate enjoyed a 5-point increase over the previous year, moving from 66% to 71%. This represents a positive trend as the current success rate is 2 points higher than the previous 5-year average. It is also 3 points higher than the CA average for philosophy programs. There are two points of interest in the demographic data. First, African-Americans' success rates in philosophy were significantly higher than their White and Hispanic classmates (80% compared to 76% and 67%, respectively). And second, men's and women's success rates were virtually identical, at 70% and 71%.

Previously, success rates at the Hanford and Tulare campuses were flagged as opportunities for improvement. We are pleased to report that since then, Tulare's success rate has improved by 7% and Hanford's by 26%.

FTES

The College's approval and filling of two new tenure-track faculty lines over the last three years has led to impressive growth for the department. 2018-19 marked a record high for philosophy, with an FTES of 57.7—a 60% increase over the department's low in 2016-17. Last year produced yet another record high, increasing another 29% to reach an FTES of 74.50.

GRADUATION AND TRANSFER

Our program continues to advance the College's goal of increasing student graduation and transfer rates. Students must take a critical thinking class to graduate and to transfer, and many programs require students to take PHIL 1 or PHIL 5. Thus, our program's rapidly growing FTES, contributes to the College's goal of higher graduation and transfer rates.

What improvements are needed?: Our program's hybrid/online success rates (50%) lag significantly behind our face-to-face rates (74%). However, this discrepancy does not appear for all our online courses. For instance, online instruction for PHIL 25 enjoys a success rate of 72%. The focus for improvement clearly lies with a single outlier: PHIL 20 (Introductory Logic). Put plainly, PHIL 20 is just a difficult course. This is made clear by its lower success rates even for face-to-face sections (52.5%). The hybrid/online success rates are even lower at 39%. Fortunately, our two philosophy faculty have already set to work to try to remedy the problem. Both have created public YouTube channels focused on short, high-quality philosophy videos. Together their channels have earned over 11,000 views in only a few months' time. We look forward to learning next year whether these growing YouTube channels translate into increased hybrid/online success rates for the program.

Describe any external opportunities or challenges.: Political difficulties come and go but few would deny that the bonds of citizenship are now strained in our Republic. It also seems clear that knowledge acquisition is more complex today than just ten years ago, complicated by the internet and a rapidly changing media landscape, particularly social media. The philosophy program, with its focus on intellectual virtues such as fair-mindedness ("What are the strengths of my opponent's view?") and logical analysis ("Is the argument valid?") is uniquely situated to prepare students to participate effectively in a vibrant, multicultural, liberal democracy.

Overall SLO Achievement: Previously, we noted that student learning outcomes were assessed in 63% of philosophy sections and that we aimed to increase that number. We are happy to report that 83% of philosophy sections were assessed during this

assessment cycle.

As a result of their learning experiences in philosophy, students report that they have come to value and develop philosophical virtues such as fair-mindedness, open-mindedness, and nuanced conclusions. 99% affirm that "as a result of my learning in this class, I am more likely to try hard to listen to understand the opinions of those who disagree with me. I try to give them a fair hearing." 93% report that "as a result of my learning in this class, I work to reconsider or revise my view when the other person gives me reasons that are stronger than mine." These numbers equal or surpass the already impressive numbers of the previous assessment cycle. On a different assessment item, however, the results were lower. Fewer students (79%) reported that "as a result of my learning in this class, I look to others for criticism of my views, so I can be more confident of my view and so that I can clarify my view." (Perhaps this is not surprising: embracing criticism is a tall order.)

Changes Based on SLO Achievement: Since most of results of our assessment items are remarkably high, we propose to focus on our lower-scoring item, introducing into our classrooms---in a more intentional way---the value of diverse viewpoints and criticism of one's views; for instance, in helping to counteract cognitive bias.

Overall PLO Achievement: The department revised the program's PLOs this year and developed new assessments to measure outcome achievements. The assessments will take place in the 2020-2021 academic year and reported in the 2021-2022 program review.

Changes Based on PLO Achievement: No other changes to the assessment plan will be made at this time. The assessment plan will be revisited after the 2020-2021 assessment results are in.

Outcome cycle evaluation: NA

Action: 2020-2021: Develop YouTube channels

Faculty members will continue to expand their newly created philosophy YouTube channels in order to (1) help current students succeed and (2) attract more students to the philosophy program. Our goal is to triple the number of combined views from 11,000 to 33,000.

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Implementation Timeline: 2020 - 2021

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Identify related course/program outcomes: In drawing more students to the department and helping more students succeed, we increase the number of students developing philosophical virtues such as fair-mindedness, open-mindedness, and acceptance of nuanced conclusions (SLO).

Person(s) Responsible (Name and Position): Timothy Linehan, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Tim Houk, Associate Professor of Philosophy

Rationale (With supporting data): To help raise our lower online/hybrid success rates as to match our higher face-to-face success rates.

Priority: Low

Safety Issue: No

External Mandate: No

Safety/Mandate Explanation:

Link Actions to District Objectives

District Objectives: 2018-2021

District Objective 1.1 - The District will increase FTES by 1.75% over the three years

District Objective 2.1 - Increase the percentage of students who earn an associate degree or certificate (CTE and Non-CTE) by 5 percentage points over three years

District Objective 2.2 - Increase the number of students who transfer to a four-year institution by 10 percent over three years

Action: 2020-2021: Assess the need for a Philosophy of Science course.

A Philosophy of Science course might serve as a science equivalent for the Science Division as well as providing philosophy majors with expanded options. We propose to investigate interest at COS for such a course and explore the ways in which a Philosophy of Science course is handled at other community colleges.

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Implementation Timeline: 2020 - 2021

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Identify related course/program outcomes: In drawing more students to the department, we increase the number of students developing philosophical virtues such as fair-mindedness, open-mindedness, and acceptance of nuanced conclusions (PLO).

Person(s) Responsible (Name and Position): Timothy Linehan, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Tim Houk, Associate Professor of Philosophy

Rationale (With supporting data): More options for science and philosophy students may increase the number of students who earn an associate degree and who transfer to a four-year institution.

Priority: Low

Safety Issue: No

External Mandate: No

Safety/Mandate Explanation:

Link Actions to District Objectives

District Objectives: 2018-2021

District Objective 2.1 - Increase the percentage of students who earn an associate degree or certificate (CTE and Non-CTE) by 5 percentage points over three years

District Objective 2.2 - Increase the number of students who transfer to a four-year institution by 10 percent over three years

Action: 2019-2020: Increase Online Sections

A. Have the newly-hired full-time faculty member complete COS's online teaching certification.

B. Over the next two years, design two new online philosophy courses (PHIL 1 and PHIL 5) to bring the department's online offerings to a total of four. (Only PHIL 20 and PHIL 25 are currently offered online.)

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Implementation Timeline: 2019 - 2020

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Identify related course/program outcomes: Expanding the department's reach will extend opportunities for developing philosophical virtues in students such as fair-mindedness, open-mindedness, and the acceptance of nuanced conclusions.

Person(s) Responsible (Name and Position): Timothy Linehan, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Tim Houk, Associate Professor of Philosophy

Rationale (With supporting data): As documented in the "What Are the Strengths of Your Area?" section of the program summary, student demand for philosophy is strong, even as the number of sections grow (11 sections in Fall 2018, 12 sections in Fall 2019) with 92% of all philosophy sections "in the red" -- that is, closed to new students due to being enrolled at capacity -- on the first day of the semester Fall 2019.

Priority: Medium

Safety Issue: No

External Mandate: No

Safety/Mandate Explanation:

Update on Action

Updates

Update Year: 2020 - 2021

09/30/2020

Status: Continue Action Next Year

The newly-hired full-time faculty member completed COS's online teaching certification and developed an asynchronous online version of PHIL 5, which was then offered Fall 2020.

However, this action was planned before the COVID-19 pandemic and the school's move to entirely remote instruction. In light of the pandemic, all of the department's courses were offered remotely during part of Spring 2020 and all of Fall 2020--including

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both asynchronous and synchronous sections of PHIL 1 and PHIL 20, and an asynchronous PHIL 12.

After COS returns to the normal modes of instruction, the department will continue this action to ensure online courses are part of our regular course offering.

Impact on District Objectives/Unit Outcomes (Not Required):

Link Actions to District Objectives

District Objectives: 2018-2021

District Objective 2.1 - Increase the percentage of students who earn an associate degree or certificate (CTE and Non-CTE) by 5 percentage points over three years

District Objective 2.2 - Increase the number of students who transfer to a four-year institution by 10 percent over three years

Action: 2019-2020: Increase Success Rates on the Tulare and Hanford Campuses

In an effort to increase success rates in philosophy on the Tulare and Hanford campuses, we will request further data to help clarify where the trouble may lie and identify avenues for improvement.

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Implementation Timeline: 2019 - 2020

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Identify related course/program outcomes: District Objectives 2.1 and 2.2: Increasing degrees and certificates and increasing transfers to four-year institutions.

Person(s) Responsible (Name and Position): Timothy Linehan, Associate Professor of Philosophy and Tim Houk, Associate Professor of Philosophy

Rationale (With supporting data): As documented in the "What Improvements are Needed" section of the program summary, our students on the Hanford and Tulare campuses lag behind their Visalia campus peers in success rates. Further investigation into the causes of this discrepancy will help us provide the necessary support.

Priority: Medium

Safety Issue: No

External Mandate: No

Safety/Mandate Explanation:

Update on Action

Updates

Update Year: 2020 - 2021

09/30/2020

Status: Action Completed

We met with Sarah Harris and Dali Ozturk to discuss student data, but we could not identify relevant data that might explain the lower success rates at these campuses. However, success rates have increased at both the Tulare and Hanford campuses.

Impact on District Objectives/Unit Outcomes (Not Required):

Link Actions to District Objectives

District Objectives: 2018-2021

District Objective 2.1 - Increase the percentage of students who earn an associate degree or certificate (CTE and Non-CTE) by 5 percentage points over three years

District Objective 2.2 - Increase the number of students who transfer to a four-year institution by 10 percent over three years