Department of Philosophy

University of Wyoming

UP-III plan final draft

Submission Date: 10.13.08

MISSION AND ASPIRATIONS

The department of philosophy at the University of Wyoming aspires to be one of the nation's finest public land-grant departments with a small faculty profile and an M.A. program. We are dedicated to providing undergraduate education of the highest quality, an M.A. program that prepares its students for success in the country's best Ph.D. programs, and rigorous scholarship. In teaching undergraduates, our chief goals are: 1) to provide courses in the humanities that are writing and discussion intensive, emphasize critical thinking, and provoke and challenge students within the great tradition of the liberal arts; 2) To provide these courses to many university constituents, including departments within and outside A&S, the University Studies Program, and the Honors Program; 3) To provide an engaging and useful range of minors for students; 4) To maintain a rigorous major program, so as to prepare students for graduate study in philosophy, law, science, mathematics, economics, business, and other disciplines. In teaching MA students, our chief goals are: 1) to prepare students for successful advanced degree work in a range of disciplines, with primary emphasis on highly-competitive Ph.D. programs in philosophy; 2) To mentor students as teachers. Our mission requires a faculty active in research on the frontiers of philosophical scholarship and with teaching and research specializations that cover the core philosophical areas. These areas include the history of philosophy (ancient Greek, 17th and 18th Centuries, as well as philosophical translation of major historical works) and contemporary philosophy (epistemology, logic, philosophy of science, metaphysics, philosophy of mind, value theory, and philosophy of language).

Four considerations animate our vision for UP-III. First, philosophy is by its very nature significantly relevant to nearly all disciplines in higher education. Historically it is the source of the life sciences, physics and astronomy, psychology, economics and political theory, and has close ties to the mathematical sciences and the arts. Thus, for nearly any department and program, we can contribute to its teaching and research missions in significant ways, and furthermore, we can contribute to the university as a whole by bringing together disparate disciplines. Second, our department houses some of the finest teachers at the university and we envision building on this quality. Third, our M.A. program, though tiny in comparison, has gained national prominence through its successful placement of its M.A. students into top Ph.D. programs. We envision not only capturing this momentum, but accelerating our success. Fourth, we have three research superstars, Carlos Mellizo, in the area of philosophical translation, Jeffrey Lockwood in the area of environmental philosophy, and Marc Moffett in the core philosophical areas of metaphysics and epistemology, and we aim to build on their strengths.

UPDATE ON LAST PLAN'S ACTION ITEMS

Phil-1: Maintain critical teaching needs. Update: ¾ completed.

Phil-2: Assessment. Update: Partially completed.

Phil-3: Areas of Distinction. Advance the ENR and life sciences initiative. Update: Completed.

Phil-4: Bolstering graduate education. Update: Completed.

Phil-5: Internationalization. Update: Completed.

Phil-6: Curriculum. Update: Completed, with ongoing revision.

RELEVANT INSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

<u>At the university level</u>. Two planning motifs of UP-III are directly relevant to the philosophy department. They are:

- **Building depth versus adding breadth (M 1).**

- **Reinforcing and refining areas of distinction (M 2).**

<u>At the college level</u>. A number of planning themes from the College of Arts and Sciences are also relevant.

- **Continue to emphasize the value of a liberal arts education (A&S 1).**

- **Provide foundational knowledge and skills in the liberal arts and sciences to all students at UW (A&S 2).** Two sub themes are especially relevant:

- "Expand opportunities for undergraduates to become involved in research."

- "Examine and revise basic curricula in majors . . . Departments and programs should complete the implementation of their plans for assessment of student learning and consider ways to develop on-going processes of curricular evaluation and modification."

- **Enhance graduate education (A&S 3)**. "departments . . . which confer the MA degree must not be complacent. The number of applicants for some of these is very low and the quality is average. . . . [Some departments] could expand their graduate programs immediately. Mechanisms to enhance the effectiveness of graduate student recruiting should also be measured and proposed."

- **Identify means to improve and expand research (A&S 4)**. "departments should identify mechanisms to enhance both the quality and quantity of faculty research. These should include both resource and non-resource items."

- **Demonstrate our appreciation for diverse human perspectives in local, national, and global contexts (A&S 5)**. "Increased student community involvement/internships/civic engagement" through service learning.

- **Emphasize our commitment to interdisciplinarity or multidisciplinarity at all degree levels (A&S 6)**.

ACTION ITEMS

(For implementation, E=Early; M=Middle, L=Late; O=Ongoing)

PHIL-1: Build depth in the undergraduate and graduate curricula.
Justification: M 1, M 2, A&S 1, A&S 2, A&S 3, A&S 6
Comment: As things currently stand, the department is unable to give sufficiently deep coverage to all of the foundational undergraduate and graduate philosophy courses. Core areas that are thinly covered include: logic at the advanced level, metaphysics, and value theory. Building depth in these areas is our first priority. But there are also significant gaps in our curriculum. The core area of Kant has not been covered in many years. So after depth has been built, we will turn to trying to fill the looming gap in Kant. This is our second priority. Other important areas that are not covered at all include Aesthetics, Philosophy of Mathematics, Medieval Philosophy. Attempting to remedy this lack of coverage will be our third priority.
Implementation: O

PHIL-2: Enhance graduate education. This action item involves two components: 1. Increase the number of GAships, and 2. improve the effectiveness of graduate student recruiting.
Justification: M 1, A&S 3
Comment: The M.A. program continues to attract strong graduate students, and as a result, we have had noteworthy success at placing them in top Ph.D. programs. Due to various trends in the profession, study at a stand-alone M.A. program has become a near essential step in the transition from undergraduate studies to Ph.D. programs.
Implementation: O

PHIL-3: Enhance undergraduate education. This action item involves two components: 1. Expand opportunities for undergraduate research, especially through a senior honors paper; 2. Increase student community involvement through service learning.
Justification: A&S 2, A&S 6
Comment: Service learning "combines service objectives with learning objectives with the intent that the activity change both the recipient and the provider of the service" (National Service-Learning Clearinghouse). Two key characteristics of service learning are that it links to academic content and standards, and involves students in helping to determine and meet real, defined community needs. Clearly, then, service learning cannot be integrated into all philosophy courses. Targeted courses include PHIL 2300, Ethics in Practice; PHIL 2330, Environmental Ethics; PHIL 2345, Natural Resource Ethics; PHIL 3000, Feminist Ethics; PHIL 3250, Global Justice. And just as clearly, it would be premature to specify the forms that service learning activities for these classes will take, since they must be linked to the specifics of the course content, student decision, and community needs. Obvious examples include projects for

homeless shelters and food-banks (Ethics in Practice), projects for immigrants, Amnesty International, as well as international relief organizations (Global Justice), projects to help clean up the environment (Environmental Ethics and Natural Resource Ethics), and Take Back the Night, SAFE projects, WAN (Women's Action Network -- the student organization for WMST) and various programs and events sponsored by WMST throughout the year, including all of March as Women's History Month (Feminist Ethics).
Implementation: E (for PHIL-3.1); L (for PHIL-3.2)

PHIL-4: Enhance faculty research activity.
Justification: A&S 4
Comment: Identify means to increase the quantity of research for low to moderately productive faculty, and of equal weight, identifying means to increase support for highly productive faculty. Research incentives include fully-supported travel to significant conferences. Develop internal ways to provide reduced teaching loads, for example, by supporting teach teaching and rotating teaching reductions. Find ways to support collaborative research, such as in the area of environmental philosophy applied to the Wyoming energy boom.
Implementation: O

PHIL-5: Program Assessment.
Justification: A&S 2
Comment: Complete the implementation of our plans for assessment of student learning and consider ways to develop on-going processes of curricular evaluation and modification, thus continuing with multiple iterations of the full cycle of program assessment.
Implementation: O

PHIL-6: Support interdisciplinarity at all degree levels, with priority on three areas of distinction: i. computational science; ii. environment and natural resources; iii. life sciences.
Justification: M 1, M 2, A&S 6
Implementation: O

PHIL-7: Support ethics across the curriculum.
Justification: Cultivating leadership is a planning motif 5 of UP-III. Central to this motif is advancing the ethical capacities of our students. And central to doing this is teaching ethics across the curriculum. The department is currently involved in a privately funded three year program that promotes the teaching of ethics across the curriculum. We support making permanent a university-wide program of teaching ethics across the curriculum.
Implementation: E

PHIL-8: Reinforce the humanities by supporting establishment of a Humanities Institute.
Justification: A&S 1, A&S 4
Implementation: Ongoing

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE
(Ongoing action-items are indicated with an "O" under year 1.)

YEAR ACTION ITEM	1	2	3	4	5
PHIL-1	O				
PHIL-2	O				
PHIL-3	E(3.1)				L(3.2)
PHIL-4	O				
PHIL-5	O				
PHIL-6	O				
PHIL-7	E				
PHIL-8	O				