

Proposal to Eliminate Academic Program

Pursuant to UW Regulation 6-43

M.A. Philosophy

Statement of the reasons for elimination of the program:

The M.A. in Philosophy has produced thirteen students in the past five years. This is on par with their 2.5 state-funded GA's per year. The program is competitive, with a 15% acceptance rate. The department is active in Outreach teaching and international collaborations.

The department feels that the M.A. is critical to their high quality B.A. degree. Undergraduate students also have required 4000/5000 level courses in their curricula (three required as the senior capstone experience).

However, the faculty ranks in this department are thin; the College has been unable to invest resources here. Two faculty have split appointments and have moved from other units. There are only four full-time philosophy faculty. This strains the ability to run both a quality B.A. and M.A. The recommendation is to discontinue the M.A. program and concentrate on a restructuring of the B.A. to increase connections with and relevance to other majors.

Description of the program and relevant data:

Describe the mission, curriculum, content and format of the program:

The department of philosophy at the University of Wyoming is a lively, analytically oriented program offering courses in all core areas of contemporary philosophy (metaphysics, epistemology, value theory, and logic) as well as the major historical figures.

Students enter the masters program in philosophy at the University of Wyoming for a variety of reasons. Some wish to enrich their understanding of the world in an advanced and intellectually challenging environment. Others find that it provides invaluable preparation for many pre-professional degree programs (such as law or medicine). Most, however, come to us with the goal of preparing for advanced study in a top flight graduate program in philosophy (or cognate discipline).

A broad graduate curriculum gives students a solid philosophical foundation as well as providing a number of courses at the cutting edge of the discipline. The program emphasizes work in the core areas of contemporary analytic philosophy as well as providing students with a strong historical foundation. We have particular strengths in epistemology, the philosophy of mind, and environmental ethics, but our graduates have written successful theses in a broad range of philosophic subject areas.

An extremely favorable faculty to student ratio (effectively 1:1) allows for the opportunity to work very closely with an enthusiastic, research-active faculty mentor.

Our track record promoting the specific goals of our students in each of these areas compares very favorably to those of other nationally recognized M.A. programs. Our success derives from a number of specific characteristics of the department.

M.A. students are required to take 9 three-credit seminars + 9 credit hours of thesis research. They take three seminars in each of the first two semesters, two seminars + 3 thesis credits in their third semester, and one seminar + 6 thesis credits in their fourth and final semester. The seminars vary from year to year, but they cover the subfields of epistemology, ethics, history of philosophy, advanced logic, philosophy of science, metaphysics, and philosophy of language (however, the last two are currently not covered due to understaffing).

PHIL 5000: Philosophical
Issues PHIL 5020: Plato
PHIL 5030: Aristotle
PHIL 5040: Kant
PHIL 5100: Figures in Modern and 19th Century Philosophy
PHIL 5110: Figures in Contemporary Philosophy
PHIL 5120: Philosophy and the Twentieth
Century PHIL 5140: Topics in Philosophy of
Science
PHIL 5190: Philosophy of Language
PHIL 5200: Topics in Contemporary
Philosophy PHIL 5300: Topics in Ethics
PHIL 5340: Issues in Environmental
Ethics PHIL 5420: Advanced Logic
PHIL 5440: Topics in the Philosophy of Mind
PHIL 5510: Theory of Knowledge
PHIL 5560: Metaphysics
PHIL 5960: Thesis
Research

Given the size of our MA program, almost all graduate seminars are cross-listed with advanced (4000) level courses for the philosophy major.

Describe the role of the program within the context of the college and the mission of the University:

It should be noted in the context of the remarks below that the recommendation is the closing of the Philosophy MA degree. The BA degree will continue to be taught.

The M.A. students are mostly involved in teaching our introductory courses (PHIL 1000), which serve the entire campus community. Our emphasis in those courses is on the

development of truly critical reasoning, i.e., the informed assessment of the plausibility of theoretical claims and an evaluation of their argumentative and evidential support, both orally and in written form. Developing such skills relies heavily on repeated discussions of quite abstract concepts, such as the nature of truth, justice, and knowledge, and their role in various argumentative strategies from a variety of perspectives. Our M.A. students are critical for the success of the introductory courses through the discussion sections they lead with small groups. Mere classroom discussion with the entire class of between 60 and 80 students would clearly not be sufficient for achieving the central learning outcomes. On occasion, some of our M.A. students also support the teaching in 2000 level courses (such as *The Greek Mind*, *Social and Political Philosophy*, *Philosophy of Religion*, and *Critical Thinking*), which also draw students from all across the campus and which are essential for gaining expertise in the core of any liberal arts education.

Philosophy is mentioned explicitly twice in the establishing document of the University of Wyoming as a central part of the educational mission of UW:

“21-17-101. Establishment.

There is established in this state, at the city of Laramie, an institution of learning to be known as "The University of Wyoming".

21-17-102. Objects; departments.

(a) The objects of the university are to provide an efficient means of imparting to men and women, without regard to color, on equal terms, a liberal education, together with a thorough knowledge of the various branches connected with the scientific, industrial and professional

pursuits. To this end it shall embrace colleges or departments of letters, of science and of the arts together with such professional or other departments as in course of time may be connected therewith.

The department of letters shall embrace a liberal course of instruction in language, literature and philosophy, together with such courses or parts of courses in the college or department of science as are deemed necessary.

(b) The college, or department of science, shall embrace courses of instruction in the mathematical, physical and natural sciences, together with such courses in language, literature and philosophy as shall constitute a liberal education.”

(Title 21, p. 352f; accessed at legisweb.state.wy.us/statutes/compress/title21.doc, 05/06/2016; department head's emphasis)

Clearly, the establishment document explicitly tasks the University of Wyoming with providing a liberal arts education, for which philosophy is deemed essential. Given the dialectical nature of philosophy and its reliance on discussions, our graduate program contributes greatly to this core mission of UW. Our M.A. students lead discussion sections, during which they facilitate a deepening of the philosophical skills, such as critical reasoning in the technical sense of the term, that we try to instill in our undergraduate students. Through this activity, the M.A. program provides an extremely valuable service to the entire campus

community. Moreover, our M.A. students serve as role models for our majors, who can observe first hand what it means to move from an undergraduate student into the role of a beginning researcher in one of the most fundamental and abstract disciplines offered in the Academy. During the last five years, two of our M.A. students have been awarded an Ellbogen Outstanding Graduate Assistant Teaching Award. In addition, national data show that philosophy majors have consistently the highest composite score on the GRE of all majors. They also score in the very top of the LSAT. The exposure to, and interaction with, the students in a philosophy graduate program is an essential element in the development of such outstanding reasoning skills. No other program on campus, or in the state of Wyoming, is comparable in the above-mentioned respects to the M.A. program in philosophy. It truly provides a unique and irreplaceable service to the central teaching mission of the university. Here are some of the details.

1. Mission, vision, and strategic goals support

“At the center of UW’s mission are our students [and] the task of providing [them] with a strong liberal arts foundation [...]”¹ And at the center of a strong liberal arts foundation is philosophy, as the document establishing UW explicitly recognizes. The A&S UP4 Plan (06/2014) promises to provide, among other things, “critical thinking [and] ethical foundations [...] to allow our students to find solutions to the problems and challenges facing the state, nation, and world in the future.” Critical thinking – the evaluation of arguments in support of claims – has traditionally been the province of philosophy (all extant textbooks in critical thinking have been written by philosophers, and virtually all courses called *Critical Thinking* are housed in philosophy departments all across the country), and developing the required skills is emphasized in all of our courses. Ethics is, of course, one of the core disciplines of philosophy. It is much more than the mere adherence to “ethics codes” – true ethics is grounded in the enlightenment idea of autonomous individuals approaching ethical and moral dilemmas by using reason and argumentation. Such reasoning can at first be quite difficult, and our M.A program is essential, through in-depth discussions between M.A. students and undergraduates, for the success of our students to acquire deep ethical foundations that serves them in their future careers and lives: Simply put, it prepares them for enlightened, and thus “for complete living.”

¹ UW – UP4 Strategic Plan, Draft 10/2014, p.3.

Financial data relevant to the academic program:

Cost data is for ENTIRE department and is not disaggregated by degree.

Ratio of student credit hours per FTE (AY 2014/15): 487.1

Direct instructional expenditures (FY 2015): \$977,917

i) Per student FTE: \$11,215

ii) Per total degrees awarded: \$88,902

iii) Non-personnel expenditures / total academic FTE: \$4,640

Course enrollment (AY 2014/15)

i) Classes falling under university minimums: 2

ii) Lower-division courses falling under university minimums: 1

Research expenditure per tenure-track FTE (FY 2015): \$330.50

Admission, enrollment and graduation data relevant to the program, including the number of students currently enrolled and the status of their progress toward graduation:

COLLEGE/DEPARTMENT Program	Master's Majors					Total
	Fall Semesters					
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	
Philosophy	8	8	8	6	5	35
Status of current graduate students' progress toward graduation is unknown.						

COLLEGE/DEPARTMENT Program	Master's Graduates					Total
	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	
Philosophy	2	2	3	3	3	13

Placement data for M.A. graduates during the last five years

- PhD program in philosophy: 4
- Other doctoral program: 2
- Adjunct Faculty in Philosophy: 2
- Private Industry: 5

Describe the administration of the program:

The MA in Philosophy is administered by the Department of Philosophy, College of Arts and Sciences, Department Head Franz-Peter Griesmaier

Describe the faculty and academic professionals who serve in the program, including their academic credentials, academic rank and length of service to the University:

Robert Colter (PhD, Northwestern University)
Rank: Assistant Lecturer
Length of Service: 9 Years (2007)

Susanna Goodin (PhD, Rice University)
Rank: Associate Professor
Length of Service: 24 Years (1992)

Franz-Peter Griesmaier (PhD, University of Arizona), Department Head
Rank: Associate Professor
Length of Service: 16 Years (2000)

Harvey Hix (PhD, University of Texas-Austin)
Rank: Professor
Length of Service: 11 Years (2005)

Jeffrey Lockwood (PhD, Louisiana State University)
Rank: Professor
Length of Service: 30 Years (1986)

Ed Sherline (Ph.D. University of Illinois-Chicago)
Rank: Associate Professor
Length of Service: 27 Years (1989)

Describe the program facilities, including classrooms and offices, library and equipment used by or dedicated to the program:

Offices: Ross Hall 7, 8, 9, 124, 127, 129. Since the BA program will continue, no office allocations will change.

Classes are generally taught in general pool classrooms, such as the Classroom Building.

Multiple Libraries and database collections are available to Philosophy students and faculty, including Arts & Humanities Citation Index, JSTOR, Religion & Philosophy Collection via Cengage Learning, Philosopher's Index, and Philosophy Documentation Center Collection . This access would be unaffected.

Evaluations from accrediting bodies or other reviewers of the quality of the program and its faculty and academic professionals

There is no external accreditation body for philosophy. In the last bi-annual report submitted by the department in June of 2015, the department pointed to the extraordinarily high research output of the department over the last two years, much of which is associated with having a thriving M.A. program: 6 books; 4 chapters in books; 12 refereed articles; 3 non-refereed articles; 77 poems; 39 presentations; and 34 interviews.

Comparison of the program with related or similar programs:

Over the last five years, we had 82 applicants for 12.5 funded slots in our M.A. program. This translates to a 15% acceptance rate, which shows that we are a highly selective graduate program. 6 applicants were from UW, 56 from out-of-state, and 20 from abroad.

Application

Origin:

Wyoming: 7%

Out-of-State: 69%

Abroad: 24%

There is no other program at UW, or in the state of Wyoming, that duplicates our M.A. program in philosophy. The program is unique in several ways. First, it constitutes an advanced study of *the* core area of any liberal arts education by systematically investigating the very foundations, not only of the other humanities, but also of the sciences: What exactly is truth? How can theoretical claims that go beyond the empirical evidence be justified? What is a cogent argument? What features determine the moral and ethical status of an action? Why exactly does mathematics, a discipline that is largely independent from empirical questions, apply to the empirical world? What can we learn from earlier attempts to wrestle with such questions about our current concerns? Do those concerns change themselves over time as the result of fundamental conceptual revolutions, or do we find historical stability? Second, philosophy is the go-to discipline for acquiring critical reasoning skills. Our M.A. program is singularly well suited to contribute to UW's institutional goal to foster such skills, as it allows undergraduates to wrestle with abstract concepts required for successful critical reasoning under the guidance of our M.A. students. Finally, the M.A. program contributes to the national and international visibility of UW by being the launching pad for successful academic careers all across the country and also abroad: Several of our former M.A. students eventually moved to teaching positions at universities across the

country (e.g., Bridgewater State University, MA, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Rice University, TX, University of Houston Downtown, University of Nebraska), and one just started a TT position at the first dedicated liberal arts university in India (Ashoka).

Grant/Awards Generation

Project	(Co-)PI	Agency	Amount
Pilot Next Generation Science Standards 2015	Griesmaier Lockwood	Campbell County School District	info pending
“Writing the West” 2015	Lockwood	WY Humanities Council	\$ 6,500
Ucross-Pollination Experiment – 2 2015	Lockwood	Ucross Foundation	\$ 27,600
Pilot Next Generation Science Standards 2014	Griesmaier Lockwood	Campbell County School District	info pending
Premier of Ucross documentary, 2014	Lockwood	WIHR	\$ 1,000
Humanity and Nature 2014	Lockwood	WIHR	\$ 2,000
Humanity and Nature 2014	Lockwood	WY Humanities Council	\$ 5,000
Humanity and Nature 2014	Lockwood	Saturday University Program	\$ 3,000
Humanity and Nature 2014	Lockwood	Ucross Foundation	\$ 27,600
Humanity and Nature 2014	Lockwood	UW, Biodiversity Institute	\$ 5,000
Pilot Next Generation Science Standards 2013	Griesmaier Lockwood	Campbell County School District	info pending
Inaugural Poem 2013	Hix	Public Arts Program UT Austin	\$ 1,000

Describe the anticipated effects of elimination of the program upon the college in which the program is situated, upon other colleges and units of the University, and upon the University as a whole, including:

Effects upon students enrolled in the academic program:

The Philosophy Department has four true philosophers. So few cannot sustain a solid Bachelor's and Master's program. Master's programs are designed to be completed in a two year period. Students currently in the program will be encouraged to complete their degrees by working with advisors to ensure that their committees and degree programs are set up and expectations are understood.

Effects upon faculty and academic professionals who serve in the program, including termination of any existing positions:

Positions for APLs and faculty in the department would not be terminated. Teaching loads for instructional personnel may increase as a result of the need for undergraduate course coverage without MA students to assist in instructional load. Certainly they will be disappointed not to work with graduate students but they may work with students in other degree programs.

Educational and financial effects upon other units of the University:

Minimal effects. Philosophers at UW will remain active participants in the educational activities of related units and will teach 4XXX level courses that can be used for undergraduate and graduate credit. A request for an additional philosophy faculty member has been made. Unfortunately, it cannot be a high priority at this time.

Effects upon faculty, academic professionals, staff, students and alumni of the University:

The loss of the Master's program will lower morale. Fewer 4XXX will be taught. Changes will be made in the curriculum of the Bachelors program to mitigate the loss of GA support.

Effects on the State of Wyoming, including loss of benefits conferred outside the University by the academic program:

The outstanding outreach provided by the department will continue.

Implementation plan to be followed in the event the academic program is eliminated, including:

Procedures for handling current and future applications for admission:

Students who apply for admission will be informed of the situation and not admitted.

Plans for assisting currently enrolled students to complete the course of study:

Current students will be told to complete degrees within a two year period and will be helped by advisors in setting up programs of study and graduate committees that will enable them to do so. Writing the thesis may go beyond the two-year period but the faculty remaining are qualified to help the student complete this work.

Plans for accommodating faculty and academic professionals who will be terminated or otherwise affected by elimination of the academic program:

No faculty or academic professionals will be terminated by elimination of the MA in Philosophy. All will continue in the BA program which has been retained.