

**Philosophy Department
Self-Study Report**

**Prepared for Program
Review 2006-07**

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Overview:

Departmental Strengths: The SUNY Potsdam Department of Philosophy prides itself on providing extraordinary curricular and extracurricular opportunities for its students, as well as for its accessibility to students and its concern to meet student needs. The Department's Faculty/Student Ratio over the last ten semesters has averaged 24.242:1, one of the highest ratios in the School of Arts and Sciences (cf. 19.482 average over last nine semesters for the School of Arts and Sciences as a whole) [see Appendix I]. Approximately three quarters of any given semester's offerings are devoted to courses offered in service to General Education and/or one of the many interdisciplinary programs on campus. The department offers courses in support of the Philosophical Inquiry (PI), Writing Intensive (WI), and Western Civilization (WC) General Education requirements, and will be offering courses beginning in the Fall of 2006 in the new First-Year Critical Thinking (FC) designator. The department offers courses which are required by or are electives for the Criminal Justice major and minor, the Linguistics minor, the Environmental Studies major and minor, the Women's and Gender Studies major and minor, the Classical Studies minor and the Dance major. We contribute at least two courses per year to the Honors program, including, this past year, teaching the required Scholar as Citizen seminar. The department also regularly cross-lists courses with Politics, Psychology and English. These offerings are all in addition to the courses offered to support our thriving honors major, major and minor programs in philosophy. Needless to say, the department is stretched to the very limit in its attempts to fulfill its obligations to the curriculum demands of the School of Arts and Sciences.

The members of the philosophy department are also highly visible in the administration of the college and in support of extra-curricular programming. The department is represented on the General Education Committee (and has been continuously for the last 17 years), on the Arts and Sciences Council, on the A&S Curriculum Committee and had a representative on the search committees for the hiring of Provost Madden in 2002 and in the search for a new president in 2005-06. These are just a few of the department's service commitments [detailed in Annual Reports for the last three years, included as Appendix II].

The Department also sponsors one of the most active student groups on campus, and the only continuously active academic oriented group on campus (for more than 17 years), The Philosophy

Forum. The Forum is completely student led and organized, and is one of the few SGA funded academic clubs on campus. The Forum sponsors weekly talks by faculty from both on and off-campus, presentations by student members, informal discussions, an annual trip to an undergraduate philosophy conference and, for the last few years, a visiting artist [see Appendix III for a listing of 2005-2006 events].

Concerns and Challenges: The most pressing difficulty facing the department in the upcoming years will be to maintain its three academic programs, while continuing to support General Education and other interdisciplinary programs. The difficulty for faculty to stay current in their areas of expertise and to maintain any semblance of a research program with constantly increasing demands on faculty time and completely inadequate support for such activities will only worsen if the college is successful in increasing enrollments, as set forth in the most recent Memorandum of Understanding with SUNY Central Administration.

The department is now composed of four full-time tenured faculty and one part-time adjunct. In addition, the Dean of Arts and Sciences is a tenured member of the department who teaches on average one course every three semesters. The full-time faculty have served the institution for 38, 36, 16, and 12 years respectively. Over the course of the next 5-10 years there are likely to be at least two retirements. Those lines will certainly need to be replaced. If, as planned, SUNY Potsdam increases its enrollment to approximately 5000, and with increased need for General Education courses, the department will not be able to fulfill its service obligations, or continue to service its major programs, much less continue any semblance of serious scholarship, without at least a fifth line.

The members of the department are stretched quite thinly in other respects as well. All teach courses well outside of their area of expertise, each carries a heavy student load each semester (~120-160 students per semester), and generally carry at least three class preparations for their 12 hour teaching load. While the department has interests in expanding its course offerings, and better serving various interdisciplinary programs across campus, it cannot now realistically consider any such curricular additions or changes, and may need to consider withdrawing from some college-wide commitments in order to continue adequate support for its major programs.

The Philosophy Faculty:

The Department of Philosophy is currently composed of five tenured faculty and one adjunct faculty (Appendix IV includes faculty curriculum vitae). Dr. Tartaglia (38 years of service), Dr. DiGiovanna (34 years of service), Dr. Curry (16 years of service) and Dr. Little (12 years of service) comprise the full-time teaching faculty. Dr. Pletcher, Dean of Arts and Sciences, is also a tenured member of the department. Dr. Pletcher teaches a course on average once every 3 semesters. The department began to utilize the services of an adjunct instructor in the Spring of 2005. We were granted this adjunct position in order to free up Dr. Little to be able to offer Environmental Ethics once a year in support of the then newly instituted Environmental Studies Major. Prof. Mark Munroe is a probable perpetual ABD with a Masters degree from Syracuse University. In the Spring of 2005 he taught one course, Philosophy of Mind, for the department. In Fall of 2005 Professor Munroe taught a single section of Contemporary Moral Issues. In Spring of 2006 he taught one section of Contemporary Moral Issues and one section of Medical Ethics. He is scheduled to teach one section of Contemporary Moral Issues and one section of Philosophy of Mind in the Fall of 2006. He also taught a section of Contemporary Moral Issues in the Summer of 2005. The use of Prof. Munroe does not address the sparseness of offerings we are able to present, but only allows the department to offer the same number of courses it always has, while fulfilling other new or extended teaching and service commitments to the college.

The department anticipates two retirements over the next five to ten years. All of the full-time teaching faculty of the department are tenured; two full professors (Tartaglia and DiGiovanna) and two associate professors (Curry and Little). Dr. Pletcher, Dean of Arts and Sciences, is also a tenured full professor. Of the full-time teaching faculty, there are three males, one female.

The faculty of the department of philosophy are recognized across campus as dedicated and effective teachers. Dr. DiGiovanna has been named Honor's Professor of the year three times since 2000, received a President's Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2002, a Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching in 2004 and was nominated for a Distinguished Teaching Professorship in

2005 and 2006. Dr. Curry was named Phi Eta Sigma Outstanding Teacher of the Year for 2002-03. Dr. Little is also widely recognized as a teacher of exceptional merit.

The philosophy faculty's service record is also exemplary, as indicated in the Annual Reports included in Appendix II and on the faculty c.v.'s in Appendix IV. One of the most important but least recognized extracurricular activities is the department's commitment to the Philosophy Forum and related activities for students. The Forum meets weekly, sponsoring informal discussions, more formal presentations by faculty from across the college and from other institutions and from students, trips to see more renowned philosophers who are beyond our department's budgeting capacity, and trips to undergraduate philosophy conferences, where our students can present their own work or comment on their peer's work. It is a rare Forum event when a majority of the faculty are not in attendance.

The department's faculty are also active and visible in the life of the larger Potsdam community. Dr. Little has served on the St. Lawrence County Environmental Management Council since 1998, including serving as both Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council. Dr. DiGiovanna regularly runs workshops on yoga and stress relaxation techniques for the College community, the broader Potsdam community, and at other colleges both in and out of state. Dr. Curry is currently serving his second three-year term on the Potsdam Central School District Board of Education.

The faculty are active in scholarship, though they do not have a particularly distinguished publishing record. The demands of teaching, advising, service and building relationships with our students leaves little time for scholarly work, and the institution has proven less than supportive of scholarship at many levels. Sabbaticals are difficult to acquire, and the department has never had any institutional support when its faculty have been granted sabbaticals in the past; in each case the remaining members of the department have simply picked up the slack.

In spite of the obstacles to scholarship, Dr. Little has a forthcoming anthology on feminist utopian and dystopian writings, Dr. Curry has a few published articles, a handful of reviews and has given a number of presentations, mostly local. He has been working on a manuscript on Plato's metaphysics and epistemology for a number of years. Dr. DiGiovanna and Dr. Tartaglia both have published books and continue to work on various projects - Dr. DiGiovanna continues to work on metaphor and on the philosophy of laughter. Dr. Tartaglia has returned to investigating questions in

the intersection between ordinary language and logical theory.

The philosophy department faculty, like most philosophy faculties, does not generate much funding from external sources in support of research, equipment or facilities. Our alumni are devoted and dedicated, though they are rarely in a position to contribute financially in significant ways to the department (they do, however, often give of their time by returning to campus to speak at a Philosophy Forum sponsored event). Nonetheless, there is a small but steady stream of gifts to our foundation account.

Department members have participated in NEH programs, both locally and nationally, in support of their research and teaching and the Philosophy Forum is a fully funded organization under SGA, allowing us to support our general outreach to the campus community by sponsoring guest artists, speakers, debates and other programming.

The Philosophy Department Curriculum

The department of philosophy seeks in all of its activities to live up to both the letter and the spirit of its mission statement (Appendix XIV). With three programs of its own (philosophy major, minor, and honors major - see Appendix V), philosophy annually offers courses serving seven other programs, totaling about 400 seats. In addition, every academic year, we also offer about 700 seats for General Education requirements. The demand for both other programs' and General Education seats has grown over the past four years, to the point that our courses are now typically over-enrolled. We anticipate this pressure to increase in the future. When the new First-Year Critical Thinking designator (FC) goes into effect in Fall 2006, our department is committed to offering about 200 more seats per year for General Education. The department's answer to these increased enrollment demands has been to teach uncompensated overloads, either tutorials or extra sections (Dr. Curry often taught four courses while chair) in order to serve philosophy majors. Moreover, the department can seldom offer philosophy seminars for seniors (cap-stone experiences), which is a serious lacuna in an undergraduate philosophy degree program. Dr. Little's assumption of the department chair position in Fall 2004 exacerbated this problem. She taught the philosophy major requirement, Philosophy of Science, plus two sections a year for the Criminal Justice program, and one course per year for the

Environmental Studies major. With the chair's one-course reduction per semester, something had to go. As a result, Philosophy of Science is no longer offered, and she no longer can teach the two sections for Criminal Justice.

Besides the increased pressure of General Education enrollments, we could easily fill Ancient Philosophy and Existentialism courses once a year, whereas we now struggle to offer these courses once every two years. Some of the other courses that always close when offered, which would fill if taught more often, include Introduction to Logic, Introduction to Philosophy, Environmental Ethics, Philosophy of Religion, Contemporary Moral Issues, and Modern Philosophy. It seems reasonable that we will have to offer more sections of Introduction to Logic to satisfy the need for FC seats. As it stands now, Curry and Little teach courses outside of their specializations (even broadly construed). Most notably, the department lacks a specialist in metaphysics and epistemology. Dr. Curry and Dr. Little have largely picked up the slack in terms of course offerings in these areas, Dr. Curry teaches Metaphysics, Philosophy of Mind and alternates the Theory of Knowledge course with Dr. Little, who until taking over as department chair occasionally taught Philosophy of Science as well. Dr. Little, Dr. DiGiovanna and Dr. Tartaglia have all taught the 20th century Analytic Philosophy course. This seriously impacts the department's ability to offer other courses which would fill gaps in the curriculum or would be of interest to our students. For example, the department lacks a course in 19th century philosophy, and would like to, but cannot now, offer more extensive offerings in applied ethics, (e.g., business ethics, medical ethics, ethics and technology), philosophy of education; and philosophy of music.

Another notable gap in the curriculum is the lack of any courses in non-western philosophy. Dr. Pletcher occasionally offers a course in Philosophy and World Religions, but the course is offered irregularly and at best piques an interest in non-western philosophies which cannot then be satisfied with further course work.

If Dr. Curry were freed from teaching Metaphysics, Mind and the Theory of Knowledge he would be able to develop a more comprehensive series of courses covering the history of philosophy (in particular a course in the history of 19th Century philosophy). He would also be free to offer extremely popular courses more often than is now possible (e.g., Existentialism and Phenomenology, Ancient Philosophy and Modern Philosophy. Each of these courses has drawn pedagogically unsound

enrollments above 50 students each semester in which they have been taught of late). If Dr. Little were freed from teaching Theory of Knowledge and 20th Century Analytic Philosophy she would be able to offer more courses in applied ethics. It is unacceptable that as things stand Philosophy of Science cannot be offered, particularly with the institution of various B.S. degrees in the sciences. The frequency with which PHIL 210, Introduction to Symbolic Logic is taught is also unacceptable. A specialist in Metaphysics and Epistemology would almost certainly be able to offer such a course with more regularity than we can now manage. That is, in each case, having a specialist in metaphysics and epistemology would allow some of the current faculty to more adequately cover areas which are considered standard in most philosophy curriculums but which are luxuries, if possible at all, here at Potsdam. (See Appendix VI for courses taught by faculty).

Based upon student evaluations and our departmental assessment program we have reason to believe that our students are extremely happy with the instruction they receive in the department. They find the faculty accessible and capable. They do consistently note that courses in certain areas are not offered, and that other courses are not offered with enough frequency (see Exit Surveys in Appendix X). This is the consequence of the department's small faculty. We do a disservice to our students by infrequently offering required courses, by our inability to offer regular capstone experiences and to more fully commit to the support of successful interdisciplinary programs. The courses we do offer are rarely anything in addition to what needs to be offered to fulfill our commitments to Gen Ed, other programs and in strained service of our major programs. A number of faculty have identified courses which they would like to develop and offer in order to fill in gaps in programming, or to reach audiences not now serviced, but we do not have the luxury to expand our offerings in any way. Students also regularly note that they appreciate the diversity of teaching styles and methods employed by the department's faculty. Of course, some students prefer one style over another, but the majority seem to appreciate the intellectual diversity the department's faculty represents.

The Undergraduate Program:

Appendix VIII offers a comparison of SUNY Potsdam's Philosophy major with other 4-year

SUNY institutions, including those SUNY institutions which Potsdam identifies as its institutional and aspirational peers. Potsdam identifies SUNY Fredonia, Oneonta and Plattsburgh as institutional peers and SUNY Geneseo and St. Mary's College of Maryland as aspirational peers. It is notable that each of these institutions requires only a 3/3 (9 hours per semester) teaching load from their full-time faculty, and so, in one enormously significant sense, we are not their peer at all. While philosophy departments SUNY-wide appear to carry high S/F ratios, Appendix VIII shows that Potsdam holds its own in this area, consistently coming in in the middle of the pack. It is important to note that these numbers reflect the department's consistent goal to maintain pedagogically sound section sizes. Potsdam shows the greatest amount of WKLD increase over the five-year period these charts reflect, increasing S/F ratios by 17% while remaining effectively stable in Faculty FTE (+6%) and in costs (-3%).

Our Major, Minor and Honors Major programs (Appendix V) could certainly be described as traditional, emphasizing those areas of philosophy which the history of the discipline has tended to emphasize as the most important or significant areas of inquiry. This is reflective of the faculty's training and interests, and of the small size of the faculty. As previously noted, the department has critical needs in the areas of Metaphysics and Epistemology. Filling those needs would allow the current faculty to offer courses to fill some of the gaps in the current curriculum (e.g., a more comprehensive history sequence and more courses in applied ethics). The department is also interested in adding courses in non-western philosophy, but that need is considered secondary to the need to fill the more fundamental gaps in the existing curriculum.

Most distinctive about our programming is the emphasis on faculty/student interaction. The department prides itself on its relationships with students, and seeks to mentor and nurture students throughout the course of their studies. New majors and minors are welcomed to the department with personal meetings with a faculty member, usually the department chair. Advising responsibilities are taken very seriously by the department and seek to go beyond the traditional schedule-building in order to engage each individual student and gauge and address their interests, plans and needs. The department publishes a Course Description booklet each semester [sample included as Appendix IX], giving detailed information about departmental offerings for the upcoming semester, as well as major and minor information and contact information.

The Honors Major in philosophy is also a fairly distinctive element of our programming. Instituted in the Fall of 2002, it was designed primarily to offer students interested in graduate study a more rigorous and extensive program, allowing fewer electives in order to guarantee familiarity with those areas of philosophy students will most likely encounter in graduate programs, and giving the student the opportunity to engage in and defend an extensive research paper. The department has graduated 3 students with honors majors, and has had one or two students pursuing that major each semester since its inception. Alumni report that both the regular and the Honors major have prepared them well for graduate study.

Given the reconfiguration of the curriculum in the School of Education there is now no required contact between teacher education students and the department of philosophy. Some students manage to take an elective course, but in general, and quite unfortunately, the curriculum in the school of education has chosen to ignore the philosophy department's offerings. Before the curriculum changes a few years back the department almost always had a few students majoring in philosophy while pursuing an elementary education certification. We still have a few students pursuing secondary certification who manage to pursue a major or minor in philosophy, but that is getting more difficult as more pedagogy classes are added to the education programs. There is interest in, but no flexibility to offer a philosophy of education course through the department. As things stand, such courses, for what they are worth, are taught within the school of education. The Philosophical Inquiry requirement for General Education for Education students is fulfilled by the Principles of Education course, an entry level education course open only to education students and of somewhat questionable philosophical content. As a result, education students are effectively deprived of the opportunity to experience a course in philosophy taught by an expert in the field. A number of our Alumni are pursuing certification, though they have chosen, often under advisement, to pursue an MST program, rather than an undergraduate certification program.

Since 2002 the department has administered an assessment plan, including an exit survey and exam and portfolios. Portfolios are being developed for students who declared in 2003 and after, but have not yet been integrated into the assessment. A description of the assessment program, as well as the results of the exit survey and exams for the last three years are included in Appendix X . In general, students perform well on the exam and report in their survey answers great satisfaction with

the department, its programs and the faculty. Universally, students report that faculty are accessible outside of the classroom and that they are pleased with their departmental advising. The majority of the faculty utilize student evaluations measures. These measures are chosen by the individual faculty member and range from the Provost's recommended form to self-designed forms which emphasize narrative responses, to purely narrative responses. Student evaluations are utilized by the individual faculty members in redesigning their teaching and curriculum. Our majors have expressed interest in various expansions to our curriculum, including courses in eastern philosophy, a broader offering of applied ethics courses and, most commonly, a desire for more regular offerings of established courses. Some of these courses are enormously popular, yet given staffing limitations can be offered at best once every two years.

The department seeks to create opportunities for student research through a variety of means. The Honors major has allowed for students to have a formal means of pursuing research under the direction of a faculty advisor. Students are encouraged to submit papers to undergraduate philosophy conferences, and the department provides support for their doing so, both in writing and revising those papers as well as financial support for travel. We also arrange for students whose papers have been accepted by a conference to present the paper in a dry run to the Philosophy Forum. Dr. Curry co-published a paper in 1995 with a student, the result of a summer undergraduate research grant obtained through the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.

The department has consciously resisted the creep in required hours infecting many other major programs in Arts and Sciences. The faculty recognizes the importance of breadth of study in the liberal arts, not just as an institutional goal but as desirable for its own majors. Making it more difficult for our majors to take another major in another discipline is to be avoided.

The department offers courses during the Winterim fairly regularly. We are firmly committed to offering classes which are designed specifically for the shortened term. Dr. Little has offered courses in Feminist Sci-Fi and Philosophy, a course in the philosophy of horror and a course on moral responsibility; Dr. Curry has taught a popular course entitled 'Does God Exist?' The department often offers courses over the summer session, though enrollments are low and many members of the faculty will not on principle teach a summer course for less than the full stipend. This has the effect

of leaving students in limbo about whether or not their course will ‘make’ for the summer, and thus likely affects enrollments in the future. The vast majority of students are looking to fulfill General Education requirements with their summer course work, and the lack of a guarantee that courses covering certain designators will in fact be offered no doubt has an effect on the College’s overall summer enrollments.

The department contributes significantly to a wide-variety of interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary projects and programs. A few of the more notable examples:

Women’s Studies: The department offers courses in Feminism and Philosophy (PHIL 372), Philosophical Ideas in Literature (PHIL 382) which has in its last few offerings focused on feminist utopian and dystopian literature.

Environmental Studies: Environmental Ethics (PHIL 330) is required for the Environmental Studies Major and is an elective for the Environmental Science and the Environmental Studies minors.

Criminal Justice: Introduction to Ethics (PHIL 120) and either Philosophy of Justice (PHIL 333) or Philosophy of Law (PHIL 322) are required for the Criminal Justice major; Contemporary Moral Issues (PHIL 314) is an elective for the Criminal Justice Minor

Classical Studies Minor: History of Ancient Philosophy (PHIL 322) is required for the Classical Studies Minor; Selected Philosophers (PHIL 387) and Seminar in Philosophy (PHIL 475) are counted as electives when the content is appropriate. The department has, on the rare occasion when scheduling has allowed, taken part in interdisciplinary learning communities focused on the study of the ancient world, clustering with courses in history, art and archaeology and English literature.

Linguistics Minor: Philosophy of Language (PHIL 355) is a required course for the Language and Linguistics minor. Language and Symbolic Logic (PHIL 217) and Metaphor (PHIL 373) count as electives towards the minor.

FIGS: The department has offered courses in Freshman Interest Groups since the start of the FIG program. Each semester at least one section of Introduction to Philosophy (PHIL 100) is combined in one or more FIGs. Introduction to Logic (PHIL 110) reserves the majority of seats in one of its two sections for Pre-Law Fig students.

Honors Program: The philosophy department has offered courses for the honors program since its inception. Generally one Honors Introduction to Philosophy course is offered each Fall. Dr. DiGiovanna, Dr. Little and Dr. Curry have all offered courses for the program. Dr. DiGiovanna has been named honors professor of the year three times (2000, 2002-03 and 2005-06). In the Spring of 2006 Dr. DiGiovanna also taught the required Scholar as Citizen seminar for the honors program.

General Education: The department of philosophy has been integrally involved in General Education since its earliest development phase. Dr. DiGiovanna was instrumental in structuring the program epistemologically around areas or modes of inquiry. Dr. Curry served as Chair of the General Education Committee from 1996-1998. At least one member of the department has been a member of the committee since the programs' inception in 1989. The department plays a central role in offering the Philosophical Inquiry mode, carrying the largest burden of responsibility for offering seats fulfilling that mode of inquiry (particularly though Introduction to Philosophy (PHIL 100), Contemporary Moral Issues (PHIL 314) and Introduction to Ethics (PHIL 120), though the majority of philosophy courses, upper and lower division carry the designator). As Appendix XI shows, the department has offered 81% of PI sections over the last five years, not including those offered in the School of Education which only Education students can take..

The department has also taken a lead in offering rare upper-division courses which fulfill the Western Civilization mode of inquiry (History of Ancient, Medieval and Modern Philosophy (PHIL 322, 323 and 324) all carry the WC designator. The department took the lead in advocating for, designing and seeing to the implementation of the new Freshman Critical Thinking designator which will be required of all entering students beginning in the Fall of 2006. Some of the department's Introduction to Philosophy (PHIL 100) courses will carry the designator, as will Introduction to Logic (PHIL 110). While pedagogically the ideal would be for the designator to be offered almost

exclusively through true critical thinking courses offered by faculty who are trained to teach the subject matter (professional philosophers), as the Freshman Writing designator is offered almost exclusively through the department of English by faculty trained in the teaching of writing, given the extreme staffing limitations in the department of philosophy that ideal is not practical. On the grounds that it is better for students to have some exposure to the basic tools of critical thinking than to have none, even if that exposure is not pedagogically ideal, the department has been a vocal advocate of the new designator. The department also offers courses which fulfill the Writing Intensive requirement (Existentialism and Philosophy (PHIL 346), Metaphysics (PHIL 365), and Environmental Ethics (PHIL 330). The department has offered Introduction to Philosophy courses which fulfilled the Freshman Writing and the Freshman Speaking requirements in the past, though no such courses have been offered in the last five years.

Cross-Listing Courses: In addition to the substantial support detailed above in support of interdisciplinary, Honors and General Education programs, the department always seeks to add to its offerings, and build other departments' offerings when appropriate by cross-listing courses. Notably, Wittgenstein and Psychology (PHIL 395/PYSC 395), Metaphor (PHIL 373/LITR 317) and Social and Political Philosophy (PHIL 371/POLS 395) are cross-listed with some regularity.

Departmental Politics

Faculty morale ought, perhaps, to be in shambles, and is certainly under constant strain, but is I suspect, in the end, unbreakable. This is due to the full department's commitment to offering quality programming and its incorrigible dedication to our students, regardless of the obstacles placed in the way of attaining their good. Internal relations within the department have been extraordinarily good for at least the last 15 years. The faculty has a single vision of itself as first and foremost committed to excellence in the classroom, but has always tempered this with engagement in matters of importance to the campus community at large, and, when possible, reasonable goals for scholarship. The department has enjoyed firm and consistent leadership by a number of its faculty

throughout its history. The department prides itself on working by consensus to achieve common goals, and with an openness and frankness with each other about important issues affecting each individual, the department and the college.

The burdens and responsibilities of the department, as well as college wide service, suffer from the same vagaries and historical dispositions that most departments on this campus face. The campus has a long tradition of placing enormous service burdens on junior faculty, which almost inevitably leads to a certain withdrawal from service later in their careers. They have, after all, paid their dues. This syndrome affects the philosophy department as well. The more junior faculty tend to be the most involved both departmentally (serving as chair, for example) and college wide. This is not to say that any faculty member is completely withdrawn from service - every faculty member makes important contributions to departmental deliberations and decisions. A more visible discrepancy occurs in college-wide service, though here too it is important to stress that this conclusion is relative. Without question, the more junior members of the department are most involved in college-wide service. However their involvement is far far above and beyond the involvement of the average faculty member on campus, and so they set an unreasonable bar to expect others to reach.

Rewards and privileges, insofar as any exist, are distributed equitably. Compensation, teaching loads and working conditions are in no way, shape or form commensurate with the quality of the faculty, but this failure to properly appreciate, reward and supply opportunities for first rate teaching and scholarship are college, and perhaps even SUNY-wide difficulties, not departmental ones (except insofar as the department is seriously understaffed). If the department were allowed to recruit new faculty there would be no question that first rate faculty would prove difficult to retain. The teaching and service loads can be crushing. Once tenured, it is unlikely that faculty will be able to move on, as by that point they have been left so far behind their peers in terms of scholarship (as a result of those crushing teaching and service burdens) that they would be unlikely to be able to compete in the extremely tight open market for non-entry level positions. The department has done an admirable job in mentoring junior faculty, though these comments are historical ones. Since 1990 two faculty have been hired (Curry, 1990 and Little, 1994), both of whom had clear expectations for what was required for achieving continuing appointment, were reviewed regularly, and both of whom

achieved tenure relatively (and deservedly) effortlessly.

The department has a set of by-laws, formalized in 2003-4, which defines its organizational structure and procedures. Those by-laws are included as Appendix VII. The vast majority of departmental decisions over the last 15 years have been made by consensus. On the rare occasion when voting is necessary a simple majority carries the day, with the Department Chair authorized to determine the issue in the case of a split vote. The department Chair position is based on a recommendation from the department to the Dean of Arts and Sciences and is then passed up the chain of command for the President's final approval. Dr. Tartaglia served as department chair from 1991-2, Dr. Curry from 1992-2004, with a break during 1998-2000, for a leave of absence and a follow-up sabbatical at which time Dr. DiGiovanna served as Chair. The Chair position has been held by Dr. Little since the summer of 2004.

Philosophy Students

The students who study philosophy are some of the best, brightest, and most engaged students on campus. The philosophy department enjoys an excellent reputation for the quality of its students. In the last four years, three of our majors won Chancellor's Awards. Philosophy students are among the most active and involved students on campus. Over the years, two of the last three Editors of the Raquette, the college newspaper, have been philosophy majors, and numerous other students have served as staff writers for the paper. Philosophy majors have been active in SGA as officers (Treasurers, Comptrollers, Vice-Presidents and the current President) as well as representatives, and The Philosophy Forum, is the premier student organization on campus. Of the current philosophy majors, 5 of 25 (20%) are Honors students and 2 of 25 (8%) are Presidential Scholars. Of current Philosophy Minors, 4 of 13 (~30%) are Honors students, numbers that are generally representative of the department historically.

In two of the past three years, DiGiovanna was named Honors Program Professor of the Year, even though he has taught only Introduction to Philosophy courses for that program. DiGiovanna also has won the President's and Chancellor's Awards for Teaching and has been nominated twice for Distinguished Professor.

The number of philosophy majors has leveled off, and given faculty strength, has most likely

peaked in the mid-twenties in the last few years (Appendix I). A small philosophy department will never service scores of majors. The department's number of majors, however is far above the national average. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reported a few years back that .1% or .001 of all college undergraduates were philosophy majors. Given an undergraduate population of approximately 4,000, then, we should expect 4 philosophy majors, not the 20-25 we have consistently maintained. SUNY wide comparative data on numbers of majors is problematic, due to the timing of the snapshot taken and, more significantly, due to the fact that SUNY counts only first majors. At Potsdam 50-75% of our majors are second or third majors. Appendix XV shows the discrepancies between the number of majors reported by SUNY, the numbers reported locally for the Academic Workload Reports and the numbers closest to the actual facts on the ground recorded in the Banner system.

Demographically, our majors tend to be white (75-90%), male (60-80%), traditionally aged college students (20-21 years of age). These characteristics mirror the national trends for students studying philosophy, as inexactly represented in the demographic make-up of PH.D. candidates in philosophy (Table 2, Appendix XII). The department strives to create a nurturing atmosphere for students regardless of age, gender, race or ethnicity. No doubt the demographics of the faculty have some effect upon which students are drawn to the department, but we believe that the intellectual background and interest of the student is more determining of these demographics than is anything more tangible which the department does or does not do in attracting and retaining students.

Tables 4 and 5, Appendix XII shows the academic qualifications and characteristics of philosophy majors, both as a somewhat misleading comparative snapshot from the Fall of 2005 (Table 4) as well as an average over six years (Table 5). A single year snapshot can be misleading given the small number of philosophy majors (a single student's performance can significantly affect the whole. The same point, it should be noted, is true of the demographic information provided above). It is worth noting, however, that the six year average SAT Math & SAT Verbal scores are higher than any other department in the Fall 2005 snapshot. The HS Ranking average is as high as the highest in the snapshot and the HS Average is the second highest, as it also is in the snapshot. The GPA Average would also place in second. Though one is hesitant to draw too precise conclusions from such data, there does seem to be a clear indication that students majoring in philosophy are, on

average, better prepared for academic work, and that, inferring from the average GPA, most go on to live up to their promise.

As noted, the department prides itself for working hard to develop a special rapport with its students. Faculty offices are always open, the department Common Room is much utilized by students and faculty, and the department maintains a number of computers for student use. Perhaps the most significant opportunity for extra-curricular interaction between faculty and students is provided by the Philosophy Forum. The Forum has existed continuously for over 17 years, and is one of the few academically oriented groups on campus to receive SGA funding. The Forum is a student led group which holds weekly meetings at which issues of philosophical and general academic interest are discussed. The Forum sponsors informal discussions, guest speakers from both within and without the campus community, guest artists, college-wide debates, and trips to other campuses to hear other speakers and to participate in undergraduate philosophy conferences. The Forum scheduling is developed, maintained and implemented solely by its elected student leaders, with only logistical support from the faculty advisor and other departmental faculty. The majority of the department faculty are in attendance at any given Forum event, and the interactions between students and faculty at such events are a model for philosophical discourse. Visiting faculty and speakers are uniformly impressed by the student interaction at these events.

The Forum also helps to sponsor college-wide events: It has brought the Brooklyn Theatre Company to campus three times to perform original philosophically themed plays; its members were integral in organizing the Presidential Debate Series under Dr. Fallon's sponsorship in 2003, 04 and 05; it helped to sponsor last year's visit by Professor Marc Behr, an award-winning South African Novelist.

The Forum's sponsorship of an annual trip to an undergraduate philosophy conference has further deepened faculty/student bonds, as well as giving our students an opportunity to showcase their philosophical talent and to compare their educational experience with the experiences of students from across the nation. This last year two students presented papers, and one student commented on a paper, for which she received an award for one of the best discussion leaders at the conference. The department also sponsors an active chapter of Phi Sigma Tau, the International Honors Society for Philosophy. Phi Sigma Tau first incorporated as a National Honor Society in October, 1955, after

25 years as a Regional Society. It now includes over 200 chapters in several countries. SUNY Potsdam's New York Lambda chapter was established in 1990, and currently has 46 members. Eligibility for Phi Sigma Tau membership is rigorous, requiring that students have completed three college semesters; rank in the top 35% of their class (which we interpret as an 3.0 cumulative GPA); and have completed at least two philosophy courses, with an average grade of 3.5 in all philosophy courses. We offer membership only to philosophy majors. The department is, to the best of our knowledge, unique insofar as it pays all students' membership dues from our OTPS. Phi Sigma Tau members are very active in the Forum, and other than the yearly initiation ceremony, does not distinguish between Forum activities and Phi Sigma Tau activities.

The Philosophy Department holds students to be the primary justification for its continued existence, and the success of the Forum is tangible evidence of the success it has had in building long-lasting and meaningful relationships with its students.

Resources and Facilities

Classroom facilities utilized by the philosophy department are adequate, but deteriorating. There is little rhyme or reason to which classrooms are assigned (certainly not governed by geographical centrality to the department). Additionally, there is a dearth of appropriate rooms available for faculty who try to incorporate technology into their teaching, and a dearth of rooms available which comfortably house the numbers of students typically enrolled in our lower-level courses (a pedagogically unsound 40-50). We often must choose between a room too small for our purposes, or lacking technology, or one which is a lecture hall, leaving vast open spaces and which are not designed for nor conducive to the kind of active participation expected and encouraged in the vast majority of philosophy courses. Faculty offices are adequate, though also in a state of deterioration. The furniture in the offices is commonly 30+ years old and often patched together, or in the case of bookcases, hand built, often by the faculty member themselves. The floors, walls, ceilings and windows have been untouched since they were constructed in the 1960's. New windows are scheduled to be installed in the Summer of 2006, but otherwise the physical space will remain

unrenovated.

The department is fortunate to have been allocated a space for a Common Room/Seminar Room (Morey 202) and, less fortunately, a small cubby in which faculty mailboxes, the departmental printer and three computers for use by student are located (Morey 210 — this rather sad little space was once the home of a part-time clerical worker dedicated to the department). The Common Room is much used, by students and faculty as a lounge, for study sessions, for seminar classes and by the Philosophy Forum, as its primary meeting space. The room houses the departmental library, acquired from emeritus faculty donations and a few reference books purchased with SGA allocations to the Forum. The room also contains a small kitchen facility: a microwave, toaster oven, coffee maker and refrigerator, as well as a Mac Kiosk (dedicated web-portal) for use by students and faculty. The department has recently excavated funding sufficient to purchase a projector and laptop which will enable us to use the Common Room as a ‘smart’ classroom. This should expand our ability to utilize technology in our seminar classes, and in support of Forum events. The Common Room space is well-lived and much used, placed centrally amongst faculty offices, and contributes greatly to the sense of community among students and faculty.

The library holdings in philosophy are woefully inadequate. Some progress has been made to make available journal resources in electronic format, and the Interlibrary Loan program works well. Notably, the department applied for and was awarded by the library funds to purchase an annual subscription to POIESIS, an online source for journals in philosophy, and for the 2nd edition of the Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy. But the library’s physical holdings are outdated and poor, making it difficult for students to find quality secondary sources to support their research. The library administration and staff are generally helpful and dedicated, but can only do so much to build holdings as long as the institution is not committed to building an appropriate library. Monograph holdings and acquisitions have decreased and deteriorated as the library is allocated fewer funds while book costs rise. There have also been some issues about where primary decision-making should lie concerning which resources ought to be acquired. Some departmental requests have been questioned in ways which raise issues about the role disciplinary expertise should play in determining which resources should be acquired. Following some discussion with library staff we are hopeful that these issues have been resolved.

The clerical support for the department has been inadequate for well over 15 years. The department currently shares one full-time clerical worker with the department of English, the largest department in the school of Arts and Sciences (30+ faculty, including adjuncts). That, combined with the geographical distance of the department from the clerical staff translates into the philosophy department chair and faculty doing their own clerical work as often as not. The department does not even receive a dedicated student worker, though the department of English has been generous in sharing their student workers with the philosophy department in the past. Recent events have only aggravated the situation as the English/Philosophy secretary has been on leave over the last two years and the office has seen a flurry of temporary workers. The permanent secretary has now resigned, and we expect to fill the position permanently in the Summer of 2006. This will not solve the underlying structural difficulty, however. Very recently it appears that these issues might finally be addressed. Since the Office of International Education is moving to a new home there is movement towards having the current secretary of Modern Languages (who currently also serves the Office of International Education) become the Modern Languages and Philosophy Departments' secretary. This would place clerical support in geographical proximity to the Philosophy department and will also provide more adequate clerical support, since the department of Modern Languages is significantly smaller than the English department. We are hopeful that this reorganization will occur prior to the start of the Fall 2006 semester.

The departmental OTPS budget has proven adequate for the teaching requirements of the department. Some departmental monies are available for faculty travel, but this has been hit or miss over the years. OTPS funds have often been used to help support student travel to conferences. As Appendix XIII shows, the department's OTPS budget has increased substantially over the last five years, due in large part to the Dean of Arts and Sciences restructuring of the formula by which OTPS monies are allocated to departments, and to his lobbying the upper administration for better departmental funding. As costs of xeroxing and supplies increase there will need to be a corresponding increase in OTPS allocations. As the faculty demographic changes over the next 5-10 years the demands on the OTPS budget will also change accordingly.

Given that the OTPS budget is dedicated almost solely to the teaching requirements of the department, financial support for faculty research, particularly travel, is limited to what can be

scrounged from other campus offices (e.g., the Dean of A&S and the Provost's office, primarily). However the single greatest impediments to increased faculty research are the smothering teaching loads, (4 courses, at least three preparations, and an average of 120-160 students per semester being the norm) combined with our faculty's admirable dedication to the education of their students. To teach such a load well, and to provide the kinds of extra-classroom support dictated by teaching well, is alone a full-time job. In addition the department supports a flourishing extra-curricular program in the Philosophy Forum, is one of the most productive departments in A&S in terms of college service, and takes its advising responsibilities quite seriously. That faculty engage in and complete any scholarly work at all is extraordinary given these conditions. Yet they do produce a trickle of work, and there are always ongoing research projects engaged in by each member of the full-time faculty.

The Department has benefitted from the computer life-cycle program, receiving new computers in 2002 and 2005. Since the discipline of philosophy is not heavily dependent on technology, the hardware received through this program has proven more than sufficient for our needs. Technical support has been good, though stretched somewhat thin. The department maintains a bank of three full-use computers (Morey 210) and one internet-dedicated server (Morey 202) for use by our majors.

General Conclusions

The Department of Philosophy at SUNY Potsdam displays numerous strengths:

- A dedicated veteran faculty devoted to teaching excellence
- A commitment to interdisciplinary programming and to General Education
- Exemplary activity in the life and governance of the College
- A talented and involved student body
- A devotion to student life both in and out of the classroom

The department also faces numerous challenges:

- A long-standing problem of under-staffing
- Increased demands for contributions to interdisciplinary and General Education courses

- Inadequate clerical support (potentially addressed)
- Inadequate support for scholarship
- Increasing demands upon faculty time and energy not counterbalanced by increased clerical support or faculty lines

The department has struggled with and flourished in spite of these challenges for many years, even as demands on the department have increased. It has done so by placing greater and greater burdens on individual faculty to fill in where needed for the good of its programs and students. The department believes that it is reaching a breaking point, however, where demands for more can quite simply not be met. The department will begin in the Fall of 2006 to cut back on course enrollment caps (from 40 to 35 for Introductory courses and from 35 to 30 for Upper Division courses) and be more diligent in maintaining those caps, since the administration has proven consistently over many years that even our proven record of massively exceeding contracted FTE's and student/faculty ratios plays no role in determining the allocation of faculty lines to the department. Decreasing the caps on our courses would also bring us more in line with the caps set in other departments in Arts and Sciences. The department believes that our major programs have begun to suffer from the high caps we have been maintaining for many years, from the pressures on our faculty to teach outside of their areas of competence and from the other increasing curricular demands placed on the department. We have reached the conclusion that if the staffing situation doesn't improve we will be forced to draw back from some of our interdisciplinary and General Education commitments in order to guarantee first-rate programming for our majors. This is an unfortunate state of affairs, particularly as the College seeks to increase enrollments while also strengthening its academic profile. While philosophy departments in small liberal arts colleges never carry large numbers of majors, there is a direct correlation between the strength of the Liberal Arts at an institution and a recognition by that institution, expressed in faculty lines, of the central role that philosophy plays in the liberal arts. (Cf. SUNY Geneseo, The College of William and Mary, both public liberal arts colleges with well-staffed departments of philosophy).

In sum, the department of philosophy has a long history of extraordinary service to its students, to teaching excellence and commitment to the college community but is severely understaffed and overstretched. We have no doubt that these traditions of excellence would not only

be maintained, but would be strengthened by the addition of faculty lines and other institutional support for one of the College's largely unrecognized and underappreciated centers of excellence.

Primary Authorship

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Appendix I

Department Profile Trends Credit Hour Production, Majors, Minors and Staffing, 2000-2005

Department Profile Trends
for

Philosophy

		2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Fall Term	Credits Generated:					
	Lower Division	981	858	792	1056	909
	Upper Division	265	335	241	368	405
	Graduate Level					
	Total	1246	1193	1033	1424	1314
	Student FTE Generated:	83.07	79.53	68.87	94.93	87.60
	Faculty FTE:					
	Contracted	3.75	3.75	2.75	3.75	4.00
	Release Time	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25
	Majors:					
	1st Major	14	10	11	11	12
	2nd Major	3	6	6	11	10
	Graduate					
Minors:	5	9	6	8	13	
Student/Faculty Ratio:	22.15	21.21	25.04	25.32	21.90	

		2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Spring Term	Credits Generated:					
	Lower Division	639	480	624	768	564
	Upper Division	675	743	939	768	639
	Graduate Level					
	Total	1314	1223	1563	1536	1203
	Student FTE Generated:	87.60	81.53	104.20	102.40	80.20
	Faculty FTE:					
	Contracted	4.25	2.75	3.75	4.00	3.75
	Release Time	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.25	0.75
	Majors:					
	1st Major	14	17	10	12	11
	2nd Major	4	9	6	12	13
	Graduate					
Minors:	8	7	11	8	11	
Student/Faculty Ratio:	20.61	29.65	27.79	25.60	21.39	

	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Degrees	4	6	4	3	

Credit Hour Production, Majors, Minors, and Staffing, 2000-2005												
	2000-2001		2001-2002		2002-2003		2003-2004		2004-2005		Six Year Change	
	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
Philosophy Department												
Majors	17	16	17	18	16	16	17	16	22	24	29%	50%
Minors	4	4	5	8	9	7	6	11	8	8	100%	100%
Credit Hours, LD	987	567	981	639	858	480	792	624	1056	768	7%	35%
Credit Hours, UD	215	761	265	675	335	743	241	939	368	768	71%	1%
Total Credit Hours	1202	1328	1246	1314	1193	1223	1033	1563	1424	1536	18%	16%
Philosophy Faculty FTE	3.75	3.75	3.75	4.25	3.75	2.75	2.75	3.75	3.75	4	0%	7%
Student/Faculty Ratio	21.37	23.61	22.15	20.61	21.21	29.65	25.04	27.79	25.32	25.60	18%	8%
Philosophy Degrees		7		4		6		4				
A & S, All Departments												
All A&S Majors	2043	2145	2124	2036	1893	1929	1971	1949	1763	1800	-12%	-12%
A&S Credit Hours, LD	24779	24021	24800	21001	25949	20211	25393	19885	25589	20174	3%	-2%
A&S Credit Hours, UD	14185	15764	14315	15845	14380	15024	14361	16196	14229	15609	0%	-4%
Total A&S (inc. grad)	39145	37227	39462	37270	40724	35740	40125	36577	40209	36302	3%	-2%
A&S Faculty FTE	121.82	123.37	121.14	128.84	133.59	128.76	132.65	132.87	133.31	129.42	9%	5%
A&S Student/Faculty	21.45	20.61	19.84	19.34	20.37	18.57	20.21	18.41	20.16	18.77	-6%	-7%
A&S Degrees	514	550		523		534		507				
Philosophy as a % of A&S												
Majors	0.85%	0.75%	0.80%	0.88%	0.85%	1.35%	0.86%	0.82%	1.25%	1.33%	47.32%	78.75%
Credit Hours, LD	4.11%	2.69%	3.96%	3.04%	3.31%	2.37%	3.12%	3.14%	4.13%	3.81%	0.43%	41.71%
Credit Hours, UD	1.48%	4.83%	1.85%	4.26%	2.33%	4.95%	1.68%	5.80%	2.59%	4.92%	74.29%	1.92%
Total Credit Hours	3.10%	3.57%	3.16%	3.53%	2.93%	3.42%	2.57%	4.27%	3.54%	4.23%	14.29%	18.61%
Faculty FTE	2.98%	3.10%	2.82%	3.30%	2.81%	2.14%	2.07%	2.82%	2.81%	3.09%	-5.70%	-0.16%
Student/Faculty Ratio	104%	115%	112%	107%	104%	160%	124%	151%	126%	136%	21.11%	18.66%
Degrees		1.27%		0.76%		1.12%		0.79%				