

Department of Philosophy

Strategic Plan, May 2008

The Philosophy Department is committed to providing excellent teaching and mentoring, as well as a challenging and exciting set of courses and overall intellectual environment, at both undergraduate and graduate levels. We believe, in light of our recent External Review, that we are largely succeeding in these respects. We will continue to offer courses that engage students with important new issues (e.g. environmental ethics, or multiculturalism) as well as with those that are of perennial interest (e.g. the nature of mind, or the nature of causality). And we will continue to engage in forms of research and to offer courses that have a significant interdisciplinary component.

The Department is also committed to improving its international and national standing. It has for a number of years been ranked by faculty peers in the mid-20s amongst graduate programs in the US (#27 in the 2006 *Philosophical Gourmet Report*; #37 in the world), although by some measures we rank significantly higher. (We rank #16 in the US by mean Hirsch-number, which is a measure of scholarly impact that combines both quality and quantity. We rank #19 by median Hirsch-number. And on a measure that ranks programs by the mean Hirsch-numbers of just the top seven faculty members, we rank #7 in the US.) We believe that with targeted investment in a couple of new senior positions, together with some strong junior hires, we have the potential to move into the mid-teens (as measured by the opinions of our peers).

The Department's existing areas of strength are: Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of Mind and Cognitive Science, Value Theory (including Aesthetics as well as Ethics and Political Philosophy), and Logic and Language. We propose to continue building on these strengths, provided that we can cover our curriculum at the undergraduate level while providing a diverse enough training for our graduate students. We are also sensitive to the dangers inherent in a department too many of whose members are focused on interdisciplinary work, however, and we expect our future hires to build towards the center of the department. (This wouldn't necessarily exclude someone with interdisciplinary credentials, but such a person should at least have interests that overlap with a number of others in the department, as well as a solid footing in core philosophical issues.) These commitments need to be qualified, however. Since it is hard to foresee all eventualities, we would need to be free to respond differently in the light of any possible future retirements and/or resignations. Nor would we wish to close off the possibility of opportunity-hires of senior faculty who work outside of our existing areas of strength, around whom we could then build.

The Department participates in an interdisciplinary graduate program run jointly with the Department of Government and the School of Public Policy, *The Committee for Philosophy, Politics, and Public Policy* (CP4). Professors Kerstein, Moller, and Morris are active in this program (and Professor Dwyer is likely to be so when she arrives), and our commitment to it will continue. The existence of the CP4 program plays an important role in attracting graduate students, even if they don't always formally participate in it (but perhaps just take the year-long proseminar). Together with our collaborating partners we will be undertaking a review of the detailed structure of the program to make improvements, and to align it better with the University's new Strategic Plan.

The Department also houses a separate PhD program in philosophy of science, *The Committee for Philosophy and the Sciences* (CPaS). Professors Bub, Carruthers, Darden, Frisch, Pietroski, Rey, and Stairs are active in this program. Following a recent review, however, involving close study of the most successful such programs elsewhere (notably UC Irvine), we have been led to believe that our efforts in the field should be significantly refocused. Increasingly, work in logic and philosophical logic is being integrated with work in the philosophy of science. This shift is now reflected in the recognition of "logic and philosophy of science" as a new interdisciplinary grouping, combining philosophy of science—including philosophy of the special sciences and social choice theory (decision theory/game theory)—with formal epistemology, i.e., formal approaches to reasoning about knowledge, uncertainty, and action. The *Philosophical Gourmet Report* has a summary category "philosophy of the sciences and mathematics" that covers this area, with the Department of Logic and Philosophy of Science at the University of California, Irvine ranked first among graduate programs world-wide. (The University of Maryland is currently ranked #19 in the world, together with the London School of Economics, University of California at San Diego, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and the University of Sydney.)

We believe that there is an opportunity here to be exploited. Although we are already strong in this broad area our visibility is lower than it should be, and we also have the potential to become a great deal stronger. What we propose is to replace CPaS with a program in *Logic and Philosophy of Science*, adding Professors Eaker, Horty, and Morreau (as well as the impending new joint appointment with Linguistics) to the faculty mentioned above. This would link together two wings of the Department that have hitherto been regarded as separate, and if properly advertised should significantly raise our profile.

This new initiative would be greatly enhanced by the appointment of a new faculty member in Formal Epistemology, however (especially if the appointment were made at senior level). Such a person would in many respects be the "glue" that holds the new program together. In addition, such an appointment would strengthen us in Philosophical Logic while better enabling us to

provide graduate (and undergraduate) courses in Epistemology, thus fulfilling one of the suggestions contained in our recent External Review. While we have some excellent people in Philosophical Logic, we don't have the critical mass necessary for a high ranking in the area, nor to attract graduate students. But a new appointment combined with the move of the *Journal of Philosophical Logic* to the Department (to be edited by Professor Horty) should be sufficient to transform the situation. And if the new program in *Logic and Philosophy of Science* proves to be a success, one might envisage in future appointing someone who does game theory or decision theory, thus linking also to the political/social wing of the Department.

In addition to the new initiative described above, the Department is hopeful of the success of the University's ambitious new Strategic Plan, and is eager to contribute to the University's strategic priorities where appropriate (especially when doing so will at the same time advance the standing of the Department). We are already in a position to participate in the proposed new initiative in *Language, Culture, and Cognition*, for example, as well as to the strengthening of the Cognitive Science element of NACS. There are possibilities for us to participate even more fully in these initiatives with targeted new appointments (especially in the core area of Philosophy of Mind, where we are already very strong but have the potential to be in the first rank).

Moreover, the Department's proposal for a new *Center for Philosophy, Biology, and Society* has the potential to contribute significantly to the University's proposed initiatives in *Health*. With Professor Dwyer's arrival in the department we might have the ideal person to head up such a Center, and we already have a number of faculty who are developing interests in this area (notably Professors Darden, Kerstein, and Moller). But the extent of our other commitments means that we would be unable to mount the necessary new courses and activities without help from the University. As detailed in our original proposal, the success of the proposed Center would depend upon two targeted new appointments. One should be someone with expertise in both ethical theory and bioethics, and the other should be someone who does both philosophy of biology and bioethics. This would enable us to reinforce existing areas of strength in normative ethics and philosophy of science while also contributing to the University's initiative in Health. And when combined with the expertise that already exists on campus in the *Institute for Philosophy and Public Policy*, the new Center could greatly enhance our standing in the area, as well as greatly strengthening the attractiveness of the CP4 program.

Approved by the Faculty
05/21/08