**Comments from the Assessment Committee (August, 2009): Philosophy**

**Assessment Committee Contact Person: Cheryl Blackwell**

**Plan also reviewed by: Drew Dunham and Dean McCurdy**

General Suggestions (sent to all Departments/Programs)

In general, there were a few themes that the Assessment Committee noticed. First, it is most helpful when the progression from Step 2 to Step 3 and Step 3 to Step 4 are clear. That is, after you have articulated your learning goals, the clearest proposals are explicit in how the courses/experiences in Step 3 directly support the learning goals. And Step 4 should take full advantage of all of the places in Step 3 where data might be collected. Second, make strategic use of both direct and indirect measures, and think about whether data can be collected at the beginning, during the program of study, and at the end. This gives a richer sense of where and when your work contributes strongly to learning goals and where improvements might be made. Third, make your plan manageable! All data need not be collected annually; some can be done every other year. And you may choose not to measure for all of your learning goals right now. Make claims that you can (a) intellectually, ethically stand behind and (b) find resources to measure.

**Specific comments on your plan**

**Step 1 (Program Mission)**

Comments: Might want to consider combining, tightening up a few sentences...might help with the flow

Example: Philosophy critically examines the concepts and basic assumptions we have developed to help us understand the world and human relationships.

Example: Our philosophy courses cultivate an analysis of arguments, clear and precise expression of one's views (particularly in writing) and the ability to comprehend complex thought systems.

**Step 2 (List goals/outcomes)**

Comments: Objectives should be student-focused

1. Students will be able to analyze the complexity of an issue by identifying the possible multiple viewpoints inherent in an issue.

2. Students will be able to construct arguments inherent in each of these viewpoints--i.e. identify implicit or explicit premises and generate conclusions from these premises.

**Step 3 (Identify Program Components)**

Comments: Would be useful to map (connect) the department's learning/outcomes in each course....

Examples:  Ethics and Public Policy (Phil  304) demonstrates/includes outcomes 1,2,3,4

                Modern Philosophy (Phil 212) demonstrates/includes learning outcome 2,3,5

**Step 4** (Select methods/data sources and instruments)

 Comments: You have direct and indirect evidence…that’s good.  In your 2004-2005 Assessment Report you wrote that you planned to work on a subset of your goals/outcomes each year…..that’s the only sane way to do it. In that report, you listed the specific instruments that make up your portfolio (Assessment Instrument, Analytical Essay, Portfolio Research Paper, and Self-Assessment) and noted which goals/outcomes the measure.  You also mentioned that you have not been particularly pleased with the Assessment Instrument.  Maybe you could use the questions from that instrument and assess them  in courses where those outcomes are emphasized or in upper level courses where students' mastery of a specific outcome(s) is assumed.  Finally, when your students perform their self-assessment, do they simply check-off items on a questionnaire or are they asked to provide evidence and cite examples from specific courses, readings, assignments, etc. to support their claims.

**Next Steps:**

In coordination with your Assessment Committee reviewers and their feedback, please observe the following deadlines for your assessment cycle:

·       September 15: Revisions to Steps 1-4 due (if necessary)

·       October 1: Completion of Steps 5 & 6 using preliminary data

·       November 2: Final Fall 2009 plans due