**Philosophy Department Assessment Plans for Spring 2010**

Description of the Current Assessment Plan

Each year for the past few years the Philosophy Department has used student portfolios of our graduating seniors to collect evidence of student achievement related to the learning objectives in our assessment plan. These student portfolios provide data from two different sources: 1) our assessment instrument; 2) the student’s analytical essay.

The *assessment instrument* uses procedures such as 1) problem analysis to measure whether our students have developed the skills necessary to conduct a logical analysis; 2) assessment questions to measure whether our students have developed a sense of intellectual heritage, including familiarity with major philosophers and their contributions to the field; and 3) self-assessment questions to measure whether our students have developed the ability to conduct logical analysis, conceptual analysis, and philosophical research with confidence.

The portfolio *analytic essay* is used to measure our students’ ability to conduct research in the field – i.e., to approach problems philosophically and conduct philosophical analysis in research papers.

Assessment Plans for Spring 2010

The Philosophy Department is offering the following courses this spring: Phil 101 Introduction to Philosophy; Phil 202 Social Philosophy; Phil 301 Environmental Ethics; Phil 302 Leadership Ethics; Phil 315 Knowledge, Truth and Reason; and Phil 380 Aristotle: A Western Foundation.

*Methods/data sources and instruments for assessment of Philosophy Senior Majors:*

**In relation to each of these courses**, the faculty member responsible for the course will use student portfolios of our **senior majors** to collect evidence of student achievement related to the learning objectives in our assessment plan. These student portfolios will provide data from the two sources described above: 1) our assessment instrument; 2) the student’s analytical essay.

As regards 1) above, each faculty member will devise a course-specific assessment instrument using at least two of the three procedures (problem analysis, assessment questions, and self-assessment questions) described above. An in-class exam assigned as work for the course can be used as an assessment instrument for that course if it meets the above description.

As regards 2) above, each faculty member will collect a philosophical research paper which will measure the student’s ability to approach problems philosophically and conduct philosophical analysis. A paper assigned as work for the course can be used as the student’s analytical essay if it meets the above description.

While the department already keeps track informally of our graduates, we are interested in partnering with the Office of Career Development to keep track of them and gather evidence of our effectiveness via their post-graduate performance in a more formal way. We hope to have them regularly share information with the department about where our graduates go after the first 6 months. This gives us a way of verifying where our graduates go and gives us valuable information for follow-up emails. We plan to devise a brief questionnaire that addresses the long-term value of our program.

*When the assessment will be conducted:*

Each faculty member in the department will carry out the assessment in her/his course towards the end of the spring semester of 2010, anytime between the last 2 weeks of classes and the day before commencement. Choosing such a time-frame enables students to acquire in-depth understanding of the subject-matter on which they will be assessed on the one hand while being sensitive to their other competing commitments on the other.

*Analysis of and response to the assessment data:*

Each faculty member will collect the data in relation to her/his individual course at the end of the spring semester of 2010. The department will meet as a whole the following semester to discuss the assessment data from the previous semester. This will allow us to do the following: look at strengths identified and discuss how these can be incorporated into all our courses; look at weaknesses/concerns raised and discuss how these can be avoided in all our courses. In the following semester, steps will be taken by individual faculty members to revise their courses by intentionally retaining or incorporating strengths and avoiding weaknesses, if any. Student anonymity will be preserved throughout the process.

*Specific Student Outcomes to be assessed:*

Student Outcome 1: Students will be able to analyze the complexity of an issue by identifying possible multiple viewpoints inherent in the issue. (Outcome 1 will be assessed in relation to all of the spring courses listed above.)

Student Outcome 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. (Outcome 2 will be assessed in relation to all of the spring courses listed above.)

Student Outcome 3: Students will be able to examine merits and demerits of these arguments and viewpoints by examining amongst other things their validity, soundness, etc. (Outcome 3 will be assessed in relation to all of the spring courses listed above.)

Student Outcome 4: Students will be able to clearly and precisely express their views in writing. (Outcome 4 will be assessed in relation to all of the spring courses listed above.)

Student Outcome 5: Students will be able to gain familiarity with major philosophers and their contributions to the field. (Outcome 5 will be assessed in relation to all of the spring courses listed above.)