

VI: Looking Ahead

1. Applying to Ph.D. Programs

If you would like to pursue a career in college or university teaching, you should plan on earning a Ph.D. And because the search for such jobs is so hotly competitive, it is important to go to the very best program to which you can gain admission. One good way to think about the available programs is to consult The Leiter Report, also known as The Philosophical Gourmet. This is an elaborate website maintained by Brian Leiter from the University of Texas-Austin. It ranks the top 50 Ph.D. programs and the top 10 M.A. programs in the country and discusses them in a delightfully gossipy way. The web address is: www.philosophicalgourmet.com/

The Philosophical Gourmet is a good way to get an initial sense of the territory. You should also consult with your professors here, especially those from whom you'll be requesting letters of recommendation. Last year Eric Wiland led a special session intended to help grad students think about pursuit of the Ph.D., and we intend to make this an annual event.

In addition to seeking a quality program with a good record of job placement for its graduates, you will also want to apply to programs that feature good philosophers in your areas of interest. And of course, some of you will have geographical interests or constraints to honor as well. All of these factors must be balanced against a realistic assessment of your record and likelihood of acceptance. Faculty members who know your work should be able to give you objective and helpful advice about these matters.

Preparing a successful application is time consuming. Brit counsels that most significant factors should be ranked in the following order::

- (1) GREs
- (2) Writing sample
- (3) Letters of reference
- (4) GPA
- (5) Rank of current and previously attended programs in philosophy
- (6) Conference presentation/publication in refereed journals

The Philosophical Gourmet also has a very helpful section entitled "Applying to Graduate School." Be sure to check it out at:

<http://www.philosophicalgourmet.com/applyingto.htm>

Finally, determine the relevant deadlines and give yourself ample time to write a compelling personal statement and to work up/rewrite an effective writing sample.

2. The GREs

Although we ended up waiving the GREs as an entrance requirement for our program, they are an extremely important component of the application package for Ph.D. programs. Be sure to take this requirement seriously. Spend the time – and money!! – needed to adequately prepare for the test.

3. Adjunct work in and around St. Louis

All campuses of the St. Louis Community College system as well as St. Charles Community College require that instructors have an M.A. in hand. Thus you will not be eligible even for part-time (i.e., adjunct) work within the system until you have earned

your UMSL M.A. When you have that degree in hand, you can certainly contact the philosophy departments at all the nearby community colleges and inquire about available courses. Adjunct work will probably be offered at exploitive rates, but it is a good way to earn a bit of money and beef up your resume while seeing whether you actually enjoy teaching philosophy.