

**5-Year Report  
Campus Review Committee  
Philosophy Department  
UM-St. Louis**

Faculty Committee Members:	Sylvia Cook, Rick Rosenfeld, & George Taylor (Chair)
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## **Introduction**

This Committee Report will follow the format of the Report of the Outside Reviewer. It was suggested that we use Dr. Rainbolt's document to offer our thoughts on topics he raised. His Report is organized nicely, well written and provides a summary of many of the issues that the Committee discussed. Indeed, we agree with the bulk of his thoughts, concerns and suggestions. Committee members did not agree with each other on every issue. Those are noted where appropriate.

## **1. Effectiveness**

### *A. Research*

The Committee fully agrees with the depiction of the research quantity and quality of the Philosophy Department. They are, indeed, "extremely effective researchers." Although we have only cursory familiarity with the Leiter Report, it seems to be important to maintain its current high ratings to continue attracting high quality, new faculty.

It was explained to us that there is a strong correlation between Leiter rankings and numbers of graduate applicants. We accept that as factual. However, at least one committee member noted that there are other factors that may explain the very high numbers of applicants to Georgia State. For example, GSU admits 20 MA students per year, most of whom receive funding. Also, one of the tracks for their graduate students is Legal and Political Philosophy, likely a popular field for students who will have careers outside of philosophy proper.

We have concerns about the diminished size of the faculty in the department. It was not clear to one committee member the point of a critical mass, but we all agreed that 6 tenure track faculty is too few. It is important for the department to be allowed to replace as soon as possible at least 2 of the 3 recently lost tenure track faculty lines. It is imperative to replace one

position immediately or risk loss of the department's current Leiter Report rank.

### *B. Teaching*

We are not as qualified as Dr. Rainbolt to assess the quality and standards of the philosophy curriculum, but we believe it is as solid as he has indicated. Having a common UMSL student evaluation instrument may be helpful, and one is being developed to be in place next year. However, departments have different and specific goals for their graduate students. A more idiosyncratic instrument may be more useful for graduate classes.

In mentioning the interdisciplinary links, other important partnering should be mentioned, for example, with the behavior neuroscience division in psychology and with the new Neuroscience Certificate.

Again, Dr. Rainbolt has more expertise in an expected size of undergraduate philosophy majors, and we accept that 30-40 majors seem low. We agree with him that the department should set its sights on increasing their majors. Double majors would appear to be an excellent route to that goal, and we concur that the department should publicize it widely.

The problem of low stipends for graduate students is campus-wide. Training in teaching, however, is a campus strength. We have a Center for Teaching & Learning and graduate students can earn a Certificate in University Teaching. Philosophy students should be encouraged to consider that certificate option.

### *C. Service*

We agree with Dr. Rainbolt's depiction of the small size of the faculty requiring a high service load, and that they do a good job. Several philosophy faculty members have high visibility on campus committees.

## **2. National Trends, Program and Future Goals**

We have no quarrels with Dr. Rainbolt's depiction of trends in philosophy and suggestions to maximize the strengths of the UMSL philosophy department.

## **3. Department Selected for Comparative Purposes**

We agree with the Dr. Rainbolt that Georgia State is a reasonable choice for comparisons with UMSL. However, there are significant differences that should be considered when comparing GSU and UMSL departments. One important difference is simply population. GSU is double our enrollment as

the population of Atlanta has increased to 6 million while greater St. Louis has remained constant.

Almost all state supported universities are undergoing contraction. UMSL's current budget outlook limits the options for marked increases in faculty numbers and graduate support for many of our departments. Salary reductions seem to have fueled some of the growth and success of Georgia State.

The result of all these factors is that GSU sets a high bar to emulate for conditions that are unlike those in St. Louis and UMSL. It is always good to shoot high, but failing to attain lofty goals should not be taken as departmental failures.

#### **4. Recommendations**

##### *A. Develop and Implement a 5 Yr Strategic*

We support the recommendations of Dr. Rainbolt to build on the current faculty research strengths rather than trying to cover all areas of philosophy. It is a sound strategic plan for all departments to acknowledge that even a small department that fits together in personality, research interests and goals is stronger than a large, disjoint department. Still, one committee member was wary of the advice given by Dr. Rainbolt for what those specialty areas should be.

The recommendations for curricular improvements also receive our strong support. The goal of 100 majors is ambitious but the UMSL department can take lessons from GSU on the means to that goal. For example, it seems that GSU removed obstacles to majoring in philosophy and made it accessible to more students than to only the best and brightest on campus.

##### *B. Implement the Following Tactical Suggestions*

a. Committee members accept the reality of other departments being in desperate needs for filling lost faculty lines. However, we strongly support prompt replacement of one of the tenure track positions in addition to the NTT hires recently approved for philosophy, and recommend that another tenure track faculty member be hired as soon as possible.

b. There is no doubt of the wisdom of maintaining an up-to-date website. Details to provide on the website, such as precise numbers on graduate time, GRE scores of applicants and so forth may be helpful in attracting students but also may discourage non-traditional applicants. The department should consider the pros and cons and decide the information to publicize.

c. Having additional quantitative data on which to select among graduate applicants is always desirable. Given the weak predictor value of the GRE on

graduate success, one can understand questioning requiring students to pay the \$100+ to take the GRE. This particularly may be relevant to a department whose graduate students often come from their undergrad program, students who are of known excellence.

d. Systematic evaluation of all courses should be required, as Dr. Rainbolt suggested.

e. Preparing philosophy graduate students to teach is certainly to be commended. As noted earlier, there is a mechanism on campus to provide that training, including issuance of a teaching certificate.

f. & g. Issues raised in these items are to provide greater consistency and structure to the department's grading and teaching. An equally compelling case can be made to allow less structure that, while ensuring basic material is covered, gives the instructors freedom that fit their own styles and strengths.

h. Sparing use of adjuncts is a commendable goal for all departments. It was our understanding that adjuncts are often recent graduates of the MA program. Eliminating them seems contrary to the earlier stated goal of providing greater teaching opportunities for their students.

i. All the suggestions here are excellent ideas for the department to consider.