

# Assessment of Student Learning in the Philosophy Major Academic Year 2013-2014 Formal Report (Due July 1, 2014)

**\*\*\*This version does not include student names and is intended for public use.**

## (1) The Centrality of Teaching to Student Learning

The single most important factor impacting the quality of a student's educational experience is the quality of the teaching she receives. The dynamic interaction between faculty and students forms the crucible of student learning. Appropriately, teaching is the top value at Millikin University. In all of its official documents, Millikin University explicitly affirms the special significance and special importance of teaching. For example, while faculty members seeking tenure must demonstrate at least *competent* scholarship and at least *competent* service, they must demonstrate at least **excellent** teaching. Philosophy faculty members wholeheartedly affirm this prioritization of teaching and what it implies about the mission and values of the institution. Indeed, philosophy faculty members aspire to provide the kind of teaching that *exceeds* what is expected at Millikin University. *Policies and Procedures* and the various division unit plans all identify "**extraordinary**" as the highest rating for teaching. We believe the evidence demonstrates that the Philosophy Department provides extraordinary teaching to Millikin students.

### Extraordinary Teaching

The Philosophy Department at Millikin University is unrivaled in terms of objective measures of teaching quality. For example, each member of the Philosophy Department has received the highest university-wide award for teaching excellence – the **Teaching Excellence Award**. This award is given to faculty members who have made a distinctive difference in classroom teaching, campus leadership, pioneering teaching methodology, creative course development, and instructional support. In addition, each member of the Philosophy Department has received the **Alpha Lambda Delta Teacher of the Year Award**. Given by the freshmen-sophomore honor society, this award is given to faculty members based on their ability to teach, knowledge of the subject matter, ability to present material in a clear and understandable fashion, ability to motivate students to self-discovery in learning, and for the care and concern shown to students in and out of the classroom. Finally, Dr. Money and Dr. Roark have each received the **James Millikin Scholar Educator of the Year Award**. Chosen by seniors in the honors program, the award recognizes the faculty member who has made the greatest impact upon them as honors scholars, who demonstrated outstanding

teaching skills, and who showed a respect and appreciation for student learning both in and out of the classroom.

Student evaluations of philosophy faculty consistently place the Philosophy Department among the highest (if not *the* highest) of any department on campus. We take student evaluations seriously. As graduate students and over the course of our time teaching, we have heard some professors seek to dismiss or to minimize the significance of student evaluations. We could not disagree more strongly with this dismissive attitude toward student evaluations, an attitude we view as defensive and self-protective. Teaching is essentially a *relational* activity, not a private exercise. While certainly not the only evidentiary basis from which to assess teaching quality, SIR data do provide us with crucial indicators regarding the health of the teaching relationship. First, SIR data provide us with a clear sense of the extent to which students are engaged in the learning experience, a necessary condition for successful teaching. Second, SIR data provide us with a clear sense of the extent to which professors are able to communicate clearly and effectively with their students. If students are going to grasp the material and begin the process of digesting it and making it their own, professors must be able to communicate clearly with students and in ways students can understand. Finally, SIR data provide us with a clear sense of the extent to which our students are able to affirm the value of their own learning experiences. All of these – student engagement, clarity of communication, and student affirmation of the value of their learning experiences – are crucial elements in successful teaching. SIR data provide us with credible objective evidence regarding our ability as teachers to approach teaching excellence in these areas.

SIR data from the past four semesters is provided below. The first number represents philosophy faculty **averages** across **all** courses taught by all three faculty members. These results are both **exceptional** and **typical**. The second number in parentheses represents university-wide faculty averages.

**Philosophy Department Summary Student Instructional Reports**  
**(Most Recent Four Semesters)**

Semester	Course Organization and Planning	Communication	Overall Instructor Excellent	Overall Course Excellent
Spring 2014	4.91 (4.34)	4.93 (4.41)	4.97 (4.34)	4.94 (4.17)
Fall 2013	4.79 (4.35)	4.79 (4.42)	4.84 (4.37)	4.66 (4.18)
Spring 2013	4.72 (4.33)	4.79 (4.41)	4.82 (4.33)	4.71 (4.19)
Fall 2012	4.58 (4.38)	4.66 (4.44)	4.70 (4.38)	4.51 (4.23)

We believe teaching excellence requires intensive *engagement* with our students. Accordingly, absent unusual circumstances (e.g., sabbatical leaves, Griswold Professorship, etc.), each of our faculty members teaches full-time (3-4 courses per

semester, sometimes more) and teaches across the entire spectrum of course offerings – from introductory level courses to upper level courses to senior seminars. Additionally, each of our faculty members utilizes a pedagogical method that emphasizes student engagement with primary source materials. We do this primarily by means of a discussion-driven classroom experience in conjunction with multiple formal writing assignments designed to emphasize both critical analysis and critical evaluation of the subject-matter under consideration. Students are required to think for themselves and our collective goal is to facilitate intellectual autonomy and responsibility.

## **(2) Goals. State the purpose or mission of your major.**

The purpose of the Philosophy Major is stated in three Philosophy Department goals:

- Department Goal 1: Students will be able to express in oral and written form their understanding of major concepts and intellectual traditions within the field of philosophy.
- Department Goal 2: Students will demonstrate their ability to utilize the principles of critical thinking and formal logic in order to produce a sound and valid argument, or to evaluate the soundness and validity of the arguments of others.
- Department Goal 3: Students will demonstrate their ability to complete research on a philosophy-related topic, analyze objectively the results of their research, and present arguments to support their point of view.

These Philosophy Department learning goals represent our allegiance to Millikin University's commitment to an educational experience that "integrates theory and practice." Because this claim is ripe for misunderstanding, it merits considerable commentary.

### **Philosophical Activity as Practical**

Our Department is committed to an understanding of philosophy as a reflective, critical, evaluative, and **practical** exercise. Philosophy is often characterized as purely theoretical, purely speculative – having no practical relevance. We contend that this is a serious mischaracterization of philosophical study. Instead, philosophical study is a kind of *activity*, a kind of *doing*. Moreover, we believe this activity is practical in the most important sense: as an activity that facilitates the development and growth of crucial intellectual skills. Among these skills are the ability to comprehend difficult readings, the ability to follow and assess the soundness of arguments and lines of reasoning, and the ability to formulate and to present clearly both creative criticisms as well as creative solutions to philosophical puzzles – puzzles that often require students to wrestle with ambiguity and think from different perspectives and points of view. Through the study and practice of philosophy, students develop their analytical and critical reading and

reasoning skills, their research skills, their ethical reasoning skills, and their writing and oral communication skills. These skills are always already practical. In *any* field of inquiry or profession – indeed, in life generally – students will have to problem solve, think critically, assess arguments or strategies, communicate clearly, spot unspoken assumptions, evaluate ideas or positions, engage in value judgments, etc. Since doing philosophy encourages the development and growth of the skills that are essential to doing any of these things *well*, philosophical study is inherently practical. As the Times of London noted (August 15, 1998), “Their [philosophy graduates’] employability, at 98.9%, is impressive by any standard...Philosophy is, in commercial jargon, the ultimate ‘transferable work skill’”. This remains true today.

The Philosophy Department vigorously opposes any understanding of “theory-practice” that would co-opt “practice” for things like labs, practica, internships, or other vocational experiences *and limit the meaning of that concept to those sorts of activities only*. If the term “practice” is defined in that way, then philosophy does not do anything practical...and we are proud to admit that fact, for we can do nothing else so long as we remain true to our discipline! We have absolutely no idea what a “philosophy internship” or “philosophy practicum” or “philosophy lab” would even be. While some of our courses include readings that address “practical” or “applied issues,” often under the label of “applied ethics” (e.g., lying, abortion, capital punishment, stem cell research, etc.), what this amounts to is simply bringing critical thinking skills to bear on concrete issues. We certainly are not going to have capital punishment labs or an abortion practicum! More importantly, we find the impulse to define “practice” in a limited and territorial fashion to be a misguided and dangerous understanding of practice and, by implication, of philosophy, and, by further implication, liberal education in general.

In philosophy, our emphasis on the development and growth of skill sets is an emphasis on *how* to think well, not an emphasis on *what* to think. Again, this focus is perfectly consistent with Millikin’s mission to “deliver on the promise of education” through the three prepares. In terms of professional success and post-graduate employment, the vast bulk of knowing what to do is learned on site; you learn “on the job.” The skill sets we aim to develop are skill sets that will allow students to do what they do in their jobs *well*. And this applies to any and all jobs.

Millikin began with an allegiance to philosophy as a discipline and that allegiance continues. When the MPSL plan was developed, the Philosophy Department faculty suggested that the central questions we ask each day in class, “Who am I?”, “How can I know?” and “What should I do?” are primary questions each student needs to engage. The faculty embraced this idea, and these three questions continue to form the heart of our general education program. Again, when we laid the groundwork for a major overhaul of the general education program in 2007, the Philosophy Department faculty proposed that along with writing and reflection, ethical reasoning be made one of the central “skill threads” developed in the University Studies program. The “practice” of

delivering the University educational curriculum that we now aim to assess cannot take place without philosophical activity. Again, the practical relevance of philosophical activity could not be clearer.

Philosophy services Millikin University's core goals and values. Close examination of the Millikin curriculum and its stated mission goals confirms that philosophy is essential to the ability of Millikin University to deliver on "the promise of education." This mission has three core elements.

The first core element of Millikin's mission is "**to prepare students for professional success.**" If philosophy is the "ultimate transferable work skill," then we prepare students for work in a variety of fields. Instead of preparing students for their first job, we prepare them for a lifetime of success—no matter how often they change their careers – something the empirical evidence suggests they will do quite frequently over the course of their lifetimes.

The second core element of Millikin's mission is "**to prepare students for democratic citizenship in a global environment.**" Our focus on philosophy of law, political philosophy, and normative-value questions in general reveals our belief in and commitment to the Jeffersonian model of liberal education. In order to engage meaningfully in democratic citizenship, citizens must be able to ask the following kinds of questions and be able to assess critically the answers that might be provided to them: What makes for a *good* society? What are the *legitimate* functions of the state? How *should* we resolve conflicts between the common good and individual rights? Might we have a *moral* obligation to challenge the laws and policies of our own country? These are philosophical questions; not questions of the nuts and bolts of how our government runs, but questions about our goals and duties. Confronting and wrestling with these questions prepare students for democratic citizenship.

The third core element of Millikin's mission is "**to prepare students for a personal life of meaning and value.**" Clearly this is exactly what philosophy does. That Millikin's mission includes this goal along with the first distinguishes us from a technical institution. We are not a glorified community college willing to train students for the first job they will get, and leaving them in a lurch when they struggle to understand death, or agonize over ethical decisions, or confront those whose ideas seem foreign or dangerous because they are new. Millikin University wants its students to be whole: life-long learners who will not shy away from the ambiguities and puzzles that make life richer and more human. Philosophy is the department that makes confronting these issues its life's work.

Philosophical study, then, is exemplary of Millikin's promise to prepare students for professional success, prepare them for democratic citizenship, and prepare them for a life of personal value and meaning. The Philosophy Department learning goals, then, match well with Millikin's University-wide learning goals:

- University Goal 1: Millikin students will prepare for professional success.
- University Goal 2: Millikin students will actively engage in the responsibilities of citizenship in their communities.
- University Goal 3: Millikin students will discover and develop a personal life of meaning and value.

The accompanying table shows how Philosophy Department goals relate to University-wide goals:

<b>Philosophy Department Learning Goal</b>	<b>Corresponding Millikin University Learning Goal Number(s)</b>
1. Students will be able to express in oral and written form their understanding of major concepts and intellectual traditions within the field of philosophy.	1, 2, 3
2. Students will demonstrate their ability to utilize the principles of critical thinking and formal logic in order to produce a sound and valid argument, or to evaluate the soundness and validity of the arguments of others.	1, 2, 3
3. Students will demonstrate their ability to complete research on a philosophy-related topic, analyze objectively the results of their research, and present arguments to support their point of view in a variety of venues, including an individually directed senior capstone thesis in philosophy.	1, 2, 3

In sum, so long as we reject any hidebound understanding of “practice,” philosophical study reveals itself to be inherently practical. The skill sets it develops and the issues it engages facilitate professional success, democratic citizenship, and the development of a personal life of value and meaning. It seems to us that the daily *practice* of delivering on the promise of education should be the goal of every department and program at Millikin University. This, we do.

Given our emphasis on skill set development, it is no accident that philosophical study is excellent preparation for law school. Accordingly, our Department has developed a “pre-law track” for those of our majors who are interested in law school. It is extremely important to emphasize that gaining admission to law school is not a function of gaining substantive content knowledge as an undergraduate. This is vividly illustrated by

pointing out the fact that the undergraduate major with the *highest acceptance rate* to ABA approved law schools is physics. Law schools require no specific undergraduate curriculum, no specific undergraduate major, and no specific undergraduate plan of study for admission. Law schools select students on the basis of evidence that they can “think like a lawyer.” Philosophy prepares students to think in this way. In fact, a recent study by the American Bar Association shows that, after physics, the major with the highest acceptance rate to law school is **PHILOSOPHY**.

While our primary emphasis is on content neutral skill set development, we do not want to short-change the substantive content of philosophical writings. We develop the above mentioned skill sets by reading and discussing topics and issues central to the human condition. For example:

- Who am I? How can I know? What should I do? The Millikin core questions are essentially philosophical questions!
- Does God exist? If God exists, how is that fact consistent with the existence of evil in the world?
- Do human beings possess free will? Or is human behavior and action causally determined?
- What is the relation between mental states (mind, consciousness) and brain states (body)?
- What justification is there for the state? How should finite and scarce resources be distributed within society?
- Are there universal moral principles? Or are all moral principles relative either to cultures or individuals?
- What does it mean to judge a work of art beautiful? Is beauty really in the eye of the beholder?

The description of the philosophy program that appears in the Millikin Bulletin is crafted to emphasize the relevance of philosophical study to students with diverse interests and goals. According to the 2014-15 *Millikin University Bulletin*,

The Philosophy Major is designed to meet the requirements of four classes of students: (a) those who have no professional interest in philosophy but who wish to approach a liberal education through the discipline of philosophy; (b) those who want a composite or interdepartmental major in philosophy and the natural sciences, behavioral sciences, humanities, or fine arts; (c) those who want an intensive study of philosophy preparatory to graduate study in some other field, e.g., law, theology, medicine, or education; (d) those who are professionally interested in philosophy and who plan to do graduate work in the field and then to teach or write (p.84).

Philosophy offers three tracks within the major: “traditional,” “ethics,” and “pre-law.”

While some of our majors go on to pursue graduate study in philosophy and aspire eventually to teach, most of our majors go on to pursue other careers and educational objectives. Accordingly, the successful student graduating from the philosophy major might be preparing for a career as a natural scientist, a behavioral scientist, an attorney, a theologian, a physician, an educator, or a writer, or might go into some field more generally related to the humanities or the liberal arts. Whatever the case, he or she will be well prepared as a result of the habits of mind acquired in the process of completing the Philosophy Major. (See "Appendix One" for post-graduate information of recently graduated majors.)

There are no guidelines provided by the American Philosophical Association for undergraduate study.

### **(3) Snapshot. Provide a brief overview of your current situation.**

#### **Philosophy Faculty**

The Philosophy Department has three full-time faculty members. Each faculty member has a Ph.D. in philosophy and teaches full-time in the Department.

- **Dr. Robert Money**, Professor of Philosophy and Chair of the Department, holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Iowa (with a specialization in ethics and ethical theory), a J.D. from Emory University School of Law, and a B.A. in Philosophy and Political Science from Furman University. His teaching and research interests include ethics and ethical theory, political philosophy, history of philosophy, philosophy of law, philosophy of religion, and the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche. Dr. Money serves as Director of the Pre-Law Program and faculty director of moot court. Dr. Money has published papers in *Religion and Education* as well as *The Emory University International Law Review*. Dr. Money came to Millikin in 1999.
- **Dr. Eric Roark**, Associate Professor of Philosophy, holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Missouri (with a specialization in political philosophy), a M.A. in Philosophy from the University of Missouri, a M.S. in Sociology from Iowa State University, and a B.A. in Political Science from Iowa State University. His teaching and research interests include social and political philosophy (especially left-libertarianism), applied ethics, history of philosophy, and epistemology. Dr. Roark has published papers in the *Journal of Libertarian Studies* as well as *Philosophy and Theology*. Dr. Roark also has a recent book, *Removing the Commons*, which deals directly with issues of political theory and global politics. Dr. Roark came to Millikin in 2008.
- **Dr. Michael Hartsock**, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Missouri (with a specialization in metaphysics and philosophy of science), a M.A. in Philosophy from the University of Missouri, and a

B.A. in Biology and Ethics from Central Methodist University. His teaching and research interests include the philosophy of science and metaphysics (especially causation), logic, history of philosophy, epistemology, and philosophy of mind. Dr. Hartsock serves as faculty adviser to the Philosophy Club and Phi Sigma Tau, the international honors society in philosophy. Dr. Hartsock came to Millikin in 2010.

## **A Vibrant Major**

The philosophy program at Millikin is vibrant and strong. We typically have around thirty students pursuing a major or minor in philosophy – nearly all of them attracted to the program by a combination of the exceptional teaching and the interesting subject matter they encounter in our courses. Our size permits us to work extensively with our students and provides many opportunities for individualized growth and mentoring. To that end, we have designed our curriculum to provide students with various options – or “tracks” – by which to complete the major. The traditional philosophy track emphasizes the history of philosophy and prepares those students intending to pursue graduate study in philosophy and/or other areas of study at the graduate level.<sup>1</sup> The pre-law track is designed for those students interested in using philosophy as preparation for law school.<sup>2</sup> Finally, the ethics track emphasizes normative reasoning in the context of ethical theory, applied ethics (e.g., bioethics, environmental ethics, etc.) and political philosophy. We have worked to fit our curriculum to the needs and interests of our students. In addition, because we only require 30 credits to complete the major, many of our students are able to double major or pursue minors in other fields of study. Indeed, we encourage our students to pursue a broad liberal education.

As of the spring 2014 semester, the Philosophy Department had 23 majors and 8 minors. This is the fifth consecutive year that the philosophy program has had over 30 students involved as either majors or minors. The department has grown considerably over the past decade. When Dr. Money started at Millikin (fall 1999), there were two majors and two or three minors. The degree to which we have grown over the past decade is clearly visible to see and has been acknowledged by administration. For example, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences recently sent A&S Department Chairs a document reviewing numbers of majors over the past decade and he explicitly noted the growth of philosophy. He wrote:

As you prepare annual assessment reports (due July 1) I want to provide you with some data about majors in your programs. Attached is a chart from Institutional Research based on annual fall census counts. This chart

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<sup>1</sup> We are pleased to note that 2014 Millikin graduate and philosophy major Emma Prendergast will be pursuing a Ph.D. in philosophy at the University of Wisconsin Madison, starting fall 2014. The philosophy program at Wisconsin is a “top tier” program nationally. Emma was awarded a highly competitive fellowship for the first year, guaranteed financial support for six years, and was one of fifty-one students across the country to receive a \$5000 Phi Kappa Phi fellowship in support of graduate study.

<sup>2</sup> The philosophy program has a strong tradition of sending philosophy graduates to nationally ranked law schools. More information on this is provided below.

provides trend information from 2001 to Fall 2012. Here's a couple of trends & talking points I've noticed...(3) Seven majors are at the record high numbers: biology allied health, history, human services, **philosophy**, physics, sociology, and organizational leadership. (4) Four majors have had significant increases: human services, **philosophy**, sociology, organizational leadership...

This recognized and celebrated growth in philosophy is all the more impressive given that few students come to Millikin (or any college) as announced philosophy majors.

### **Service to Students and Programs Across the University**

The Philosophy Department's range of contributions across campus is truly exceptional. In addition to delivering a top quality philosophy major and minor to our students, the Department makes contributions that impact the University at large. These include but are not limited to the following.<sup>3</sup>

#### ➤ **University Studies (General Education)**

The theoretical design of the University Studies curriculum is intentionally interdisciplinary. The University Studies program does not necessitate that any specific element be delivered exclusively by any single department. Put another way, the program does not establish a "one to one" correspondence between program elements and specific departments. Instead, the program is anchored around a commitment to the development of important skills (e.g., writing, reflection, ethical reasoning), exposure to diverse ways of knowing (humanist, natural and social scientific, quantitative, artistic, etc.), and the expansion of student horizons (from self/local in the first year, to national in the second year, to global in the third year). Given this design, the ability to teach in the program is conditioned only by the ability of the faculty member to design courses that deliver the learning goals that are definitive of the particular curricular element and the will to participate. The Philosophy Department is unsurpassed in its ability to make significant contributions to the general education of our students and its willingness to do so – a willingness that we view as part of what it means to be committed to Millikin University and her students. To date, we have made contributions to the following elements of the University Studies program<sup>4</sup>:

- IN140, University Seminar
- IN183, Honors University Seminar
- IN250, United States Cultural Studies

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<sup>3</sup> While most of our contributions are in the form of traditional semester-long courses, our faculty members also teach courses in the PACE and immersion formats.

<sup>4</sup> That we have not made contributions in additional curricular areas does not indicate our inability to do so. For example, Dr. Hartsock is currently in the process of creating a course that will be offered as an IN350, Global Issues course.

- IN251, United States Structural Studies
- ICS, International Cultures and Structures
- QR, Quantitative Reasoning

➤ **College of Arts and Sciences**

In addition to the many contributions we make to the delivery of the University Studies program, we also make key contributions to the delivery of the “historical studies” requirement of the College of Arts and Sciences. All courses in our “history of philosophy” sequence as well as select other courses contribute to the delivery of this important College requirement.

➤ **The Honors Program**

The Philosophy Department is among the strongest supporters of the Honors Program. We deliver all of the required sections of IN183, Honors University Seminar each fall semester to all incoming first-year honors students. In addition, we regularly deliver sections of IN203, Honors Seminar in Humanities, to second semester first-year and second year honors students. Finally, we regularly supervise students in the completion of their James Millikin Scholar Research Projects. Our involvement with and commitment to the Honors Program and our honors students are unsurpassed on campus.

➤ **MBA and Undergraduate Business Programs**

Dr. Roark delivers a designated section of PH215, Business Ethics for the Tabor School of Business each fall semester. This is a crucial contribution as the State of Illinois now requires that all individuals wishing to sit for the CPA exam must have business ethics on their undergraduate transcript. In addition to delivering ethics courses for the undergraduate business program, Dr. Roark also delivers business ethics for the MBA program each spring semester – MBA510, Personal Values and Business Ethics.

➤ **Pre-Law**

At Millikin University, our pre-law program is not a program of academic study. Students do not major or minor in pre-law. This is because law schools do not favor that approach. Instead, law schools want undergraduates to major and minor in “traditional” undergraduate academic programs. While law schools require a B.A. or B.S. degree, they do not require any particular undergraduate major or undergraduate program of study. Accordingly, pre-law students may choose to major in any discipline.

While it is true that students interested in attending law school can choose any undergraduate major, it is also true that all undergraduate majors are not equal in terms of their ability to prepare students for the rigors of law school. It is essential to

understand that the preparation needed for law school must focus on the development of essential critical thinking skills that enable the student to “think like a lawyer,” and not the memorization of facts and information. Given the central importance of critical thinking skills for the study of law, any student interested in attending law school and entering the legal profession would do well to complete a philosophy major at Millikin University. There is no better major for students interested in preparing for law school than philosophy.<sup>5</sup> This is true for many reasons. Here we note five.

First, the academic credentials and backgrounds of the faculty members in our department give us the expertise necessary to prepare students for law school. Philosophy faculty teach in ways that are specifically designed to develop the critical reading, writing, and reasoning skills essential to the study and practice of law. In addition, we teach the kind of courses that prepare students to “think like a lawyer.” Courses such as Critical Thinking: Logic, Ethical Theory and Moral Issues, Political Philosophy, Philosophy of Law, Appellate Legal Reasoning – Moot Court, and others are precisely the kind of courses that prepare students for the rigors of law school. In addition, the Philosophy Department is the only department with a full-time faculty member who has been to law school, earned a law degree, and passed a state bar exam. When we give students advice about law school, we speak from *experience*.

Second, the best preparation for law school demands that students take challenging courses taught by outstanding and demanding teachers. As emphasized above, the Philosophy Department at Millikin University is unrivaled in terms of objective measures of teaching quality. Whether we look at honors and awards for teaching or student evaluations of the teaching we provide, there simply is no stronger teaching department at Millikin University than the Philosophy Department.

Third, the philosophy curriculum has been intentionally designed to meet the needs of students interested in law. Our philosophy program emphasizes analytical reading and critical reasoning skills. These skills are *precisely* the skills required for success in the study and the practice of law. In addition, our assignments require students to engage in analysis and critical evaluation of ideas; in particular, our written assignments typically require students to present a thesis and defend it with argument. This is the form that much legal reasoning takes. Finally, we have a specific “pre-law track” within the major that is tailored even more specifically to meet the needs of our pre-law students. The track emphasizes courses in critical thinking and logic, ethical and political philosophy, and jurisprudence and law.

Fourth, we have intentionally kept the requirements for the major to a minimum. Only 30 credits are required to complete the philosophy major. This allows students to acquire curricular breadth in their undergraduate curriculum. The value of pursuing a

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<sup>5</sup> We are not alone in making this claim. For example, please see: <https://ethics.tamucc.edu/program/burgess-jackson-advice-for-prospective-law-students?destination=node%2F44>

broad liberal arts education is supported and celebrated by the Millikin University Philosophy Department and is looked upon very favorably by law schools.

Finally, as part of the course PH366, Appellate Legal Reasoning – Moot Court, the Philosophy Department provides students with the opportunity to participate in moot court. Dr. Money has been directing our moot court program since 2005. As detailed below, the success we have enjoyed has been exceptional and sustained over time. Students who participate in moot court draw on while developing even further many of the key skills that are emphasized in our philosophy curriculum as well as our wider University Studies curriculum: critical-analytical reading, critical-ethical reasoning, oral communication, and collaborative learning, among others. Moot court is an experiential and collaborative learning experience in which students are taught the essential elements of appellate legal reasoning by an appropriately credentialed faculty member and eventually perform their learning before third party stakeholders (e.g., legal professionals, pre-law faculty advisers, law students, etc.). It is a paradigmatic example of performance learning at Millikin University.

### ➤ **Moot Court**

Each year, we participate in a state-wide competition held as part of the Model Illinois Government simulation in Springfield, Illinois. At the competition, students work in two-person teams to deliver persuasive legal arguments before a panel of justices. At the competition, each team has 30 minutes to present arguments. While team members can divide up the presentation of arguments as they see fit, competition rules require that each team member speak for at least 10 minutes. During the presentation of the oral arguments, justices – a combination of legal professionals from central Illinois, law school students, and college students who have had prior experience participating as attorneys in the competition – ask questions and offer rejoinders to the arguments made by the students. After a round of argument concludes, a formal rubric is utilized to assess student performance in five main categories: knowledge of the case, organization and reasoning, courtroom manner, forensic skills, and responding to questions. Over the past ten years, Millikin students have performed exceptionally well. The team and individual awards speak for themselves:

- Team First Place Finishes (8): 2005, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014
- Team Second Place Finishes (6): 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2013, 2014
- Team Third Place Finishes (6): 2006, 2007, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2014
- Team Fourth Place Finishes (2): 2012, 2013
- Individual Award for Most Outstanding Attorney (5): 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014
- Individual Award for Runner Up Most Outstanding Attorney (3): 2011, 2012, 2013

The success of our students – as judged by external evaluators, including legal practitioners and law school students – is clear evidence of the high quality of our program.

It is worth noting that the success enjoyed by our moot court students extends well beyond Model Illinois Government and Millikin. For a school our size, our placement record into nationally ranked law schools is impressive. Over the past ten years, a number of students who have participated in our moot court program have been accepted into **nationally** ranked law schools. Importantly, all of these students earned substantial scholarship support to attend these high quality institutions. These schools, their national rank, and the students who attended include:<sup>6</sup>

- University of Virginia: ranked **#8**
- Northwestern University: ranked **#12**
- Vanderbilt University: ranked **#16**
- Washington University: ranked **#18** \*\*
- Emory University: ranked **#19**
- University of Minnesota: ranked **#20** \*\*
- University of Iowa: ranked **#27** \*\*
- University of Wisconsin: ranked **#31** \*\*
- University of Illinois: ranked **#40**
- University of Colorado Boulder: ranked **#43** \*\*

### **Phi Sigma Tau**

The Department has completed its process of securing a formal philosophy club on campus. Dr. Hartsock has taken leadership of this initiative and has led us to a Phi Sigma Tau membership on campus. We hope that a formal club and honors society will provide our majors and other students with an interest in philosophy to bond and reinforce our philosophy community. We hope this will be another avenue by which to reinforce our growth.

### **Recent Review of and Revisions to Curriculum**

In 2008, the Philosophy Department expanded to two faculty members to three faculty members. Then, in 2010, we replaced a long-tenured Professor (Dr. Jacobs) with a new Assistant Professor (Dr. Hartsock). The changes provided the occasion to engage in a series of long-overdue revisions to our curriculum. Our revisions ensure that our curriculum is aligned with the teaching interests and abilities of the philosophy faculty. Significant changes were made over the course of two rounds of changes.

During the first round of changes (2010), we created an “ethics minor” within our program. As part of this new program, we offer three additional courses under the

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<sup>6</sup> Ranking information from: <http://www.top-law-schools.com/rankings.html>. A mark of \*\* indicates that the student majored in philosophy. Those students who did not major in philosophy took numerous philosophy courses.

broad category of “applied ethics.” These courses include PH215, Business Ethics; PH217, Bioethics; and PH219, Environmental Ethics. We have intentionally designed two of these “applied ethics” courses to connect to other major academic units. PH215, Business Ethics, connects to Tabor; PH217, Bioethics, connects to the pre-med, medical technology, and nursing programs. The ethics minor also coheres with and reinforces the recently revised University Studies program, which emphasizes three skill sets over the course of the sequential elements: reflection, writing, and *ethical reasoning*. Every course that we offer in the area of value theory generally, including the applied ethics courses, engage students in all three of these skills. The learning goals of the ethics minor program are as follows:

1. Students will use ethical reasoning to analyze and reflect on issues that impact their personal lives as well as their local, national, and/or global communities; and
2. Students will be able to express in written form their understanding of major ethical concepts and theories and demonstrate competency in the application of those concepts and theories to specific topics (business, medicine, environment, politics, etc.).

We believe it to be self-evident that ethical reasoning and reflection on ethical issues and topics are indispensable for the kind of intellectual and personal growth our students need if they are to find professional success, participate meaningfully in democratic citizenship in a global environment, and create and discover a personal life of meaning and value. Hence, the ethics minor coheres well with the stated goals of Millikin University – indeed, it flows from it.

The second round of changes (2012) was enacted to align better our curriculum with the best practices of quality undergraduate programs across the country in terms of curricular structure. Four main changes were made. First, we incorporated PH211 Ethical Theory and Moral Issues into the core requirements for the major. This ensures that every philosophy major have a basic introduction to ethics. While almost all majors were receiving this exposure as a matter of practice, this change requires that the exposure be guaranteed to all majors. Second, we reformed our history of philosophy sequence, providing the courses with appropriate names and reducing the history requirement by one course. The reduction was made in order to set the stage for our third major change: the creation of a “metaphysics/epistemology” requirement. Each major must now take one course in metaphysics or epistemology, and we have created two new courses to deliver this requirement: PH312, Minds and Persons and PH313, Ways of Knowing. Fourth, we enacted a revision that essentially resulted in a combination of the old PH400 Senior Thesis course with the old PH381 Seminar in Philosophy course. We now have a single course, PH400, Seminar in Philosophy. Our majors produce their “senior theses” (i.e., a major research paper engaging in argument-based thesis defense) within the context of the newly created (modified)

course. We did this to provide better guidance to students as they work to produce this major paper and to ensure that this essential capstone teaching was appropriately counted as part of faculty workload.

With the addition of Dr. Hartsock, we are also offering more courses that will intersect with topics and issues in the natural sciences. Dr. Hartsock's area of expertise, philosophy and history of science, permits the Department to forge additional connections to programs in the natural and social sciences. These links have been forged by way of formal philosophy course offerings (e.g., PH223, History and Philosophy of Science) as well as by way of offering electives and interdepartmental courses focusing on philosophical content that intersects with the natural sciences.

The Philosophy Department rotates or modifies the content of its upper-level seminars on an ongoing basis. The Department also makes some modifications in its normal courses, rotating content in and out. Doing so allows philosophy faculty to keep courses fresh and exciting for the students, and helps to keep faculty interest and enthusiasm high. For example, Dr. Money had taught the PH400 Seminar in Philosophy course on Nietzsche, on personal identity, on the intelligent design-evolution controversy, and as a course on ethical naturalism. The title of the course is the same, but it is a new course nonetheless. This type of "internal evolution" takes place frequently within the Department.

A number of changes have occurred in the philosophy curriculum in the last several years. "Appendix Two" provides an overview of requirements within the major. In addition, both minors are now aligned at 18 in terms of the total credit hours required to complete them. The Department regularly meets to review its curriculum and identify ways in which it can be improved.

#### **(4) The Learning Story. Explain the typical learning experience provided through your major. How do students learn or encounter experiences leading to fulfilling your learning outcome goals?**

It is important to emphasize that we do not require that our majors complete the Philosophy Major by following a formal and rigid sequential curricular structural plan. While there are required courses within the major, these courses (with one exception) need not be taken in a specific sequential order. Given the context within which the Philosophy Department operates, the demand for that kind of "structural plan" is unrealistic. More importantly, given the nature of philosophical activity and philosophical teaching, the demand for a structural plan is *inappropriate*. What this shows is that assessment efforts cannot demand a "one size fits all" approach. Assessment demands must respect disciplinary autonomy, as well as the practical realities of "the situation on the ground." Assessment of philosophy may be a worthy goal, but it must be assessment of *philosophy*. Respect for disciplinary autonomy comes first and

assessment tools must be constructed that respect that autonomy. Indeed, it is only when this is the case that it becomes realistic to expect faculty members to take ownership of assessment practices; after all, we are professors of philosophy, not professors of assessment! The following makes clear why the demand for a “structural plan” in the Philosophy Major is both impractical and inappropriate.

A structural plan in philosophy is impractical. Students rarely come to Millikin as declared philosophy majors, since few have even heard of this discipline in high school. Students switch to or add philosophy as a major, often during their second or even third year at Millikin, because they recognize the quality of the teaching provided by our faculty, the way philosophical study develops the skill sets essential to any quality educational experience, and because of the power of the questions philosophy forces students to ask and wrestle with, questions that form the heart of a life of meaning and value—one part of Millikin’s stated mission “to deliver on the promise of education.”<sup>7</sup>

In light of the peculiar nature of our discipline and the nature of “recruitment” to our major, we cannot insist on a rigid formal sequential curricular pathway for our majors. We might prefer our majors start with PH110 (Basic), then move on to PH211 (Ethics) and PH213 (Logic), then complete the history sequence in order (PH300, 301, 302), then finally take PH400 (Seminar in Philosophy). This preference or ideal, however, is completely unrealistic. The only situation in which we could realistically expect its implementation would be with those very few incoming freshmen students who declare philosophy as a major during summer orientation and registration. Even with these students, however, we would be limited by the small size of our Department and our faculty’s commitment to making substantial contributions to other portions of the university curriculum (e.g., University Studies, the honors program, etc.). In light of these realities on the ground, we simply could not guarantee that the needed courses would be offered with the degree of regularity that would make it possible to implement a rigid formal sequential curricular pathway. So, this kind of “stepping stone” curricular plan is impractical for us to implement.

Fortunately, implementation of a curricular structural plan is also unnecessary. Many of our courses involve a mix of students, both majors and non-majors. Teaching a group of students who are from various backgrounds is always a challenge. However, students who are good at reading, writing, and thinking can succeed in philosophy courses at the upper division level, even if they’ve never had a philosophy course before. (The same principle underlies the institution’s commitment to the viability of IN250 and IN350 courses.) In physics or French it is highly unlikely that a student beginning the major or a student from another discipline could enter an upper level

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<sup>7</sup> During the 2005-2006 academic year, one senior student declared a major in philosophy *during his senior year!* He had to take courses in the summer in order to complete the major. It is wildly implausible to suppose that he could complete the major by following some structural plan of study. Yet, the fact remains that he was an outstanding student, who produced high quality exemplary work. An electronic copy of his senior thesis is posted on our website (Jordan Snow).

course and succeed. However, in philosophy, first year undergraduate students in PH110 Basic Philosophical Problems and graduate students in graduate school seminars read many of the same texts, e.g., Plato's *Republic*, Descartes' *Meditations*, etc. We regularly have students from history, English, or music who do as well as or better than philosophy majors in the same courses. This somewhat peculiar feature of philosophical inquiry and activity explains (and completely justifies) why we do not insist on a formal rigid sequential curricular pathway for our majors. High quality intellectual engagement with philosophical issues and philosophical texts does not require that we follow a stepping stone model.

The only exception to our curricular flexibility is the philosophy capstone course: PH400 Seminar in Philosophy. That course can only be taken during the junior or senior years. In that course, the philosophy faculty member teaching the course identifies a topic or philosopher of interest and designs a seminar course based on the graduate school model to explore the topic/philosopher. A major research paper is required of each student. (This paper is the equivalent of the prior senior thesis.) Faculty work one-on-one with each of our junior and/or senior majors and help them produce some of the best work of their career at Millikin. Given the role of this course, we insist that this particular course come near the end of the student's undergraduate philosophical exploration. We want our students to have exposure to a wide range of philosophical issues, topics, and texts before they write their thesis.

To summarize, philosophy majors do not fulfill a formal sequential curricular plan because such a plan is both impractical for us to implement and unnecessary given the nature of philosophical study.

Students in the Philosophy Major learn to think critically. All members of the Philosophy Department have been recognized as outstanding teachers. Indeed, as documented above, all three faculty members have been recognized and honored with multiple teaching awards. The department prides itself on exceptional undergraduate teaching. Students respond to their philosophy education for three key reasons: (1) philosophy faculty are passionate about the subject matter that they teach, and that passion is contagious; (2) philosophy faculty are rigorous in their expectations, and establish high expectations for their students, encouraging the students to have high expectations for themselves; and (3) philosophy faculty employ an intense, discussion-driven format in which students are engaged, challenged on many of their core beliefs and assumptions, and encouraged to take charge of their own education and their own thinking.

All philosophy faculty employ written forms of evaluation, including in-class essay examinations, take-home essay exams, and papers.

The learning experience provided through the Philosophy Major is strongly interactive in nature. For example, Dr. Roark utilizes a case-study approach in many of his applied ethics courses. Under this pedagogical strategy, students are responsible for presenting

analysis and engaging in normative reasoning regarding the case study, with class debate and interaction intentionally woven into the experience. Similarly, Dr. Money has students engage in the oral delivery of legal arguments in his Appellate Legal Reasoning course. These arguments are delivered to the class, with Dr. Money and the other students roll playing as justices – peppering the students with questions, etc.

Similarly, all philosophy faculty employ written assignments as the primary basis for assessing student learning. Faculty also make extensive use of e-mail communication and the Moodle forum feature to extend class discussions after class, eliciting sophisticated discussion from undergraduates and extending their philosophy education into the world beyond the classroom.

Students are expected to read challenging texts, and philosophy faculty use those texts, and subsequent discussions of those texts, to help students spot the assumptions behind arguments – especially the unstated assumptions that inform a particular outlook or worldview. The philosophy curriculum is unlike nearly every other in that the texts for freshman students are the same as those for seniors, and indeed for graduate students. Freshmen may read fewer pages than seniors, but the difficulty is in the texts themselves; there are no “beginner” philosophy texts, *per se*.

The Philosophy Department uses all primary texts. These texts raise challenging questions related to Millikin’s core questions: Who am I? How can I know? What should I do? These are essentially philosophical questions, and every philosophy course addresses at least one of them. Students can take away varying levels of understanding, but all are called upon to work with the most profound philosophical writing available, so that from the beginning they can be thinking in the deepest way they can.

As noted above, the fact that philosophy texts lend themselves to different levels of interpretation and understanding allows philosophy faculty to engage students who may be along a varying continuum of intellectual abilities, including non-majors and majors alike. The discussion driven format of philosophy courses exploits the varying degrees of student intellectual abilities for collective benefit – often more advanced students expose less advanced students to central issues and ideas in a way that can be easily understood by the less advanced student. Class discussion is not simply vertical (between students and teacher), but quite often horizontal as well (between students). Some of our most effective learning takes the horizontal form.

The key experiences in the philosophy curriculum, along with encounters with challenging texts (as mentioned above), include intensive engagement with philosophy professors, engagement with fellow students, reflection and digestion of ideas, and presentation of the students’ own ideas in written form. The overall learning experience in the Philosophy Major, then, is one of intellectual engagement (with a great deal of one-on-one engagement outside of class as well), in which students are

challenged to think critically about core beliefs and assumptions, and are expected to be able to present critical and creative ideas regarding those core beliefs and assumptions in oral and, especially, written form.

The Philosophy Major requires 30 credits to complete.

The Philosophy Major includes four required courses (12 credits):

- **Philosophy 110, Basic Philosophy.** This course gives students an initial glance at both the kinds of texts they will encounter and the kind of teaching style that informs and characterizes the Philosophy Major.
- **Philosophy 211, Ethical Theory and Moral Issues.** This course exposes students to major ethical theoretical frameworks (utilitarianism, deontological positions, virtue theory, etc.) and at least one applied issue (e.g., capital punishment, suicide, etc.).
- **Philosophy 213, Logic.** This course is essential for critical thinking.
- **Philosophy 400, Seminar in Philosophy.** This course gives Philosophy majors (or advanced Philosophy students) a chance to learn in a small setting, usually 12-15 students. It is the most discussion-driven of all Philosophy courses. Moreover, this course allows students truly to lead the direction of the course. The course goes where students' questions in response to readings take the course. Philosophy faculty also use the course to "rotate in" materials and subjects that are of current interest. Students also write a major research paper. This paper is collected and analyzed for purposes of assessing student learning.

The Philosophy Department also has a history sequence. Students must take two out of the following three courses (6 credits):

- **Philosophy 300, Ancient Philosophy**
- **Philosophy 301, Modern Philosophy**
- **Philosophy 302, Contemporary Philosophy**

The Department is committed to facilitating students' understanding of philosophical issues and problems in their historical context, i.e., presenting students with a "history of ideas." Doing so gives philosophy faculty a chance to expose philosophy students to many of the seminal works in philosophy.

Finally, the Department has a requirement that each student take one course in either metaphysics or epistemology (3 credits):

- **Philosophy 312, Minds and Persons**
- **Philosophy 313, Ways of Knowing**

The remaining nine credits are secured by way of the numerous electives offered by the Department, many under the umbrella of "value theory": political philosophy, ethical

theory and moral issues, meta-ethics and the like. These elective courses provide philosophy students with a chance to encounter a range of normative issues, and challenge them to think not only in descriptive terms (e.g., what is the case) but also in normative terms (e.g., what *should* be the case). (9 credits).

An overview of the requirements for completion of the Philosophy Major is offered as an appendix to this document (see Appendix Two).

**(5) Assessment Methods. Explain your methods and points of data collection for assessing fulfillment of your key learning outcomes and for assessing effectiveness.**

The explosion in administration related to assessment – an explosion in which assessment has driven both size and priorities – deserves serious pushback. We provide this pushback in the form of a reminder regarding a point that we, as faculty members actually teaching courses to students, view as an obvious point: **student intellectual growth and learning is assessed in every class, on every assignment, and in every course. We call this assessment of student learning “grading.”** If we are not assessing student learning when we grade student work, then we have no idea what we are doing. Quite frankly, building a culture of assessment is administrative speak for what we view as faculty members doing their job. We do not need multiple layers of administrative bureaucracy to achieve a culture of assessment. We simply need faculty members doing their jobs well.

**We repeat: in the context of an intra-departmental program, grading is assessing student learning.** The fact that we have assigned each student a grade in each course is already to engage in an extensive assessment of “student performance in all other courses.” For example, one of our Departmental Learning Goals (#2) is: Students will demonstrate their ability to utilize the principles of critical thinking and formal logic in order to produce a sound and valid argument, or to evaluate the soundness and validity of the arguments of others. Each philosophy major must complete PH213, Critical Thinking: Logic. Here, each student spends an entire semester doing nothing but working on mastering the principles of critical thinking and formal logic and applying them. The grade earned in the course signifies our “assessment of student learning” relative to that specific learning goal. While we also assess this learning goal in reference to the arguments constructed in the student’s senior thesis (and on all other written papers for that matter!), the point is that our students are assessed on each learning goal continuously in numerous courses as they work to complete the major. Indeed, we have designed the curriculum to deliver our central learning goals. Hence, if a student successfully completes our curriculum, she demonstrates successfully mastery of our learning goals.

Perhaps an even more powerful illustration of the continuous and pervasive nature of our assessment of student learning can be seen in reference to Departmental Learning

Goal #1: Students will be able to express in oral and written form their understanding of major concepts and intellectual traditions within the field of philosophy. The following remarks appeared in my letters of recommendation for three philosophy majors who applied to law school during the 2009 fall semester:

I want to emphasize the extent of my familiarity with STUDENT'S NAME academic work. To this point, I have had STUDENT in eight philosophy courses. He has excelled across a wide range of assignments including reading quizzes, oral presentations, in-class exams, take-home essay exams, and research papers. His writing, in particular, is outstanding. His papers and exams are models of analytical clarity and compelling reasoned argumentation. Across the eight courses he has taken with me to this point, STUDENT has written a total of thirty-eight (38) essays of 4-8 pages in length. His average grade on these assignments is an outstanding 95%.

Across the six courses he has taken with me to this point, SECOND STUDENT has written a total of twenty-nine (29) essays of 4-8 pages in length. His average grade on these assignments is an excellent 92.93%. (Letter for SECOND STUDENT)

Across the seven courses he has taken with me to this point, THIRD STUDENT has written a total of thirty-two (32) essays of 4-8 pages in length. His average grade on these assignments is an astonishing 95.66%. (Letter for THIRD STUDENT)

The point is that this degree of familiarity with our students and the depth of our assessment of their learning are substantial and pervasive. This is the **NORM** in our Department. One of the great benefits of being a small department is the fact that this ensures that we will get the opportunity to interact with many of our students repeatedly over time. This puts us in an excellent position to make judgments about the growth of their learning while at Millikin and positions us to engage in excellent advising and mentoring. Thus, it should be abundantly clear that we assess student learning continuously and rigorously. Reinvention of the wheel is entirely unnecessary. We will not speculate on why such reinvention has and is occurring.

In addition to the pervasive assessment of student learning that we engage in through formal class assignments, there is the opportunity for assessment that comes from the close mentoring relationship that are formed between philosophy faculty and philosophy majors. Philosophy faculty interact with philosophy majors a great deal, meeting with them to discuss class materials, life issues, and the like. These "advising" moments are also moments of assessment. In addition, philosophy faculty assess each student's character development during his or her four years as a philosophy major at Millikin.

Despite these obvious points, we have been asked to engage in even further assessment of student learning. We have complied with this request. Given the peculiar nature of our discipline and the nature of "recruitment" to our major, the natural point for formal "data" collection and analysis is PH400, Seminar in Philosophy. This course, toward the end of the student's career, involves the writing of a major research paper (thesis) and is, therefore, an important key opportunity for assessing the student's growth and learning over the course of the Philosophy Major. The thesis provides us with yet another opportunity to assess our effectiveness in delivering on each of our key learning goals. There are three "aspects" or "elements" in the development of a thesis.

First, philosophy faculty members meet with students over the course of a semester. Early in the semester, these weekly meetings involve students reporting on their progress, trying out various formulations of a central thesis or idea for exploration, finding and locating sources to be used, etc. (Learning Goal 3). Later in the semester, these weekly meetings involve students bouncing arguments and ideas off of the other seniors and faculty, polishing up arguments and ideas, providing feedback to the other students, etc.

Second, students complete a substantial written essay (generally, around 20 pages). This essay is the primary basis for their course grade in PH400. We assess the quality of the written work by employment of the "writing rubric for senior thesis" (see Appendix Three) in conjunction with our own trained judgments regarding the quality of the writing, the difficulty of the subject matter, etc. (Learning Goals 1 and 2).

Finally, each student makes a formal presentation of their thesis to philosophy majors and faculty members. This oral presentation and thesis defense is now part of our community tradition of "celebration of scholarship." We assess the quality of the oral presentation by employment of the "rubric for assessment of oral communication" (see Appendix Four) (Learning Goal 1).

The thesis, therefore, provides us with yet another opportunity to assess student learning in relation to all three of our learning goals. It is, therefore, the artifact that we collect and analyze.

## **(6) Assessment Data**

Assessment data on key learning outcomes will be collected each academic year. The "artifacts" to be collected include the following:

1. All majors will submit a copy of their thesis. The thesis will offer a basis to assess student learning in the Philosophy Major in relation to all three stated learning goals. First, it (along with the oral presentation) will allow us to assess a student's ability "to express in written and oral form their

understanding of major concepts and intellectual traditions within the field of philosophy.” (Goal 1) The presentation of arguments in the writing will allow us to assess the student’s “ability to utilize the principles of critical thinking and formal logic in order to produce a sound and valid argument, or to evaluate the soundness and validity of the arguments of others.”

(Goal 2) Finally, the thesis and weekly advisory sessions will allow us to assess our student’s ability “to complete research on a philosophy-related topic, analyze objectively the results of their research, and present arguments to support their point of view in a variety of venues. (Goal 3).

2. Philosophy faculty will continue to track the post-graduate placement of our majors. Acceptance into quality postsecondary educational programs is evidence that we are fulfilling our educational mission. (Goals 1, 2, and 3). Information on the post-graduate placement of many graduates since 2000 is included in Appendix One. Additional information should be available through the alumni office.

## **(7) Analysis of Assessment Results**

During the 2013-2014 academic year, 10 students constructed and defended theses. These students were:

- (#1)
- (#2)
- (#3)
- (#4)
- (#5)
- (#6)
- (#7)
- (#8)
- (#9)
- (#10)

Assessment of student learning in the Philosophy Major focuses on the following:

- 1) The written thesis produced by each graduating philosophy major.
- 2) The oral defense of the thesis provided by each graduating philosophy major.
- 3) The post-graduation placement of each graduating philosophy major, if known.

Analysis of assessment results for each key learning outcome goal, with effectiveness measures established on a green-light, yellow-light, red-light scale, occurs for each academic year. We see no reason to reinvent the wheel. We correlate letter grades with this “colored-light” schema. A grade of “A” or “B” correlates to “green.” A grade of “C” correlates to “yellow.” And a grade of “D” or “F” correlates to “red.”

## **A. Written Thesis**

Regarding the written product, the supervising faculty member will generate a brief evaluative summary for each thesis supervised during the academic year (included below). This summary will indicate the name of the student, the title of the senior thesis (if titled), the grade earned on the senior thesis, and an indication of the basis for the grade assigned. We employ the "Rubric for Thesis" as a general guideline for grading. (The rubric is included as Appendix Three to this report.) Finally, any additional information deemed relevant to the assessment of the student's work may be included.

Electronic copies of all theses will be obtained and stored by the Chair of the Philosophy Department.

The data for philosophy students completing their thesis during the 2013-2014 academic year is provided below. All students not only produced a thesis research paper, but each also presented and defended their thesis orally during the campus wide "Celebration of Scholarship."

### **Evaluative Summaries of Senior Theses**

Recently, the Philosophy Department instituted a new process for the production of senior thesis. We revised our curriculum resulting in a combination of the old PH400 Senior Thesis course with the old PH381 Seminar in Philosophy course. We now have a single course, PH400, Seminar in Philosophy. Most (though not all) of our majors produce their "senior theses" (i.e., a major research paper engaging in argument based thesis defense) within the context of the newly created (modified) course. We did this to provide better guidance to students as they work to produce this major paper. This year, six of our ten graduating seniors wrote their thesis on this general topic. The other four students produced their thesis in another course or as an independent study project. All students not only produced a thesis research paper, but each also presented and defended their thesis orally during the campus wide "Celebration of Scholarship."

#### **Student #1:**

**Title: Religious Belief: Handle with Care**

**Grade: A (Green Light) (Dr. Money)**

#1 produced her thesis in the context of an independent study in which she focused on general issues in the philosophy of religion. She produced a solid thesis in which she defends the idea that religious belief should not be assessed or evaluated in terms of truth-value, but in terms of its instrumental value for the individual. She argues that determination of the "objective truth-value" of core religious beliefs (e.g., that God exists, claims about God's nature, etc.) are not accessible to us. In light of this skepticism, she argues that we should reorient ourselves to religious belief and

practices. The key question is not whether these beliefs are “true,” but rather whether they are beneficial to the individual who holds them. She argues that religious belief is a “tool” and should be evaluated in terms of whether the tool is effective in helping the individual adapt to his or her environment. In her words,

I aim to argue that religious does have value as a tool for personal growth and coping, and that truth value plays no part in understanding this instrumental value. Understanding this instrumental value of religion is key to releasing some of the personal and interpersonal tension that results from religious belief in an objectively-focused [or perhaps objectivity-focused] world (p.1).

#1 utilizes ideas from William James in her initial rejection of the idea that the proper and paramount focus in the assessment of religious belief should be on whether it is objectively true or false. She then turns to a reflection on some of the major causes of religious belief, dividing these causes into external causes (e.g., authority, peer pressure, education, etc.) and internal (e.g., cognitive dissonance, loneliness, desire to live a moral life, etc.). Next, she note that like any tool, religion can be used in adaptive (good, beneficial, healthy) behaviors or maladaptive (bad, harmful, unhealthy) behaviors. Among the benefits, she notes stress relief, mood elevation, connectedness and belonging with others, etc. Among the harms, she notes emotional trauma, complacency, addiction, etc. She then returns to her central claim – namely, that viewing religious belief and practices in this light provides a way to assess religion that avoids controversial claims about truth and falsity and provides a way of relieving some of the tensions that are due to religious diversity. In addition, this approach offers a pathway to inclusion and tolerance, rather than judgment and exclusion.

#1’s thesis is constructed well. It is organized and well written. It could be strengthened further by utilization of additional sources, particularly on claims about the psychological benefits or harms of religious belief. Many of the claims #1 makes in this regard feel “intuitively” right, but documentation of supporting evidence would have strengthened the paper further. It would have made the paper less of a personal reflection and more of an argument-based research paper.

In addition to incorporation of additional sources, the following ideas strike the reflective reader as ideas that might well have been anticipated and addressed:

- What implications are there for those religious viewpoints which assert as part of their basic structure the claim that their viewpoint is correct and objectively true? Are adherents to these types of religious frameworks excluded from adopting the approach #1 recommends?
- Is the determination of the truth-value of religious claims a scientific question? In places, #1 suggests that skepticism (agnosticism?) about truth-value is warranted because “our scientific methods have yet to create a system or tool in which we can come to solid, scientific conclusions about the existence of a

deity..." It is a live issue as to whether any scientific approach to understanding would be relevant to the question of God's existence and nature.

- If our evaluation of religious belief should be instrumental in focus because that focus provides a way to alleviate tension given widespread disagreement on religious claims, would this generalize to any subject matter where there was widespread disagreement? For example, there is widespread disagreement on moral claims. Should morality be evaluated in this same instrumental way?
- One often wonders if membership in any "club" or "organization" would yield some of the same benefits. For example, sense of community, avoiding loneliness, belong with others, etc. Is there anything distinctive about religion that positions it to be a more effective tool for addressing these needs or goals rather than, say, membership in the academy, in the chess club, in political party structures, etc.
- In places, one gets the sense that #1 believes that approaching religion from an instrumental value perspective fosters greater empathy and tolerance, in part because it lessens the centrality of "should claims." However, her own view seems to rest on an implicit "should" claim – namely, that religious belief should be used as a tool to facilitate the development of healthy well-adapted individuals (and should not be used as a tool for control, domination, manipulation, etc.). Rather than seeking to avoid should claims, one might suspect that what #1 is actually doing is arguing for the merits of a particular should claim regarding the way we might view religious belief and practices.

### **Student #2:**

**Title: Swampman, Millikan, and Tye**

**Grade: A (Green Light) (Dr. Hartsock)**

#2 defended a unique philosophical thesis in response to Ruth Millikan's seminal work in the philosophy of biology and mind, *Language and Other Biological Categories*. Millikan argues that a hypothetical creature, *Swampman*, who is a spontaneously created being that is biologically equivalent to some possible human, has no meaningful mental states. She accepts this counter-intuitive conclusion as a consequence for her arguments for meaning externalism. #2 argues that this consequence follows only from a misunderstanding of the semantics of phenomenal states.

#2's argument makes use of Millikan's distinction between first-order and higher-order reproductive families. Millikan argues that a causal (external) condition must be in place to establish meaning for mental states. Since Swampman, by hypothesis, is causally disconnected from the being to which is identical, Swampman lacks this connection and thus has no meaningful mental states. However, #2 argues that this is an overly narrow understanding of the possible causal connections. Instead, there is a causal connection at the type or functional level. These establish higher level causal relations and allows Swampman to inherit the meaning conditions of the creatures for which his mental states are type identical.

#2 takes on a very difficult, technical topic in philosophy. He successfully synthesized disparate philosophical material to argue for a significant and novel thesis. While his arguments were, at times, underdeveloped, the level and quality of the argumentation he provides is exceptional for the undergraduate level. Indeed, the quality approaches graduate level work. He did not merely 'extend' an extant argument from a philosopher he studied. He went after a lingering problem that faces externalist philosophies of mind and offered and argued for a novel and interesting philosophical thesis.

**Student #3:**

**Title: Untitled**

**Grade: A (Green Light) (Dr. Roark)**

#3 works to further develop the thesis found in Heumer (2013) that many people within contemporary states are, consistent with their acceptance and endorsement of political authority, are plausibly victims of something akin to Stockholm syndrome. After introducing the symptoms of Stockholm syndrome and suggesting that in fact most people within the grips of state authority suffer from the condition, #3 then productively extends her reasoning to critically examine the concept of psychosis. #3 concludes her discussion on this score by noting that, "Therefore I find the manipulative perceptions of government authority to be a form of psychosis perpetuated by governmental action". #3 makes a strong case that Stockholm syndrome is not only reserved by those who have been held captive but in addition could also apply to describe the complex political relationship between citizens and their states. As #3 notes we may simply look at the vast power differential between a citizen and their state as a starting place and then add to this empirical reality both the level of abuse from the state as well as the willingness of many citizens to make excuses for 'their' state and ultimately identify with it as a clear grounding to locate something like mass Stockholm syndrome. Using a number of powerful examples from the My Lai massacre to the Abu Ghraib prison scandal #3 makes a strong case that liberal democracies often engage in a significant level of deception and that often citizens cope with this deception not by rejecting the government or state but instead by forming a type of psychosis further identifying with it.

**Student #4:**

**Title: The Quest for Knowledge: Attention is Necessary**

**Grade: B (Green Light) (Dr. Hartsock)**

In her senior thesis, #4 explores the role that attention plays in acquiring empirical knowledge. She begins with Russell's notion of acquaintance, and argues that, contra Russell, that acquaintance must be an active, rather than passive, process. The active component she labels *attention*.

Her argument is predicated on the observation that we are not acquainted with everything we experience. Many things pass through our phenomenal experience without generating knowledge by acquaintance. Her answer for this is that such things pass by our attention.

Her primary task is to give an analysis of attention that could play this role. Her secondary task was to argue that her account of attention is the one that actually plays that role.

She succeeds in describing the functional characteristics of attention, but only does a marginal job of laying out the conditions of attention to successfully differentiate it from inattention. While this is a deficiency of her work, we must assess her attempt in context. For an undergraduate senior project, this was ambitious. Therefore, her marginal success, placed in context is well-done.

In her effort to argue that attention is actually a component of knowledge acquisition, she does better. Here, she shows that there are many things that may pass by our attention, even though, in Russell's words, they would be presented as sense-data. She successfully shows that there must be some active component on the part of the percipient if objects of our experience are to become objects of knowledge, and that this active component must be on the 'front-end,' that is pre-cognitive.

**Student #5:**

**Title: Untitled**

**Grade: A (Green Light) (Dr. Roark)**

In her senior thesis #5 explores the margins of political authority by examining the political authority held by regular citizens as well as bounty hunters. #5 begins her examination by noting that the most standard and defensible account of political authority renders consent necessary (and perhaps necessary and sufficient) for political authority. #5 then argues that when the standard for political authority can be met then it is morally permissible for the state to coerce its citizens. This seems to be a safe assumption (although of course many political philosophers would challenge the idea that the state can meet to burden of possessing political authority over its citizens). Bounty hunters are then defended by #5 as a group of people who do in fact have a type of political authority. This view has important ramifications because it suggests that quasi-state actors or even private citizens (when citizen arrest is considered) have a type of political authority. As such political authority might not be merely reserved for agents of the state. Lastly, #5 distinguishes between a bounty hunter or a private citizen making a citizen's arrest from the actions of a vigilante. She argues that the two are different because those in the first group have a broad type of permission from the state to do their actions while the vigilante lacks such permission. With this distinction in tow the idea that political authority is directly linked with state action and power is reserved.

**Student #6:****Title: Spatial Reasoning and Conceptual Content****Grade: B+ (Green Light) (Dr. Hartsock)**

#6 argues that the problem of spatial reasoning demonstrates that not all reasons are conceptual in character. She extends a counterexample Eilan offers to undermine Brewer's argument that reasons must be conceptual if they are to be reasons at all. Whereas Brewer argues that if reasons are to serve as premises in an inference they must be captured by concepts the agent possesses, Eilan argues that cases of spatial reasoning demonstrates that not all judgments involve premises in an argument. #6 reconstructs Eilan's argument as follows: "[If] we have the table and want to decide whether or not it will fit into a specific space without moving or taking measurements of it or the space, we would mentally "rotate the image". Most people would readily use that phrase to describe how they would go about this perfectly ordinary cognitive task."

#6 does a good job adjudicating the debate between Brewer and Eilan, #6's most interesting and philosophically significant contribution comes when she argues that the difficulty surrounding questions of conceptual content is rooted in our indispensable use of language to talk about perceptual content. She argues that our judgments about content are prejudiced toward the conceptualize thesis because we must necessarily conceptualize these contents to speak about or debate about their nature. Here is #6's best and most insightful work. She demonstrates a keen understanding of the complexity of philosophical subjects and treats them with subtlety rarely found in undergraduate work.

**Student #7:****Title: Response to the Demonstrative Concept Defense of Conceptualism****Grade: A (Green Light) (Dr. Hartsock)**

#7 argues that the argument for conceptualism from demonstrative concepts fails, because our understanding of the nature of concepts is wanting. Further, #7 argues that the conceptualism/nonconceptualism debate is fundamentally flawed, as it is predicated on deep misunderstandings about the nature of concepts.

#7 does a truly exceptional job outlining the major threads of the conceptualism/non-conceptualism debate. Her treatment and reconstruction of the central arguments is clear and rigorous. She reviews both the history and the state of the art in this debate very well, far beyond the level normally found in undergraduate work.

#7's work is excellent. Her arguments are clear and persuasive. She demonstrates a mastery of a highly technical philosophical field, and provides both negative critiques and positive arguments for a novel philosophical thesis. This is the gold standard of

undergraduate work, and clearly demonstrates that she is prepared for graduate work in philosophy.

**Student #8:**

**Title: Conceptualism and Hallucinations**

**Grade: A- (Green Light) (Dr. Hartsock)**

#8 argues that hallucinations should not be viewed as a challenge to the conceptualist view of experience. Rather, they should be used as a tool through which we can better understand the conceptual nature of experience. #8 offers and argues for what he terms the "dial" and "mind-engine" theories of mind.

The dial theory of mind that #8 develops suggests that agents 'turn-up' or 'turn-down' our focus of various aspects of experience, and that, to some extent, this is under the control of the agent. This is an ordinary aspect of perception, but when, for example, drugs or illness, interfere with the ordinary tuning of our sense modalities, hallucinations and illusions result. The mind-engine theory hypothesizes that the mind works together as an engine, with complex input-output functions, and that the engine synthesizes hallucinatory experience when the tuning of those functions are out of sync, per the dial theory.

While #8's theories are highly-speculative, the fundamentals of the theories construct something of a plausible account of mind. Where #8 falters is in defense of his theories. Where he excels is in the novel and creative account he provides. Too often, undergraduates rely on well-worn accounts and rarely "think out side of the box." #8 does not find himself so constrained. Though his theories are under-defended, #8's work is exceptionally critical and creative.

**Student #9:**

**Title: Money and the State**

**Grade: A (Green Light) (Dr. Roark)**

#9 in his senior thesis takes a critical look at the function and role of money and currency within civil society. #9 notes that all, or nearly all effective currency, is issued and 'guaranteed' in some sense by a state. Where you find currency you are bound to find a state and where you find a state you are bound to find currency. #9 does an excellent job distinguishing money from currency as well as explaining why it is the trust assigned to the action and solvency of the state that ultimately explain the value of state issued currency. The focus of the paper then takes an interesting turn to examine the way in which decisions made by states –often with limited consent from its citizens, e.g., going to war- can have devastating impacts of the value of a state issued currency. People can be economic victims to the inflationary policies of states. It seems that this notion can also work in reverse as well. For instance, consider the many, usually older people, in the United States who have seen virtually no growth of

fixed income guaranteed investments because the federal reserve has kept interest rates near zero. Lastly, #9 offers a very well developed section of his paper suggesting that Bicoïn could offer a substantive alternative to state sanctioned currencies. The ideas that #9 offers in defense of Bitcoin as a plausible alternative to state sanctioned currency are appealing and well thought out. But as #9 suggests to it is really power that backs up money – we just happen to see that in our world states are where power resides. And until that status quo changes one wonders how many people would trade in their dollars or Euros for bitcoin?

**Student #10:**

**Title: Untitled**

**Grade: A- (Green Light) (Dr. Roark)**

#10 takes on two of the most prominent defenses of political authority that have been offered in the philosophical literature: social contract theory and paternalism. #10 astutely challenges social contract defenses of political authority on a number of clear and relevant lines. For instance, #10 builds on the idea that for an agreement to be binding it must be the case that the parties agreeing to the contract have reasonable alternatives. On this score #10 argues that often parties to a social contract style agreement will not have reasonable alternatives. Such a position can be extended to considering whether or not a normal 18-year-old living within the United States would have reasonable alternatives to that of simply agreeing to be a citizen of the United States. At first the idea of having reasonable alternatives as a type of litmus test or necessary condition to see if consent is valid seems plausible and perhaps even compelling. However the idea does have some odd and counter-intuitive implications. For instance, imagine that you are stranded in the desert and just need one bottle of water to make it to a nearby town for help, without the water you will die. As luck would have it a man is selling a bottle of water in the desert for 10\$. Considering that we have to take into account transport to desert the 10\$ charge from the seller does not seem out of line or unfair. The seller will even take an IOU and payment after you get back from town. If we say that you need reasonable alternatives then the contract between you and the seller is not valid because your only alternative to buying the water is death. But something seems very wrong with this conclusion. You might have been in dire need but the deal you were offered was fair by any reasonable measure and your lack of reasonable alternatives in itself does not seem to invalidate your contract. Consider another example in which a person marries the love of her life and it just so happens all of her other alternatives for marriage were indeed awful. This contingent fact about the world does not seem to invalidate the marriage contract. We can apply this same reasoning to the state. Consenting to the political authority of a state might be your only feasible option but if the deal is fair that fact alone does not seem as if it would invalidate your consent. #10 also explores the idea that appealing to paternalistic concerns cannot be a defense of political authority. Here he notes, "if an action does not impose a probable harm to another party, then it should not be subject to legal intervention". With this principle, #10 suggests that whatever the

bounds of political authority it should not be so broad as to encompass actions that do not pose at least a probable harm to others. #10's idea here is powerful and finds a rich history including Mill's infamous 'harm principle'. But the 'harm principle' is notoriously hard to strictly apply in complex societies. For instance, we probably do not want to limit the harm principle to physical harms, surely we would also want to count financial harms and even emotional or mental harms that could invoke legal intervention. But then anyone who invokes something like a harm principle, as intuitive and ultimately true the principle might be, has the burden of saying a lot about the scope of harms that they have in mind. For instance, does an employer harm his employees if he uses a religious objection to deny them access to contraception via the company's medical insurance program? Maybe. And even if we count this as harm, would it count as a harm that ought to invoke legal intervention? Would that type of example count as the 'type of' harm to a third party that #10 thinks might involve legal intervention? The answer is not clear.

## **B. Oral Defense of Thesis**

All philosophy majors present an oral defense of their thesis. Their oral defense is assessed using the "Rubric for Assessment of Oral Communication," provided in Appendix Four to this report. The rubric provides for an available total point range of between 55 and 11. A total score of 34-55 will indicate a green light regarding assessment. A total score of 23-33 will indicate a yellow light regarding assessment. Finally, a total score of 11-22 will indicate a red light regarding assessment. The original assessment sheets will be stored by the Chair of the Philosophy Department.

The data for philosophy seniors graduating during the 2013-2014 academic year is provided below. The score is the average score between the three faculty evaluators.

Student #1:

Total Score on Rubric: 50

Color-Code: **Green**

Student #2:

Total Score on Rubric: 55

Color-Code: **Green**

Student #3:

Total Score on Rubric: 50

Color-Code: **Green**

Student #4:

Total Score on Rubric: 39

Color-Code: **Green**

Student #5:  
Total Score on Rubric: 45  
Color-Code: **Green**

Student #6:  
Total Score on Rubric: 5  
Color-Code: **Green**

Student #7:  
Total Score on Rubric: 51  
Color-Code: **Green**

Student #8:  
Total Score on Rubric: 47  
Color-Code: **Green**

Student #9:  
Total Score on Rubric: 43  
Color-Code: **Green**

Student #10:  
Total Score on Rubric: 49  
Color-Code: **Green**

### **c. Post-Graduation Placement (If Known)**

Our report will indicate the post-graduation placement of our graduating seniors, if known. This information is updated as new information becomes available. Among this year's graduates:

- Jame Farris is attending Stetson Law School, Florida
- Maddi Harner was awarded an Illinois Legislative Studies Fellowship, University of Illinois
- Nora Kocher is working at State Farm
- Emma Prendergast is attending University of Wisconsin at Madison, Ph.D. in philosophy
- Jacqui Rogers is pursuing Americorp, Clarke University, Dubuque, IA
- Kolton Ray is attending University of Colorado Law, Boulder

Philosophy tends to attract students who are committed to the life of the mind. Accordingly, most of our graduating majors eventually pursue further educational opportunities. The range of areas within which our majors find success is also incredibly impressive. A sense of the post-graduation educational accomplishments of our majors can be gleaned from consideration of the following:

- Our majors have been accepted into and/or completed Ph.D. programs in philosophy.
- Our majors have been accepted into and/or completed M.A. programs in philosophy.
- Our majors have been accepted into and/or completed Ph.D. programs in fields other than philosophy (e.g., political science)
- Our majors have been accepted into and/or completed M.A. programs in fields other than philosophy (e.g., experimental psychology, chemistry, health administration, French, etc.)
- Our majors have been accepted into and/or completed J.D. programs.

Acceptance into M.A., J.D., and Ph.D. programs provides compelling **external** evidence and validation of student learning in the philosophy major. Moreover, this evidence shows a consistent trend line over time: exceptional performance by our students over a decade. We believe this is compelling evidence that our *program* is vibrant and delivering on the promise of education. Student learning in the philosophy program is strong and demonstrable.

#### **D. Additional Evidence of Student Learning in the Philosophy Major**

##### **➤ Moot Court**

Each year, we participate in a state-wide competition held as part of the Model Illinois Government simulation in Springfield, Illinois. At the competition, students work in two-person teams to deliver persuasive legal arguments before a panel of justices. At the competition, each team has 30 minutes to present arguments. While team members can divide up the presentation of arguments as they see fit, competition rules require that each team member speak for at least 10 minutes. During the presentation of the oral arguments, justices – a combination of legal professionals from central Illinois, law school students, and college students who have had prior experience participating as attorneys in the competition – ask questions and offer rejoinders to the arguments made by the students. After a round of argument concludes, a formal rubric is utilized to assess student performance in five main categories: knowledge of the case, organization and reasoning, courtroom manner, forensic skills, and responding to questions. Over the past ten years, Millikin students have performed exceptionally well. The team and individual awards speak for themselves:

- Team First Place Finishes (8): 2005, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014
- Team Second Place Finishes (6): 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010, 2013, 2014
- Team Third Place Finishes (6): 2006, 2007, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2014
- Team Fourth Place Finishes (2): 2012, 2013
- Individual Award for Most Outstanding Attorney (5): 2009, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014

- Individual Award for Runner Up Most Outstanding Attorney (3): 2011, 2012, 2013

It is worth noting that the success enjoyed by our moot court students extends well beyond Model Illinois Government and Millikin. For a school our size, our placement record into nationally ranked law schools is impressive. Over the past ten years, a number of students who have participated in our moot court program have been accepted into **nationally** ranked law schools. Importantly, all of these students earned substantial scholarship support to attend these high quality institutions. These schools, their national rank, and the students who attended include:<sup>8</sup>

- University of Virginia: ranked **#8**
- Northwestern University: ranked **#12**
- Vanderbilt University: ranked **#16**
- Washington University: ranked **#18** \*\*
- Emory University: ranked **#19**
- University of Minnesota: ranked **#20** \*\*
- University of Iowa: ranked **#27** \*\*
- University of Wisconsin: ranked **#31** \*\*
- University of Illinois: ranked **#40**
- University of Colorado Boulder: ranked **#43** \*\*

The success of our students as judged by external evaluators is clear evidence of the high quality of our program. Moreover, this evidence shows a consistent trend line over time: exceptional performance by our students. We believe this is compelling evidence that our program is vibrant and delivering on the promise of education. Student learning in the philosophy program is strong and demonstrable.

## **(8) Trend Lines and Improvement Plans**

The Philosophy Department is pleased with the results in our seventh year of formal assessment.

**100% of our students were assessed in the “green” for their oral defense of their senior thesis.** The data is in line with the consistently high performance by our majors and is evidence that the philosophy program is strong. The data we have collected over the past seven years reveals a consistency in the oral competencies of our students. We attribute this primarily to the intensely discussion-driven format of our courses, a format that encourage and rewards student engagement and student contributions. Given our emphasis on this pedagogical style, it is not a surprise that our majors are adept at communicating their views orally. They essentially receive the opportunity to engage in oral communication each and every class meeting!

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<sup>8</sup> Ranking information from: <http://www.top-law-schools.com/rankings.html>. A mark of \*\* indicates that the student majored in philosophy. Those students who did not major in philosophy took numerous philosophy courses.

**100% of our students were assessed in the “green” for their written thesis.**

The data reveals consistently high performance by our majors and is evidence that the philosophy program is strong. We are confident that student learning in the philosophy major is strong.

Given these results and the fact that this is our seventh year of data collection for formal assessment purposes, we do not anticipate making any changes in our program as a result of our assessment review. We are extremely pleased with the performance of our students and we continue to believe that our program facilitates the intellectual growth and development of the critical thinking skills that are essential to delivering on “the promise of education.” The high quality work produced by our students is compelling evidence in support of this claim.

Much is made of the need to “close the loop” in assessment. While it is important to work to ensure that the information gained by assessment makes a meaningful impact on Department pedagogy and teaching practices, it is a mistake to assume that effective use of assessment information can only be demonstrated if review of assessment results in **changes** to curriculum and/or pedagogy. We reject this assumption. If analysis and review of assessment data reveal positive student learning achievements, then there is no reason to change what is clearly working. We use assessment; it is simply that the results have confirmed our strategy and approach in terms of curriculum and/or pedagogy. Absent **evidence** presented by others to us that we are in need of changing our curriculum and pedagogy, we will not undertake action to change what, in our considered judgment—judgment informed by being trained in philosophy, interacting daily with our students, grading numerous assignments, etc.—is clearly working. The members of the Department are ready to listen to those who have **evidence** that our pedagogy/curriculum could be improved. In the absence of that evidence, however, no changes will be made. If no reasons whatsoever are given for why we should change pedagogy and/or curriculum, and if all evidence points to the success of our students in terms of learning and achievement (Does anyone have evidence to the contrary? If so, then present it to us.), then the loop is closed by continuing with our tried and true approach to student learning that we implement. Our assessment efforts to date have revealed no issues or concerns that would justify instituting changes in our pedagogy/curriculum.

## **APPENDIX ONE: POST-GRADUATE INFORMATION ON GRADUATED MAJORS**

Philosophy tends to attract students who are committed to the life of the mind. Accordingly, most of our graduating majors eventually pursue further educational opportunities. Of our graduates, almost one-fourth have been accepted to law school. Approximately a one-third have been accepted to a masters or Ph.D. program of some sort.

The following list provides information regarding the post-graduate activities of each of our graduating majors over the last 14 years. Taken as a whole, this information clearly demonstrates an exceptional post-graduate success rate for our majors. It also demonstrates the ability of our faculty members to attract and retain high quality students, and their ability to grow and maintain a vibrant and essential major. In light of the totality of the circumstances (i.e., the nature of our discipline, the nature of our institution, the size of our Department, etc.), our trend line is extremely positive.

### **2014: Ten Graduating Seniors**

Katherine Chwalisz (Dec., 2013): unknown

James Farris (2014): Stetson Law School, Florida

Maddi Harner (2014): Illinois Legislative Studies Fellowship, University of Illinois

Brandy Johnson (2014): unknown

Nora Kocher (2014): State Farm

Emma Prendergast (2014): Ph.D. in philosophy, Wisconsin at Madison

Kolton Ray (2014): University of Colorado Law at Boulder

Jacqui Rogers (2014): Americorp, Clarke University, Dubuque, IA

Sam Spurling (2014): unknown

Greg Yep (2014): unknown

### **2013: Five Graduating Seniors**

Woody Boero (2013): unknown

Olivia Heisner (2013): Executive Director, Decatur is Growing Gardens, Decatur, IL.

Anna Litwin (2013): unknown

Tyler Lamensky (2013): unknown

Michael Schloss (2013): applying to medical schools

### 2012: **Seven** Graduating Seniors

Haley Carr (2012): planning on attending graduate school in philosophy; delaying for one year

Garrett Derman (2012): unknown

Dylan Howser (2012): M.Ed. College Student Affairs, Penn St. University

Jean Hurst (2012): Southern Illinois University Law School.

Alex Kralman (2012): unknown

Kyle McAllister-Grum (2012): working for the DOVE, Inc., Decatur, Illinois

Taryn Veasy (2012): Horace Mann Insurance Company, Annuity Specialist

### 2011: **Three** Graduating Seniors

Klay Baynar (2011): University of Minnesota College of Law

Jessy Sivak (2011): Boston University, Masters in Occupational Therapy (accepted and deferred enrollment until 2012)

Kenzie VanBeest (2011): University of Kansas, MA program in literature

### 2010: **Eight** Graduating Seniors

Justin Allen (2010): Washington University Law School, St. Louis

- Update: Justin did outstanding work during his first year. His work was of sufficient quality that he made **Law Review**. In addition, Justin was a member of the winning Environmental Law Moot Court team. He will be representing Washington University Law School at the national competition in NYC.

Dustin Clark (2010): working for a year, retaking LSAT, law school following year (was accepted at Cardoza Law School, NYC, but decided not to attend).

- Update: Dustin was accepted to law school at both Wisconsin and Illinois. He received significant scholarship offers at both. He has decided to attend the University of Wisconsin. He starts fall 2011.
- Dustin, as a first year law student and as part of a practicum for a non-profit group, wrote a legal brief for an appeal in a case involving a denial of unemployment benefits. The appellate court ruled in favor of his client. Here is his description of his work:

The case was based on a denial of unemployment insurance benefits because of an initial determination of misconduct by the department of workforce development. My client (without representation) then appealed this decision to an administrative tribunal run by an administrative judge. That judge determined that my client had indeed committed misconduct as defined by a Wisconsin statute and a ruling case explaining the statute. The client came to the clinic, and upon speaking with the client about what had occurred up to the point of our meeting, I identified a number of potentially arguable points. Since the client had a reasonable chance at success in an appeal, I agreed to be retained by the client as counsel (we have limited resources, so we try to filter out the cases that are lost causes). The appeal court, known as the Labor and Industry Review Commission (LIRC), is a three administrative law judge panel that reviews written appeals. They can request oral argument, but they did not. My brief argued three points. First, I argued that, contrary to the rules of evidence, the lower court had relied solely on hearsay to establish a material fact. Second, my client was never given an opportunity to view security footage either before the initial appeal or during the initial appeal, but a witness for the employer testified about the contents of said video.

I argued that because my client was unable to confront the evidence against him/her, this was a violation of his/her due process rights. Finally, I argued that no reasonable person, based on the weight of the evidence, could conclude that my client had committed misconduct. The employer did not file a timely response brief, so I'm sure that helped my client's position. I am not sure which of my arguments LIRC agreed with, but I will let you know if they publish the opinion on their website.

Khris Dunard (2010): John Marshall Law School, Chicago

- Update: Khris did outstanding work during his first year. He is ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in class of 345 and made **Law Review**.

Gordon Gilmore (2010): Gordon was accepted to Sonoma State University's program in depth psychology. He starts fall 2011.

Kenny Miller (2010): University of Colorado Law School, Boulder

Adam Moderow (2010): obtained teaching certificate and taught in public school system

Dan Nolan (2010): plans unknown

Anna Stenzel-Kuehn (2010): Attending Northern Illinois University Law School (starting fall 2012)

### 2009: **Three** Graduating Seniors

Jessica Colebar (2009): plans unknown

Tommy Fowle (2009): plans unknown

Kenny Oonyu (2009): plans unknown

### 2008: **Four** Graduating Seniors

Ali Aliabadi (2008): Ross Medical School

Michael Flesch (2008): applying to graduate school in chemistry (2010)

Gregg Lagger (2008): John Marshall Law School, Chicago.

Giuliana Selvaggio (2008): plans unknown

### 2007: **Seven** Graduating Seniors

Bjorn Bollig (2007): Director of Christian Education, Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, Downers Grove, Illinois.

Colleen Cunningham (2007): State-wide coordinator for Missourians to Abolish the Death Penalty; accepted and attending University of Chicago's Liberal Studies MA program (2010)

Mark Fredricksen (2007): working in the IT department at the University of Illinois.

Kyle Fritz (2007): Ph. D. program in philosophy, University of Florida (starting fall 2008); Assistant Editor for Human Kinetics' Scientific, Technical, and Medical Division, Champaign, Illinois; Ph.D. in Philosophy, University of Florida (starting fall 2008).

Colette Gortowski (2007): Teaching at the Wuhan Yucai Primary School in China.

Nichole Johnson (2007): Graduate University of Iowa, College of Law. Attorney with Reno and Zahm LLP, in Rockford, Illinois.

Cole Pezley (2007): Performing music, Chicago.

### 2006: **Five** Graduating Seniors

Corey Bechtel (2006): Ph.D. in Political Science, Purdue University (starting fall 2008); MA in International Studies (with concentration in International Politics), Graduate School of International Studies, University of Denver.

Ashley Goodson (2006): Peace Corp (working in Senegal, West Africa); Indiana University, MA program in social work

Stephanie Janecke (2006): Southern Illinois University Law School.

Shaun Miller (2006): University of Houston, MA program in philosophy.

Jordan Snow (2006): Completed his MA in Urban Planning and Policy from the University of Illinois-Chicago. His main course of study was Urban Transportation with a focus on transportation policy and finance. After graduation he was offered and accepted a full time position as a visiting researcher at the Urban Transportation Center at UIC. He has been working on a wide variety of projects from monitoring federal policy to consulting with local transportation organizations about revenue generation systems/policies and how they can benefit from specific federal and state programs.

### 2005: **Six** Graduating Seniors

Erika Cornelius (2005): Ph.D. program in history, Purdue University (starting fall 2007). MA in Political Science, Eastern Illinois University, where she received an Award of Excellence for her thesis, "Unilateral Executive Power: Bush Push or Congressional Cave?"

Nick Curry (2005): St. John's College, M.A. in Asian Philosophy.

Zach Godsil (2005): Web Developer, Archer Daniels Midland, Decatur

Nick McLenighan (2005): Northern Illinois University, MA program in Philosophy.

Jessica Revak (2005): Operations Manager at White Lodging Services; Western Illinois University, MA program in Experimental Psychology.

Amanda Russell (2005): University of Iowa, Dual MA programs in Health Administration and Public Health where she was recipient of The John and Wendy Boardman/Amenity Foundation Exceeding Expectations Scholarship.

### 2004: **Five** Graduating Seniors

Kim Keplar (2004): Working in St. Louis area. Was accepted to the MA program in philosophy at the University of Missouri Saint-Louis, but declined to attend.

Danielle LaSusa (2004): Temple University, Ph.D. program in philosophy.

Louis Manetti (2004): Chicago-Kent Law School, where he was awarded the first Dolores K. Hanna Trademark Prize. The prize was established last year by the law firm of Bell, Boyd & Lloyd. Awarded at the end of the school year to a Chicago-Kent student based on outstanding performance in an intellectual property course, recipients are selected by intellectual property law Chicago-Kent faculty.

Paul Scherschel (2004): Associate Director of Major Gifts, Millikin University; Program Specialist with the Office of the Speaker in the Illinois House of Representatives, Springfield; State Service Representative/Writer with the Governor's Office of Citizens Assistance, Springfield.

Kelli Willis (2004, Dec.): Working on organic farms in California.

### 2003: **Three** Graduating Seniors

Jon Bassford (2003): Ohio Northern Law School.

Katherine Guin (2003): Florida State University, Ph.D. program in philosophy.

Meghan Haddad-Null (2003): Case Western Reserve University for graduate study in French.

### 2002: **Four** Graduating Seniors

Rob Lininger (2002): University of Illinois, MA program in journalism OR Marquette University, MA program in public relations and advertising. Completed a M.A. in Human Resources and Industrial Relations from the Institute for Labor and Industry Relations, University of Illinois; Visiting Assistant Director of Student Development at Campus Recreations, University of Illinois; currently working in human resources, University of Illinois; currently in the process of applying to several masters programs in communication and education (Depaul, Loyola).

Carrie Malone (2002): Louisiana State University, Ph.D. program in psychology.

Jason Maynard (2002): Western Michigan University, MA program in philosophy; accepted into another MA program in religious studies at WMU (2009)

Jace Hoppes (2002): Dallas and Company, Champaign, IL

### 2001: **One** Graduating Senior

Chris Wood (2001): University of Kansas, Ph.D. program in philosophy.

### 2000: **Two** Graduating Seniors

Aaron Margolis (2000): Washington University School of Law. University of Chicago, M.A. Program in Social Science. Hebrew University of Jerusalem, M.A. in Israeli Politics and Society.

Michiko Tani (2000): Lewis and Clark Law School (Portland, Oregon).

## APPENDIX TWO: REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PHILOSOPHY MAJOR

### **Philosophy**

Robert E. Money, Jr. (Chair)

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#### **Philosophy Department Faculty**

*Full-Time:* Michael D. Hartsock, Robert E. Money Jr., Eric S. Roark

The philosophy major is designed to meet the needs of four classes of students: (a) those who have no professional interest in philosophy but who wish to approach a liberal education through the discipline of philosophy; (b) those who want a composite or interdepartmental major in philosophy and the natural sciences, behavioral sciences, humanities, or fine arts; (c) those who want an intensive study of philosophy preparatory to graduate study in some other field, e.g. law, theology, medicine, or education; and (d) those who are professionally interested in philosophy and who plan to do graduate work in the field and then to teach or write. Students with a professional interest in philosophy are urged by the Department to give early attention to courses in the history of philosophy sequence, metaphysics and epistemology, logic, and ethics.

#### **Major in Philosophy**

A major consists of a minimum of 30 credits and leads to the B.A. degree. There are three ways to complete the philosophy major: (1) The Traditional Track, (2) The Ethics Track, and (3) The Pre-Law Track.

#### **Traditional Track**

The traditional track ensures exposure to the core areas of philosophy, including the history of philosophy. The requirements for the traditional track are as follows:

Four Core Courses (12 credits):

PH110, Basic Philosophical Problems  
PH211, Ethical Theory and Moral Issues  
PH213, Critical Thinking: Logic  
PH400, Seminar in Philosophy

Two Courses in the History of Philosophy (6 credits):

PH300, Ancient Philosophy  
PH301, Modern Philosophy  
PH302, Contemporary Philosophy

One Course in Metaphysics/Epistemology (3 credits):

PH312, Minds and Persons  
PH313, Ways of Knowing

Three Electives in Philosophy (9 credits)

#### **Ethics Track**

The ethics track reinforces and substantially extends Millikin's emphasis on ethical reasoning and issues of social justice. The requirements for the ethics track are as follows:

Seven Core Courses (21 credits):

PH110, Basic Philosophical Problems  
PH211, Ethical Theory and Moral Issues  
PH213, Critical Thinking: Logic  
PH215, Business Ethics  
PH217, Bioethics  
PH219, Environmental Ethics  
PH400, Seminar in Philosophy

One of the following courses (3 credits):

PH305, Philosophy of Law  
PH310, Political Philosophy  
PH311, Metaethics

Two additional 300-level electives in philosophy (6 credits)

#### **Pre-Law Track**

The pre-law track provides students with the courses that emphasize the skills and the knowledge content that will make it both more likely that they will get into law school and more likely that they will succeed in law school and later as lawyers. The requirements for the pre-law track are as follows:

Seven Core Courses (21 credits):

PH110, Basic Philosophical Problems  
PH211, Ethical Theory and Moral Issues  
PH213, Critical Thinking: Logic

PH305, Philosophy of Law  
PH310, Political Philosophy  
PH366, Appellate Legal Reasoning – Moot Court  
PH400, Seminar in Philosophy

Three electives from among any philosophy courses, PO234 Civil Liberties, or PO330 Constitutional Law (9 credits)

### **Minors in Philosophy**

A student seeking a philosophy minor is required to complete 18 credits. The student can elect to complete either the traditional philosophy minor or the ethics minor. Both minors are described below.

#### **Traditional Philosophy Minor**

The requirements for the traditional philosophy minor are as follows:

Two Core Courses (6 credits):

PH110, Basic Philosophical Problems  
PH213, Critical Thinking: Logic

One Course in the History of Philosophy (3 credits):

PH300, Ancient Philosophy  
PH301, Modern Philosophy  
PH302, Contemporary Philosophy

One Course in Metaphysics/Epistemology (3 credits):

PH312, Minds and Persons  
PH313, Ways of Knowing

Two Electives in Philosophy, One of Which Must be at the 300-level (6 credits)

#### **Ethics Minor**

The requirements for the ethics minor are as follows:

One Core Course (3 credits):

PH 211, Ethical Theory and Moral Issues

Two Courses in Applied Ethics (6 credits):

PH215, Business Ethics  
PH217, Bioethics  
PH219, Environmental Ethics

Three of the Following Courses (9 credits):

PH213, Critical Thinking: Logic

Any additional applied ethics course offered by the Philosophy Department (i.e., PH215, PH217, or PH219)

PH300, Ancient Philosophy

PH305, Philosophy of Law

PH310, Political Philosophy

PH311, Metaethics

PH366, Appellate Legal Reasoning – Moot Court

PH400, Seminar in Philosophy (if content appropriate and with approval of the Chair)

Any one course outside the Philosophy Department focusing on ethics, including: CO107, Argument and Social Issues; CO308, Communication Ethics and Freedom of Expression; SO325, Social Work Ethics; BI414, The Human Side of Medicine; or another course in ethics outside the Department and approved by the Chair of the Philosophy Department.

## APPENDIX THREE: RUBRICS

### “Rubric for Theses”

The purpose of the Philosophy Major is stated in three Philosophy Department goals:

- Department Goal 1: Students will be able to express in oral and written form their understanding of major concepts and intellectual traditions within the field of philosophy.
- Department Goal 2: Students will demonstrate their ability to utilize the principles of critical thinking and formal logic in order to produce a sound and valid argument, or to evaluate the soundness and validity of the arguments of others.
- Department Goal 3: Students will demonstrate their ability to complete research on a philosophy-related topic, analyze objectively the results of their research, and present arguments to support their point of view in a variety of venues.

The following rubric connects our three learning goals to our assessment of the senior thesis, completion of which is a requirement for all majors.

**A:** In light of Department learning goals, a senior thesis earning an “A” grade should meet the following criteria of assessment:

Presentation Goal 1	Very few grammatical errors or misspellings, if any.	
	Sentence structure is appropriately complex.	
	Vocabulary is used correctly. Work reflects a college level use of words and understanding of their meanings.	
Clarity Goal 1	Each sentence clearly expresses an idea.	
	Each paragraph forms a coherent whole. Paragraphs do not include several unrelated sentences without any overarching structure.	
	The logic used in the analysis is explicitly stated or clearly implied.	
	The overall structure and organization of the introduction and the analysis is appropriate, logical and coherent. The organization adds to the strength of the arguments being presented.	
Quality Goals 1, 2, 3	Analysis reflects a high level of integration of information from multiple questions and multiple sources.	
	Analysis reflects consideration of multiple causes and	

	alternative explanations, while maintaining a clear focus on the explanations utilized.	
	In addition to there being no flaws in the reasoning presented, it is also clear that the most effective arguments are being made. The arguments being presented are compelling.	
	The analysis elicits substantive questions regarding your interpretation.	

**B:** In light of Department learning goals, a senior thesis earning a “B” grade should meet the following criteria of assessment:

Presentation Goal 1	Few grammatical errors or misspellings.	
	Overall, sentence structure is appropriately complex, incorrect sentence structures occur rarely.	
	Vocabulary is used correctly. Overall, work reflects a college level use of words and understanding of their meanings. Occasional incorrect use of vocabulary.	
Clarity Goal 1	Overall, each sentence expresses an idea.	
	Overall, each paragraph forms a coherent whole. Level of coherence is varied. Paragraphs may include some unrelated sentences.	
	The logic used in the analysis is generally clear.	
	The overall structure and organization of the introduction and the analysis is appropriate, logical and coherent.	
Quality Goals 1, 2, 3	Analysis reflects integration of information from multiple questions and multiple sources.	
	Analysis occasionally reflects consideration of multiple causes and alternative explanations. A clear focus on the explanations utilized is generally present.	
	There are no glaring flaws in the reasoning presented. Effective arguments are being made.	

**C:** In light of Department learning goals, a senior thesis earning a “C” grade should meet the following criteria of assessment:

Presentation Goal 1	Some grammatical errors or misspellings.	
	Occasionally sentence structure is appropriately complex. Simplistic sentence structures are used. Common errors in	

	sentences such as run-on sentences occur.	
	Some vocabulary is used correctly. Work minimally reflects a college level use of words and understanding of their meanings. Frequent use of simplistic vocabulary.	
Clarity Goal 1	More sentences clearly express ideas than do not. Rambling sentences or unclear structure occurs.	
	Level of coherence in paragraphs is varied. Paragraphs may include some unrelated sentences. Paragraphs may be too long or too short.	
	The logic used in the analysis is occasionally clear.	
	The overall structure and organization of the introduction and the analysis reflects some logic and coherence.	
Quality Goals 1, 2, 3	Analysis reflects occasional integration of information from multiple questions and sources.	
	Analysis rarely reflects consideration of multiple causes and alternative explanations. Occasional clear focus on the explanations utilized present.	
	There are few glaring flaws in the reasoning presented. Occasional effective arguments are being made.	

**D:** In light of Department learning goals, a senior thesis earning a “D” grade should meet the following criteria of assessment:

Presentation Goal 1	Grammatical errors or misspellings occur, penalties for affect final grade.	
	Sentence structure is rarely complex. Simplistic sentence structures are used. Common errors in sentences such as run-on sentences occur. Non-sentences occur occasionally.	
	Minimal appropriate use of the language. Work only rarely reflects a college level use of words and understanding of their meanings. Frequent use of simplistic vocabulary. When sophisticated vocabulary appears, it is often incorrect.	
Clarity Goal 1	Sentences occasionally clearly express ideas. Rambling sentences or unclear structure occurs.	
	Low levels of coherence in paragraphs. Paragraphs frequently include some unrelated sentences. Paragraphs may be too long or too short.	
	The logic used in the analysis is rarely clear.	
	Structure and organization of the introduction and the analysis do not reflect logic and coherence, they are simply strung together.	
Quality Goals 1, 2,	Analysis reflects little or no integration of information from multiple questions or sources.	

3		
	Analysis does not reflect consideration of multiple causes and alternative explanations. Clear explanations are missing.	
	Many glaring flaws in the reasoning presented. Only rarely are effective arguments are being made.	

**F:** In light of Department learning goals, a senior thesis earning an “F” grade does not meet the standards for a “D” and is totally unacceptable work for a college senior, much less a philosophy major.

### Critical Thinking in the Philosophy Major

1. Identifies, summarizes (and appropriately reformulates) the problem, question, issue, or creative goal.

RED, 1 to 2 Points	YELLOW, 3 Points	GREEN, 4 to 5 Points
Does not attempt to or fails to identify and summarize issue/goal accurately.	Summarizes issue/goal, though some aspects are incorrect or confused. Nuances and key details are missing or glossed over.	Clearly identifies the challenge and subsidiary, embedded, or implicit aspects of the issue/goal. Identifies integral relationships essential to analyzing the issue/goal.

2. Identifies and considers the influence of context and assumptions.

RED, 1 to 2 Points	YELLOW, 3 Points	GREEN, 4 to 5 Points
Approach to the issue is in egocentric or socio-centric terms. Does not relate issue to other contexts (cultural, political, historical, etc.).	Presents and explores relevant contexts and assumptions regarding the issue, although in a limited way.	Analyzes the issue with a clear sense of scope and context, including an assessment of audience. Considers other integral contexts.
Does not recognize context or surface assumptions and underlying ethical implications, or does so superficially.	Provides some recognition of context and consideration of assumptions and their implications.	Identifies influence of context and questions assumptions, addressing ethical dimensions underlying the issue, as appropriate.

3. Develops, presents, and communicates OWN perspective, hypothesis, or position.

RED, 1 to 2 Points	YELLOW, 3 Points	GREEN, 4 to 5 Points
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<p>Position or hypothesis is clearly inherited or adopted with little original consideration.</p> <p>Addresses a single source or view of the argument, failing to clarify the established position relative to one's own.</p> <p>Fails to present and justify own opinion or forward hypothesis.</p> <p>Position or hypothesis is unclear or simplistic.</p>	<p>Position includes some original thinking that acknowledges, refutes, synthesizes, or extends other assertions, although some aspects may have been adopted.</p> <p>Presents own position or hypothesis, though inconsistently.</p> <p>Presents and justifies own position without addressing other views, or does so superficially.</p> <p>Position or hypothesis is generally clear, although gaps may exist.</p>	<p>Position demonstrates ownership for constructing knowledge or framing original questions, integrating objective analysis and intuition.</p> <p>Appropriately identifies own position on the issue, drawing support from experience and information not available from assigned sources.</p> <p>Clearly presents and justifies own view or hypothesis while qualifying or integrating contrary views or interpretations.</p> <p>Position or hypothesis demonstrates sophisticated integrative thought and is developed clearly throughout.</p>
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4. Presents, assesses, and analyzes sources appropriate to the problem, question, issue, or creative goal.

RED, 1 to 2 Points	YELLOW, 3 Points	GREEN, 4 to 5 Points
<p>No evidence of search, selection, or source evaluation skills.</p> <p>Sources are simplistic, inappropriate, or not related to topic.</p>	<p>Demonstrates adequate skill in searching, selecting, and evaluating sources to meet the information need.</p> <p>Appropriate sources provided, although exploration appears to have been routine.</p>	<p>Evidence of search, selection, and source evaluation skills; notable identification of uniquely salient resources.</p> <p>Information need is clearly defined and integrated to meet and exceed assignment, course, or personal interests.</p>

5. Integrates issue/creative goal using OTHER disciplinary perspectives and positions.

RED, 1 to 2 Points	YELLOW, 3 Points	GREEN, 4 to 5 Points
<p>Deals with a single perspective and fails to discuss others' perspectives.</p> <p>Treats other positions superficially or misrepresents them.</p> <p>Little integration of perspectives and little or no evidence of attending to others' views.</p>	<p>Begins to relate alternative views to qualify analysis.</p> <p>Analysis of other positions is thoughtful and mostly accurate.</p> <p>Acknowledges and integrates different ways of knowing.</p>	<p>Addresses others' perspectives and additional diverse perspectives drawn from outside information to qualify analysis.</p> <p>Analysis of other positions is accurate, nuanced, and respectful.</p> <p>Integrates different disciplinary and epistemological ways of knowing. Connects to career and civic responsibilities, as appropriate.</p>

Comments:

6. Identifies and assesses conclusions, implications, and consequences.

RED, 1 to 2 Points	YELLOW, 3 Points	GREEN, 4 to 5 Points
<p>Fails to identify conclusions, implications, and consequences, or conclusion is a simplistic summary.</p> <p>Conclusions presented as absolute, and may attribute conclusion to external authority.</p>	<p>Conclusions consider or provide evidence of consequences extending beyond a single discipline or issue. Presents implications that may impact other people or issues.</p> <p>Presents conclusions as relative and only loosely related to consequences. Implications may include vague reference to conclusions.</p>	<p>Identifies, discusses, and extends conclusions, implications, and consequences. Considers context, assumptions, data, and evidence. Qualifies own assertions with balance.</p> <p>Conclusions are qualified as the best available evidence within the context.</p> <p>Consequences are considered and integrated. Implications are clearly developed and consider ambiguities.</p>

7. Communicates effectively.

RED, 1 to 2 Points	YELLOW, 3 Points	GREEN, 4 to 5 Points
<p>In many places, language obscures meaning.</p> <p>Grammar, syntax, or other errors are distracting or repeated. Little evidence of proofreading. Style is inconsistent or inappropriate.</p> <p>Work is unfocused and poorly organized; lacks logical connection of ideas. Format is absent, inconsistent, or distracting.</p> <p>Few sources are cited or used correctly.</p> <p>Final product/piece does not communicate the intended issue or goal.</p>	<p>In general, language does not interfere with communication.</p> <p>Errors are not distracting or frequent, although there may be some problems with more difficult aspects of style and voice.</p> <p>Basic organization is apparent; transitions connect ideas, although they may be mechanical. Format is appropriate although at times inconsistent.</p> <p>Most sources are cited and used correctly.</p> <p>Final product/piece communicates the intended issue or goal in a general manner.</p>	<p>Language clearly and effectively communicates ideas. May at times be nuanced and eloquent.</p> <p>Errors are minimal. Style is appropriate for audience.</p> <p>Organization is clear; transitions between ideas enhance presentation. Consistent use of appropriate format. Few problems with other components of presentation.</p> <p>All sources are cited and used correctly, demonstrating understanding of economic, legal, and social issues involved with the use of information.</p> <p>Final product/piece communicates the intended issue or goal effectively.</p>

Criteria Scores

- \_\_\_ 1. Identify problem, question, issue, creative goal.
- \_\_\_ 2. Consider context and assumptions
- \_\_\_ 3. Develop own position or hypothesis
- \_\_\_ 4. Presents, assesses, and analyzes sources appropriate to the problem, question, issue or creative goal.
- \_\_\_ 5. Integrate other perspectives
- \_\_\_ 6. Identify conclusions and implications
- \_\_\_ 7. Communicate effectively

\_\_\_\_ TOTAL SCORE

RED Total score of 7-20	YELLOW Total score of 21-27	GREEN Total Score of 28-35
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## APPENDIX FOUR: RUBRIC FOR ASSESSMENT OF ORAL COMMUNICATION

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Presentation Context: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_

### Rating Scale:

- 5 = sophisticated communication skills
- 4 = advanced communication skills
- 3 = competent communication skills
- 2 = marginal communication skills
- 1 = profound lack of communication skills

### I. Formal Presentation

- |           |  |
|-----------|--|
| 5 4 3 2 1 | 1. Uses notes effectively.   |
| 5 4 3 2 1 | 2. Shows an ability to handle stage fright.  |
| 5 4 3 2 1 | 3. Communicates a clear central idea or thesis.  |
| 5 4 3 2 1 | 4. Communicates a clear and coherent organizational pattern (e.g., main supporting points are clearly connected to the central thesis).                |
| 5 4 3 2 1 | 5. Exhibits reasonable directness and competence in delivery (e.g., voice is clear and intelligible, body is poised, eye contact with audience, etc.). |
| 5 4 3 2 1 | 6. Avoids delivery mannerisms that detract from the speaker's message.   |
| 5 4 3 2 1 | 7. Meets time constraints.   |
| 5 4 3 2 1 | 8. Overall Evaluation  |

WRITTEN COMMENTS:

## II. Informal Classroom Discussions

- 5 4 3 2 1      1. Is able to listen to perspectives that differ from one's own.
- 5 4 3 2 1      2. Uses language and nonverbal clues appropriately.
- 5 4 3 2 1      3. Displays appropriate turn-taking skills.

WRITTEN COMMENTS:

GREEN Total score of 55-34	YELLOW Total score of 33-23	RED Total Score of 22-11
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