**Philosophy Department Assessment Report for Majors (2010-11)**

*Courses in which assessment of Philosophy senior Majors was conducted*:

In the spring of 2011, the Philosophy Department conducted a general assessment based on any 8 courses taken in the department to complete a major (in contrast to the previous year, i.e., 2009-10, when we conducted an assessment based on specific courses taken by the graduating senior majors in the spring semester).

*When the assessment was conducted:*

The assessment took place in the spring semester of 2011, between the last week of classes and the day before commencement.

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

The department used **student portfolios of senior majors** to collect evidence of their achievement related to the learning objectives in the department assessment plan. **These student portfolios provided data from two sources**: 1**) a general assessment instrument**; 2) the **student’s analytical essay**.

**The general assessment instrument mentioned in 1) above included at least two of the following three procedures**: ***problem analysis*** (to measure whether our students have developed the skills necessary to conduct a logical analysis); ***assessment questions*** (to measure whether our students have developed a sense of intellectual heritage, including familiarity with major philosophers and their contributions to the field); and ***self-assessment questions*** (to measure whether our students have developed the ability to conduct logical analysis, conceptual analysis, and philosophical research with confidence).

**The student’s analytical essay mentioned in 2) above** is used to measure our students’ ability to conduct research in the field – i.e., to approach problems philosophically and conduct philosophical analysis in research papers.

Cumulatively, student portfolios of senior majors enable us to measure whether they have achieved the following Learning Outcomes: Student Outcome 1: Students will be able to analyze the complexity of an issue by identifying possible multiple viewpoints inherent in the issue; Student Outcome 2: Students will be able to construct arguments inherent in each of these viewpoints – i.e., identify implicit or explicit premises and generate conclusions from these premises; Student Outcome 3: Students will be able to examine merits and demerits of these arguments and viewpoints by examining amongst other things their validity, soundness, etc.; Student Outcome 4: Students will be able to clearly and precisely express their views in writing; and Student Outcome 5: Students will be able to gain familiarity with major philosophers and their contributions to the field.

*Summary of Data Collected in Spring, 2011 [Number of graduating senior majors = 4; Number of responses = 2]:*

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

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 20

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Problem Analysis 2

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Assessment Questions 20

**Student Outcome 2: Students will be able to construct arguments inherent in each of these viewpoints – i.e., identify implicit or explicit premises and generate conclusions from these premises.**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 20

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Problem Analysis 2 **0**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Assessment Questions 20

**Student Outcome 3: Students will be able to examine merits and demerits of these arguments and viewpoints by examining amongst other things their validity, soundness, etc.**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 20

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Problem Analysis 1 **1**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Assessment Questions 20

**Student Outcome 4: Students will be able to clearly and precisely express their views in writing.**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 20

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Problem Analysis 20

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Assessment Questions 20

**Student Outcome 5: Students will be able to gain familiarity with major philosophers and their contributions to the field.**

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Analytical Essay 20

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Problem Analysis 20

**Assessment Procedure Passing [70% or above] Failing [below 70%]**

Assessment Questions 20

*Analysis of the data*

The Philosophy Department wishes to know whether its students learn to approach a problem philosophically. Our graduating majors’ portfolios have demonstrated that desired student outcomes have been achieved in relation to general assessment instruments and students’ analytical essays.

General assessment instruments demonstrate that our graduating majors have achieved proficiency in relation to all 5 student outcomes listed above. In addition to the above assessment instruments, there is, to our minds, no substitute for an analytical essay in which a wide spectrum of skills are deployed *in an appropriate way*, given the problem at hand. By the time our majors are seniors, there is ample evidence that our approach is productive. Our graduating senior majors’ portfolios exhibit the reflective, critical perspective we hope to convey. The five student outcomes identified above are demonstrated in a wide variety of ways: Our students deploy distinctions demonstrating an appreciation of precision; they routinely consider the arguments presented by a text, distinguishing the logical properties from the rhetorical components of these arguments; they attempt to provide counter-examples, advance their own positive arguments, and even consider counter-examples to their own arguments – this demonstrates skill in philosophical analysis and also shows that they are properly reflective and critical, even of their own assumptions and beliefs, which sets them apart from those who approach problems ideologically. This is distinctively philosophical and especially important to the Department. Their analytical essays also consider historical approaches to the problem they are working on and demonstrate a sense of intellectual heritage.

*Curricular Changes Proposed as a Result of the Above Analysis*

At present, no curricular changes are being considered by the Department as a result of the above analysis. Even though we are a much smaller department compared to other schools in the GLCA and ACM, we are doing an excellent job of training our students philosophically and have a long record of placing them in top-notch graduate and professional programs. A recent retirement of faculty member whose position was not immediately replaced has necessitated our looking for ways to meet the evolving needs and interests of our student body through offering new and innovative courses despite our limited resources. We are also keeping better track of our majors and will continue to gather evidence of our effectiveness via their post-graduate performance.