

Department of Philosophy Strategic Plan 2019-2024

Mission Statement

The Department of Philosophy as a three-fold mission: to provide an outstanding undergraduate education in Philosophy to students enrolled in our programs and courses; to produce and disseminate first rate scholarship in Philosophy and related fields; to play an integral role in the University's mission to foster the development of graduates who are knowledgeable, critical, independent thinkers, and engaged citizens through our significant participation in the general education program.

Vision

The Department of Philosophy seeks to provide an outstanding philosophical education to our students and to support the educational goals of Illinois State University by fostering the development of graduates who are informed critical enquirers and life-long learners. We are a department of productive scholars and strong teachers that recognizes the central importance of successful scholarship to quality instruction in Philosophy. We seek to provide an environment where all of our faculty and students can achieve their intellectual goals and thrive as productive and engaged members of their communities.

Values

The values of the Department of Philosophy have been informed by and are consistent with the values found in Illinois State University's strategic plan, *Educate-Connect-Elevate*, and the College of Arts and Sciences Strategic Plan.

- Education in philosophy provides students with the opportunity to develop skills necessary for lifelong learning, critical thinking, and engaged citizenship within a global society.
- We value the active pursuit of learning and scholarship through research and its dissemination through publication and teaching.
- A healthy and successful academic community works collaboratively to fulfill the goals of producing both knowledge and informed, engaged citizens.
 - Collaboration between faculty across disciplinary boundaries and between faculty and students that encourages critical reflection on distinctly philosophical issues is vital to the production of human understanding across a wide range of intellectual endeavors.
- As a department, we approach the study of Philosophy from a variety of perspectives and with a plurality of scholarly methodologies. We recognize that a diversity of ideas, perspectives, and scholarly approaches contributes to the intellectual development of

our students. It also helps to make the department a vibrant and exciting place in which to work and study.

- We recognize that, as a discipline, Philosophy does not reflect the cultural, racial, and gender diversity found in our student body or in the broader society. We acknowledge this as significant problem and we are committed to addressing this disparity to the extent practically possible.
- We recognize that many programs talk about welcoming and supporting faculty with diverse backgrounds, but once those faculty members show up on campus, they often do not experience the level of support they were promised during the recruitment process. We will work to ensure that applicants understand that we are a department that values and supports candidates who contribute to the diversity of our faculty. We will not make promises in the recruitment process we cannot keep and we will make every effort to support and retain the people we hire.
- We are committed to fostering an environment of integrity, mutual respect, shared governance, and civil discourse.

Areas of Strategic Focus

Strategic Focus One: Continue and increase support for faculty scholarship. Continue to encourage and support a culture of “sharing” works in progress among faculty colleagues and interested students.

- a. Secure more funding for faculty travel.
- b. Develop more flexibility in teaching assignments to allow faculty targeted opportunities for intensive research and writing.
- c. Improve developmental opportunities for mid-career faculty to facilitate promotion from Associate to Full Professor.
- d. Assist faculty with securing extramural funding.
- e. Encourage the development of a voluntary “works-in-progress” forum where faculty can present and discuss their current research projects with interested faculty and students.
- f. Support efforts to share philosophical scholarship by ensuring that organizing and participating in such events is recognized as “service to the department” in annual productivity reviews.

Strategic Focus Two: Hire new faculty with the potential to be outstanding teacher-scholars who maintain and enhance the breadth and depth of departmental expertise.

- a. Future appointments should support breadth and depth in course offerings and research expertise.
- b. Use opportunities to recruit new faculty in ways that are consistent with our departmental values. For example, we should search strategically in ways that increase the probability that women and philosophers of color will be well represented in the applicant pool.

- c. Enhance departmental programs that lead to the retention and career success of new faculty hires. For example, explore establishing a voluntary early career mentorship program that would be recognized and rewarded in the annual productivity review process.
- d. We are committed not only to maintaining, but to enhancing scholarship and teaching in areas in which we already excel.
- e. We should think more intentionally about our interdisciplinary connections and expand them where appropriate.
- f. The Department is dependent on our Non-Tenure Track Faculty to meet our curricular needs. In light of this fact, we support the development of early-career initiatives designed to assist our non-tenure track colleagues achieve long term career success.
- g. Given the realities of the contemporary academic job market, some of the Department's Non-Tenure Track Faculty may serve in that role for most, if not all, of their academic career. We support initiatives to ensure that our non-tenure track colleagues receive fair wages and access to affordable benefits including health insurance.
- h. We also recognize the important role non-tenure track faculty play in the shared governance of the University and will continue to develop ways to include them in the Department's shared governance without imposing an unreasonable burden on them.

Strategic Focus Three: Develop a “Visiting Assistant Professor” Program.

- a. Continue working to establish a “visiting scholar” program. We have envision a 1 to 2 year temporary appointment we would use to bring in early career scholars working on research projects that would add considerably to the intellectual excitement among both faculty and students. We would like these visitors to collaborate with students and faculty, share their scholarship with the university community, and serve to bring attention to research in Philosophy.
 - Explore ways of modifying or expanding our NTT hiring to accomplish this goal.

Strategic Focus Four: Enhance the quality of undergraduate instruction in order to continue to provide our students with an outstanding undergraduate education in Philosophy.

- a. Continue to evaluate, discuss, and improve our curriculum and related pedagogical practices.
 - Continue building a healthy culture of assessment.
 - Continue to develop a departmental culture that encourages faculty to reflect collectively on the department's pedagogical and curricular goals.
- b. Continue to ensure that the Department provides an inclusive and supportive environment for all of our students.
 - Continue to monitor data regarding student retention/persistence in our major and develop strategies to address problems where necessary.
 - Continue to work on new ways of fostering an environment of integrity, respect, and civility in all of our classrooms, colloquia, and any of our other events.

- c. The student population in Philosophy is increasingly diverse. We will continue to work with campus and community resources, including RSOs, to respond to the needs of all of our students.
 - Develop better ways to support students who struggle in class for reasons outside of school (e.g. mental health, financial need).
 - Support student participation in the university’s various diversity graduation ceremonies.
- d. Further enrich advising and other forms of support for students in all of our programs:
 - Continue working with the College to establish a 12-month contract for our Academic Advisor so that he can carry out essential advising duties including Preview, Summer Open Houses, Welcome Week, and August graduation audits.
 - Continue and improve career advising.
 - Continue and improve advising for students interested in graduate and professional schools.
 - Develop internship, mentoring, and networking opportunities for philosophy students.
 - Develop better channels of communication between the department and our students, including enhanced utilization of social media.
- e. Continue working to develop a culture of scholarship among our majors.
 - Provide opportunities and support for students to present their own philosophical scholarship to faculty and peers in both formal and informal settings.
 - Continue to encourage and support participation in undergraduate research events such as the University Research Symposium and the Women’s and Gender Studies Research Symposium.
- f. Improve on our efforts to encourage philosophy students to take part in the Honors Program:
 - Continue to improve the department’s relationship with the Honors Program including increasing communication through the Honors Liaison Program.
 - Encourage qualified students to participate in the departmental *Honors in Philosophy* program by increasing the visibility of this program and recruiting our best students.
 - Encourage qualified students to participate in the University Honors Program
 - Actively encourage honors students enrolled in our courses to consider majoring or minoring in Philosophy.
- g. Secure additional funding to support undergraduate scholarship including travel to undergraduate conferences.
- h. Work with university and community resources to develop and promote opportunities for internships and service learning for Philosophy students.
- i. Recognize, promote, and encourage civic engagement.

Strategic Focus Five: Increase opportunities for collaboration between faculty and between faculty and students.

- a. Secure consistent funding for a departmental colloquium series that provides resources for at least 2 visitors per semester (travel and modest honorarium).
- b. Secure consistent funding for a short-term visiting scholar program. Visitors would spend several days here on campus. Visitors could be focused on working with students or working with faculty (especially junior faculty) on collaborative research or teaching projects.
- c. Explore developing opportunities for students to engage in philosophical research in collaboration with faculty.
- d. Work to increase the audience for department colloquia and other programming events. Where appropriate, work to broaden the appeal of our programming for members of the academic and local community beyond philosophy faculty and students.
- e. Continue to recognize that the department colloquium series also provides philosophy faculty with an important opportunity to engage in scholarly discussion with fellow philosophers working on problems or questions of particular interest to members of the department. Continue to support the inclusion of such presentations as part of the series.

Strategic Focus Six: Enhance relationships with alumni and other external stakeholders.

- a. Continue to develop and enhance connections with alumni.
- b. Develop better connections with recent graduates both to track their success after graduation and to enhance networking and mentorship opportunities for current students.
- c. Continue to regularly produce the alumni newsletter and work to expand the scope of the newsletter.
- d. Identify distinguished alumni and invite them to participate in annual Alumni Day and Homecoming activities.

Strategic Focus Seven: Work with the College and University to improve the physical spaces assigned to the Department for its use in both teaching and scholarship.

- a. Enhance classroom space and furnishings to facilitate improved learning outcomes and provide for greater flexibility in instructional approach.
- b. Improve faculty office space in order to facilitate greater opportunities for collaboration between faculty peers and between faculty and students.
- c. Improve access to classroom technology to facilitate flexibility in pedagogy and encourage the appropriate use of such technology in Philosophy instruction.