

Department of Philosophy Illinois State University

Strategic Plan 2010-2015

Mission Statement

The Department of Philosophy has a four-fold mission: to help prepare graduates to become informed inquirers, to foster an excellent learning environment broadly conceived, to produce and disseminate original scholarly contributions within the discipline and related areas, and to provide leadership to the university and community using our expertise as appropriate. We seek to provide an excellent and broad education to majors and minors, and to support the educational goals of ISU by supporting general education requirements with courses that are of real value to non-majors. In keeping with the interdisciplinary character of many areas of philosophy, we seek to play a leadership role in fostering the growth of interdisciplinary learning opportunities.

Values

Consistent with the University-wide strategic plan, Educating Illinois, and the College of Arts and Sciences Strategic Plan, we in the Department of Philosophy value

- Development of student skills necessary for lifelong learning, critical thinking, and engaged citizenship within a global society
- Active pursuit of learning and scholarship through research and its dissemination through publication and teaching
- Engagement with students and faculty of other disciplines, encouraging critical reflection on those foundational issues within each discipline that are distinctly philosophical in nature
- Recruitment, professional development, and retention of a high quality faculty engaged in teaching, research, and service, especially given high number of recent retirements
- Faculty and student collaboration in teaching and learning
- Shared governance, the diversity of ideas and perspectives, academic freedom, cooperation and collegiality among faculty members

Vision

In light of the University's strategic plan, *Educating Illinois*, and the College of Arts and Sciences Strategic Plan, the vision of the Department of Philosophy is to provide a high quality undergraduate Philosophy program delivered by high-quality faculty.

The Department's vision includes

- Improving the learning environment for students in standard Philosophy courses and fostering greater student participation in classroom discussions in order to enable instructors to have greater impact on each student's personal and academic growth
- Increasing the number of philosophy majors and minors, with a goal of 100 philosophy majors
- Improving the research environment for faculty by increasing the resources that support quality research (including increased research time, support for travel, and support for local colloquium series)
- Enhancing the academic reputation of the department on campus and off to include superior performance in research, a first-rate major and minor program, and a quality contribution to general education

- Continuing to receive external funding through grants to support the research and teaching mission of the department
- Recruiting, developing, and retaining high-quality faculty, especially in the wake of many recent retirements
- Continuing to support The Mind Project so it can expand its outreach to serve more students, faculty, staff, and the public at large and to further enhance its reputation as a national leader in philosophy and cognitive science instruction

Strategic Directions

Strategy One: Hiring new faculty who maintain and enhance the breadth and depth of departmental expertise. (CAS Strategic Plan Strategic Focus 1.)

Due to retirements and other changes in the faculty, the Department of Philosophy as of 2011 has barely half its historic complement of tenure track faculty. The goal of future appointments is to support breadth and depth in course offerings and research expertise. Breadth is important so that students are able to design undergraduate programs that include their special interests and so that the greater academic community and the general public can benefit from a faculty with broad areas of expertise. Depth is also important, however, because a department's greatest influence and impact will be in disciplinary areas where they are leaders in the field. Since no department can be a leader in every sub-discipline, this department is committed not only to maintaining but to enhancing areas in which it has traditionally excelled. Ideally, at least one appointee with the primary specializations listed below will have some competence with philosophy of religion. Future appointments (and there should be at least three vacancies in the next five years) will seek to strengthen departmental expertise in the following three areas:

1. Ethics, Social, and Political Philosophy—a new appointee should have a demonstrable mastery of traditional areas of Ethics and Political Philosophy and a sound understanding of recent developments in Social Philosophy, including the Philosophy of the Social Sciences.
2. Philosophy of Mind—a new appointee should understand, be able to teach and contribute to recent interdisciplinary developments in Cognitive Science as well as traditional areas of the philosophy of mind.
3. Non-Western and/or Continental Philosophy – A new appointment should continue the department's tradition of excellence in offering first-rate instruction and expertise in philosophical areas that lie outside the Anglo-American traditions that dominate philosophy departments in this country. Non-western traditions of particular interest include those of India and China. Continental traditions of interest include phenomenology and its successors primarily in France and Germany.

Strategy Two: Enhance the Quality of Undergraduate Philosophy Instruction by Redistributing Enrollments and Reducing Student-Faculty Ratio. (CAS Strategic Plan Strategic Focus 1.)

- Reduce the department's percentage of general education credit hour production from 70% to 60% to meet the need for increased 300-level course offerings required by recent changes in major requirements
- Continue to develop on line courses to meet the needs of off-campus students

Strategy Three: Increase the Number of Philosophy Majors and Minors. (CAS Strategic Plan Strategic Focus 1.)

- Improve departmental efforts to use general education philosophy courses to identify and recruit high quality students into the major and minor
- Educate students, faculty, advisors, and staff throughout the university to the benefits of a major or minor in philosophy as preparation for a careers in law and business and other professions.
- Expand the breadth of course offerings to attract more students

- Decrease class sizes in courses for majors to allow more faculty attention to individual student development

Strategy Four: Enhance support for faculty research and creative activity. (CAS Strategic Focus 3.)

- Restructure course enrollments to gain extra re-assigned time for faculty to enhance research productivity
- Continue to experiment with courses like large sections of PHI 101 and 112 to create more research time for faculty
- Take steps during the next 5 years to move to a 3/2 teaching load to facilitate research productivity

Strategy Five: Increase the local, state, national, and international visibility of the Department's quality programs, student successes, and faculty and staff achievements. (See CAS Strategic Focus 4.)

- Continue distributing our departmental newsletter, *Philosophical Conversations*, to alumni and students
- Start distributing the newsletter electronically using email
- Continue to regularly update our Department webpage and *The Mind Project* Webpage with news items
- Disseminate faculty and student accomplishments to CAS News and ISU Media Relations
- Promote faculty expertise to outside constituencies
- Increase the number of colloquium talks from outside speakers and promote ISU faculty as candidates for colloquium presentations at other institutions.

Accountability

Strategy 1: New faculty search committees and the chair will be responsible for assessing progress on and taking steps to further the accomplishment of this strategic goal.

Strategy 2: The Departmental Curriculum Committee and Teaching Committee will be responsible for assessing progress on and taking steps to further the accomplishment of this strategic goal.

Strategy 3: The Departmental Curriculum Committee and Teaching Committee will be responsible for assessing progress on and taking steps to further the accomplishment of this strategic goal.

Strategy 4: The Chair, the Departmental Curriculum Committee and Teaching Committee will be responsible for assessing progress on and taking steps to further the accomplishment of this strategic goal.

Strategy 5: The Assistant to the Chair, the Chair, the Colloquium Director, and the rest of the Departmental Staff will be responsible for assessing progress on and taking steps to further the accomplishment of this strategic goal.