Assessment of Student Learning in the Philosophy Major
Academic Year 2014-2015
Formal Report (Due July 1, 2015)

***This version does <u>not</u> 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.

<u>Extraordinary Teaching</u>

The Philosophy Department at Millikin University is unrivaled in terms of objective measures of teaching quality. For example, <u>each</u> 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, <u>each</u> 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, <u>each</u> member of the Philosophy Department has 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 five 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 Five Semesters)

Semester	Course Organization and Planning		Communication		Overall Instructor Excellent		Overall Course Excellent	
Fall 2014	4.85	(4.35)	4.82	(4.41)	4.83	(4.35)	4.78	(4.19)
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:

Philosophy Department Learning Goal	**Corresponding Millikin University Learning Goal Number(s)**
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

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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 scare 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.

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 also directs our ethics bowl program. Dr. Hartsock came to Millikin in 2010.

A Vibrant Major

The philosophy program at Millikin is vibrant and strong. We typically have between twenty and 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.[1] The pre-law track is designed for those students interested in using philosophy as preparation for law school.[2] 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 2015 semester, the Philosophy Department had 20 majors and 6 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:

[1] 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.

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

> 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 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.[3]

- **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:

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

[3] 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.

- IN251, United States Structural Studies
- IN350, Global Issues
- 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.[4] 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

[4] 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

acquire curricular breadth in their undergraduate curriculum. The value of pursuing a 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 (7): 2006, 2007, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015
  - Team Fourth Place Finishes (3): 2012, 2013, 2015
  - 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 "top 100" 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:[5]

- University of Virginia: ranked **#8**
- Northwestern University: ranked **#12**
- Vanderbilt University: ranked **#17**
- Washington University: ranked **#18**
- Emory University: ranked **#19**
- University of Minnesota: ranked **#20**
- University of Iowa: ranked **#22**
- University of Wisconsin: ranked **#31**
- University of Colorado Boulder: ranked **#40**
- University of Illinois: ranked **#41**
- St. Louis University: **#87**

Ethics Bowl

The philosophy program provides philosophy majors as well as Millikin students more generally with the opportunity to engage in high intensity and high quality performance learning in the form of ethics bowl. Students wishing to participate must enroll in PH370, Ethical Reasoning – Ethics Bowl. This course is an experiential and collaborative learning experience in which students are taught the essential elements of ethical reasoning by an appropriately credentialed faculty member and eventually perform their learning before third party stakeholders (e.g., professionals from a variety of applied fields, academics, government and non-profit organizational leaders, etc.). It is a paradigmatic example of performance learning at Millikin University. Dr. Hartsock teaches the course every fall semester.

The following description taken from the Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl (IEB) website enables one to see several points of intersection between the IEB competition and our institutional commitment to the value of performance learning.[6]

[5] Ranking information from: http://grad-schools.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-law-schools/law-rankings.
[6] The website is http://appe.indiana.edu/ethics-bowl/intercollegiate-ethics-bowl-competitions/

> The Intercollegiate Ethics Bowls (IEB) is a team competition that combines the excitement and fun of a competitive tournament with an innovative approach to education in practical and professional ethics for undergraduate students. Recognized widely by educators, the IEB has received special commendation for excellence and innovation from the American Philosophical Association, and received the 2006 American Philosophical Association/Philosophy Documentation Center's 2006 prize for Excellence and Innovation in Philosophy Programs. The format, rules, and procedures of the IEB all have been developed to model widely acknowledged best methods of reasoning in practical and professional ethics.

In the IEB, each team receives in advance of the competition a set of cases which raise issues in practical and professional ethics. Each team prepares an analysis of each case. At the competition, a moderator poses questions, based on a case taken from that set, to teams of three to five students. Questions may concern ethical problems on wide ranging topics, such as the educational classroom (e.g., cheating), personal relationships (e.g., dating or friendship), professional ethics (e.g., engineering, law, medicine), or social and political ethics (e.g., free speech, gun control, etc.) A panel of judges may probe the teams for further justifications and evaluates answers. Rating criteria are intelligibility, focus on ethically relevant considerations, avoidance of ethical irrelevance, and deliberative thoughtfulness.

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 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 indispensible 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.

We anticipate an additional round of curricular revisions and reforms to be processed during the 2015-2016 academic year. We will report on these changes in next year's report.

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 One" 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."[7]

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

[7] 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).

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 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 One).

(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 the size of administration and the priorities identified by administration – 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 <u>every</u> class, on <u>every</u> assignment, and in <u>every</u> 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. This we do.

We repeat: in the context of an intra-departmental program, grading <u>is</u> 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" and "student learning." 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. Of course, 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!), and that is the important point – our students are assessed on each learning goal continuously in numerous courses as they work to complete the major. Indeed, we have intentionally 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 equally 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 Dr. Money's 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 members interact with philosophy majors a great deal, meeting with them to discuss class materials, life issues, and the like in both formal and informal venues. These "advising" moments are also moments of assessment. In addition, philosophy faculty members 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, completed 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. Here is a short description of how PH400 is delivered.

Dr. Money, Dr. Roark, and Dr. Hartsock teach the course on a rotating basis each fall semester. The faculty member in charge identifies an important philosophical topic or philosopher. This topic or philosopher serves as the focus of course readings, class discussions, assorted presentations, and eventually students' theses. Students are free to identify their thesis topic, subject to approval of the supervising faculty member. Students work to construct a clear and creative thesis. This work frequently involves experimenting with various formulations of their central ideas over the course of the semester. Once their topic and central ideas are identified, students work to locate sources to use in their research. As the semester unfolds, students work to fashion more developed arguments and ideas, building their thesis over time. Students present their arguments and ideas to the other students in the course and/or the supervising faculty member and receive critical feedback. Students continue to work on their theses over the course of the entire semester. In fact, it is not uncommon for students to continue working on their theses into the following spring semester. In the end, students generate a substantial written essay (typically 20-25 pages), their philosophy capstone thesis. This work is submitted to the supervising faculty member for a grade. We assess the quality of the written work by employment of the "writing rubric for senior thesis" (see Appendix Two) 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). In addition to producing a written thesis, each student also makes a formal oral presentation of her thesis to philosophy majors, faculty members, and interested members of the campus community during our university-wide "Celebration of Scholarship." We assess the quality of the oral presentation by employment of the "rubric for assessment of oral communication" (see Appendix Three) (Learning Goal 1). The entire experience is intentionally designed to have students do the work of philosophy: thinking, writing, and presenting philosophical arguments in written form and presenting philosophical ideas orally in a public venue. In short, the goal is for our students not simply to study philosophy, but to do philosophy.

The thesis written for PH400, 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 and/or performed include the following:

1. All majors will submit a copy of their written 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 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. All majors will present an oral defense of their thesis during our campus-wide Celebration of Scholarship during the spring semester. These oral defenses 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 oral presentation and defense of the thesis 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)

(7) Analysis of Assessment Results

Seven students wrote and defended their thesis during the 2014-2015 academic year.

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.

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 generates 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 by the student 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, supplemented by our own trained judgments regarding quality philosophical writing. (The rubric is included as Appendix Two to this report.) 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 2014-2015 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

Within the past five years, 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, five of our seven graduating seniors wrote their thesis based on PH400 (this year's topic: Nietzsche, taught by Dr. Money). The other two 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: "Reasonable Religious Disagreement"
Grade: A (Green Light) (Dr. Hartsock)

#1 explores a relatively new subfield in epistemology, *social epistemology.* Social Epistemology differs from traditional analytic epistemology in that it focuses on the social conditions for knowing, rather than the traditional and fully internal *personal and cognitive* conditions for knowledge. #1 deals with the problem of reasonable religions

disagreement, which regards the possibility of two epistemic peers (agents who have shared all of their relevant evidence) having a reasonable disagreement. A reasonable disagreement is a situation where the epistemic peers *disagree* about the truth of a given conclusion, share all of their evidence, yet judge the other agent to be, nevertheless, reasonable. *Pace* Feldman, #1 argues that religions disagreement is possible because such cases create a unique context where a weak principle of epistemic conservatism is triggered. Epistemic Conservativism is the view an agent has a *prima facie* reason to endorse her default believes by virtue of such a belief being the default.

#1 effectively frames the problem of reasonable religious belief, surveys the contemporary literature on the topic (of which there is precious little, so her bibliography is, contrary to appearances, very thorough), and argues for her thesis. Most impressive is the care with which #1 develops her version of epistemic conservativism. She develops it in a way that avoids many of the well-known problems with the view (e.g., it licensing people to maintain their prior beliefs in the face of contravening evidence) by offering a principled account for its limited application in the unique case of religious disagreement between epistemic peers.

The thesis paper could have been strengthened by elaborating on the reasons for restricting the arguments to reasonable religious disagreement rather than reasonable disagreement, *simpliciter.* I inferred from #1's work and other discussions that #1 thought that there was some special issue regarding non-empirical (hence, *religious)* disagreements that would not apply in cases of disagreements concerning empirical matters. However, this was underdeveloped.

Neverthethess, this thesis is well-argued, well-developed, and demonstrates excellent philosophical thinking and writing.

Student #2
Title: "Nietzsche's philosophy and the Horror genre of Film"
Grade: B+ (Green Light)

In *Gay Science*, Nietzsche presents his doctrine of eternal recurrence. Nietzsche proposes this doctrine, in part, as a test by which to gauge the health of the individual considering it. Does the prospect of eternal recurrence elicit a reaction of despair and dismay? Or does it elicit a reaction of joyous affirmation? Nietzsche proposes that properly understood, the prospect of eternal recurrence presents the individual with "the greatest weight" and that genuine authentic affirmation would be a task of monumental difficulty. In his thesis, #2 seeks to explain why Nietzsche views eternal recurrence as "the greatest weight" and, at the same time, draw parallels between Nietzsche's philosophy and the genre of horror. In #2's words:

> But what is it that makes the affirmation of such a world so difficult? Why does Nietzsche believe that such an affirmation is not just an immense weight, but the greatest weight that can be brought upon someone? There are four key features of Nietzsche's philosophy that shed light on why it is that the affirmation of eternal recurrence is the greatest weight: lack of knowledge in one's self, lack of knowledge of the world, lack of moral value in the world, and the lack of purpose, or meaning in existence. Each one of these focuses on a different aspect of one's perception, from the perception of one's self to one's perception of their external surroundings.
>
> Viewing the horror genre through these lenses can help one come to a better understanding of what Nietzsche is calling for in his idea of eternal recurrence and what the affirmation of such an ideal entails. Nietzsche's philosophy and horror pair well together, in that they both require a rather visceral connection with the content being presented; horror films invoke very strong emotions in the viewer, whether that be through a deep emotional fear or simply an unsettling of the viewer, while Nietzsche's philosophy unsettles the reader through a deep introspection and an extensive meditation on the external world. Each of the four key features of Nietzsche's philosophy that speak to why the eternal recurrence is the greatest weight are just as prevalent in the horror genre of film, and in uncovering these themes in such films, one can understand what it means to be a part of this unthinkable world.

#2's primary major is theater and #2's goal was to use the thesis opportunity as a vehicle by which to make connections between his two majors. In initial drafts of the thesis, the focus was almost exclusively on the horror genre. As he continued to work on the project, #2 was able to make some connections between themes explored in horror works and themes explored in Nietzsche's philosophy. Among some of these themes were:

- "Skepticism" about laws, rules, norms, truths, etc. as able to capture the chaos of reality.
- The idea that we lie to ourselves or keep things hidden from ourselves (we cope by denying or hiding truths from ourselves).
- The idea that the demand for conformity, equality, and predictability in moral behavior might have an analogy in knowledge (ordinary, everyday experience is "reality"), at the expense of the unique, exceptional, rare, etc.
- The idea that human psychology is geared more to coping, protection, stability, security, etc. than it is geared toward truth and knowledge.

The final product was much improved over earlier versions, though the project would have been improved had even more attention been given to Nietzsche's philosophical ideas.

Student #3
Title: "A Comparison of Evolutionary Psychology to Nietzsche's Anti-Morality"
Grade: A (Green Light) Dr. Money

In his thesis, #3 argues that the metaethical position known as moral naturalism supplemented by empirical findings in evolutionary psychology poses a serious threat to Nietzsche's general attack on morality and moral systems, i.e., his "immoralism." #3 argues that Nietzsche's attack proceeds on the basis of the idea that moral systems and structures are social-cultural constructions imposed by institutions upon individuals to their detriment and, in this sense, "unnatural." #3 argues that moral systems and structures might better be viewed as the quite natural outgrowth of evolved human capacities and dispositions. If moral naturalism is correct, then Nietzsche's outright rejection of morality, his "immoralism," turns out to be the 'unnatural' position and not well suited for a philosopher whose aim is to "translate man back into nature."

#3 introduces his thesis as follows:

> Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical reflections regarding morality are frequently characterized as "immoralism" and his immoralism is a recurring theme throughout his writings. Essentially, Nietzsche proposes that humanity created moral systems and that humans would be much better off without any type of moral system because these systems are unnatural and condemn individualistic value structures. He states that moral individuals prioritize the well being of the community versus the well being of the self and more importantly that the demands of the community go against the demands of the individual. The individual is most important in Nietzsche's eyes and his writings suggest that all pro-social behaviors, behaviors that are reinforced by the core moral systems dominant in the west, are unnatural because they conflict with individual desires. Nietzsche would comment that individuals brought up in a moral system have been indoctrinated and ultimately misled by that morality. Nietzsche views the moral systems developed by the Judeo-Christian religion as well as secular philosophical ethical systems such as utilitarianism and Kant's deontological ethical system as the most threatening moral systems or concepts and attacks them directly in his works. In the face of Nietzsche's attacks, one can ask whether humans can live as Nietzsche recommends, without a moral system? Or is morality an inherent expression of human nature that cannot be denied? Regardless of the truth-value of moral naturalism, Nietzsche views morality as a detriment to all humans because they are unnatural.

> However, moral naturalists, such as Frans de Waal, argue that moral systems are expressions of distinctive natural traits in humans that have evolved from our ancestors. Richard Joyce, although not a moral naturalist, argues that pro-social behaviors are natural human behaviors. Evolutionary psychology and studies on animal behavior supports these claims. Importantly, pro-social behaviors and norms that reinforce such behaviors abound in this evolutionary context. If morality is ultimately an expression of human nature and has evolved out of pro-social behaviors, Nietzsche should be considered anti-natural with his emphasis on immorality and anti-social individualism. In this essay I will argue that Nietzsche should consider himself anti-natural by his own standards. Contrary to Nietzsche, and consistent with the results of recent studies in evolutionary psychology, pro-social behaviors that may lead to morality are quite natural to the human condition.

#3 identified an excellent issue in Nietzsche's philosophy and did a good job contextualizing that issue in both the history of philosophy as well as contemporary metaethical debates over the merits of moral naturalism. #3 worked hard on the project, submitting multiple drafts for substantive criticism and feedback. The incorporation of contemporary meaethical naturalism and evolutionary psychology was somewhat light and underdeveloped, but the thesis was able to show the clear relevance of such thought to the assessment of Nietzsche's immoralist position. This was a first rate undergraduate thesis.

Student #4
Title: "Decaying European Morality in the Shadow of God"
Grade: B (Green Light) Dr. Money

In his thesis, #4 focuses on Nietzsche's claim that European moral systems and structure cannot survive the growing disbelief in the supernatural, what Nietzsche famously termed "the death of God." In his thesis, #4 argues that while there are some ways in which Nietzsche is correct, on balance, it seems that he is mistaken.

In #4's own words:

> In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche proclaims (through the madman) the death of God. He elaborates on this idea throughout *The Gay Science*, arguing that the death of God is instead the death of *faith* in God. He further argues that the death of God – specifically the decline in faith in the Christian god – directly impacts the legitimacy of the entirety of European morality during his lifetime. Giving Nietzsche his argument that faith in the Christian god is declining, the question then becomes: can 19th century European morality survive without this foundation of religious faith? Certainly, there is some strength in the argument that a system of

> morality built upon the faith in a religion can exist without that foundation, specifically if it has matured enough. That argument, however, ignores the ever-changing nature of morality and the larger role that religion (and faith) plays in molding that system of morality to accompany the changes in culture and society. It is, of course, possible that the molding of a given system of morality could be done by a force separate from religion or faith, even when the system of morality first found its creation through religious faith…Nietzsche's belief that the morality of Europe during his lifetime was completely dependent upon its base of Christian faith seems mistaken. Certainly Christian beliefs had a significant role in the establishment of the previously mentioned normative views. However, other parts of society (other than Christianity) have adopted these moral values such that the moral system is quite capable of existing without the continued faith in the Christian god. While Nietzsche is rather clear that he believes it is necessary that 19th century European morality be 'vanquished', he gives little suggestion as to how the shadow of God is to be defeated. In all likelihood, Nietzsche may have believed that – once the shadow is vanquished – Europe would be in an ideal position to transform its culture into one that is aimed at the advancement of humanity.

While key elements to a very good thesis were present, additional development was needed in key areas. For example, one point that needed further development concerned the relation between normative moral claims concerning how agents ought to act and descriptive claims about human agency. The notion that agents are praiseworthy and blameworthy for their choices and behaviors has deep roots in Christian theology, yet such normative evaluation of agents might rest on a conception of human agency that Nietzsche views as no longer defensible: namely, free willed agents. Developing this point further would have allowed for #4 to explore how normative evaluations made within moral systems might be viewed as hinged to conceptions of human agency. In other words, it would have positioned #4 to explicate Nietzsche's position as one that emphasizes how normative evaluation presupposes a "metaphysics of agency." If the "death of God" was presented in a way that more clearly included the death of the "metaphysics of free-willed agency," then this would provide a way to see why Nietzsche would view the "death of God" as destructive of European morality: European morality assumes the existence of something that, in fact, does not exist – namely, free willed human agency. It would focus the issue on the plausibility of maintaining that the European normative structure could shift to a different metaphysical base, and allow the paper to then have a philosophical form and structure that would extend beyond Nietzsche's work and place Nietzsche's reflection more firmly in the wider philosophical tradition.

Still, despite some shortcomings, the thesis was well executed in terms of its identification of a key idea for analysis and evaluation, its structural design, and its incorporation of both primary and secondary sources. A solid undergraduate thesis.

Student #5
Title: "Eternal Recurrence: Interpretations and Ideals"
Grade: A (Green Light) Dr. Money

In his thesis, #5 argues that Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence in conjunction with his denial of the self as a substance and his acceptance of a relational view of "things" necessitates a form of nihilism – moral nihilism. #5 argues that under eternal recurrence, there is no free will and, as a result, moral evaluation of agents (e.g., praise and blame of agents for their choices and decisions) is out of place because such evaluations presuppose free will. In #5's own words:

> If we accept the doctrine of eternal recurrence, in doing so, we affirm that not only have the events of the past, present, and future already been determined, but that we as an individual, are nothing more than a bundle of experiences that are simply a chain of events fixed in time infinitely repeating. Further, in our actions being fixed there is no room for growth in any manner, additionally, we are without any type of morality. We will always react in the same manner, either accepting or denying eternal recurrence and living our lives just as we would without this paper or Nietzsche's teachings…Nihilism becomes necessary as our (moral) values draw their logical conclusion. For example, we are morally obligated to be honest, to tell the truth, not to deceive or lie, etc. Eventually, this moral commitment turns on our picture of our own natures and our own being in the world. Once it so turns, reflection and thought (and perhaps science…the will to truth), reveal that human agency is not what we have been told to believe it to be. We are natural creatures, animals, evolved beings, etc., and we do not possess a soul with the capacity for free will choice. If our understanding of the value of the world is hinged to this conception of ourselves as distinctive and possessed of free will (and moral responsibility, etc.), then the moral commitment to honesty will require us to abandon this picture, and we will recoil into the view that nothing is valuable anymore, ergo; nihilism.

#5 engaged in a number of sustained revisions to his thesis. The project started out much too large and without adequate focus, but over time, the project was refashioned and became far better focused. In the end, a very good thesis was produced. In addition to my positive evaluation of the work, the thesis was awarded second prize at the HURF competition.

Student #6
Title: "Nietzsche: Art and Eternal Recurrence"
Grade: A (Green Light) Dr. Money

In his thesis, #6 sought to connect Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence to the ideal of art having redemptive value. This project is oriented by its reflection on one of Nietzsche's own key existential concerns: in the face of an objectively meaningless existence, how is the value of life to be affirmed? #6 explores the idea that a central part of the answer to this existential crisis in meaning is to be found in art. In #6's own words:

> The eternal recurrence is most commonly referenced in explorations of Nietzsche's concepts of the will to power, the sovereign individual, and most notably, I will argue, Nietzsche's philosophy of art. This connection is apparent when we appropriately understand the purpose for Nietzsche's inclusion of the eternal recurrence in the latter portion of "The Gay Science." Throughout the successively provided sections of "The Gay Science," Nietzsche utilizes a various number of literary devices with which to communicate his ideas. Aside from the frequently present use of aphorisms and metaphors, through his doctrine of eternal recurrence, Nietzsche employs the use of thought-experiment to contextualize the absurd nature of reality in the minds of his readers, serving as a platform through which individuals gain access to the redemptive value of art. Through a thorough analysis of section 341, *The greatest weight*, as well as other relevant sections pertaining to Nietzsche's views on art, I intend to provide support for the following: the eternal recurrence is a thought-experiment intended to manifest in individuals, that is, to embody within agents, Nietzsche's account of the absurd; the eternal recurrence provides the platform through which the role of art in Nietzschean philosophy is *best* understood.

One issue that needed further clarification concerned the characterization of life as "meaningless" or "absurd." When life is characterized as meaningless or absurd, does that suggest negative value or just non-value (neither positive nor negative)? One might distinguish between (1) positive value, (2) negative value, and (3) non-value. And these distinctions would need to be complicated by the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic value. Finally, a related issue is that if the claim that life is absurd and meaningless is given an interpretation implying that this means life has negative value, then absent a commitment to intrinsic value, this could only signify that some subject has interpreted life in this way. Life is not inherently bad (or good), but is "made so" by the interpreting act of the self that views life as worthless, meaningless, etc. This is a common theme in Nietzsche: value judgments concerning the value of life are symptomatic of the condition of the organism. #6 could have explored this more explicitly, perhaps exploring potential causes of distressed conditions – for example, the idea that a subject would view life as having negative value if she had been conditioned by the "teachers of the purpose of existence" to view life as valuable only as a bridge to another realm, but then came to be convinced that this other realm does not exist.

Such a subject might make a recoil judgment that since life has no value as a bride, it has negative value…instead of "no value" in the neutral sense.

Overall, however, #6 constructed a great essay. #6 demonstrated his ability to digest difficult philosophical material, utilize a range of sources, and the ability to extend and develop ideas that were discussed over the course of the semester. #6 did a great job of doing independent work on a complex topic. He not only read primary source material that is not easy to digest (Nietzsche), but he did a good job with secondary source materials. His essay was truly independently done, which is I assume our ultimate goal: to have students who can complete independent research and analysis.

Student #7
Title: Untitled
Grade: A/A- (Green Light)

#7 develops ideas from Michael Huemer's, *The Problem of Political Authority*, to offer an account of authority that allows rational adults to be subject to paternalistic intervention. As a backdrop Huemer argues that the moral underpinnings of the state are morally dubious because a state necessary allows for the non-consensus use of force by state agents in many cases where we would be highly skeptical of such force being used between private actors. To use one example, the state uses its power to use force against agents who decide not to wear their seatbelt. Such a use of force by the state can be argued to be an unjust paternalistic overreach of power that we would never allow to be applied between private actors. #7 responds not so fast as he develops an account in which paternalistic action, including the non-consensual use of force, in regards to rational actors is justified in a wide variety of cases. #7 argues that while a person might be rational in an overall sense they may indeed not be rational in a wide variety of cases involving morality and politics and as such are subject to an authority that is rational in such matters. To make this case #7 argues that the primary reason why we think that paternalism is justified in the case of children ought to be extended to adults who lack rationality in an area such as morality or politics. In one of the best examples of the paper #7 discusses the case in which a small child to who he has no relation is dropped off on his front door. #7 convincingly argues that he has the authority to make this child eat his vegetables even though he has no special relationship to the child. What justifies this? It is because the child, who might want to eat only ice cream, is irrational in matters of health and can be forced –in some fashion- to eat in a healthy manner. It makes no difference that the adult who finds the child has no special relationship in respect to the child. #7 extends this reasoning to the case of adults who might act in irrational ways, for instance the case of an adult who wishes not to wear a seatbelt because it is uncomfortable. If we think it is fine to force the child to eat veggies, then why not think it is fine to force the adult to wear a seatbelt? One reply here is that the adult understands the risks involved and simply opts to take on those risks whereas the child does not. But #7 questions whether an actor merely understanding risks and opting to take on such risks is enough to deter

the grounds for paternalistic action generally. If a state is allowed to engage in the non-consensual use of force under paternalistic justifications it would close off a major line of thought in many anarchist arguments. But at the same time unless such uses of force can in some way be distinguished from the paternalistic interference of private actors there are still plenty of questions surrounding whether justifying paternalistic interference directed toward generally rational adults carves our any special moral authority for the state not had by private actors.

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 Three 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 2014-2015 academic year is provided below. The score is the average score between the two faculty evaluators. (Dr. Money was absent, attending his brother's wedding.)

Student #1:
Total Score on Rubric: 53
Color-Code: Green

Student #2:
Total Score on Rubric: 50.5
Color-Code: Green

Student #3:
Total Score on Rubric: 54
Color-Code: Green

Student #4:
Total Score on Rubric: 52.5
Color-Code: Green

Student #5:
Total Score on Rubric: 41
Color-Code: Green

Student #6:
Total Score on Rubric: 53.5

Color-Code: Green

Student #7:
Total Score on Rubric: 47
Color-Code: Green

c. 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 (7): 2006, 2007, 2008, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015
- Team Fourth Place Finishes (3): 2012, 2013, 2015
- 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 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.

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. See above for more data related to this.

- **Ethics Bowl**

Dr. Hartsock took two teams of students (10 total) to the regional Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl (IEB) competition held in Indiana during the fall semester. One of these teams was invited to the national competition, held in California. During the spring semester, Dr. Hartsock led these students to California, where they competed in the national Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl competition.

In the IEB, each team receives in advance of the competition a set of cases which raise issues in practical and professional ethics. Each team prepares an analysis of each case. At the competition, a moderator poses questions, based on a case taken from that set, to teams of three to five students. Questions may concern ethical problems on wide ranging topics, such as the educational classroom (e.g., cheating), personal relationships (e.g., dating or friendship), professional ethics (e.g., engineering, law, medicine), or social and political ethics (e.g., free speech, gun control, etc.) A panel of judges may probe the teams for further justifications and evaluates answers. Rating criteria are intelligibility, focus on ethically relevant considerations, avoidance of ethical irrelevance, and deliberative thoughtfulness.

All of the numerous characteristics of performance learning identified by the 2014 Summer Nyberg Seminar can be seen in this course and the connected competition. For example, students receive the materials in advance and work over time to analyze and develop ethical arguments. It is a ***process***. In addition, it is a process that they do not undertake alone. Dr. Hartsock works in collaboration with students as they engage in analysis, reflection, and ethical reasoning. He ***mentors*** and ***models*** even as he is a ***partner*** in ***exploration*** of the cases. Students both "***do the discipline***" and "***do the skill***" as they assume ***responsibility*** for ***creatively*** constructing appropriate ethical arguments. Students not only present their arguments before ***third party stakeholders*** (a panel of judges), but must respond to questions and probing from those judges.

It is simply obvious that participation in the IEB possesses all the key features of a paradigmatic performance learning experience. It is equally obvious that IEB is tied in direct and meaningful ways to the mission and values of Millikin University. Finally, the success of our students as judged by external stakeholders with expertise in a diverse range of practical disciplines is clear evidence of the quality of instruction our students receive from members of this department and confirmation of student learning.

(8) Trend Lines and Improvement Plans

The Philosophy Department is pleased with the results in our eighth 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!

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 eighth 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, with the exception of specific curricular revisions that will seek to capitalize on our delivery of high quality performance learning opportunities (e.g., the formalization of a course, PH370, Ethical Reasoning – Ethics Bowl). 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: REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PHILOSOPHY MAJOR

Philosophy

Robert E. Money, Jr. (Chair)

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 TWO: 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, 3	Analysis reflects little or no integration of information from multiple questions or sources.	
	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.). Does not recognize context or surface assumptions and underlying ethical implications, or does so superficially.	Presents and explores relevant contexts and assumptions regarding the issue, although in a limited way. Provides some recognition of context and consideration of assumptions and their implications.	Analyzes the issue with a clear sense of scope and context, including an assessment of audience. Considers other integral contexts. 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
Position or hypothesis is clearly inherited or adopted with little original consideration.	Position includes some original thinking that acknowledges, refutes, synthesizes, or extends	Position demonstrates ownership for constructing knowledge or framing

Addresses a single source or view of the argument, failing to clarify the established position relative to one's own. Fails to present and justify own opinion or forward hypothesis. Position or hypothesis is unclear or simplistic.	other assertions, although some aspects may have been adopted. Presents own position or hypothesis, though inconsistently. Presents and justifies own position without addressing other views, or does so superficially. Position or hypothesis is generally clear, although gaps may exist.	original questions, integrating objective analysis and intuition. Appropriately identifies own position on the issue, drawing support from experience and information not available from assigned sources. Clearly presents and justifies own view or hypothesis while qualifying or integrating contrary views or interpretations. Position or hypothesis demonstrates sophisticated integrative thought and is developed clearly throughout.

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

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

RED, 1 to 2 Points	YELLOW, 3 Points	GREEN, 4 to 5 Points
Deals with a single	Begins to relate	Addresses others'

perspective and fails to discuss others' perspectives. Treats other positions superficially or misrepresents them. Little integration of perspectives and little or no evidence of attending to others' views.	alternative views to qualify analysis. Analysis of other positions is thoughtful and mostly accurate. Acknowledges and integrates different ways of knowing.	perspectives and additional diverse perspectives drawn from outside information to qualify analysis. Analysis of other positions is accurate, nuanced, and respectful. Integrates different disciplinary and epistemological ways of knowing. Connects to career and civic responsibilities, as appropriate.

Comments:

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

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

7. Communicates effectively.

RED, 1 to 2 Points	YELLOW, 3 Points	GREEN, 4 to 5 Points
In many places, language	In general, language	Language clearly and

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

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	YELLOW	GREEN

Total score of 7-20	Total score of 21-27	Total Score of 28-35

APPENDIX THREE: 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