

**Philosophy Department Six-Year Report**  
**September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2017**  
**Profs. Nelson, Taylor, & Vander Laan**

**I. Answers to Key Questions and Follow-up on PRC's Recommendations**

We did not begin the current program review cycle with key questions, so in this section we will summarize what we have found in the course of this review cycle. We will begin by reviewing the PRC's responses to our 2011 Six-year Report and annual reports for 2012-16, and detailing how we followed up.

From this summary, we believe that the following sort of narrative emerges: the PRC response to our 2011 Six-year Report was sharply critical on numerous points, and showed how far we were from a satisfactory understanding and practice of Program Review. Our journey from there had several stages:

- I. Much of the first stage of our development concerned the basics of PLOs: we had too many, they were unclear and difficult to assess. Accordingly, we reduced them in number, we worked to clarify our wording of them and to make them measurable.
- II. Once we began to get our PLOs in decent shape, the next stage of our work concerned assessment of those PLOs. Our main work here was the development of rubrics for each PLO, and (furthermore) the development of rubrics that were uniform, consistent with Westmont's preferred template and also meaningfully comparable with each other.
- III. Once we began to develop appropriate rubrics, we then began to develop good habits of meaningful and effective assessment practice. For example, we recognize that, given our very small number of majors and the small number of students in our upper-level classes, any quantitative data we collect by assessing a single assignment will be statistically insignificant. This points, e.g., to the desirability of assessing across multiple assignments in a single class, across multiple classes in a single year, or even across multiple years. This in turn points to the necessity of planning our assessment activities sufficiently far in advance.
- IV. As we began to develop good habits of meaningful and effective assessment practice, we became aware of the need to develop these habits in the context of a larger "culture" of program review, in which the results of assessment get translated into action, and which is informed by knowledge of what is happening in other departments at Westmont and in philosophy departments outside of Westmont.

We believe that the following record reveals that we have emerged from stages I and II, and that we are now moving from stage III into stage IV. (The early reports were sharply critical and contained numerous recommendations. Over the years, though, the recommendations become fewer in number and concern matters of fine-tuning instead of urgent care.) We know that we still have some way to go, but we are in a much better position than we were six years ago.

PRC Response to our 2011 Six-year Report

Here are the PRC's recommendations [along with a brief description of how we addressed them]:

1. "Solicit an external review for your program."

Our response: We neglected to do so last time, but have secured an external reviewer for our program this time around: Prof. Dan Speak, Loyola Marymount University.

2. "Refine your PLOs to make them clear and measurable."

Our response: We modified the wording of our "Knowledge" and "Virtues" PLO's to make them clearer and more concise. We addressed the issue of measurability by developing new rubrics for assessment of "Knowledge" (2017), "Skills" (2013) and "Virtues" (2015). In each case, the new rubrics invoke criteria that are more "quantitative" or are accompanied by explanations of the

particular need for qualitative assessment in philosophy, and how the challenges of qualitative assessment are considered in our department and in the broader community of academic philosophy.

3. "Sharpen your assessment tools."

Our response: As noted above, we have in some cases developed new and sharper rubrics for assessment. In other cases, we have explained the limitations on quantitative assessment of indispensable philosophical objectives, such as skills and understanding.

4. "Examine the depth and breadth of offerings in Philosophy following a thorough assessment of student learning in relation to your PLOs and provide evidence of the program quality, effectiveness, viability and sustainability in the next six-year program review report due on September 15, 2017."

Our response: Following two years of discussion and deliberation (2012-14) about our curriculum, we concluded that the depth of our required historical courses could be improved by splitting our two courses "Ancient & Medieval Philosophy" and "Modern & Contemporary Philosophy" into four courses: "Ancient", "Medieval", "Modern" and "19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Philosophy." Accordingly, we produced course descriptions and sample syllabi for these new courses, submitted them for approval by the Academic Senate Review Committee and began teaching them in 2015. We also concluded for similar reasons that we should divide our "Critical Reasoning and Logic" course into two separate courses ("Critical Reasoning and Logic" and "Formal Logic"). "Evidence of program quality" has been collected and presented in Section II.A. of the present report.

5. "Review the Philosophy curriculum and provide evidence of its cohesiveness. Please, ensure that all departmental syllabi include course learning outcomes aligned with the program learning outcomes. Ensure that all course learning outcomes are aligned with course assignments, instructional activities, tests, exams, and other instructional products. You may consider using Bloom's Taxonomy posted at the Educational Effectiveness website to complete this task. We would ask your department to demonstrate the alignment between courses and program learning outcomes (PLOs); to discuss the program scaffolding (how all the parts progressively build on each other) and provide evidence of how students learning in relation to your PLOs is supported by all instructional and assessment activities and products in your next six-year program review report."

Our response: We undertake such a review in Section II.C of the present report.

6. "Collaborate with the GE committee and other academic departments on refining certification criteria and assessment tools for the Philosophical Reflections in Truth and Value and Reasoning Abstractly GE areas. Sharpen your tools for assessing student learning in the GE courses."

Our response: In our 2011-12 annual report, David Vander Laan notes that the Department was asked to participate in the GE Committee's discussion of the PRTV requirement, and that, as chair, he provided input on behalf of the department, proposing "language for the official criteria used by the GE Committee that would more closely resemble the committee's supplementary documents, particularly by clarifying the degree of breadth that courses satisfying the requirement should have, and by including several examples, etc." In the PRC's response to the 2012 report, Tatiana Nazarenko congratulated us on "Refining the Certification Criteria, Interpretive Statement and the SLO for the Philosophical Reflections on Truth and Value GE Common Contexts area."

Also: Jim Taylor worked with the GE Committee and Academic Senate in 2013 to revise the certification criteria for the Reasoning Abstractly GE requirement, and David's proposed simplified wording for the Reasoning Abstractly GELO was approved by the GE Committee and Academic Senate in 2015. What remains to be done along these lines is for us to continue to work with other departments offering courses in these two GE areas to develop and refine assessment tools (especially rubrics).

Also, for 2011-12 in particular, we were asked to:

7. "Remove students' personal information from the Program Review Archives by 12/15/2011."

Our response: This information was removed immediately.

8. "Develop an Action Plan for the next six-year assessment cycle based on the Memorandum of Understanding."

Our response: That "Memorandum of Understanding" was subsequently rescinded as of Feb 10, 2012, so we did not respond to take up that particular requirement. And though we did not develop an Action Plan for the 2011-2017 assessment cycle, we plan to develop one for the 2017-2023 cycle.

#### PRC Response to 2012 Annual Report

1. "Set a benchmark for your Skills PLO. You may also consider setting benchmarks for other PLOs as well."

Our response: As noted in our 2013 annual report, a rubric was created for the assessment of the Skills PLO, and a benchmark of 80% according to this rubric was set prior to the assessment in 2012-13.

2. "Refine your Knowledge and Values PLOs."

Our response: The wording for both PLOs was adjusted in 2012-13 to make them clearer and more measurable. (Also note: the "Values" PLO was renamed as the "Virtues" PLO.)

3. "Update your Curriculum Map and Multi-year Assessment Plan and post these two documents – preferably in departmental website."

Our response: As detailed in our 2013 annual report, we completely overhauled both our Curriculum Map and Multi-year Assessment Plan as per the requests and these are now posted on our departmental website. (See Appendix 5.)

4. "Continue assessment of student learning in PHI-195 [Senior Seminar]. Interpret the assessment data and close the loop as much as possible."

Our response: As documented in our 2012-13 annual report, we created a rubric for the new Philosophy Department "Integrating the Major Discipline" SLO. Using this rubric, Jim Taylor assessed for this SLO in the four 1250 word essays each student wrote in the PHI-195 in the Spring of 2013. [See 2013 Annual Report, Appendices C-E.]

5. "Identify which data you would need for assessing student learning in the future and begin the data collection."

Our response: As noted in the our 2012-13 annual report, we identified the assessment work we would need to do in future and divided the work up as follows: Reasoning Abstractly (Taylor), Philosophical Perspectives (All), Virtues (Taylor), and Knowledge (Nelson).

6. "Discuss curricular changes identified in (IV.B) ["Next Steps"] and implement them as required."

Our response: As noted above, at several department meetings in 2012-13, we discussed the possibility of dividing our "Critical Reasoning and Logic" course into two courses ("Critical Reasoning and Logic" and "Formal Logic"). We also discussed dividing "Ancient & Medieval Philosophy" into two courses ("Ancient Philosophy" and "Medieval Philosophy") and "19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Philosophy" into two courses ("Modern Philosophy" and "Contemporary Philosophy"). (These changes were eventually implemented in 2014.)

### PRC Response to 2013 Annual Report

1. “Your current assessment works seems to be in large part the task of individuals... we would encourage more collaborative assessment activities, where for instance, multiple professors are looking at selected student work, using the same rubric, and discussing areas of overlap and non-overlap.”

Our response: In 2013-14, we had prolonged and significant conversations as a department about our assessment work in general and in particular on the Skills PLO.

2. “We strongly urge you to continue to engage in serious dialogue with peers at comparable (and non-comparable) Philosophy Departments as to how other institutions are dealing with the challenges of assessment. To the extent that you are already having those serious discussions, we urge you to document more of that discussion in the Annual Report.”

Our response: Retrospectively, we note that we actually already had engaged in such conversations, but neglected to mention this in our reports to the PRC. In December 2012, e.g., we hosted a one-day workshop at La Casa de Maria with members of Biola’s philosophy department to discuss their recent redesign of their philosophy major (including curriculum and assessment). We hope for more opportunities to do the same with colleagues in other departments. For example, we recently reached out to Tom Holden, Head of Philosophy at UCSB, and he shared a document detailing that department’s PLOs and their general approach to assessment, as well as their plan for assessment of the “Informal Reasoning” PLO in 2016-17. This document was circulated among the philosophy department for discussion.

3. “We strongly urge you to continue to engage in serious dialogue with peers at Westmont who have also struggled—and in some cases made major progress—in documenting student achievement in ways that were (eventually) meaningful and actionable for the department. We commend to you in particular peers in departments such as History, who also aspire to sometimes abstract, less tangible, or more organic outcomes, and have traveled a parallel road.”

Our response: Mark Nelson made appointments and met with Alister Chapman, History (9/4/14) and Tom Knecht, Political Science (9/9/14) to discuss matters of assessment and program review generally. Nelson took notes on these meetings and circulated these for discussion at the next Philosophy Department Meeting (9/12/14). These meetings yielded some useful advice, some of which we were able to take on in our subsequent assessment activities.

4. “If you do not already have systems in place for collecting annual information on individual faculty and department achievements, for instance, we urge you to develop and implement such systems as soon as possible.”

Our response: Each member of the department keeps and regularly updates his CV and/or personal record of achievements.

### PRC Response to 2014 Annual Report

NB: This particular response was brief and late. No explicit recommendations were enumerated, though one point was made in passing that seemed to call for action:

1. “The prompts, instruments and rubrics used to collect the data are not available in the LiveText database.”

Our response: This was rectified in future reports, though, as past reports are no longer available through LiveText, we cannot go back and fix that particular submission.

### PRC Response to 2015 Annual Report

Again, no explicit recommendations were enumerated, but one small point was made in passing:

1. “We should consider partnering with the GE Committee to develop a rubric for assessing the Philosophical Reflections GE learning outcome” in Philosophical Perspectives.

Our response: This remains to be done.

PRC Response to 2016 Annual Report

NB: We did not receive this report until March 15, 2017. By that time, we were unable to incorporate any recommendations into our planning for the 2016-17 year. It was an almost uniformly positive report, though the following observation does entail a useful critical point:

1. Regarding the assessment of papers in PHI-104 for the “Virtues” PLO, it was observed: “It was assumed that only Mark Nelson scored the five papers since they were given as part of his final exam. It will add reliability to the scores and the rubric if more than one scorer is utilized ....”

Our response: We accept this point for future PLO assessment exercises. As noted above, by the time we received this report, we had already planned our assignments, grading and assessment for our next PLO assessment (“Knowledge” in PHI-195).

## II. Findings

### A. Student Learning

#### Summary of Assessment Results

Here is a brief summary of the department’s assessment work over the last six years. (See Appendix 2 for a graphic representation of these results.)

#### 2012: Skills PLO

The department assessed the four students in the Senior Seminar on their argument-related skills. The results in the three categories of evaluation were:

Understanding: 2 good, 2 excellent  
Construction: 1 good, 3 excellent  
Evaluation: 1 fair, 1 good, 2 excellent

#### 2013: Integrating the Major Discipline GELO

All five students were at least proficient in the two rubric areas (Philosophical Knowledge and Faith Integration) emphasized in the Senior Seminar.

#### 2014: Reasoning Abstractly GELO

Student learning was assessed via selected questions on five PHI-012 tests. Average scores on questions keyed to the three evaluation areas were:

Recognition: 83.6%  
Evaluation: 71.3%  
Construction: 68%

#### 2015: Philosophical Reflections GELO

Essays by 43 Philosophical Perspectives students were assessed. Relative to the GELO, 13 students’ essays (30%) were highly developed, 10 (23%) were developed, 16 (37%) were emerging, and 4 (10%) were initial.

#### 2016: Virtues PLO

The work of five students in PHI-104 (Ethics) was assessed on a 1-4 scale (1 = poor; 2 = fair; 3 = good; 4 = excellent) in two categories: Enthusiasm for Rational Enquiry and Awareness of Limits of Rational Enquiry. The results were these:

<b>Paper #</b>	<b>Enthusiasm (out of 4)</b>	<b>Awareness of Limits (out of 4)</b>
1	2.5	2.0
2	3.5	4.0

3	3.5	3.5
4	4	4
5	4	3.5
Average	3.5	3.4

2017: Knowledge PLO

The work of the three students in PHI-195 (Senior Seminar) was assessed on a 1-4 scale (1 = poor; 2 = fair; 3 = good; 4 = excellent) in three categories, as indicated in the chart below.

Paper #	Philosophical terms & concepts	Important thinkers, issues, positions, problems, arguments	Historical & cultural context	Assigned readings
1	3.0	3.0	NA	3.0
2	4.0	4.0	NA	4.0
3	3.0	4.0	NA	4.0
Average	3.33	3.67	NA	3.67

Answers to Central Questions

Substance

1. *What did you learn about your students' learning?*

Overall, indicators suggest that students are learning what the department has set out to teach. As noted below, student work met the department's benchmarks or nearly did so in most cases. The 2015 assessment of the Philosophical Reflections GELO is the most conspicuous exception, and even that case raises interpretive questions given the consistency of past assessment of this outcome. So it looks as if students are, by and large, learning what we hope they will learn.

We also learned which areas seem to need the most improvement, namely those assessed by the Philosophical Reflections and Reasoning Abstractly GELOs. See question 5 below for the department's past steps and future plans to help students in those areas.

2. *How did this help you answer your Key Questions?*

The department did not have Key Questions during this assessment cycle. The department has now adopted Key Questions regarding major/minor recruitment, the nature of the Senior Seminar, broadening the curriculum, and essay grading practices, but the above assessment results do not have a strong bearing on those questions.

3. *Did your students meet the standards or benchmarks you established (if appropriate)?*

Skills (2012): The 80% good or excellent benchmark was met in the Understanding and Construction categories, and nearly so in the Evaluation category.

Integrating the Major Discipline (2013): All students were at least proficient, so the 80% benchmark was met.

Reasoning Abstractly (2014): The 80% benchmark was met in the Recognition category, but not in the Evaluation or Construction categories.

Philosophical Reflections (2015): 53% of the students scored highly developed or developed, well short of the 75% benchmark.

Virtues (2016): 80% of the students scored good or excellent, so the benchmark was met.

Knowledge (2017): All students met the 80% benchmark in each assessed category.

4. *Did your students meet the ILO standards or benchmarks—if your department participated in ILO assessment?*

The department participated in the assessment of the Critical Thinking ILO in 2013-2014. Our Senior Seminar students' score on the CAT (Critical Thinking Assessment Test) was 101.3% of the national average. This result has a bearing on the department's Reasoning Abstractly courses and has helped shape the new incarnation of PHI-012 (Critical Reasoning and Logic).

5. *What changes have you made and/or do you plan to make to improve student learning?*

Skills (2012): In 2013 the department set a benchmark of 80% good or excellent scores. The department also created a Skills rubric and shared it so that it could be included in the syllabi of upper-division courses. The department also discussed whether to use "scaffolding" assignments so students have more practice with these skills before they reach the Senior Seminar. (See also Reasoning Abstractly below.)

Integrating the Major Discipline (2013): The department discussed the results and noted that no improvements appear to be needed, so that our attention is best directed elsewhere.

Reasoning Abstractly (2014): PHI-012 (Critical Reasoning and Logic) has since been extensively redesigned, and PHI-108 (Formal Logic) has been added to the curriculum. In each case, more of the semester is devoted to foundational argument evaluation/construction skills than previously.

Philosophical Reflections (2015): The department discussed how far the class was from the 75% benchmark. That result suggested that work would be needed in order to close the gap. At the same time, the result was surprising, especially given the department's conclusion in its 2011 six-year report that students consistently met the standards of the Philosophical Reflections requirement. It is possible that the difference between assessment tools explains some of the variance between results. To get a better understanding of this, the department agreed on the need to develop a rubric for this assessment tool.

Virtues (2016): The department created and refined a Virtues rubric, and, after the assessment, discussed the results. Since the benchmark was met, this area did not seem to require special attention, though the department does plan to compare the results with those of future assessments of the Virtues PLO.

Knowledge (2017): Student performance in this area appears strong, so the department has no changes planned for this outcome.

#### Assessment methodology

1. *Are your annual assessment results giving you useful information for improving your work?*

As noted above, the assessment results are, on the whole, indicators of success in the department's efforts. Those results do not suggest avenues for improvement so much as areas that ain't broke. But even such negative results are useful, since it helps the department focus on those areas that really do need attention. This information makes the department's work more effective and sustainable than it would otherwise be.

In the cases where significant improvement is needed, the difference in scores between assessment areas is a useful indicator of specific skills that need more attention. For example, it is clear from both Skills assessment and Reasoning Abstractly assessment that our students find it more difficult to construct and evaluate arguments than to identify arguments.

It is also true that the assessment results sometimes raise new questions that seem to require further investigation. Low scores do not in general indicate why the scores are low, or which pedagogical strategies might be most effective in addressing them. But this does not seem to be a deficiency of the assessment tools that have been used, but only a reminder that teaching (and assessment of teaching) is a process. Our hope is that the assessment tools we have used so far will point us in the direction of worthwhile questions for the next round of assessment.

*2. How effective are your current methods for truly assessing student achievement?*

The department is aware that assessment tools always have their limits, and that the assessment process itself assumes that we have selected a small part of our total aspirations for student for the purpose of demonstrating that valuable educational outcomes are being produced. But with respect to those limited aims, the department is in general satisfied with the snapshots of student achievement that its current methods provide.

However, the surprising results of the Philosophical Reflections assessment did cause the department to wonder whether its methods in this area are delivering a consistently accurate picture of student performance. (See question 3 below.)

*3. What changes do you plan to make to improve your assessment work?*

The most immediate change, noted above, is to create a rubric for the Philosophical Reflections tool so that the department can more effectively compare assessment results across the years. The department will also remove Integrating the Major Discipline from its assessment rotation since that area is no longer a part of the GE program.

## **B. Alumni Survey**

Introduction. In April, the Philosophy Department sent an invitation to 89 philosophy alumni from the classes of 2005-2016 inviting them to take a survey. The survey contains questions about their gender, ethnicity/race, graduating class, overall Westmont education, and philosophy major education. We received 35 completed responses, which is a response rate of 39%. See Appendix 6 for the survey results and a more detailed analysis of them.

### Answers to Central Questions

- 1. How happy are our majors with our program and specific aspects of it?* As stated in Appendix 6, nearly half (17) of the alums surveyed chose “Superior” in response to the question, “How effective was the teaching in the Philosophy Department overall,” and almost the same number (16) chose “Strong.” So almost all (94.28%) of the respondents consider our teaching to have been more than adequate or above average. Moreover, at least 30 of the respondents (85.72%) stated that our program had enabled them to achieve each of our three program learning outcomes to a strong or superior extent—also above average. The perceived degree of accomplishment is especially strong with respect to our Virtues PLO (71.43% chose “Superior”) and our Skills PLO (62.86% chose “Superior”)—as compared to our Knowledge PLO (only 31.43% chose “Superior”). In terms of how their study of philosophy at Westmont affected their attitude to the Christian faith, 68.57% reported that it had improved their attitude either somewhat (25.71%) or substantially (42.86%) and only 20% reported that it had worsened their attitude somewhat (11.43%) or substantially (8.57%). When the percentage of students who reported their attitude to have been neither improved nor worsened (8.57%) is taken into account, it turns out that 77.14% of the respondents did not consider their attitude to the Christian faith to be worsened by our program. Finally, the short-answer responses reveal that our alums appreciate a number of aspects of our program (e.g., instruction in critical thinking, close interaction with professors, preparation for graduate school or career) and have many suggestions for improvement (e.g., additional courses and approaches to philosophy) but few complaints.
- 2. How well did our program prepare our majors for life after Westmont?* As stated in Appendix 6, 19 alums (54.29%) chose “Stronger” in reply to the question, “How would you say your Westmont experience in the

Philosophy Department prepared you, relative to your peers with whom you interact in your life today?" and 12 (34.29%) chose "Above Average." So 88.58% of respondents said they considered the preparation provided by our program to be at least above average. This result is reinforced by a number of specific comments made in response to the question concerning what was most valuable to them about their learning in the philosophy program (e.g., "I entered (philosophy) graduate school ready to engage with the material and had a head-start over my peers;" and "I learned critical thinking, writing, and argumentation. Each of those skills is essential to the study and practice of law, my chosen profession;" and "Learning to construct strong arguments and to explain ideas clearly in writing comes in handy every day in my job. It has helped me become successful with content marketing - which is a style of marketing that involves sharing educational or valuable content with potential customers to grow the relationship so they will be more likely to purchase or become more loyal customers. Explaining why readers should care about an idea or method is easy for me with my background in Philosophy.").

3. *Did our program provide opportunities to apply disciplinary skills and knowledge and explore interests?* A number of comments made by alums in response to the "What was most valuable . . ." question provide solid grounds for an affirmative answer to this question. Here are some examples:
  - a. "I greatly enjoyed the metaphysics side of the education. The concepts that are acute to an anthropology and are both far removed but also very close to every day life (i.e. free will, identity, composition, et al) have given me a richer perspective on the human being and surrounding life."
  - b. "The most valuable aspect of my Westmont education came through the Philosophy Department- the encouragement I received to fully engage and compassionately embody the arguments and perspectives of people with whom I have substantial disagreements is the greatest skill I could ever have learned. The constant requirement of diligence and respect in confronting and critiquing opposing positions will always stand me in good stead, and I didn't learn that elsewhere in the 'Westmont bubble,' but learned that from my Philosophy professors."
  - c. "The analytical and writing skills I gained in my philosophy education at Westmont were probably the best possible preparation for a career in medicine and science."
  - d. "My choice of electives (Metaphysics, Philosophy of Religion, Senior Seminar in Religious Epistemology, Ethics) was especially helpful in navigating and articulating to others whether belief in the Christian faith was justified (or, perhaps, warranted)."
  - e. "A general understanding of ethics is simply essential for anyone, whether in church life, politics, grad school, or those extended family dinners with opinionated aunts and uncles who see the world a bit differently than you do."
  - f. "The intimate, collegial learning environment (including easy access to faculty, small class sizes, and lots of dialogue) modeled a style of disciplined and generous intellectual inquiry, which I have done my best to model for others in subsequent professional contexts."
  - g. "The student-teacher interaction taught me skills around interacting with professionals early on (and not just other students). The small class sizes with lots of dialogue and interaction gave me practice in articulating thoughts aloud and having open-minded discussions. I also loved learning how to think and evaluate critically. My most favorite, the ability to fully entertain all different concepts, ideas, and opinions with an open mind. My experiences since Westmont (and at Westmont) have proven that this is a very rare and special ability. Most are too quick to attach to one idea, that they are unable to entertain conflicting ideas."
  
4. *What changes, if any, will we make in light of what we have learned?* We have already made some changes to our program that address some of the issues raised and recommendations made by our alums. For one thing, our division of our two history courses into four has resulted in our being able to focus more on both 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophy, including both continental and analytic traditions. These changes also allow us to cover the other periods of philosophy in more depth, with time for additional philosophers. Also, our division of our logic course into two courses allows us to provide our majors with more training in formal logic and philosophical methodology. This change will help us to address the disparity between the value our alums placed on our skills PLO (85.71% labeled it "Very Important") and the degree to which they think our program helped them to achieve that outcome (only 62.86% judged our program to have enabled them to achieve this outcome to a "Superior" degree). Moreover, our new course, "Intellectual Virtue & Civil Discourse" provides us with a means by which to enhance our instruction in the virtues, provide more applications of philosophy to other disciplines, life, and moral and social issues, and build

bridges with potential philosophy majors or minors who are majoring in a social science (which we indicated in Appendix 6 is the academic division with the fewest number of students double majoring in philosophy and another discipline). This course also provides opportunities for helping students improve both their writing and public speaking skills. We have also built more student-to-student interaction in some of our courses by introducing i>clicker questions (followed by student conversations) and group exercises of various kinds.

We will also be in conversation about the possibility of making the following changes: (1) making the philosophy major capstone experience/course a blend of both theoretical and practical components (a direction that is suggested by the fact that a nearly equal number of students recommended each of these alternative models for Senior Seminar); (2) providing more and better advising to our students concerning their preparation for graduate study and career choice; and (3) improving our students' experience of a philosophical community by strengthening the philosophy club and finding a place on campus for our students to gather regularly for socializing and philosophical conversation. This latter improvement would also be a component in our effort to strengthen our major and minor recruitment and retention.

5. *What light did these discussions shed on our Key Questions?* Though we did not have any Key Questions before we began to work on this report, we now have four that will guide our program review and assessment efforts going forward. And our ability to address three of these adequately will be enhanced by what we have learned from our alumni survey (the survey did not provide us with feedback relevant to the fourth). These three key questions concern (1) Philosophy Major/Minor recruitment/retention; (2) The nature of the philosophy major capstone course/experience; and (3) Broadening the major via additional courses. With respect to (1) we now have a better idea about the aspects of our program that our alums value most highly, and knowing what these are can help us promote our major more effectively. In the case of (2), it is helpful to know on the basis of alumni feedback that a capstone experience that blends the theoretical and the practical may be better than one that emphasizes one of these over the other. And as for (3), we now have alumni suggestions of what courses and areas of philosophy we should consider adding to our program.

## C. Curriculum Review

### Recent changes

In the department's 2011 six-year report, we noted that the number of philosophy courses listed in the catalog was approximately half as many as the average number listed by a dozen peer institutions. Though comparable in many other respects, Westmont's catalog was conspicuously small. The report also noted that the department had discussed other pedagogical reasons for increasing the number of courses. For example, the content of PHI-012 (Critical Reasoning and Logic) was aimed at two rather different student populations, philosophy majors and general education students, and the formal methods that were important for the former group did not serve the latter group particularly well. The department had also received feedback from one graduate program that an otherwise stellar Westmont alumna had been disadvantaged in her application for graduate studies relative to applicants who had completed more philosophy units.

Consequently the department chose to expand its course offerings. Since that time it has divided three existing courses into two. At the same time, a grant opportunity and the new Westmont Downtown program provided opportunities to create two new courses. The department also cross-listed two courses taught outside the department. As a result, the department is now teaching eight courses that are either entirely new or substantially revamped, and the catalog lists six more courses than it did six years ago—a noteworthy change. Westmont still lists fewer courses than the others in the comparison group, but the additional courses do represent a far-reaching change in what will actually be taught on a regular basis.

The courses the department split were PHI-012 (Critical Reasoning and Logic), PHI-101 (Ancient and Medieval Philosophy), and PHI-102 (Modern and Contemporary Philosophy). The number and title of PHI-012 were retained, but the course content changed substantially. Most of the formal material was moved to the new PHI-108 (Formal Logic), and additional material on forming hypotheses (an area of mild deficiency for Westmont students according to the recent assessment of the Critical Thinking ILO) was

added. It already seems clear that each of PHI-012 and PHI-108 is more thoroughly suited to its intended student population than the older version of PHI-012 was.

PHI-101 (Ancient and Medieval Philosophy) was replaced with PHI-103 (Ancient Philosophy) and PHI-105 (Medieval Philosophy). This change allows each course to treat the relevant periods in considerably greater depth. Likewise, PHI-102 (Modern and Contemporary Philosophy) was replaced with PHI-106 (Modern Philosophy) and PHI-107 (19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Philosophy). Again, the change allows for much greater depth. Majors must now take two of the four historical period courses rather than the only two such courses that were offered before.

Taking advantage of a grant opportunity, Dr. Taylor created PHI-015 (Intellectual Virtue and Civil Discourse). The course addresses a timely (and perennial) topic, and it expands the department's lower-division offerings, which otherwise include only the various sections of Philosophical Perspectives and Critical Reasoning and Logic.

Dr. Ed Song created PHI-137 (Justice and Public Policy) as an offering of the Westmont Downtown program. ART-131 (Theory and Criticism in the Arts) is now cross-listed as PHI-131, giving philosophy majors another option for their upper-division electives. And finally, Dr. Sameer Yadav's RS-129 course ("Divine Hiddenness") was cross-listed as a Philosophy Topics course (PHI-150).

These changes are all relatively new, so it is too early to say what all their effects will be. For example, it remains to be seen how the broader range of upper-division courses will make any difference to the average enrollments in those courses. Nonetheless, the new courses clearly give students more options, and they allow students to spend more time with key ideas in the history and logic courses. They also allow students interested in graduate studies the option of taking more courses than they would otherwise have been able to take. The expansion of the curriculum seems to be a significant improvement.

#### Answers to Central Questions

1. *How well does your program provide opportunities for students to learn disciplinary knowledge, skills, etc.?*

Overall, our students do learn disciplinary knowledge, skills, and virtues, as indicated in results of our assessment of the departmental PLOs.

2. *Are there ways you could structure your major more effectively?*

Given student achievement of the PLOs, the current structure appears quite effective. It provides significant flexibility to accommodate double majors, but it also encourages students to begin with Philosophical Perspectives, proceed to the history and logic courses, and end with upper-division courses in the core areas.

3. *Is more effective sequencing of courses possible?*

It is certainly possible to create additional prerequisites, though it is not clear that this would in fact be more effective for students. As it stands, students do generally take courses at appropriate times in their education. Additional prerequisites would risk decreasing the number of majors and minors due to scheduling complications, something the department is eager to avoid.

4. *Do you offer an appropriate range of courses each year?*

One effect of the recent curricular changes is that (compared to previous years) more courses are taught biennially rather than annually. The biennial courses include the four history courses, Formal Logic, and (for scheduling reasons) Metaphysics. This may help avoid low enrollments in those courses, but it may also create scheduling difficulties for students, since Formal Logic is a prerequisite for a number of upper-division courses and Metaphysics is a core area. The department will need to keep an eye on how workable this schedule is.

*5. What changes do you wish to make? Or should some aspect of your curriculum be one of your next set of Key Questions?*

The new course development of the last few years has been a labor-intensive project, and the new (and redesigned) courses will continue to be refined in the near future. It seems wise, then, for the department's curricular development to enter a "quiet phase" in the immediate future. That said, the department has discussed two further areas where improvements could be made.

First, the 2014 assessment of the Reasoning Abstractly GELO indicated that students could use additional help with argument construction (a result that is not surprising, since argument construction is a higher-level skill). The department has considered whether it might be helpful to create a sequence of assignments across several upper division classes that would better enable students to develop their argument construction skills. Alternatively, this could be a greater focus in PHI-012 and PHI-108. The question of which strategy is best will be on the department's radar. (The department will be asking for radar as its next CIP request.)

Second, the department has begun to consider whether its Senior Seminar would be more effective if it were redesigned. Research points to capstone courses as high-impact experiences, but it is not clear to the department how well its current Senior Seminar resembles the studied capstone courses. The college catalog describes the course as "A writing-intensive capstone seminar course designed to help students to: (a) integrate their major, (b) prepare for transition to life after graduation, and (c) reconnect with fellow graduating philosophy majors." In practice, it has functioned as a writing-intensive advanced-topics seminar. An alternative model could have a more pragmatic bent, perhaps by aiming at a product like a published article or practicable philosophy of life. It could have a more explicit focus on how to be a Christian philosopher, with visits from established philosophers and alumni in other fields. In short, the model could resemble a practicum or major honors project more than an upper-division seminar. Whether to switch to such a model is now one of the department's Key Questions.

In the alumni survey, respondents who thought that the Senior Seminar should be more practicum-oriented were slightly outnumbered by those who thought that it should not. A number of alumni expressed appreciation for the Senior Seminar as they experienced it. So there does not seem to be any unequivocal demand for a practicum-style course. But the department will continue to consider what will make the course most effective.

*6. Is your curriculum comparable to curricula of similar departments at relevant peer institutions?*

All the regularly offered courses, and the curriculum as a whole, would be recognized as fairly standard among peer institutions. However it remains true that Westmont does not offer some of the courses that are frequently offered at peer institutions, such as Philosophy of Mind and Philosophy of Science. (It is also true that the number of faculty is at the low end of the spectrum among comparable institutions.) The alumni survey indicates that many graduates would have been glad for exposure to other areas, such as continental philosophy, feminist philosophy, Eastern philosophy, and aesthetics. Others express a desire for deeper engagement with mathematical methods in philosophy, or the thought of late antiquity or the early modern period or the 20<sup>th</sup> century (though our recent changes address those desires to some degree). To fill the gaps, Westmont would in all likelihood need to hire additional faculty with the appropriate expertise, and the department would have to draw more majors in order to register enough students in the additional courses. Though the department has identified it as a Key Question how to attract more majors and minors, neither of those is an easy fix. Whether to broaden the curriculum further is another Key Question. Doing so remains an ideal, though one that can only be approached to a degree with our current resources.

## **D. Program Sustainability and Adaptability**

### **Introduction**

According to the Program Review Guide, the question to be addressed here is "whether our department is likely to be around in ten years." The quick answer to this question is, "Yes, almost certainly." The three full-time members

of this department all have tenure and no immediate plans to retire. More importantly, our department has primary responsibility for teaching the “Philosophical Reflections on Truth and Value” course that is both a GE requirement and central to the tradition of liberal arts at Westmont, so the department will continue to exist, in some form or other, for the foreseeable future. We therefore believe that it will be *more* profitable for us to reframe our guiding question as: “Will we be able to accomplish our mission over the next ten years and to do it well?” (This is recognizable as a version of the second bulleted question in the Program Review Guide: “Will our department be able to sustain its curriculum development and delivery, faculty and student research, and institutional service in response to internal challenges such as changes in enrollment, staffing, or resource allocation?”)

### **Our Mission (and how we achieve it)**

The mission of Westmont’s Department of Philosophy is “to enable students to cultivate the knowledge, skills and virtues of Christian philosophers – that is, to enable students to be lovers of wisdom in every sense.” We do this by:

- a. Teaching the main GE required PRTV course.
- b. Providing a philosophy major & minor
- c. Teaching other courses that satisfy GE requirements (see II.E.1—“Additional Analysis”)
- d. Engaging in philosophical research and scholarship ourselves.

How do we serve society? Philosophy’s situation is different from that of some other disciplines in the college: we do not serve society concretely and directly by producing graduates who to take up the particular, ready-made career for which their major uniquely trains them (unlike liberal studies). Nor do we serve a guild or industry that examines and sets national standards for our discipline (unlike, say, music or chemistry). The service we provide to society must be understood in more abstract and indirect terms, such as:

- a. The benefits to individual members of society, of being exposed to basic philosophy as part of a liberal arts education.
- b. The benefits to other individuals, of studying advanced philosophy as majors.
- c. The benefits to society in general, insofar as it includes persons who are informed by their (basic or advanced) study of philosophy.
- d. The benefits to ourselves and the academy, insofar as we write books and papers, give professional lectures, and take part in the great conversation of the ages that is philosophy.
- e. The benefits to the Christian Church, insofar as we interpret and engage with culture both critically and constructively.

### **Challenges to our Mission**

As noted above, our department will almost certainly be around in ten years, but we face two serious challenges to our ability to provide these services to a high standard. That is, whether we will be able to “accomplish our mission and do it well” over the next ten years is not so certain, precisely because of how these factors of enrollment, staffing and resource allocation come together:

1. Course Offerings: The range of middle- and upper-level courses we offer in our major is already a barebones affair (see section II. C, “Curriculum Review”). As the data in Appendix 7 show, we are near the bottom of the list of peer/aspirant institutions in the number of different philosophy classes we offer over a four-year cycle. This is undesirable for several reasons:
  - a. We are unable to provide classes on key areas that any department worth its salt *ought* to provide, such as: philosophy of science, philosophy of mind, philosophy of math, philosophy of law, continental philosophy, feminist philosophy and non-western philosophy. Occasionally, these receive glancing, partial coverage in other classes (or even other departments), but for the most part we simply do not cover these areas.
  - b. Students frequently express interest in such classes, and ask why we don’t offer them.
  - c. Likewise, in the alumni questionnaire, several respondents report wishing they could have taken more or different classes than the ones we offered.
  - d. We have been told by the graduate admissions officer of a leading PhD program that this “thin” course background is one of the main reasons why even our best graduates find it hard to get straight into top PhD programs. (The last of our students to be admitted directly into a top-20 PhD program without first earning a terminal MA in philosophy was Aaron James in 1994.)

The most straightforward response to this would be to hire additional faculty with expertise in these areas, but Westmont’s financial resources (as they stand) do not allow for this. The next best response would be for the current faculty to study up and acquire enough competence (if not expertise) in these areas to offer such new courses (perhaps in alternate years), but this collides with the second major challenge:

2. Declining Enrollments: we have seen a sharp drop in the number of philosophy majors in recent years.

**Table 1: Westmont Philosophy Major Graduates, 2005-2017**

<b>Year*</b>	<b># of Philosophy Graduates</b>
2005	15
2006	4
2007	17
2008	8
2009	8
2010	11
2011	8
2012	4
2013	6
2014	6
2015	5
2016	1
2017	3

(\* NB: = year of degree requirement completion, not year of graduation.)

This has coincided with a noticeable drop in enrollment in our upper-level classes. Numerous times, our upper-level classes have had registrations in single digits. (E.g., the projected enrollments in Fall 2017 for PHI-104 “Ethics” and PHI-175 “Metaphysics” are four and six, respectively.) This drop in enrollment has played out in a number of different ways:

- a. In some cases, we have simply had to cancel the under-enrolled class, with the consequence that our majors find it hard to meet all their major requirements of what is already a “barebones” major, and (presumably) making this major even less attractive.
- b. In some cases, we have been allowed to run the under-enrolled class (so that our majors can meet their requirements), but we are aware that regularly running classes with five or fewer students is not ideal for an institution with Westmont’s modest endowment and budget.
- c. In some cases, we have simply had to cancel the under-enrolled class and replace it with an additional full section of the GE required course, PHI-006 “Philosophical Perspectives”. (The normal size for a section of PHI-006 is 40. The grading load for a single full section is considerable; the grading load for *two* full sections is virtually unmanageable.)
- d. In some cases, we have had to cancel the under-enrolled class, but been invited to offer it as an independent study to the students who wanted it. These independent studies are normally uncompensated and on top of a full teaching load.

### **Understanding Declining Enrollments**

We believe that the declining enrollments at Westmont can be explained in terms of three factors:

- a. The main factor is the national trend of a drop in philosophy majors:

#### **Table 2: Survey of Neighboring or Comparable Institutions**

In the summer of 2017, we contacted department chairs at ten institutions and posed a single question:

**“Has your department had a noticeable drop in the number of philosophy majors in the last five to ten years?”**

Institution	Definitely Yes	Unclear	Definitely No	No Answer
Biola	X			
Claremont			X*	
Gordon	X			
Houghton	X			
Loyola Marymount		X**		
SPU	X			
UCSB	X			
Wheaton	X			
Whittier		X***		
Whitworth	X			

A number of respondents observed that the sharp decline began shortly after 2008 and hypothesized that parents and counselors were steering students away from liberal arts majors and into “more practical” majors such as STEM or Econ & Business.

\*Respondent at Claremont says that their numbers are pretty constant, but they never have many single philosophy majors. Most of their philosophy majors EITHER double with non-liberal arts subjects OR are in their PPE “Philosophy, Politics and Economics” program -- which would appear to explain why they have not been affected so much, even given the move toward majors perceived as more practical.

\*\* Respondent at LMU notes that numbers are down since 2012, but believes that this reflects their usual pattern of waxing and waning numbers, and that numbers will start picking up next year.

\*\* Respondent at Whittier notes that their number of philosophy majors is at low ebb at the moment, but that this is hard to interpret, because their numbers are often erratic but normally small in any case: some years 5, some years 9, some years 0, some years 3.

- b. Though we believe that the decline in philosophy enrollments at Westmont is mainly explained an instance of a larger national trend, we also believe that it may be partially explained by complacency on our part: because we were used to attracting plenty of majors effortlessly, we got out of the habit (or never got into the habit) of actively recruiting them.
- c. We are concerned that the decision to give Philosophical Reflections GE credit to students who take the fall semester Augustinian Scholars seminar may exacerbate the problem, since it entails that we no longer teach dedicated honors sections of PHI-006. This means that we have far fewer opportunities to present our department and major to the brightest and most motivated students in the college (from whom we have in the past recruited some of our best students). Jim Taylor’s involvement in the Augustinian seminar this coming year is a good step in the right direction, though it will remain true that about half of the incoming Augustinians will not have a GE course with a member of the Philosophy Department in their first two years, so it's still not the case that we're breaking even in terms of exposure.

### Addressing Declining Enrollments

We believe that, if we are going to achieve our mission as described above, we must address the challenge of declining (non-GE) philosophy enrollments in two ways:

- a. Improving Recruitment: we must do more to promote the philosophy major/minor within the college, e.g., by advertising its attractiveness and feasibility as a double major or minor in combination with more “practical” subjects, and by making the case for philosophy itself in practical terms (such as philosophy majors’ high scores on the GRE, LSAT, MCAT, etc. We must also redouble our efforts to make the case for the intrinsic value of philosophy as a field of study, regardless of its immediate practical benefits.

To a certain extent, we have already begun to do these things. In Spring 2015, we dedicated two departmental meetings to improving our recruitment strategies. At one of these meetings, we consulted with newly arrived Ed Song about the successful recruitment strategies at his previous department (LSU).

Following this consultation, we acted on a number of Ed's suggestions, including redesigning our departmental bulletin board, creating brochures and other literature to advertise the benefits of a philosophy major, creating a Westmont Philosophy Department Facebook page, working more closely with Phi Sigma Tau to sponsor college-wide events that showcase the major, and sending recruitment letters to promising individual students from our lower-level classes. It is too early to tell for sure, but we believe that these efforts appear to be working, in that we foresee a modest up-tick in the number of senior majors and minors for both of the next two years.

- b. Diversifying our Work Portfolio: until our numbers bounce back (and while we are still occasionally having to cancel upper-level philosophy courses) we must find other ways to pull our weight in the college workload.

Again, to a certain extent, we have already begun to do this. In January 2017, we met with the Provost and Vice-Provost to discuss low enrollments, recruitment strategies, class cancellations and alternative workloads (such as assisting with First Year Seminars and Augustinian Scholar Seminars). Following these meetings, Jim Taylor has agreed to help team-teach an Augustinian Scholars Seminar in 2017-18. We look forward to further guidance from, and cooperation with the Provost's Office in these matters.

**Conclusion:** If we can address these challenges in a satisfactory way, we have good reason to be sanguine about our ability to fulfill our mission and to do so well. If we can't, then we don't.

#### **E. Additional Analysis**

1. General Education. Roughly half of the courses our department offers on a regular basis can be taken by students to satisfy a GE requirement. These courses are as follows:
  - a. PHI 6 (& PHI 6H)—Philosophical Perspectives—satisfies the Philosophical Reflections on Reality, Knowledge, and Value Common Context requirement (multiple sections offered every semester).
  - b. PHI 12—Critical Reasoning & Logic—satisfies the Reasoning Abstractly Common Inquiries requirement (offered every spring semester).
  - c. PHI 15—Intellectual Virtue & Civil Discourse—satisfies the Writing/Speech Intensive requirement (offered some fall semesters).
  - d. PHI 103—Ancient Philosophy—satisfies the Reasoning Abstractly requirement (offered every other fall in rotation with PHI 105).
  - e. PHI 105—Medieval Philosophy—satisfies the Reasoning Abstractly requirement (offered every other fall in rotation with PHI 103).
  - f. PHI 106—Modern Philosophy—satisfies the Reasoning Abstractly requirement (offered every spring in rotation with PHI 107).
  - g. PHI 107—19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Century Philosophy—satisfies the Reasoning Abstractly requirement (offered every spring in rotation with PHI 106).
  - h. PHI 108—Formal Logic—satisfies the Reasoning Abstractly requirement (offered every fall in rotation with PHI 175—Metaphysics).
  - i. PHI 137—Justice & Public Policy—satisfies the Understanding Society and Thinking Globally requirements (offered as needed, SB Downtown only)
  - j. PHI 195—Senior Seminar—satisfies the Writing/Speech Intensive requirement within the philosophy major (offered every spring).
2. Finances. See Appendix 12 ("Budget") for a chart that records our department's overall expenses in each of our specific line-item budget categories for the last six years. That appendix also contains comments on the expenses in each budget category.

Three of the last six years we came out in the black and three we came out in the red. The highest year-end surplus was \$548.69 (2105-2016) and the highest year-end deficit was -\$726.93 (2014-2015). The average year-end amount is -\$194.60. So we have averaged a deficit. Consequently, we should plan to spend some time looking more carefully at our expenses to see where we might be over-spending (and then we should either cut spending in that area or request an increase in our overall budget amount).

Some more specific items for discussion about the budget include the following: (1) Clarify whether our “Student Wages” category is used in part to pay for a percentage of the wages for the student office workers hired by Victoria or instead only for student workers hired by individual faculty members; (2) Discuss whether we plan to use the \$110 in the “Scholarships” category (there have been no expenses in that category for the last six years), and if not, to which other category we should transfer those funds; (3) Discuss ways to reduce expenses in the “Printing” category (e.g., by switching to electronic copies); (4) Review the areas in which we have been spending “Hospitality & Honoraria” funds (department meals, senior breakfast, speaker stipends, etc.) and discuss how much to increase the amount budgeted for this line item (our six-year average in this category is \$1,080 and our most recent budgeted amount is \$660, so we have overspent in this area by average of \$420 a year); (5) Look carefully at our faculty expenses in the “Academic Supplies” area and at the administrative assistant’s expenses in “Office Supplies” to see where we might be able to reduce spending; (6) Consider moving the \$50 from the “Telephone” category to another line item (since it is so easy to make free calls overseas using Skype, etc.); (7) Find out what the “Professional Development” category is for (expenses that benefit the whole department?), and discuss whether we want to allot funds in this area (the amount budgeted is currently \$0.00); (8) Review the expenses in the “Transportation, Meals, and Lodging” category to see what they are, and consider budgeting funds in this area (there are currently none, but we have spent an average of \$318.19 in this category for the last six years); (9) Find out what we are spending the “Dues & Subscriptions” money for (budgeted amount: \$100 and average annual expenses: \$125.67).

3. Faculty quality. The three full-time members of the philosophy department (Mark Nelson, Jim Taylor, and David Vander Laan) each have Ph.D.’s in philosophy from top philosophy graduate programs (the University of Arizona and the University of Notre Dame) and between 17 and 30 years of teaching experience. They have also each done a substantial amount of publishing, and each of them has been promoted to the rank of full professor. There are also three adjunct philosophy instructors who teach courses for our department (usually PHI 6) on a regular basis. Two of these three (Chris Hoeckley and Ed Song) have Ph.D.’s and one (Stephen Zylstra) is ABD. They also did their doctoral work at strong philosophy programs (Claremont Graduate University, the University of Virginia, and the University of Toronto) and have high average teaching evaluation scores. See Appendix X for current CVs.
4. Advising. Some alumni who completed our alumni survey suggested that we improve the quality and quantity of our advising of students for the purpose of preparing them for careers and for the graduate program application process. One alum contributed this reflection on the topic of career preparation:

“Since philosophy is a very theoretical subject and it does not lead to a direct form of employment, I would include more areas of self-exploration so that students understand their own strengths & weaknesses, and understand what types of work and tasks a student enjoys to help lead them to relevant employment.

Having attended Stanford and been around many high-achieving individuals the main thing that I think Westmont lacked was informing students what decisions would put them on the path to career success. For example, if a graduate wants to be put on the fast path to success in business, they should seek employment in a company like McKinsey, Bain or the Boston Consulting Group, and must start that pursuit before graduating. Many students may not choose this path, but they should know the path exists. The main difference to a place like Stanford is that everyone knows that these paths exist and if they want to pursue them, there is institutional and peer support.”

And two alums commented on the role of the department in helping our majors who consider applying to philosophy graduate programs:

“Since philosophy, as a career, is notoriously difficult to pursue right now, I think the most important practical thing the department can do is help students figure out whether or not that is for them. Promoting TA positions for advanced students gives them a sense of whether being in the classroom is for them. Likewise, encouraging student research outside the classroom tests whether one enjoys the research and writing. One of the biggest factors that contributed to my decision to pursue graduate school were these two things. I loved lecturing and being involved with students, and I loved the research process and enjoyed a

modicum of success. With those things under my belt, I feel confident that pursuing philosophy is the right decision, and that the hardships involved, economic and otherwise, are worth the risk.”

“If students choose to emphasize the theoretical aspects of philosophy, there should be better training and coaching on how to prepare a strong application for graduate school. I initially intended to go to grad school but did feel I wasn't prepared to compete with other applicants from universities with larger philosophy programs.”

5. Facilities. Though our office building and individual offices are adequate for the three of us (and for whichever adjunct happens to be teaching), the main office we share with the RS department is too small, and there is also no place for our majors and minors to gather. With respect to that latter concern, one of our alums offered the following:

“I always felt like the program lacked a geographic center. Unfortunately Porter Center doesn't allow for students to really gather to study or talk; however, finding some way around this would be idyllic. I would have loved to see a designated classroom or some space on campus where students in philosophy classes could meet to read, work, and study together. Also, as a TA, I often had to really work to secure a good space for me to tutor students one-on-one. If there was some designated classroom, it would be very handy for TA's to work with students, perhaps during designated open hours.”

6. Interaction with other departments. We have at least the following reasons to interact with other departments;
  - a. Comparing notes about program review (which we have done with the History and Political Science departments);
  - b. Working with other departments that offer courses that satisfy the same GE requirements some of our courses also satisfy (*Philosophical Reflections on Truth & Value*: Political Science, Computer Science, Economics & Business and *Reasoning Abstractly*: Mathematics & Computer Science). We have collaborated with these other departments in developing GELOs and certification criteria. We need to continue having conversations with these departments about assessment tools and rubrics.
  - c. Cross-listing courses with other departments that students can take to satisfy philosophy major or minor requirements (Art, History, and Religious Studies). In the future, we should consider talking to Political Science about possibly cross-listing POL 30 (Political Theory and Ideology) with a philosophy course and also possibly cross-listing PHI 137 (Justice and Public Policy) with a Political Science course.
  - d. Talking to other departments about philosophy courses either required (Political Science) or recommended (Art, English, Religious Studies) for their majors.
  - e. Asking other departments to encourage their students to take philosophy courses that would complement their non-philosophy major coursework (such as Communication Studies majors talking Philosophy of Language, Political Science majors taking Political & Legal Philosophy, History majors taking one or more of our history of philosophy courses, and Religious Studies students taking Philosophy of Religion or Philosophical Theology). This kind of interaction with other departments could potentially lead to our acquiring more majors and minors.
7. Faith-learning in our program. As a discipline, philosophy is not only well suited for the purpose of faith-learning integration, it is also an absolutely essential tool for this purpose. We strive to incorporate a substantial faith-learning component in each of our courses. Our Philosophical Perspectives course, in particular, is designed in part not only to introduce Westmont students to the discipline of philosophy but also to provide them with a philosophical introduction to the Christian liberal arts and to equip them to use philosophy as a tool in their on-going faith-learning efforts throughout their time at Westmont (and afterward).

The three of us full-time members of the department also make it a priority to engage in research that involves faith-learning integration. For instance, Taylor's book, *Learning for Wisdom: Christian Education & the Good Life* has recently been published. And Vander Laan is in the process of submitting his paper, “The Paradox of the End without End” (which is about the Christian doctrine of life after death) to a journal

for publication. Also, Nelson has recently presented an updated version of his inaugural lecture, “Redeeming the Time”—in which he borrows an idea from CS Lewis’s *Great Divorce* and tries to make it do some work in ethical theory and philosophy of religion. These are just three examples of many of our research projects that involve faith-learning integration.

8. Collaboration with the departmental library liaison. During the last six-year period, the philosophy department has had three different library liaisons (Robin Lang, Sarah Stanley, and Mary Logue) because of staff resignations. Also, our collaboration with these liaisons has focused on collection development rather than library instruction sections for our students. The library has asked us to participate this year (2017) in their evaluation of philosophy print resources contained in the library.

We will no doubt be assigned a new liaison in the coming year, since Mary is now the Director of the Library. Also, we will discuss, as a department, ways to work with our new liaison so as to collaborate with her or him on projects in addition to collection development, including scheduling library instruction sections for our students, maintaining the library’s online philosophy resource guide—and promoting its use to our students, and encouraging our students to use the philosophy print resources in the library. Finally, we will need to participate with the library staff this fall in their evaluation of the philosophy print materials in their collection.

See Appendix 11 for details.

9. Student participation in off-campus programs. Though many of our students participate in off-campus programs, few of them get philosophy major or minor credit on these programs. Exceptions include philosophy majors who attend the SCIO (Scholarship & Christianity in Oxford) semester program and receive major credit for philosophy coursework done there, philosophy majors who participate in Westmont in San Francisco and Westmont in Santa Barbara and do a philosophically-oriented internship for four units of philosophy credit, and philosophy majors who attend the Oregon Extension Program and receive four units of philosophy credit for philosophical coursework offered during that semester. There is also a philosophy course (PHI 7) offered on the Northern Europe Semester program for which students can get four units of philosophy credit and also satisfy their Philosophical Reflections GE requirement and a philosophy course (PHI 137) offered in the Westmont in Downtown SB program for which students can receive four units of philosophy credit and also satisfy both their Thinking Globally and their Understanding Society GE requirements.
10. Student/faculty research opportunities. Though the members of our department assist students in their philosophy research through independent/directed studies (tutorials) and through major honors projects, we do not regularly collaborate with students on research projects. David did receive Westmont grants for two student-professor research projects, but he decided not to continue this practice because he deemed it not to be of sufficient value for both the student and him. As a rule, professional philosophers rarely collaborate with each other or with their students on research projects. Rather, philosophy professors provide guidance and feedback to students who work on their own writing projects.

### **III. Looking Forward: Changes and Questions**

Changes. As indicated above in section II C, we have created six new courses, substantially revamped two, and cross-listed with two outside the department. We have also sharpened our PLOs in response to PRC recommendations (see section I) and developed new rubrics for each of our PLOs. In addition, we have changed how we approach program review by increasing the number of conversations about it and the amount of collaboration we have engaged in with respect to it. Moreover, we have changed how we approach philosophy major and minor recruitment (see section II D).

Our planned changes include improving our student advising relative to both career preparation and graduate school application. We will also be discussing possible changes to our senior capstone experience as well as the possible creation of additional upper division courses. Finally, we will be talking about ways to collaborate with other

departments—especially for the sake of improving our major and minor recruitment of students who are already majoring in other disciplines.

Mission Statement. Our alumni survey confirms that our mission statement is adequate and does not need to be revised (our former students indicated the value of the philosophy education here that was driven by that mission statement—see section II B and Appendix 6).

Action Plan, Multi-Year Assessment Plan, & Draft of Key Questions. We will be looking carefully together going forward at the six areas for potential change listed in the “Action Plan For a Six-Year Program Review Cycle” form: (1) In the “*Curriculum/program*” area, we will be discussing possible changes to our senior capstone experience (currently a four-unit Senior Seminar course) and possible new upper division courses; (2) in the “*Initiatives to improve teaching and learning*” area, we will be discussing ways to help our students do better relative to our three PLOs: with respect to the Knowledge PLO, a list of items enough of which we would like our students to show us they know adequately by the time they graduate; with respect to the Skills PLO, more explicit attention paid to argument evaluation and construction in all of our courses; and with respect to the Virtues PLO, the possibility of requiring all of our majors to take our new Intellectual Virtues & Civil Discourse course; (3) In terms of “*Possible adjustments in faculty priorities or responsibilities*” a possible reassignment of faculty to the tasks of advising the philosophy honor society and club, overseeing library acquisitions, managing the department colloquium schedule, and arranging for visiting speakers (e.g., the Erasmus Society); (4) As for “*Learning outcomes that the department will assess in the subsequent years,*” we will need to work with the General Education committee and other relevant departments to schedule assessments for the GELOs our GE courses include (Philosophical Reflections, Reasoning Abstractly, and now with the addition of PHI 137, Understanding Society and Thinking Globally); (5) In the “*Reallocation or acquisition of resources*” area, we will be discussing possibly revising our departmental budget by reallocating funds (see section II E); and (6) “*Other important changes*” will include changes to our strategies for the recruitment and retention of majors and minors, changes to our advising of majors concerning career preparation and graduate school application, and changes to the way we grade essays (for enhanced inter-grader reliability, improved communication with students, and decreased burden on each individual instructor).

Our Multi-Year Assessment Plan will need to be revised in light of our revised and new courses. Also, as said above, we will need to work with the GE Committee and other relevant departments in the coordination of our assessment of GELOs. We will also be eliminating our assessment of the “Integrating the Major Discipline” GELO, since the faculty recently voted to eliminate that component of the GE program.

Our Key Questions going forward will concern the following topics (in order of importance from most to least):

- (1) Philosophy Major/Minor recruitment/retention;
- (2) The nature of the philosophy major capstone course/experience;
- (3) Broadening the major via additional courses; and
- (4) Faculty workload (essay grading).