



## Philosophy | 2014-2015 Assessment Report

**1. Please give a brief overview of the assessment data you collected this year. This can be in any form you feel is appropriate, such as a table, a short narrative of results, statistical analysis, highlighting findings that were of particular interest, etc. You will, however, likely want to submit results for each learning outcome you assessed this year individually.**

The Philosophy program sought to investigate two different dimensions of our curriculum this year. We wanted, again, to determine how well we help our students improve their writing. We also wanted to identify ways to strengthen individual commitment to our program. We relied on comparative analyses of student papers and discussions with graduating students to assess these aims.

**Writing:** We did not have a large enough pool of graduating students to conduct a thorough assessment of our writing. However, we did note that while one of our graduating students demonstrated astronomical improvement in his writing, the other student's work had started strong and improved, though not to the extent that we would have liked.

We asked them whether they would recommend developing a new course on the methodology of philosophy, viz., writing. This course is tentatively called 'What Philosophers Do', and was inspired additionally by the recent URSCA (Undergraduate Research and Scholarly and Creative Activity) seminar. Both students agreed that such a class, at a 200-level, would have helped them to develop their writing early. Though the one student almost certainly would have demonstrated remarkable progress regardless, we think that such a course might have helped the student who started quite strong to better hone his approach to writing and thereby write even better philosophical papers. We hope that this course will also help the Philosophy Program to better integrate Undergraduate Research into our curriculum.

**Student Commitment:** We asked our graduating students for their thoughts on the rapport amongst the Philosophy Majors and Minors. Both noted that while there is considerable in-class comradery, one of the virtues of a small program, there is little interaction or opportunity for such outside of their classes. We asked for their thoughts on resuming a Philosophy Club, and both thought that it would improve student commitment to the program. We then discussed how this club might be organized, noting that an earlier iteration had devolved into the same small group of students meeting to discuss a class they shared and not much more. We need, they recommended, more structure for the club.

**2. How will you use what you've learned from the data that was collected? Some examples are: particular improvements to the curriculum, incorporation of a different pedagogy, a change in assessment plan for the following year in order to obtain more specific feedback, better information or a better response rate, a determined need for faculty development in a particular area, better career alignment, a faculty retreat to discuss the data and how best to use it, etc.**

With these discussions, our plan next year is to identify two of our more dedicated Majors to organize the Club. We would like for the club to meet every other week. In any two-month cycle (4 meeting) we intend for one of the meetings to consist of a faculty member presenting to the students and holding a

discussion on something that s/he is currently interested in or possibly working on. [This is another avenue of integrating Undergraduate Research, as these discussions may persuade certain students to get more involved in this work as well.] For another of the 4 meetings, we would ask 2-3 students to present and discuss work that they have submitted for earlier classes. Discussing their work beyond merely submitting it to a faculty member for a grade will, we hope, strengthen their commitment to the program. The remaining two meetings would be arranged around a specific topic, which will be chosen by the club president(s). Our hope is that the topics will be at least tangentially related to on-going classes, but we will leave the specific determinations up to them.