University of Colorado **Boulder**

2025 Program Review

Department of Philosophy

Academic Review and Planning

Advisory Committee Report

Approved *Ann Stevens* 12/16/2025

Signed by:
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Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs | Date

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2025 PHIL Program Review

Process Overview

The Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee (ARPAC) review of the Department of Philosophy (PHIL) was conducted in accordance with the 2025 program review guidelines. The degree program report and goal setting exercise were prepared and submitted by the unit. An external review committee (ERC), consisting of two experts from outside of the University of Colorado Boulder, engaged in a virtual visit and submitted a report based upon review of relevant documents and interviews with faculty, staff, and student unit members and university administrators. ARPAC staff, employing web conferencing tools, facilitated the external review as a remote visit over April 14 and 15, 2025. The ARPAC unit liaisons submitted a summary of findings derived from the goal setting exercise. ARPAC reviewed and considered these materials, met with the chair, and wrote this report.

Past Reviews

The recommendations from ARPAC in the Department of Philosophy's 2016 program review focused on departmental climate, diversity and equity, and strategic planning. Philosophy has worked to make progress in departmental culture and climate since the previous report. Since problems surrounding the internal climate of the Department of Philosophy and concomitant public scandals associated with both unethical and inequitable behaviors of some faculty members, PHIL has made progress, addressing many of the problems noted in the last ARPAC review. The department has, since the last review, corrected many of the shortcomings of the departmental practices and breaches in appropriate conduct; this progress was confirmed through multiple conversations and meetings with external reviewers. These changes have helped to elevate the reputation of both the department and the University more broadly.

Unit Analysis

The campus' standardized description of the Department of Philosophy is available on [the website of the Office of Data & Analytics](#) (D&A). D&A updates the profile annually in the fall semester. This report cites data posted in October 2024, reflecting the state of the Department of Philosophy as of the academic year (AY) 2025-2026.

Philosophy has, particularly in the last several years, enhanced its reputation in the wider field of philosophy as a discipline. Academically, the unit has demonstrated over the last several years an excellent record, both in terms of the highly productive publishing record of its faculty and its standing in the field as a whole, reflected for instance, particularly in the comments of the external reviewer committee. The faculty of Philosophy are accomplished, and the department ranks among the best in world, including a #1 ranking in the subdiscipline of medieval philosophy and a #4 ranking in applied ethics in the Philosophical Gourmet Report (confirmed by external reviewers as the discipline's standard ranking system).

Moreover, Philosophy has done a tremendous amount of work towards bolstering the humanities in a current climate of bias towards science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), and this is reflected as well in the strong numbers for majors and student credit hours. Along these lines, Philosophy also offers curricular benefits for the university as a whole, specifically in relation to the large number of credit hours taken in the department by non-majors, as roughly 90% of its student credit hours generated come from students not majoring in Philosophy. The department offers three degrees: a Bachelor of Arts (BA), a Master of Arts (MA), and a Doctor of Philosophy

(PhD). In each of these areas, Philosophy has established strong numbers in relation to peer departments across the country. Philosophy has also established relationships with other departments on campus, to deliver curriculum useful to these other departments, such as its course offerings in logic and ethics for the Department of Computer Science.

It appears that a substantial portion of the student credit hours generated by Philosophy are tied to online instruction delivered by lecturers and adjunct faculty. Roughly half of Philosophy's faculty of approximately 48 faculty members are lecturers, while the remaining tenured and tenure-track (TTT) faculty include 9 full professors, 7 associate professors, 3 assistant professors, and 5 teaching assistant professors.

Philosophy is to be commended for recognizing the challenges associated with online education and its commitment to addressing the challenges arising from this modality, which ARPAC suspects will only increase as more and more students start to use artificial intelligence (AI) for their online assignments. This may pose problems particularly as this usage increases, and specifically for a writing intensive discipline such as Philosophy.

Teaching and Learning Excellence and Assessment

Philosophy houses three degree programs: a bachelor's degree, a master's degree, and a PHD degree. The department graduates approximately 60 majors each year, which is high compared to peer institutions. Philosophy has focused on a dual mission of servicing the needs of other programs, such as Cognitive Science and Neuroscience for its MA curriculum, along with classes in ethics for other departments, such as Computer Science. Roughly 90% of its student credit hours service non-majors, emphasizing this contribution to the University's wider teaching mission.

In addition to its mission towards servicing the needs of other university units, Philosophy also offers an exceptionally wide range of course topics for students. In this regard, CU's Department of Philosophy certainly does stand out among its peers at other institutions in its robust delivery of a wider curriculum. Particularly noteworthy are offerings in less common subjects in the United States, such as African philosophy.

Philosophy offers assessment of its degree programs particularly in relation to placement of undergraduates in master's and doctoral programs in philosophy and in student placement in professional fields, such as medicine and law. Philosophy plans to expand offerings to engage with the new degrees that will be offered in public health, which will also require student training in ethics, which is an area of research expertise of the department.

On the whole, the Department of Philosophy is strong in both undergraduate and graduate offerings for students, particularly those offered by TTT faculty. There is room for development and improvement with regard to online course offerings. As Philosophy has flagged in its report, and ARPAC concurs, particular attention should be given to assessing online course offerings as part of university requirements for assessing learning outcomes. The department offers a substantial contribution to interdisciplinary education on campus.

Research, Scholarly, and/or Creative Work Excellence

Philosophy has a strong reputation for excellence in relation to peer institutions in terms of its research program. The department covers a wide range of philosophical topics, with special strengths in the fields of medieval philosophy, in which it ranks #1 in the world; applied ethics, in which it ranks #4; and epistemology, among another broad range of subdisciplines. Overall, the

reputation of research and scholarship for the department is extremely high and to be congratulated. The external review committee confirmed the prominence of the CU Department of Philosophy's reputation. Center for Values and Social Policy and the department host the annual Rocky Mountain Ethics Congress (RoME), which is the largest annual international ethics conference in the world; the Committee on the History & Philosophy of Science, which the 2016 ARPAC recommended be turned into a center, hosts the Conference on the History and Philosophy of Science.

ARPAC agrees with the assessment of the external review committee that Philosophy has a stellar reputation, particularly after the difficulties several years ago. In the revised ARPAC format, the department does not fully articulate their vision for what areas need expansion. The external review committee noted a lacuna in the areas of logic and the philosophy of language and particularly modern philosophy and Kant. They recommend a hire in the area of logic to dovetail with philosophy of language in relation to newer work on AI. Certainly, if the department has an opportunity to focus on a new hire, a hire that would emphasize philosophy of language in relation to AI seems to be a good bet to help sustain the Philosophy's robust reputation.

Hiring and Mentoring (Faculty, Staff, Postdoctoral Fellows)

According to the D&A profile for AY 2024-2025, faculty personnel in Philosophy consisted of 19 tenured/tenure-track (TTT) faculty (9 full professors, 7 associate professors, 3 assistant professors), 5 teaching-track faculty (all assistant teaching professors) and 21 lecturers. The department reports show one of these assistant professors was promoted to associate by the time of the report. Five of the 19 TTT faculty are women; 4 are from groups traditionally underrepresented in philosophy as a discipline. CU Boulder salaries are all 93% or higher of the Association of American Universities (AAU) public peer average salaries in Philosophy.

Philosophy offers a faculty mentor for junior faculty, as an optional assignment, but one which is strongly encouraged. On the whole, junior faculty feel supported by senior faculty; however, the ERC reported some junior faculty have been given unrealistic expectations in terms of the number of publications they were told they would need to gain tenure, with the ERC suggesting that the number suggested by senior faculty was probably double the expectations of peer institutions. The department has suggested that these recommendations have resulted in successful tenure cases. Clear communication of disciplinary expectations will ameliorate faculty morale particularly for junior faculty.

The department's goals suggest a replacement for two recently retired faculty, one in the area of philosophy of language and logic and another in metaphysics and epistemology. The external review committee concurs with the need to make sure that the department has a person whose research particularly addresses language and recommends someone who might also be able to address ideas of language in relation to AI. It may be possible to pursue links to the Program in Culture, Language, and Social Practice as well to ameliorate offerings connected to AI. ARPAC also supports Philosophy directing its efforts towards new hires, particularly towards this subdiscipline.

According to the Data and Analytics profile for AY 2024-2025, staff personnel in Philosophy consisted of 3 classified staff members and 2 hourly student employees. The ERC report suggests that the three staff members feel appreciated by the community in the department as a whole and work well together to keep the department functioning optimally.

Student Success and Mentoring (Undergraduate and Graduate Students)

Philosophy has a strong profile for student success among its 215 majors (2024) majors; for example, the department graduated approximately 60 students per year over the past 5 years. The D&A report shows 59 degrees awarded in 2023 and 230 total undergraduate majors. The department notes that numerous undergraduates have gone on to prestigious PhD programs in philosophy and some have become tenured professors elsewhere, without giving precise figures; this sort of information, particularly for undergraduates, is extremely difficult to track and mostly gets noted in departmental memory via individual faculty anecdotes. This holds for graduate students as well, including some of the department's placements for PhD students in tenure-track positions elsewhere in the US.

The department also has a robust program compared to peer institutions, particularly on the level of undergraduates, but also in terms of graduate level instruction for the PhD. The department taught 31,197 student credit hours in 2024, a substantial contribution to the university. Approximately 90% of these student credit hours were taken by non-majors, and the number of student credit hours has increased over the last five years. Approximately half of these credit hours are taught by TTT faculty, with the remaining half taught by lecturers (i.e., temporary faculty).

The department profile posts a variety of opportunities for undergraduates and graduate students to engage in social activities around philosophy. However, the external review committee also noted that some undergraduate students felt that engagement opportunities were lacking, with the notable exception of a late-night philosophy evening event, which students found appealing. They have also offered a variety of workshops to help students prepare papers for publication and professional development workshops. Additionally, they have made great strides to make the process involved in funding transparent for students, with a website explaining how funding awards, summer teaching, and other awards are distributed.

The external review committee noted general undergraduate satisfaction with both the teaching and the climate of Philosophy. Graduate students as well were mostly satisfied with the culture and climate of the department and its educational opportunities.

On the whole, Philosophy appears to offer a congenial atmosphere of learning for both undergraduate and graduate students. Students appear satisfied with instruction and the opportunities for learning and community. The external reviewer committee report suggests that there are some problems with mentoring for women undergraduates and suggests a proactive plan to incorporate more women in the teaching faculty. ARPAC notes that in previous reports from 2018, 2019 and 2020, the department has made concerted and successful efforts to recruit female graduate students which could help with mentoring for women undergraduates.

Inclusivity and Unit Culture

In February 2022, a collaborative group met and identified the following [five goals to advance diversity, equity and inclusion](#) at CU Boulder: (1) employee skills and development; (2) student achievement outcomes; (3) community building; (4) employee recruitment outcomes; and (5) preparing students to participate in a diverse democracy. Philosophy has worked to address these goals through a variety of programs and assessment activities. Regarding the Campus Culture surveys, the Department of Philosophy generally ranks well, with scores ranging from the high 4's

to the low 5's. The unit has included graduate students in decision-making processes and worked to pair graduate students with faculty mentors and other graduate student mentors.

While the department has made progress since 2016, concerns remain about the problem of interruptions within graduate seminars, often related to gender. In addition, an element of concern noted in the external review report was the lack of women's participation in upper-level class offerings and the perception by some undergraduates that women's voices have a tendency to be silenced in the lower-level offerings. The external reviewers suggest a concerted effort to recruit a wider pool of applicants for teaching faculty positions; however, some of these goals of supporting women students could also be accomplished by training for faculty to encourage women's participation in lower-level undergraduate classes. This same attention by faculty could also help with problems noted regarding interruptions of graduate students.

The Department of Philosophy has worked since its last review to improve the climate for faculty, students and others, and this work appears to have caused positive impacts on the department's climate. Students appear generally satisfied with the culture of the department, as noted in the external review committee report. Faculty as well appear to be generally satisfied with the collegial climate of the department. More transparent procedures for merit have contributed to departmental faculty satisfaction. However, the external review committee did note that some faculty, particularly pre-tenured faculty felt that senior colleagues placed excessively high standards for promotion to tenure, standards that the ERC also felt were excessively high and not conducive to pre-tenured faculty success.

Here, however, ARPAC wishes to also note another separate avenue for inclusivity, which ought to be recognized, in terms of curricular offerings by the Department of Philosophy. As noted above, Philosophy offers a robust variety of course offerings, and, as mentioned, courses such as its course in African Philosophy are noteworthy, contributing to goals of inclusivity for the culture at large.

Unit Planning and Governance Structures and Processes

The department bylaws were last amended on November 15, 2024. The bylaws delineate voting rights, providing full voting rights to all members (at least a half-time academic appointment as assistant teaching professor to full professor). The bylaws include: faculty hiring procedures, annual merit review procedures, reappointment, promotion, and tenure criteria and procedures, and grievance procedures for faculty. An additional document providing a detailed annual evaluation system was also provided. Mentoring was discussed in other documents but does not appear in by-laws. No grievance procedures for students were provided.

The department has two elected committees (executive and salary) and six appointed committees (climate, colloquium, fellowship and awards, graduate admissions, graduate studies and curriculum, and undergraduate and curriculum). The chair calls faculty meetings, which follow Robert's Rules of Order.

The annual evaluation system initially appears onerous; it is explained in a 15-page single-spaced document with seven steps for completion, but the external review committee reports that department members find it relatively easy to follow. It does have the benefit of making cutoffs and rankings generally known.

The department has a strong identity within the discipline of philosophy, particularly within the area of medieval philosophy. It has defined its future trajectory through replacement of recently retired faculty, particularly focusing on the area of language, with the possibility of a hire in the field of language in relation to AI. The unit's goals seem sensitive to current cultural issues.

Recommendations

The members of the Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee address the following recommendations to the Department of Philosophy and to the offices of responsible administrators:

To the Unit:

<u>Teaching</u>

1. Develop department infrastructure for online teaching. This may include the following: a template/model for online education (e.g., generic Canvas shells and best practices), a plan for generation of student credit hours online (i.e., ideal mix of online and in-person offerings), the stated goal of developing procedures for evaluating online teaching, and consistent guidance and procedures the department will follow in response to student use of AI (consider consulting disciplinary guidelines from professional associations).
    a. Consider working with the dean of arts and humanities, as well as the vice chancellor for academic resource management to reach out to Continuing Education to see if they can provide the department with support for online education.

2. Formulate and act on a clear proposal for the department's stated goal of shifting the balance of faculty towards more TTT and teaching faculty to reduce reliance on adjunct lecturers for undergraduate course offerings. Work with the dean of arts and humanities on the plan for decreasing the number of temporary faculty (i.e., lecturers).

<u>Research/Faculty Support</u>

3. Provide consistent and equitable mentoring for all pre-tenured faculty around tenure expectations and how the department defines "excellence" in scholarly and creative work.

<u>Inclusive Climate</u>

4. Work with the appropriate campus support offices (e.g., Center for Teaching and Learning, Graduate School, Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance) to provide education for all faculty on inclusive practices that are attentive to identity and power across the department. This should attend to three dimensions: specific concerns about women in undergraduate classes feeling silenced, interruption in graduate seminars, and the department undergoing change, with particular attention to the needs and experiences of underrepresented faculty. Given the long-standing issues in the department, especially around gender, noted in the external review materials, this work should be ongoing. There should be a plan for this education to be included systematically in the preparation of all instructors, through, for example, campus resources such as the Center for Teaching and Learning or the Graduate School's inclusive faculty mentoring initiative.

To the Dean of the Arts and Humanities:

5. Work with the department on a plan for decreasing its number of temporary faculty (i.e., lecturers) by moving longtime lecturers into teaching faculty positions or other teaching positions such as scholar in residence or postdoctoral (teaching) fellow.

6. Explore creating shared administrative support services for certain key functions for which individual units, especially smaller units, may not have staff personnel, e.g., graduate student administrative support, event support, budget and finance support, etc.

7. Assist the department in connecting with online education experts (such as Continuing Education) who can help the faculty become more proficient in planning for and teaching online courses.

8. Emphasize and support the important role that PHIL—and the humanities disciplines as a whole—play in CU Boulder's mission when communicating and advocating to university administration, the local community, and the state of Colorado, including in central campus (SRC) communications and storytelling.

To the Vice Chancellor for Academic Resource Management:

9. Assist the department in connecting with online education experts (such as Continuing Education) who can help the faculty become more proficient in planning for and teaching online courses.

To the Provost:

10. Emphasize and support the important role that PHIL—and the humanities disciplines as a whole—play in CU Boulder's mission when communicating and advocating to university administration, the local community, and the state of Colorado, including in central campus (SRC) communications and storytelling.

Required Follow-up

The chair of the Department of Philosophy shall submit two follow-up reports—one due on the first of April 2027 and one due on the first of April 2029. The follow-up reports shall focus on the implementation of the recommendations from ARPAC detailed herein. The dean of Arts and Humanities and the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, as well as the provost and other relevant central campus leadership will also respond to all outstanding matters under their purview arising from this review year's recommendations. The dean of Arts and Humanities and the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences will submit one follow-up report due on May 1, 2028, while the provost and relevant central campus leaders will submit one follow-up report due on June 1, 2030.