PRAC Meeting Minutes  
December 11, 2015

Present: C. Dellinger-Pate, J. Gleason, T. Lin, R. Silady, L. Vitale (chair), J. Webb, R. Zipoli  
Absent: M. Bay, C. Calin, M. Fede, K. Gorniak

PRAC convened electronically at 11:03am (chat feature on BlueJeans)

The Philosophy Program is to be praised for its many strengths, which include strong faculty with internationally renowned research. The PRAC minutes from November 12, 2015 are reiterated here:
- the department’s mission and faculty demographics were specific and clear  
- faculty are heavily engaged in research  
- students are presenting their research at international conferences  
- goals for student learning clearly expressed, and 5 measurable outcomes made explicit  
- two important initiatives are housed in the department: RCCS/RC-VEST and the journal Metaphilosophy  
- students receive individualized attention, and are nurtured in their pursuit of Philosophy

In particular, PRAC would like to commend the department’s attempt at assessment of major student performance. Philosophy implemented a direct assessment of their majors by using a “History Inventory” survey. Upon reflection, the Philosophy program concluded such a survey was an inadequate tool to measure their defined student goals, and revisited an assessment without the survey’s limitations.

The self-study proposed a new way of direct assessment, the course-embedded model. In this model, students’ growth will be measured by the “typical philosophy essay” in a fashion that will preserve student anonymity. According to this plan, Philosophy majors will provide the Scholarships and Awards committee with their best essay. A selection of these essays will undergo anonymous assessment by all faculty members.

However, through discussions with department members, it became apparent to PRAC that the department does not yet have consensus on how to best assess student learning. PRAC is concerned with the lack of standard tools used for direct measurement. Furthermore, assessment of the Religious Studies minor was not included in the report in a sufficient manner. In light of these reasons, and after careful deliberation, PRAC recommends conditional approval of the Philosophy Program with the understanding that the program will be granted continual approval after the following items have been sufficiently addressed:
1) a clear plan of which direct measures the program will implement; when/in which classes they will be implemented; and how data will be gathered and stored. The committee recognizes that direct assessment may come in different forms, and it also recognizes that faculty are masters of their own field. It is the choice of the Philosophy department to decide what tools for direct assessment they will use. Examples include, but are not limited to: rubrics to measure the 5 identified DEOs; a simple “objectives met/not met” for the goals; test grades; individual papers and presentation grades (usually scored with a rubric). PRAC members are happy to help and discuss other possible assessment alternatives.

2) the development of objectives for the minor of Religious Studies, and how its program is/will be assessed.

PRAC also suggests that the development of a curriculum map, though not required, would serve the department well for future program assessment.

The Philosophy Department is responsible for a 1-2 page explanation providing solutions to the above two items. This report is due to the PRAC chair of AY 2016-17 by October 4, 2016.

Again, the committee appreciates Philosophy’s unique concerns, and recognizes the faculty’s hard work, passion, and substantial accomplishments. We urge our university administrators to support the department, in accordance with the external reviewer’s recommendations, in the following ways: restore greater support to *Metaphilosophy* and the RCCS; provide administrative support for assessment initiatives and service-learning initiatives; support curricular and research initiatives of the faculty in the form of research re-assigned time, course load reductions and other releases. A new tenure-track position for a specialist in race and gender would be highly beneficial for the department and university.

(VOTES: continuing: 1; conditional: 8; abstention: 2)

Meeting adjourned at 12:01pm

Revised 1/21/2016