14 March 2011

Dear Chairman Leavitt,

I write on behalf of the Executive Committee of the American Philosophical Association’s Pacific Division to urge the Board of Regents not to approve the proposed elimination of the Philosophy Department at UNLV.

Philosophy contributes in an indispensable way to the mission of the university and to the intellectual and moral life of our culture. It transmits the foundations of this culture, as represented in the writings of thinkers from Plato to Dewey. It fosters intensive and rigorous critical thinking. It is the discipline where students undertake the study of ethics and its applications in political, commercial, and biomedical contexts. It interacts with and enriches a wide range of other disciplines, such as political science and psychology. A major or minor in philosophy is a traditional start to a career in law, and philosophy majors have excellent admission rates to medical school.

A statement describing the role of philosophy in higher education is available from the American Philosophical Association at http://www.apaonline.org/publications/texts/roleofphilosophy.aspx.

We understand that very difficult decisions must be made to address the budgetary shortfall at UNLV and we know that the Board of Regents will ensure that cuts are made in a way that is consistent with the mission of the University. We therefore ask you not to deprive future students at UNLV the opportunity to study philosophy.

Sincerely,

Dominic McIver Lopes
Secretary–Treasurer

For the Executive Committee of the Pacific Division: Professors Julie van Camp (Cal State Long Beach), Chair; Michael Tooley (University of Colorado), President; Alison Wylie (University of Washington), Vice President; Michael Bratman (Stanford University), Past President; Heather Battaly (Cal State Fullerton); Joseph Keim Campbell (Washington State University); Ned Markosian (Western Washington University); Alastair Norcross (University of Colorado)

cc: Vice Chairman Jason Geddes, Mark Alden, Andrea Anderson, Robert J. Blakely, William G. Cobb, Cedric Crear, Mark W. Doubrava, Ron Knecht, Kevin C. Melcher, Kevin J. Page, Jack Lund Schofield, Michael Wixom, President Smatresk, Provost Bowers, Dean Hudgins, Professor Jones, Chair of UNLV Philosophy, The Board of Officers of the American Philosophical Association