

Committee on the Status and Future of the Profession

2015-2016 Membership

Sally Scholz, chair (2018)

John Heil (2016)

Jacquelyn Ann Kegley (2016)

Anita Silvers (2017)

Meghan E. Sullivan (2017)

Luvell E. Anderson Jr. (2018)

Eric Schwitzgebel (2018)

Sven Bernecker, *ex officio* (2016)

Teresa Blankmeyer Burke, *ex officio* (2016)

Krista Lawlor, *ex officio* (2017)

Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, *ex officio* (2017)

Alexandra E. Bradner, *ex officio* (2018)

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The Committee on the Status and the Future of the Profession worked on the following projects during 2015-16:

- Completed the interview best practices which had been drafted and presented to the Board twice during the previous year, and was presented again at the November 2015 board meeting.
 - The Interview Best Practices was an extensive project under the leadership of Julia Driver, former chair of the Committee on the Status and Future of the Profession. Driver led online discussions, created multiple drafts, and researched best practices and implicit bias in related disciplines. The document is quite extensive and offers advice to departments and candidates on every aspect of the interview process. It also includes a set of guidelines for Skype interviews. The complete version is available [here](#).
- Completed the Committee's assigned work from the Task Force on Inclusion and Diversity (attached).
 - The Task Force assigned certain tasks to various standing and special committees. Our committee discussed, drafted, and revised our recommendations to departments. In addition, our committee offered recommendations on additional items found on the Task Force report.

- The committee is working on further proposals regarding language requirements in the 2016-17 year.
- Ranked and augmented the data Collection Task Force's list of priorities for data collection
 - Although a relatively simple process of ranking, the committee also discussed briefly and made suggestions for additional items to be studied.
- Began a project on creating a toolkit for academic departments under threat.
- Began a project on Graduate Student Admissions policies and procedures
- Reviewed grant proposals for the APA small grant program

Scholz was also an active participant on the Code of Ethics/Code of Conduct Committee.

“Supporting Inclusion for Undergraduates and Graduate Students”

7G: “Provide recommendations for graduate and undergraduate course requirements.”

Understanding that diversity includes the origin, content, and methodologies of course materials, the APA recommends that undergraduate majors be exposed to diverse primary sources in philosophy in introductory and intermediate level courses, and that advanced courses on diverse topics be offered on a regular basis. Instructors are encouraged to draw material from non-Western philosophical traditions as well as from marginalized voices within the western philosophical tradition. Care should be taken not to relegate diverse perspectives to the end of a course or to represent diverse viewpoints as merely responding to or reacting to canonical positions.

At the graduate level, departments are urged to include a course requirement directly related to expanding the traditional canonical boundaries of philosophical inquiry, e.g., students should be required to take at least one course in feminist theory, philosophies of race, disability studies, queer theory, postcolonial studies, or related critical fields.

Additional recommendations:

- Attend to recruitment into the profession by encouraging and supporting programs that introduce philosophy to students prior to college, including but not limited to programs for underrepresented students.
- Provide support in the form of grants for special projects for philosophy programs in colleges and universities that lack sufficient resources. For example, provide a line of funding for campus lectures, philosophy clubs, and ethics bowl teams for colleges and universities that have demonstrated need (such as tuition dependent institutions).
- As part of undergraduate and graduate assessment, departments are encouraged to regularly analyze retention measures. Exit interviews or surveys provide valuable feedback that can help departments address curricular and climate issues.
- Encourage and support mentoring programs for underrepresented students at both undergraduate and graduate level. The [APA resource page](#) includes links to institutes as well as information for developing in-house mentoring programs. Departments can contribute by advertising relevant summer programs and providing financial support to students seeking attendance at such programs.
- Diversify introductory texts.
- Require graduate students to demonstrate non-Western/etc. proficiency in their qualifying exams.
- Expand PhD language proficiency requirements.
 - Departments are encouraged to adopt a language policy concerned with proficiency in understanding philosophical work in at least one language other than English, without privileging any particular set of languages.
 - Greek/Latin/French/German reinforce a Eurocentric approach to philosophical education. If a privileged list is retained, adding some non-Western languages to

the privileged list, perhaps classical Chinese or Pali, is another way to further diversify philosophy.

- Departments are encouraged to allow research methods (digital humanities, the language of medicine or law, and statistical methods, etc.) to stand in for language if the specific research would be better served.

8B Support and fund a Visiting Scholar program to foster the idea that a professional career in philosophy is real option for community college students.

Two-year colleges are a traditional starting point for members of under-represented groups who seek a Bachelor Degree. As a result, student populations at two-year colleges often are more diverse than those of baccalaureate institutions in the same region. Two-year college curricula may focus on associate degree programs for students who will not transfer and on general education courses for those who will. In many regions, therefore, opportunity for two-year college students to learn about cutting edge developments in philosophy is severely curtailed, and as a result they are not attracted to studying philosophy when they transfer.

The Council of Philosophical Studies' Visiting Philosopher programs of the 1970s stimulated the transfer of two year college students to philosophy baccalaureate programs by arranging for leading philosophers, usually from senior institutions in the same region, to give talks at two-year colleges. Visiting Philosophers also advised students about continuing study in philosophy beyond their two-year colleges. Sometimes they also assisted the two-year college faculty in expanding their philosophy course offerings by increasing the number of qualified philosophy instructors their institutions employed.

There are several possible routes the APA could pursue to revive this program. As did the Council for Philosophical Studies, the APA could seek grant support. Or through its Two-Year College Committee and its three Divisions, for example, the APA could organize an internal mechanism for doing so.

9A Facilitate M.A. students' access to Ph.D. programs by prompting doctoral programs to reconsider the importance of an elite undergraduate education in eventual success in the field.

Research published as a Harvard University Press book, *Inside Graduate Admissions: Merit, Diversity and Faculty Gatekeeping*, by University of Michigan Assistant Professor of Education Julie Posselt, indicates that highly ranked doctoral department admissions committees, including some in Philosophy, are drawn to applicants from elite undergraduate institutions. The prestige of the applicant's undergraduate institution can count for a lot in who is admitted, Posselt observed, with judgments about applicant's ability influenced by the prestige of the undergraduate programs from which they come. Such decisions, Posselt observes, "effectively determine the future make-up of the faculty" in the discipline.

The APA can urge doctoral admissions committees to add diversification of educational background to the considerations brought to bear in assembling each incoming class of doctoral

students. Applicants who enjoyed undergraduate education in well-funded philosophy departments in highly-selective institutions are likely to complete more advanced work in philosophy and to be more sophisticated in applying the discursive conventions prevailing in the field upon attaining the baccalaureate degree than applicants from less favored backgrounds. They also have been given much more opportunity to number well-published professors among their referees. Inequality of opportunity to develop their philosophical talents as undergraduates is one reason applicants from M.A. programs should not be found less worthy of admission because of deficiencies in their undergraduate education.

Another reason is inconsistency of practice across different segments of higher education. To illustrate, philosophically talented individuals who began their higher education in a two-year college or regional four-year college setting usually have little occasion to hone competitive standardized test-taking skills. Grading practice apparently differs from one institutional type to another: grading at two-year colleges tends to result in lower GPAs than at elite baccalaureate and flagship research institutions, so applicants from non-elite backgrounds may have earned lower GPAs in their early years of higher education.

To facilitate equitable opportunity for careers in philosophy for individuals from diverse educational backgrounds, and especially for members of under-represented groups, the APA could appoint a special committee – constituted by members nominated by the Committees on Teaching and on Inclusiveness – to recommend diversity catering expansion and weighting of criteria for admission to doctoral programs.

Addendum: Foreign students

Colleges and Universities ought to be encouraged to provide opportunities for foreign students to attend graduate programs, increasing the cross-cultural pollination and challenging the US/Anglophone dominance of many philosophy programs. Policies that explicitly or implicitly limit the number of foreign students admitted each year are counterproductive. Philosophy programs are encouraged to examine the university policies regarding admission of foreign students as well as the services available to foreign students (including assistance with visas and language preparation) to better facilitate globally diverse graduate student populations.