Committee on Non-Academic Careers

2017–2018 Membership

Amelie O. Rorty, chair (2018)

Stephen Martin, associate chair (2018)

Aine Donovan (2018)

Jennifer Faust (2018)

Jeremy A. Lent (2019)

Eleni K. Manis (2019)

James E. Bruce (2020)

E. A. Howe (2020)
Committee on Non-Academic Careers  
Annual Report - 2017-2018  
Stephen Martin

Though the academic job market for philosophers has improved in the ten years since the 2008 financial meltdown, securing permanent academic employment remains an unlikely proposition for most recent PhDs. Accordingly, there is a great demand among those seeking non-academic employment for resources and services designed to facilitate career change. It is an open question as to what role the APA in general or the Committee on Non-Academic Careers in particular can play in meeting this demand.

**Short-Range**

We reached out to several members of the philosophical community who had created websites designed for philosophers in, and interested in, non-academic careers. One message we received was the non-academic careers committee ought to include fewer academics and more of those who have embarked on successful non-academic careers.

Last year we discussed a newsletter. We did not pursue it. The reason is that there does not appear to be a demand for one. It is true that those seeking non-academic employment appreciate accounts of those who have made such a transition. But we do not believe that an APA newsletter is the best method of gathering and delivering such accounts to the population most interested in them.

**Long-Range**

We propose the following measures to improve the Committee’s responsiveness to the needs of the philosophical community:

1. To encourage on-campus info sessions, hosted by graduate programs, for students curious about what life for philosophers is like outside academia. In our discussions with those who have coordinated such sessions, it is best to include at least one alumnus or alumna in any such program;
2. To post links to external resources and services on the APA Non-Academic Career site;
3. To invite successful non-academic philosophers to join and lead the Committee.

All that we wrote last year about the difficulties faced by the Non-Academic Career Committee is still true. The APA is an academic association. There is little incentive for any philosopher in, or interested in, a non-academic career to remain a member of the APA, let alone join if not one already. At any rate, the primary responsibility to provide resources and services falls on graduate programs—at the department level on directors of graduate studies, and at the university level on career counseling and service centers. The Committee can support graduate programs to some extent, and indeed the APA’s Beyond the Academy is intended for department and university officials as much as it is intended for individual philosophers. But the fact that there is little incentive for APA membership among non-academic philosophers means that there is little else the Committee can do for these individuals besides support them indirectly though the affiliations of members of their home departments.
We continue to urge directors of graduate studies to encourage those of their graduates who are considering non-academic careers to maintain active connections to their academic colleagues. Departments should circulate Beyond the Academy, continue to invite graduates to departmental events and colloquia, and encourage them to join the APA and attend regional philosophy meetings. We also believe that departments should be candid with incoming students about the likelihood that non-academic careers are in their future. The sooner graduate students realize that they are unlikely to secure permanent academic employment, the more responsive graduate programs can be to their specific needs.

**Conclusion**
The APA is an academic association, and it functions to support its members. The APA Committee for Non-Academic Careers, however, functions to support those who are unlikely to be members of the APA at all. To be sure, there are professional and ethical reasons for the committee to provide this support. One, as we noted last year, is that the vitality of the discipline depends in part on its reach outside the walls of the ivory tower. But it is in the end up to graduate programs to carry the lion’s share of the load in advancing the non-academic careers of their students.