

Committee on the Status and Future of the Profession

Submitted by William E. Mann

The Committee on the Status and Future of the Profession presently has the following membership: Michael Burke, Cheshire Calhoun (*ex officio*), Randall Curren (*ex officio*), Wayne Davis, Saul Fisher, Leslie Francis (*ex officio*), Carol C. Gould (*ex officio*), Paul Humphreys (*ex officio*), Patricia Kitcher, William Lawhead, Peter Markie (Associate Chair), and Paul Roth. Members who left the committee when their terms expired in the middle of 2008 are Judith Lichtenberg, Andrew Light (*ex officio*), Elisa Ruhl, and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (*ex officio*).

In 2007 the committee revised the document, “The Role of Philosophy in Higher Education,” that had been published in 1980. The revised document was considered by the Board of Officers at its meeting in November, 2007. The Board decided to send the document back to the committee for further revision, to be reconsidered at its November, 2008 meeting. The Board also decided that the document was important enough to post on the APA web site, in its provisional form, with the understanding that work on the document had not been completed. (The provisional document can be found at <http://www.apaonline.org/publications/texts/index.aspx>.) During the Summer of 2008 Cheshire Calhoun and William Mann worked on a substantial revision of the document, which was then presented to, and modified by, the other committee members. This version of the document will be presented to the Board for its consideration.

The first recommendation of the 1999 report of the Committee on Priorities and Problems of the APA (the “Hanson Report”) was that

the APA must better track its members and the changing conditions for philosophic work by instituting a much more extensive and on-going system of data collection and management.

There are many issues in which the APA might be expected to interest itself – for example,

the evidently increasing use of part-time and adjunct faculty, non-academic career options for philosophers, curricular trends in philosophy, supply and demand for new Ph.D.'s, and so on – but where the organization lacks the information necessary to address the issues credibly. Individual members and departments and programs of philosophy often turn to the APA for up-to-date statistics – on the academic job market, the number of new Ph.D.'s awarded, the ethnic and gender mix of the profession, the average time to degree in philosophy, figures on undergraduate and graduate enrollments – and the National Office does its best to supply whatever information it has or can borrow from other reliable sources. But inquiries too often end in frustration because it has to be admitted that the APA either does not collect information of the sort required or it has only out-dated or inferred or otherwise questionable statistics.

In some ways the availability of pertinent data has improved significantly, primarily because of the enormous proliferation of information resources now on the internet. But there are two tasks that the committee might consider undertaking. One is the aggregation of links to reliable, up-to-date sources of relevant information. There are some sources under Profession/Resources on the APA web site, but the collection could be made more complete and more current.

The other task would consist of a periodic survey of philosophy departments and programs in the United States, to be completed by department chairs and program heads, using a survey instrument that gets at the kind of data the profession wants. A prototype of such an instrument, “Humanities Indicators: Survey of Humanities Departments,” was developed in 2004 by the American Academy of Arts & Sciences in collaboration with some of our sister societies and the American Council of Learned Societies. I don't know what the present status of the instrument is, but it would be a valuable resource to the development of the sort of survey the APA might want to inaugurate.