

Committee on the Status and Future of the Profession

2012-2013 Membership

Julia Driver, chair (2015)

Sanford Goldberg (2013)

Noelle McAfee (2015)

Lewis Powell (2014)

Joel Pust (2014)

Christopher Pynes (2015)

Charles Taliaferro (2013)

Daw-Nay Evans, *ex officio* (2015)

Garry Hagberg, *ex officio* (2013)

David Hoekema, *ex officio* (2014)

Sally Scholz, *ex officio* (2014)

Anita Silvers, *ex officio* (2013)

Report of the Committee on the Status and Future of the Profession of the American Philosophical Association

September 2013

Julia Driver, Chair
Sven Bernecker, ex officio
Daw-Nay Evans, ex officio
David Hoekema, ex officio
Susana Nuccetelli, ex officio
Sally Scholz, ex officio
John Heil
Jacquelyn A. Kegley
Noelle McAfee
Lewis Powell
Christopher A. Pynes
[Joel Pust resigned]

The subcommittee on Dual-Career Hiring prepared a report for discussion (attached). That subcommittee consists of:

Julia Driver, Chair
Cheshire Calhoun
Ann Garry
Diane Michelfelder
Holly Smith
Charles Taliaferro
[Joel Pust resigned]

The committee reviewed seven grant proposals for the APA and submitted a report with comments and recommendations to the APA.

The committee was directed by the Eastern Division to consider the issue of Skype and internet-assisted interviewing: “[The Executive Committee] decided to recommend to the APA Committee on the Status and Future of the Profession that they 1) investigate the relative merits and defects of live versus Skype interviews, and, more generally, best practices for interviewing, and 2) consider the benefits to members of attending APA meetings (quite apart from job searches), as well as how to make the membership more broadly aware of these benefits.” (Richard Bett, who was Secretary of the Eastern Division until the current academic year).

Preliminary thoughts on internet-assisted interviewing: There was some trepidation expressed on the issue of Skype/internet-assisted interviewing by

some committee members, though it was generally recognized that reliance on internet-assisted interviewing is likely to increase, especially as technological improvements remove various glitches from the process. Thus it was agreed that it would be useful to look into 'best practices' for such interviewing. A subcommittee will be formed to look into this.

The problems that concerned members of the committee:

Internet-assisted interviewing does not seem to work well when departments have large numbers of candidates to interview. Some departments interview 25-30 candidates per position. In-person interviews in these cases tend to be important to ensure uniformity of experience. For example, if members of the hiring committee are not gathered in one place there may be less willingness to forgo other demands and participate in all the interviews. While internet-assisted interviewing may work fairly well for smaller candidate pools, it may not work as well for larger groups.

Other worries involve the fact that some interviewees will not have access to the equipment and setting required for a smooth interview. One possible way to avoid this problem is for the interviewing institution to assume responsibility for setting up the interview in a location with appropriate equipment and setting for internet interviews. At the very least, the interviewing departments should be concerned about making the experience for the interviewees as uniform and fair as possible.

Another worry is that Skyping [the method used in the cases discussed] seemed to have a bad effect on the structure of the interview itself. One problem had to do with the fact that most computer cameras have a limited field, which meant that interviewees were not really able to address the interviewers as a whole.

However, it seems quite clear that there are also considerable advantages to forgoing in person interviews. Those advantages mainly have to do with cost reduction. Graduate students and other candidates would not have to spend large sums of money to interview. Hiring departments and their institutions would not have to spend large sums of money to attend professional meetings for the purpose of interviewing.

The committee was also asked to consider benefits to members of attending meetings. This issue came up in a meeting held by the Strategic Planning Task Force at the Pacific APA in April. Members of the Committee on the Status and Future of the Profession were invited to attend, and some did so. Member services were a prominent topic at that meeting, and some services would be better offered in conjunction with meetings. For example, one suggestion that seemed promising to those present was the possibility of the APA hosting professional development events at conferences. Some members may be interested in short courses on current developments in philosophy. Many other

professional organizations offer professional development, and this may be something for the APA to consider.

Some of the concerns raised at this meeting have been superseded by the success of the new APA website, so I won't address those in the report. My impression is that people generally have been very pleased with the improved functionality of the APA web site.

Committee members considered the APA's function of defending philosophy departments and programs to be extremely important. One suggestion was that the APA let it be known that it is willing to advocate for departments and programs that are at risk of loss of institutional support or elimination. This could be done in a variety of ways. Simplest would be promoting this on the web site. The APA already does a good job of utilizing social media to alert membership of its efforts on behalf of Philosophy departments. The newsletter suggested by the Strategic Planning Task Force would provide another means of promoting this service.

Plans for the following year include continuing to investigate the advantages and disadvantages of internet-based interviewing. The committee is also looking into what sorts of surveys would help the APA best in eliminating its data deficit, and how to conduct the surveys most efficiently.