APA Committee on the Teaching of Philosophy

Submitted by Randall Curren, Chair

The Teaching Committee welcomed two new members in July 2008: Robert Ladenson (Illinois Institute of Technology) and Nathan Nobis (Morehouse College). Betsy Decyk (Cal. State, Long Beach) is the committee’s vice-chair, and will succeed the current chair in July 2009.

The main actions taken by the Committee during the 2006-07 academic year:

1. A new revision of the Statement on Outcomes Assessment (OA) was completed and submitted for Board approval. We propose that it replace the existing statement, which was adopted in November 2006. The sense of the committee was that a single statement on all forms of OA would yield the clearest overview of the characteristics of, and relationships between, outcomes assessment of courses, departments, and programs. The revised statement includes links to sites where the OA schemes of several departments of philosophy are described.

2. Work on a revised Statement on the Major is in progress. It will be consistent with the references to the philosophy major in the revised statement on The Role of Philosophy Programs in Higher Education, but it will incorporate sample course titles and descriptions to add specificity to claims about the diverse ways in which philosophy offerings and major programs could prepare students and allow them to pursue their interests. It will nevertheless be a distinctly shorter document that the existing one.

3. We sponsored a session at the 2007 Eastern Division meeting, on the Intercollegiate Ethics Bowl and the involvement of undergraduate philosophy majors in teaching. We also sponsored a session at the 2008 Pacific Division meetings, on teaching philosophy through science fiction.

4. Beginning in January 2008, we have had extensive conversations with Roberta Israeloff, Director of the Squire Family Foundation, on ways in which to collaborate to promote pre-collegiate philosophy. With some encouragement, the Foundation is now collaborating with the Association for Practical and Professional Ethics (APPE) to introduce a high school version of the Collegiate Ethics Bowl, and has begun making grants to philosophers engaged in philosophy for children projects. It has also launched an on-line “Philosophy Toolbox” resource. A further initiative focuses on opening APA membership to school teachers.

5. We evaluated several grant applications pertaining to philosophy teaching and outreach.