APA Committee on the Teaching of Philosophy

Submitted by Randall Curren, Out-going Chair, July 3, 2009

On July 1, 2009 the Teaching Committee welcomed a new Chair, Betsy Decyk (Cal. State, Long Beach) and three new members: John Immerwahr (Villanova University), Brian C. Ribeiro (University of Tennessee-Chattanooga), and Jana Mohr Lone, ex officio (University of Washington). Continuing on the Committee are: Robert Ladenson (Illinois Institute of Technology), Nathan Nobis (Morehouse College), …

The main actions taken by the Committee since its 2008 report:

1. A new revision of the Statement on Outcomes Assessment (OA) was submitted and approved at the November 2008 meeting of the Board, completing a multi-year undertaking.

2. The Committee sponsored a proposal, originating with the Squire Family Foundation, to create a new category of APA membership, at a reduced rate, for school teachers engaged in the teaching of philosophy. (The mission of the Squire Family Foundation is to make it possible for all high school students to study ethics in a philosophically meaningful way.) Pursuant to creating this new category of membership, proposed revisions to the APA By-Laws were drafted by the Committee Chair in consultation with the Board in December 2008, in time for them to be put to a vote at the divisional meetings in December 2008, February 2009, and April 2009.

3. The Committee arranged a session on “Philosophy and Plagiarism” at the Pacific Division meetings and co-sponsored a session on “How to Improve Student Learning” at the Central Division meetings. Efforts were made to arrange a session on sustainability in the philosophy curriculum for the 2009 Eastern Division meetings, but not enough potential participants were willing to travel for that purpose at the end of December.

4. Work on a revised Statement on the Major stalled in the New Year, as it became impossible to enlist a subcommittee to take on the necessary work. Consistent with the guidance provided by members of the Board at its 2008 meeting, the intention in revising this statement is to build on the references to the philosophy major in the revised statement on The Role of Philosophy Programs in Higher Education (approved at the 2008 meeting), and produce a shorter and more helpful document by: (1) incorporating 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; (2) replacing the existing statement’s models of the major with profiles of the philosophy major at different kinds of institutions.

5. The review of 2009 grant applications pertaining to philosophy teaching is anticipated in August.