American Philosophical Association

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October 26, 2026

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Sarah Beth Estes, Dean, CLAS (sarahbeth.estes@wichita.edu)

Dear President Muma, Provost Lounsberry, Vice Provost Jack, Senate President Koop, and Dean Estes:

We write as chair of the board of officers and executive director of the American Philosophical Association, the largest scholarly society of philosophers in North America, representing more than 8,000 members. We urge you and all involved in making vital decisions about the future of the Wichita State University to preserve and support your philosophy program rather than phasing it out as has been proposed.

Wichita State's mission is "to be an essential educational, cultural, and economic driver for Kansas and the greater public good," with a vision "to be one of the nation's premier urban public research universities." It would be difficult to argue that Wichita State is fulfilling its mission, living up to its commitment to its students and its community, or becoming a premier research university were it to eliminate its philosophy program.

Philosophy is an absolutely core liberal arts discipline, dedicated to critical thinking, clear communication, and ethical reasoning. More than perhaps any other discipline, philosophy prepares students to be engaged, well-rounded citizens and leaders with exactly the skills that Wichita State aims to cultivate.

Wichita State's philosophy program is strong and growing, having tripled its number of majors in the last five years. It has launched an Ethics Bowl team to build students' applied philosophy (and other) skills and has seen a number of its majors participate in the Mellon Foundation's paid applied learning grant for the humanities. And the program has broad impact across campus, offering more than 30 sections of courses required by other programs as well as general education courses. With just 6 faculty achieving all of these effects, the philosophy program offers great bang for the university's buck.

Further, in terms of market value and equipping students with skills employers desire, philosophy is perhaps the best humanities major a student could choose. Philosophy teaches skills that are highly valued by employers and that are transferable as the kinds of jobs available to workers change over time: critical thinking, creative problem solving,

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written and oral communication, and logical analysis. Renowned investor William H. Miller recently invested $75 million in Johns Hopkins University's philosophy program, saying, "I attribute much of my business success to the analytical training and habits of mind that were developed when I was a graduate student [in philosophy] at Johns Hopkins." Miller's conviction based on his own experience is backed up by general data about employment and professional success.

A philosophy major or minor is a classic gateway to a career in law, and philosophy majors routinely outperform nearly all other majors on the LSAT, GRE, and GMAT. According to Payscale.com, those with a BA in philosophy have the highest pay over time of all humanities majors, significantly outranking other humanities disciplines. Philosophy majors' mid-career earning potential is ahead of majors in many fields outside the humanities, including biology, psychology, political science, and business. *The New York Times* and *The Economist* have recently reported that philosophy majors are currently in particular demand, and *Times Higher Education* reports that philosophy and AI courses and degree pathways are increasingly popular. At a time when career outcomes are so important to students and parents, and when philosophy degrees and courses are in increasing demand, it is unwise to disinvest in your philosophy program.

We understand that numerical metrics such as majors—especially metrics dictated by the Board of Regents—are often used to make decisions about institutional priorities, but such metrics do not tell the whole story of what your philosophy program offers. As noted above, Wichita State's philosophy program is growing in terms of students and is a positive contributor to the university budget. It would be difficult if not impossible for the department to continue meeting student demand or offering the current breadth of general education, interdisciplinary, and service courses if the major were eliminated. Reductions to the philosophy program would also reduce Wichita State's standing among peer universities and would undermine the institution's efforts to achieve R1 status.

Finally, who better to articulate the importance and impact of Wichita State's philosophy program than your alumni?

> *I consider my background in philosophy, and the training it provided me in philosophical thought and critical reasoning, as one of the greatest keys to my success in business. I truly believe that philosophy is one of the best core educations that anyone can get to prepare them for facing the challenges of life (in any field of work).*
> *— Jason Van Sickle '01, President and CEO, InSource AI*

> *I think that people who have studied Philosophy know how to ask the questions that will lead them towards a more meaningful answer; an answer one would be honored to live within. My education at Wichita State—under the tutelage of the Philosophy Department—has equipped me with the confidence and the analytic capacity to ask and answer these deeper, more structural questions with clarity, purpose, and poise.*
> *— Hannah Erickson '15, Senior Director of Operations & Business Development, Impact Health*

> *Getting my bachelor's degree in Philosophy was one of the best choices I could have made for my professional career. A degree in Philosophy serves many purposes. First, my Philosophy degree taught me to think critically and analytically which has been a valuable skill for me as an employee. Secondly my degree taught me how to clearly articulate my thoughts which has proven valuable numerous times as I navigate the business world. Finally, it never ceases to be a great interview question when someone asks me why I chose to get*

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my degree in Philosophy. When I tell them it "made me a better thinker" I automatically make a great first impression.
—Sarah Strydom '03, CSM Team Lead, Iron Mountain

The courses I took as a Philosophy major at WSU were indispensable to my success in law school. The critical thinking skills I developed in those classes not only helped me succeed in my law school courses, but also gave me an "edge" in a very competitive academic environment. My training gave me the ability to extract crucial information through careful reading and to logically structure my thoughts. These skills were central to my success on the LSAT, and my admission to a top law school. That same training pays off every day in my career, as well.
— Mark Kanaga '98, Deputy General Counsel, Centuri Group

For the sake of your mission, your students, and your community, we strongly urge you and all leaders at the Wichita State University to preserve and support your philosophy program.

Most sincerely,



Marya Schechtman, Chair, Board of Officers



Amy E. Ferrer, Executive Director

cc: Patrick Bondy, Chair, Department of Philosophy (patrick.bondy@wichita.edu)
Jayden Island, Student Government Association President (SGA.President@wichita.edu)