



2023–2024 BOARD OF OFFICERS

Association Officers

R. Lanier Anderson, *Chair*
Richard Bett, *Vice Chair*
Matthew O'Brien, *Treasurer*
Amy Ferrer, *Executive Director*

Central Division

Marya Schechtman
President

Robert Pasnau
Vice President

Connie Rosati
Past President

Elizabeth Purcell
Secretary-Treasurer

Rachel Zuckert
Representative

Eastern Division

Lisa Tessman
President

Michele Moody-Adams
Vice President

David Chalmers
Past President

Andrew Cullison
Secretary-Treasurer

Janice Dowell
Representative

Pacific Division

Margaret Gilbert
President

Amy Kind
Vice President

Debra Satz
Past President

Rebecca Copenhaver
Secretary-Treasurer

Clair Morrissey
Representative

Committee Chairs

Lauren Ashwell
Academic Career Opportunities

Julia Jorati
Inclusiveness in the Profession

Martin Pickavé
International Cooperation

Mark van Roojen
Lectures, Publications, & Research

Lynne Tirrell
Status and Future of the Profession

Fritz McDonald
Teaching of Philosophy

Sean Costello
Graduate Student Council

Members-at-Large

Gwen Bradford
Jennifer Morton
Sarah Stroud

February 16, 2024

President Milo Rivero (milo.rivero@manhattan.edu, president@manhattan.edu)
Acting Provost Rani Roy (rani.roy@manhattan.edu)
Board of Trustees Chair Stephen Squeri (steve.squeri@aexp.com)
Manhattan College
Riverdale, NY 10471

Dear President Rivero, Provost Roy, and Chair Squeri:

We are the chair of the board of officers and executive director of the American Philosophical Association (APA), the largest scholarly society of philosophers in North America, representing more than 8,000 members. We write to express our deep concern about recent terminations of faculty in the philosophy department and the proposed elimination of the philosophy major at Manhattan College.

It is our understanding that three of the five philosophy faculty have been removed in recent months: one long-term visiting faculty member moved into administration, another took a “voluntary separation,” and a third was fired on January 12. We have learned that a junior faculty member, Professor Heidi Furey, accepted a “voluntary separation” because the administration had stated that faculty terminations would use a last-in-first-out approach. Then, last month, terminations were announced that did not follow this stated plan, and Professor Jordan Pascoe was terminated. We also understand that tenured faculty were given short notice of their terminations, contrary to the standard procedures in the Manhattan College faculty handbook. And since then, the college has announced plans to cut several majors, including philosophy—plans that, reportedly, were put forward without consultation with the curriculum committee or faculty chairs. The terminations and program eliminations are procedurally very troubling. Moreover, they seriously undermine Manhattan College’s ability to offer robust philosophical and liberal arts education to its students.

Manhattan College’s mission is “to provide a contemporary, person-centered educational experience that prepares graduates for lives of personal development, professional success, civic engagement, and service to their fellow human beings...through programs that integrate a broad liberal education with concentration in specific disciplines in the arts and sciences.” It would be hard to argue that Manhattan College could fulfill this mission were it to make such significant cuts to its philosophy program—a core liberal arts discipline dedicated to critical thinking, clear communication, and moral reasoning. More than perhaps any other discipline, philosophy prepares students to be engaged, well-rounded citizens and leaders with exactly the skills Manhattan College aims to cultivate. (More information on the role of philosophy in higher education is on the APA website: www.apaonline.org/role_of_phil)

Further, as a Lasallian institution, Manhattan College has special responsibilities to the Catholic intellectual tradition, as outlined in the college’s mission statement: “Among the hallmarks of this Lasallian heritage are excellence in teaching, respect for human dignity, reflection on faith and its relation to reason, an emphasis on ethical conduct, and commitment to social justice.” For centuries, Catholic thought

has made deep contributions to philosophy, and has been enriched in turn by what philosophy has to offer, including not only foundational theoretical frameworks for understanding our place in the world, but also more specific tools for reflection on ethics, social justice, and the intellectual history of some of our most culturally important aspirations. The faculty terminations and the elimination of the philosophy major betray Manhattan College's Catholic values and stated commitment to the Catholic intellectual tradition.

We recognize that Manhattan College faces a financial crisis that necessitates emergency measures. However, these faculty terminations and the elimination of the philosophy major go beyond necessary emergency measures—they undermine the institution's commitment to its faculty and students and severely compromise its ability to provide the well-rounded liberal arts education it promises. These cuts are short-sighted and not in interest of the long-term health of Manhattan College.

Especially now, in difficult times, market value and employer-oriented training are key considerations in allocating scarce resources. From this perspective, philosophy is perhaps the best humanities major a student could choose. 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. Philosophy hones skills that are highly valued by employers because they equip employees to adapt to a rapidly changing economy: critical thinking, creative problem solving, 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]." (See: <https://hub.jhu.edu/2018/01/16/bill-miller-hopkins-philosophy-gift/>) Those with a BA in philosophy have the highest pay over time of all humanities majors, and philosophy majors' mid-career earning potential is also ahead of majors in many fields outside the humanities. (See: <http://dailynous.com/2015/09/04/salaries-of-philosophy-majors-over-time/>) At a time when career outcomes are especially important to students and parents, it is unwise to disinvest in the very program that offers these career benefits.

We understand the natural desire of administrators to make decisions based on numerical metrics such as enrollment or cost. But such metrics significantly undervalue what Manhattan College's philosophy program offers. It has been reported that philosophy is one of the strongest, fastest growing majors at Manhattan College. Its elimination is unlikely to save the college money. Moreover, philosophy plays a pivotal role not only for majors and minors but also in university core curricula and interdisciplinary programs. Courses such as Roots, Environmental Ethics, Faith and Reason, Philosophy of Law, Philosophy & Film, Philosophies of War and Peace, American Political Thought, Chinese and Japanese Philosophies, Ethics, and Critical Thinking all serve students pursuing a wide variety of degrees and career paths. It would be difficult or impossible for the philosophy program to maintain such a broad variety of high-quality offerings if the philosophy major were eliminated and faculty reduced.

For the sake of your mission, your students, and respect for due process, we strongly urge you and all leaders at Manhattan College to reverse the terminations of faculty positions in the philosophy program and rescind the plan to eliminate the philosophy major.

Most sincerely,



R. Lanier Anderson, Chair, Board of Officers



Amy Ferrer, Executive Director

cc: Professor Sarah Scott, Chair, Philosophy Department (sarah.scott@manhattan.edu)