



American Philosophical Association

Strategic Plan

Mission Statement

The American Philosophical Association promotes the discipline and profession of philosophy, both within the academy and in the public arena. The APA supports the professional development of philosophers at all levels and works to foster greater understanding and appreciation of the value of philosophical inquiry.

Statements of Principal Activities

Scholarship

The APA supports scholarship by producing a variety of publications, such as the *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association*, which is of general interest to the philosophical community; a scholarly journal, the [Journal of the American Philosophical Association](#); and newsletters on topics of interest to different constituencies within the discipline. The APA sponsors conferences and conventions, including three annual divisional meetings. The APA also provides grants for projects and conferences that benefit the discipline, and supports smaller, more specialized philosophical associations. The association fosters international cooperation, working with philosophical associations around the globe on issues of common concern. It gives a variety of prizes and awards for philosophical excellence and contributions to the discipline.

Teaching

The APA supports the development of teaching and dissemination of teaching materials and techniques at all levels and provides support for efforts to teach philosophy in primary and secondary schools. It publishes a [newsletter on teaching philosophy](#), sponsors sessions on teaching at divisional meetings, and partners with teaching-focused organizations on collaborative efforts in support of philosophy teachers and teaching.

Career Development

[PhilJobs: Jobs for Philosophers](#), a joint project of the APA and the PhilPapers Foundation, informs prospective job seekers about the availability of academic positions and post-doctoral fellowships in philosophy. In keeping with APA support for [fair equality of opportunity](#) in hiring, departments that advertise in *PhilJobs: Jobs for Philosophers* must attest that they do not discriminate against members of underrepresented groups. The APA provides [resources and guidance related to the academic job market](#) and support for career paths for philosophers beyond the professoriate. It collects benchmark data on the profession and fosters inclusiveness by providing grants for programs that promote diversity outreach. It also provides information and resources related to careers for philosophers outside the academy.

Advocacy

The APA is active in the defense of professional rights of philosophers. It advocates for contingent faculty and under-employed philosophers and for philosophers whose professional rights are at

risk, and it provides assistance to departments threatened by lack of institutional support. The APA works with the [American Council of Learned Societies](#), the [National Humanities Alliance](#), and like organizations on issues of common professional and educational concern. It underwrites activities fostering interest in and appreciation of philosophy in the wider community. The APA also represents the discipline in a variety of public fora, providing a voice on public issues relevant to philosophy, and supports philosophers doing publicly engaged scholarship.

Diversity and Accessibility

The APA aims to serve and support philosophers of all backgrounds, perspectives, demographics, and specializations. The APA works to ensure that those from historically underrepresented and marginalized groups have access to the support and resources necessary to flourish as philosophers, and that historically marginalized areas and traditions within philosophy are valued and respected. The APA aims to make the resources, events, and opportunities it provides broadly accessible to all those with a professional interest in philosophy.

Strategic Plan

Introduction

The following strategic plan was adopted by the American Philosophical Association board of officers in December 2020. It is the culmination of a two-year-long process that included surveys of APA members and constituents, online focus groups, in-person listening sessions, analysis of association metrics, and extensive board discussion. The planning process (which was originally intended to last one year) and the plan itself were reworked in light of the coronavirus pandemic that began in 2020.

The process was led by a strategic planning advisory group made up of the following individuals:

- Amy Ferrer, executive director — chair
- Cheshire Calhoun, chair of the board of officers (2014–2020)
- Dominic McIver Lopes, chair of the board of officers
- Richard Bett, vice chair of the board of officers
- Alexandra Bradner, chair of the Committee on the Teaching of Philosophy (2014–2018)
- Jeffrey Dunn, secretary-treasurer of the Eastern Division
- Jennifer Nagel, president of the Central Division (2018–2019)
- Mike Morris, deputy director

This strategic plan will be used to guide decision-making by the board of officers, staff, and other APA leadership through 2025. The board of officers will monitor and oversee its implementation, and the strategic planning advisory committee will be consulted about implementation as appropriate.

Strategic Goals

The strategic plan contains six strategic goals. Those goals, listed below, are detailed in the following pages.

- **Create Opportunities for Connection**
- **Foster Scholarly Excellence**
- **Foster Teaching Excellence**
- **Welcome, Support, and Represent the Full Spectrum of Philosophers**
- **Promote and Advocate for Philosophy and Philosophers**
- **Ensure Organizational Stability and Sustainability**

GOAL: Create Opportunities for Connection

The APA has long been known for—sometimes even identified as—its three annual divisional meetings. These meetings offer valuable opportunities for philosophers to share their scholarship, receive feedback, and learn about developments in the discipline and the profession. They also provide invaluable opportunities for philosophers to connect across specializations, demographics, institutions, and career stages in ways that benefit both individual philosophers and the discipline more broadly. At the same time, the APA must work to develop new and innovative ways to serve the evolving needs of philosophers and foster connections among them.

The three annual divisional meetings will continue to be a hallmark of the APA’s work, as required by the APA’s bylaws. The APA will work to improve these meetings to suit the evolving needs of philosophers while also creating new opportunities for connection among philosophers, both in person and virtually.

- **Objective:** Continuously improve APA divisional meetings to make them as valuable and accessible as possible for as many philosophers as possible.
 - Explore changes to meeting format and program structure to improve the meeting experience for participants (e.g., breaks, session schedules, meeting dates, minimizing scheduling conflicts).
 - Guided by the Committee on the Status of Disabled People in the Profession, take steps to improve accessibility of meetings for people with disabilities.
 - Seek financial resources to provide additional travel funding for vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, such as contingent faculty.
 - Track data on divisional meetings, such as participants and session topics, to identify groups and areas being underrepresented, and develop and implement strategies to increase representation and participation of those groups and areas in meetings.
 - Through the Committee on Divisional Coordination, continue to support the divisions in working together and in coordination with one another to maximize administrative efficiency and create a consistent experience for meeting participants across divisions.
- **Objective:** Create opportunities outside the divisional meetings for philosophers to connect, network, share scholarship, and learn from one another.
 - Continue and expand the APA webinar series.
 - Explore the possibility of regular virtual conferences in addition to the in-person divisional meetings.
 - Facilitate online connections among philosophers via APA platforms, such as APA Connect and the APA Blog, seeking new ways to bring more philosophers to these platforms.

- Seek to expand existing and build new networks within and across APA constituencies—for example, the Department Chairs Network, Philosophers Beyond Academia Network, diversity institute alumni, placement officers, and networks of scholars doing interdisciplinary philosophical work.
- Explore smaller, more localized in-person conferences and events in addition to annual meetings.

GOAL: Foster Scholarly Excellence

Supporting philosophy scholars and scholarship has long been central to the APA's mission. As a scholarly society dedicated to serving all philosophers, the APA must work to ensure that both traditional scholarship and newer philosophical areas, perspectives, and approaches are supported, and that scholarly excellence of all kinds is recognized.

The APA will support philosophical scholarship and foster scholarly excellence across the many diverse traditions, approaches, specializations, and perspectives in the discipline. The APA will work to ensure that marginalized scholars and scholarship are recognized and respected, and that all modes of philosophical scholarship—including traditional and emerging content areas, as well as traditional and emerging approaches to disseminating scholarship—are valued and supported.

- **Objective:** Foster philosophical diversity across the venues in which the APA publishes and promotes scholarship.
 - Gather and analyze data about the philosophical specializations, traditions, and approaches represented on APA meeting programs and in APA publications and implement initiatives to increase the presence of underrepresented work.
 - Provide venues for disseminating excellent philosophical scholarship of all kinds—traditional, non-traditional, specialized, publicly engaged, and representing a wide variety of traditions, methodologies, and approaches—including the *Journal of the American Philosophical Association*, the APA newsletters, the APA Blog, the APA meetings, and others that may develop over the coming years.
- **Objective:** Encourage and support the full spectrum of philosophical scholarship, including traditional as well as emerging and historically marginalized content areas, interdisciplinary work, and newer approaches to disseminating scholarship, such as digital humanities work and publicly engaged philosophy.
 - Work to build the APA's capacity to support publicly engaged philosophical work and to connect scholars doing this work with venues in which to share it, both within the APA (such as the APA Blog) and beyond.
 - Encourage departments and institutions to recognize, value, and reward scholarship that has often been undervalued—including marginalized areas of philosophy, digital scholarship, and publicly engaged scholarship—by offering guidance and best practices on how to appropriately evaluate such scholarship in admissions, hiring, tenure, and promotion.
 - Seek funding for programs to help philosophers build skills in non-traditional modes of scholarship, to support projects using non-traditional modes of philosophical scholarship, and to recognize excellence in non-traditional philosophical scholarship.

GOAL: Foster Teaching Excellence

The health, sustainability, and vibrancy of the discipline of philosophy, and thus the APA, depends upon excellence in philosophy teaching. The training and professional development of philosophy teachers is at the core of the APA's mission and principal activities; continuing and expanding the APA's work in this area is essential.

The APA will build upon and expand its existing programs and initiatives to support the teaching of philosophy, the training of philosophy teachers, and the dissemination of the scholarship of teaching and learning in philosophy.

- **Objective:** Provide venues for discussion of matters related to teaching methods and the dissemination of teaching expertise of all kinds.
 - Support and encourage the development of teaching expertise and excellence among graduate students.
 - Support new opportunities to publish scholarship on teaching and learning in philosophy.
 - Foster new and expand existing partnerships with organizations committed to teaching excellence in philosophy.
- **Objective:** Provide venues for disseminating excellent teaching materials regarding diverse traditions and peoples.
 - Encourage departments and institutions to recognize, value, and reward teaching that has often been undervalued by offering guidance and best practices on how to appropriately evaluate teaching in admissions, hiring, tenure, and promotion.
 - Seek funding for efforts that help philosophers build skills in various non-traditional modes of teaching.
 - Develop resources for teaching philosophy across the academy and in non-traditional contexts.

GOAL: Welcome, Support, and Represent the Full Spectrum of Philosophers

As the leading scholarly society for philosophy and philosophers in North America, the APA must include and serve philosophers of all kinds—philosophers who are diverse in race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, (dis)ability, socioeconomic status, nationality, language, viewpoint, specialization, philosophical tradition, methodology, career stage, career type, tenure status, institution type, and many more ways. Though the APA has made important strides in recent years in increasing demographic, professional, and philosophical diversity among membership and leadership, there is much more to be done.

The APA will continue to strive to ensure that philosophers of diverse backgrounds, experiences, perspectives, and career paths feel welcome, supported, and represented within the APA, and to ensure that all philosophers have the opportunity to participate in and benefit from the APA's work.

- **Objective:** Increase membership and participation in the APA of philosophers and philosophy-degree-holders working outside academia and in non-faculty positions in academia, and support philosophers considering and pursuing a broad array of career paths.
 - Expand programs and services for philosophers working outside the professoriate, including, for example, webinar series, online communities, support for meeting participation, and networking and mentoring opportunities.
 - Provide professional development trainings, workshops, and resources for philosophy students (graduate and undergraduate) exploring diverse career paths.
 - Seek to build relationships in sectors and with companies where those trained in philosophy have found career success, and explore programs and initiatives to connect those companies to philosophy-degree-holders (e.g., virtual job fairs, discounted job advertising and meeting sponsorships).
 - Develop and promote recommendations for philosophy graduate (and undergraduate) programs to update their curricula to better prepare students for a wide variety of career paths.
- **Objective:** Support unemployed and underemployed philosophy faculty.
 - Create a financial assistance program to offset APA membership and meeting participation for faculty in contingent positions and unemployed philosophers.
 - Develop and update guidance documents and best practices for departments and institutions employing contingent faculty.
 - In collaboration with other scholarly societies, seek opportunities to advocate for college and university administrators to provide stable and fair working conditions and compensation for contingent faculty, to develop and implement more stable

- employment structures for non-tenure-track faculty (e.g., long-term contracts, permanent non-tenured faculty positions, access to benefits), and to minimize reliance on contingent faculty.
- Explore adding new APA membership benefits of particular importance to contingent faculty.
 - **Objective:** Make the discipline and the association more inclusive, welcoming, and accessible.
 - Following the end of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation grant supporting undergraduate diversity institutes, continue to pursue avenues for supporting diversity institutes, their alumni, and their prospective participants.
 - Reinstate and seek to increase APA grant programs supporting projects aimed at making the discipline and profession more inclusive, welcoming, and accessible.
 - Guided by the new Committee on the Status of Disabled People in the Profession, take steps to make the APA—including the website, guidance documents, and meetings and events—more accessible to people with disabilities.
 - Regularly review, update, promote, and add to existing guidance and best practices to support diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout the discipline.
 - **Objective:** Diversify APA membership, leadership, and meeting participation.
 - Review and update procedures and structures for electing, appointing, and hiring in APA leadership positions—such as APA board, APA committees, divisional executive committees, divisional program committees, and staff—to ensure they are fair, inclusive, transparent, and encourage participation from the full spectrum of philosophers.
 - Review and update procedures and structures for planning APA meetings and other events to ensure they are fair, inclusive, transparent, and encourage participation from the full spectrum of philosophers.
 - Seek funding to promote and support APA membership and meeting participation among groups that have been historically underrepresented in the association.
 - **Objective:** Increase support for philosophy students and early career philosophers.
 - Working with the Graduate Student Council and relevant committees, include in the APA webinar series and divisional meetings professional development events for philosophy students (graduate and undergraduate), early career philosophers, and philosophy program leadership (e.g., department chairs, placement officers).
 - Seek funding to increase travel funding and other financial support for graduate students to participate in the APA and its meetings.

GOAL: Promote and Advocate for Philosophy and Philosophers

Advocacy for philosophy and on behalf of philosophers has long been central to the APA's mission. This part of the mission has never been more important, given the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic in North American higher education, increasing political polarization, decreasing trust in higher education, and other societal factors that directly impact philosophers as scholars, teachers, and individuals, as well as philosophy programs.

The APA will advocate for philosophers and philosophy programs both within and beyond their institutions, and work to raise the profile and public understanding of philosophy as a discipline.

- **Objective:** Expand strategies and resources to defend philosophy programs (and their faculty) facing cuts or closure, and to proactively avert potential threats.
 - Regularly update and expand the Department Advocacy Toolkit and accompanying resources, and take steps to increase awareness of the toolkit (webinars, meeting sessions, social media posts).
 - Develop and implement additional strategies to advocate for philosophy programs and faculty to university administrators, both directly and indirectly (e.g., through faculty and alumni).
 - Facilitate increased communication among and professional development of philosophy program leaders (e.g., department chairs, graduate program directors), building on the existing APA Department Chairs Network.
- **Objective:** Improve supports for philosophers facing threats to their professional rights.
 - Review and update charge of the Committee on the Defense of Professional Rights of Philosophers and APA Ombudsperson to clarify options for responding to complaints about professional rights infringement, and further publicize the committee and its work.
- **Objective:** Increase awareness of the value of philosophy among various audiences and develop strategies to make the work of philosophers more visible and accessible.
 - Seek opportunities to promote the work of philosophers in the media.
 - Seek funding to develop programs that elevate the public profile of philosophy, such as media training for philosophers and initiatives to expose K-12 students to philosophy.
 - Develop resources to help philosophy programs attract majors and increase enrollments.

- **Objective:** In partnership with other scholarly societies and organizations, continue and expand efforts to advocate for government support of philosophy, the humanities, and higher education.
 - Working with the National Humanities Alliance and other partners, continue to advocate for funding of the National Endowment for the Humanities and other federal government programs supporting scholarly work in philosophy and other humanities disciplines.
 - Encourage philosophers to participate in advocacy efforts and initiatives to build public awareness of the value of philosophy, including by joining efforts organized by the National Humanities Alliance, state humanities councils, and other community organizations.

GOAL: Ensure Organizational Stability and Sustainability

In order to achieve the previously outlined goals and objectives, the APA itself must be financially sustainable, mission-driven, and have stable and transparent staff and leadership structures.

The APA will work to ensure that the association has the human, financial, and administrative resources to achieve its goals, pursue its mission, and serve its members and constituents.

- **Objective:** Secure financial resources to support the expansion of programs and services in support of the APA's mission.
 - Undertake initiatives to maintain and increase APA membership and meeting participation.
 - Seek to build a culture of giving among APA members and supporters.
 - Review and enhance fundraising and development operations, including grantseeking efforts, planned giving programs, prospect relationships, and the Development Committee.
- **Objective:** Ensure that the APA has the leadership and staff necessary to pursue its mission effectively and efficiently.
 - Increase awareness of and transparency about APA leadership structures and processes, to ensure they are effective and efficient, and that APA members and constituents can easily understand the structures and trust both the processes and the organizational leadership.
 - Continue to build processes and structures that enable APA scholar-leaders, including members of the APA board and committees, to put their knowledge and experience to work for the betterment of the association and the discipline.
 - Review and update current practices to ensure APA staff are appropriately compensated, supported, and included in organizational decision-making, and that their positions and responsibilities enable the staff and the organization to be as effective as possible.