



**The Chapel Hill Philosophy Outreach Program
2008-2009**

Report to the American Philosophical Association

The *American Philosophical Association's* Grant played two significant roles for us. First, it made it possible for us to offer Outreach Programs that otherwise we simply could not afford to offer. The report below provides some sense of the programs we offered. Second, our having support from the APA made a difference to the Squire Family Foundation's decision to provide some support for the Outreach Program for this year. Securing the Squire Family Foundation support has been crucial, since it comes just as the *Mellon Foundation's* money is coming to an end.

Advisory Committee:

Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, Morehead Alumni Distinguished Professor and Department Chair
Jan Boxill, Senior Lecturer and Director, Parr Center for Ethics
Jennie Dickson, Department Program Coordinator

Program Administrator, 2008-2009:

Felipe De Brigard, Teaching Fellow

Purpose of our Outreach Program:

The aim of the Outreach Program is to use the Philosophy Department's intellectual resources both (i) to help people in the community think carefully and clearly about a broad range of ideas, commitments, and practices that regularly shape their lives and (ii) to get them excited about philosophy. Now in its 6th year, the Program continues to be a proven success. A review follows of all the activities that the Outreach Program carried out during the academic year of 2008-2009. These activities were made possible thanks to the generous support of the *Mellon Foundation*, the *American Philosophical Association*, Litsa Tsitsera, and the *Parr Center for Ethics*.

***C. A. Dillon Youth Development Center
100 Dillon Drive, Butner, NC 27509***

The C. A. Dillon Youth Development Center opened in 1968. It provides custody and treatment to adjudicated males ranging in age from ten to eighteen. For the past three years, the Philosophy Department's Outreach Program has conducted monthly sessions with groups of about eight teenagers. These sessions are usually run by two graduate students, and participants get to discuss a varied range of philosophical issues, from ethics to epistemology and metaphysics. This past year we had the good fortune of conducting eleven sessions, not with one, but with two groups of eight students each. Four graduate students from the Department of Philosophy were in charge of leading a total of 22 sessions. The students read

important philosophical texts in topics like personal identity, skepticism, artificial intelligence and the mind-body problem, among many others, and they had the opportunity to discuss these issues for one hour with their classmates and discussion leaders. An added advantage of this past year, relative to the previous ones, was the frequency of the meetings. One of the major downfalls reported by previous experiences at Dillon had to do with how infrequent the meetings were. Graduate students who participated as discussion leaders in previous years reported that by meeting only once a month, students would lose track of the dynamics of the discussions, and as a result the conversation wouldn't be as engaging as it could have been had the meetings been closer to each other in time. This year we wanted to correct that problem, so we decided to schedule the meetings once a week as opposed to once a month. This proved to be a success; students were much more engaged in the conversation, and graduate student leaders had an easier time motivating the discussion. For future years we recommend that the meetings be scheduled more frequently than they have been in the past.

Graduate students involved: Elanor Taylor, Clair Morrissey, Seth Bordner, Kristen Bell, and Amber Ross (one session).

Expenses: each graduate student received \$90 per session, for a total of \$3,600 (one of the sessions was completely voluntary; the students wanted to have an extra session, and the participant graduate students were happy to do so).

Contact person at Dillon:

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Clinical Chaplain
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Cary Academy
1500 North Harrison Avenue, Cary, NC 27513

Cary Academy opened in 1997. It is committed to providing a challenging curriculum that reflects the school's mission of discovery, innovation, collaboration, and excellence. It creates a secure and nurturing environment for students in grades 6-12. In the past we sponsored Cary Academy's Philosophy Club by directing one hour discussions on ethics where lunch was provided. This past year was no different. A total of eight monthly sessions were initially scheduled, and a graduate student from the Department of Philosophy conducted the discussion. Unfortunately, two of the sessions had to be cancelled by the Academy, so only six sessions took place. Still, participating students were highly engaged in the discussion, and they certainly got the chance to read important philosophical texts and converse about fundamental philosophical issues with their peers.

In addition, last year we expanded our activities beyond the scope of the Philosophy Club by sponsoring the attendance of their outstanding students at the 42nd Chapel Hill Colloquium in Philosophy (October 17-19, 2008). At this event, distinguished philosophers from around the world come to the UNC campus to give remarkable presentations and participate in lively discussion. The Colloquium demonstrates philosophy at its best and provides a uniquely enriching experience for the students. This proved to be a wonderful experience for Cary

Academy students as well, and they should be encouraged to attend the 43rd Chapel Hill Colloquium in Philosophy (October 16-18, 2009).

Graduate student involved: Daniel Layman.

Expenses: \$540

Contact person at Cary Academy:

Donna Newell

English Teacher

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Morehead Afterschool Program
250 E. Franklin St. - Chapel Hill, NC 27599

The Morehead Planetarium and Science Center at UNC-Chapel Hill, recently started an afterschool program for children in primary and middle-school. Designed to foster their interest in science, the Afterschool Program invites children “to explore different topics and themes, all related to discovery, invention, and imagination” (moreheadplanetarium.org). In addition, they encourage children to participate in what they call “Green Initiatives”: educational projects that aim at fostering an environmentally-friendly mindset in children. Taking advantage of their privileged position at UNC, the Afterschool Program is designed, directed, and carried out by experienced science educators, graduate students, and staff from the University.

Last year, the Philosophy Department Outreach Program Department was happy to contribute to this new and exciting program. Two graduate students conducted two one-and-a-half-hour sessions with close to 50 children. The purpose of such sessions was to introduce middle-school students to central issues in the philosophy of science. In particular, they wanted to provide them with an accessible and hands-on introduction to the notion of hypothesis confirmation. The participating graduate students asked children to design two experiments, one intended to be successful and one intended to be unsuccessful, about a well-known thesis in physics (Newton’s law of gravity). During the session, the students had the opportunity to carry out their experiments and see for themselves how challenging it could be to design a good experiment. The take home message was that small changes in an experiment can have big effects on the results, and it takes care and creativity to confirm even a simple hypothesis.

Graduate students involved: Kate Nolfi and Eva Hoffman

Expenses: \$360

Contact person at the Morehead Afterschool Program:

Carly Apple

Educator

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Durham Academy
3601 Ridge Road, Durham, NC 27705-5599

Durham Academy is a coeducational, independent day school from pre-kindergarten through grade 12, providing a stimulating academic environment and broad, varied opportunities for growth through arts, athletics, outdoor education and community service. Since the beginning of the Outreach Program, our Ethics program with Durham Academy has been one of the most successful. It began as part of the Honors Ethics class for graduating seniors, but since 2007 some juniors are also allowed. As in previous years, this past year one of our graduate students conducted a series of sessions, twice a week and during 5 weeks, in order to discuss different issues in ethics. Students enrolled in the honors session did their readings in advance, and the graduate student led a discussion in a class that typically lasted one hour. Durham Academy is open, in principle, to have speakers coming in with more regularity. At the end of this year we even talked about the possibility of having a graduate student specialized in modern philosophy, to be invited as a speaker in an English class. This is a project worth discussing next year.

Graduate student involved: Patrick Connolly

Expenses: \$810, for 11 sessions (\$90 per session)

Contact person at Durham Academy:

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English Teacher

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Plato's The Apology of Socrates.
A performance

Perhaps the most successful of all the Outreach projects last year was the performance of Plato's *The Apology of Socrates*. It featured a theatrical solo performance by the Emmy Award winner Yannis Simonides and it was directed by Broadway and television veteran Loukas Skipitaris. *The Apology* premiered in New York in 2003 and has since been performed to great acclaim at the United Nations, the Athens Agora, the NBC Today Show, and in theatres, festivals, schools, universities and libraries across the United States, Greece, Cyprus, Turkey, and the United Kingdom (where it recently completed a tour of Oxford, Cambridge and Edinburgh Universities). In the last two years it has been presented at the European Center at Delphi, in Athens under the Akropolis, in Thessaloniki, Patras, Crete and various festivals in the Aegean, in Greek and English, as well as in Dubai and in Montevideo where it played to 2000 students from across Uruguay, in Greek and Spanish. Recently it enjoyed successful performances in Montreal and Luxembourg, and tours in the United States, Greece, Spain, Germany and Russia are scheduled for 2009 and 2010. In September 2010 it will return to Columbia University to inaugurate the Core Curriculum for all Freshmen and Sophomores.

It was an honor and a privilege to have been able to offer this performance to the community of the Research Triangle. Over 600 attendees came to two performances on April 23 and 24, 2009. In addition, after the performance, Mr. Simmonides offered half an hour of Q&A for the audience. It was remarkable to see most people engaging in a philosophical discussion with Mr. Simmonides that extended, on both occasions, for up to one hour. This project wouldn't have been possible without the help of Elizabeth Pyle Ross, the Director of Aletheum Productions. She is interested in bringing Mr. Simmonides again, this time to perform excerpts from *The Odyssey*. This coming year, the Outreach Program is hoping to collaborate with her again on a similar production. Having a performance of this nature is a very successful way of bringing philosophy to a large group of people.

Contact person at Aletheum Productions:

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Media coverage

This past year, the performance of *The Apology of Socrates* brought substantial and welcome media exposure to the Outreach Program. There were several articles and columns in local newspapers, including Raleigh The News and Observer, The Chapel Hill News, and The Independent Weekly. In addition, the Daily Tar Heel (UNC's campus newspaper) dedicated a long article to the performance, and News 14 Carolina (a local TV station) aired several advertisements announcing the event. Finally, the Education Week (edweek.org), a weekly electronic magazine with information pertaining to American education, published an interesting article about teaching philosophy in high schools all over the United States. The Outreach Program of the Department of Philosophy was featured as one of the pioneer projects

Programs that couldn't get done

Despite the success of our Outreach Program, a few projects that we had in mind couldn't be completed as planned. Specifically we were not able, after all, to facilitate activities at the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics and we did not offer classes in philosophy at El Centro Latino, in large part because of allocation decisions we had to make given limited resources. At the same time, we discontinued our courses at The Hawbridge School because they were too disorganized to work with, and we decided not to hold debates at the McDougale Middle School and East Chapel Hill High School because not enough support on their side was available. At East Chapel High School, the problem was that the person with whom we work most closely there took a leave of absence due to illness, and a suitable replacement was not found in time. We do hope to return to East Chapel Hill High School, though, since they are working to put new people in place and are enthusiastic about the program. The challenge will be to find the financial support required.