



History, Philosophy, and Social Sciences Department
 Philosophy Program Review Fall 2017
 Departmental Response

November 13, 2017

Professors Benjamin Lipscomb (Houghton College) and John Wingard (Covenant College) visited the campus of Malone University on October 4-5, 2017 for the purpose of reviewing the Philosophy program. We are grateful for their thorough, insightful review, their support of Professor Floyd, and their affirmation of philosophy's importance to the Christian college. Their insights have been invaluable to us, and we want to affirm much of what is contained in their report.

Before turning to their specific recommendations and our response to them, we want to call attention to an underlying concern that runs throughout the report. The reviewers are rather emphatic that a single person cannot sustain a vibrant philosophy program. Apart from needing advanced coursework, students need exposure to diverse perspectives and strengths; they also need program-enhancing activities of a co-curricular variety. Then there are the administrative duties necessary to monitor and enrich the program (resource acquisition, curricular review, assessment, etc.). Compounding this challenge is the recognition that the students Malone typically recruits and attracts will not be those who are initially drawn to philosophy. The emphasis of education's practical ends will often discourage students from pursuing courses of study perceived to be abstract and (contrary to all the available evidence) unrelated to their vocational goals. For philosophy to thrive at Malone, then, there needs to be some program re-visioning and reconstruction. Yet no one person can take responsibility for these ventures.

With these concerns in mind, the reviewers pose the following question as their point of departure:

"The question we have thus asked ourselves is this: what are the conditions under which philosophy—since it has been deliberately preserved—can contribute best to an institution like Malone, which cares about the formation of its students in intellectual maturity, wisdom, and a Christian mind, but which emphasizes particularly the preparation of its students for practical works of service and draws from a constituency with similar ideals?"

Professors Lipscomb and Wingard offer a number of recommendations intended to move the program forward given our strengths, fiscal constraints, and student profile. What follows is an abbreviated version their recommendations and a response that indicates whether or how we intend to implement them.

Reviewer recommendations¹ (in bold) and responses

¹ The more detailed recommendations and their rationales are contained in the reviewers' complete report.

1. That HPSS develop ... an idea they have been discussing already: a concentration in Ethics, Law, and Society (ELS).²

We're persuaded that an interdisciplinary major that capitalizes on departmental synergy and has practical value would be attractive to Malone students and strengthen enrollments in upper level philosophy courses. Marketed properly, we believe the program could be a draw for Christian students interested in law and policy. In fact we have many of the components necessary for an unusually strong program in this area (a "potential powerhouse" to use the reviewers' term). While we recognize the importance of strengthening traditional programs housed in our department, a program similar to one described here could benefit those programs indirectly. Of course, a program of this sort will require administrative support and a willingness to work out a creative (and fiscally responsible) strategy for additional staff.

2. That the stand-alone philosophy major be retained, though the emphasis of the University and HPSS would shift to promoting ELS.

We are in full agreement with this recommendation. Although we are persuaded the some resources should be set aside for promoting philosophy alongside ELS in Christian high schools and home school networks.

3. Relatedly, that the current hybrid major in philosophy and law, and other such hybrid majors—which have been understood as options for people committed to philosophy, rather than programs with their own constituency—be abandoned to avoid confusion.

We are in full agreement with this recommendation. Although we would like to have some discussion with theology faculty in order to determine whether some version of the theology concentration in philosophy should be retained or revised.

4. That the University make a second hire, *partly* in philosophy. The goal would *not* be to bring philosophy up to 2.0 FTE. Given the current circumstances of the University, that is not a reasonable goal. But we urge all creative options be explored so that Prof. Floyd can have a colleague in philosophy to assist with the development of ELS and so that other contributions of philosophy to the life of the University (in philosophical theology and in honors instruction, for instance) need not be sidelined entirely.

We are in full agreement with this recommendation. Our ability to launch and sustain a successful ELS program would require the additional position. We also agree that a position of this sort should not be filled by an instructional specialist, partly for the reasons given by the reviewers (see full report). At least this would not be the ideal or preferred way to fill such a position.

5. That one application of the extra .5 FTE in philosophy be the development of service courses in medical [or] environmental ethics, serving the nursing program and the University's new program in environmental studies. These should enroll well if the faculty in these areas welcome these courses.

² This is a tentative program name.

The program as we envision it would need either a course in an area of applied ethics or legal philosophy (preferably both). Specialists in either medical ethics or legal philosophy who are also Christian would not be difficult to find through a proper search. We recommend seeking a specialist in one (if not both) of these areas. We understand the challenges posed by current financial realities; we hope we can explore creative options with the administration to address the issue.

6. That Shawn Floyd take a sabbatical as soon as practicably possible. The work of developing and promoting a new program and building community among its students will require Prof. Floyd's best efforts.

We are in full agreement with this recommendation.

7. That the stand-alone major be more loosely structured. ... We would recommend that as few courses as possible be required of philosophy majors, not because this is abstractly ideal, but in order to free up Prof. Floyd and his proposed colleague to develop courses for ELS, for service to other areas of the University, and for addressing student interest [should there be room for such experimentation].

We are in full agreement with this recommendation. Shawn will submit more specific recommendations to the department for its consideration.

8. That the two surveys in the history of philosophy be allowed to count for the general-education requirement, the prerequisites to these courses being removed (and the courses perhaps being renumbered accordingly).

We agree adding another option to the GE philosophy menu would be a good idea. Yet these options named here provide two of the three most reading/writing intensive courses in the program. As the reviewers note earlier in their report, "students in that major need courses in which they can engage at a high level with other advanced students." These courses are intended to fill that role and thus would not be ideal for GE's philosophy menu.

On the other hand PHIL 262 (Theories of Human Nature) and PHIL 343 (Philosophy of Religion) should be allowed to count toward students' GE philosophy requirement. The former is a good entry level course into the discipline (as is logic and ethics). And while PHIL 343 is a more advanced course, it is likely to generate student interest and serve GE's purposes just as PHIL 301 (Political Philosophy) does. We recommend PHIL 262 and 343 be allowed to fulfill students' GE philosophy requirement.

9. That the temporal boundary lines in these two survey courses be revisited. It is problematic that no course at Malone is guaranteed to carry students past Kant and include figures like Kierkegaard and Nietzsche.

We are in full agreement with this recommendation. Shawn will make adjustments to these courses and submit new course descriptions to the department for its consideration.

10. That Prof. Floyd (and hopefully soon a colleague) develop an internship program for philosophy students, inside and outside the new ELS program.

Covenant College has an interesting (and highly regarded) internship program for philosophy students. The reviewers make a good case for developing such a program for Malone's philosophy and ELS students. Thus, we agree *in principle* with the recommendation. Yet we prefer to resolve existing staffing issues and get clarification on the sort of program(s) the administration is willing to support.