

Department of Humanities & Philosophy Self-Study

I Purposes and Outcomes

The primary purpose of any educational institution is to transmit to students the body of knowledge accumulated by mankind that will enable them to function in society. Department of Humanities and Philosophy faculty assist in that endeavor by exposing students to the world's great cultural achievements.

The uniqueness of this department lies in its approach to the subject matter. The curriculum enables students to encounter culture holistically, encouraging them to recognize interrelationships among historical events, philosophical movements, and styles of art, architecture, music, and literature. In the process, students learn to differentiate between the workings of the mind and those of the heart. They make connections between the cultural achievements of the past and their own search for meaning and fulfillment in life. As students learn more about the arts, they discover new avenues of spiritual and intellectual enlightenment, and lay the foundation for a lifetime of arts enjoyment and appreciation.

Upon successful completion of one of the department's courses, students will have become acquainted with the great works of architecture, painting, sculpture, music, literature, and/or philosophy. Humanities students will understand the unique qualities of various artistic media and be able to differentiate among periods and styles. In the process, they will have gained sufficient knowledge to find appreciation for and enjoyment in the arts. Philosophy students will have encountered the philosophical traditions of western culture while learning to apply logic and other philosophical principles in their own thought processes.

II Description of the Department

The department is comprised of seven faculty members, two with doctorate degrees, and five with master's degrees (one is mid-way in pursuit of a doctorate). Three have degrees in humanities and/or art history, two in music, one in philosophy, and one in communications and education. The department serves approximately 3,650 students a year with a variety of General Education, elective, and minors courses. While the department's primary mission is supplying courses which satisfy General Education requirements, in the 2002-03 school year between 20 and 25 students minored in humanities or philosophy as a complement to their majors in other fields.

Facilities include three multimedia classrooms; two with a fixed seating capacity of 60 students, and one with moveable desks accommodating 40 students. Moreover, a 20-seat conference room is utilized for seminar courses in addition to department meetings and group projects. Well-appointed faculty offices surround a spacious department reception and secretary work area, and there is adequate storage space for supplies and teaching materials.

III Significant Changes

The transition from Ricks College to BYU-Idaho had a significant impact on the department. Based on the relatively low numbers of Associate Degree majors in humanities and philosophy

during the last years of Ricks College, the decision was made to offer only minors in humanities and philosophy at BYU-Idaho. This decision did not alter the primary role of the department of providing general education courses. It did, however necessitate the expansion of the department curriculum to include junior and senior level courses as part of a minor. For the Humanities minor, three new courses were developed and one course was changed from a 200-level designation to a 300-level. The philosophy minor necessitated the addition of two new courses. The courses added to or modified in the department curriculum are as follows:

Hum 266 American Humanities

Hum 333 Spirituality in the Arts

Hum 342 Humanities of the Islamic World (changed from Hum 242)

Hum 497R Senior Seminar

Phil 205 Logic

Phil 497R Senior Seminar

As a part of this transition, no additional faculty members were added to the department. Faculty loads have been maintained by reducing the number of introductory courses and by increasing the availability of on-line courses. The reduction in the number of lower-division courses has coincided with the reduction in the number of freshman and sophomores as a percentage of the total student body.

Other recent changes in the department include additions and expansions of online courses and a significant boost in the department faculty development budget. There are now four department courses available on-line which together serviced 500 students during the 2003 winter and summer semesters. The department professional development budget allocation has grown from \$1600 in 1999 to \$6500 for the year of 2003. This dramatic increase will greatly expand the possibilities for faculty development within the department.

Changes likely to impact the department in the near future include the retirement of two department members, increasing demand for on-line courses that will necessitate faculty load adjustment, and possible growth in the number of minors in humanities and philosophy that will lead to further adjustments in balancing course offerings with student demand.

IV Analysis and Appraisal

Two studies suggest that the department is meeting its purposes well. The College Student Experience Questionnaire (CSEQ) was administered to a sample of what was then Ricks College students during Winter 1997. Results suggest that our students have a high degree of appreciation for and understanding of the arts, and a very high rate of attendance at cultural events in comparison to national norms. While 57.9% of our students reported attending concerts or other music events *often* or *very often*, the survey recorded results of 42.7% of students from select liberal arts colleges (SLA), 23.9% of students attending general liberal arts colleges (GLA), 22.1% at Doctoral Universities (DU) and 20.8% of students from Research Universities (RU). When Ricks students were asked about developing an understanding and enjoyment of art, music, and drama, 61% answered *much* or *very much* compared to SLA 41%, GLA 32%, DU 27.7 and RU 25.9.

An alumni survey conducted during Fall 1998 suggests that former students continue to make the arts a part of their lives beyond their college careers. A full 100% of Humanities and Philosophy majors (for an Associate of Arts Degree at that time) and 91% of the respondents from other departments indicated that they visit museums or art exhibits and attend concerts or theatrical events at least once a year. In response to the question, *What impact did Ricks College have on your appreciation for the aesthetic and creative expressions of humanity?*, 100% of majors and 72% of general respondents answered *positive* or *very positive*. In response to a question regarding the impact of being a spectator at performing arts and other cultural activities at Ricks on their learning and growth, 91% of majors and 75% of the others responded *positive* or *very positive*.

Facilities are almost ideal in terms of comfort and equipment. Each room features an integrated audio, visual and computer system with internet access. The department enjoys a generous budget to acquire videos and other support materials. With the transition to a university, budget allotments for faculty professional development has increased dramatically by fourfold, allowing opportunities for participation in activities such as conferences, workshops, and individual research. The recent institutional policy of allowing load reductions for approved professional development projects has also been widely utilized within the department, mainly for the purpose of developing new courses.

The use of technology to enhance and facilitate learning and increase productivity and effectiveness continues to remain a priority in the department. Department and faculty web pages are updated each semester. Digital imaging and editing has gone beyond still photos to video. Individual faculty who wish to keep current with developments in computer and web resources for educational purposes are encouraged and provided budgetary support. Web courses continue to receive attention and enrollment has increased to about 500 a year.

Two avenues of improvement currently engage the department. The first concerns the proliferation of web courses. One issue that needs to be addressed both on a department and institutional level is how web classes are to be weighted in terms of faculty load. Up to this point, administering web classes has been carried out as an overload for the instructor. As enrollment in these courses expands, the faculty who oversee them will not be able to satisfactorily carry out their regular work assignments and the web courses as well. The courses need to become integrated into the regular faculty load.

A second challenge involves the development of desired learning outcomes for each course and a regular procedure for assessing the attainment of those outcomes. The department has expended considerable effort in identifying course outcomes so that there is a high degree of consistency among various sections of the same course in terms of content and learning objectives. The transition to BYU-Idaho and the creation of new courses for minors in humanities and philosophy temporarily diverted faculty energies and focus away from developing and implementing a program of systematic assessment. The department is now actively involved in researching and developing appropriate quantitative and qualitative assessment means that will allow the collection of the data necessary for continual self assessment.