FY2006 DEPARTMENTAL ANNUAL REPORT

OF CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Department of Philosophy

Fort Hays State University

I.   Departmental Overview

Time, space, and cosmos, the mind, moral ideals, religion, political aspirations, education, professional obligations, love, death, the law, sports, mystical experience, art and creativity, logic, mathematics, freedom, and the meaning of life – philosophy is no less than the pursuit of a deep and systematic understanding of everything. It is the central academic discipline, drawing together questions and knowledge from all the other disciplines and attempting to integrate them with personal experience so that one achieves a greater understanding of oneself and one's place in the order of reality. The Department of Philosophy offers major, minor, and certificate programs at the undergraduate level and four courses that may be taken by graduate students who are seeking advanced degrees in other areas. Courses in philosophy at every level are especially well suited to developing excellence in critical thinking and analysis, a good grasp of intellectual history, tolerance, objectivity, intellectual curiosity, clear and logical expression of ideas in speech and writing, and the habit of thinking things through for oneself.

After college, philosophy majors typically continue their education in graduate school where they earn the professional credentials to pursue vocations in fields such as law, medicine, business, information technology, ministry, and education. Even with just an undergraduate degree in philosophy, students are attractive to employers, especially to employers looking for adaptability, good thinking and writing skills, and the ability to work with people from a wide variety of backgrounds. Philosophy majors become particularly adept at examining information and coming to good judgments based on information. Recent graduates of the FHSU major program in philosophy have taken up professions as diverse as teacher, businessman, philosophical counselor, lawyer, minister, doctor, museum educator, data specialist, designer of legal software, tennis pro, and rodeo cowboy.

A. Departmental Mission Statement

The mission of the Department of Philosophy is to create the opportunity for student development of the philosopher's knowledge and wisdom, skills and abilities, and attitudes and values.

B. Departmental Goals, Objectives, and Strategic Priorities

Our *meta-goal* is to produce graduate who are:

Knowledgeable – They know of past and continuing achievements of philosophical inquiry;

Logical – They reason in a logical, clear, analytical, and organized fashion;

Intellectually civilized – They will counteract intellectual provincialism in both of its two main forms, namely, narrow vocationalism and an uncritical assumption of the limitations of one's time and place;

Reflective – They will subject assumptions and behavior – their own and others' – to evaluation and appropriate improvement;

Wise – They will understand reality and act in a way appropriate to that understanding.
The list of *specific goals and expected learning outcomes* that follows resulted from departmental discussion and reflection upon both the nature of philosophy and the ideal characteristics of our graduates. The philosophy program is aimed at enabling students to acquire three different types of attributes: knowledge or other cognitive states, skills or abilities, and attitudes or values. These different classes of attributes are reflected in our goals. The first goal focuses on the development of knowledge of the major figures, strands, and eras of philosophy. The second goal focuses on the development and use of skills characteristic of philosophy and intellectual inquiry more generally. The third goal returns to the knowledge category, and it directs our attention toward some of the traditional topics of philosophy. Our fourth and last goal is aimed at encouraging within the student some valued attitudes.

Goal 1 – To acquire knowledge of the development of metaphysics, value theory, epistemology, and logic. The learner can (1) explain the features, strengths, and weaknesses of a variety of philosophical systems: those of Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Aquinas, Descartes, Hume, Kant, and Wittgenstein; (2) identify the primary questions and responses to those questions in metaphysics, value theory, epistemology, and logic; (3) identify the primary questions, responses, and figures of four different periods in philosophical history: the ancient, medieval, modern, and contemporary.

Goal 2 – To recognize and employ logical techniques. The learner (1) analyzes the reasoning of himself or another; (2) identifies the type of inductive or deductive reasoning;

(3) displays the structure of the reasoning in a manner understandable to a non-professional; (4) evaluates the validity of the reasoning.

Goal 3 – To recognize alternative conceptions of man, God, and the universe and the possible relations among them. The learner is able to explain and evaluate (1) the four major arguments for the existence of God, the ontological, the cosmological, the teleological, and the moral arguments; (2) the major argument contesting the existence of God, namely, the problem of evil; (3) four different theories of the nature and proper conduct of human life; (4) four different theories of the ultimate nature of the physical universe; (5) three different theories of the worth or value of the physical universe.

Goal 4 – To employ their knowledge of different value systems in coming to individual conclusions and in applying these conclusions to their thought.

One *important comment* remains. These program goals are not just means of securing, but also important constituents of, the goals of the university as a whole.

II.   Departmental Highlights

A. Departmental Productivity and Other Distinctive Departmental Accomplishments

1. Because the Department of Philosophy has a strong major program, it is able to attract and retain a top-quality faculty. Universities that offer service courses in philosophy but lack major programs in the discipline have trouble attracting and retaining good teacher-scholar-servants. The quality of the faculty has been so high that it has served as a kind of leavening influence on the life, mind, and activities of the institution as a whole. Members of the philosophy faculty have been in the vanguard of nearly every important academic and curricular development at FHSU since 1950.

2. The graduates of the major program who chose to go to graduate school in our discipline found themselves well prepared to succeed there and thereafter in their careers. Several are now successful philosophy professors at excellent schools (for example: Benedictine College, The University of California at Santa Clara, Cornell University, Syracuse University, the United States Military Academy at West Point).

3. The graduates of the major program who chose to go to graduate school in other disciplines, such as law or English or history, found that there are many important things that they are able to do conspicuously better than the graduate students who lack much undergraduate work in philosophy. Particularly impressive is the number of successful and talented lawyers that has been produced by our program.

4. The academic unit is among the most innovative and vigorous in working for academic excellence throughout the university by contributing especially to interdisciplinary efforts, to general education improvement, and to honors education.

5. The academic unit is among the most energetic and effective in providing workshops and experiences for the gifted high school students in our region as well as for their teachers and facilitators.

6. The academic unit is among the most energetic and effective in providing thought-provoking programs or experiences for the broader community.

7. The academic unit is among the most energetic and effective in providing distance education through the Virtual College, especially by supplying core courses for the Master of Liberal Studies program.

8. The weekly pro-seminar meetings at which members of the philosophy faculty work together on their scholarly projects and share their experiences and suggestions for how to be more effective classroom teachers have been a highly productive tool for faculty development.

B. Performance Indicators

Key Performance Indicator	Baseline FY2004	Actual FY2006	Goal FY2006	Goal FY2007
Number of New Freshmen	1	1	1	1
Number of Transfer Students	1	3	1	2
Number of Majors				
Undergraduate (first majors/second majors)	17	23	22	25
Graduate				
Departmental majors	0	0	0	0
MLS students	0	0	0	0
Student Credit Hour Production				
Undergraduate	4095	4425	4335	4400
Graduate	693	724	640	650
FTE Faculty (Headcount)				
Tenured or Tenure Track Faculty (Headcount)	4	4	4	5

Non Tenure Track Faculty (Headcount)	0	2	1	1
Other Faculty (Headcount/Sections Taught)	8.0 FTE [13 adjuncts, 37 sections, (8 are 1 hr, so equiv. to 32)]	9.75 FTE [11 adjuncts, 41 sections, (3 are 1 hr, so equiv. to 39)]	8.9 FTE [11 adjuncts, 39 sections, (5 are 1 hr, so equiv. to 35.67)]	9.0 FTE [12 adjuncts 40 sections (6 are 1 hr., so equiv. to 36)]
Degrees Awarded				
Undergraduate	1	2	2	6
Graduate				
Departmental degrees	0	0	0	0
MLS degrees	0	0	0	0
Scholarly Activity (See Section IV for documentation requirement)				
Number of books, book chapters, and **refereed** articles published, and sold referred presentations	6	10	3	3
Percent of faculty publishing **refereed** books, chapters, or articles	33% tenure track, 17% all	75% tenure-track, 30% all	50% tenure-track, 22% all	75% tenure track, 20% all
Number of **non-refereed** articles and presentations	0	1	5	3
Percent of faculty publishing, referred and non-referred, **non-refereed** articles or presentations	0%	25% tenure-track, 20% all	50% tenure-track, 36% all	75% tenure-track, 20% all

Number of scholarly performances and other creative activities	0	0	0	0
Percent of faculty in scholarly performances or other creative activities	0	0	0	0
Total number of external grant applications submitted / percent of faculty submitting	0	0	0	0
Total number of funded external grants / percent of faculty funded	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Service Activity				
Percent of faculty meeting acceptable standard of service activity	100%	100%	100%	100%
Percent of faculty meeting exceptional standard of service activity	60%	60%	60%	60%
Assurance of Student Learning				
[Outcome/Indicator 1]	High quality Senior thesis	High quality Senior thesis	High quality Senior thesis	High quality Senior thesis
[Outcome/Indicator 2]	General satisfaction indicated on TEVALs	General satisfaction indicated on TEVALs	General satisfaction indicated on TEVALs	General satisfaction indicated on TEVALs
Other Departmental Key Performance Indicators (up to 3	NONE	NONE	NONE	NONE

additional measures, optional)				
[Outcome/Indicator 1]				
[Outcome/Indicator 2]				
[Outcome/Indicator 3]				

C. Current Quality Initiatives and Results

FY 2006 Quality Initiatives	Results
INITIATIVE NUMBER ONE: Require more substantial writing assignments of our students in upper-division major courses	**Description:** The centerpiece of our departmental assessment strategy is the senior thesis. In FY2005 we discussed at some length our perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of our seniors as we guided and oversaw their progress on these theses, We drew the conclusion that we need to require more large-scale writing assignments of them before they reach that stage. We are therefore agreed to address this need by requiring that at least many of our courses for majors should require a substantial term paper, and at present we are discussing exactly which courses these should be. **Results:** Implementation of this plan in a few courses on a pilot basis has shown a good measure of the desired results and pointed towards ways that we can fine-tune and extend this plan in the coming fiscal year.
INITIATIVE NUMBER TWO: Remake the Virtual College version of MLS core course IDS 801	**Description:** Virtual College courses need in general to be updated and remade from time to time, and this particular MLS core course is still being offered in its original form as developed in the late 1990's. During that period of time, its companion course, IDS 802, has been remade twice, and the other two MLS core courses, IDS 803 and 804, have been significantly improved at least once. Both ongoing course evaluation and fresh ideas about how IDS 801 might further contribute to the quality of the MLS core point the direction for the needed changes. **Results:** For various reasons, we decided in fall 2005 that we would replace Dr. Clark Sexton in FY07. Therefore, this project was deferred for one year.
INITIATIVE NUMBER THREE: Create Virtual College version of general education and major course PHIL 340	**Description:** The department has agreed to take the necessary steps to create an on-line major program. To the three major-program courses already available through the Virtual College, one or two new Virtual College courses will be added per year until a full program is available on line. The first of the new courses to be developed will be PHIL 340: Introduction to Ethics. Because this is also a General Education course, its development will be helpful to the university in other ways as well. **Results:** Dr. Faber has started but not yet finished the necessary steps toward creating an on-line version of PHIL 340. Completion of this project is deferred for one year.

FY 2007 Quality Initiatives	Responsible Party, Resources, and Plan
INITIATIVE NUMBER ONE: Continue to fine-tune plan for improving student writing in upper-division major courses. (Continued fine-tuning and monitoring of an FY06 Initiative)	**Description:** The centerpiece of our departmental assessment strategy is the senior thesis. In FY2005 and FY 2006 we discussed at some length our perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of our seniors as we guided and oversaw their progress on these theses. We drew the conclusion that we need to require more large-scale writing assignments of them before they reach that stage. We therefore began in a few courses to require substantial term papers and to require more dialectically extended writing in general, and it remains to fine-tune this plan and extend it to other courses as well. **Implementation:** Prior to the first day of classes for fall 2006, we shall have agreed to a a more fine-tuned plan for implementing this strategy. (This will allow us to include this requirement in the syllabi for the relevant courses.) **Measures of success:** The measure of success is the extent to which our seniors produce good theses without the multitude and magnitude of false starts and growing pains that now typify the process. **Responsible party:** Eugene Rice.
INITIATIVE NUMBER TWO: Remake the Virtual College version of MLS core course IDS 801 (Continuation of an FY06 Initiative)	**Description:** Virtual College courses need in general to be updated and remade from time to time, and this particular MLS core course is still being offered in its original form as developed in the late 1990's. During that period of time, its companion course, IDS 802, has been remade twice, and the other two MLS core courses, IDS 803 and 804, have been significantly improved at least once. Both ongoing course evaluation and fresh ideas about how IDS 801 might further contribute to the quality of the MLS core point the direction for the needed changes. **Implementation:** Dr. Clark Sexton's replacement will work toward producing a suitable revision of this course. We hope to finish this project in 2007. **Measure of success:** Success is judged by whether the new version of IDS 801 responds appropriately to the results of course evaluation of the older version and takes proper advantage of the new ideas about how this course might make a strengthened contribution to the quality of the MLS core. **Responsible party:** Eugene Rice.
INITIATIVE NUMBER THREE: Create Virtual College version of general education and major course PHIL 340 (Continuation of an FY06 Initiative)	**Description:** The department has agreed to take the necessary steps to create an on-line major program. To the three major-program courses already available through the Virtual College, one or two new Virtual College courses will be added per year until a full program is available on line. The first of the new courses to be developed will be PHIL 340: Introduction to Ethics. Because this is also a General Education course, its development will be helpful to the university in other ways as well. **Implementation:** Dr. Paul Faber will create a Virtual College version of PHIL 340 by the end of 2006. **Measures of success:** The usual measures for assessing course quality will be used to determine success. **Responsible party:** Eugene Rice..

III.   Strategic Plan and Opportunities for Improvement for FY2007

A. Departmental Reflection of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats

Our departmental strategic planning process is to discuss among ourselves throughout the year our perceptions of our strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities, as well as to identify and address the most prominent threats to doing our jobs as well as we can. These discussions are based on all the available, relevant data, including statistical information about our productivity, incoming information about opportunities for service and scholarly growth, awareness of college and university or community projects to which we might contribute, our experiences in the classroom, good ideas from external sources that we have heard or read about, and feedback from our students and others. However, from the standpoint of academic improvement, we rely above all on our formal assessment process, which is described immediately below.

Formal Departmental Assessment Process

The annual assessment procedures culminate near the end of the spring semester each year. The graduating seniors and their faculty advisors are asked to put together a portfolio (see the affinity diagram), with portions of that portfolio (senior thesis, defense, reports on defense, exit interview, and reports on exit interview) being completed in the last semester of a student's undergraduate work.

At the beginning of the fall semester the faculty again convenes to reflect on the departmental program and the need to work for curricular or other changes. Numerous and significant changes in the programs offered by the Department of Philosophy and in the content and pedagogy involved in various courses, and new courses have been developed, as a direct consequence of these reflections.

Approach and Methods

Portfolio

In the semester of graduation, each learner creates a portfolio with departmental assistance. Each portfolio will include a number of items: (a) the graded final written examination or the instructor's written report on the final oral examination in one of the student's upper-division philosophy courses; (b) a graded research paper of the student's choice submitted in a 400- or 500-level class; (c) the student's senior thesis; (d) the departmental faculty's reports on the student's defense of the senior thesis; (e) written evaluations of student performance if the student has completed an apprenticeship in philosophy; (f) written reports of the student's exit interview; and (g) evidence, if any, of a student's use of philosophical knowledge, skills, or perspectives outside of philosophy classes.

Capstone Course

499 Senior Thesis challenges the students to research, organize, compose, and publicly defend a scholarly paper.

Program Audit
The department maintains a file of individual philosophy major grades, class averages, and majors' averages.

Informal feedback from graduates
Graduates of the program, especially those who go to graduate school, often share their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the program and make suggestions for its improvement.

Regular sharing of observations by faculty
Faculty share their experiences and impressions of the strengths and weaknesses of the program throughout the school year. At the end of each spring semester, after the presentation and defense of senior theses, faculty members focus on suggesting specific improvements for implementation in the next school year.

Instrument
_____

Department of Philosophy
Assessment of Learning Outcomes
Evaluation of Senior Thesis

Name of student _____ Date of consideration_____

Title of thesis _____ Name of evaluator _____

The following are goals of the degree program in philosophy at FHSU. Please make a judgment about the presence of evidence of the program's success or failure in the student's thesis and accompanying discussion. Add any comments about the philosophy program, this thesis, or this student as you see fit.

Goal 1: To acquire knowledge of the development of metaphysics, value theory, epistemology and logic.
_____ Evidence of success   _____ Evidence of failure   _____No relevant evidence
Comments:

Goal 2: To recognize and employ logical techniques.
_____ Evidence of success   _____ Evidence of failure   _____No relevant evidence
Comments:

Goal 3: To recognize alternative conceptions of man, God, and the universe and the possible relations among them.
_____ Evidence of success   _____ Evidence of failure   _____No relevant evidence
Comments:

Goal 4: To employ their knowledge of different value systems in coming to individual conclusions and in applying those conclusions to their thought.
_____ Evidence of success   _____ Evidence of failure   _____No relevant evidence
Comments:

_____

Strengths	Weaknesses/Needs
• Quality of the faculty as effective teachers, active scholars, and willing servants. • Faculty loyalty and commitment, often exhibited in self-sacrificial service, to the task of helping our students develop their human potentials as fully as possible. • Quality of the departmental Senior Administrative Specialist. • Quality and rapidly growing quantity of our majors. • Quality, flexibility, and interdisciplinary linkage of the curriculum. • Quality and quantity of contributions to important extra-departmental service projects. • Quality and quantity of contributions to the education of non-majors through general education and MLS coursework • Excellent productivity in terms of SCH production	• Our teaching and service loads are so heavy that they threaten maintaining the desirable level of scholarly productivity. • Majors have been graduating without sufficient depth in such key disciplinary areas as ethics and philosophy of knowledge • There have been logistical problems in terms of class size that arise from having so many choices in the major program • We have some growing pains: Impressive recent growth in number of majors puts much strain on our capacity to offer enough in the way of tutorial courses and experiences (Senior Thesis, Readings, Apprenticeship). • We rely too heavily on adjuncts to staff most of our many sections of Virtual College coursework. The present adjuncts are, in fact, performing admirably, but the situation is much more fragile and less stable than staffing these courses with on-campus, full-time teachers. Also, the adjuncts cannot be here to contribute to and benefit from those faculty interactions and development activities that help to provide an optimal professional and educational environment. • We need to update and redesign two present Virtual College courses: IDS 401 and IDS 801. • We need to finish the project of having on-line versions for all of our general education courses. At present, they are available for PHIL 120, IDS 400, and IDS 401. We need to add PHIL 100 and PHIL 340, and perhaps IDS 411 as well. • We need to be able to offer an on-line degree program.

Department of Philosophy

Opportunities	Threats
• Area high school gifted programs look to us for special programming. • There is growing demand for offering graduate-level philosophy courses for MLS students. • Recent additions to the faculty bring fresh ideas and energy to the department. • We now have a full-time Senior Administrative Specialist, and this will make possible a number of important ventures that earlier had to remain in the "maybe someday" category. • We have the opportunity to produce an on-line degree program by adding a new on-line version of an appropriate philosophy course each year until the necessary credits are available.	• A problem of inadequate support: Efforts to raise the pay for adjuncts to a more just and attractive level seem never to go anywhere in the end, even though they are always ranked highly in the university-wide strategic planning process. • Another problem of inadequate support: Efforts to replace reliance on adjuncts with staffing by full-time, tenure track faculty members seem never to go anywhere in the end, even though they are generally ranked highly in the university-wide strategic planning process. • A problem of perception: There is failure on the part of some segments of the public (and sometimes even of university administrators) to understand and appreciate the educational significance of the contributions made by the department and the program. We must therefore work continually to educate others as to the true centrality and significance of philosophy in a liberal arts curriculum. • A problem in how we are sometimes judged: There is a tendency among evaluators toward over-reliance on purely quantitative information (for example, number of majors, number of graduates per year) at the expense of important qualitative information. We waste a lot of valuable time and energy combating this inappropriate way to measure our worth.

B. Opportunities for Improvement

For meeting needs that do not require any or significant new funding from the university, our opportunity for improvement is to plunge in and get to work. For those that require significant new funding from the university, the best we can do is to keep submitting action plans each fall.

Short Term OFI	Resources Required	Expected Outcome and Completion Date
1. Implement and monitor effectiveness of recent and proposed changes in the degree program (adding courses in ethics and epistemology to the core, requiring more substantive writing projects in certain major courses)	1. Time for faculty discussions and deliberations.	1. We expect evidence that our graduating majors know more and write better. Assessment of this is ongoing and never terminates.
2. Remake on-line versions of IDS 401 and IDS 801.	2. The standard Virtual College pay for remaking already existing on-line courses.	2. We expect improved, updated versions of these courses. It would be nice for both to be available in remade form sometime in FY0 7.
3. Create on-line versions of the General Education courses PHIL 100 and PHIL 340.	3. The standard Virtual College pay for creating new on-line courses.	3. We expect to be able to offer our students solid on-line versions of the General Education courses PHIL 100 and PHIL 340. It would be nice for both to be available sometime in FY07.
4. Finish integrating current best-practices material into an on-line manual for Virtual College teachers.	4. Time for the Chairman and the Senior Administrative Specialist to work together to finish this project.	4. We expect to be able to offer an extremely useful best-practices manual that addresses in particular the teaching of our own on-line courses rather than simply on-line teaching in general. We want this to become available soon.

Long Term Strategic Initiatives	Resources Required	Expected Outcome
1. Add two, full-time, tenure-track faculty members to teach MLS core courses.	1. The allocation of two, full-time, tenure-track positions at the Assistant Professor level, and the appropriate financial resources to fund these positions.	1. Dependably solid, long-term, accountable stability in the teaching of MLS core courses from faculty members who will contribute as well to departmental service, strategic planning, and scholarly development.
2. Add two, full-time, tenure-track faculty members to teach on-line sections of IDS 400 and IDS 401.	2. The allocation of two, full-time, tenure-track positions at the Assistant Professor level, and the appropriate financial resources to fund these positions.	2. Dependably solid, long-term, accountable stability in the teaching of IDS 400 and IDS 401 from faculty members who will contribute as well to departmental service, strategic planning, and scholarly development.
3. Finish creating an on-line degree program by adding a course per year until the full program is available.	3. For each created course, the standard Virtual College pay for creating a new on-line course, and a substantial commitment of time by Dean Faber in particular, who has agreed to create these needed courses for us.	3. An on-line degree program that will serve many people well.

IV.   Supporting Materials

A. Department Degree Program Affinity Diagram(s) – See attached.
We attach the traditional version of the Affinity Diagram rather than the newer format because there is too much information to include under "Results" and "Curricular and/or Pedagogical Changes." This material occupies several pages under Section III of this present report.

B. Department Staffing Plan – See attached.

C. Bibliography of Departmental Scholarly Activity

Books, book chapters, and refereed articles or invited presentations at conferences

Invited book review by Carl Miller. A review of *Value, Reality and Desire*, by Graham Odie, in *Review of Metaphysics*, May, 2006.

Book chapter by Eugene Rice. "Human Rights and Buddhist Compassion" in *Human Rights, Democracy and Religion*, edited by John Rowan in Vol. 21 Social Philosophy Today Series, July, 2005.

Invited presentation by Walt Schrepel. "Critical Thinking Techniques," presented for the Upper Iowa University staff at Fort Leavenworth, KS, December, 2005.

Other publications or presentations

Invited article by Eugene Rice. "Juggling Research and Teaching," in "Grants Update," FHSU, Fall, 2005.

Invited presentation by Eugene Rice. "Freedom of Speech in China: Universal Human Right or Contingent Asian Value?" presented by the "Times Talk Series" for the American Democracy Project, Spring, 2006.

Invited presentation by Walt Schrepel. "The Ethics of Counter-Terrorism: The Battle of Jenin," presented for the series "Civil Discussions of Controversial Issues," sponsored by the FHSU Department of Philosophy and the American Democracy Project, at Hays Public Library, April, 2006.

Invited presentation by Clark Sexton. "Abduction and Intelligent Design," presented for the series "Civil Discussions of Controversial Issues," sponsored by the FHSU Department of Philosophy and the American Democracy Project, at Hays Public Library, February, 2006.

Invited presentation by Stephen Tramel. "Christian Unity," presented at the request of FHSU Chapter of Campus Crusade For Christ, November, 2005.

D. Department Program Assessment Results

Although philosophy courses had been taught in the early years of the university by Dr. Charles Fisher Weist, the modern version of the Department of Philosophy was founded by Dr. Samuel Martin Hamilton in 1948. Since 1948, there has been ongoing and constant attention to improving the quality of its programs and the significance and worth of its many other contributions to FHSU. Until the late 1980's, however, this process of assessment and improvement was not guided by any systematic, formal plan or instrument. Since that time, beginning with the requirement of a non-credit senior thesis as a way to measure the attainments of our graduates, the department has continued to develop and revise the various elements that have constituted its method of assessment. The present approach has been in place since the middle 1990's. However, the extensive changes made in 2000-2002 in the major and minor programs – changes that were made, partly, because of the findings of previous assessment activities – have made a number of adjustments necessary or desirable.

FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION
_____

The data gathered by the Department of Philosophy cannot profitably be quantified nor can it be profitably analyzed statistically. Nevertheless, our use of the assessment tools has produced many notable results. Below we classify these findings under two headings: the findings of the period 1997-2002, and the findings since 2002. It will be clear in what follows just why 2002 is a watershed year.

IN THE PERIOD 1997-2002
_____

The two most noteworthy classes of findings in the period 1997-2002 were in the areas of perceived weaknesses in the ability of our major program to meet the needs or our students optimally and the identification of new opportunities for departmental service to benefit the campus community, the people in our region, and the State of Kansas.

The chief findings about our programs and curriculum were (1) that we needed to give philosophy majors more direction in their writing of major philosophy papers; (2) that we needed to change the senior thesis from a non-credit to a credit-bearing requirement in order to get some students to do a good job on this project; (3) that we needed to recast our programs to make them more flexible, useful, and attractive to students who are not planning to go to graduate school in philosophy; (4) that we needed to develop a course in contemporary philosophy; (5) that we needed to develop more upper-division courses that are tied directly to students' (non-philosophy) majors, especially by redevelopment of the course in aesthetics and by developing new courses in political philosophy and philosophy of law; and (6) that we could do a better job of advertising our upcoming courses by posting, in both electronic and paper form, expanded course descriptions.

The members of the department share a missionary zeal for spreading interest in and ability to think deeply and rationally about the larger questions that face all of us as human beings and citizens. That is why we also work to assess and improve our service contributions with the same care with which we assess our academic programs. One good reason for the existence of a vigorous philosophy program is to serve as a sort of Socratic gadfly for the benefit of the wider communities in which we live. In the period 1997-2002 we concluded (1) that we might improve our contributions to the Kansas Regents Honors Academy by developing a great-works curriculum rather than the more traditional approach that we had conducted earlier; (2) that we could improve our contributions to area high school gifted students and debaters in a number of ways; (3) that we could improve our public colloquium series by a change of location and by sticking to current events sorts of issues; (4) that we appeared to have an opportunity to help design an honors program for FHSU and to work for its adoption; (5) that we appeared to have an excellent opportunity to have a formative role in the development of the core courses for the new Master of Liberal Studies degree program; and (6) that the department needed to make more of its courses available through the Virtual College.

SINCE 2002

2002 is a watershed year because it gave us our first opportunity to say with any accuracy just how well the new programs are working. After completing the implementation of the new set of certificate, minor, and major programs that were developed in the period 1997-2002, we now have a growing number of students who have graduated under these new programs. Therefore assessment of these programs has begun in earnest. Our earliest assessment observations indicated the need for a few changes.

The source of the problems is that we may have overdone the flexibility of the program. The older program was fairly rigid, and it was designed especially with the thought of preparing students to continue the study of philosophy at the graduate level. However, the great majority of our majors do not intend to study philosophy at the graduate level. They instead typically add a philosophy major to another major in the field in which they intend to pursue a career, particularly such fields as history, English, biology, sociology, modern language, business, art, mathematics, and political science/pre-law. For them, it is important that they be able to choose philosophy courses that appropriately supplement the other subjects in which they are majoring. Such was our thought as we designed the new program. Three sorts of difficulties have arisen.

One is that it is was possible to get a philosophy degree without ever taking a course in ethics, or without knowing anything about the history of philosophy since the time of Immanuel Kant, or without any knowledge of epistemology. In addition to having good reasons to want a flexible program, we also have an obligation to our discipline to see that our program covers the sorts of subjects that our peers elsewhere would expect it to cover.

A second, related problem is that it is desirable for our majors and minors to have enough of a shared core that certain kinds of knowledge and past experiences can be expected of all of them in the upper-level classes. Again, the fact that they might know nothing about ethics or about recent philosophy is a barrier to efficient and effective teaching and learning.

Third, there has been a logistical problem that might prove to be only a growing pain. Since the newer, flexible program requires so few courses in the core, and since it offers so wide an array of options, it is hard to get good enrollments in the non-core classes. This is not an efficient use of our resources. The hope that we shared as we launched the new program was that our 9-hour certificates would be sufficiently attractive to students majoring in other fields that their added enrollments would create good enrollments for these non-core courses. So far this has not occurred. However, the program is very new, and we still have not advertised the certificates well enough to know whether our original hope was well grounded. Thus, a strong advertising initiative will be part of our plan for school year 2003-2004.

Next, our assessment tools indicate a need to remake two of the courses currently being offered through the Virtual College and to create Virtual College versions for two others.

The courses that need to be remade are IDS 401 Ethical Issues in the Professions and Business and IDS 801 Introduction to Graduate Liberal Studies. Mostly, IDS 401 simply needs a little updating of examples and issues, but it now looks desirable to redesign it a bit in order to make it especially suitable for use in the curriculum that we offer through our Chinese partnerships. Assessment deliberations on the part of the MLS Director and Steering Committee indicate that IDS 801 needs to be expanded from a 1-hour course to a 3-hour course.

The courses that need to be recreated in a distance-education format are PHIL 100 General Logic and PHIL 340 Introduction to Ethics. Down the road a little farther we would also like to create Virtual College versions of our four courses in biblical studies, since these are likely to have a broad appeal. But first things first. The primary need right now is to have all departmental general education offerings available through the Virtual College.

Finally, our assessment tools indicate a need to strengthen the teaching of our Virtual College offerings in two ways.

First, we need to provide additional means and encouragement for professional development, especially as teachers, among our adjunct faculty. Keeping them aware of, and motivated to make use of, educational best practices, is necessarily an ongoing process.

Second, we need to move away from such heavy reliance on a revolving door of adjuncts to staff our many Virtual College offerings, replacing at least many of them with full-time, on-campus members of the faculty who have been hired for this purpose.

USE OF FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

_____

The Department of Philosophy has used the findings of its assessment process to design and implement many changes in its programs and its service ventures. As in the preceding section, it will be convenient to classify these findings under two headings: the findings of the period 1997-2002, and the findings since 2002.

IN THE PERIOD 1997-2002

_____

1. The first change brought about by our assessment findings was the greater direction we began to give students in upper-division courses, direction about how to research and write a philosophy paper properly. This change was later incorporated into the courses PHIL 101 Orientation to Philosophy, which prepares students to do good work in philosophy, and PHIL 499 Senior Thesis, which further develops and then measures their scholarly accomplishments.

2. Secondly, we began to make extensive curricular changes as we worked towards developing new certificate, minor, and major programs. These changes were parts of an ongoing master plan to recast our major program into a flexible, multi-optioned set of subject-concentrations. In 2000-2001 we shepherded these programs through the approval process, and in 2001-2002 we implemented the full range of new programs.

3. We designed, organized, administered, and participated in the teaching of the 1999 Kansas Regents Honors Academy.

4. We designed and provided many special workshops for gifted students in the region's public schools, some held here at FHSU and some held at area high schools.

5. We created and began to deliver "Civil Discussions of Controversial Moral Issues," a series of public colloquia held twice a semester at the Hays Public Library.

6. We instituted a system for making available to students during enrollment times expanded course descriptions, which include not only more details about our courses but also information about texts and requirements.

7. We took the lead in developing and lobbying for the creation of a university-wide honors program or honors college.

8. We created the new MLS core course "Introduction to Graduate Liberal Studies" (IDS

801).

9. We created the new MLS core course "Ways of Knowing in Comparative Perspective" (IDS 802).

10. We created and began to deliver a Virtual College version of IDS 801.

11. We created and began to deliver a Virtual College version of IDS 802. The first Virtual College version of the course was offered only once, since it relied too much on web-based teacher interaction to supply course content. A second Virtual College version of IDS 802 turned out to be flawed due to technical problems with the audio on the videotapes and to copyright complications with some of the readings that were included in the anthology. So work began to create a third version that will be mentioned under the activities that have taken place since 2002.

12. We developed and offered a new course in aesthetics that is designed to be useful and attractive to students majoring in several subjects.

13. We developed and offered a new course in the philosophy of law that is designed to
 useful and attractive to students in law as well as to students in philosophy.

14. We developed and offered a new course in political philosophy that is designed to be useful and attractive to students in political science as well as to students in philosophy.

15. We agreed to commit ourselves as a faculty to attend weekly pro-seminar meetings at which we would both help one another bring scholarly projects to completion and further develop ourselves as productive scholars in other ways.

SINCE 2002
_____

1. We strengthened the core curriculum of the major program by replacing electives with required courses which ensure a more adequate knowledge of such discipline-essential areas as ethics and epistemology.

2. We began to respond to the difficulties about efficiency that were revealed by assessment of our new major program by choosing topics for some of the smaller-enrollment, variable-content courses that allow us to combine two classes into one.

3. We began to respond to the difficulties about efficiency that were revealed by assessment of our new major program by narrowing the number of certificate programs that would be made available in a given two-year period.

4. The Virtual College version of IDS 802 was completely revised yet again to solve the problems that had surfaced in the previous to versions.

5.   The plan to develop a course in political philosophy that would be shared by political science majors and philosophy majors became a reality. This improves the efficiency of both departments, as is clear from the strong enrollment in the section of the course that has been offered since this became official. No longer are two different departments offering their own, small-enrollment versions of this course.   The students and teachers in both departments have been well satisfied with the result. Indeed, the interaction in the classroom between political science majors and philosophy majors, who have different perspectives and backgrounds, provided an enriched educational experience for all.

6. Initial steps have been taken to redevelop our course in aesthetics so that it can be used to fulfill major program requirements by both philosophy majors and art majors.   Indeed, perhaps the redevelopment can lead to a course that similarly benefits music, literature, and theater majors. We hope here for gains in efficiency and in the quality of student interaction that will be similar to what was produced by our new course in political philosophy.

7.   We have employed a number of strategies to strengthen the performance of adjunct faculty who teach so many of our Virtual College offerings, including a mentoring program, equipping them with relevant books and articles, and circulating best-practices advice from our most experienced and successful on-line teachers.

8. We have made some progress in our effort to move from staffing so many on-line courses with adjuncts to staffing these with full-time faculty members hired for this purpose. This remains a point of future emphasis for action plans in the next few years.

9. We continued to improve the nature and format of our workshops for gifted students in the region's public schools, some held here at FHSU and some held at area high schools.

10.   We began to provide workshops in applied ethics for mental health professionals as a component of their continuing education and relicensure requirements.

11. We continued to modify the nature and format of "Civil Discussions of Controversial Moral Issues," a series of public colloquia held twice a semester at the Hays Public Library. One particularly important change was to assign sponsorship of this series to one of our faculty members as an important contribution to community, departmental, and university service.

12.   We continued to develop our weekly pro-seminar approach to systematic faculty development by adding to our scholarly collaboration an in-depth consideration of ways to improve our teaching of general education courses, especially from the standpoint of developing strategies for increasing student interest and motivation.

E. Other Departmental Information

DEPARTMENTAL CONTRIBUTIONS TO ACHIEVING UNIVERSITY GOALS

AQIP CATEGORY	CORRESPONDING EFFORTS/ PROJECTS/ INITIATIVES
HELPING STUDENTS LEARN	-Continuing to implement new certificate, minor, & major programs -Using some of our proseminar sessions to share pedagogical strategies -Using TEVALS to evaluate and indicate areas where improvement is needed -Working to improve the quality of adjunct faculty who teach Virtual College courses -Continuing to improve old & develop new Virtual College courses -Encouraging student leadership through the philosophy club
ACCOMPLISHING OTHER DISTINCTIVE OBJECTIVES	-Becoming involved with supplying coursework for Tak-Ming -Creating certificate programs to provide a useful philosophical supplement for students majoring in other disciplines -Developing improved ways to publicize our programs to high school students -Developing improved ways to publicize our programs to the on-campus community -Conducting workshops for area gifted high school students -Conducting two colloquia per semester for the general public through our series "Civil Discussions of Controversial Issues" -Providing a special ethics workshop for the professionals at High Plains Mental Health
UNDERSTANDING STUDENT AND STAKEHOLDER NEEDS	-Use of our program assessment strategy to evaluate existing efforts and point the direction that should be taken by future efforts -Maintaining contact with gifted facilitators in area high schools to determine ways that we can assist them, and thereby be attractive to talented prospective students -Encouraging a learning atmosphere in all our courses which is responsive to the individual needs and circumstances of students
VALUING PEOPLE	-Providing a teaching and advising environment in which all our students feel encouraged to develop their intellectual, moral, and spiritual potentials -Providing an office environment in which all employees and visitors are treated in a friendly, respectful way -Managing our collegial relations with one another by collaborative consensus, through which each faculty member is overtly valued, & to which each contributes -Cultivating friendly, cooperative ties with our colleagues in other departments, especially by seeking opportunities for interdisciplinary and supra-disciplinary sharing -Keeping faculty, staff, and students informed about opportunities for personal, educational, and professional development -Making sure that standards and procedures – such as for tenure, promotion, and merit evaluation, are clearly understood by junior faculty -Maintaining a departmental handbook to keep faculty members informed about all policies and practices -Working at transparent equity in sharing burdens and opportunities for service among the faculty -Insuring that grievance procedures are in place for faculty, staff, and students
LEADING AND COMMUNICATING	-Maintaining and updating departmental website -Serving on university committees -Maintaining contact with area gifted facilitators -Keeping high school counselors informed about our programs -Meeting with our own admissions representatives to keep them informed about our programs -Maintaining contact with Bible and Christian colleges that supply students to our undergraduate and graduate programs -Making minutes of CASC meetings available to faculty members -Publicizing our programs to the on-campus community -Using public colloquia to spread knowledge of and appreciation for philosophical thinking
SUPPORTING INSTITUTIONAL OPERATIONS	-Contributing massively to the university's Virtual College operation (our contribution has grown semester by semester, & in spring 03 will comprise 13 sections of VC courses) -Taking the lead in helping to design & implement an honors program

Department of Philosophy

	-Providing a number of sections of on-campus general education coursework per semester (typically about 10-12 sections per semester) -Helping to attract talented students to FHSU through workshops for gifted students -Taking the lead in all three of the Kansas Regents Honors Academies that have been held at FHSU -Seeking opportunities to serve on committees that deal with general education and curricular reform -Contributing two of the core courses for the MLS program -Serving on the MLS advisory committee
MEASURING EFFECTIVENESS	-Using TEVALS as a principal basis for measuring effectiveness in the classroom -Using our department assessment strategy to measure effectiveness of our major and minor programs -Monitoring the ongoing success of our philosophy graduates in graduate schools and in careers -Using the university instrument for evaluating advising
PLANNING CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT	-Creating and active on new AQIP initiatives each year -Requiring faculty to submit annual plan and 3-year plan -Encouraging sabbaticals and involvement in professional meetings as a way to foster continuous faculty development -Conducting weekly proseminars to promote scholarly growth and productivity -Monitoring suggestions from alums about how to improve our programs
BUILDING COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS	-Establishing certificate programs that will be useful to majors in other disciplines -Holding discussions with the Department of Political Science and Justice Studies to find ways to make linkage between our program and theirs -Seeking ways to make curricular linkage with the Department of Art through our course in aesthetics -Involving colleagues from other departments in our proseminar meetings -Involving colleagues from other departments in our public colloquium presentations -Involving colleagues from other departments in our workshops for area gifted high school students -Involving professionals outside the campus in our activities (for example: lawyers, mental health professionals) -Working with gifted facilitators and regents representatives on issues that involve education for the gifted -Helping to sponsor the interfaculty colloquium series in the past

F. Special AQIP Report

No special AQIP report was requested for FY2006.