On October 30, 2009 the Undergraduate council (UGC) met with John Barker, Chair of the Philosophy Department, to discuss the Philosophy Department Review in a question-answer format. Also present at this meeting were Terry Bodenhorn; Associate Dean of College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLAS) and James Ermatinger; Dean of CLAS.

The UIS Philosophy Department offers an online B.A. degree in Philosophy and a minor in Philosophy. The major is a relatively new degree, offered since 2004 and the minor has been offered since 1993. The UGC commends the department for their work in producing a thriving degree, by developing thirteen new courses. Given that the department has not received an additional faculty line to deliver required courses they are also commended for recruiting high-quality adjuncts to help deliver the degree online. The UGC also commends the department for their contribution to general education at UIS.

Based on the UGC review of the written report and the question and answer session the UGC makes the following recommendations for the Philosophy department:

1. The online B.A. degree in Philosophy is one of few online majors offered in that area. This provides a unique opportunity to recruit and retain high quality students in the program. The department should develop and implement a recruitment and retention plan by fall 2011 for the major. This plan should explicitly include the kinds of resources, for example, program web site development assistance, required to increase both number of majors and graduation rates.

2. Analysis in the program review indicates that the Philosophy major at UIS has the highest number of completion credit hours relative to other B.A. philosophy degree programs in Illinois. It appears that this is a result of having four-credit hour classes versus three-credit hour classes because the number of courses required is similar across programs. Still, the department should reevaluate the degree requirements as it may put the program at a competitive disadvantage in recruiting students, in that students might seek a program that requires less credit hours.

3. The UIS Philosophy Department is a small department relative to other departments in CLAS. The UGC recommends that the department should create an “Advisory Committee,” which will include adjunct faculty, affiliated faculty, students, and alumni. This
committee could provide further input into program changes and recruitment and retention initiatives.

4. The UGC commends the department for beginning the assessment process by developing a rubric for evaluating papers in the senior seminar course. The UGC recommends the following steps to improve assessment of student learning:

   • Implement the rubric for senior seminar papers and monitor and evaluate data on an annual basis.

   • Consider developing an electronic portfolio system of assessment for online majors. This will provide a baseline that can be used for evaluation of the program and individual classes. Online portfolios appear to be a good opportunity for assessment of student learning in an online environment.

   • Work in conjunction with the Committee on Assessment of Student Learning (CASL) to develop and implement the assessment process.

   • Collect and report evaluation data as stipulated in the CASL guidelines.

5. The Philosophy program would benefit if UIS continued to provide resources to Brookens Library and the Center for Teaching and Learning, that enhance services offered to online majors.

6. To optimize enrollment in upper division philosophy electives, the department should seek ECCE approval of selected electives.

7. Faculty hires in the Philosophy department should be considered if a new hire will broaden and deepen the curriculum offered for program majors. In addition, the department should make the case for new hires based on data on enrollment patterns/projections and how new faculty hires could boost recruitment and retention.

HDB