**2020 Philosophy Department Undergraduate Major Assessment Plan**:

Authored by Dr. Steven Brence, Director of Undergraduate Studies, in consultation with the Undergraduate Studies Committee and Prof. Daniela Vallega-Neu, Department Head.

Previous efforts to assess the effectiveness of the undergraduate Philosophy major have confronted significant challenges. Primary among these has been a failure to secure a representative sample of work from our students. The absence of a more systematic approach to organizing faculty involvement in assessing what work was gathered also hindered their success. The plan detailed below is designed to address both of these problems. It remains subject to further revision. Any such revisions, and development of the standardized assessment form indicated in the plan, will be completed Spring term 2020.

**Learning Goals and Objectives:** (from the Philosophy Major Map)

To enable students to:

1. Reason more insightfully about questions of value.
2. Build skills in writing and critical reasoning.
3. Explore fundamental questions about meaning and the nature of human life.

**Assessment Methods:**

Means: Because the chief means by which we assess student achievement in our courses is via evaluation of the expository and evaluative essays that we require students to produce, these essays are also the most appropriate means by which we may assess our own achievement in facilitating student development.

Measure: To render such assessments as useful for this purpose as possible, we apply a standard rubric, reflecting the learning goals and objectives indicated above.

Period of assessment: Since the department’s learning goals and objectives are meant to define the cumulative value of philosophy as a *completed* major course of study, this assessment is made via comparison of essays written by students at or near their entrance into the program with essays written near to their graduation.

Gathering Data: In order to better ensure that work from a representative number of students is available for assessment when it is needed, students will be alerted by the Director of Undergraduate Studies that such work may be requested from them for later comparative evaluation when they first declare philosophy as their major. With prior notice and official request that they save their work for possible later submission, we anticipate that students will more readily respond to such requests when they are made. The request for their previous work will be made by the DUGS, with the assistance of the Undergraduate Program Coordinator, when students apply for graduation.

**Assessment Processes:**

Every other Fall term, a minimum of 24 papers (2 each from 12 students) gathered at the end of the prior Spring term, will be assessed by the Undergraduate Studies Committee using a standard assessment form containing a rubric based upon the Learning Goals and Objectives listed above. After considering these assessments as a whole, the Undergraduate Studies Committee will develop an actionable plan for improving the success of our undergraduate major.

**Status Outcomes and Results:**

The DUGS will then author a report that summarizes these assessments and explains the actionable plan and present it to the larger faculty to consider and potentially revise prior to the end of that Fall term.

**Decisions, Plans and Recommendations:**

The improvement plan adopted with the approval of the larger faculty will be put into action from the start of the subsequent Winter term.