

# The Instructional (Academic Affairs) Program Review Narrative Report

## 1. College: *Laney College*

**Discipline, Department or Program:** Amir Sabzevary

**Date:** October 28, 2012

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## 2. Narrative Description of the Discipline, Department or Program:

Please provide a general statement of primary goals and objectives of the discipline, department or program in light of the College's priorities and goals. Include any unique characteristics, degrees and certificates the program or department currently offers, concerns or trends affecting the discipline, department or program, and any significant changes or needs anticipated in the next three years.

The primary goals and objectives of the Humanities-Philosophy department are to familiarize students with the study of fundamental questions that arise from different areas of human experience through an integrated approach. The program's main objective is to expose students to the disciplines of Humanities and Philosophy within the modes of *reflection* and *expression*. The former encompasses such areas as philosophy, religion, and history; and, the latter encompasses the visual arts, which include expressions such as painting, sculpture, architecture, photography, film, the performing arts, music, theater, dance, poetry and prose.

In short, the objective of the Humanities-Philosophy program is to give a sense of wholeness to human experience and provide opportunities in the way of self-development through a synoptic world-view and critical reasoning skills. Furthermore, the program offers lower division prerequisites for four-year Humanities and Philosophy majors.

The program offers an AA Degree in Humanities, but not in Philosophy. However, it is hoped that in the next two-to-three years the program will be able to offer an AA Degree in Philosophy. Finally, the full-time instructor is currently collaborating with other faculty members in order to offer AA degrees in both Philosophy and Religious Studies.

### Course Offerings

Currently, the Laney Philosophy curriculum includes: Philosophy 1 (Introduction to Philosophy), Philosophy 2 (Social and Political Philosophy), Philosophy 10 (Logic), Philosophy 20 A-B (History of Philosophy), and Philosophy 37 (Asian Philosophy), all of which meet the Social Science requirements.

The Laney Humanities curriculum includes: Humanities 6 (Introduction to New Testament), Humanities 7 (Introduction to Old Testament), Humanities 30 A (Human

Values: Ethics), Humanities 30 B (Human Values: Aesthetics), Humanities 31 A-B (Arts and Ideas of Western Culture), Humanities 40 (World Religions), Humanities 45 (Religion and the African-American Church in America), all of which meet Social Science requirements.

The following are the basic courses that have been offered for the past five years on a regular and consistent basis: Introduction to Philosophy (Phil.1), Logic (Phil. 10), Social and Political Philosophy (Phil. 2), World Religions (Hum 40), and Ethics (Hum 30A). In addition to these regular course offerings, two new courses: Humanities 16 (Islam) and Philosophy 37 (Asian Philosophy) have also become part of regular core course offerings in the Humanities-Philosophy department since the Fall semester of 2008 academic calendar. It is hoped that the department will grow as it continues to offer more new and innovative courses in the semesters to come.

Although certain course offerings such as Ethics, Introduction to Philosophy, Social and Political Philosophy, World Religions, Islam and Asian Philosophy have a steady enrollment of fifty-to-seventy-five students each, there are certain courses that have been forced into cancellation simply because of the recent overall division/college/district budget crises.

It is hoped that with the fading of the budget crises, the Humanities-Philosophy program will once again have the means to offer more courses in order to meet the needs and interests of students. This would not only help in the growth of the Humanities-Philosophy program, but also, help create an attractive and lively department as well.

### Needs

Only a few years ago, the Humanities-Philosophy department was offering close to twenty sections with each section having an enrollment of at least fifty students. This was a vital and lively department with variety of exciting and exotic courses that attracted many students in the Bay area. With the devastation of the economy, however, the department is currently offering only six-to-seven sections per semester. Consequently, many students now find their desire for Humanities and Philosophy met at other colleges. This not only has an enormously negative impact on the Humanities-Philosophy department, but also, Laney College for it can no longer compete with other nearby campuses. It is sincerely hoped that beginning Fall 2013 semester the Humanities-philosophy department will be allowed to offer more sections so that it can once again grow to serve its community of students.

As the student's interest and need for more course offerings in humanities and philosophy grow, there would be a ***need to hire an additional Full-Time instructor*** in the next one-to-three years. Aside from the enormous enrollment increase in the Humanities and Philosophy classes that desperately speak to the ***need of an additional full-time instructor***, the new instructor can bring about a different teaching pedagogy and perspective which would most definitely make for a richer and more diverse Humanities-Philosophy program.

It would also be of great benefit to the current full-time instructor if there could be a budget for a student assistant. Almost all of the course offerings are currently being taught by the full-time instructor and the enrollment for every class is fifty-to-seventy-five students.

It is hoped that the philosophy and humanities classes will all be held in Smart-Class rooms so that the visual arts could be incorporated into the in-class discussions for a better understanding of sometimes difficult philosophical concepts.

Finally, a request for an office to be occupied only by the full and part-time Humanities-Philosophy instructors! Currently the full-time instructor shares the office with other faculty members. Because of the enormous student interest in the subject, the office is usually houses ten-to-fifteen students on a daily basis. Due to the constant traffic of students, it would be of great benefit to the interested students, the full-time Humanities-Philosophy instructor and those with whom he shares office if there was an office space solely for the Humanities-Philosophy full and part time instructors.

### **3. Curriculum:**

- a. Is the curriculum current and effective? Have course outlines been updated within the last three years?
- b. Please indicate how many active courses are in the department inventory.
- c. How many of those have been updated in the last 6 years?
- d. If courses have not been updated within the last 6 years, what plans are in place to remedy this?
- e. Has your department conducted a curriculum review of course outlines? If not, what are the plans to remedy this?
- f. What are the department's plans for curriculum improvement (i.e., courses to be developed, updated, enhanced, or deactivated)? Have prerequisites, co-requisites, and advisories been validated? Is the date of validation on the course outline?
- g. What steps has the department taken to incorporate student learning outcomes (SLOs) in the curriculum? Are outcomes set for each course? If not, which courses do not have outcomes?
- h. If applicable, describe the efforts to develop outcomes at the program level. In which ways do these outcomes align with the institutional outcomes? (Note: if your department has no certificate or degree offerings and does not offer a course as part of one of the College's associate degree programs, then skip questions 3.h and 3.i.)

- i. Provide one program level outcome (PLOs), and the assessment tool that will be used to measure the program level outcome this fall 2012 and spring 2013.
- j. How are the SLOs and PLOs, if applicable, mapped to the college's Institutional Learning Outcomes? (*See Attachment B for copy of the Laney College Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs)*)
- k. Recommendations and priorities.

The curriculum is current and effective. Since there are no pre-requisites or co-requisites to any of the courses offered by the Humanities-Philosophy department, students can enroll in any class that interest them.

A review of the curriculum course outlines was conducted by the full-time faculty of **all** of the department's course offerings and the following course outlines were updated and approved by the Curriculum Committee in the Spring semester of the 2008 academic year:

- 1) Philosophy 1: Introduction to Philosophy
- 2) Philosophy 10: Logic
- 3) Philosophy 37: Asian Philosophy
- 4) Philosophy 2: Social and Political Philosophy
- 5) Humanities 6: Introduction to the New Testament
- 6) Humanities 7: Introduction to the Old Testament
- 7) Humanities 16: Introduction to Islam
- 8) Humanities 30A: Human Values- Ethics
- 9) Humanities 40: Religions of the World

The following are approved courses but which have not been offered in the past five years, and hence, their course outlines have yet to be updated. However, it is hoped that with the recovery of the budget and the hiring of another full-time instructor, the course outlines for these courses will be updated and thereafter offered.

- 1) Humanities 30B: Human Values- Aesthetics
- 2) Humanities 31A/B: Arts and Ideas of Western Culture
- 3) Philosophy 20A/B: History of Philosophy
- 4) Philosophy 30: Contemporary Philosophy

The current budget crises make it difficult, if not impossible, to offer these courses. The Humanities-Philosophy program does not wish to deactivate these courses. It is hoped that with the recovery of the economy and the **hiring of an additional full and part time instructors**, these courses can be part of annual course offerings in the Humanities-Philosophy program.

*SLO's and Assessments*

Currently, the program has incorporated student-learning outcome for the following courses:

- 1) Philosophy 1: Introduction to Philosophy
- 2) Philosophy 2: Social and Political Philosophy
- 3) Philosophy 10: Logic
- 4) Philosophy 37: Asian Philosophy
- 5) Humanities 6: Introduction to the New Testament
- 6) Humanities 7: Introduction to the Old Testament
- 7) Humanities 16: Introduction to Islam
- 8) Humanities 30A: Human Values- Ethics
- 9) Humanities 40: Religions of the World

Student Learning Outcomes for the following courses were developed by the full-time instructor and approved by the SLO Coordinator, Michelle Fossum, in the Fall semester of 2008 academic year:

- 1) Philosophy 1: Introduction to Philosophy
- 2) Philosophy 2: Social and Political Philosophy
- 3) Philosophy 10: Logic
- 4) Philosophy 37: Asian Philosophy
- 5) Humanities 6: Introduction to the New Testament
- 6) Humanities 7: Introduction to the Old Testament
- 7) Humanities 16: Introduction to Islam
- 8) Humanities 30A: Human Values- Ethics
- 9) Humanities 40: Religions of the World

The full-time instructor has completed assessing the Student Learning Outcomes for the following courses:

- 1) Philosophy 1: Introduction to Philosophy
- 2) Philosophy 2: Social and Political Philosophy
- 3) Philosophy 37: Asian Philosophy
- 4) Humanities 16: Introduction to Islam
- 5) Humanities 30A: Human Values- Ethics
- 6) Humanities 40: Religions of the World

It is hoped that the student learning outcomes at the program level will be aligned with the institutional outcomes in the way of assisting students in possessing a breadth of knowledge and experiences from the areas of the social and natural sciences so that they can act critically, responsibly, intelligently and ethically, resulting in success in both their private as well as social lives.

#### *New course curriculum*

Having attended the Curricunet training, the full-time instructor plans to develop the following new course curriculums by the end of Fall semester of 2013:

- 1) Philosophy of the Self
- 2) Philosophy of Living and Dying
- 3) Philosophy of Education
- 4) Philosophy of Love and Sex
- 5) Philosophy through Film

It is hoped that the department will grow as it continues to offer new and interesting courses in the semesters to come.

#### **4. Instruction:**

- a. Describe effective and innovative strategies used by faculty to involve students in the learning process. How has new technology been used by the department to improve student learning?
- b. How does the department maintain the integrity and consistency of academic standards within the discipline?
- c. Discuss the enrollment trends of your department. What is the student demand for specific courses? How do you know? Identify factors that are affecting enrollments.
- d. Are courses scheduled in a manner that meets student needs and demand? Please describe the criteria and considerations used in the scheduling process.
- e. Recommendations and priorities.

Today, in our society, due to the emergence and the explosion of so many different cultures and traditions, our language has become immensely complex, and indeed, pregnant with innumerable levels of meaning- with every level expressing its own unique culture and the manner in which it perceives and experiences the world. Such changes can, and indeed, do play an important role, not only in directing human thought and behavior, but also, reconstructing social structure as well. And, the awareness of the faculty member in regards to the already mentioned elements defines his/her ability as a caring, compassionate and a successful educator and communicator.

The Humanities-Philosophy department views a classroom of sixty students, each from a unique culture and background, as a classroom of sixty novice thinkers interested in all matters of human consciousness. Hence, the department's philosophy revolves around bringing to life students immense sense of awe, wonder and curiosity out of which the entire classroom participates and becomes engaged in the subject at hand. This, in turn, creates an environment of openness and trust between the student and the instructor.

In short, one of the most important and productive ways through which students become engaged in the art of learning is through collaborative learning. Since every student brings with him or herself a unique history through which the world is perceived,

collaborative learning allows those perception not only to be shared, but also, critiqued. Hence, everyone becomes engaged in playing not only the role of a student but teacher as well.

Fortunately, in the past five years, many students have found the department's course offering refreshingly interesting and inspiring. In fact students initiated the creation of a Philosophy Club. Here those interested come together in order to build a community of seekers questing find answers to various everyday personal and social dilemmas. This has helped in the growth of the department not only in an increased interest in the humanities and various schools of philosophy amongst students, but also, a rise in class enrollment.

Also, for the past year, the Philosophy Club has designated every Thursday as the "sandwich day." With the funds generated by the students themselves, the Philosophy Club welcomes everyone and offers its guests lunch and variety of lively and exciting discussions.

Also the Humanities-Philosophy program collaborates with other department to evaluate their course offerings in order to better serve their student.

### Keeping Current

To keep current with the ever-evolving issues in the fields of Philosophy and Humanities, the full-time instructor is an active member of the New Books Review Committee for Oxford and Pearson Publishings. This involves reviewing newly published books, journals and articles related to the field. In addition, the full-time instructor attends seminars/workshops relevant to the fields of education, philosophy, humanities and religious. Finally, the full-time instructor is in the process of writing an introductory text on Philosophy that will be completed and published by Wadsworth Publishing Company by 2014.

### Technology

Another way to learning that students have found enjoyable is through the usage of technology. There is, of course, the usage of overhead projector, audio-video tapes, which are extremely useful for visual learners. Also, students who wish to further their knowledge and interest in humanities, philosophy, religion and the arts are provided with various Internet websites.

In addition, the Humanities-Philosophy department offers two Online courses every semester by full-time instructor. Finally, Moodle, which is a course management system, has allowed the full-time instructor to upload all of department's course offerings and their requirements so that the enrolled students can, at anytime, visit the online site to access the courses in order to keep current.

Finally, it would be of great benefit to the program if the philosophy and humanities classes could be held in Smart-Class rooms so that the visual arts could be incorporated

into the in-class discussions for a better understanding of sometimes difficult philosophical concepts.

#### Humanities enrollment

The total enrollment in the Humanities course offerings are as follow: The enrollment for the academic year of 2009 was 317 with five course offerings. The enrollment for the academic year of 2010 was 211 with four course offerings. The enrollment for the academic year of 2011 was 176 with four course offerings.

#### Philosophy enrollment

The total enrollment in Philosophy course offerings are as follow: The enrollment for the academic year of 2009 was 326 with five course offerings. The enrollment for the academic year of 2010 was 217 with four course offerings. The enrollment for the academic year of 2011 was 222 with four course offerings.

The reason as to why the humanities have a higher enrollment rating is simply due to the fact the more Humanities courses are being offered than Philosophy courses.

#### Humanities-Philosophy combined enrollment

The total combined enrollment in the Humanities-Philosophy course offerings are as follow: The combined enrollment for the academic year of 2009 was 643 with the total of ten course offerings. The enrollment for the academic year of 2010 was 428 with the total of eight course offerings. The enrollment for the academic years of 2011 was 398 with total of eight course offerings.

### **5. Student Success:**

- a. Describe student retention and program completion (degrees, certificates, persistence rates) trends in the department. What initiatives can the department take to improve retention and completion rates?
- b. Identify common challenges to learning among your students? What services are needed for these students to improve their learning? Describe the department's efforts to access these services. What are your department's instructional support needs?
- c. Describe the department's effort to assess student learning at the course level. Describe the efforts to assess student learning at the program level. In which ways has the department used student learning assessment results for improvement?
- d. Recommendations and priorities.

#### Humanities enrollment, retention and success rates

By employing the total grades given and total census enrollment, the following is the success and retention rates in the Humanities department. In the academic year of 2009 the enrollment was 317 with the retention of 86% and a 68% successful course completion. In the academic year of 2010 the enrollment was 211 with the retention of 82.% and a 70% successful course completion. In the academic year of 2011 the enrollment was 176 with the retention of 71% and a 48% successful course completion.

#### *Philosophy enrollment, retention and success rates*

By employing the total grades given and total census enrollment the following is the success and retention rates in the Philosophy department. In the academic year of 2009 the enrollment was 326 with the retention 82% and a 61% successful course completion. In the academic year of 2010 the enrollment was 326 with the retention of 85% and a 75% successful course completion. In the academic year of 2011 the enrollment was 222 with the retention of 79% and a 46% successful course completion.

The department has offered only those courses that have historically proven to be successful not only in terms of high enrollments and retention, but also, student success. Those classes that did not meet student's need and were ultimately forced into cancellation and have not been offered.

#### *Challenges*

What sort of philosophy of education can best serve a society and its citizens? Without this important tool: education- no member of any society can truly be a healthy and a functioning citizen. This is simply because a thoughtful human existence demands and requires layers of decision-making moments. And what sort of fruits will be born from those decisions will entirely depend on the extant to which the decision-maker has been educated. Let us be clear though. Education here is not simply meant or defined as "Institutions of Higher Learning," where one enters into an environment specifically designed to 'teach'. The term education here is defined as any environment that promotes and en-courages reflection, creativity, critical examination of the most basic to the most complicated ingredients of life. Only such an environment will bestow upon her students the adequate decision making tools. Hence, it is only through education that people are able to live with and through awareness, understanding, forgiveness and compassion-components that are essential to a harmonious and meaningful existence for both the individual and society.

One of the enormous challenges facing the instructors in the Humanities-Philosophy department is student's reading, critical and analytical abilities, which are crucial in helping student's success not just in philosophy and humanities courses, but in academia altogether. There are currently no tutors available in the Humanities-Philosophy department at this time except for the presence of the full-time and part-time instructors. However, for part-time instructors to have paid-office-hours, they must have at least two teaching assignments, equivalent to six hours, which is not possible due to the budget crises. This, in turn, leaves students without the assistance outside of the scheduled class-

time. In addition, the student learning center is not sufficiently staffed leaving student's academic needs unfulfilled.

One way that this challenge could be met, is by offering more classes in Logic (Philosophy 10), and also, closely working with the English department in helping link the Logic course to the Critical Thinking course that is offered through them.

Perhaps the two most important keys in assuring the departments success in the way of supporting its students is *hiring an additional Full-Time instructor*, and also, being provided a budget for a student assistant.

Assessing student learning is a difficult task, since learning like a seed that requires time to sprout and grow into maturity. Therefore, one cannot predict when and how this takes place. One of the difficulties pertaining to the fields of humanities and philosophy classes is their existential and multidimensional aspects.

Education, after all, like any other material good, if not packaged according to desires, capacities and needs of the consumer- the student- will ultimately be indigestible and hence rejected. This, however, does not suggest that the imparted knowledge cannot be parroted back by the pupil. The suggestion here is: Regurgitation of information cannot be an adequate means of assessing success or failure. It is the digestibility of information not regurgitating that defines success.

The goal of the department at both the course and program level regarding the assessment of student learning is twofold: First, to create an environment where collaborative learning takes place. It is hoped that this environment will bring forth the element of 'presence' which carries within it the qualities of listening, observing, thinking, critiquing, learning, and teaching. These are invaluable tools that will provide enormous assistance to students who decide to further their education.

Aside from attendance, which could demonstrate their interest in the course, students are also evaluated on their engagement in the course and their completion of course work.

Attendance is not only an important part of the evaluation process, but is also crucial to the student's understanding of the course materials, which are needed in doing the course work. Without a firm understanding of the course materials it would be impossible to become properly involved in the course work which could result in a poor course-work performance. Also, without attendance, there can be no participation, and thus, no contribution.

Although every instructor assesses student learning according to his/her own teaching pedagogy, the goal is to have modes of assignments (presentation, papers, quizzes, etc.) where students can demonstrate the areas in which they are most comfortable, qualified and confident. In this way, students are evaluated not only on their knowledge of the course materials, but also their creativity in the way of presenting them.

In addition, learning and understanding is a gradual process and students naturally reveal their understanding and knowledge of the course materials throughout the semester. And, of course to what degree they have matured will be revealed by the ideas they share in the classroom and through their written works.

Finally, there is currently one full-time who is responsible for adopting and using text that best suit not only their needs for the course, but also, one that fulfills the requirements as stated in the course outline.

## 6. Human and Physical Resources (including equipment and facilities)

- a. Describe your current level of staff, including full-time and part-time faculty, classified staff, and other categories of employment.
- b. Describe your current use of facilities and equipment.
- c. Are the human and physical resources, including equipment and location, adequate for all the courses offered by your department (or program)? What are your key staffing and facilities needs for the next three years? Why?
- d. If your department experienced a reduction in resources, describe the impact of that reduction on the overall educational quality of your unit and the College.
- e. How does the department plan to sustain the quality of instruction and/or services offered through your department in the current environment of reduced resources?
- f. What does the department recommend that the college do to maintain quality educational programs and services?
- g. Please provide any other recommendations and priorities. (Use the appropriate request forms within Attachment D.)

There is only one full-time instructor and it would be enormously beneficial if the division could provide a budget for a student assistant as all the offered courses are taught by the full-time instructor. Henceforth, the responsibility is borne by the full-time faculty in attending to the needs of all students who enroll in the philosophy and Humanities classes. Therefore, the presence of a student assistant would immensely be helpful.

Naturally, as the Humanities-Philosophy program grows and additional courses are created and offered, there would be a ***need to hire an additional full-time instructor***. This would not only help in the continuous success of the department, but would also play a crucial role in student success at Laney college.

It is also imperative that only those classrooms be assigned to the philosophy and humanities courses that would make in-class group activities and exercises possible.

Finally, a request for an office to be occupied only by the full and part-time Humanities-Philosophy instructors! Currently the full-time instructor shares the office with other faculty members. Because of the enormous student interest in the subject, the office is usually occupied with over ten-to-fifteen students on a daily basis. Due to the constant traffic of students, it would be of great benefit to the interested students, the full-time

Humanities-Philosophy instructor and those with whom he shares office if there was an office space solely for the Humanities-Philosophy full and part time instructors.

## **7. Community Outreach and Articulation**

### ***For Career and Technical Education Programs:***

- a. Describe the department's connection with industry. Is there an Advisory Board or Advisory Committee for the program? If so, how often does it meet? Is the program adequately preparing students for careers in the field? How are you assessing this?
- b. Have students completing the program attained a foundation of technical and career skills? How do you know? What are the completion rates in your program?
- c. What are the employment placement rates? Include a description of job titles and salaries. What is the relationship between completion rates and employment rates?

What are the employment projections (numbers of replacement and new positions) for these job titles over the next 10 years using the California Employment Development Department Labor Market Information?

(<http://www.labormarketinfo.edd.ca.gov/Content.asp?pageid=1004> , and <http://www.laney.edu/wp/educational-master-plan/2010-educational-master-plan/> for the Laney College Educational Master Plan, Chapter II, pps. 18-30.)

- d. What industry trends are most critical for the future viability of the program? What are the implications of these trends for curriculum development and improvement?

### ***For transfer programs:***

- e. Describe the department's efforts in meeting with and collaborating with local 4-year institutions. How is the program preparing students for upper division course work?
- f. Has there been a Transfer Model Curriculum identified for your program? Has it been implemented? If not, what are the plans to do so?

### ***For all instructional programs:***

- g. Describe the department's efforts to ensure that the curriculum responds to the needs of the constituencies that it serves.
- h. Please indicate how many of the full and part time faculty have been evaluated in the last three years. For faculty that have not been evaluated in the last three years, what are your plans to become current.
- i. Recommendations and priorities.

Currently, the department has no connection to the industry, with the exception of a handful of students who every semester are required to enroll in Humanities 30A (Human Values- Ethics). Since this course offers variety of perspectives regarding contemporary dilemmas in the political, social and the environmental spheres, some employers require their employees to enroll in such classes in order to attain a greater awareness pertaining to their field of expertise.

Since humanities and philosophy courses fulfill certain categories of the general education that every student must complete, in particular, Philosophy 10 (Logic), it is hoped that after completing a course in the humanities and philosophy program, students leave with a better understanding of themselves and the world in which they live.

All of the Philosophy and Humanities courses meet the general education requirements for both AA degree and transfer to four-year institutions. The Philosophy and humanities courses also meet the undergraduate requirement for a Bachelors degree in both Philosophy and Humanities. Though Laney College does offer an AA in Humanities and Arts, it is not currently offering an AA in Philosophy, which could be helpful not only in the growth of the Laney Humanities-Philosophy program, but also, to students who are interested in majoring in Philosophy. The full-time instructor is also planning to create a Religious Studies program that offers an AA degree.

To help the department grow and to ensure that the curriculum responds to the needs of the constituencies that it serves, the full-time instructor has and will continue to meet with the faculty and the Chair persons of the Humanities and Philosophy Departments of various four-year institution such as CSU San Francisco, CSU Hayward, CSU San Jose, UC Berkeley and UC Davis to not only make necessary refinement to the Laney Humanities-Philosophy program, but also, to adequately prepare students for both lower and upper division courses in the fields of humanities and philosophy.