

Philosophy Department
Executive Summary on Program Viability
November 6, 2012

The Philosophy Department of Bakersfield College serves BC's Core Mission, its students, and the Kern Community College District in a very Productive manner.

BC's Philosophy Department directly serves two of the three components of BC's Core Mission: Transfer and Career Technical Education (CTE). All of BC's Philosophy courses transfer to CSUs, UCs, and private universities. All of our courses provide explicit instruction in Critical Thinking, Reading and Writing, which is required across the Curriculum here at BC and at the four-year institutions. Our Philosophy B9 course (Critical Thinking/Advanced Composition) is one of two courses that meet the IGETC requirement for Critical Thinking. Philosophy B9 does so more cost effectively than the other course that meets this requirement (English B2). Philosophy B9 carries a .333 instructor load for one (1) instructor, whereas English B2 carries a .6 load, split between three (3) instructors.

Our Philosophy B12 course (Ethics of Living and Dying) serves BC's Allied Health Programs and completion of the course is one of the factors it considers in admitting students. This course prepares students for the philosophical and emotional challenges that await them in Health Care careers; it complements the technical training they receive in BC's Allied Health Programs. I don't have numbers on BC's Allied Health Programs (see their Executive Summaries and Annual Program Reviews), but these programs are respected throughout the state. They are very successful. Their Licensure Exam Pass rates are among the best in the state. They place their students in careers, both locally and elsewhere, and the employment outlook for these fields is strong. BC's Philosophy Department contributes to these very strong Allied Health Programs with its popular B12 Course, of which we run approximately 25 sections per academic year with high enrollment caps of 40.

Since BC's Philosophy Department emphasizes Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing, weakening or eliminating BC's Philosophy Department would impact students across the curriculum by weakening the Critical Reading, Reading, and Writing Skills they use across the curriculum. It would also weaken BC's Allied Health Programs, which consistently value our B12 course. In this way, weakening or eliminating BC's Philosophy Department would create the sort of "domino effect" mentioned as a criterion of BC's Program Viability. Another "domino effect" of weakening or eliminating BC's Philosophy Department would be its impact on a range of contributions our Faculty make across the College. Three (3) of our seven (7) members are Paramount Farms Student Mentors. One of them spearheaded BC's Safe Space Program. One of them ran EODOC. Another launched an AB 540 Seminar, and Philosophy faculty are on more committees than I can list here.

Productivity, Retention and Success numbers from other Philosophy Departments in the State are not available to me. I, however, have reviewed our numbers for the

past four years during which I have been the Chair of my Department, and they are impressive. Last year our FTES/FTEF was 19.9, exceeding the College's Goal of 18.5 and exceeding the College FTES/FTEF of 16.6. This number of the Department has risen over the past five years, though some years are difficult to calculate because the IRP Numbers distinguished F-to-F (Face-to-Face) and DE (Distance Education) without combining them. BC's Philosophy Department serves high numbers of students (2,635 last academic year) with only seven (7) full-time faculty members and one (1) adjunct, resulting in our high productivity and low cost to the college. BC's Philosophy Department generated 309.75 FTES last academic year at a total cost of \$803,102.09, for a Cost/FTES of \$2,625.05.

Our Retention and Success Rates are also strong: 81.4% and 65.7%, respectively. The former number only trails the College-Wide number by 1.8% and the latter by 0.3%—despite the fact that only one (1) of our courses has a prerequisite and that most BC students have no idea how challenging Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing are in a Philosophy course before they take our classes (with no high school Philosophy curriculum in the community).

BC's Philosophy Department's enrollment numbers are very strong, particularly for a department with seven (7) full-time instructors. Our enrollments have dropped slightly over the past four (4) years (from 2,924 in 2008/09 to 2,635 in 2011/12), but this is in direct compliance with the College's needs and explicit request to cut sections. The drop in enrollment in BC's Philosophy Department, then, does not reflect a reduced demand for our courses but rather how attentive and cooperative the Department is to the administrative needs and requests of the College.

Of the Program Viability Criteria provided, the one "weakness" of BC's Philosophy Department I would mention is the number of degrees we award. We have awarded 19 Associate Degrees in Philosophy over the past five years combined (9, 1, 3, 4, and 5, respectively).

Many of our students transfer and pursue Bachelor's Degrees in Philosophy and a host of other disciplines (e.g., History, English, and the sciences) without completing an Associate Degree in Philosophy. This, however, is only a weakness if we believe the function of the college is to confer such Associate Degrees: rather than to prepare students with the skills they need to complete Bachelor's Degrees, which BC's Philosophy Department does admirably. For many students, completing an Associate Degree entails spending another year at BC, where student demand exceeds the College's resources to offer sections. Since most Associate Degrees (non-CTE degree) do not satisfy minimum qualifications for jobs and since most of them are not required for Transfer, BC's Philosophy Department believes in developing students skills and encouraging them to earn Bachelor's degrees in Philosophy and other fields, which enables them to gain quality employment. This also addresses BC's need to facilitate transfer while reducing enrollments under the current Budget Climate. This is a boon to the college, not a weakness.