TO: Brenda McComb, Dean of the Graduate School  
FROM: Jacob Hamblin, Associate Professor of History and Director of Graduate Studies, School of History, Philosophy, and Religion  
DATE: 29 Jan 2014

Action Plan for Master of Arts in Applied Ethics  
Oregon State University  

Response to Review Team’s Overall Recommendation

The review team’s overall recommendation was to “Restructure and expand the Program.”

The team outlined some specific opportunities and challenges. It was an extremely helpful visit by the review team, and we came away energized. The follow-up document reinforced the themes that arose during the review. What follows is a discussion of our plans to implement the recommendations.

Detailed Plans in Response to Recommendations

A. Program Structure/ Thesis Option: “The faculty should consider allowing for a degree option that is not a thesis but a written description of the practicum or culminating experience/project.”

The SHPR graduate committee is currently considering this option. We agree that the MA thesis and MA practicum are two very different kinds of projects, and they satisfy different graduate learning outcomes, and that our program’s focus on applied ethics suggests
significant engagement with the practicum. The intellectual energies of the student, and writing, may be best directed toward an analysis and reflection on the practicum. On the other hand, the traditional thesis may be desirable for some students, and it should remain an option.

At the program level we plan to devise an option that does not imply less rigor for those students who opt out of the thesis. If the student intends to opt out of the thesis, for example, there should be means of assessing equivalent intellectual engagement, such as a written examination, along with the required oral examination.

No elimination of the practicum is being considered at this time.

The review team also suggested putting together a student handbook, rather than relying on the website and the formal orientation meetings. We agree that having such a document would be useful to students, not just for planning their graduate lives, but in planning their careers.

*Actions:
1. Devise a rigorous non-thesis option by Winter 2014 [this was completed mid-January, and the negotiated language will be incorporated into all future policies, including the student handbook]

2. Develop a student handbook to include degree-specific policies and procedures (such as the above non-thesis option), to be available for incoming students as of Fall 2014.

B. Program Structure/ Online options. “Online courses should be developed and offered.”

The SHPR graduate committee recognizes that online courses may be the preferred option for some students. We have explored whether or not online graduate offerings can be, or should be, integrated into our program.

*Our assessment: At this time, offering online courses for such a small graduate program runs counter to our goal of having a sufficient cohort of on-campus students to offer stand-alone graduate seminars. However, graduate sections of existing online slash-listed courses can be encouraged, if consistent with SHPR policy on online graduate courses.

*Action:
1. In Winter 2014, establish a SHPR-wide policy on online graduate courses [in a January 2014 meeting of the Graduate Committee, we determined this policy. Graduate students will be encouraged to take ecampus courses if consistent with the advice of the student's major professor. Lack of enthusiasm for extensive online graduate offerings in this program was unanimous among faculty, for the reasons mentioned above].
C. Program Direction: “We recommend that the faculty hold a retreat next year to decide whether the MA in Applied Ethics is a terminal degree or a stepping stone, or both. Further, the program faculty need to consider the relationship of Applied Ethics to the new proposal for an interdisciplinary major in Environmental Humanities. In addition, the faculty should consider the initiation of a non-degree graduate certificate program.”

Although Applied Ethics is a terminal degree, some of our students continue to other programs, such as doctoral degrees. Among students who plan to pursue a Ph.D., faculty will likely advise them to pursue the thesis option.

As the review team suggests, once the MA program is of sustainable size, we can consider the possibility of expanding it to a PhD program. This is not currently being planned.

As the Environmental Humanities program develops at OSU after this year, we will be in a better position to evaluate the relationship of Applied Ethics to it.

*Action:
1. Organize an intensive meeting of graduate faculty in all SHPR programs to establish a strategic plan that delineates the purpose of each program, integrates their goals, identifies hiring needs and goals, and establishes clear liaison with other programs across campus. [In light of the new hire of a director of Environmental Arts and Humanities, we will target Fall 2014 to do this]

D. Administration: “We recommend the establishment of a Community Advisory Board comprised of a diversity of community leaders and some OSU representatives.”

This is an excellent suggestion that SHPR may implement. The School needs to decide whether this board will be degree-based or school-based.

The review team also suggested pre-tenure teaching relief for Prof. Stephanie Jenkins, to provide space for pursuing scholarship amidst substantial responsibilities in the graduate program. This will be worth pursuing, should Prof. Jenkins take on substantially more responsibilities than other faculty in the program.

*Actions:
1. In Spring 2014, the SHPR Graduate committee will identify the appropriate structure of a community advisory board.
2. Should Applied Ethics meet the goal of enlarging the program significantly beyond its current small size by Fall 2015 (at least 10 enrolled students), we will meet to decide whether to develop a community advisory board specific to our program (rather than a single board for all of SHPR, as in #1 above).

E. Size: “The program must grow in order to be sustainable.”

We are aware of this and we have several strategies to increase the size of the program, including:

--Decrease the stipend amount for GTAs to less than .49 FTE, in order to extend offers of financial support (including tuition remission) to a larger number of applicants.

--Maintain a robust web presence, including outreach through social media, to improve recruitment
--Offer GTA support to faculty who agree to accept and mentor graduate students

*Actions:
1. We will implement the above stipend strategies during the admission decision of Winter 2014, to achieve large enough student numbers to offer stand-alone graduate seminars offered by tenure-stream faculty.

2. We will pilot a stand-alone ethics seminar, taught by Stephanie Jenkins, in Fall 2014.

3. Starting in Fall 2013, we began to offer GTA support to faculty who agree to accept and mentor graduate students.

4. Our short-term goal (to be achieved by 2014-2015) is a total student number of 6-8. Our medium range goal (by 2015-2016) is 8-12 students.

F. Funding: “Faculty should take advantage of Ecampus and the INTO Pathway for international students as revenue sources for the program.”

We do not currently have a large number of ecampus offerings in PHL, which would be revenue streams to support graduate students. We need to create more ecampus courses that could bring money back to SHPR (and justify support for more graduate students).

As suggested by the review committee, we can have our graduate students manage undergraduate ecampus courses. Because our students do not yet have MA degrees, this will require faculty supervision.

According to preliminary discussions with INTO, we may not currently attract enough international students to justify an agreement with INTO. However, this may change and we should pursue an INTO pathway when practicable.

*Actions:
1. We will “pilot” an ecampus funding model in which 1-2 faculty convert their courses to ecampus, and then offer (with compensation) to supervise MA students to teach them.
   (a) Spring 2014: Convert two PHL courses to ecampus for this purpose. [In January 2014 Allen Thompson made a preliminary commitment to attempt one of these]
   (b) Fall 2014: Fund two incoming students using this model, tying them to these specific courses, supervised by two faculty members.

2. We will reopen the discussion with INTO in Spring 2014 to clarify whether there is sufficient market interest to justify establishing an INTO pathway to Applied Ethics.

G. Recruitment: “Faculty should target a diversity of prospective students locally, nationally, and globally (e.g., via INTO Pathway or by creating a collaborative arrangement with Pacific Rim institutions or through Ecampus marketing).”

These are interesting suggestions and our program may need to develop a more coherent recruitment and marketing strategy.

*Action:
1. In Spring 2014 we will, in conjunction with our public information officer, more coherently tie our promotional efforts to specific targets, rather than our current approach of sending flyers to universities. Our goal is to have 10-20 applicants for our program each year. [In January 2014, Hamblin met with Fran Saveriano to discuss partnerships with the Graduate School. Upon her advice, beginning in summer 2014, we will make fuller use of Data Warehouse information and target recruitment efforts of students from underrepresented groups. We will send targeted recruitment emails to selected students from these databases during the month of September.]

H. Integration: “Faculty should seek collaborations and connections with forestry, education, agriculture, businesses, and public health. In addition, the popular and successful Ideas Matter program should be revived, and new activities, such as student-led or faculty-led workshops, instituted.”

This was one of the important take-aways from the formal meetings with the review team, and we have already begun to put it into action. We will reach out more purposefully to faculty outside the Philosophy faculty, and also outside SHPR, to put other students and faculty in touch with our program.

We have explored the idea of creating “signature” Applied Ethics activities, such as an annual workshop.

*Actions:*
1. Appoint relevant faculty outside Philosophy as graduate faculty, if they have training relevant to the field. Establish a minimum of five graduate faculty to serve on committees, outside PHL, by Spring 2014.

2. We have planned a signature SHPR graduate course on ethical methods, to involve not only AE students but also History of Science ones, in Fall 2014.

3. Plan an ethics workshop for graduate student projects. This can occur annually, and the current cohort of AE students would be ready in Spring 2015.

I. Diversity. “The program needs to expand its diversity through some of the above suggestions, such as establishment of the Community Advisory Board, the connection with the Center for Civic Engagement, involvement with Ecampus, and the connection with INTO.”

Applied Ethics has a good record of ethnic, national, and gender diversity, and we will continue to be mindful of this, possibly through the connections mentioned above. Our current admission rates are frankly quite high and our main task is recruiting (see section G above).

*Action: see section G, “Recruitment”*

**Appendices.** Model Questionnaire and Dream Proposals

The review team very helpfully provided a model questionnaire for MA students entering their graduate programs, and we think it is a useful way to imagine our own student handbook (see above actions).
The review team showed considerably energy and creativity in suggesting “dream proposal” projects ranging from war ethics to zombie studies.

We are excited that our program motivated such thinking after their day with us. It may be that the relevant faculty here will be able devise similar themes, and perhaps work them into a signature event, such a workshop, that serves several functions: teaching, research, outreach to other programs and community, and recruitment. Our faculty members already have invested considerable energy into the Phronesis project—an ethics laboratory—and are poised to use it as a vehicle to achieve these goals.

*Actions:
1. Encourage all Applied Ethics graduate faculty to associate some of their own research projects with Phronesis in order to serve student needs while promoting the program to other faculty and the wider community. Goal by Fall 2014: to have at least one research project prominently identified by each Applied Ethics graduate faculty member as connecting to the idea of an “ethics laboratory” (i.e. Phronesis).

2. Immediate: Ensure that all Applied Ethics graduate student projects are included under the Phronesis rubric and highlighted on the website.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Jacob Darwin Hamblin
Associate Professor of History and Director of Graduate Studies