

# College of San Mateo

## 2018-19 Instructional Program Review

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### Program Name

Please select your program. For CTE programs, use the [2018-19 CTE Instructional Program Review form](#).

Philosophy

### Division

Please select your division

Creative Arts/Social Science

### Submission Date

### Description of Program

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### 2a. Describe the results of your previous Program Review's action plan.

If your answer is more than 2000 characters (approximately 300 words), please upload a Word document below (10 MB or less). If you're not sure, please upload your answer. Please upload text only; we cannot ensure that non-text such as images, diagrams, or charts will be retained in the final submission.

We have met all our goals from our previous cycle. We have expanded and formalized our implementation of tutoring through the learning center. We offer both drop-in and SI modalities. We believe this has contributed to student success. We have also done this with an eye toward equity: both tutors are female and from under represented student populations. We have intentionally tried to make getting help in our courses more welcoming and inclusive. We have also made our program more accessible by articulating online and hybrid versions of two additional courses: Phil 244 and Phil 103 (Phil 100 is currently available). Again, the goal was to make our courses more accessible and address the diverse set of needs present in our student population and potential student population.

### 2b. Program coherence and effectiveness: Explain any curriculum changes since last program review, including SLO alignments.

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In the past two years we have close to doubled the number of possible course offerings available within the department. We have also added two AA-Ts: one in Philosophy and one in Law, Public Policy, and Society. We have also attempted to spearhead the articulation in one more interdisciplinary AA-T for Global Studies (which, I think is currently in the pipeline past the local approval process). Lastly, we have worked with the YearOne Program to support the goals of that program and the students it serves. In short, the philosophy department is actively reaching out to build better access to students, provide more diverse learning opportunities, and to make formal connections with other groups and services on campus. We are committed to the team approach to serving students. We understand and are building courses and pathways to address the diverse set of needs that learners in our county.

### Student Success and Equity

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### 2d. Provide an update on any long-term plans that are still in progress (if applicable).

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AA

**Course and Program Assessment**

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**3b. General Education / Institutional assessment. Discuss participation in any General Education, Core Competencies, institutional or interdisciplinary assessment activities.**

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Faculty have attended workshops on Canvas. (We were part of the pilot program) and the Summer institute for Year 1 (the past two years), along with various flex day activities (which, as philosophers, we think you should change the name of since these activities are now mandatory and not flexible) Faculty work with colleagues in other Social Science departments to facilitate our "Movie Night" extravaganzas. (It is Movie "Night" because this semester, the events start at 1:30pm. We changed the starting time this semester to compare whether the time works better for the students. Many students found it difficult to attend the events when we started at 6:30pm. They were dependent on public transportation. The earlier start also means students could attend while they were already on campus: eliminating another trip.) Since Movie Night is a learning community event, we work closely with our partners in Psychology: Jim Clifford and Shelly Mullane. We are now also inviting additional faculty to participate. Several Ethnic Studies faculty, Frederick Gaines, Lewis Kawahara, and Malathi Iyengar have shared their expertise with students, along with Minu Mather from Sociology and Judith Hunt from History.

One of the faculty has been involved with a learning community with a cohort of students taking ENGL 100, LIBR 100 and PHIL 100. The faculty members would meet weekly to share observations, strategies and insights. They would read and analyze each other's assignments, as well as read the papers from students in each of the classes on a common theme. The goal was to reinforce best critical thinking practices in order for the students to receive consistent, rigorous feedback, urging students to become learners that are more autonomous. Another Faculty has been part of the Year 1 program meeting bimonthly with the other folks involved in developing and implanting that program.

**4a. Provide a brief description, including actions, measurable outcomes, and timelines**

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Our main goal is to prepare our students for living fulfilling lives as engaged citizens of their communities.

Philosophy, as Aristotle conceived it, is the broadest of the investigations humans undertake. (Put just about any word into Wikipedia, click on the first hyperlink in the description [except for pronunciation] and then repeat with each new term; that algorithm will eventually lead to the philosophy page. As a human community, we have organized all our knowledge into one giant tree: all is connected. We teach our philosophy students to be botanists of that tree of knowledge.) As such, studying philosophy provides an overall strategy for organizing and questioning all other categories of knowledge.

We will continue to provide our students the opportunities to develop and practice the solid academic habit of critically questioning their ideas. This means we will continue to search for the ways to engage and meet the students where they are, and guide them to see how these skills lead to a wider range of possibilities. They can witness how writing clear, coherent prose matters: from writing a solid personal essay to gain admittance to their university of their choice, or to write a devastatingly profound love letter. In other words, learning to reason by questioning the ideas in front of them means they have better tools for tending their mental garden of knowledge.

We plan to continue cultivating the minds of the students and we will make the cosmetic name changes to entice more students to take philosophy classes. Once they are there, we are confident we have the seeds and the recipe for them to be successful.

Regardless of who walks into a philosophy classroom, they are welcome: it is safe. While we embrace them with open arms, we also tell them no idea is safe. Not their ideas; and most certainly not ours. In class, we encourage the questioning of every idea. The ideas may not survive such scrutiny, but luckily, people aren't their ideas.

**4b. What will your program do to increase student success and promote student equity in the next two years? What kind of professional development and institutional support will be engaged and enacted to meet these goals?**

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We want students to learn to develop and refine their reasoning capacities. We challenge them to think outside their mental boxes. As Jeremy Ball phrases it "While every person is welcome in a philosophy class, but it is open game on every idea." We teach that people are safe, but their ideas need rational defense. In other words, philosophy class is a safe space for people to put their thoughts under the microscope in the philosophy lab. Just as the students in biology learn about how the living world works by closely scrutinizing living tissue, philosophy faculty and students put their ideas under a comparable idea-scope. We practice questioning the thoughts in our heads. This practice results in a tool that serves the students' interests regardless of their majors; it will contribute to their success. We start from the premise that all people are equal; it is the coherence of the ideas, and their rational defense, in which there is difference.

The faculty plan to attend appropriate flex sessions to explore good teaching practices and continue our regular meetings both within the department as well as with colleagues in other disciplines where we share ideas about encouraging better student performance.

**4c. Describe other professional development activities and institutional support and collaborations that would most effectively ensure that the program achieve its goals and plans.**

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The institutional support we desire most is a college-wide commitment to rigor and competence. We also desire the institutional support to explore more interdisciplinary opportunities. Cross-departmental collaborations are important since they demonstrate to the students that their education does not exist in a silo. What they learn in every class has a place on their single tree of knowledge.

Years ago, Jeremy Ball and Dave Danielson were part of the Writing Across the Curriculum program, or WAC. What struck the members of that group most was one response we heard consistently from the students: they were surprised to learn that faculty members from different disciplines talked with each other about the students. One method we used to present the importance of good writing no matter the subject was to have several faculty members from different disciplines attend, for example, a philosophy class. The faculty would talk about the papers written by the students for the philosophy class. We displayed samples of student writing on the board and each faculty member talked about the clarity and coherence of the writing from their perspective. Whenever we engaged in this exercise, the students responded very positively.

Institutional support for such programs is vital. It provides the means for our students to become better learners and thinkers. Such programs reinforce our aims of coaxing the students to reflect critically upon their ideas.