

# UCF Dept. of Philosophy Graduate Programs Where We Stand, and Options

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Draft: January 10, 2008

This is an overview of where we stand right now. This is a report on what has been discussed already, along with some of my own observations about the strengths of the department and possible ways forward. This document is intended to begin a conversation.

As everyone knows, we have put forward several proposals to the college and the provost for graduate programs. In the last couple of years, we have submitted white papers for M.A.s in Humanities in the Digital Age and Ethics (2 versions). As well, we have submitted a white paper for a Ph.D. in Cognitive Science. The status of these proposals: Humanities in the Digital Age is on hold for at least 3 years, Ethics did not make it past the dean's office in the most recent round, and we have been told to do more work on the Cognitive Science Ph.D., which basically means that we need to get more players lined up.

We have several issues to address:

1. Do we want some sort of a graduate program at all?
2. If we do, what kind of program can we reasonably put forward, given the strengths and interests of the faculty in the department?
3. Should we take into account program strengths elsewhere in the university, and if so, how?
4. How do we convince those who need to be convinced (dean, provost, BOT, BOG) to allow us to have a program?
5. What happens if we can't convince those who need to be convinced? Can we still do some of what we want to do outside of the graduate program structure?

## **1. Do we want some sort of graduate program at all?**

This is a good question. My sense from the discussions we have had is, yes, but not at any cost. For instance, we do not want a program that does not play to the strengths of at least a significant number in the department. We do not want a program that stretches us so thin that we cannot support it. We do not want a program that will require a lot of work but bring no benefits.

What do we want to do? That's not for me to say, but various people in the department have raised questions about one or another of the proposals that have been raised (see below for these). The questions seem to cluster around the following concerns:

- ❖ Whatever we do should draw as many people from the department together as possible. A program that can involve only a few of the faculty is less desirable than one that can involve more.
- ❖ We should play to the research strengths of the department (that is, not just the interests we may have, but the areas where we actually have a research record).

- ❖ Some argue that we need to construct a program that is more focused on a specialty, while others argue that we should try to get a more general grad program (i.e., a “Philosophy M.A.”)
- ❖ We need to have a program that has adequate financial and personnel support. That means sufficient support for success, not just for survival. We might be able to staff the courses, for instance, but if we can’t attract students through being able to offer teaching assistantships, tuition waivers, and so forth, no program will thrive.

**2. If we do want a graduate program, what kind of program can we reasonably put forward, given the strengths and interests of the faculty in the department?**

There are a couple of questions we need to address here. First, what can we reasonably propose, given who we are? Second, how do the various parts of the department relate to each other? Should we find a way to involve a maximum number of faculty, or should we focus on some subset of the department in order to have a more focused program?

What has been proposed within the department?

- ❖ Cognitive Science Ph.D. – white paper submitted; on hold for a year
- ❖ Humanities in the Digital Age M.A. – white paper submitted; on hold for at least 3 years
- ❖ Ethics/Theoretical and Applied Ethics M.A. – white paper submitted; stopped at college level.

Other ideas that have been discussed (I’m sure I’ve forgotten some – please help me fill these in):

- ❖ Expand the certificate program offerings, with the hope that one of them might be transformable into an M.A. at some point. – this has the merit of building on existing programs, but the drawback that those programs have not been very successful to this point. There are, of course, reasons for this, but it does mean that we would have to find ways of making the courses fill. One option (making our grad courses cross-listed with senior undergrad courses), which Shaun has promoted, is discussed below.
- ❖ Propose a generic or general Philosophy M.A. (or a Humanities M.A.) – this would play to the strengths of the department, but would have almost no chance of being approved.
- ❖ Comparative Ethics M.A.
- ❖ Digital Ethics & Academic Responsibility M.A.
- ❖ Peace and Justice Studies M.A.

These proposals have all had some merit to them. Several of them would have allowed us to work across discipline and program boundaries. I will try to address some possibilities in a little while, after looking at the research strengths of the members of the department.

Can we bootstrap our graduate program by cross listing courses, and enrolling undergrads as well? This has a lot of merit, but there are also potential problems:

- ❖ It is clear that we would have to water down the grad course, if we were to have undergrads. But as anyone who has taught one of these courses recently, and has allowed undergrads into the course, it is often the case that the undergrads perform at least as well as the grad students. The problem, though, might not be the ability of the students, but the level of the material we can reasonably use for lectures. Could we, for instance, require the grad students to deal with more difficult or technical primary source material, while we have the undergrads do more basic work? It would be a challenging pedagogy.
- ❖ Putting up grad courses might take away the focus on our other undergrad offerings, especially in a time when our personnel are stretched thin (especially in the humanities). But if we choose existing undergrad courses that could have a grad version as well, we might be able to continue to properly support the undergrad program while building the grad. Still, this would be a challenge – we might want the grad courses to be qualitatively different from the undergrad courses, in order to maintain the integrity of the grad program.
- ❖ Grad students might not want to have a significant number of their courses with undergrads. They might think that the program was lightweight.
- ❖ Undergrads who took the undergrad version of a course might have a problem continuing into the grad program, since they might be barred from essentially taking the same course (with a higher workload, to be sure, but the same course nonetheless). So, we might be cutting off our most obvious source of students, and the source that most new grad programs rely on when they are starting.

### **What are our strengths, based on looking at CVs?**

For my summary of each person's research agenda, see Appendix 1. As mentioned, I have included only those areas that have clear support in the research record. I have included all tenured and tenure track members, as well as regular instructors who have Ph.Ds (which is, in fact, all our regular instructors). I have not included visiting instructors, given that we cannot plan a program around their records and interests. It's worth noting, though, that some places plan and run grad programs using at least some adjuncts, particularly if there are highly qualified people around. For instance, if we could get John Dominic Crosson to teach a course on a regular basis, that would be an asset to a grad program. It wouldn't be enough to plan around, of course – a graduate program has to be mainly supported by regular tenured and tenure track research faculty.

What do all these research areas indicate? Obviously, they are diverse – that is a function of having multiple programs. We might be able to identify some strengths that we share, although in some cases we might have to equivocate in order to do it. But it's worth noting that the key might not be to look for similar areas, but complementary areas. For instance, when we were talking about the Humanities in the Digital Age proposal, it was clear that we could have cultural studies people doing one aspect of that, while philosophers did things like philosophy of technology, theories of subjectivity, and so forth, and people in religious studies did some other aspect of it.

What's in common among at least some of the faculty? This is what I can see – perhaps others see commonalities that I missed (the number after the item is my rough count of how many work in the area – it is rough because it is hard to say, in some cases, who identifies themselves with that area):

- ❖ Cognitive Science (4-5)
- ❖ Philosophy of Mind (4)
- ❖ Ethics (8)
- ❖ Social Thought (Gender, Race & Freedom & Justice) (5)
- ❖ Embodiment (5-6)
- ❖ Subjectivity/Self/Identity (5-6)
- ❖ Cultural Studies/Theory (8)
- ❖ Religious Experience/Philosophy of Religion (8)

What are some possible complementary areas, which could draw on the strengths of people across these interests? Here are a few possibilities that might cut across the various programs and interests in the department. This is hardly complete, of course, and it pays no attention to the question of what would actually be of interest to the dean, provost, BOT or BOG.

- ❖ Theories of Subjectivity & the Self – who are we?
- ❖ Humanities in the Digital Age (I still like this one) – what does it mean to be human in a world mediated and constructed by digital and virtual experience?
- ❖ Methodologies (Trent University in Canada used to call their M.A. this) - how do we construct, justify, defend, and promote our various ways of understanding the world?
- ❖ Philosophy, Interpretation & Culture (SUNY Binghamton has this program)
- ❖ Knowledge, Responsibility & Society – our departmental theme does still seem to fit a large number of people.
- ❖ Humanities in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century/Philosophy in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- ❖ Action Theory – phenomenology, ethics & cultural studies could all be part of this. Of course, in philosophy this has a more specific meaning, and it has a different meaning in sociology.
- ❖ Cognition and Narrative in Culture
- ❖ Bodies, Norms, and Narrative (Shelley's suggestion)

The issue of core competence in the department must also take into account what has been done already. Not only have we put in some white papers and other more rudimentary ideas, we have had a positive response on one of those ideas: the Cognitive Sciences Ph.D. The fact that this has received some positive response must not be taken lightly. It does seem as if there is a will at UCF for this program to exist. Currently it is interdisciplinary, across colleges, and if we don't go forward with it, most likely a combination of IST, Psychology, and Computer Science would go ahead. That would put the program outside of CAH, and I think politically that would be seen as a strike against us (some of this comes from Shaun, who is closer to the politics of this situation than I am).

### **3. Should we take into account strengths elsewhere in the university, and if so, how?**

There are two conflicting arguments here, one based on program integrity and the other based on strategy. On the one hand, we might want to have a program that is as self-contained as possible, in order to justify its existence in our department. On the other hand, we might want to link to other units on campus, in order to make the case that there is a critical mass of work elsewhere that can support this program, and from which we can draw other grad students to fill classes.

Personally, I lean toward the second, as long as we first figure out what we are able and willing to do within the department, so that we set some limits on what we are willing to talk about. If, for instance (and this would never happen, but it's an example) African-American Studies wanted us to mount an M.A. in African/a Studies, it would be hard to make that case, since only JL and I really work in that area here. That's what I mean by setting some limits – I don't think it would be good for the department to pursue something that doesn't have significant support and expertise within the department. (of course, if they were going to base that hypothetical program in a different department, I'd be more than happy to be listed as faculty for it, and contribute to it. I just don't think we could contribute departmental resources to it, past the involvement of those who were interested).

But taking other units on campus into account could mean that we could contribute to a stronger program in their area, while taking some partial ownership of that program as well. The most obvious example of this is English's T&T program, but there may be others. It is unlikely that a traditional discipline would be open to this; it is more likely that an existing interdisciplinary graduate program, if there is one, would be a more fruitful place to investigate.

#### **4. How do we convince those who need to be convinced (dean, provost, BOT, BOG) to allow us to have a program?**

There are several factors that complicate our desire to develop graduate programs:

- ❖ **The Y-axis:** The word from the provost is that the board of governors wishes to move the authority to authorize M.A. programs to themselves (it is currently with the board of trustees). See the following site for the clearest statement of the Y-axis:  
[http://www.flbog.org/bog/meetings/2005\\_06\\_09/SUS\\_StratPlan.pdf](http://www.flbog.org/bog/meetings/2005_06_09/SUS_StratPlan.pdf) They will certainly enforce the Y-axis more stringently than the board of trustees, given that their concern is not with the health of any local department or with one university, but with the system as a whole. The Y-axis, of course, restricts the development of new graduate programs to a specific group of areas that are perceived to add jobs to the state. At a recent meeting, the provost basically said that there were no units within CAH that qualified on that score.
- ❖ **The Pappas Report/Forward By Design:** Both the Pappas Report [http://www.flbog.org/BOG/meetings/2007\\_01\\_25/StructureReport.pdf](http://www.flbog.org/BOG/meetings/2007_01_25/StructureReport.pdf) and Forward By Design <http://www.flbog.org/ForwardByDesign/> emphasize undergraduate education, and tend to see an institution like UCF as mainly contributing to that. The Pappas report argues that graduate programs have grown much more quickly in Florida than undergrad programs, and so this imbalance should be redressed. Also, students in graduate programs tend to enter the national job market, and so do less good for the state of Florida than undergrads.
- ❖ **The current budget crisis:** No program will be supported, from anywhere in the university, if it requires new state money, for the foreseeable future.
- ❖ **The provost:** It is unclear how much the provost would be willing to support another graduate program in the humanities. Various people have given differing opinions on how sympathetic he would be to such a program. He presents himself as being the front line, advancing our interests in the face of a hostile board of governors.

- ❖ **Patricia Bishop/Graduate Studies:** It is unclear how much of an advocate Graduate Studies and its director would be for us. At the very least, we need them with us on this, and it's not clear whether they would be supportive.
- ❖ **The Dean/College:** I list this one, not because I think it is the main issue we face, but because the other issues will have to be dealt with first at this level. If the dean thinks that a proposal will have no chance at a later level, then he will stop it at his office. In fact, we would want him to do that, if his sense is correct, but if he is more conservative about these things than the higher levels, we might not get a chance to make a case to the provost or board.

**What kinds of arguments will work, and which will not work, as we make our case?** Of course, various people might differ with me on what will and what won't work, but I'm thinking here from the point of view of those reading our future proposals. Some of the arguments that won't work may, in fact, be solid (yes, we do deserve to have a graduate program) – this is about rhetoric, not logic.

**Arguments that (I believe) will work, if true:**

- ❖ We're the only department in the college without a graduate program (this will only work for the college, and maybe the provost, but maybe not. The BOT or BOG will be totally unswayed by this).
- ❖ A graduate program will be low or no cost (we'd need to demonstrate how this is the case, of course, and this may be against our own interests to argue this – see above for comments on program survival vs. program success).
- ❖ A graduate program will produce teaching faculty (GTAs, adjuncts) to staff more sections of GEP courses.
- ❖ A graduate program will be truly interdisciplinary (of course, we'd have to make sure to propose a program that actually was interdisciplinary, if we were to use this argument).
- ❖ Graduate programs will help attract and retain high quality faculty. (this won't convince anyone by itself, but will have some force as a partial reason)
- ❖ This graduate program will make money. (of course, we'd have to find a way for that to actually be true, if we wanted to use that argument. Other departments can use the potential of getting more grants; that's a harder sell for most of us.)

**Arguments that (I believe) will not work:**

- ❖ We deserve it – we've done everything we were supposed to. (the BOG won't care about this)
- ❖ A real university should value philosophy and the humanities. (the BOG, and upper administration, are concerned about bottom lines and "accountability". Since we are not a land grant institution, there is little reason for the BOG or administration to want to cover the full range of programs, especially at a graduate level.)
- ❖ We should be educating intelligent, civic-minded critical thinkers, not just employable drones. (this argument works for us, but will convince few others, because it essentially insults the ones who we are hoping will look kindly on us. Calling politicians to a higher moral or civic standard only works when you have massive public support behind you. We don't.)

- ❖ If we want to be a Research I university, we should be supporting a grad program in the humanities. (Research I doesn't mean research I in everything. Plus, especially for the BOG, there's a good question as to whether they even think we should be a research I university)
- ❖ National organization X thinks we should have more critical thinkers/humanities scholars/whatever. (state organizations are more or less unswayed by national arguments, it seems to me. The question from the BOG point of view is benefit to the state.)
- ❖ The rivalry/shame argument: university/state X has a first-rate philosophy/humanities program. (this argument worked for the humanities center (I heard the provost use my statistic in a meeting that we were the only university in the largest 12 without a center), but it won't work for a graduate program. The eggs here are in a different basket – the medical school, optics, IST, and so forth)

Arguments we will have to counter or address (apart from the ones implied or raised in the list of “factors that complicate our desire to have a grad program”, above):

- ❖ No money in the college, university, state.
- ❖ The department should be focusing on undergrad education.
- ❖ There are programs like what we would want to propose in other universities.

##### **5. What happens if we can't convince those who need to be convinced? Can we still do some of what we want to do outside of the graduate program structure?**

We do have several non-mutually exclusive options if we cannot find a way to convince the administration to give us a grad program:

- ❖ Work with Interdisciplinary Studies to offer a track or two that is equivalent to a Master's. This could be done through courses that are primarily in our department (I'm not sure what they would think of this), or we could organize some new programs with ours at the core. I'm thinking of something like U. of Chicago's “committee” system – Committee on Social Thought, Committee on International Relations, etc.
  - Drawback – these aren't our degrees.
- ❖ Develop our certificate programs so that we are offering the equivalent of a Master's program, and hope that we can transform our existing offerings into a Master's. (this might be equivalent to the previous one, but in fact we could do this without also working with Interdisciplinary Studies)
  - Drawback – we may never get to offer these as Master's, because the argument that we are already doing it and it wouldn't cost any more to just give us a Master's ignores the fact that some (e.g., BOG) may not want us to do this in the first place, and so may have little reason to reward us for doing what they don't want us to do.
- ❖ Cooperate with another department (e.g., English, Texts & Technology, Digital Media, etc.)
  - Drawback – again, these aren't our degrees.
- ❖ Develop the Hertfordshire connection, or other outside graduate collaborations.
  - Drawback – these will likely require that students go elsewhere to do at least part of the degree, which would undermine the benefit of having grad students around the department.

## Appendix 1: CV Summary

I've listed peoples' areas of work here, based on what they actually have written about or presented. If you think this should be changed, please let me know, but make sure that any additions are based in your published research or creative work.

Mason Cash

- Philosophy of Mind
- Cognitive Science
- Ethics in Science and Technology

Kristin Congdon

- Ways of Seeing
- Art and Digital Media
- Community Arts
- Eco-Feminism
- Feminist Art Criticism
- Folk Art, Traditional Art
- Multicultural Education
- Teaching in Non-traditional Settings
- Mental Health and Art Products and Processes
- Art Criticism
- Arts Organizations and Political, Cultural, and Sociological Power
- Aesthetics
- Folklore and New Technology

Jane Compson

- Buddhism
- Environmental Ethics
- Animal Ethics

Harry Coverston

- Stages of moral/faith development (Kohlberg, Gilligan, Rest, Fowler, Beck, Wilber)
- Latin American Humanities
- Capital punishment attitudes and religious correlates
- Law
- Religion in the 21st Century
- Holocaust studies

Sabatino DiBernardo

- Philosophy of Religion
- Contemporary Religious Thought
- Religion and (Post)modern Thought
- Religion, Spirituality, and Popular Music
- Deconstruction
- Hermeneutics, Epistemology and Narrative Thought

Doug Evans

- Religion

Steve Fiore

- Cognitive Science
- Human Factors
- Learning & Cognition
- Team Performance

Shaun Gallagher

- Cognitive Science
- Philosophy of Mind
- Phenomenology
- Hermeneutics
- Theories of the Self/Subjectivity/Personal Identity

Ronnie Hawkins

- Environmental Ethics
- Ecofeminism
- Philosophy of Biology
- Philosophy of Medicine
- Reproductive Ethics

Don Jones

- Analytic Philosophy

Husain Kassim

- Islamic Philosophy & Culture
- Medieval Philosophy
- Modernity/Enlightenment Thought

Bruce Janz

- 18<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> century European Philosophy
- Contemporary African Philosophy
- Research on Place and Space/Philosophy-in-Place
- Contemporary Cultural Studies & Theory
- History & Philosophy of Mysticism
- Disciplinarity & Interdisciplinarity

Jennifer Mundale

- Philosophy of psychology
- Philosophy of neuroscience
- Philosophy of mind

Shelley Park

- Feminist Theory
- Parenting/Mothering
- Memory & Testimony
- Queer Theory

- Cultural Studies

Claudia Schippert

- Religion
- Queer Theory
- Feminist Theory
- Feminist Ethics
- Contemporary Culture Studies

Nancy Stanlick

- American Philosophy
- Ethics
- Early Modern Philosophy (Hobbes)

Michael Strawser

- 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> Century European Philosophy
- Philosophy of Religion
- Ethics

Jennifer Lisa Vest

- African/a Philosophy
- Native American Philosophy
- Feminism
- Ethics