

Attachment C to Board Rule 502 New Program Proposal Supplement

In addition to the items ACHE has requested for program proposals, please include the following additional items when developing and submitting academic program proposals to the System Office and the Board of Trustees for approval.

# Institution:

UA UAB UAH

# Program Identification

Program name: Degree Nomenclature:

Date of NPP submission:

1. **Six-digit CIP Code:**

Philosophy

M.A.

NISP 2/2/2024

38.0101

# Executive Summary (not to exceed two pages)

Over the last decade, the Department of Philosophy has been developing its three specialized concentrations within the existing Philosophy (B.A.) program in Philosophy and Medicine, Jurisprudence, Mind and Brain, through faculty hires and curriculum development. The purpose of these concentrations is to provide our students with an education that will help them succeed in their post-graduate studies, particularly in Law and Medical school, and give them the resources to address philosophical questions later in their professional lives. The proposed Philosophy (M.A.) will build on these specializations with three concentrations: Philosophy, Medicine and Ethics; Law, Ethics and Society; and Mind and Brain.

The value of the Philosophy (M.A.) with three concentrations will be found first in the preparation it provides students who will be advancing to Medical or Law school. Most obviously it will better situate them for application to these schools, by distinguishing them from students who have just a typical undergraduate education. It will also prepare them for the many philosophical issues they will encounter in Medical or Law school, and later in the medical and legal professions. Third, this program will be the first graduate program of any kind in Philosophy in the state of Alabama, and the proposed program can provide the opportunity for the pursuit of graduate work in Philosophy for those students in the state who would like to continue their studies after their undergraduate education. Fourth, it would contribute to the University’s missions of providing an excellent education to students and advancing research.

Finally, these programs will provide value at a broader societal level, by preparing citizens to better address important philosophical questions and problems. Relative to Medicine, for instance, there are philosophical questions about the nature and quality of evidence for the diagnosis and treatment of disease. Evidence-based medicine advocates a hierarchy that prioritizes randomized control trials over observational trials, expert judgment, and causal reasoning. Physicians and medical professionals must understand the strengths and weaknesses of each. There are other philosophical questions about public health policy, as we have seen in the recent debates about the COVID shutdowns and vaccine mandates. Ethical questions have long been debated in medicine, about death and dying, reproduction, mental health, and more. In the law, we have seen recent philosophical debates about the nature and role of policing, as well as longstanding debates about the nature and functions of law, constitutionalism, and morality and the law. And in the professions related to psychology and neuroscience, there have been debates about the nature of mind and consciousness, and their relation to the brain and its processes. Currently, there are philosophical concerns about the nature, and proper roles of Artificial Intelligence (AI). The graduates of the proposed Philosophy (M.A.) program will be better prepared to address these philosophical questions and more, by learning about the many philosophical answers to these questions, and by learning methods of critical analysis to better explore possible stances.

This will be a 30-hour graduate program, with a thesis option, where students will begin in the first year with an introductory course to the program, the Proseminar, and turn to a narrow focus on foundational courses, the second year will be an exploration into broader but still related topics, and a capstone course where students will lead discussions, present their research, and engage in critical discussions with fellow graduate students.

# Steps taken to determine if other UA System institutions might be interested in collaborating in the program.

There is no current plan to collaborate with other UA System institutions. We are open to conversations on future prospects that would benefit both institutions.

# Summary of other campus comments, internal to the UA System or external (if any), regarding your plans for developing this program. Please include substantive feedback from the pre-proposal process.

None of the chairs of the philosophy departments contacted in the state expressed reservations about our proposed graduate program (M.A.) in Philosophy. This is unsurprising since there are no other graduate programs in Philosophy in the state of Alabama. The chair of the Philosophy Department at UAB, David Chan, indicated that they were considering a graduate program in Medical Ethics, but had not formally proposed one. He, along with Dr. Jones at UAH and Dr. Watkins at Auburn University, have expressed tentative support for collaboration with the UA Philosophy Department in providing graduate education opportunities in Philosophy.

# Describe the process that will be used by your institution for routine internal and/or external program review.

All departments at The University of Alabama undergo academic program review (APR) approximately every eight years. The APR process includes a departmental self-study, an on-site visit by a review team with internal and external members, and a department-created strategic action plan informed by the review team’s recommendations.

# Describe the process that will be used in assessing program outcomes (to include student learning outcomes).

All academic programs are required to submit annual assessment reports that includes student learning outcomes, measures to collect data, analysis of data, and plans for the use of data for continuous improvement.

Students completing the Philosophy (M.A.) program will be able to:

* 1. Evaluate competing conceptions about fundamental things and processes, such as health and disease, the nature of law and morality, and the mind and brain.
  2. Evaluate the competing theoretical frameworks that govern our practices and inquiries, such as what we see in medicine, the law, and brain sciences.
  3. Analyze and compare the different kinds of evidence employed to support empirical and theoretical claims, such as what we see in medical diagnoses and claims about effectiveness, legal claims and judgments, scientific claims, and hypotheses about mental and brain processes.
  4. Analyze the ethical problems confronting us in our professional practices, such as what we see in the

# Other pertinent information, if any.

N/A