Department of Philosophy

THE POWER

Michigan has ranked among the top five philosophy doctoral programs nationally and top six departments internationally in assessments spanning five decades, with strengths in all the main areas of philosophy — ethics, epistemology, metaphysics, philosophy of language and mind, philosophy of science, and aesthetics — and in the history of Western philosophy, from antiquity to the present. We encourage interdisciplinary work, to take advantage of U-M’s great strength across fields, and offer courses of special interest to students in Art and Design, Classical Studies, Economics, History, Law, Linguistics, Mathematics, Music, Physics, Political Science, Psychology, Psychiatry, and Women’s Studies.

THE OPPORTUNITIES

The Department of Philosophy emphasizes broad and intensive training in the analytic tradition across the main areas of the discipline.

Our largest-ever fundraising campaign is ambitious, visionary, purposeful — worthy of the name “Victors.” The $400 million goal is built upon the cornerstone of the liberal arts: the idea that a powerful, pragmatic education can transform hearts and minds, can solve problems in a changing world, can yield ideas and innovation across every discipline. That’s why we are focused on raising money so that the best and brightest minds can have access to the College through robust scholarship support, no matter their financial circumstances. So too are we committed to helping every student acquire not just knowledge in the classroom, but experiences outside the academy including innovative entrepreneurial efforts and internships. We strive to support our faculty on the frontlines of research, and steward our planet, our community, our campus. To do all this, and so much more, the College needs you — because the world needs Victors.
Undergraduate students, including major and minor concentrators, participate in a comprehensive and rigorous program of study, which provides them with the critical and analytical facility that is central to liberal arts training. Undergraduates are well prepared for a wide range of careers in both the professions and public service, while graduate students achieve impressive success on the job market, with many receiving offers from highly ranked philosophy departments.

THE IMPACT

Gifts are a personal expression of support, often reflecting the specific interests and hopes of the donor. The following are the most vital endeavors for which we need support.

ENDOWED PROFESSORSHIP

$2.5M endowed

Named professorships are the best means of attracting and retaining top faculty in specific areas of philosophy. Outstanding faculty are central to the continuing quality and ongoing leadership of the department. A Named Endowed Professorship will serve as a powerful recruitment tool for distinguished scholars. We currently seek endowed professorships in areas that reinforce exciting interdisciplinary undergraduate initiatives, such as Cognitive Science, and also Philosophy, Politics, and Economics.

VISITING SCHOLARS FUNDS

$1M endowed/$50,000 annually

Gifts to this fund would allow faculty members teaching an advanced undergraduate or graduate course to bring to campus a number of scholars whose work is central to the course topic. Ann Arbor is isolated geographically from concentrations of peer philosophy departments, such as Berkeley, Stanford, Harvard, MIT, NYU, Rutgers, Princeton, and Columbia. Visiting scholars would enhance seminars and provide our students with a rich and varied set of philosophical interlocutors and models.

GRADUATE STUDENT FELLOWSHIPS

$1M endowed/$50,000 annually

Successes in faculty recruiting and retention have greatly enhanced the Department’s international distinction and visibility in such central areas as epistemology, philosophy of language, and metaphysics. Although we are well positioned to retain our current standing in the top five graduate programs nationally, we urgently need our graduate student support to be competitive with packages offered by our peer institutions—Cornell, Harvard, MIT, NYU, Princeton, Rutgers, and Yale—in order to recruit the strongest graduate students in our areas of faculty strength. Also, we seek to increase the number of graduate students coming to Michigan to stimulate our vibrant intellectual environment by regularly injecting the most promising philosophical talents into our campus community.

PHILOSOPHY AREA FUNDS SUPPORT

$50,000 to $100,000 annually

Funding is needed to support teaching and research in areas of traditional and growing departmental strengths. These areas include (but are not limited to) Moral and Political Philosophy, Law and Philosophy, Philosophy of Science, History of Philosophy, and Mind, Language, Psychology, and Cognitive Science. Each Area Fund could be used to support speakers and conferences, undergraduate research projects, summer fellowships, and conference and summer institute travel grants for graduate students, faculty retention and recruitment, and curricular initiatives in the targeted area.

PHILOSOPHY OUTREACH EFFORTS

$10,000 to $50,000 annually

As a profession, philosophy is not demographically diverse. We are mounting initiatives to bring philosophy to those who have not traditionally participated in it, and to bring non-traditional participants in philosophy into our classrooms. One initiative, designed and driven by our graduate students, is to teach a philosophy course at a Dearborn public school that wouldn’t otherwise have philosophy in its curriculum. Another is to run an “Emerging Scholars” conference for promising undergraduates and their advisors at traditionally under-represented institutions to make participants aware of top graduate philosophy programs. A fund dedicated to outreach efforts would be invaluable in the pursuit of these initiatives.

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