What does the Philosophy Major Cost the University?

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In the document “Budget Feedback Received via Email,” on February 5, 2015 someone recommended that we eliminate the philosophy major in order to “potentially eliminate 1.0 FTE.” In order to refute that proposal, and also to give the APC, UABC and Faculty Senate a clearer sense of the actual cost of having a philosophy major, let me describe the current course loads of our three faculty members, one full-time teaching academic staff member and one part-time teaching academic staff member.

- Every semester, the four of us who are full-time offer 10 sections of Introduction to Philosophy. Each section is capped at 30 students. These sections almost always fill.
- Every semester, we offer 3 sections of Science, Technology, and Ethics. Each section is typically capped at 25 students. These sections almost always fill.
- Every semester, we offer 3-4 other 2000-level courses. These include two courses on the Bible (Introduction to the Hebrew Scriptures and Introduction to the New Testament), both taught by our part-time teaching academic staff member at a salary of approximately $3600. We teach Business Ethics (every spring), a general ethics course (every fall), a course on Eastern philosophy (fall even years), and a logic course (spring even years). Each of these courses is capped at 25 students. Some of the courses fill to capacity; others have between 15-24 students.
- Every semester, we offer one 3000-level course. Enrollment varies. Philosophy of Law and Philosophy of Religion have approximately 20 students. Our other philosophy courses have fewer students. If we are allowed to continue the philosophy major and/or minor, we will replace our less popular 3000-level courses with new 3000-level courses that might be more popular.
- On occasion, we offer a 4000-level Senior Seminar for our philosophy majors and minors. Enrollment is under 10 students. More often, we offer independent studies to our philosophy majors (at no cost to the university). We have 3-4 students taking an independent study per year.
- Except for our logic course and our 4000-level seminars, every philosophy course we teach satisfies the general education humanities requirement. The logic course is required of our majors and minors and is needed by some students with disabilities to satisfy their math requirement.
- Under one scenario, if the university eliminated both the philosophy major and minor, we likely would replace the 3000-level course with another section of Introduction to Philosophy or add sections of Ethics or Business Ethics. By doing so, we would gain between 5-15 additional students (15-45 SCHs) per semester. We would still need 4.25 FTEs to teach these philosophy courses. The only way our university would gain the savings of 1.0 FTE is if we choose not only to eliminate the philosophy major and minor but also reduce the number of general education courses that we offer in the Humanities.
- Under a second scenario, if the university eliminated the philosophy major but retained the philosophy minor, there would be no change in the number and types of courses that we offer. We would still need to offer one 3000-level philosophy course per semester.

In light of a cost-benefit analysis of these different scenarios, the financial gain reaped from the elimination of the philosophy major is very small to non-existent.