

MAP

MINORITIES AND PHILOSOPHY

2016 END-OF-YEAR REPORT

As you may have [seen](#), new Organizers will direct MAP starting this upcoming year. Having been with MAP for the last three years, we (the old Organizers) offer more big-picture observations in this End-of-Year Report than in reports past.

Trends & Directions

MAP began with a broad mission -- in a slogan, to “diversify philosophy”. We’ve now had three years to see how individual chapters translated this general goal into particular projects. On the whole, projects clustered around 5 main categories. Below are descriptions and examples of actual Chapter activities and projects that fall under each.

- (i) **Addressing the Pipeline:** reach out to undergraduates.
E.g.: undergraduate/graduate mentoring programs, chapter collaboration with undergraduate philosophy clubs, or meetings with prospective graduate students.
- (ii) **Community Building:** create a network of or for members of underrepresented groups, either within a department, region, or subfield.
E.g.: philosophically themed MAP social events such as film watching, or small paper workshopping groups for women students.
- (iii) **Promoting Underrepresented Philosophers:** promote and support the professional activities of members of underrepresented groups.
E.g.: creating a speaker series featuring graduate students from underrepresented groups, campaigning for a department to diversify the speakers in a regular colloquium series, or starting a reading group on recent work in epistemology featuring articles by women.
- (iv) **Promoting Underrepresented Philosophies:** broaden the range of philosophical sources or traditions that their members or department engage with.
E.g.: holding reading groups on classical Chinese political philosophy, inviting guest lecturers to give talks on feminist philosophy or philosophy of race, and expanding the range of topic matters dealt with in introductory syllabi.
- (v) **Expanding the Range of Professional Activities:** diversify the activities that professional philosophers engage in beyond university teaching and writing for a specialist audience.
E.g.: teaching in local prisons, tutoring at community centers, or writing op-eds for popular press.

So what does it mean to diversify philosophy in practice? These categories are neither exclusive nor exhaustive, but they reflect the ways people have interpreted the question to different ends. Our organization works best when Chapters shape their individual priorities around local conditions and concerns, while the MAP international organization helps coordinate and facilitate all such efforts.

Problems & Suggestions

We saw a few main problems common to chapters. Below are problems and solutions that Chapter Representatives suggested or successfully implemented.

(1) **Low attendance/Involvement:** *Chapters see low attendance or involvement in some form.* E.g.: not enough undergraduates or faculty attend; or, the graduate students who attend are already so ‘on board’ with MAP goals that events feel insular.

Suggested solution: Chapters can benefit from more clearly defining which of the aims above (i-v) they want to focus on, or which a particular event is intended to serve. Different project types target different audiences. A ‘support/promote work of underrepresented philosophers’-type event need not aim for a large showing from undergraduates. An event aimed at pipeline problems may succeed without any faculty attending.

Chapters are encouraged to take on a variety of events so different members of a department can get involved in different ways. Some department members who wouldn’t attend a talk on non-Western philosophy, for example, may be more inclined to teach their areas of specialty in a local prison-teaching program.

(2) **Transferring Leadership:** *Grad student leadership roles invariably face short lifespans and high turnover rates. Transferal to new leaders is often rocky, or simply doesn’t happen.*

Suggested solution: (a) Keep materials that can be easily transferred to the next generation, like a Google Drive folder of email templates, contacted speakers, organizational notes, etc. (b) Look into whether chapters near your school would be interested in starting a regional network. Regional coordination can sustain slow years of a single chapter therein. (c) Given the small size of most programs, there are bound to be years where none of the incoming students want to help organize. And that’s okay—slow years are fine. Try to identify one or two faculty members who may try to pass the baton to new students, especially if you graduate with no clear successors.

(3) **Organizer Overload:** *Running a MAP Chapter is a lot of work!*

Suggested solution: (a) As we wrote last year, do be sure to check out the catalog of events on the MAP website. No need to reinvent the wheel each time brainstorming events or projects to take on. Make sure your core organizing group has at least 2-4 people. (b) Collaborate. Many chapters have found success collaborating with other departments (e.g., African-American, East Asian, or Latin American Studies), student groups (e.g., undergraduate/graduate affinity groups), and undergraduate philosophy clubs. These groups often have far greater networks than the philosophy department alone, so beyond helping generate novel content, can help to bring in a wider audience.

Positive Recommendations

We also have advice based on the more positive experiences chapters reported to us. First, we were delighted to hear of our chapters making ever greater use of MAP’s network. Chapters in the same region pooled resources to fund or arrange events, shared expertise with each other when encountering common problems, and formed bonds of solidarity by attending others’ MAP events. We encourage chapters to keep it up! Forge connections with local [MAP chapters](#) besides your own, engage with our [Facebook](#), and use [the mailing list](#) to contact cartographers around the world.

Second, some chapters report that getting involved in prospective week has helped them both advance MAP goals and integrate themselves into departmental communal life. By organizing events that discuss what the department is doing to address diversity issues and answer questions prospective students have, these events can help orient new department members. What is more, chapters found that such events are welcomed by their departments. This is because their departments are keen for current and prospective students to interact in a friendly manner, and have found that the presence of the MAP chapter signals the department's commitment to taking climate issues seriously.

This last is an instance of a broader positive trend which we would like to end by highlighting. Over the last few years, it has become increasingly clear that philosophy departments around the world are committed to diversifying. Participation in MAP has thus become an efficient and productive way for departments to be part of the broader movement. Multiple chapters have reported that people who were once indifferent were brought around to the importance of our characteristic concerns as they were made aware of the global scale of efforts to address them. We are proud to be part of this change, and look forward with optimism for the future of our discipline.

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