DATE: September 30, 2011

DIVISION: Language and Humanities

MAJOR: Religion / Philosophy

I. Program

1) Mission of the program
Our mission is to equip students to critically, creatively and compassionately examine claims for the strengths and weaknesses of theological and secular worldviews by making connections between religion and other areas of knowledge including history, politics, philosophy, economics, literature and the arts.

2) Ways in which the program supports Valley’s mission
The Religion/Philosophy program highlights the cultural diversity of our students, engaging them in thoughtful and challenging discussions, study, projects and experiences that enhance their understanding of the unique qualities of each person and the worldviews that identify them.

3) Goals of the program (based on the five areas taught)
- Fundamentals of World Religions: Students will demonstrate an ability to factually characterize and identify religions and world views.
- Knowledge of Sacred Texts: Students will become aware of historical, political, literary and social contexts of the Bible and other sacred texts.
- Critical Thinking: Students will demonstrate the ability to defend sound decisions based on discussion and rational evaluation.
- Theology: Students will demonstrate familiarity with theological and philosophical concepts and be comfortable debating their ideas, opinions and “sacred cows”.
- Western Philosophy: Students will demonstrate recognition and historical integration of various western philosophical paradigms/traditions.

4) Ways in which the program contributes to General Education
This campus is a laboratory of world views, languages, opinions, and biases. Religion/Philosophy fosters critical thinking, presents old ideas/ideals made new and challenges the students to examine their own world views in light of new information with the intent of flattening ignorance. RE100, RE101, RE308, PL100, PL110, PL300, and PL325 (See Curriculum, below) all are foundational to the General Education mission of a liberal arts college.
5) Curriculum

RELIgiON/PHILOSOPHY MAJOR

RE 100. Introduction to World Religions - 3 hours. An introductory examination of religious studies. An effort will be made to help the student discover the religious significance of human life through a discussion of the nature of religious experience and expression in themselves, as well as through the diversity of the world's established religious traditions. Fall Spring.

RE 101. Introduction to the Bible - 3 hours. A study of the Bible in relation to its historical, political, literary and social contexts, as well as its writers and why books were chosen for the canon. Fall.

RE 111. Introduction to the Old Testament - 3 hours. The literature, history and faith of Israel from its beginnings to the Exile. The first half of the semester will deal with the theo-political development of Israel as a people and nation; the second half of the semester will analyze and explore the origins and nature of the prophetic movement in relation to the theo-political backdrop. Fall odd years.

RE 161. Introduction to the New Testament - 3 hours. The history, experience and faith of the early church as expressed through (a) the synoptic gospel tradition, (b) the Pauline letters tradition and (c) the Johannine gospel/letters tradition. Spring odd years.

RE 165. Topics in Religion - 3 hours. Course on various topics in the field. Paperbacks constitute the assigned reading and are the basis of class discussion. Fall even years.

RE 203. Jesus in Faith and History - 3 hours. An examination of the content and nature of the teachings of Jesus as presented to us: (a) textually (biblically, extra-biblically), (b) ecclesially (the tradition of the church), (c) culturally (secular/pluralist appropriation). Spring even years.

RE 210. Introduction to Christian Theology - 3 hours. An introductory examination of the content, method and application of the various facets of the theological enterprise. A variety of theological approaches will be presented, ranging from the classical to the contemporary. Fall odd years.

RE 240. Magic, Witchcraft, and Religion – 3 hours. This course discusses the cultural origins, functions, and meaning of magic, witchcraft, and religion through global case studies. Prerequisite: AY 102, SC 100, or Permission of Instructor.

RE 308. Religion in American Life - 3 hours. An examination of the American religious experience, from ancient times to the Reformation. Fall odd years.

RE 311. Archaeology of the Bible Lands / Archaeology of the Ancient Near East – 3 hours. The course will focus on the application of archaeology in the lands and time periods recorded in the Bible. Basic overview of the material cultures that are the setting for the Biblical narratives. Spring odd years.

RE 323. History of Christianity I - 3 hours. A discussion of the growth of the Christian church and doctrine from ancient times to the Reformation. Fall odd years.

RE 349/449. Special Topics in Religion and Philosophy – 3 hours. An advanced course designed to address and analyze specific traditions, issues or disciplines within the broader field of religious and/or philosophical studies. Prerequisites: RE 100, RE 111, RE 161. Fall even years.

RE 376/476. Independent Study - 1-3 hours. Reading or research in religion or philosophy at a greater depth than in a normal classroom setting. The specific topic, rationale, objective, bibliography, requirements and schedule will be determined by the student and the instructor and then formalized in a written covenant. Prerequisite: Permission of instructor, division dean and Chief Academic Officer.

PL 100. Introduction to Philosophy - 3 hours. An examination of the various approaches given to the analysis of the meaning and experience of self and world. Through the discussion of assigned readings ranging from classical to contemporary thinkers, an effort will be made to critique their approaches and apply them to one's own problem-solving activities. Fall.

PL 110. Introduction to Critical Thinking – 3 hours. The student will learn how to think critically with a variety of deliberative processes aimed at making wise decisions about what to believe and do, and to process one’s choices on evaluation of arguments. This will include logic, formal and informal, with variety of skills and topics to assist students to make sound decisions about claims, actions or practices. This course will lead students in basic writing and critical-thinking skills that will include opportunities to present reports in a public setting that supports their own thoughts on a topic. Students will discover how to objectively approach a topic with rational evaluation, learning to distinguish between argument, conclusion and premise. Students will learn inductive and deductive reasoning to support or refute arguments. Fall.

PL 150. Biomedical Ethics – 3 hours. A consideration of the ethical implications of modern medical research and practice across many healthcare disciplines. Topics include professional versus universal ethics, and rights of patients, genetic engineering, truth and information in medicine, the concept of mental illness, experimentation on human subjects and public health policy.

PL 300. The Art of Good Reasoning (Logic) - 3 hours. Study of the nature of human thought: Aristotelian, inductive and symbolic systems of logic with practical application through the study of linguistic usage and common fallacies. Spring even years.

PL 325. Ethics - 3 hours. An examination of the various approaches given to the cultural formation of value structures. Classical and contemporary methods are evaluated and discussed in relation to contemporary events and current ethical issues. Spring.

PL 331. History of Philosophy I - 3 hours. The development of Western philosophy from pre-Socratic Greek philosophy to the medieval period. Fall even.

PL 332. History of Philosophy II - 3 hours. The development of Western philosophy from the medieval period to the modern/postmodern period. Spring even.

PL 376/476. Independent Study - 1-3 hours. Reading or research in religion or philosophy at a greater depth than that in a normal classroom setting. The specific topic, rationale, objectives, bibliography, requirements and schedule will be determined by the student and the instructor and then formalized in a written covenant. Prerequisite: Permission of instructor, division dean, and Chief Academic Officer. Arranged.
6) Degree requirements

Major requirements: 30 elective hours of Religion/Philosophy courses and RE 485. Minor requirements: 18 hours in Religion, including at least 9 upper division hours, taken in consultation with a Religion advisor. Major assessment: Senior Religion/Philosophy majors will write a major interpretative paper that discusses some topic in either philosophy or religion.

7) Any unique aspects of the program not otherwise addressed N/A

8) Brief description of the status of the discipline, including emerging issues and trends.

Traditionally, RE/PH majors have been seminary bound and have sought employment in youth ministry, music ministry, evangelism.

The proposed designation of an emphasis for graduation will expand the options for our majors to include graduate work in law, philosophy, humanities and related fields.

The critical thinking skills inherent in RE/PH enhance the ability to learn, the capacity to interpret data, and to do so in ways that are transferable to a variety of settings.

The very nature of these disciplines (particularly when coupled in a double major or minor with another disciplines) makes them well-suited for a spectrum of fields of employment including, not only the traditional areas noted above, but also management, business, journalism and publishing. For instance, religious and philosophical understandings of economics have a direct bearing on business practice. For those interested in medicine and health sciences, religious studies courses aid in evaluating the moral complexity of scientific advances and appreciation of the spiritual nature of health.

The excellence of philosophy majors is recognized on standardized tests: They received higher scores in the LSAT than students in other humanities (the third highest score, only behind math and economics). On the GMAT philosophy majors outscored business majors by a margin of 15% (second only to math majors). And on the GRE, philosophy majors rank first on the verbal section.

While philosophy majors tend to make slightly less than business majors – at mid career, they make an average of $10,000 more.

II. Students/Faculty Information

1) Profile of current full time faculty

(See Vita attached)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th># credit hrs.</th>
<th># of advisees</th>
<th>Yrs of teaching &amp;/or prof. experience</th>
<th>Highest degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pam Sebastian</td>
<td>L/H</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>M.Div.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2) Profile of current adjunct faculty

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>#credit hrs.</th>
<th># of advisees</th>
<th>Yrs of teaching &amp;/or prof. experience</th>
<th>Highest degree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David Van Horn</td>
<td>L/H</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>M.Div.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Swisher</td>
<td>L/H</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>M.Div.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3) Course offerings this past year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fall</th>
<th>Spring</th>
<th>Intersessions, fall/spring</th>
<th>Summer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100-200</td>
<td>300-400</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>level</td>
<td>level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face-to-face</td>
<td>Studio sections</td>
<td>Internship practicums</td>
<td>Lab sections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online sections</td>
<td>Classes total</td>
<td>Gen Ed. classes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4) Faculty professional development activities

Pam Sebastian:
Solo pastor, first Presbyterian Churches, Marshall and Slater, MO
President, Saline County Habitat for Humanity affiliate
Synod of Mid-America – Rural Ministry conference (2009, 2010)
Hastings College, mid-summer pastor education event, (2008)
Center for Rural Ministry conferences – annually
Missouri Union Presbytery, trainer for lay pastors

I have made the decision to apply for the D.Min. program through Dubuque Seminary(Iowa) with the intention of beginning studies in 2012. This will require two weeks in January and mid-May for on-campus work + personal study and dissertation…for three years.

Christopher Libby:
David Van Horn:
C.H.A.R.T. (Community Health Assessment Resource Team Facilitator, 1997-99, through the State of Missouri Health Department and Saline County Health Office – developed a team reach study to evaluate county’s health needs and published a 100 page report on the findings.
Clergy articles in local newspaper (3-5 per year)
Weekly sermon preparation and presentation (100 per year covering 24 year period, 1981-2005).
Preaching at local area churches as supply: (15 in 2007, 18 in 208, 13 in 2009, 17 in 2010, and so far in 12 in 2012.)

John Swisher: Not available.

5) **Student Enrollment this past year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Fall</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Majors</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minors</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6) **Number of graduates over last five years** 1- 2011, 2- 2010, 1 – 2009, 1 – 2008, 1-2007

7) **Any available relevant information such as job placement of graduates, student performance on licensure/certification exams, alumni and employer surveys, etc.**

One graduate is seeking an additional degree in criminal justice, two have informed us of plans to enter seminary, and one is seeking a degree in counseling.

III. **Program Assessment and Planning**

1) **Student learning outcomes of the program**

- **Fundamentals of World Religions**: Students will demonstrate an ability to factually characterize and identify religions and world views.
- **Knowledge of Sacred Texts**: Students will become aware of historical, political, literary and social contexts of the Bible and other sacred texts.
- **Critical Thinking**: Students will demonstrate the ability to defend sound decisions based on discussion and rational evaluation.
- **Theology**: Students will demonstrate familiarity with theological and philosophical concepts and be comfortable debating their ideas, opinions and “sacred cows”.
- **Western Philosophy**: Students will demonstrate recognition and historical integration of various western philosophical paradigms/traditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>#1 Fund</th>
<th>#2 Sacred</th>
<th>#3 Cr Th</th>
<th>#4 Theol</th>
<th>#5 Phil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RE 100</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RE 101</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RE 111</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RE 161</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RE 203</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2) **Means of assessing student learning outcomes:**
Research Paper/Project assessed by committee formed through RE 485: Senior Seminar.

3) **Evaluate effectiveness of assessment methods used:**
Exit interview with recent graduate indicated a need for more regular consultation/direction.

4) **Summarize improvements made based on the results of the assessment**
RE 485 students will meet at specified times with advisor(s), maintain a calendar of progress on their project, and submit drafts of their work.

5) **If applicable, brief analysis of grade patterns of courses with high failure rates and/or withdrawals and action plan for student improvement in these courses**
N/A

IV. **Facilities and Resources**
Address adequacy of resources and support services (for example, library, laboratories, equipment, space, personnel) for meeting program goals.
We are pleased with the library support (current AV resources and texts are available upon request). The upgraded Stewart Chapel gives us excellent classroom space for upper division groups. The addition of a new full-time faculty member whose specialty is philosophy/ethics allows the department to more confidently cover the course load.

V. **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)**

1) Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that support or impede achievement of program goals
2) Comments from external reviewer(s)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERNAL Origin</th>
<th>POSITIVE/ HELPFUL to achieving the goal</th>
<th>NEGATIVE/ HARMFUL to achieving the goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>facts/ factors of the major</td>
<td>Strengths Smaller classes= collegial atmosphere, open discussion, students as instructor/advocates; emphasis on more career options</td>
<td>Weaknesses Very few majors, but increased interest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EXTERNAL Origin</th>
<th>OPPORTUNITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>facts/ factors of the environment in which the major operates</td>
<td>Opportunities Dedicated classroom, faculty clustered in one building= better communication, cross-discipline teaching, administrative support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**VI. Conclusion and Vision**

1) **Status of program: growing, static, or declining**
We are pleased with the growth RE/PH exhibits. The number of declared majors is encouraging and the significant interest in RE/PH as a minor (added in 2010) is increasing.

2) **Major strengths/accomplishments of the program over the last five years.**
RE/PH is more cohesive. Faculty are encouraged to play to their strengths. The expertise of Dr. Acay (taught PL300 in 2010) and Dr. Warnock (RE240, RE311) have enhanced the scholastic rigor of our courses. The addition of Dr. Libby fills a vacuum in the philosophy side of our discipline, and experienced adjuncts more than exceed expectations. We’ve also begun a series of seminary “open houses” so our students can see first-hand, the opportunities of post-graduate education.

In the past several months several of our former “action plan” goals have been fulfilled:
- The addition of a new faculty member
- The retro-fitting of the Stewart Chapel for multiple use
- The addition of Latin to the core list. Rationale: to add academic depth to the major. Engaging biblical texts is key to understanding the original intent as well as learning more about the all-to-human editing and redacting that’s part of the canon.)
- The cross-listing of several courses.

RE/PH faculty are committed to becoming even more accessible to students, with the intent of “infecting” them with our passion for our disciplines, and challenging them to be and think more!
3) **Vision statement of what the program members would like the program to be in five years (improvement goals)**

- A robust program includes an institutional change requiring two (rather than one) RE/PH class in the core, with an emphasis on “critical thinking” being taught in a cross-disciplinary manner. Faculty is in place to support this advancement.
- Encourage early declaration of a major with emphasis on RE or PH at the time of graduation. Rationale: enough work has been done in a discipline to adequately prepare the student for master’s level studies. With assessment via capstone: paper or portfolio.
- Add “Youth Ministry” and “Music Ministry” minors. These are areas with ready career opportunities. Faculty is in place. These careers are regularly undertaken by bachelors’ graduates who want to work while they consider the option of seminary.
- Continue to cross-list courses.
- Increase the use of students interested in RE/PH in the learning center. One-on-one student contact does de-mystify a lot of the RE/PH content.

4) **Strategies and resources required for achieving the program vision**

- A Youth Ministry minor would incorporate sections from Speech Communications, Volunteer Administration, Psychology and RE/PH. In a similar way, a Music Ministry minor would take advantage of MVC’s music department, plus courses added by an interdisciplinary committee.
- Hospital chaplaincy and hospice care training might be coordinated with the Nursing program.
- Additional faculty would certainly be welcome, especially as we look forward to increasing the graduation requirement from 3 to 6 hours of RE/PH.
- Increased budget for professional development would be very helpful.