

# Outside the Pipeline

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A Student-Faculty Collaborative Examination of  
How to Increase Engagement of Women in an  
Undergraduate Philosophy Program

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# Outline

Introduction - Stephen Bloch-Schulman

The 5 methodologies:

1. Reviewing the literature - Stephen Bloch-Schulman
2. Data mining- Nim Batchelor
3. Survey analysis- Ann J. Cahill
4. Conducting focus groups- Claire Lockard & Helen Meskhidze
5. Student-faculty partnership- Sean Wilson

Questions (and maybe some answers)

# Data (Fall 2011-Spring 2014)

	How Should We Live?	Ethical Practice	What Can We Know?	Critical Thinking
Female-identified students (%)	55.67%	53.11%	44.38%	41.71%
Male-identified students (%)	44.33%	46.89%	55.62%	58.29%
Female-identified students' recidivism rate (%)	14.34%	10.73%	10.62%	10.6%
Male-identified students' recidivism rate (%)	17.06%	12.15%	11.75%	15.17%
Female-identified students' GPA in PHL class/overall GPA	3.7/3.42	3.54/3.4	3.39/3.34	3.33/3.34
Male-identified students' GPA in PHL class/overall GPA	3.38/3.12	3.18/3.07	3.10/3.10	2.99/3.05

# Survey (summary)

In October 2014, we launched an on-line survey to a random sampling of 1444 Elon students. We received **166 total responses** (11.5% response rate):

- 55 respondents had taken a PHL course
  - 106 had not taken a PHL course
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- 115 respondents identified as female
  - 46 as male,
  - 1 as genderqueer
  - 1 preferred not to answer
  - 3 did not respond
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- 52 respondents identified as 1<sup>st</sup> year students
  - 38 as second years
  - 39 as third years
  - 25 as fourth years

# Survey Questions

Of folks who took PHL classes, with the scale (1-5): Strongly Disagree/Disagree/  
Neither Agree nor Disagree/Agree/Strongly Agree

Some examples:

- My PHL course(s) is/was/were intellectually challenging.
- My PHL course(s) has/have/had an open and welcoming intellectual environment.
- Doing well in philosophy depends on natural talent more than hard work.
- Doing well in philosophy depends on hard work more than natural talent.
- I find philosophy interesting.
- Topics discussed in philosophy are meaningful to me.
- I am satisfied with the grade(s) I have earned in my philosophy course(s).

Of folks who didn't take PHL classes, on the same scale as above:

Some examples:

- I didn't know enough about philosophy to know whether it would be interesting.
- I preferred other courses to fulfill Core/GST requirements.
- I didn't find the course offerings in philosophy interesting.
- The course offerings in philosophy didn't forward my academic interests.
- The course offerings in philosophy didn't forward my career interests.
- I expected the workload in a philosophy course to be too great.

# Statistically Significant Survey Responses

Among those who took a PHL class:

17. I believe I can do well in philosophy.

#	Answer	Female	Male	Transgender	Genderqueer	I prefer not to answer.
1	Strongly Disagree	0	0	0	0	0
2	Disagree	1	1	0	0	0
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	8	0	0	0	0
4	Agree	23	13	0	1	0
5	Strongly Agree	2	6	0	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>3.76</b>	<b>4.20</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>

Women are less likely to believe that they can do well in philosophy.

# Statistically Significant Survey Responses

Among those who have not taken a PHL course:

2. I didn't know enough about philosophy to know if it would be interesting.

#	Answer	Female	Male	Transgender	Genderqueer	I prefer not to answer.
1	Strongly Disagree	9	7	0	0	0
2	Disagree	21	7	0	0	0
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	24	8	0	0	1
4	Agree	24	4	0	0	0
5	Strongly Agree	2	0	0	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>2.86</b>	<b>2.35</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>3.00</b>

Women are more likely to agree that they didn't know enough about philosophy to know that it would be interesting.

# Statistically Significant Survey Responses

Among those who have not taken a PHL course:

23. I am interested in the topics addressed in philosophy courses.

#	Answer	Female	Male	Transgender	Genderqueer	I prefer not to answer.
1	Strongly Disagree	2	0	0	0	0
2	Disagree	15	1	0	0	1
3	Neither Agree nor Disagree	20	7	0	0	0
4	Agree	35	15	0	0	0
5	Strongly Agree	7	3	0	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Mean</b>	<b>3.38</b>	<b>3.77</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>2.00</b>

Women are less likely to report being interested in the topics addressed in philosophy courses.

# Focus Groups

**Goal: understanding student perceptions of philosophy as a discipline, philosophy classes at Elon, and our philosophy professors.**

## Structure of the focus groups

- Icebreaker
- Think/Pair/Share
- Large-group discussion
- Exit Survey

## Sample Questions

- What are your perceptions of the philosophy department/ majors on campus?
- How do you think one succeeds in philosophy?
- How did you see gender dynamics play out in your classroom?
- Do you think your gender had any influence in how students were treated in your courses?
- What is one critique you have of the philosophy department?

## Analysis

- "I guess I've never really thought about it. It's never been a conscious decision."
- "I didn't consciously avoid it but I didn't consciously seek it out either."

# Focus Group Coding

**From the >1 focus group for the prompt “How do you succeed in philosophy?”:**

“As long as you keep asking questions and keep having discussions, you will succeed and the learning never stops really for philosophy.”

**From the never taken philosophy focus group for the same prompt:**

“I think I’d do well enough participation-wise, but I’m not sure I would be capable of the level of thinking they want...I like logic well enough too, I just don’t think I could wrap my head around so many different viewpoints and argue about each one.”

# Student-Faculty Partnership

## Reasons for student-faculty partnership:

- Reconfigure the traditional assumptions of power and authority in the student-faculty relationship
- Gain the deepest possible understanding of the topic under investigation

## How we did it:

- Institutional support for the students
- Meet regularly and in person
- Split up group tasks, but include everyone on the core parts of the project

## How it has helped/will help us:

- “Asshole” conversation
- Focus groups
- Student-engaged solutions
- Experience as undergraduates interested in graduate school

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