Outside the Pipeline

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

Stephen Bloch-Schulman, Nim Batchelor, Ann J. Cahill, Claire Lockard, Helen Meskhidze, Sean Wilson

Elon University
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)
### How Should We Live?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How Should We Live?</th>
<th>Ethical Practice</th>
<th>What Can We Know?</th>
<th>Critical Thinking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female-identified students (%)</td>
<td>55.67%</td>
<td>53.11%</td>
<td>44.38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male-identified students (%)</td>
<td>44.33%</td>
<td>46.89%</td>
<td>55.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female-identified students’ recidivism rate (%)</td>
<td>14.34%</td>
<td>10.73%</td>
<td>10.62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male-identified students’ recidivism rate (%)</td>
<td>17.06%</td>
<td>12.15%</td>
<td>11.75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female-identified students’ GPA in PHL class/overall GPA</td>
<td>3.7/3.42</td>
<td>3.54/3.4</td>
<td>3.39/3.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male-identified students’ GPA in PHL class/overall GPA</td>
<td>3.38/3.12</td>
<td>3.18/3.07</td>
<td>3.10/3.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Data (Fall 2011-Spring 2014)

- **Intro & Literature**
- **Data Mining**
- **Surveys**
- **Focus Groups**
- **Student-Faculty Partnership**
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
- 115 respondents identified as female
- 46 as male,
- 1 as genderqueer
- 1 preferred not to answer
- 3 did not respond

- 52 respondents identified as 1st year students
- 38 as second years
- 39 as third years
- 25 as fourth years
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.
Among those who took a PHL class:

17. I believe I can do well in philosophy.

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

Women are less likely to believe that they can do well in philosophy.
Among those who have not taken a PHL course:

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

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Genderqueer</th>
<th>I prefer not to answer.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mean | 2.86 | 2.35 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 3.00 |

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.

<table>
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<th>I prefer not to answer.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Neither Agree nor Disagree</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>79</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>0</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|    | **Mean**                      | 3.38   | 3.77 | 0.00        | 0.00        | 2.00                   |

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."
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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