



Department of Philosophy

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April 6, 2016

Letters to the Editor  
ATTN: Vimal Patel  
The Chronicle of Higher Education  
1255 23rd Street, N.W., Suite 700  
Washington, D.C. 20037

DIVERSITY IN PHILOSOPHY

Dear Mr. Patel and Editors,

On behalf of the Department of Philosophy at the University of Memphis, I write with the following statement regarding the March 27, 2016 article by Vimal Patel, "Diversifying a Discipline":

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To the Editor:

Thanks both to the conscientious efforts of many faculty members over the years (not least Robert Bernasconi himself, when he was a faculty member here) and to the vision and support of our university administration, the Department of Philosophy at the University of Memphis has been, and continues to be, a leading force in efforts to increase diversity in professional philosophy. As the *Chronicle* itself highlighted nearly a decade ago ("Black Women Seek a Role in Philosophy," Robin Wilson, September 28, 2007), here at Memphis, we have successfully recruited, trained, and placed male and female students of color for many years now. Indeed, as a 2014 article details, "most U.S. [blacks in philosophy] earned their PhDs at Memphis, followed by Stanford, Yale, Harvard, and Pittsburgh" (T. Botts, et al., "What Is the State of Blacks in Philosophy?" *Critical Philosophy of Race*, vol. 2, 229). Nor is this a merely historical commitment, but an ongoing emphasis of our program. In this calendar year alone, of the 7 doctoral degrees conferred by our program (3 women, 4 men), we anticipate 3 will be to philosophers of color, including 2 women of color. And we take great pride in working closely with every one of our graduate students—including those whose background might not be predominately in philosophy—to develop the skills, perspectives, and voices that our profession so desperately needs. We have a broad conception of this community of philosophical voices and continue to welcome students from a wide range of backgrounds typically underrepresented in academic philosophy.

Given our decades-long and ongoing commitment to inclusiveness and diversity in philosophy, we are pleased to see that the model developed here has now been adopted by Penn State ("Diversifying a Discipline," Vimal Patel, March 27 2016). Yet we are puzzled by the impression left by the article that our parallel efforts represent a zero-sum game. Diversifying our discipline is not a competition, and

one program's successes in this effort is not another's failure. Indeed, far from any one graduate program being able to do this on its own, the profession needs many more programs to adopt this model in order to redress the under-representation of minority voices in our field. Had someone from the *Chronicle* reached out to us for comment, we would have been happy to discuss our track record and to direct you to the many, many students of color we have trained and placed in academic positions—students whose experience at Memphis was a very positive one.

—*University of Memphis Department of Philosophy*

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We would be grateful if you would publish this statement in your “Letters to the Editor” section. Also, please do not hesitate to contact me directly if I can be of any assistance in clarifying this statement and/or providing you further information concerning our graduate program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Blatti', with a horizontal line extending to the right from the end of the signature.

Stephan Blatti  
Associate Professor and Chair  
[blatti@memphis.edu](mailto:blatti@memphis.edu)