Applied Philosophy

A. Executive Summary of Initiative

At UC Merced each of our ladder-rank philosophy faculty teach courses and perform research spanning two or more disciplines. We view ourselves as the founding core faculty of an *Applied Philosophy* program that is unique among American philosophy programs. Mathematical modeling, laboratory experiments and computer simulations are as important to our work as conceptual analysis and reasoning, and we aim to share this vision of philosophy with our students. Both in terms of our continuing research and teaching and in terms of our vision for our program, we see ourselves as contributing to and drawing strength from academic programs across campus, including Cognitive Science, Economics, Management, Political Science, and Sociology. Consistent with this vision and with the Strategic Academic Focusing Working Group's suggestion that round one proposals be consolidated into "stronger, more comprehensive initiatives", <u>we are submitting this proposal primarily to indicate how the various research areas we emphasize exist as parts of the strategic focusing initiatives of other academic units.</u> We believe ours is a unique way of conceiving of philosophy: as a program whose research and teaching strengths are all founded in substantive ties with other academic programs. The specific research areas we emphasize are:

(1) Politics, Philosophy, and Economics (PPE).[1]

(2) Philosophy and Cognitive Science.

(3) Gender and Race Studies.

(4) Applied Ethics.

Because our strategic plan is in a sense distributed across other SAFI's, this umbrella description will be relatively brief.

B. Definition of Thematic Area

Philosophy studies conceptual and foundational questions. Traditional philosophy is characterized as an "armchair" discipline that is almost purely theoretical, having little contact with other disciplines. However, in recent years a growing number of philosophers incorporate the sciences and other disciplinary areas into their own work. Mathematical modeling, experimental techniques, and computer simulations are all now deployed in philosophy, in an effort to address theoretical questions such as: (*i*) What is justice?, (*ii*) What is an optimal decision in a given context?, (*iii*) How should the self and attention should be understood?, (*iv*) In what, if anything, does race consist in?, and so on. Much of the most exciting current work in philosophy now occurs where philosophy intersects with other fields. Areas of applied philosophy now include, but are not limited to: political philosophy, philosophy of cognitive science, social and political philosophy, experimental philosophy, applied ethics, and philosophy of race and gender. Some American philosophy departments have a few faculty and/or programs that are interdisciplinary, but UC Merced's program is perhaps the first American

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[1] The title "Politics, Philosophy and Economics (PPE)" is provisional. We plan to work with faculty in Economics and Political Science to create an appropriate title before the envisioned undergraduate minor and major are launched.

philosophy program built fully upon interdisciplinary foundations. Thus Applied Philosophy at UC Merced is really a covering term for first-order research that could happen in multiple bylaw units, or even schools, and as part of multiple strategic initiatives.

1. Does it fit in one of the nine (9) defined Themes?

Applied philosophy as we envision it overlaps all nine themes:

1. *Disparities: Equity, Diversity, Social Inequality.* This theme intersects with philosophy of race and gender.

2. *Cross-cultural Studies and Cultural Production.* This theme also intersects with philosophy of race and gender (see above).

3. *Human Health.*   This theme intersects with applied ethics, especially bioethics.

4. *Innovation and Entrepreneurship.*   This theme intersects with applied ethics, especially business ethics, and PPE.

6. *Energy and Energy Systems.* This theme intersects with applied ethics, especially environmental ethics.

7. *Information, Computational, and Data Sciences, and Engineering.*   This theme intersects with the philosophy of cognitive science.

Even in those areas not listed above, applied philosophy is relevant. Applied ethics lines could teach courses as part of the life sciences curricula, for example.

2. Are there other SAF Initiatives that, in your opinion, might contribute to this theme

Yes. As noted above, we are primarily deploying our initiative as a series of pointers to other initiatives. Here are some of the initiatives whose authors' we have corresponded with in developing our own:

> (1) Politics, Philosophy, and Economics
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> - Political Science
> - School of Innovation, Management, and Economics (SIME)
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> (2) Philosophy and Cognitive Science:
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> - Center for Human Adaptive Systems and Environments (CHASE)
> - Cognitive Science
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> (3) Gender and Race Studies:
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> - Diversity, Inequality, and Representation
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> (4) Applied Ethics:
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> - Environmental Sustainability
> - Human Health Sciences
> - School of Innovation, Management, and Economics
> - Sustainability, Energy, Climate and Communications (Sierra Nevada Research Institute)

C. Intellectual components of the Initiative

Why is this area(s) important?

UC Merced has distinctive empirical and applied strengths in many areas. However, the faculty also recognize the importance of theoretical questions and their role in driving empirical and applied research. Our initiatives provide a way of addressing theoretical questions while maintaining an applied emphasis.

What are the current key areas/achievements in this field, and those going forward?

To give a sense of research in these areas, here are a few illustrative examples: (1) In PPE, analysis of collective action problems such as the tragedy of the commons paradox (Ferguson, 2013), which is one of a class of examples where individual rationality appears to conflict with the common good. (2) In philosophy of cognitive science, an increased understanding of different types of agency and their neural bases (Roskies, 2006).   (3) In gender and race studies, a recognition that race is not a biological category (Appiah, 1995) and an increasingly sophisticated way of understanding the nature and boundaries of racial categories (James, 2011). (4) In applied ethics, analysis of how certain norms in business interactions can be characterized using game theory as equilibria of exchange games (Binmore, 1999).

We refer the reader to the other SAF initiative documents that we refer to above, for further discussions of other lines of research relating to the four fields we emphasize.

D. UCM's Role in this Theme

The UCM Campus' unique position in this particular field and current strengths on campus / Potential research areas of expansion / How will investment in this area make our program distinctive/competitive when compared to programs within UC and other research universities?

 (1) A PPE program is yet to be established in the UC system, although UC Irvine is in the late stages of approval for a PPE masters program. We believe that a PPE program at the UC Merced campus would serve the university mission well for several reasons, especially given that such a program would be the first of its kind in the San Joaquin Valley and the first undergraduate PPE program in the entire UC system. Further, a PPE program would complement existing undergraduate major programs in economics, management and political science: these programs have a strong empirical orientation and students in these programs who are interested in gaining additional background in political theory, economic theory, or moral and political philosophy could be served by the PPE program.   Consistently with our overall vision, we anticipate that all hires in this area would have a strong empirical and applied orientation.

(2) Philosophy is one of several disciplines in the interdisciplinary field of cognitive science and philosophy and cognitive science are currently well integrated at UC Merced. Philosophy is part of the Cognitive and Information Sciences Academic Unit, and two of the three philosophy faculty are core members of the Cognitive Science graduate group and are involved in advising students. The Philosophy and Cognitive Science curricula are highly integrated both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Plans are in place to launch a graduate track with the Cognitive Science graduate group in philosophy of cognitive science. In this track, computational, experimental, and mathematical methods will be used in the research and analysis

of traditional philosophical questions. Philosophers in cognitive science at UC Merced currently focus on neural networks, computational modeling, dynamical systems theory and the analysis of experimental data concerning attention, perception, action, and consciousness.

(3) *Race and Gender Studies*

Gender and race studies are emerging research topics in philosophy that intersect with research in cognitive science, psychology, anthropology, sociology, and political science. Some central questions include whether gender and race are natural kinds (i.e. according to Simone de Beauvoir*,* "One is not born a woman, one becomes one (2011), the interrelations of gender, race, and objectivity (i.e. according to Helen de Longino, "Gender, race, and class structure are features of a scientific community that must be taken into account when assessing its epistemic reliability" (1993), and the intersection of gender, race, and justice (i.e. according to Tommie Shelby, "In most modern democratic societies…the socioeconomic disadvantages that racial minorities currently suffer are caused by racial injustice perpetrated in the past" (2004).

(4) *Applied Ethics*

Ethics is a central area of philosophical research that is vital to the practice of other disciplines. For example, the National Institutes of Health (NOT-OD-10-019) and the National Science Foundation (FR Doc No: E9-19930) require institutions to provide training and mentoring in the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) to students and post-doctoral researchers. We hope to teach students to apply ethical theories and conceptual analyses to real world cases in a manner that is also informed by research in disciplines outside of philosophy.

E. What bylaw units/grad groups might participate, and how would they participate?

The envisioned PPE major would exist within CIS, but could contribute to and draw on Political Science, Management, and Economics, e.g. by making courses in those areas fulfill the requirements of the PPE major.

Philosophy of cognitive science exists within CIS and the Cognitive Science graduate group, and could contribute to CHASE.

Gender and Race Studies could exist as part of the Humanities and World Cultures bylaw unit (e.g. within the emerging ethnic studies group), and could contribute to the World Cultures graduate group and Sociology.

Applied ethics would exist within CIS, and has very broad relevance. Research in this area could contribute to several academic units, including Biological Science, Environmental Systems, and Management. An applied ethicist could also work closely with faculty in research units like SNRI and the Health Sciences Research Institute. Discussions have already begun regarding the possibility of a person in this area teaching Public Health's bioethics course, and plans are underway to discuss ways of connecting the Public healthHcurriculum with applied ethics (e.g. via cross-listed courses).

F. General description of special programmatic needs (specialized space requirements, special library collections, etc.).

This is primarily a matter for the other initiatives we are applying within, but it is worth noting that resource needs associated with these areas of applied philosophy are minimal. Each faculty line will require office space only, with the possible exception of an experimental philosopher, who might require minimal or shared lab space.

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