



STANFORD

SCHOOL OF  
HUMANITIES AND SCIENCES

April 15, 2009

To: Committee for the Review of Undergraduate Majors

From: Richard Saller, Dean, School of Humanities and Sciences *RPS*  
Susan Stephens, Senior Associate Dean for Graduate and Undergraduate Studies *JS*

Subject: Review of the Interdisciplinary Honors Program in Ethics and Society

**Background:**

The Program graduates about six students annually. It was last reviewed in 2004. After that review the program attracted considerable funding and has become a Center, with the undergraduate honors program now only a small component of the Center's university-wide activities. Changes in the undergraduate program include the discontinuation of EthicSoc 77 (Ethics in Action) for reasons described on pp. 6-7 of the self-study, the addition of a minor in citizenship, and the two new and central faculty members—Joshua Cohen (Law, Philosophy, and Political Science) and Josiah Ober (Classics and Political Science).

The program's self-study was submitted to the School in January, 2009. After review by the Senior Associate Dean for the cluster (Stephen Hinton) and the Senior Associate Dean for Graduate and Undergraduate Studies (Susan Stephens), the self-study was submitted to the School Curriculum Committee for the Humanities. That committee met to review the program on March 9, 2009

The first hour of that meeting was dedicated to discussion with the director, Rob Reich, Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science. There were two main areas of discussion: first, the impact the growth of the Ethics Center on the Honors program and then various strategies to attract students to the program.

For the second hour the committee met alone to discuss its recommendations.

**Findings:**

The program saw a drop off in quality of students for 3-4 years, while the previous director was building the Center. The program itself has taken steps to repair the situation, and with the new director, whose job is to concentrate on the Honors program, we anticipate that there will be swift improvements. Problems with core courses that surfaced in the past seem to have been promptly dealt with.

**Recommendation:**

At this time H&S recommends that the Honors BA degree in Ethics and Society be renewed for a period of five years, from 1 September 2009 to 31 August 2014. We would also like to commend Rob Reich for his initial efforts to grow the program, and ask him to provide H&S with a short, written report of the progress he is making in this regard by Spring 2011.