SOPHIA

SOCIETY OF PHILOSOPHERS IN AMERICA

Strategic Plan

2015

PhilosophersinAmerica.com

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Introduction

As we enter a new era of philosophical and technological progress, the leadership of the Society of Philosophers in America (SOPHIA) determined that it was necessary to rethink our vision to achieve success in our future endeavors. We reached out and collaborated with the student affairs professionals enrolled in EDHE 670, a graduate course on strategic planning and assessment at the University of Mississippi, who acted as our consultants for the process. Through this process we were able to focus on what we want SOPHIA to be and on the needs of the current and future members.

Through our work with the consultants, we explored the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that the organization faces. We also revisited the mission statement and developed core values that reflect the heart and history of the organization.

Who we are:

SOPHIA was founded in 1983 for the purpose of allowing philosophers to involve the greater public in their work. Additionally, SOPHIA allowed for those who valued a variety of philosophical approaches and applications. At its inception SOPHIA was a selective and honorary organization. That brings us to the present day.

What we believe:

Mission Statement

The mission of the Society of Philosophers in America (SOPHIA) is to use the tools of philosophical inquiry to improve people's lives and enrich the profession of philosophy through conversation and community building.

Core Values

Building philosophical community and engagement

Philosophy is for everyone.

As members of SOPHIA, we believe that everyone can be a philosopher and that philosophical wisdom should be available to all people. We value building philosophical communities that are inviting, relatable, inclusive and that stimulate social change.

Philosophical inclusiveness

Philosophers learn from others.

SOPHIA aims to change the way philosophers converse. We want the profession of philosophy to be productive, inclusive, and welcoming. SOPHIA encourages the discussion of new, relevant ideas that include an interdisciplinary dialogue and a pluralist approach.

Respectful communication

Everyone has a voice.

To engage in respectful, open, accessible and authentic philosophical dialog, SOPHIA embraces face-to-face connections and collaboration. We invite everyone, not just scholars, to participate in civil and empathetic dialog regarding relevant and relatable topics and support unique expressions of opinions, beliefs, and feelings. To reach broader participation and ensure timely communication, SOPHIA may also use technology to exchange and disseminate information.

Professional excellence and public relevance

Philosophy goes beyond the realm of academia.

SOPHIA seeks to raise awareness about philosophical issues and showcase their relevance by providing a platform for public discussions about real-life challenges and issues. SOPHIA engages and welcomes all disciplines to build a national reputation for applicable philosophy. This enables philosophy to be relatable and impactful in the public sphere.

Where we are going:

Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: To create publicly-engaged SOPHIA chapters that are locally-focused

We envision multiple local chapters of SOPHIA that can meet to address local and current issues. These meetings will be informal and inclusive of community members from all walks of life. Through the support of the national SOPHIA organization, we want to:

- Build community outside of philosophy and philosophers, and among disciplines and professions
- Serve as an asset and support for chapters
- Actively recruit chapter leaders and members

Goal 2: To build a collection of thematic materials and meeting guidelines

We envision a national SOPHIA organization comprised of the board of trustees and executive leadership who are dedicated to providing academic materials and event outlines to the local chapters. In order to enable the local chapters to host thoughtful discussions and events on issues affecting their communities, these materials will:

- Provide structure for meetings in informal and formal settings
- Include timely topics of broad relevance
- Promote and respect diverse perspectives
- Create safe spaces to discuss issues with civility and rigor

Goal 3: To use technology effectively

We envision being able to provide access to the knowledge base of SOPHIA and to reach a larger audience of members through the expanded use of technology. While we value face to face interactions, we feel that a broader community could be developed through the use of technology. With an increased need for timely and relevant information, we want to utilize:

- Audio and video platforms
- Blogs and social media
- An online member management system

Goal 4: **To engage with the profession on public philosophy and digital humanities**

We envision fostering rich collaborations between SOPHIA and the growing movement toward public philosophy and digital humanities. Digital humanities brings together technology and the disciplines of the humanities in the areas of research and teaching to re-envision the relationship between the academic and the everyday world. We hope to:

- Pursue publishing opportunities in the digital humanities, such as with the *Public Philosophy Journal*
- Provide training and networking opportunities with partners such as the Public Philosophy Network
- Seek out funding opportunities to support SOPHIA's goals