

# Tracking the Development of Philosophical Dispositions

Spring 2013 Pilot Sample from  
CSB/SJU Student Body

Total N = 528

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## Comparison of Alpha Values

Measure	Sample					
	2009†		Spring 2011		Spring 2013#	
	$\alpha$	N	$\alpha$	N	A	N
CA	.458	11	.604	6	.792	7
CR	.656	9	.565	5	.763	7
RQA	.664	9	.466	5	.773	6
PDI	.689	7	.790	5	.842	6

† Combines two samples: April 2009, students in philosophy classes & October 2009, students with no experience in philosophy.

# Using only the 26 stems kept after data reduction.

# PHIL	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	>6
N	266	151	43	12	8	20	10	18
%	50.4	28.6	8.1	2.3	1.5	3.8	1.9	3.4

- Definition of *disposition*: tendency or propensity to respond to philosophically salient situations by adopting a particular stance, orientation or attitude.
- The CSB|SJU Philosophy Department believes that our curriculum and pedagogy should foster or elicit certain philosophical dispositions.

## Four Target Dispositions

1. Comfort with ambiguity (CA)
2. Charitable Reading (CR)
3. Resisting the urge to settle for quick and easy answers (RQA)
4. Pleasure in the struggle with difficult ideas (PDI)

## Comfort With Ambiguity

➤ Developing comfort with an inescapable feature of the human condition – that it is possible to understand some kinds of issues more fully without ever being able to establish a single final and correct answer.

➤ Sample Stem: It bothers me when different perspectives on an issue all seem equally valid. (R) (7 items total)

## Charitable Reading

➤ The practice of considering an author's ideas in their strongest and most convincing form, of trying to understand an idea or argument from the perspective of someone who would accept it as true.

➤ Sample Stem: When an author's writing contradicts my own thinking, my impulse is to read it again more carefully. (7 items)

## Resisting the Urge to Settle for Quick and Easy Answers

➤ A disposition to look past first impressions and commonsense conclusions to search for underlying assumptions, unfamiliar perspectives, and their own unexamined ideas.

➤ Sample Stem: – I feel like people who disagree with me make me look more seriously at perspectives I'd otherwise dismiss. (6 items)

## Pleasure in the Struggle with Difficult Ideas

➤ Philosophical ideas challenge conventional perspectives on truth, reality, and the good. Making sense of them is as a result frequently difficult for students.

➤ Sample Stem: If I have to struggle to understand a subject, learning just becomes a chore. (R) (6 items)

Group	N	Mean	Dif	Std Dev	Prob >  t
4/less	478	24.48	4.73	5.25	P < .0001
5/more	48	29.21		5.49	

Group	N	Mean	Dif	Std Dev	Prob >  t
4/less	478	30.34	2.95	4.31	P < .0001
5/more	48	33.29		4.03	

Group	N	Mean	Dif	Std Dev	Prob >  t
4/less	478	26.68	1.74	3.90	P < .0034
5/more	48	28.42		3.94	

Group	N	Mean	Dif	Std Dev	Prob >  t
4/less	478	23.35	4.44	5.31	P < .0001
5/more	48	27.79		5.02	