

Department of Anthropology: 2007-2008 Annual Report to CAPR (Winter 2009)

A. Self-Study

The department's primary goals in recent years have been to update the major and the curriculum so that it is more efficient, more contemporary, more rigorous, and more relevant; to increase the tenure-track faculty; to attract more students to the major (and to our classes in general); and to regain administrative independence from our sister department, Sociology. In 2007-2008, the department made progress on several of these fronts, helped in large part by our focus on departmental strategy as we put together the five-year review we submitted in spring 2008.

Curriculum: The department's two year course rotation plan has helped to ensure that most classes have a good number of students. In Fall 2007 we offered a new graduate-level topical seminar on Environmental Anthropology. We offered a range of major classes, GE classes, and MA classes in the four fields of anthropology (physical anthropology, archaeology, linguistic anthropology, and socio-cultural anthropology) as well as from both academic and applied perspectives.

Faculty: The department continues to fight to maintain a critical mass of faculty. From a one-time high of 18, and 8 TT faculty as recently as 1980, anthropology in 2007-2008 had 4 full-time and 2 part-time (FERP) faculty, with one newly-hired professor, Andrew Wong, on leave for his first year (working as an applied linguist). (Dr. Wong joined the active teaching faculty in Fall 2008.) At the end of 2007-08, one faculty member completed his FERP term, and at the end of 2008-2009 the last remaining FERPed faculty member will also be finished with that program. That will leave us in 2009-10 with 5 full-time faculty (one of whom will be on a one-year sabbatical leave), and no remaining FERP faculty. While hires in 2005 and 2007 helped to offset retirements, with only three tenured professors (Laura Nelson was promoted to associate professor and granted tenure in 2007-08), the department is unable to staff PTR committees (because the Chair does not sit on PTR), and with such a small department, faculty are spread very thin with departmental obligations, graduate student advising and committee work. (Several of our faculty are serving on more than eight MA thesis committees at a time!) We have, however, maintained the ability to teach both academic and applied anthropology in all four traditional subfields: biological, archaeological, linguistic, and socio-cultural anthropology, and the C.E. Smith Museum of Anthropology mounted an exhibit of Hopi Kachinas in Winter 2008.

Increasing Majors and attracting more students: According to the list of students on the majors Blackboard site, the department currently has 59 undergraduate majors, which represents significant, steady growth. The department also has steady graduate student enrollments, with 25 current masters students. The department has tried to encourage majors by: participating in a freshman cluster (Viewing Diversity); streamlining the major; improving the website; instituting an annual student paper prize; establishing an anthropology student association; and engaging in some publicity of anthropology and anthropology courses. To increase general enrollments, we have received current GE approval for 26 classes. The department offers several online classes: ANTH 3000, ANTH 3730, ANTH 3750, and ANTH 3765.

Administration: In the fall of 2004 the department was administratively merged with that of sociology. From that time, the department operated under the leadership of the sociology department's chair, albeit with most departmental operations handled as though the anthropology department were independent. Some responsibilities remained allocated to the sociology chair (e.g. ultimate oversight, PT&R process), but all scheduling, lecturer hiring, budgeting, reporting, and strategic planning was done within the anthropology department. The department was badly underresourced in terms of both support staff and dedicated administrative oversight. A key department goal in last-year's five year review was to achieve independence, and, after considering the situation, the interim CLASS Dean granted us independence beginning Fall 2008.

B. Assessment Report

As we noted in the Five Year Plan submitted in 2007-2008, our previous assessment procedure was cumbersome and, because we did not have a chair attending intently to the business of the anthropology department, was never really carried out. We proposed a new assessment plan to gauge the degree to which the department is fulfilling its primary goals, which are:

1. To promote the understanding and appreciation of cultural and linguistic diversity in the modern world by exposing the student to a broad, representative and cross-cultural range of the world's cultures.
2. To foster the student's understanding and appreciation of an evolutionary, bio-cultural perspective on the history of the human experience.
3. To encourage anthropology majors' understanding of core anthropological concepts, theory and practice.
4. To provide opportunities for the practice of anthropological methodology within such activities as anthropological interview and participant observation, archaeological field work, museum curation and exhibit design, and volunteer / internship experiences.
5. To facilitate the academic skills of critical thinking and argumentation, articulate oral and written expression, and library / media and museum research.
6. To graduate majors that not only possess the values, knowledge, and skills listed above, but are committed to a career of life-long learning.

For the first three goals, we have generated a set of four questions for each of our core classes (ANTH 3100, ANTH 3200, ANTH 3400, ANTH 3800, and ANTH 4910) that are designed to gauge whether students have grasped the essential perspectives and content of the discipline. At the end of each of these core classes, students will answer the question-set, and the responses will be archived in the department office for analysis at the end of each academic year. As this is the first year of this process, we have not yet analyzed the data, although we have collected answers from ANTH 3400 and ANTH 3800.

The fourth goal is fulfilled automatically, as each major must take the museum class, as well as a core methodology class.

We proposed to evaluate our achievement of the fifth goal by looking at a random selection of research papers written for anthropology classes. Again, as this is the first year of this new assessment process, we have yet to implement this process.

We do not have a proposal for measuring whether our majors are committed to life-long learning.

Our own assessment of our departmental functioning indicates that we still have room for progress in a few areas. One is improving the visibility of the department in order to increase majors and draw more students to our GE classes. This may require funds for publicity, as well as more colloquia, an active student club, and student and faculty outreach. Our non-tenure track lecturers are somewhat less-well rated than the temporary instructor averages in CLASS. This may be because there is high turnover in our lecturer pool. The department would like to stabilize our lecturer pool, if possible. We still intend to take a close look at our undergraduate classes in order to see whether the mix of classes, and their titles, should be updated. In 2007-08 we noted that we needed to update the graduate degree pathway, including changing and clarifying requirements, as a result of somewhat confusing changes to the major that resulted from the reduction of units for graduate seminars from 5 to 4 in 2006-2007. Our faculty continue to be very actively engaged in research, and would benefit from more time release if at all possible.