

Graduate Program Strategic Assessment – Anthropology

September 15, 2009

Mission. The Department of Anthropology is dedicated to the comparative study of peoples and cultures of the past and present. Our program provides training leading to both M.A. and Ph.D. degrees and conducts scholarship in all four of the major subfields of Anthropology – sociocultural anthropology, archaeology, biological anthropology, and linguistic anthropology. The M.A. is viewed as a general degree that equips the student to teach any subfield of anthropology at the introductory level. It may serve as a stepping stone to the Ph.D. degree in Anthropology or some other field, or as a limited professional degree qualifying its recipient for certain types of employment not necessarily involving continuing independent research. The Ph.D. degree represents a balance between general competence in the four major subfields of anthropology obtained at the M.A. level, and a professional level of specialization in one. To obtain a Ph.D. in Anthropology, the student conducts original research based on ethnographic fieldwork, archaeological excavation, laboratory analysis, or the study of archival or museum collections.

Admission Processes and Criteria. Admission to the department's graduate program may be at the M.A. or Ph.D. levels, although the majority of students enroll for the Ph.D. (Many think that they must apply for the M.A. first, which accounts for the somewhat misleading figures for the M.A. and Ph.D. applications in the appendices.) Students applying for admission to the graduate program in Anthropology are considered regardless of the field of their previous training. However, students without previous training in anthropology may be asked to perform additional work as necessary to achieve the levels expected for the degree desired. Applicants with an M.A. degree in another discipline must seek admission as a first year graduate student.

- Student demand and recruitment.* The number of completed applications, between 2004-2008, has ranged between 40 and 50 per year. We recruit students largely through informal avenues, such as by referrals from colleagues at other institutions, although some more formal recruiting has taken place at professional conferences.

- Criteria for selection.* Our criteria for selecting students for admission are based on multiple factors, including GREs (Quantitative, Verbal, and Analytical Writing; mean as of 04/07=1251), GPA (mean = 3.67), the strength and development of the student's research interests and skills, and the fit between these interests and those of the faculty in our Department. In addition to seeking the best students, we also strive to admit students from the different subfields of Anthropology in order to have a balanced cohort and one that can provide TAs for the Introductory courses in the four subfields of Anthropology.

- Success in enrolling the highest quality student admitted.* We have had very good success in enrolling high quality students of those admitted by making competitive funding offers for 5 years and by nominating top students for Presidential and Deans Graduate Fellowships (PGF and DGF). Graduate students enrolled in Anthropology at UI have consistently higher mean GPA and GRE scores than the UI Social Sciences, the national average, and the national average for the Social Sciences. Between 2004-2009, the Department nominated 29 students for PGF; 20 PGF were offered, and 9 students (or 31% of those nominated) accepted these offers.

- Success in enrolling a diverse student cohort.* In Anthropology, diversity is defined in a variety of ways, by gender, class, ethnicity, and sexuality, some of which can be tracked over time and others that are more difficult to monitor. That being said, we have had some success in enrolling a diverse student cohort. As with the UI Graduate College trends, more women than men have been enrolled in our program, by 2-3:1 ratio. Between 2004-2008, 6 students were nominated for DGF, 6 were offered Fellowships, and 3 students (or 50% of those nominated) accepted these Fellowships. Despite this reasonable success rate in securing DGF, we have been less successful in recruiting and funding international students as their GRE scores (particularly Verbal) may be less competitive for PGF and they are ineligible for DGF because they are not US citizens.

- Financial aid commitments to incoming and continuing graduate students. Role of externally funded grants, teaching positions (TAs).* We have worked to make increasingly competitive financial aid commitments to incoming students. For the top ranked applicants, we offer 5 years of half-time funding in the form of TAships, in addition to PGF and DGF. If half-time funding is not available for a good student, we offer quarter-time funding on a year-by-year basis. In spring 2009, we were able to offer Strategic Initiative Funds grants to support student-driven research for 2 of our DGF for one academic year. Some of our students are funded as TAs in other departments or programs, such as Rhetoric, Women's Studies, and Spanish and Portuguese. Externally funded grants do not play a significant role in the funding of Anthropology students while they are doing coursework and comprehensive exams. External grants, primarily obtained by the students, play a more important funding role at

the time of a student's research, since most anthropological fieldwork and research require significant resources for travel, research supplies, and analyses.

Program Outcomes

•*Degree completion and time-to-degree.* Our graduate students have, on average, a higher time-to-degree rate than most graduate students in the Social Sciences at UI (6.8 years), although they are below the national average for Anthropology (10 years). In general, their TTD rates are more consistent with the Arts and Humanities than the Social Sciences (and Biomedical Sciences), which is understandable given three factors: 1) Anthropology graduate students generally work in international or non-local contexts, which can require the mastery of a new foreign language (or two), 2) Anthropological fieldwork requires a lengthy time commitment, typically a year or more, prior to beginning to write the dissertation; and 3) To support their fieldwork, Anthropology graduate students must seek their own funding.

•*Graduate student fellowships, awards, honors, and/or publications.* Despite the challenges of conducting anthropological fieldwork, our graduate students have been very successful in obtaining funding (internal and external) and are extraordinarily active as conference presenters and publication authors.

Internal awards, grants, and fellowships received by Anthropology graduate students (2004-2008)

•T. Anne Cleary International Research Fellowships: 10 nominated, 10 offers (**100%**)

•Ballard Seashore Fellowships: 8 students nominated, 6 offers (**75%**)

•Graduate College Summer Fellowships: 24 applications, 13 offers (**54%**)

•Other internal grants and awards include: Outstanding Teaching Assistant Awards, Stanley Grants for International Research, Executive Council of Graduate and Professional Student (ECGPS) Travel Awards, University of Iowa Student Government Awards, Center for Asian and Pacific Studies Grant, Graduate Student Senate Grants, Center for International, Rural and Environmental Health Grant, Center for Global and Regional Environmental Research Travel Grants, Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) Summer Fellowships, Hugh V. Ross Scholarships, UI Obermann Graduate Fellow, Cmiel Human Rights Fellowship, and Crossing Borders Fellowships.

External awards, grants, and fellowships received by Anthropology Graduate Students (2004-2008)

•National Science Foundation

•Wenner Gren Foundation

•Ford Foundation

•School for Advanced Research

•Leakey Foundation

•Smithsonian Institution

•Additional grants include awards by the American Association of Physical Anthropologists, Archaeological Institute of America, Arizona Archaeological and Historical Society, Predoctoral Fellowship at Bowdoin College, Center for Khmer Studies, Central States Anthropological Society, National Museum of Natural History, Sigma Xi, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Woodrow Wilson Foundation, and a Young Center Graduate Fellowship at Elizabethtown College.

Publications. Since 2004, our graduate students have authored or co-authored works in scholarly journals including: *American Journal of Orthodontics & Dentofacial Orthopedics*, *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, *Anthropology and Humanism*, *Ancient Mesoamerica*, *Anthropology of East Europe Review*, *Azania: Journal of the British Institute in Eastern Africa*, *Cambridge Archaeological Journal*, *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, *Current Osteoporosis Reports*, *Ethnology*, *Generations*, *History and Anthropology*, *Illinois Archaeology*, *International Journal of Global Health & Health Disparities*, *Journal of Anatomy*, *Journal of Human Evolution*, *Journal of Latin American Anthropology*, *Journals of Gerontology: Social Sciences*, *Latin American Antiquity*, *Nutritional Anthropology*, *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology-University College London*, *Plains Anthropological Society*, and *Studies in American Indian Literatures*. Their work has also appeared as chapters in books published by the University of Texas Press, Rutgers University Press, Center for Archaeological Investigations-Carbondale, University of Southampton Archaeology Series, AltaMira, Oxbow Books, and Gale. Their creative works have won prestigious awards, such as the Jean Rouch Award for Best Student Film (Society for Visual Anthropology, 2005) and Second Place at the Iowa City International Documentary Film Festival (2006), and have appeared in *The Believer*.

Conference Presentations. Anthropology graduate students, between 2004-2008, have given papers and organized panels at meetings, national and international, including the American Anthropological Association, American Association of Physical Anthropology, Society for American Archaeology, African

Studies Association, American Ethnological Society, Archaeological Institute of America, Brazilian Studies Association, CIC-American Indian Graduate Student Consortium Conference, Center for Archaeological Investigations Visiting Scholar Conference, Central States Anthropological Society, XI Congreso Nacional de Paleopatología (Spain), Congresso de Arqueologia Peninsular (Portugal), Craft, Critique, Culture Interdisciplinary Conference (UI), Historical and Underwater Archaeology, Illinois Archaeological Survey, Iowa Academy of Science, Latin American Studies Association, Paleoanthropology Society, Society for Applied Anthropology, Society for Economic Anthropology, Society for Medical Anthropology, South Asia Conference, University of Chicago Eurasian Archaeology Conference. One was a Juried Award Winner at the Annual Meeting of the Rural Sociological Society. A number of anthropology graduate students have won awards at the James F. Jakobsen Conference, and in 2007, one of our doctoral students won a D.C. Priestestersbach Dissertation Award (2007).

•*Graduate student placements*

Between 2003-2008, our department has graduated a total of 14 PhDs; in the last year, we graduated an additional 6 PhDs; 71% are employed in college/university teaching; 36% of them are in tenured/tenure-track positions at Tulane, Grinnell, Augustana, Luther, Western Illinois University, and University of the Sciences in Philadelphia. Others have post-docs, at Washington University (Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies) and the University of Iowa (Department of Orthodontics), or part-time/adjunct teaching at Kirkwood, Cornell, and the University of Iowa.

Program Characteristics

•*Appropriate size, given department's mission, role in educating undergraduates, role in research, current FTE size, composition of faculty (areas of expertise represented), other resources available to department?*

All four subfields are represented in the Department. Resources available to the Department, in terms of research facilities, and teaching and training personnel, include the Office of the State Archaeologist, the Department of Geoscience, Women's Studies, and Global Health Studies. Currently, our FTE is 15.50, and we have 49 enrolled graduate students. Graduate students play an important role in educating and mentoring undergraduates, by serving as TAs for the introductory classes and in collaborative research, and, in the case of more advanced graduate students, teaching classes of their own design (with input from a faculty advisor). The difficulties of funding large cohorts of graduate students, posed by the current economy, is challenging our ability to offer graduate seminars.

•*How program compares with other similar programs?* For those top students who apply to our program and for whom we compete by offering PGF or DGF, we compete with the top graduate programs in Anthropology, including Columbia, Duke, and Yale. However, these universities offer full fellowships (not TA/RA positions), and thus, we tend to lose students to these programs.

•*Strengths/weaknesses of graduate program*

We have been able to increasingly recruit good students and secure funding for them through our 5-year funding packages, we provide close mentoring of these students, and we are able to develop their professional credentials through expanded TA opportunities for our advanced graduate students (who can teach their own classes), collaborations and co-authored publications (and encouraging sole author publishing), supporting conference attendance, and active mentoring through their grant writing. With the recent loss of a number of senior sociocultural faculty, traditionally strong components of the department - particularly feminist anthropology, economic anthropology, and medical anthropology - have been weakened. These losses have been mainly at the senior level, and it is prominent senior faculty who play a key role in attracting strong graduate student applications.

•*Opportunities for growth or reorganization to improve.* In our hiring plan for a medical anthropologist, we have an opportunity to strengthen and revitalize our department.

•*Other factors for Task Force to consider?* Our department is in a period of transition, with the net loss of numerous senior sociocultural faculty over the last 6 years and a gain in the number of archaeologists and a biological anthropologist.

Conclusions. Distinguishing features and outlook for future of graduate program. The economic crisis has challenged most graduate programs in the US. However, because of the current strengths of the department, we are still able to draw a strong pool of high-quality applications in these particular subfields and may even be able to better compete for higher quality students than in the past because of the tightening of funding everywhere.