

Department of Anthropology
Action Plan and Summary Response to External Review
Spring 2016

The fall 2015 external review of the Department of Anthropology offers a cogent and productive evaluation of our programs at the University of Illinois based upon a review of our self-study and supporting documentation and two days of meetings with faculty, students, and staff in our department and with administrators at the college and campus levels. The review team itself, composed of an archaeologist, a biological anthropologist, a linguistic anthropologist, and a sociocultural anthropologist, well embodies the breadth and interdisciplinary ferment of our discipline, and we take their review as an encouraging guide for our efforts to extend Illinois' reputation as one of the leading four-field anthropology programs nationally. As the review and our self-study make clear, we do this in the face of a series of challenges: some within our programs, others at the levels of campus administration and national trends involving higher education and public universities.

The external review makes five broad recommendations for our programs. This document is intended as a plan of action in response to those recommendations as well as selected other items identified in the review. It draws from the external reviewers report, our self-study document, and subsequent conversations among our faculty and students to present a description of steps underway to address recommendations for changes that fall within the scope of things we control as a department, steps currently underway that will require some collaboration and assistance from college and campus administration, and longer term planning necessary to build upon current strengths in our programs. Items requiring campus and college support are noted with asterisks (***)

The recommendations by the review committee concern:

- 1) Improvements to department facilities and lab spaces
- 2) Revisions to our undergraduate major
- 3) The status of linguistic anthropology
- 4) Establishment of a colloquium series
- 5) Longer term plans for hiring.

We turn here to address these recommendations and correlated issues.

Improvements to department facilities and lab spaces

The first of five recommendations from the external reviewer's report concerns "renovation of facilities and lab space." This section closes with the following (emphasis in the original): "While UI continues to invest in the Anthropology Department's future by generous start-up support of new hires and the funding of retention packages, it is losing new hires and will almost certainly lose highly productive and promising mid-career faculty in the future because of the manifest shortcomings of Davenport Hall. In other words, the University will insure the decline of the Anthropology Department, including the loss of prominent faculty, by ignoring the reconstruction and modernization of Davenport Hall." Earlier in the report the reviewers note (emphasis in the original) that the lab spaces in Davenport Hall are "an embarrassment to the University." As lab space is critical for "bench training" for students, these spaces affect not

only the department's ability to conduct research but also to train future generations of anthropologists. The external report also refers to the mezzanine floors in Davenport Hall as "windowless, low-ceilinged, poorly ventilated spaces that cannot be dignified as true offices or labs, even though that is what they are used for."

In AY 2012-13 we participated in the development of a master plan for the renovation of Davenport Hall. That planning exercise recognized the profound limitations of the current facilities and spaces available to our department and addressed those problems by proposing expanding our footprint in the building, consolidating research spaces now spread across borrowed laboratories around campus, and upgrading teaching, office, and common areas to create useful, healthy and productive work spaces adequate to expectations of an academic department in a great research university. In recent years we have seen considerable and much-needed investment in improvements to the exterior of the building, and some interior remodeling focused on classrooms in spaces once occupied by the Department of Geography, and on bringing restrooms in the building up to code.

***With the comprehensive renovations to the building likely postponed for many more years, we are requesting investment from the campus to upgrade existing facilities and address the glaring deficiencies noted in the external reviewers' report. We further request that a portion of any spaces in Davenport Hall currently used by units such as Chemistry and Geography while renovations to the Chemistry Annex and the Natural History Building are underway be assigned to Anthropology as the new spaces of Chem Annex and NHB come into use. If there are no such plans to reduce the footprint of other units in Davenport Hall that are also benefitting from other renovation projects on campus, we request a reassessment of space allocation in the building to ensure that the needs of our department that were identified in the master planning process are adequately addressed in the near term. ***

Revisions to the undergraduate curriculum in Anthropology

A revised undergraduate curriculum—based upon the draft documents included in the fall 2015 department self-study—has been submitted and approved at the College and at the Faculty Senate. We will implement the new curriculum beginning in AY 2016-17.

There are substantial changes in three areas: (1) following a common set of foundation courses, students will be able to select a course of study within new concentrations/tracks more specific to their interests and career goals; (2) current course offerings will be grouped into themes suggestive of career opportunities in an increasingly broad range of non-academic as well as academic professions in which anthropologists are currently being employed; (3) additional opportunities for original undergraduate research are built into the degree requirements.

Linguistic Anthropology

As a department we confirm our commitment to revitalizing linguistic anthropology as a key component of our identity as a four-field department. We note that external National Research Council rankings privilege four-field departments in their rankings. Although we expect linguistic anthropology to remain closely connected with our program in sociocultural anthropology (we will continue, for example, to train graduate students within a single sociocultural and linguistic anthropology graduate program track), developing strengths in

linguistic anthropology is an explicit priority of our department. Our commitment to linguistic anthropology as a component subfield of our department will require the following actions:

- Identifying linguistic anthropology as the distinct subdiscipline it is for the purposes of strategic planning in faculty hiring. ***We will include among our hiring priorities the recruitment of faculty with expertise in linguistic anthropology, and we seek college and campus support for initiatives to build excellence in our programs in linguistic anthropology.***
- Including linguistic anthropology core courses as a requirement for all students in the sociocultural and linguistic anthropology track of our graduate program. This matches requirements at the undergraduate level where courses in linguistic anthropology are part of a suite of subdisciplinary courses at the 100- and 200-levels.

Building intellectual community (colloquium series):

The external review committee identifies building the intellectual community in the department as a high priority. Faculty and graduate students across the board identified building a colloquium series as a priority for energizing intellectual life in the department, contributing to professionalization for graduate students, building a sense of community, and raising the profile of the department on campus.

Anthropology is well positioned to improve in this area and has already taken steps to do so. The department currently has an active colloquium committee that has planned a calendar of department events over the past few semesters. The following are additional actions already underway or under discussion:

Creating a vision for Anthropology's intellectual role on campus

Anthropology will support speakers, conferences and workshops that help articulate the central role of our discipline in the integrated study of human and non-human primate culture and behavior. As part of this process, the department proposes a speaker series or a yearly conference that bridges its own sub-fields around a central theme. Timely themes might include: Human Ecology, Health and Wellness; Environment and Climate; Gender, Race and Inequality, Material-Human Interaction.

Support strong sub-disciplinary colloquia

Our colloquia planning should include support and scheduling room for both integrated and sub-disciplinary specific events, speakers and conferences.

Create a sustainable culture of participation among faculty and graduate students

We are discussing a range of strategies to help us to realize our departmental priority of encouraging a culture of collective intellectual engagement, including:

- Longer (two-year) service appointments for colloquium committee members to enable longer term planning of speakers and events
- Course-release connected to primary coordinating responsibility for colloquia
- Developing a course rubric through which students might receive credit for sustained engagement with department colloquia and faculty might receive teaching credit for taking on coordinating responsibilities for the colloquia series.

Connect our colloquia to our classrooms on themes of diversity, pedagogy and equity

Both faculty and graduate students have found an increasing hostility on campus to discussing issues of gender, class, and race. Anthropology faculty regularly run informal workshops to address issues of pedagogy and power. ***Departmental efforts should be matched at the college and campus levels with strong leadership and a commitment of resources.***

Longer term plans for hiring

As a four-field anthropology program, our department is committed to the renewal and growth of each of our subdisciplinary faculty groups. As a broadly interdisciplinary unit with a strong record of contributions to strategic initiatives across our campus, Anthropology is also poised to participate in (and is often a preferred partner for) a range of opportunities to expand campus excellence through targeted cluster or seeded hires. Our long term hiring planning anticipates balancing these two kinds of growth.

As of summer 2016, our tenure system faculty will stand at 23 FTE, reflecting a decrease of 11.3% over the past 5 academic years, and a decrease of 22.5% since AY 2007-08. In terms of our subdisciplinary faculty groups, our expected 2016-17 FTE staffing is as follows: Archaeology (5 tenure system + 1 visiting instructor); Biological Anthropology (8 tenure system + 2 specialized faculty); Linguistic Anthropology (2.5 + 1 visiting instructor + 1 postdoc); Sociocultural Anthropology (7.5 + 1 specialized faculty).

Our hiring priorities underscore the need for additional teaching staff to sustain our programs in archaeology and linguistic anthropology; the need to replace recent losses in our sociocultural and biological anthropology programs, and the need to build areas of excellence reflecting developments in Anthropology that promise to strengthen cross campus initiatives at the University of Illinois. Our hiring planning privileges thematic foci over regional coverage, although we recognize that regional diversity is essential to an anthropology program and we will target hiring along regional lines when our coverage of strategic areas lapses and when we see opportunities to contribute to regionally-themed clusters of excellence within our department or across campus. In those cases, we will seek to connect regional expertise with research addressing thematic priorities.

Additional action items resulting from the reviewers' report and self-study

Coordination with other programs in the biological sciences.

Anthropology is one of the programs in the biological science within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. However, our experiences in recent years, and the observations of the external review committee, make clear that this is sometimes overlooked by college and campus administration and ignored by other biology-focused units. Our curriculum, and the expertise of our faculty, position us well to serve students interested in the biological sciences—particularly students interested in human biology from an evolutionary perspective and in combination with social science perspectives. In this regard we bring both added capacity to the biological sciences in our college and across our campus, and we offer a uniquely holistic focus on human biology. ***We underscore the external reviewers' recommendation that the College provide more effective leadership and advocacy for the interests of our department among other biological sciences in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and across our campus.***

Anthropology in the new College of Medicine.

Our connection to medical and premedical training on our campus is a case in point of the previous action item. Anthropology staffs one of the foundational course sequences in medical training: human gross anatomy. We are also poised to contribute other courses in evolutionary medicine, and our long-stated hiring goal of replacing faculty expertise in medical anthropology will position us to better connect social science perspectives with biomedical training. We have recently been included among a group of units participating in discussions about the appointment of the first Dean of the new College of Medicine. We have not always been included in campus level discussions (such as the Provost's Biology Coordinating Committee) related to biology at the University of Illinois. ***In response to the observations of our external reviewers regarding the "peripheralization" of Biological Anthropology among biological sciences on our campus, we request continued and increased advocacy at the College and campus levels to ensure our inclusion in discussions regarding the future of medical education at Illinois.***

Field schools and summer tuition.

The External Review report observes that recent increases in summer tuition rates have dramatically reduced our enrollments in summer courses at the 400 level which provide experiential learning in the field and laboratory (e.g., Anth 454 and 455 for archaeology field schools). ***We request establishment of a special, reduced tuition category for these summer courses (analogous to the reduced rates established for Study Abroad programs), or a comparable off-set of tuition amounts by university-provided grants for students participating in these summer courses.*** This request is justified by the important role these experiential courses play in both our education and research missions.

Post-award and payables

Our self-study discussed systemic problems at OBFS regarding processing transactions related to international and field-based research activities. Because a number of Anthropology faculty are engaged in such research, we are especially impacted by these problems. Recent conversations among researchers hosted by LAS and IGB make it clear that this is also a campus-wide problem stemming largely from University of Illinois-specific policies and procedures, rather than the requirements of federal or other funding agencies. These administrative obstacles discourage cutting-edge international research and divert significant staff time. Individual researchers and department business staff are unable to effect significant change in these university policies. ***These systemic problems require attention from College and campus leaders able to advocate for the needs of international researchers from units across our campus.***

Improvements to the anthropology website and outreach efforts.

Many of our action plan goals will require improved and increased outreach efforts, beginning with our department website. The Anthropology website is poorly designed and out of date. Our efforts to address this in recent years have ranged from relatively minor redesigns and updates of the site to a commitment to a total redesign of the webpage. At every turn our own halting efforts have been further stymied by limited support from ATLAS, where changing support policies and changes in staff have made it difficult for us to carry out a sustained set of improvements to the website. Anthropology is recommitting the time and resources to carry out a redesign of our website. We consider this an emergency situation. ***We seek matching support from the College as well as college-level assistance in fast-tracking the redesign of our website.***