

MA in Applied Anthropology Proposal Review #4

My review of the proposed MA of Applied Anthropology is rather brief. Since I was involved in some fashion at all stages of the planning and discussion of this master's program in the IU School of Liberal Arts (curriculum development is part of my portfolio as associate dean of academic affairs), I obviously want the proposal to become reality, especially since my colleagues in the school formally voted unanimously in support of it.

Following are some background and explanations: This is a proposal that has been conceived by a small department that just completed a comprehensive program review. The external reviewers had many very good things to say about the program and its faculty, giving high praise to the graduate program in Museum Studies (this is a distinct graduate program under the departmental umbrella of Anthropology) and support to the proposed MA in Applied Anthropology.

The success of the Museum Studies graduate program and examples of other MAs in the IU School of Liberal Arts that have a strong "applied" component such as Public History served as models for the MA in Applied Anthropology. Given the constraints that all departments face in regard to adding more faculty to staff new, often niche-type graduate programs, they have developed ways to maximize already available resources to offer courses that fulfill the curricular demands stipulated by the respective professions and that serve the demands of students in the region and nationwide.

As a result, the core courses in the graduate program are for graduate students even if that means that class sizes in the beginning phase of the proposed program are small (hence expensive). For many of the elective courses in the program the classes are "combined" courses. Those courses have an undergraduate version and a graduate one (the courses are approved independently by the requisite curriculum committees). This is not an ideal solution but one for which best practices have been developed in the school over the past two decades. In Anthropology the distinction between the two components of those combined courses is easy to establish and maintain, especially because of the "applied" nature of the program that lends itself to individualized instruction and projects (even if the latter are conceived, developed, and completed as collaborative projects). Assuming increasing success of the program as well as of the enrollment-shaping initiative on campus (developed to increase revenues that can support the addition of new faculty) the "combined" courses will be uncoupled in the foreseeable future.

In summary, the development of a Master's program that relies on the combination of undergraduate and graduate sections builds on the successful experience with such courses in the IU School of Liberal Arts and, once the program is fully established the reliance on those "combined" courses will lessen.