

Response to Review for MA program in Applied Anthropology
Susan B. Hyatt
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Employment Possibilities

The reviewer has made an important point regarding employment possibilities. Given the present economic turmoil, it may be difficult to produce accurate projects of job opportunities. Nonetheless, trends within Central Indiana, including the growth in immigrant populations and the focus on life sciences bode well for the development of areas where anthropologists can and do make significant contributions. Many of our BA students decide to pursue post-graduation jobs based on their capstone “senior project” experience.

As active members of the consortium COPAA, Consortium of Programs and Applied and Practicing Anthropology, we have studied the outcomes of established programs that do succeed in placing their graduates in several fields of study including historic preservation and cultural resource management and with a range of not-for-profits in human services. Perhaps surprisingly, one “growth” area for anthropologists is in corporate and business anthropology. Large corporations, including such high-tech companies as Motorola and Intel, are hiring anthropologists to study how humans in various settings utilize technology. An article published in USA Today on July 7, 2007 (http://www.usatoday.com/tech/techinvestor/corporatenews/2007-07-10-windows-mobile_N.htm) notes the role that one anthropologist employed by Microsoft plays in developing new instruments for mobile technology by studying the everyday use of cell phones across different cultural settings. As the articles states,

“Flynn's ethnographic profiles are a foundation for Microsoft's efforts to capture a hefty slice of that burgeoning market. As "lead user-experience strategist," Flynn has studied cellphone users on three continents, scouring for clues on how to get ordinary people to come to rely on Windows smartphones.

She can expound on the cultural and nationalistic reasons why the Chinese are as passionate about their cellphones as Americans are about their cars. When it comes to using advanced cellphone features, Flynn says, Americans lag far behind Asians.”

In other areas as well, there is a growing recognition for the value of an anthropological perspective. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics 2007 report on the employment of social scientists,

“Anthropologists and archaeologists will experience the majority of their job growth in the management, scientific, and technical consulting services industry. Anthropologists who work as consultants apply anthropological knowledge and methods to problems ranging from economic development issues to forensics. As construction projects increase, more archaeologists also will be needed to monitor

the work, ensuring that historical sites and artifacts are preserved”
(<http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos054.htm>)

It would, granted, be unusual to find job listings calling for “applied anthropologists.” But, it is our belief (and, in some cases, our students’ experiences) that their skills in utilizing, for example, qualitative methods to analyzing particular social settings can be “marketed” to prospective employers, in both businesses and in the not-for-profit and human services sector.

One of our primary markets for recruiting graduate students will also be people already employed in human services and in not-for-profit organizations, who wish to acquire an advanced degree for purposes of promotion or in the interest of acquiring expertise in the use of qualitative methods, often for purposes of program evaluation.

It is difficult to predict what percentage of our MA graduates will go on to PhD programs; we would not anticipate that the primary role of our program is to serve as a feeder program en route to a PhD, though some students may pursue that route. Our main emphasis will be to provide students with advanced training that they can use in pursuing careers in areas where an anthropological perspective can offer additional insights.

Internship

Our internship model builds on our experiences with our BA students, and also on the guidelines put forth by the Master’s Program in Museum Studies. Internships will be undertaken only after a formal proposal has been completed and approved by the student’s committee, which would often include an external mentor. The internship will be designed by the committee, not by the host institution. Our experience with our BA students is that we are able to work out compromises with organizations, whereby our students not only provide a service but also are able to put to good use their analytical skills. We see the internship option as an important way for students to gain practical experience which complements their theoretical, methodological and practical instruction they have received through their coursework.

Student Committees

The suggestion to have committee members from outside the department is an excellent one. We have particularly close links at the undergraduate level with Geography and Public History. Through our MA program, we hope to strengthen our ties with the professional schools located in Indianapolis, especially SPEA, Nursing, Social Work and Education.

Graduate Level Work

The revised syllabi address the distinctions between undergraduate and graduate level work. It would be difficult for us to summarize these differences across the board because of the nature of our different sub-disciplines. At the very minimum, we expect graduate students to be able to assimilate literature that is more theoretically sophisticated than the material we offer to undergraduates. Methods-based courses in Biological Anthropology, Cultural Anthropology and Archaeology will have different conventions for assessing graduate-level work.

Student Handbook

The suggestion for a student handbook outlining clearly the program's policies is an excellent one.