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POINT-TO-POINT

PETER VAN ARSDALE, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



ANDREA AKERS, MANAGING EDITOR

Twenty years ago, several of us – led by John van Willigen – began a project which resulted in the publication of “Guidelines for Training Practicing Anthropologists.” We think these still are relevant today. The document was distributed, in a special folio, by the Society for Applied Anthropology. Following, with essential updates, are the central points:

A university or college interested in establishing a graduate-level training initiative for practicing anthropologists should explicitly identify it as such, i.e., as a “practicing anthropology,” “applied anthropology,” or (more recently) “public anthropology” program. Within this, definitive specializations – linked to the department’s strongest resources – should be identified, such as “policy research,” “international agriculture,” or “environmental rights.” The primary program administrator should have a Ph.D. or M.A. in anthropology and it should primarily be staffed by individuals with graduate degrees in the discipline. The program should have an integrated, organized plan of study that is consistent with the curriculum guidelines summarized in the next paragraph.

Training is accomplished through course work, mentoring, practical experience such as internships and service learning, and a thesis. Practice needs to be integrated into the educational experience from the beginning. Participation in complementary discipline-based organizations (such as the High Plains Society for Applied Anthropology), special projects, and sponsored events is strongly encouraged. The instructional curriculum should include courses on research methods (research design, data collection, data analysis, and ethics); basic statistical analysis; anthropological theory (with stress on substantive areas like cultural ecology, organizational behavior, and gender issues); cognates (e.g., gerontology, agricultural development, public health), which can involve work in other university departments; and professional issues (e.g., ethical practice, knowledge utilization, history of application). Any student-defined study plan needs to be approved by a departmental supervisor.

A formal internship or practicum is necessary to address some of the problems the professional anthropologist may encounter. It should provide the trainee with the opportunity to take on significant responsibility for engaging essential professional functions, this complemented by appropriate supervisory support, professional role modeling, and awareness of administrative structures. In planning the internship, careful consideration must be given to its duration (in the context of the overall instructional program); budgeted administrative support; student-specific funding opportunities; oral and written evaluations of the student’s performance; placements which are not ethically compromised; community-specific collaborative opportunities; and submission of a final report on accomplishments. The program should maintain an archive of organizations interested in sponsoring internships, of key contacts, and of final student reports.

Training faculty should have acquired professional competencies and field-based experiences that will enable them to fully assist these graduate students. This goes far beyond teaching and publishing. They must have the energy and enthusiasm to offer their time, and regular advising, to the students.

To conclude, we would like to thank the peer reviewers who assisted us with the articles that appear in this issue: Clare Boulanger, Ph.D.; Christopher Edwards, M.S., M.B.A.; Constance Holland, M.A.; Joanne Moore, M.A.; Timothy Schommer, M.A.; Teresa Tellechea, Ph.D.

—Peter Van Arsdale, Editor-in-Chief
—Andrea Akers, Managing Editor

