



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

January 26, 2011

To: Gerald Baldasty, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School
James Soto Antony, Associate Vice Provost and Dean for Academic Affairs
Judith Howard, Divisional Dean of Social Sciences, College of Arts & Sciences
Ana Mari Cauce, Dean, College of Arts & Sciences
Janice DeCosmo, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Academic Affairs

From: Bettina Shell-Duncan, Professor and Chair of the Department of Anthropology

RE: Response to the Department of Anthropology Program Review Report

On behalf of the faculty, staff and students of the Department of Anthropology, I want to express our gratitude for an extremely detailed, thoughtful and constructive review of our programs. We are well aware of the tremendous time and effort that is involved in program reviews, and we were honored to have such an excellent review committee. We were also quite pleased at the overall positive tone of the report, and the recognition of our many areas of strength. While the report focuses on both commendations and recommendations, we will focus on the latter in this response. In some areas progress has already been made, and others are the subject of ongoing work. And, unfortunately, a few are beyond our control in this challenging climate. Nonetheless, we continue to focus forward and create initiatives that will serve to maintain areas of excellence and strengthen our programs.

We solicited responses to the report in several forums: an open discussion in the January faculty meeting, and Advisory Committee meeting, and interdisciplinary faculty meetings. Additionally, through graduate student representatives for each program, we solicited feedback from graduate students. This process generated thoughtful feedback on how we might address areas that either currently or potentially pose challenges for our programs and members of our Department more broadly. We group them here by general themes.

Departmental culture and climate

The section of the report focused on departmental culture and climate addressed two main issues: 1) our recent workplace assessment and subsequent structural and procedural changes and trainings, and 2) the structure and function of the Department in semi-autonomous subdisciplines. It was recommended that the Department should continue working to create a climate that is conducive to problem solving and strategic planning by the entire department, not solely within sub-disciplines. While it was recognized that we have made strides in addressing structural and procedural issues that led to a period of tension in our Department, concern was expressed that "below the surface there remain fissures of still unresolved issues." We agree that we have made tremendous progress in re-examining and revising numerous processes in our Department, and have worked closely with an external consultant, and also utilized local resources for trainings (one training session, Identifying

Institutionalized Racism, was incorrectly attributed to our consultant in the report; this session was sponsored by students in the Evans School, and several faculty and graduate students in Anthropology attended). We also acknowledge that turn-around of long held practices and change in the Departmental climate will require on-going work. The report notes that with respect to promoting open discussion of social and epistemological diversity, more progress has been made among the faculty than graduate students; this point is corroborated by The Graduate and Professional Student Senate Program Review Report as well. We have and will continue to include graduate students in our on-going trainings and workplace initiatives. We wish to stress, however, that the changes that have been made thus far have come about from synergistic efforts from faculty across all subdisciplines. While the report notes that the organization of our department into subdisciplines is common across anthropology departments in the United States, the description of the subdisciplinary structure as “intellectual silos” glosses over numerous interconnections beyond the noted Epistemology Seminar. While this seminar has served as a bridge-building strategy, differences in epistemological approach are not delimited by subdiscipline. Faculty from different subdisciplines have collaborated in a variety of ways, including research collaborations, program development such as Medical Anthropology and Global Health, serving on Departmental committees, co-teaching, and graduate advising. While some anthropology departments are famous for rifts along subdisciplinary lines, we are not one of them, and we do not view the subdisciplinary structure as problematic. Further, we are not surprised that the review committee found that “there currently exists an impressive amount of consensus and collegiality.” In order to maintain this, we plan, as recommended in the report, to continue to promote forums for interaction across the subdisciplines, and plan to engage in a process of Department-wide strategic planning.

In contrast to the faculty, graduate students are more isolated within their subdisciplinary programs. We have taken steps to bring graduate students together in various social and intellectual forums, and will continue these efforts. Additionally, with the hire of a new lecturer, we plan to restore ANTH 100, a course that draws TAs from all subdisciplines, providing another site of workplace interaction and cross-subdisciplinary team building.

Support staff

We concur with the review committee’s conclusion that we have a very capable support staff. With the recent growth in our major, we agree with the recommendation that funding be restored for an additional professional undergraduate advisor. We recognize that with additional budget cuts that will be finalized this year, this is a considerable challenge in the near term, but we hope that the administration may find a way to allocate resources that would allow us to follow through on the advisory committee’s recommendation by hiring an additional undergraduate advisor.

Teaching distribution

The review committee applauded the success of our undergraduate curriculum initiative, which has resulted in the restructuring of foundations courses, the development to two track options in the major, and a near doubling of the size of the major in just two year. They also accurately noted the difficulty of having this unprecedented growth coincide with budget cuts. We wish to note that the Deans have recognized this growth, and have allocated very scarce resources to our Department to help maintain our instructional mission; we are currently conducting a search for an anthropological geneticist, whose courses will likely contribute to the MAGH curriculum. Additionally, we have been approved to offer a 25% appointment to medical anthropologist James Pfeiffer (currently in Global Health and Health Services), with the expectation that this appointment will increase to 50% at the end of the next biennium. We have also taken steps internally to meet the instructional needs of our undergraduate

majors. We have instituted a system of recommended minimum enrollment caps for all upper and lower division courses, with recommended sizes above those typically found in the past. We have also agreed on a uniform course load among all tenured and tenure track faculty across subdisciplines (previously the full load for archaeologists was 3 courses, and now it is 4 courses for all faculty). We have also taken measures to even out recommended credits per course among the subdisciplines. These steps address the review committee recommendation to address the uneven distribution of teaching responsibility.

Undergraduate honors program

The review committee report noted that there are structural issues that make it difficult for transfer students to complete our undergraduate honors program. Transfer students are at a particular disadvantage because they do not have as much time to plan courses needed for graduation around the required courses for the honors program. We have been aware of this issue for some years, and have previously taken steps to mitigate this problem. In particular, we have reduced the number of required courses to only two classes. We have taken steps this year to improve the ability of transfer students to plan for these courses by advertising the program earlier in Autumn Quarter, and having the advising staff assist prospective honors students in planning their schedules. In addition, we will continue to work with community colleges to both advertise and explain the requirements of Anthropology Honors.

Support and incentives for extramural funding

Overall faculty in the Department of Anthropology have had tremendous success in obtaining extramural funding for research. The report took exception to a statement in our self study in which some Sociocultural faculty question whether they could be competitive for funding given the nature of their scholarship. One of the next initiatives we are planning will focus on providing support and incentives for faculty to seek and win extramural funding. We are discussing plans for a grant writing workshop for faculty. Additionally, as recommended in the report, we are considering returning some portion of RCR to principle investigators as an incentive for grant writing.

Graduate programs funding

A common challenge shared across all graduate programs in the Department is limited graduate funding. Because the Department lacks reliable resources, we often are unable to offer funding packages needed to attract top applicants. Two specific recommendations are given in the review committee report. First, it is suggested that we consolidate grant RA and teaching funds in an effort to create 4-year funding packages. We will certainly have serious discussions about this recommendation. Second, it is recommended that we explore new graduate funding options such as NSF-IGERT and NIH training grants. Eric Smith currently has an NSF-IGERT, but support will end soon. We do plan to follow the committee's recommendation to explore sources of external graduate funding.

Diversity

The review committee report highlights the tremendous steps taken in the Department to recruit, retain and promote diverse faculty, staff and students. We formed a diversity committee in 2005, and important accomplishments of this committee include writing the Anthropology Diversity Statement that was adopted by our faculty, creating an Excellence in Hiring Rubric that is now presented as an example for search committees throughout the College, and writing Excellence in Hiring Guidelines. During our recent period of conflict, the issue of diversity and the role of the diversity committee was a flash point for conflict that became interwoven with anxieties over budget cuts and epistemological divisions. One outcome of our workplace assessment was to clarify the membership, roles and responsibilities of the committee by creating a committee charter, and subsequently we have been

working very productively on diversity-related initiatives. One of the recommendations of the review committee report is to continue to build ties to U.S. historically under-represented minorities. We wish to point out that we have ties to ethnicities that are representative of the uniqueness of the Pacific Northwest community (for example, Donna Leonetti's work with Japanese Americans and Miriam Kahn's work with Pacific Islanders in the Seattle area) and we are committed to forging new ties across campus and throughout the local area. Central to our identity as a department is our commitment to diversity in the broadest sense. Our ongoing graduate student recruitment and retention efforts, supported by GOMAP, reflect this commitment. At the same time, we continue to look for ways to support our faculty's commitment to diversity, and to enhance diversity-building strategies amongst broader segments of our faculty. For example, the Diversity Committee members and all search committee members attended a training session offered by UW Advance in January 2011 entitled "Interrupting Bias," and we plan to offer similar training in the future. The activities implemented this year are being closely monitored, and we will reassess these strategies in the near future.

Archaeology Program

We are pleased that the review report has recognized the consistently strong reputation of the Archaeology Graduate Program, the scholarly productivity of the program's faculty, and their social cohesiveness. The report commends the active research profile of the Archaeology faculty, and finds that "the UW Archaeology program remains lively and strong." The key concern centers on the diminished size of the program's faculty. At the time of the 2000 review, the faculty size had declined by 50%, and has not increased in the interim period. The report concludes that "if the pending retirements of their two most senior faculty (Don Grayson, Angela Close) is not counterbalanced by new hires in Archaeology, the UW Archaeology graduate program will be severely compromised." The specific recommendations in the report are: 1) to develop a multi-year hiring plan; 2) develop a broader curriculum; and 3) continue to have limited graduate admissions.

It is certainly true that the Archaeology program has a very small faculty (the correct number of archaeology faculty is not 6.25, the figure given in the table of page 13 of the Review document, but 5.75). A number of things follow from this. First, we concur that should the UW administration decide not to replace any departing faculty members, the Archaeology program will lose its viability as a nationally-recognized program. Second, the relatively small number of undergraduate courses offered in Archaeology follows from the small number of faculty members. The faculty has recently completed a process of revision of the curriculum and learning goals. However, the number of course offerings cannot be increased significantly without a corresponding increase in the number of faculty members. Cultural resource management, an area instruction mentioned in the report, is, in fact, being offered by Dr. Peter Lape. Third, we wish to note that the Archaeology program already has a long standing strategic plan developed in response to the 2000 program review focused on building our environmental archaeology program. This plan was revised to include archaeology of the Pacific Northwest, a specialty lost to us with Dr. Stein's departure from our program. We will follow the committee's recommendation to continue to revise this plan as the field changes and our program evolves. And finally, we plan to continue to follow our policy of limited graduate admissions, admitting only the number of students that we can support.

Biocultural Anthropology Program

The review committee report describes the Biocultural Anthropology Program as "one of the top in the country," and concludes that currently the program is "thriving." We are very appreciative of the numerous commendations of the research and graduate training in this report. Two key recommendations are forwarded. First, as the Department is currently conducting a search for an anthropological geneticist, an important consideration for successful recruitment is to identify

laboratory space that supports the research and training needs. Indeed, we have been in ongoing discussions with the Dean's office in this regard, and they worked hard to secure laboratory space. Second, the committee report notes that with two pending retirements, the Biocultural faculty are encouraged to develop a strategic program development and hiring plan over the next five years. Indeed, we do plan to follow this recommendation.

Sociocultural Anthropology Program

We appreciate the committee's comments on our productivity, overall strength, and successful record of graduate education and placement. We found their comparison to similar programs at comparable universities illuminating and would like to highlight their recognition of our disproportionate contribution to undergraduate teaching in the department. We also appreciate their comments on our extensive commitment to graduate student teaching and to undergraduate and graduate advising.

The committee made three specific recommendations: 1) build areas of strength over time, 2) establish a hiring plan to replace key faculty losses, and 3) consider decreasing the size of graduate admissions. In response to the committee's recommendations:

- As we described to the committee, the Sociocultural faculty has already developed an analysis of our areas of strength and is using these to plan clusters of undergraduate course offerings. These clusters—as the committee notes—can potentially be developed into areas of specialization as support for future hiring becomes available. We note that the addition of James Pfeiffer (eventually at 50%) will strengthen medical anthropology in the department.
- We will work toward a hiring plan as one aspect of the process of clarifying, developing, and advertising the strengths we have identified.
- The Sociocultural faculty has already addressed the issue of graduate student numbers. Since the committee's visit we have decided on an alternate-year admission process and are in the process of reconfiguring our graduate program around it. These changes have been informed by a great deal of hard work and thoughtful collaborative discussion, as well as research into how other graduate programs around the country are structured, and are intended to produce a larger graduate student cohort (but fewer numbers overall), a more efficient allocation of graduate teaching requirements, better use of upper-division courses for both graduate students and majors, and greater cohesion among entering cohorts.