

Review Committee Members:

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General Evaluation

The Anthropology Program is outstanding for its strengths in consistently recruiting and retaining majors; in maintaining an array of courses that provide grounding in the four fields of anthropology and extensive and intensive coursework in two of the four fields (cultural anthropology; archaeology) as well as standard courses for an anthropology program such as theory, research methods, prehistory, religion, and peoples and cultures of various world areas; and in providing students with significant hands-on, out-of-classroom experiences. The Program is also outstanding in recruiting, retaining, and supporting high-quality, high-energy, enthusiastic, committed faculty who go out of their way to engage students in critical thinking. These strengths are all the more salient for being maintained by a core faculty, including committed adjuncts, that is burdened with heavy teaching loads and that is too small in number.

Mission Statement and Its Relationship to Instruction (A,a)

The Mission Statement targets holistic knowledge, the comparative approach, and getting a strong sense of anthropology's relevance in today's world as the most important goals for the Anthropology Program. For a sense of how this Mission Statement is reflected in current faculty's thinking, reviewers asked the four tenure-track faculty members what were the five most important things they wanted majors to learn.

Faculty responded with: diversity awareness; critical thinking skills; the culture concept; quantitative and qualitative research skills (2); the global dimension of problem solving and anthropology's role in it; a sense of anthropology's four subfields and their applicability; a grasp of theory; knowing the literature in one or two of the subfields (2); how to think like an anthropologist; have good grounding in history (ethnohistory); assess arguments; how to get at information & problem solving; a sense of breadth of the world: what humanity is like; an understanding of evolution; why a scientific approach is important and its applications to "hot topics" such as "biological race". One faculty member volunteered the opinion that faculty should not feel obligated to have students end up as anthropologists; rather, they should be good citizens. Another faculty member volunteered that students should be encouraged to minor in political science or, if they are concentrating in archaeology, then botany or geosciences.

The two students who spoke to reviewers stated their appreciation for having to be made to think critically; form their own conclusions; and defend a position taken.

Thus faculty's and students' comments above reflect good concordance of what is being done in classes with the Mission Statement; however, they also indicate that some adjustment might be appropriate. "Holistic knowledge" could be interpreted in many different ways and thus loses its pedagogical import. It could be interpreted as referring to the necessity of instilling expertise in Anthropology's 4 subfields. However, only one faculty response mentioned the "4 subfields" as being important; 2 responses referenced familiarity with 1 or 2 subfields. Moreover, it is difficult to see how a truly anthropological "holistic" grounding can be accomplished with only one course each in biological and linguistic anthropology. Discussion with faculty indicates that there will soon be at least one upper division biological anthropology course and that some creative interdisciplinary programming might result in significantly more anthropology students pursuing studies or a minor in linguistics (see below).

No one specifically mentioned the "comparative approach", but rather, faculty and students mentioned the importance, and success, of learning and applying critical thinking skills; in authoritative grounding to interpreting the biological, cultural, and historical (both recent and deep¹) diversity of humanity; and in applying such expertise to contemporary problems in the interest of "good citizenry".

These responses indicate that the Mission Statement might well be revisited to better reflect the specificity of what is actually being taught in the classroom, and the impact of that classroom instruction. Generally, the educational program is well defined and the curriculum, taught by tenure-track and adjunct faculty with impressive expertise and credentials, enables graduates to achieve the mission **(A,c)**; and is consistent with the program's mission **(B,b)**. It is revision of the mission statement to better conform with this achievement that needs to be done.

Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Process (A,b; C)

Assessment of learning outcomes is done on an annual basis, with a comprehensive assessment process being administered every five years. Assessment procedures are developed and applied on a university-wide basis, with the specific measures used determined by the individual academic programs. The assessment procedures are clear, realistic and adequate, although the measures are not so. The overarching program goals, stating the expected knowledge, are well articulated. The interpretation of findings, based on the learning outcomes and measures, is clear. However, assessment could be made more robust.

While exit surveys with graduating seniors have been done, faculty discussed the difficulties of using this procedure with reviewers. It was acknowledged that because the burden of participation rests with the students, and because students have many priorities at the end of their college careers, 100% participation is not realistic. Therefore, exit surveys are supplemental, rather than definitive.

¹ "Deep" history references history accessible only through archaeological methodology.

No curricular or pedagogical changes were deemed necessary as a result of assessments conducted between 2011 and 2015. Aggregated evidence **(C, b)** points to a successful program that does not need improvement. Anticipated program changes will likely be driven by changes in the collective faculty expertise with one new faculty member coming on board in Fall 2017 and an anticipated retirement in the near future. With such a small faculty carrying an extraordinary teaching load, there is little flexibility. It is clear that what might drive or inhibit program change **(C, e)** are factors beyond the Anthropology Program's and the Sociology and Anthropology Department's control: allocation of faculty lines for new hires and administrative demands for a minimum number of students in each class.

In discussing course offerings, one faculty member mentioned the possibilities for implementing program change through offering new courses under the 9 "variable titled courses" in the 2810, 2920, 2990, 3600, 4830 and 4810, 4920, and 4990 series. Courses that attract minimum enrollments or better could be offered on a regular basis. However, low student enrollments in these courses would indicate that permanent changes are neither necessary nor a good allocation of resources, and therefore program changes should be approached cautiously.

There is actually no indication that program change is being implemented on the basis of assessment of learning outcomes. However, assessment procedures are not very robust. Assessment is done in classroom settings. The measures are performance on classroom tasks that are also used to evaluate students' comprehension, knowledge, and diligence on assignments and to assign grades. Therefore, the faculty are evaluating themselves with the same instruments that they have developed and use to evaluate the students. Although the evaluation instruments are largely concordant from class to class, there is some variation in the number and kind of evaluation instruments used. More importantly, no minimum thresholds of evaluation have been established. Thus there are no department-established thresholds against which measures can be reviewed **(C b, d)**.

Recommendations

Although it is probably beyond the scope of the assessment mandate for the Sociology and Anthropology Department to deviate from standard procedures, the current methods could be made more robust by standardizing which evaluation instruments are going to be used, and also specifying exactly what percentage of students achieving grades of A, B, C or below will indicate satisfactory achievement of Program goals. The reviewers do recommend that department assessment measures be developed that can be administered above and beyond the use of grades on assignments. It might also be useful, in courses that serve as the introduction to the major as well as satisfying general education requirements, to distinguish

between majors and non-majors in these classes.² The reviewers also recommend that as long as the present system is in place, a statement of learning thresholds for acceptable performance on measures be established.

Curriculum

Courses to support the major/minor/general education programs are offered on a regular basis and ensure students are able to complete graduation requirements in a timely manner **(B,d)**. Despite the fact that the Assessment reports indicate that no changes have been made in the Anthropology Program in the last ten years, there is recognition that the curriculum will change soon, with the recent hiring of an archaeologist to bring the faculty back up to 4.75. There is recognition that the biological anthropology component must be made more robust, with at least one upper-division course being regularly offered. One area outside of the program that needs to be taken into consideration during curriculum reviews is the Linguistics Minor. This minor utilizes the Language and Culture class and has a capstone course that is occasionally taught by one of the Anthropology faculty.

Allocation of Resources (B,c); Program Support (F)

Three outstanding features of the Program deserve to be highlighted. One is the very well-outfitted archaeological laboratory and tandem field school facilities and tools. The lab is large and roomy. It has water laid on; it has a half dozen washing basins and screens available for student use; and there are more than an adequate numbers of trowels, shovels, surveying instruments, and other equipment. Equipment is hauled to field sites in two trailers stored adjacent to the lab. Convenient artifact storage facilities are capacious and accessible. The facilities for archaeological research and analysis are better than those available to many masters-level programs.

Several more features contributing immensely to preparing students to achieve a solid grounding in what it means to be a practicing anthropologist are the archaeological field school; an internship program that has placed students in such widely diverse sites as Guatemala and Belize; long-standing partnerships with the Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest and with the Natural Resources Conservation Service that will continue to provide students with hands-on experience in local settings; and a recently initiated cultural anthropology field experience. The field school has accessed a number of different sites in the Great Basin and will continue to provide training and experience at a rock shelter site in northeastern Idaho where subsistence activities focused on bighorn sheep hunting and processing. Students become familiar not only

² The reviewers acknowledge that doing this may not be feasible. The “Executive Summary for the Weber State University Anthropology Program Review Self-Study, AY 2011-2012 to AY 2015-2016” has two different statistics for Anthropology majors: 139 v. 75. The explanation for this discrepancy is that many more students declare as Anthropology majors than end up fulfilling major requirements and graduating as such.

with desert culture tools and food procuring techniques, but also with how to identify animal bones evidencing human processing.

An annual summer field school opportunity in Ireland, doing oral history, also provides excavating experience at Galway Castle through a creative “tweaking” of the University’s study abroad program.

Administrative support is outstanding. One administrative specialist has responsibility for both the Anthropology Program and the Sociology Program; a couple dozen tenure-track and adjunct faculty; a couple hundred majors; and a budget that has a number of different components. This administrative specialist coordinates party planning, does graduation checks, organizes an annual Department of Sociology and Anthropology Student Research Conference, and orchestrates distribution of scholarships. Although she does not do course scheduling, she enters the schedule into the University’s Banner system and flags potential conflicts.

Relationships With External Communities (G)

The reviewers met with the two local archaeologists, one from Uinta-Wasatch-Cache National Forest (NF) and one with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Rachelle Handley of the NF praised the student volunteers from Weber State as some of the best volunteer workers she has had on the Strawberry Valley Project. Students measured, weighed, classified, recorded, and archived artifacts, and one did faunal analysis that nobody else – volunteer or on staff – could have done. She described the Weber State student volunteers as crucial because, although the NF has some seasonal workers, there are only two archaeologists for all three forests and routinely having students has put the NF archaeology program years ahead of where it otherwise would be.

Shelly Szeghi uses volunteer interns in the Natural Resources Conservation Service. In winter, they draft reports, do archival work, work on site recordd, and recruit additional volunteers. In summer, they are out during pedestrian surveys, GPS navigation, field mapping and base camp logistics (sometimes on private land), and draft reports for the State Historic Preservation Office. The two Weber State Anthropology interns she had worked well independently. Are they crucially important? Yes! There are only three archaeologists for all of Utah, with 50,000+ acres to survey.

Academic Advising and Career Placement (D)

The primary evidence of effective advising is a steady number of majors over the years, as well as BIS students. This steady number is well documented. The two students who spoke with the reviewers emphasized the personal attention they receive from faculty as well as from the administrative specialist in planning their programs (although the administrative specialist does not do actual advising) and in making career decisions, as well as the opportunities to bond with fellow students. They specifically contrasted the Anthropology Program favorably with their experiences in other programs in which they had formerly begun to major. The

internships, covered above, as well as the field school provide hands-on experience for students contemplating a career in archaeology.

Faculty (E)

The faculty are highly qualified and experienced. All faculty carry teaching loads, ranging from 300 to 600 students annually, each, in eight classes per year (12 credit hours per semester). Such teaching loads are far too heavy, even for a teaching university. These burdensome teaching loads leave little time or opportunity for professional development. Yet faculty have, in fact, at times placed scholarly work in significant publication venues; regularly presented results of research at professional conferences; and pursued participation in professional activities. The Dean's office does provide the possibility for a one-course release per year per faculty member upon application to a faculty committee. However, it is unlikely that a particular faculty member would receive more than one of these releases once every few years. Therefore, professional activities are, in a sense, on a built-in time delay, with faculty having to juggle time and priorities in order to continue research or disseminate the results of research that might have been begun during one of these course releases. While some creative rotation of low-enrollment, upper division classes with heavily enrolled introductory and general curriculum courses might offer some relief from consistently heavy teaching loads, realistically, the faculty numbers need to be increased from 4.75 to 5.75.

A significant factor in the stability of the faculty, the quality of courses, and the educational experiences highly valued by students is the long-term commitment of the faculty. Faculty effectiveness is assured through tenure and post-tenure review. Not only have the majority of faculty members been in their positions for more than 25 years, but also adjunct faculty have consistently returned year after year to teach in the program, often taking on classes with heavy enrollment. 45% of student credit hours are generated by adjunct teaching. Therefore, in many ways, the "core faculty" are not only those on tenure-track lines, but also those who continue to provide important instructional service as adjuncts. In fact, two of the tenure-track faculty members actually began their involvement in the Anthropology Program as adjuncts. One began a cultural anthropology field experience for students as a component of study abroad when still an adjunct. Adjunct pay is in line with other colleges in the region, but it is a fact that adjunct pay in the Mountain West is notoriously low in most instances. The reviewers recommend that the University a) investigate ways to improve adjunct compensation in consideration of the commitment of its adjuncts in this Program. And b) search for a way to commit itself to acknowledging the effectiveness of the core faculty by allocating to it, one additional tenure-track line.

Program Summary: Implementation of Recommendations from Previous Reviews (H):

The 2012 review recommended expanding the upper level course offerings in cultural anthropology. While some additional topical courses could be added (such as, perhaps, Environmental Anthropology or Folklore), the Program seems to have a good spread of upper level topical courses represented in regular offerings covering topics such as "social

organization" (ANTH 3700, "Sex Roles" Past, Present and Future") and "the anthropology of religion" (ANTH 3900 "Magic, Shamanism and Religion"), Advanced Cultural Anthropology and Special Topics. Culture Area Studies seems to fulfill the "Peoples and Cultures of xx" that is a standard component of anthropology programs. The review committee also seemed to feel that "cutting edge" material was not being included in course content. The 2017 reviewers did not find this to be so. While we did not conduct an examination of course content, the experience and participation of faculty in contemporary settings and issues (conflict in Iraq, Weber State's annual Storytelling Festival, collecting of oral traditions in Ireland, Native artistry on the Northwest Coast) indicate that there is not just reliance on "standard texts" or "cutting edge" case studies for course content.³

The 2012 review recommended an increase in the \$700 per faculty member for travel. This has been done, although the few hundred dollars added still does not come close to covering conference participation expenses. Nonetheless, lack of funding for faculty travel to conferences is a chronic feature of nearly all except the best funded universities.

While the review noted limited funding for student research, the internship opportunities seem to mitigate this limitation to some extent.

The 2012 review recommended a more prominent "public face" for "general" (cultural) anthropology program commensurate with the "public face" in archaeology. Improving this "public face" is still an important goal to pursue; however, doing so requires yet additional uncompensated work by faculty to set up internships and/or community-engaged/ service learning experiences. While it was noted in conversations with faculty that a University-level community engagement program exists through which this goal could be pursued, we all agreed that available situations do not always satisfy an anthropological perspective.

Night class funding was noted as underfunded. One of the students we spoke with noted that night classes were not supported. Thus, this issue continues to be salient. However, this situation is one over which the Program and the Department have no control. Most night courses are not taught in load. They are either taught by adjuncts or as overload by the regular faculty. In either case, the funding is from Continuing Education. Often exacerbating the problem is a lack of suitable adjuncts in the Ogden area to teach specialty upper division classes. The 2012 review also noted that faculty leadership in study abroad was uncompensated and should not be so. This still seems to be the case.

The greatest weakness noted in the 2012 review was that the program was "understaffed, hence overworked and unsustainable in the long run". The reviewers noted that this would be a difficulty in finding younger faculty. This continues to be the case. The Program has been

³ It should also be noted that much of the "postmodern" writing in anthropology references arcane perspectives imported from the fields of literary criticism and philosophy that are more suitable for graduate students than for undergraduates.

fortunate in being able to hire high-quality faculty who already have some connection with the Program, either as adjuncts or in a having long-term liaison with program faculty.

The reviewers recommended tracking employment and careers undertaken by graduated students. We note that this still needs to be done, but in conversations with the Anthropology faculty and the Chair of the Sociology and Anthropology Department, we noted the logistic challenges of doing so; some graduated students simply do not engage in social media such as LinkedIn or even Facebook.

The review also noted that “the assessment survey is problematic as a tool of assessment since it tautologically biases in favor of certain answer within what it wishes to test.” This is still the case, noted above.

Program Summary: Our Recommendations:

- (1) Allocate one additional tenure-track line specifically to the Anthropology Program;
- (2) Improve adjunct compensation in consideration of the commitment of its adjuncts in this Program;
- (3) Provide funding for faculty study abroad leadership and participation;
- (4) Increase the standard amount per faculty member for travel and professional development;
- (5) Develop at least two upper-level courses in biological anthropology to provide a robust learning experience in this field;
- (6) Seek to enhance the linguistics component of the program by incorporating some aspects of the linguistics minor into the electives list for Anthropology, or, if this cannot be done, it might be appropriate to examine the wisdom of trying to maintain a “four field” anthropology major with only one introductory linguistics course;
- (7) Develop assessment procedures and measures that can be administered above and beyond the use of grades on assignments;
- (8) For the current assessment procedures and measures, develop a statement of learning thresholds for acceptable performance on measures;
- (9) Revisit the Mission Statement to ensure that it does, in fact, reflect the priorities that faculty are emphasizing in their courses and the course outcomes.