

Department of Anthropology Action Plan

This Action Plan has been prepared in response to the report by the Chancellor's Committee on Latina/o Issues titled "Latinas/os at the University of Illinois: A History of Neglect and Strategies for Improvement, 1992-2002."

The Department of Anthropology is committed to the interlinked goals of recruiting and retaining a diverse departmental scholarly community of faculty and students, developing our departmental curriculum and our teaching practices in ways that affirm and expand the inclusive and broad scope of our discipline, and building interdisciplinary bridges across our campus that promote and extend these aims throughout the University of Illinois. The Chancellor's charge to develop a departmental action plan arrives at a critical moment in UIUC anthropology because we have received important criticisms from the Latina/o constituency in the department. We have listened to these and plan to use this opportunity to begin redressing the problems they have identified. We approach this challenge as part of a larger opportunity to revitalize our scholarly community and to rethink and re-envision anthropology today. In particular, we plan to seize the challenge to respond to the needs of Latina/os groups as an opportunity to diversify the environment for all students and faculty through a broad evaluation of the department that encompasses hiring, graduate recruitment, graduate and undergraduate curriculum, collegial interactions, and the pedagogical methods and spirit of our classrooms and professional training.

As a discipline that has grappled with a serious critique of its connections to racial and colonial formations, these issues are not new to anthropology. Given the problems that our department has had with its racial climate and given our discipline's long engagement with a parallel critique, we believe that we have an important responsibility to respond seriously and in a broad-based fashion to the challenges of the Report of the Chancellor's Committee on Latina/o issues. The climate issues outlined in the Chancellor's report are lived in the Department of Anthropology. We are grateful for the Chancellor's report and the opportunity to list and address these problems:

- Chilly Climate for faculty and graduate students from underrepresented groups
- Racial tokenism/taxation of minority faculty and graduate students
- Public use of racist language and images
- A Perception that students and faculty of color have been treated differentially in a variety of departmental decisions and policies

While specific plans of action will be detailed below, we wish to highlight that, as a result of discussing the Chancellor's Committee's report, the department plans to form a standing Committee on Diversity and Departmental Community which, beginning in AY 2004-05, will have responsibilities that include oversight of the implementation of this Action Plan and its subsequent development.

Since the mid-1990s, the Department of Anthropology has had marginal success in recruiting and retaining faculty and students from underrepresented groups. Three members of our faculty

are from these groups. Two of them are Latina/o, and both of them are tenured. Minority faculty members in Anthropology represent 16.6% of the 24 current full-time faculty members in our department. Within the context of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Illinois, we note that of 325 faculty hires between 1992 and 2002, 25% were scholars identified as Latina/o, African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, or American Indian. 19 scholars (5%) were Latina/o.

While such small samples should be interpreted with caution, we note that these departmental patterns exceed trends in our discipline. According to surveys conducted by the American Anthropological Association, “minority representation in anthropology Ph.D. cohorts increased over the 1990s from 13% in 1990 to 15% in 1997” (the latest year for which we currently have data). These percentages are slightly higher than the 10% of all Ph.D.s awarded to U.S. citizens of racial/ethnic minorities in 1992 according to the National Research Council. Within the discipline of anthropology which includes four principal subfields –archaeology, biological anthropology, linguistics, and sociocultural anthropology – anthropologists of color are most strongly represented in sociocultural anthropology, with approximately 70%-75% of minority Ph.D.s in the mid-1990s specializing in that subfield. In the UIUC department, all of the scholars of color hired have been specialists in sociocultural anthropology.¹

The work of our principal professional society, the American Anthropological Association (AAA), in monitoring these developments reflects a disciplinary commitment at the national level to professional diversity and inclusion. Writing in 1996, the AAA’s Commission on Minority Issues in Anthropology, observed:

It remains indisputable that anthropological training, critical to the development of cadres of culturally sensitive educators, researchers and practitioners in the academy, business, and the public sectors, should be available to members of all ethnic and cultural groups and communities in the United States. However that has not been the case: there is little or [no] anthropology being taught in predominately minority institutions as well as little active recruitment and nurturing of minority students and scholars. In recent years, there has been a burgeoning consensus that the discipline of anthropology is severely handicapped from fulfilling its potential contribution to understanding different cultures by its historic dilemma in failing to attract students from underrepresented populations...²

This action plan shares these goals and concerns and participates in and builds upon a set of initiatives, detailed below, presently underway at the national level through the work of the American Anthropological Association.

U.S. minority graduate students (i.e., self-identifying as African American, Hispanic or Latina/o, or Native American) in our department currently make up 15.4% percent of our graduate student body, or 14 out of 91 students. These numbers reflect the total number of graduate students

¹ Data on national trends are reported in David B. Givens, Patsy Evans, and Timothy Jablonsky “1997 AAA Survey of Anthropology Ph.Ds,” available at <http://www.aaanet.org/surveys/97survey.htm>

² “AAA Commission on Minority Issues in Anthropology Report, Recommendation for a Committee for Minority Issues in Anthropology within the American Anthropological Association” (February 28, 1996), available at <http://www.aaanet.org/committees/minority/report.htm>

currently making progress toward a degree in anthropology. In this they differ from the number reported by the Graduate College for our department as these reflect only graduate students registered for a given semester.³ Among students currently registered (Spring 2004), 10 (15.4%) self identify as African American, Hispanic or Latina/o, or Native American, out of a total of 65 currently registered graduate students. Eleven students identifying as Hispanic or Latina/o comprise 12% of the total graduate student body in anthropology. Of these twelve, eight are currently registered. As of Spring 2004, in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences generally, 115 minority students (49 African American; 64 Hispanic or Latina/o, 2 Native American) constitute 4.8% of a graduate student body of 2,362. Latina/o graduate students comprise 2.7% of this student body. Of the 14 current minority anthropology students, four are in the first year (one African American, two Hispanic or Latina/o, and one Native American (on medical leave), four are in their second year (one African American, three Hispanic or Latina/o), one student (Hispanic or Latina/o) is completing her third year, two (Hispanic or Latina/o) are in their fourth year, one student (Hispanic or Latina/o) is in her seventh year, and one (Hispanic or Latina/o) is in her tenth year. Three of these students have completed their preliminary examinations, which we expect students to do by the end of their fourth year.

Of the four students currently in our program longer than four years, two have completed preliminary examinations that are required to undertake doctoral dissertation research. Two have received Masters Degrees. One of these self-identified Latina/o students will defend a doctoral dissertation this spring. Of these 14 self-identified minority students, 8 have received Graduate College Fellowships. We report this last statistic to demonstrate the importance of these resources for recruitment of graduate students from underrepresented groups. Finally, we recognize the challenge of the Chancellor's committee to develop more nuanced categories for talking about minority student experiences and particularly the various groups included under the designations Hispanic or Latina/o (the usage recommended by the Chancellor's Committee). To that end, we note the more delimited criteria of Graduate College Fellowships for students from "underrepresented minority groups" (which give priority to "students of African American, Mexican American, Puerto Rican, and Native American descent"). Nine of our current graduate students (six currently registered) are from underrepresented minority groups as defined by the Graduate College. Three of five incoming Ph.D. students (one has deferred for one year) are identified as Latina/o.

While the Department of Anthropology has experienced modest gains in the 1990s, a longer historical trajectory helps to place these figures in a broader context.⁴ In the late 1960s to mid 1970s, a handful of African American students

³ Our data regarding graduate students in anthropology are taken from each student's self-identification on their applications for graduate admissions. We understand this to be the same method used by the Graduate College to report minority student enrollments. Additional differences between the numbers we report and numbers reported by the Graduate College may stem from some students registering after the date on which the Graduate College generated its statistics. Our experiences compiling and comparing these numbers point to additional tasks to be undertaken at the departmental and campus level to ensure an accurate and meaningful statistical representation of graduate student diversity that facilitates efforts to address the concerns and challenges raised by the Chancellor's Committee's report.

⁴ These figures reflect data collected via Department files, and anecdotal information collected from former students and senior faculty. There is a dire need to systematically accurate information about recruitment, enrollment, retention, and success.

were recruited and enrolled. Four of these students completed doctoral degrees with concentrations in cultural anthropology. One student completed a Master's degree with a concentration in archaeology. During that period, one doctoral student from Puerto Rico specializing in archaeology was also recruited. This student was the first Latino/Hispanic student in the anthropology program. He completed his doctorate in the late 80s. There was a hiatus in the recruitment of minority students from the mid 1970s to the early 1980s. In 1983, two sociocultural graduate students from underrepresented groups were recruited to the Department. An African American and a Puerto Rican student received graduate fellowships for one year and modest support from the Department of Anthropology. The bulk of their support came from the African American Studies and Research Program, other units on campus that serve the underrepresented population, and outside sources. Throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, several students from these groups were recruited to UIUC. An African American student left the program after two years, citing an inhospitable environment in which to pursue a Ph.D. Another African American student was recruited. He was awarded a one-year graduate fellowship and, once again, with modest support from the department and outside funding, he was able to complete his doctorate. An increasing number of Latino/Hispanic students were recruited in the 1990s. Among these were two students of Mexican descent, one Cuban American, and three of Central and/or South American descent. Three of these students specialized in archaeology, two in cultural anthropology and one in biological anthropology. The success of these students has varied. Of note is that the two students from underrepresented groups (Mexican Americans) are no longer actively enrolled in the Ph.D. program, and neither is the student of Central American descent. Of this cohort, only one sociocultural student completed a Ph.D. The second sociocultural student is expected to complete her PhD this spring or summer. A Puerto Rican student was recruited four years ago with a one year Graduate Fellowship, and he has received subsequent support with teaching assistantships. Since then, the Department has been able to successfully recruit graduate students (four of Mexican descent, one of Cuban/Dominican descent, 1 of South American descent, 2 African Americans and 1 Native American) with Graduate College Fellowships ranging from one to three years and support in the form of teaching assistantships.

While these numbers are consistent with and indeed ahead of national trends in our field and patterns on our campus, **we note that relative percentages alone do not make community.** Indeed, as aforementioned, many Latina/o students and faculty of color have felt excluded from the larger department of anthropology community.

Anthropology faculty and students are part of a campus community. Our goal as a leading public research university should be to produce cohorts of scholars that more adequately reflect our society. This is a goal not yet reached. In recent years, a growing cohort of Latina/o and other faculty and students has voiced concerns and criticisms about our department and our campus. These have too often been misunderstood as isolated moments of crisis rather than as indications of ongoing systemic problems in our curriculum, in our departmental community, on our

campus, and beyond. Similarly, we recognize that our department has too often failed to seize these crises as opportunities to positively transform and renew itself. The report of the Chancellor's committee, documenting specific experiences and campus-wide patterns related to Latina/os at the University of Illinois, challenges us to build upon our beginnings in this area, to learn from our mistakes, and to strive to be a leader for other units on our campus and other anthropology programs nationally.

Our relative concentration of faculty specializing in Latina/o studies, ethnicity, and race and racialization place UIUC in the forefront of anthropology programs nationally and has enabled us to recruit a superb group of graduate students with research interests in these areas. Therefore, we see our program as a tremendous resource to our campus, to the State of Illinois, and to our discipline. We note the very important participation of a number of our faculty and students on the Chancellor's committee, and the contributions of anthropologists in leadership positions across our campus – in Latina/o Studies, the Center for the Study of Democracy in a Multiracial Society, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, Asian American Studies, Jewish Studies, Asian Studies, and the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities. Yet, we also observe that our record of disciplinary service to this campus has drawn away energy and expertise that might otherwise have been focused more directly on our department. Our Action Plan details our efforts to address this. The cultural anthropology program has identified hiring an anthropologist of African America/the African diaspora as its top priority. We hope that future hiring decisions will recognize the vital role anthropologists play across our campus and will enable our faculty to sustain and increase these important contributions.

DEPARTMENTAL GOALS AND ACTIONS

Below we detail the goals and actions proposed to address the current state of race relations in our department. We note, however, that no actions will be successful unless we, as a community, fully take stock of our recent past. Specifically, this entails public departmental admission of racist and exclusionary practices, however unintentional. We begin below with recommendations for fostering departmental community because we understand that, without these efforts, none of the other curricular and training measures will succeed.

Fostering departmental community

This Action Plan, focused on becoming more inclusive with respect to Latina/o faculty and students and other students and faculty from underrepresented groups, is inseparable from ongoing efforts to foster a deep sense of intellectual community across our department.

Specific actions:

- Hold a departmental workshop with a mediator on issues of race and community.
- Establish mechanisms for graduate students to communicate concerns and problems, especially around issues of race, to the department at large. (This will fall under the

scope of the standing Committee on Diversity and Departmental Community, discussed below).

- Work with counseling professionals on campus to assist us in the sometimes highly emotional process of negotiating these relations and make sure that all department members understand the availability and importance of these campus services.
- Encourage the resumption of an electronic departmental newsletter.
- Encourage the resumption of graduate student conferences.
- Plan department wide social events and activities such as beginning and end of the year potlucks and picnics.
- Redesign and improve the graduate student lounge.

Recruitment and retention of faculty and students

The Department of Anthropology affirms its ongoing commitment to maintaining and increasing diversity among our faculty and students. We are committed to identifying and improving best practices for recruiting Latina/o and other graduate students from underrepresented groups to our department. This involves continuing and expanding our participation in Educational Equity Programs such as the Summer Research Opportunities Program and the McNair Scholars Program, in Fee Waiver Programs such as Project 1000, and in Recruitment and Fellowship Programs both on campus and nationally.

Specific actions:

- Assemble and review data from previous searches and prepare an evolving set of recommendations for future faculty searches.
- Explore ways of working more closely with recruitment efforts at the UIUC Graduate College to increase the number of applications to all subfields in anthropology from undergraduate students of color.
- Provide information and workshops for anthropology faculty to encourage increased participation of anthropologists in mentorship programs and other recruitment efforts.
- Continue efforts to assess progress through program milestones and time to degree of graduate students in anthropology with particular attention to current cohorts of students of color and the successes and failures of the department in nurturing them through our program.
- Continue to seek new faculty hiring opportunities that will enable anthropology to maintain and build upon its strengths. Include as part of this effort identification of candidates for TOPS hiring initiatives.

Classroom environment

We recognize that the steady diversification of our graduate student body in terms of race, ethnicity, and sexuality requires us to evaluate and transform our teaching strategies as well as curricular offerings to create a departmental culture of debate, argumentation, and respectful disagreement. We commit as a department to openly engage with debates about our discipline's historical association with imperialism, with the implications of white privilege and power, and

the racial politics of contemporary anthropology and our contemporary world. We commit as a department to creating classroom environments that make all students feel included and valued and that can be spaces of open and honest discussion and debate based in mutual respect.

Specific actions:

- Form reading/discussion groups and provide workshops for faculty on best practices for diverse classrooms at the undergraduate and graduate level.
- Include in current professional training for graduate students discussions about classroom environment and about diversity in our discipline and in our educational institutions.
- Establish these goals as something all faculty advisors will strive to reinforce and model for their advisees.
- Continue as a department to urge the University of Illinois Board of Trustees to join us in creating a welcoming campus environment for all students by retiring the campus mascot, Chief Illiniwek.

First year graduate students

The Chancellor's Committee's report underscores the importance of the first year experience for shaping graduate student cohorts and establishing a sense of inclusion or disaffection that stays with students throughout their career at UIUC. We commit to focusing on our first year and first semester experiences to create a more welcoming, accessible and functional department that explicitly includes all students from the moment of their arrival.

Specific actions:

- Develop a set of orientation activities for incoming graduate students that will address themes of race, diversity and inclusion and make clear our expectations for collegial interactions in our classrooms, in our hallways and lounges, and across our campus.
- As part of an ongoing reexamination of our graduate curriculum, focus particularly on the first year experience both for its cohort building function and for its presentation of a community of scholarship that includes and values a wide and sometimes divergent range of interests and positions.
- Encourage the formation of formal mentoring relationship between faculty and graduate students of color. These would supplement relations with preliminary academic advisors and ensure a network of committed faculty contacts for students from the moment of their entrance to the program.
- Providing secure office space for all anthropology graduate students. Currently only students with TA or RA appointments receive office space. Students with fellowships (and this includes a number of students of color) do not currently have office space within the department.
- Increasing the accessibility and functionality of other spaces of student life in our department: e.g., extending the hours of the department computer lab; redesigning our student lounge.

Graduate Curriculum:

It is clear to us that a number of students approaching their graduate work in sociocultural anthropology from the theoretical perspectives of ethnic studies or other critical theoretical approaches such as queer studies believe that their interests are marginalized and undervalued in our department and that their contributions to our discipline are silenced. This is the case for a number of Latina/o students. While we share a departmental aim of training anthropologists, we understand our discipline to be a broad and varied one. In line with discussions at the national level by the American Anthropological Association, we recognize that race “matters” in all of the subdisciplines of anthropology, not simply as a topic of study, but in terms of the politics of scholarly practice. We commit as a department to reviewing our graduate curriculum and our disciplinary philosophy, to learn from the experiences of recent cohorts of students, and to find ways to train our students that serve and value all of them.

Specific actions:

- Plan, in coordination with the public education program “Understanding Race and Human Variation” being undertaken by the American Anthropological Association, a series of colloquia and seminars that feature critical race perspectives on the discipline. Give this series a particular focus by inviting Latina/o academics and other scholars of color to serve as role models and future mentors for Latina/o students and other students of color in the program.
- During academic year 2004-05, invite Professors Alan Goodman (Professor of Anthropology, Hampshire College, President-Elect American Anthropological Association) and Yolanda Moses (Visiting Professor Claremont Graduate University, Past President: American Association of Higher Education; City College of New York; American Anthropological Association) to speak on our campus.
- Devote a semester of the Sociocultural Anthropology Workshop to a program focused on current critical scholarship on race in the U.S. and the challenges to anthropology.
- Initiate, through these and other events, dialogues with scholars from ethnic studies programs on our campus to thicken intellectual and collegial ties.
- Provide resources and encouragement to support the formation of graduate student and faculty reading groups that might: bring together diverse groups of students and faculty, complement the existing graduate curriculum in ways that will be more immediately responsive to the interests of different cohorts of students, and serve as something of an intellectual laboratory for course development within our department.
- Draw upon resources within our discipline and resources on our campus, such as the Graduate College career center, to support students considering a range of career paths—applied, public, and academic—within anthropology and beyond.

Undergraduate programs

We will be implementing a number of changes to our undergraduate major over the next two years. This will be linked to an effort to increase the number of anthropology majors on our campus. As part of this additional attention to our undergraduate program, we commit to assess the experiences of Latina/o students and other students of color within our major and the

experiences of undergraduate students of color who enter our classrooms fulfilling General Education requirements or for other reasons.

Continuing elaboration and implementation of this Action Plan

We intend this Action Plan as an evolving document to be informed and improved through many of the initiatives detailed above.

Specific actions:

- A student-faculty task force has been formed and will be undertaking a range of fact-finding measures intended to provide an ethnographic snapshot of conditions in our department and a glimpse of the experiences of a range of members of our department. This task force will devote its efforts to responding rapidly to the information gathered, and proposing immediate initiatives for the coming school year. An additional goal of the task force will be to contribute directly to the sort of examination called for by the Chancellor's Committee of the differences among Latina/o student experiences on this campus. Beginning in AY 2004-05, the task force will work with the Committee on Diversity and Departmental Community (below).
- Formation of a standing departmental Committee on Diversity and Departmental Community which, beginning in AY 2004-05, will have responsibilities that include oversight of the implementation of this Action Plan and its subsequent development.
- Beginning in AY 2004-05, the Head of Anthropology will meet with the Chairs of all of the standing committees in the department and instruct them to assess how the work of their committees might serve to further the aims of this Action Plan.
- Develop a procedure for periodic formal reviews/revisions of this plan and related initiatives.

Resources

These initiatives will require commitments of time and resources by faculty, students, and staff. We undertake them at a time of diminishing resources on our campus. As part of the implementation of this Action Plan, we will be seeking support at the campus level and nationally.

Specific actions:

- Continue to seek support at the campus level for our graduate program through Teaching Assistantships, Graduate Assistantships, Block Grants, etc.
- Continue to seek support at the campus level for our undergraduate program through restored discussion sections for large lecture courses, discovery courses, etc.
- Identify and apply for resources at the national level to support the initiatives detailed in this Action Plan