

Department of Anthropology Action Plan (Revised).

This action plan is a critically revised version of the action plan submitted to the faculty in May 2004. The initial action plan was 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 has set itself the goals of recruiting and maintaining an active and innovative scholarly community made up of a diverse student body and faculty. In this updated Action Plan, we evaluate the impact of the recommendations of the original report, and put forth a series of new recommendations to the department.

The original Action Plan was conceived and implemented in response to the Chancellor's Committee's call to address problems of racism and discrimination as reported in the *Latinas/os at the University of Illinois: A History of Neglect and Strategies for Improvement, 1992-2000* report and criticisms of the Department of Anthropology from within. While the campus wide and intradepartmental roots of racism and discrimination are intertwined, the particulars of the history of the department of anthropology and our present situation call us to continue to reflect on these criticisms and strive to address them to produce a just and inclusive scholarly environment.

Before summarizing our assessment of the previous action plan and outlining a set of newly proposed and revised aims, it is important to recognize that the discussion of issues of diversity and confrontation of problems of racism and other forms of discrimination in the department has been in large part driven by the efforts of dedicated student-scholars in the department. Through the volunteer efforts of CHiLa, the Diversity Committee, and individual members of the department, discussions issues of diversity and the confrontation of problems of racism and other kinds of discrimination have been kept alive and continually renewed in the department. Their ideas and energy have made notable improvements in fostering community, thus ensuring that the department remains a site for the production of rigorous scholarship.

The following report first evaluates the attempts to implement the original action plan and then presents a series of recommendations to the department. The methods were essentially ethnographic and archival in nature as the members of the committee were tasked with talking to members of the department and compiling relevant statistics. The committee convened regularly to compare notes and to use our common experiences to assess which of the recommendations of the original action plan were carried out and the extent to which they were successful in achieving their aims. This report summarizes the results of these discussions. We thank the members of department for their willingness to participate.

The deterioration of the funding situation at the University poses significant challenges to the Department of Anthropology. Nevertheless, the department should maintain a substantial commitment to the funding of under-represented students as a part of maintaining an intellectually robust and diverse department..

Evaluating progress on accomplishing departmental goals from the previous action plan.

The specific goals of the 2004 action plan were fostering departmental community, recruitment and retention of faculty and students, improving classroom environment, orienting and welcoming first year graduate students, revising the graduate curriculum to welcome a diversity of scholarly outlooks, re-evaluating the undergraduate curriculum, a commitment to update the action plan, and a commitment to securing resources to assist in achieving the diversity goals of the department. In the following sections we evaluate the department's performance on achieving each of the goals.

Fostering departmental community

The specific actions recommended in the original action for fostering departmental community were:

- 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.

The department has made several concrete strides toward building a better sense of community. These include: holding regular gatherings and increasing awareness of the activities of members of the department through the department website, and initiating the production of a biannual newsletter. We have also updated the newsletter format with news postings, a department blog, and an email newsletter to be sent out to all department alumni. The blog format in particular now provides an open and regularly updatable forum for discussions and community engagement. Furthermore, the department has carried out a series of workshops focusing on diversity and issues of racism and other forms of discrimination or oppression. On one occasion, a counsellor specializing in these issues in group settings directed one of the workshop sessions.

The results of the efforts are mixed. We have many department activities and members of the staff, graduate students, and faculty have put much effort into developing and improving these gatherings. Many department members we talked to noted improvements in the gatherings. They are, however, variably attended by faculty and students alike and a number of respondents noted that there may be altogether too many meetings. Much of the variable attendance appears to be due to the vicissitudes of busy academic life and other commitments, but it is clear that there are still feelings of unease over on the part of some students and faculty about participating in these

events. These feelings have their roots in different causes, ranging from a personal dislike of the gatherings to a feeling that discriminatory practices have not been contravened to a point where the gatherings are welcome to members of underrepresented groups. While strides have been made in the direction of building communities, we need to be mindful that communities can be built in an exclusionary manner. As we plan social events, we should be aware that that they can easily become vehicles for the replication and reinforcement of hierarchies.

The biannual department newsletter was begun in 2005, although, lately, it has not been produced with regularity. In January 2011, the AnthroIllinois Blog (<http://anthroillinois.wordpress.com/>) and a news page (<http://www.anthro.illinois.edu/resources/students/>) were created to provide information about department events and accomplishments, and largely has taken the place of the printed newsletter.

The departmental workshop on diversity held in January 2009 was organized around an extra-departmental facilitator who specialized in motivating group discussions of diversity. While reasonably well attended by students and faculty alike, it was clear that we as a department are very hesitant to discuss issues of race and racism in our departmental and campus communities. While the effort was notable, we need to rededicate ourselves to either implementing more effective means of facilitating discussions or to explore other means of addressing these issues as a department.

Student conferences (specify which conferences e.g. graduate scholarly conferences or diversity conferences) have been a staple of the department for the last few years. We encourage their continuation and note that they tend to be poorly attended by faculty. Attendance on the part of the faculty should be more aggressively promoted.

Recruitment and retention of faculty and students

The recommendations of the original action plan for the recruitment and retention of faculty and students were:

- 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.

Since the last action plan the Department of Anthropology has had a mixed record in the recruitment and retention of faculty from underrepresented groups. Of the 31 members of the faculty, six are members of underrepresented groups (two tenured and two untenured). It should be noted that these figures do not include two Asian American scholars, who nevertheless participate in our diversity efforts. Across the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, individuals from underrepresented groups make up 9.5% of the tenure track/tenured faculty. Two untenured faculty from university-recognized underrepresented groups were hired since the last Action Plan report and two members of the faculty from within-department underrepresented groups were also recruited. We recently lost one tenured member and one non-tenured faculty member from underrepresented groups to other institutions.

Graduate students from underrepresented groups (Defined here as U.S. minority graduate students. Those self-identifying as African American, Hispanic or Latina/o, or Native American) make up 10 of 59 graduate students or 17% of the graduate student body based on enrollment in the 2008-2009 fall semester. At first glance this bodes well for the department in that we are able to recruit and graduate students from underrepresented groups into successful positions. The absolute number of graduate students within the department is small, however, making the meaning of comparisons with the larger population of students on campus difficult to assess. Nevertheless, a commitment to diversity is critical for the maintenance of a critical, rigorous, community of scholars.

Moreover, the size of incoming classes of graduate students has been dwindling concomitant to the decrease in funding of the department, making it more difficult to maintain a viable graduate program. Students from underrepresented groups have been successful in competitions for fellowships at the university and national level and we need to foster an environment that will allow this success to continue. That said, the department should establish and maintain funding commitments to underrepresented students with an emphasis on fellowship support pursuant to the completion of dissertations. This is to ensure that our diversity obligations are not at the mercy of the financial situation of the university and external granting agencies. Moreover, diversity must remain a fundamental commitment of the department given the likelihood of further funding cuts at the university level.

In the recent past, several faculty members, including two scholars from underrepresented groups have been recruited to other institutions. While recruitment has been taking place during this period, the loss of two scholars of color to other institutions represents a serious blow to the scholarly and teaching efforts of our department in addition to our efforts to recruit and maintain a diverse faculty. As is the case with our graduate community, the finances of the university appear to make this difficult to address. Small numbers of faculty combined with the stochastic nature of offers and counter-offers make large changes in the number of faculty likely, which puts our plans for recruiting and maintaining a diverse faculty at risk..

Classroom environment

The recommendations of the original action plan for improving the classroom environment were:

- 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.

We can happily reflect on the retirement of Chief Illiniwek as an official emblem of the university and the pivotal role that many of our graduate students and faculty played in this victory. The high prevalence of unofficial knock-off clothing and other merchandise including the Chief emblem in classrooms, on campus, and the community at large is still a grim reality, however, and does contribute to perpetuating racist hierarchies. We encourage the adoption of a new non-damaging mascot and new popular identifier to replace “The Fighting Illini.” Moreover, the committee recognizes and encourages the continued tradition of the regular intervention of the department in matters regarding diversity across the campus and the larger Urbana-Champaign community.

The previous Diversity Outreach Coordinator, Anthony Jerry, Monica Santos, Brenda Farnell, and Janet Keller produced a video entitled *Diversity in the Classroom* in conjunction with the diversity committee, the Provost’s Initiative on Teaching Advancement, Lisa Fay, and InnerVoices. Videography was directed by Bill Yauch. The film consists of a series of short scenarios depicting incidents of racism, sexism, and other forms of aggressive behavior and discrimination in order to provide points for discussion during diversity training sessions. The short pieces were scripted based on ethnographic research conducted by the producers with members of the community, students and instructors alike, and attempt to accurately convey common classroom problems found in our department.

The film is an important resource for the department and we should aggressively pursue its use. It would provide a very useful basis for discussing classroom strategies in workshops designed to communicate skills useful for promoting an inclusive classroom environment. Redoubling our efforts to make sure that viewings of this important film are held and attended is important to make sure that this opportunity does not go to waste. Our graduate students are now, and should continue to be, required to engage with the material in regular training sessions.

First year graduate students

The recommendations of the original action plan for improving the experience of the first year graduate students were:

- 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.

The orientation for new graduate students is coordinated by the Director of Graduate Studies (Chris Fennell) and the Graduate Program Coordinator (Liz Spears) working with the assistance of other faculty and continuing graduate students. In a “Welcoming Meeting,” new students are introduced to the second and third year student cohorts, representatives of GASA, GEO, and ChiLa, our Anthropology Librarian at the Graduate Library, staff from ATLAS, and our Diversity Outreach Coordinator (Jason Romero). An overview of the graduate program and resources available across campus is provided, including details of the advisory process and the multiple opportunities for students to benefit from mentorship within the department and university communities. The diverse character of our department is discussed as part of this orientation, noting recent developments in student and faculty recruitment, and observing our diversity in ethnic, racial, national, international, and professional training backgrounds, as well as diversity in gender, class, and sexual orientation within our department community.

At the conclusion of this Welcoming Meeting, the new students have lunch with second-year students who then take them on a walking tour of campus. This orientation is followed soon after by the departmental “Meet and Greet” and the Fall picnic. Additional workshops on specific topics, such as ethics in research, grant writing, academic publishing, teaching strategies, non-academic careers, and the job search process are offered during the academic year. Our Spring Banquet provides another annual gathering of the department community and celebration of accomplishments by our students and faculty. It is important to note, as before, that these gatherings are not viewed as open and welcoming to all members of the department and further effort needs to be put into trying to ensure that all who are inclined to attend may do so without fear of discrimination.

Efforts to recruit and retain minority students and faculty have resulted in an increasingly diverse departmental community. We participated in the Alliances for Graduate Education and Professoriate Program and our Committee on Diversity and Departmental Community works rigorously to review and improve our diversity recruitment and retention initiatives. The 2010 National Research Council assessments recognize our department's success by ranking us as No. 1 out of 82 comparable graduate programs in "Percent of Students Receiving Full Support" and in overall "Program Outcomes." We also ranked 6th in "Percent of Minority Students," 7th in "Percent of International Students," and 8th in "Time to Degree." Superficially, these numbers may compare well with other institutions, but they do not bear on the climate of the department nor is it clear that other anthropology departments are a good point for comparison in favor of an idealized standard.

Our computer lab was recently upgraded with a host of new equipment supported by ATLAS, and the student lounge and adjacent conference room space were renovated in connection with repairs due to steam pipe leaks. Students' access to office space is made available through the TA/RA assignments and also by students consulting with Liz Spears and Karla Harmon on other work space opportunities.

Graduate Curriculum

The recommendations of the original action plan for revising the graduate curriculum to reflect the diversity of scholarly views and to ensure that students from underrepresented groups were being properly served by the graduate curriculum were:

- 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.

Since the original action plan, the graduate curriculum has undergone substantial revision and classes that include discussions of race and racism are being taught with some regularity. Likewise, a social theory class for sociocultural and archaeology students has been implemented with the aim of providing early and rigorous training in a fundamentally important part of anthropology. The understanding is that this course will include discussions of race and its intersections with other social processes.

The departmental engagement with the American Anthropological Association project on Understanding Race and Human Variation, spearheaded by a coalition of graduate students, was successful in bring in Dr. Yolanda Moses for a talk. Continuing engagement with national professional organizations should be reinforced and continued.

In recognition of the evolving questions of diversity, the department should initiate dialogues with scholars in Gender and Women Studies as well as other allied programs. In addition to recognizing the applied, public, and academic career trajectories, activist questions and methods should be valued as a strength of the department.

Undergraduate programs

The recommendations of the original action plan for revising the undergraduate curriculum were vague. It is likely that our department will increasingly rely upon the enrollment of undergraduates to determine our share of university resources. This provides an important opportunity for the faculty to articulate how diversity will play a role in the development of our undergraduate program.

Continuing elaboration and implementation of this Action Plan

- 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.

The initial action plan has been implemented through several avenues although these differ somewhat from those envisioned in the action plan. The diversity committee has been an active presence in the department as has the Diversity Outreach Coordinator and the present report was compiled in fulfillment of the last aim of this report.

Resources

The original action plan specified three areas where resources were needed in order to facilitate the implementation of its recommendations.

- 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

Little headway has been made in acquiring the necessary resources. This is owing in part to the drastic underfunding of the university as a whole in recent years. Funding was secured from the National Science Foundation and at the university level to continue funding our Diversity Outreach Coordinator. As previously mentioned, a local initiative, funded by the Provost's Initiative on Teaching Advancement and LASTA was undertaken to produce the film "Diversity in the Classroom." Individual students have been successful in university- and nation-wide competitions for funding, but the prospects for substantial increases in funding range from grim to uncertain. As previously stated, the department should make diversity a priority in recruiting and funding irrespective of the financial condition of the university. This should extend to fellowships in addition to teaching and graduate assistantships.

Action plan revision

While the department has made some constructive steps in the directions outlined in the original Action Plan, it is clear that we have also made missteps. After evaluating the results of our discussions with students and faculty, we recommend that several of the original action plan proposals be continued in modified form and that we implement several new policies. The theme that runs throughout these recommendations is that diversity and inclusiveness need to become a part of the scholarly and administrative discourse in the department. Diversity is a critical part of the intellectual vitality of the department.

We propose that we accomplish the following goals:

Establish the Diversity Committee as a standing committee within the department.

Modifying the department bylaws to include the diversity committee will help to ensure a continuing commitment on the part of the department to build a diverse scholarly community and to take a strong stand against racism and other forms of discrimination and oppression. This would require dedicated faculty and graduate student (and, we hope, undergraduate) participation. It would also provide a place in the department for the spirit of the original action plan to continue and to mature as the department changes.

Specifically revise and add to departmental by-laws to institutionalize policies regarding race and racism along with other forms of discrimination in the department.

As with a codification of statutes governing the diversity committee in the department, procedures for fairly addressing student grievances and outlining expectations for all members of the department should be established. This would ensure that these policies would not be subject to modification with changing leadership of the department. This would be a guiding principle in our effort to create a just and inclusive department and provide a sense of continuity and permanence about these principles.

Emphasize intellectual rationales for the department to embrace a commitment to inclusion and non-discriminatory practices.

The current departmental discourse focuses on specific problems of underrepresented groups. This perspective inherently creates a schism that further alienates students who feel excluded and allows others within the department to view these problems as isolated and unrelated to themselves. We propose a shift in discourse towards the benefits of a department, a community, and a practice of anthropology that is committed to non-discriminatory and inclusive practices. This includes making clear that scholarship on themes of race, racism, and other ways that power is differentially exercised is a welcome and necessary part of anthropology locally and as a discipline. We need to stop asking the question “how is *that* anthropology?” and start asking how anthropology can be useful to many kinds of research problems and how scholarship from within and without anthropology may help transform our discipline in a constructive and rigorous manner.

Commission service awards to be given to one graduate student and one faculty member each academic year for their commitment and service to issues of diversity.

These awards are intended to motivate and reward members of the department for their continuing efforts to address issues of diversity and improve the climate of the department. The diversity and awards committee could play a joint role in deciding the criteria for these awards. Recipients of these awards would be decided by the Diversity Committee based on nominations from members of the department.

Propose peer-to-peer graduate mentoring processes to address the pervasive feelings of isolation among the graduate students.

A recurring theme in our discussions with graduate students is isolation whether it be due to exclusion as a result of racist acts and sentiments, other forms of exclusion, or simple lack connection among people in the program. We propose strengthening connections among students in the department in a more formal manner to address these problems

Install a process for faculty and students to use to address concerns about racism or other forms of exclusion when an individual faculty member does not feel able to adequately address the topic personally.

Accountability of members of the department for their actions and clear avenues for those who feel aggrieved to seek redress or reconciliation are necessary for an inclusive and just scholarly environment.

Create a pamphlet to address strategies for dealing with episodes of racism or discrimination in the classroom from experiential perspectives.

We envision this pamphlet to include contributions from members of the Action Committee as well as other members of the department who have experiences dealing with relevant conflicts in a classroom or department and strategies for dealing with them. This would then serve as a resource, particularly for graduate students who will be TAs, for methods of handling these conflicts should they arise. We will also consider creating an online version of these submissions that would include an open forum for additions to be made by anyone who could share a relevant experience. The *Diversity in the Classroom* DVD has a manual which includes information along these lines (e.g. questions to ask oneself, strategies for enhancing classroom inclusion) and may serve as a good model for developing further literature.

Hold a workshop at the beginning of the fall semester to discuss inclusive and non-discriminatory pedagogical practices.

The first such workshop was held earlier this calendar year. We need to make issues surrounding diversity need to be a central part of departmental discourse and to make sure that we as students, scholars, advisors, and instructors have the skills to contribute to the goal of making our classrooms, department, and university an inclusive place. A regular workshop, perhaps at the beginning of each fall, would provide us with an official venue to discuss issues of diversity in the department including expectations of department members and skills to deal with situations we may encounter in the classroom, lab, office, and hall. A good point of departure for these workshops would be a screening and discussion of the short films compiled in *Diversity in the Classroom* as mentioned above.