

External Reviewer's Report

**Department of Anthropology, Graduate Program
San Francisco State University**

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I. Introduction and General Overview

The on-campus visit to San Francisco State University (SFSU) took place on September 26 and 27, 2011. At this time we met with students, faculty, and university administrators about the vitality and effectiveness of the MA program in Anthropology. Meetings were conducted with Ann Hallum, Dean, Division of Graduate Studies; Paul Sherwin, Dean, College of Arts and Humanities; Linda Buckley, Associate Vice President, Academic Planning and Development; and the APRC Chair. We discussed in detail the graduate program with departmental faculty, including Professors Douglas Bailey, Peter Biella (Chair), Mark Griffin (Graduate Coordinator), Gary Pahl, James Quesada, and Cynthia Wilczak (Undergraduate Coordinator). Unfortunately, three members of the nine person Anthropology faculty were unable to meet with us. They included Mariana Ferreira, C. Sarah Soh, and Lucia Volk. We participated in a lively two hour lunch meeting with 13 current graduate students in the MA Program. We also toured departmental facilities, reviewed recent MA theses and films, and attended a graduate seminar (Anth 710) taught by Professor Quesada.

As outlined in the self study, the Anthropology Department at SFSU has a long and vibrant history at SFSU spanning more than six decades. But it quickly became clear during our on campus visit that the Department has reached a major crossroad. Since the last external review in 2001, the Department has entered into a period of significant internal dissent and discord. The last few years have been particularly difficult with the University putting the Department into receivership, bringing in an outside chair, and now requiring the Department to uphold a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that must be met with clearly defined benchmarks. Several people referred to the Department as a dysfunctional mess. We recognize that most academic departments, particularly anthropology programs, go through cycles of good and bad years, and that personality issues can enter into the functioning of a program. But a negative threshold has been reached in the Anthropology Department where it is now affecting the health and well being of graduate students. In our confidential meeting with graduate students, several referred to the unprofessional behavior of some members of the Department that had left them demoralized and feeling very vulnerable. This is an unacceptable situation.

In addressing this issue, the University has several options. One option raised by several people we interviewed was to integrate the Department into another larger department and/or move faculty, given their expertise, to other relevant academic programs. Another option is to keep the Department basically as is and hope for the best in the future. A third option is to revamp the Department to make it a more effective and efficient academic unit. In writing our external reviewer's report, we are strong advocates of the third option.

II. Evaluation of the Program

A. Department Vision, Mission and Goals

Faculty and program input and documentation show a strong connection with and inertia in following past practices in thinking about how to structure and maintain the Anthropology

Department. These unquestioned assumptions have guided program development, faculty hires, and the mindset of what the Department believes to be its role for the present and future. It appears to us that there has been little, if any, re-examination of the Department's vision about what kind of academic unit it wants to be in five or ten years. The Web page for the Graduate Program outlines its areas of strength in Archaeology, Biological Anthropology, Cultural Anthropology, and Visual Anthropology, and the Self-Study adds preparation of graduates for teaching careers, museums, and public service. But there is little in these documents that would distinguish the graduate program in Anthropology at SFSU from other departments that offer rather generic programs in the three fields of anthropology.

We believe that it is critical for the Anthropology Department to develop a more concise unifying statement of its Vision, Mission, and Goals. Specifically, the Department needs to address what will be its purpose and mission in the 21st Century. What will set it apart from other universities that also offer three or four field approaches in anthropology? What will attract graduate students to SFSU from the greater San Francisco Bay Area and beyond? And where does the Anthropology Department see itself in five to ten years?

We recognize that decisions about the future mission and goals of the Department must be articulated by the faculty involved. As external reviewers, the point we emphasize here is that a strong program already exists within the Department, and that with some thinking, planning, and innovation, a truly unique and exciting program could be put into place. There is no better place to study, explore, and undertake anthropology than at SFSU given its location in San Francisco and the broader Bay Area. Here faculty and graduate students can do truly innovative and cutting edge anthropological research and teaching in their own backyard. Faculty members in the Anthropology Department are already involved in teaching classes and undertaking research projects that stress the urban, multicultural, and transnational characteristics of the SF Bay Area. We believe that this could be developed and nurtured into a core identity for the Department, and also serve as way to integrate the different fields of anthropology together.

During our visit, we observed evidence of the high quality work being undertaken by both faculty and graduate students in social anthropology that highlight the anthropology of the urban environment and the people of San Francisco through print, digital media, and film. Much of this work focuses on socially relevant issues that are of significant concern to the diverse populations of San Francisco. In addition to the creation of a truly first class program in urban anthropology, medical anthropology, and visual anthropology at SFSU, there is much growth potential for the development of archaeology and biological anthropology that emphasizes the Bay Area. The archaeology of the Bay Area offers a fantastic opportunity to examine the rise of complex hunter-gatherers, the archaeology of colonialism (Spanish, Russian, Mexican, American), and the creation and development of the contemporary urban environment and its diverse people. It also affords the opportunity to develop strong relationships with local Native Californian tribes, and other stakeholders, such as the Chinese American community, through collaborative projects focusing on the area's prehistoric and historical archaeology. The study of the growth and development of the urban, multicultural

environment of San Francisco also affords many opportunities for faculty and students in biological anthropology. The already strong biological anthropology program at SFSU could provide support for graduate students in examining various research questions about the past and contemporary populations of the greater Bay Area through human osteology, genetics, forensics anthropology, etc. Biological anthropology of past and contemporary populations of San Francisco could also serve to bridge the different fields of the Department together through the flourishing subfields of bioarchaeology and medical anthropology.

Recommendations:

1. *Agree upon a vision for the future of the program and prepare concise statements on Program Mission and Goals.* In producing a new mission statement for the Department, members of the faculty may need to participate in one or more retreats to develop key elements of their plan. This should be written as a strategic plan that outlines the kind of anthropology that will serve as the core of the teaching and research mission for faculty and graduate students. The plan should outline where the Department will be in five to ten years.
2. *Identify other faculty on campus who may be brought into an expanded MA Anthropology program.* SFSU is blessed with a great faculty, including first class teachers and researchers housed in other Departments who are trained as anthropologists or work in related fields. Some of the faculty from outside programs could be brought into an expanded MA graduate program in Anthropology. They could help advise graduate students and serve on their committees. In addition, some of the graduate seminars they teach could be cross-listed as Anthropology courses. This would increase the number of graduate seminars that Anthropology students could take. A common complaint among the current graduate students is that there are too few relevant 700 level courses offered.
3. *Identify future faculty resource requirements.* With the number of recent and pending retirements, the number of faculty is down from previous levels. With the creation of a strategic plan that outlines where the Department will be in five years to ten years, the Department will need to think about future hires. For example, we can see a great need to hire an archaeologist who works in the Bay Area undertaking historical archaeology, or a biological anthropologist or medical anthropologist who can bridge the biological and social fields. This should be decided as part of developing the mission statement, goals, and strategic plan for the Department. While we know that this is not an ideal time to request faculty positions, we strongly support the addition of at least two more conditional positions for the Department in the near future. This should be done in a series of phases. That is, once the mission statement and strategic plan have been created and put into action, then a benchmark at two to three years should be established. If the Department is making good progress in implementing its new vision at the time of this benchmark, then an additional position might be justified. Another benchmark could then be set by administration for the addition of another faculty position.
4. *Support of the Chair and Anthropology Faculty.* Once the mission statement and strategic plan have been created by the Department, it is critical that the administration support the

Chair and Anthropology faculty in implementing the proposed changes and in developing the new program.

5. Prepare concise and measurable Graduate Student Learning Outcomes/Objectives (SLOs) (aligned with the Program Goals). As part of the strategic plan outlining the mission statement and goals for the Department, it is critical that the Department think more specifically about expectations/outcomes for student learning, a set of measurable objectives by which they might gauge their Program successes.

6. Undertake annual assessment of the success in meeting selected SLOs.

B. Department Professional Relations

Documentation received from the Department (the self-study), an earlier version of that document, commentary from faculty and administration during interviews, and expressions of concern from students made it clear that serious professional relationship problems have handicapped the Department in years prior to this review. The serious nature of faculty disaffection and its transmission to the classroom has hampered optimum discharge of interdepartmental responsibilities and has had a discouraging effect on students and on the mission of the Department. Several faculty are disposed to find solutions to personal/professional differences in migration to other programs or university opportunities. Given that sustainability of the program depends on a full complement of faculty and the resolution these difficulties, much Department energy should be expended in their resolution.

Recommendations:

- 1. Improve professional and interpersonal relations and the student learning environment in the Department and Program.*
- 2. Advance student, faculty, and staff morale by insulating students and staff from any professional, intellectual, or interpersonal differences or matters that, ethically, should remain entirely with the faculty.*
- 3. Prepare a plan for internal Departmental reconciliation including positive action to heal divisions, build Program image among colleagues and students, and increasing faculty responsibilities for participation. Such a plan should include steps and a timeline for achieving these objectives. (The plan might include mediated discussions and frequent face-to-face meetings to air and examine differences. Faculty should also be encouraged to participate jointly in separate faculty and combined faculty/student events, e.g. fall and/or spring gatherings.) If after extended faculty mediation has taken place, and some faculty choose not to participate constructively in a reinvigorated Anthropology Department, then the administration may want to consider transferring them to other academic units.*
- 4. The Department should consider and follow the terms of the "Civility" MOU from the Dean outlining principles in a 1 ½ year process of restoring faculty accord. The memo presents outcomes of failure to accomplish this.*

C. Advising

The self-study indicates that four faculty advise and supervise theses for over 75% of the graduate students. This inequitable situation produces a disparate supervised teaching load that detracts from the ability for those faculty to do their best job in the classroom or in their research agendas. Additionally, students attest that access to faculty is, at times, limited and that faculty often seem unavailable for consultation for extended periods during the semester or beyond normal academic year leaves. The draft self-study prepared by the previous chair noted that some faculty planned leaves and sabbaticals without concern for the workloads of their colleagues. Clearly, impacts might also be significant on student progress and program requirements. The most recent survey of graduate students (spring 2011) indicates significant concern regarding faculty support in the thesis stage (advising, mentoring, availability, and committee effectiveness), and a concern for the adequacy of the graduate curriculum.

Recommendation:

1. *Assign students to faculty based on the matriculating students research interest and insist that the faculty take responsibility for that student (except in extenuating circumstances) through the thesis writing process. Place a maximum advising load on faculty and admit no more students than all faculty are willing to advise and mentor (up to the maximum per faculty member, e.g. 1-2 students per faculty member per year).*
2. *Encourage faculty who have a history of working outside the graduate program to become engaged by rotating them through graduate seminars. If some faculty choose not to participate in a reinvigorated MA program in Anthropology, then the administration should consider increasing their undergraduate teaching loads to established CSU requirements since they are not taking on the additional workload of advising graduate students, participating in the graduate curriculum, or State Contract required responsibilities to the Department and University.*
3. *Insure that faculty meet all assigned office hours. Furthermore, designate particular hours that are set aside for graduate students as the first priority.*
4. *Insure that any transition of the position of graduate advisor is seamless and that any faculty accepting the responsibility is prepared to meet the full responsibilities of the position.*
5. *Discuss means for compensating the graduate advisor for the additional load of student advising.*
6. *Complete the Graduate Student Handbook and publish it on-line. The Handbook needs to articulate the specific requirements for the MA degree and to provide ideal paths to graduation. The graduate advisor for the Department needs to make sure that the Handbook is updated every summer before the start of the academic year. It should then be sent to all incoming graduate students.*
7. *The chair should approve faculty leave applications only when the students and program will be effectively served in the absence of the faculty. Leave applications which hinder student progress or effective discharge of the curriculum, advising, or programmatic requirements should be discouraged.*

D. Communication with and Inclusion of Graduate Students in Departmental Life

Graduate students know little of Department and faculty professional activities and have little opportunity outside the classroom to showcase their own work. Also, there is little interaction of faculty and students outside the classroom to stimulate personal or student/faculty professional collegiality.

Recommendation:

1. *Explore publishing a Department newsletter each semester providing an overview of faculty, Department, and student's professional news.* This could be published on-line to minimize costs and to speed up the time of publication.
2. *Facilitate a student research journal, online, to encourage incipient graduate student publication and to inform all faculty and their peers of their academic successes.*
3. *Institute a program of Department research forums, taken for credit, hosting faculty, graduate students, and members of the professional community.* These might offer bi-weekly presentations open to the community to showcase Department research activity and expose students and faculty to allied work by members of the University and urban community. The forum program would help foster a stronger anthropology community at SFSU where both faculty and students could gather for intellectual stimulation. This would be an ideal setting for students who are finishing their MA projects to present the results of their thesis research in a summary lecture, or where students finishing the MA in visual anthropology could present their films. The series would also provide the opportunity for faculty to present the results of their latest research, as well as an ideal venue to bring other faculty from SFSU or from nearby universities to talk about their work.

E. Ongoing Program Review

Recommendation:

Begin preparation for a succeeding program review in fall 2016. Collect enrollment, advising, curriculum scheduling, exit interview, FTES, FTEF, SFR, Supervised Teaching Load, and other relevant data annually in preparation for the review.

F. Preparation for next the WASC Graduate Program Review

Recommendations:

Further compliance with previous WASC recommendations stipulated in current self-study, specifically:

1. *Formulate indicators of satisfactory progress toward the degree(e.g. Student GPA, writing performance, normative time to degree, number of petitions for extension, average number of units taken per student per semester, annual number of graduates).*

2. *Improve methods of dissemination of program information to students (e.g. Web page link to up- to- date Graduate Handbook, Department writing standards, link to student organization news, secured link to student rosters and photos).*
3. *Establish appropriate student performance standards (e.g. discipline, writing, and procedures for their review).*

G. Space

The self-study rightly expresses concern for the loss of space in the Science building due to expansion of other campus programs, namely one faculty office, one classroom, and one laboratory. Lack of robustness in program enrollments and adequate justification for the space (except possibly in the case of inadequate laboratory space for biological anthropology and archaeology processing needs) made this inevitable.

Recommendation:

1. *Build class enrollments and demonstrate to the Dean the emerging need to reclaim classroom and laboratory space.*
2. *Address space concerns specifically in the strategic plan that outlines the mission statement and goals of the Department.*

H. Instruction

The CSU contract obligates full-time faculty to .8 time teaching (four course equivalent) and .2 time Department/University service responsibilities. In the case of the Department of Anthropology, a reduced teaching load of .6 time is compensated by the expectation of increased professional and publication activity. Faculty may also be released from classroom responsibilities for grant activity buy-out or expanded administrative responsibility. Retired (FERP) faculty are held to the same requirements. (Team-taught classes retire only ½ of classroom obligations.) Most faculty have met and exceeded these expectations. Some have not.

Recommendations:

1. *Assure full required classroom assignments to meet contract obligations and provide maximum engagement of faculty with students.*

I. Graduate Curriculum

The Department offers four seminars per year to its graduate students. These seminars focus on theory and current research in three sub-fields of the discipline; Archaeology, Biological Anthropology, and Cultural (including Visual Anthropology). The seminars seem to be discharged in sequence though some students admit to delaying certain of them due to non-

interest (lying outside their focus). The seminars ANTH 710 (Proseminar in Theory and Methods), ANTH 740 (Archaeology), ANTH 760 (Biological Anthropology), and ANTH 770 (Cultural Anthropology) are generally highly reviewed by graduate students. However, there are several problems they, and the external team, noted:

A. Paired-classes (i.e. ANTH 710) often include more undergraduate students than graduate students. Graduate students consequently are exposed to undergraduate levels of work and curriculum substance. Rather than challenged with graduate level theoretical constructs and expectations, graduate students are held to the pace of their undergraduate classmates.

Recommendation:

1. *Consider discontinuing the paired course model for graduate students. Offer the class each third semester allowing demand to build for it. Alternatively, require that every entering graduate student take the class in his/her matriculating semester.*
2. *If pairing is the only possible means to deliver the curriculum, require an additional hour in which graduate students would be challenged with appropriate theoretical concepts and cases across the discipline and be required to carry the class with their own directed scholarly reviews of the literature.*

B. The introductory seminar (ANTH 710) is intended to treat anthropological theory, methods, and techniques (ostensibly over the four fields of the discipline). Depending on who is teaching Anth 710, the contents of the seminar varies. In some past year it has tended to showcase specific case studies in Cultural Anthropology.

Recommendation:

1. *We suggest a model in which, during the semester, the seminar becomes a stage for presentation of research and theoretical positions by each member of the faculty, in turn. One faculty member would be assigned the class, coordinate outside presentations, and outline the theoretical underpinnings of the four fields in advance of classroom participation by faculty. The class would be rotated among the faculty.*
2. *Propose a template for the approach to offering ANTH 710 so that each faculty instructor can guarantee similar breadth and rigor of academic experience. Faculty from the different fields may want to develop a reading list with some of the classics that students will read during their first semester at SFSU.*

C. There is little rotation of seminars among the faculty. Consequently, students may learn only one view on the literature and theory and applications in their graduate education in each sub-field. No single faculty should “own” a class.

Recommendation:

1. *Insure that each faculty in archaeology, biological anthropology, and cultural/visual anthropology rotate with the other through each of the seminars.*

D. Non-tenured full-time faculty seem discouraged from offering graduate seminars for reasons of concern about evaluation in the RTP process. These faculty are, in fact, best suited to offer graduate students “fresh” impressions and current disciplinary research directions having just completed doctoral programs.

Recommendation:

1. *Encourage new tenure track faculty to offer graduate seminars at least every alternating academic year.*

E. Students and the external reviewers find the number of graduate level classes to be inadequate.

Recommendation:

1. *Add a seminar to the curriculum by requiring one of the focused seminars, in the area of specialization of the student, to be taken a second time. This would be facilitated by scheduling each seminar to be offered by alternating faculty, assuring a different focus and point of view of the materials.*

2. *Additionally, require that each graduate student take an additional seminar in some other Department, which is previously approved by the faculty, as being directly applicable to one of the sub-fields of the discipline. This option is especially relevant if faculty from other academic units are brought into the MA program in Anthropology.*

F. Students and the external reviewers noted that there needs to be a formal course on the writing of the thesis. Also, there is no regular mechanism to review the adequacy of graduate writing skills prior to the thesis.

Recommendation:

1. *Offer a Thesis writing class for all MA students to take in their third semester. The current practice is to have students work on their thesis abstract, proposal, and research questions in their first semester in Anth 710. While instructors could still touch upon these critical topics, we see the need for a stand-alone seminar for students in their third semester that provides a forum for their development of a thesis project.*

2. *Implement a policy of formal evaluation of a writing product for each graduate student at one point in the program from the first semester of student enrollment.*

G. Time to graduation seems longer than necessary. Since 2001 24% of graduates required more than seven years to complete the program (almost half of those required nine years). This imposes personal, financial, and professional stress on graduate students. Many students drop out of the program due to difficulties they encounter negotiating requirements and lack of adequate faculty facilitation.

Recommendation:

1. *Improve graduate advising, student progress monitoring, graduate committee function and student support to improve graduation rates and timing.*

J. Graduate Student Teaching Resources

Many Graduate Programs on the campus provide resources to graduate students and offer them opportunities as GTAs in lower division classrooms. Students in the Program asked why similar opportunities cannot be made available to them.

Recommendation:

1. Prepare graduate students for teaching in the discipline by having them complete the class, ANTH 685-785, Teaching in Anthropology. Assign the trained student to oversee preparation and presentation of lectures in ANTH 100, 110, or 120 as a Graduate Teaching Assistant, overseen by a faculty member, in rotation. The resources generated by the class would be used to provide compensation for the student. Alternatively, offer graduate credit to the student for an experience requiring less responsibility. Look for models of this approach to the History Department and others.

K. Professional Learning Resources for Graduate Students

Graduate students assert that few opportunities are available for them to learn critical skills in grant writing, conference paper presentation, CV preparation, professional writing, career advising, research support (students assert being discouraged by the University Grants Office), and preparation of thesis proposals. Faculty noted that workshops have been offered previously on some of these topics.

Recommendation:

- 1. Offer regular workshops in alternate semesters dealing with professional skill sets for graduate students. Insure that announcements of these workshops are available on the Department Website, with fliers, and in announcements in all graduate student classes. Explore the employment of University staff, graduating students, and part-time faculty to offer these workshops.*
- 2. Offer an annual interdisciplinary field school for all graduate students. Each would combine field methods common to the sub-disciplines and would focus on the interests of the particular faculty offering the class in that term.*
- 3. Work with campus offices that provide graduate research funding opportunities to facilitate student enquiries and applications.*

III. Overall Recommendation to the Review

Recommend the Program Remain Under Continuing Review

This recommendation cites many concerns the program must rectify before a positive recommendation can be offered. The report contains many specific actions and outcomes that address Program deficiencies and in some cases particular schedules for resolution.