

**Academic Program Review Committee Report
of the
Department of Anthropology**

COMMITTEE PROCESS

This Academic Program Review Committee (APRC) Report is based on the following source material:

1. Department of Anthropology Self-Study Report to APRC, 2008
2. External Reviewers Report and Summary of Recommendations to Anthropology Department, 9/26-7/2011.
3. Department Response to Outside Evaluators Report.
4. APRC Interview with Spring 2012.
5. Department Response.
6. Guidelines for the Sixth Cycle of Academic Program Review.
7. The APRC customary evaluation procedures.

These sources were employed to construct an integrated view of the Department of Anthropology's present strengths, aspirations, and possibilities for future development.

REPORT

University Standards

Admissions. The Department meets standard 3.2 (Admissions—Evidence of Competent Writing) and 3.3 (Admissions- Non-Native Speakers). They state that 98 percent of their applicants meet the University's 3.0 admissions standard for graduate programs, with a 31.9 percent admissions rate.

Program requirements. The Department has met Standard 4.1- Number of course offerings every semester but one (due to faculty illness), offering two foundation seminars per semester. Standard 4.2 is fully met since they offer all their graduate and undergraduate paired courses once per year. Standard 4.3 is also met since they do have a roadmap to graduation for their graduate students on their website. Standard 4.6 is met as the Department has an average of 7.6 graduates per year over the past 5 years.

The Department does not meet Standard 4.4. Standard 4.4 states that 50 percent of the courses on a student's GAP must be graduate courses, 20 percent may be from paired or graduate courses and another 30 percent may be from upper division, paired or graduate courses. The Department's students had at least 50 percent of their courses at the graduate level, fulfilling the first part of the standard, which works for students if admitted prior to 2007. However, students have not been able to fulfill the second part of the standard—to have the next 20 percent be from either graduate or paired courses so that at least 70 percent of their courses were graduate or paired. Given that the External Reviewers acknowledge that the students do not like paired courses and that this number of paired courses violates the Standard, the Department needs to develop strategies to develop more graduate courses in order to meet this standard.

Standard 4.5 is also not fulfilled since at least ANTH 320, which may be taken by graduate students, regularly exceeds 30 in enrollment.

Faculty requirements. The Department's graduate program fulfills University standards for having a minimum number of faculty in the graduate program as well as the required number of faculty per concentration. In fact, while the minimum number of faculty are participating, the External Reviewers pointed out that the same faculty teach the graduate foundation courses each year and recommended that these courses rotate so that more faculty participate in the graduate program. Thirty one percent of the courses used by graduate students were staffed by lecturers, however.

Program-Specific Indicators and Standards

6.0 Program planning. The External Reviewers recommended that the Department needed to revise their mission statement and goals. The APRC would go a step further and recommend the Department needs to complete a full strategic planning process, beginning with a renewed mission statement, vision statement and goals. What would be most important for this Department, however, would be the next step—to develop a detailed Implementation program on how to achieve these goals. In the past, the Department had a mission statement and goals but did not seem to know how to achieve these goals. Obtaining consensus on action steps could be a very powerful process for them.

7.0 Student experience. Neither the External Reviewers nor the APRC found any evidence of assessment of graduate-level student learning outcomes. Without assessment, it is difficult to see how the Department can believe their program is effective or that they are achieving the goals they have set. The APRC recommends the Department begin immediately to develop graduate level student learning outcome goals and assessment procedures to examine what students are learning.

The survey given to students by the Department found that thesis advising was sorely lacking. However, it appears that steps have already been taken to revise the thesis process by the previous Graduate Coordinator. The APRC recommends these steps continue and be constantly monitored to see if more changes are needed.

8.0 The Program and the Community. The APRC commends the Department for its achievement in equity and social justice involvement, civic engagement and internationalization. The summer Maasai workshop, the Human Rights conference, the international archeology projects are all outstanding examples of work in this area.

9.0 The Faculty Experience. Faculty members appear to be quite professionally active although the table in the Self-Study that provided counts and averages did not state the time period for this table. As the External Reviewers suggested, the APRC recommends educating students more about faculty research through rotation of the foundation seminars among faculty so that more get involved in the graduate program.

10.0 Resource Support. The Department identifies needs for additional lab and other space in their Self-Study. They have also just had some spaces fully retrofitted for their lab needs.

Curriculum

The Department has been moving quickly to revise their graduate program to meet University standards for graduate courses as well as the findings of the External Reviewers. The APRC supports the External Reviewers' recommendation that the Department focus upon their strengths (urban anthropology, medical anthropology and visual anthropology with potential for archaeology and biological anthropology); the APRC also believes that this proposed focus must be revisited and justified in the recommended strategic planning process.

It is clear that, if the Department wants the graduate program to succeed, an adequate number of graduate seminars must be established and be fully subscribed to by students so that students receive important value from the program. The Department must also put a plan into place for completing the thesis.

If the Department wants to continue having a graduate program, it is also important that the faculty rethink the relative amount of resources dedicated to the graduate, as opposed to the undergraduate, program. The Department has relatively few graduate students, stating in the Self-Study that their admissions are consistently on the low side, with an average of 17 from their desired range of 17-25 new students, with only 11 actually enrolling. Their Spring 2010 graduate FTES was only 5.76 percent of their total FTES, which is at the low end of the range for similar departments

Beyond these incremental steps, however, the APRC believes the Department should consider requesting suspension of their graduate program so that they may conduct their strategic review, develop meaningful and doable emphases for their graduate program and reconsider their curriculum in a holistic fashion. Trying to, essentially, rethink and redo the graduate program while still engaging graduate students, trying to build enrollment, and respond to these recommendations would be an exceedingly difficult task.

The APRC believes that it would be far better for the program, its students and its faculty to send the message to everyone that the Department is serious about these changes; suspend the program, plan future directions and priorities, then reinstate the program.

Faculty

The importance of this recommendation is further emphasized by the significant interpersonal problems still evident in this department (External Reviewers Report),

As stated by the External Reviewers (p. 3),

“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”.

The External Reviewers highlighted three 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”.

With the option of suspension and then reinstating the program, the APRC is offering a fourth option (although similar to the third, above).

The APRC is also concerned about the findings in the Self Study and by the External Reviewers that some faculty are in violation of the Collective Bargaining Agreement and not meeting their obligations for advising, office hours, and other required work. If not already part of the MOU with the Dean’s Office, the APRC recommends the need to equalize the workload and ensure everyone is doing the required work. This is clearly part of the morale problem in the Department.

The APRC sees a department in flux without a focus. While some things are changing, there are significant problems with the graduate program and students are not receiving the best education possible here at SF State. The Department needs to decide where their priorities lie, if they can put their difficulties behind them, and if they can mount a successful program where students receive an education without being caught up in faculty issues. It is clear more internal department resources should be allocated for the graduate program to succeed within the Department.

The APRC understands that the Department is responding to the issues found right now. Again, we recommend suspension and then reinstatement. After suspension and if the program is reinstated, a condensed review should be held within two years to determine whether the changes have been successfully made and whether or not they are having any effect. If University standards are still not being met and students still report discontent and not receiving adequate advising, then shutting down the graduate program should be considered. These issues cannot continue without significant action.

Students

The self-study states that the admission rate is about 1/3 of those students who apply, implying that the program is being selective. The report also describes active engagement of students with alumni and service learning projects in the community. It also reports that about 25% of the students are admitted to doctoral programs in their subfields and engaged participation of graduate students in conference presentations, among other professional activities.

While these aspects of the student experience are commendable, they highlight what students accomplish outside the department. The student experience while in the program is more problematic. It takes, on average, 4.5 years to graduate rather than the usual 3 years. In the external

reviewer's report, partially based on interviews with a focus group of students, and in the student survey, the following conditions are noted:

- Too few relevant 700-level courses.
- Too little faculty advising and support as students undertake the thesis-writing process.
- Lack of advising in general, with some faculty not meeting their office hours.
- Little professional, collegial interaction with faculty.

APRC supports the following recommendations of the external reviewers:

“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). (Pg. 7)

“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. (Pg. 7)

“Assure full required classroom assignments to meet contract obligations and provide maximum engagement of faculty with students. (Pg. 9)

Resources

The self-study states the following:

- Too few faculty members participating in the graduate program results in strains on teaching courses and advising students.
- The department needs additional space for instruction and housing collections for instruction and research purposes.
- External grant funding provides some students credit for research assistantships or pay for work on faculty research projects.

APRC recommends a review of faculty workload by the Dean or her designee to determine the how many faculty are needed to sustain a graduate program. The outcome may be that a graduate program is not feasible at this time given limited available resources.

Conclusions

The APRC acknowledges that some work has been done and some benchmarks have been met, but a lot of progress is still required. Given this, the primary recommendation of the APRC is that the Department withhold admissions for one year, followed by formal suspension, if the numerous benchmarks and recommendations of the External Reviewers and APRC are not successfully met. Given the cultural and interpersonal issues existing within the Department, the APRC does not believe either students or the Department would be well served by trying to strategically assess their future directions and priorities while trying to make other changes.