Chapter 32

High-Performing Applied Programs

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Elizabeth Briody and Riall Nolan were curious about how anthropology departments approached the issue of training future practitioners, and in 2010 they conducted a Delphi survey of 15 institutions. They have combined the results of this survey with data from several other recent surveys of students, faculty, and departments to present a picture of how training is being done today, how this differs from the past, and what experience so far may mean for students, faculty, and departments as they seek to improve training and to respond to new opportunities. The authors discuss how training has changed, how applied programs have evolved, and what their main commonalities and differences are. They look in detail at four flagship programs – Memphis, Maryland, Northern Arizona, and North Texas – and how they grew. Finally, the authors offer advice to students on choosing a program.

A gradual but steady transformation has been occurring within US-based anthropology departments. Since the late 1970s, increasing numbers of these departments have been offering coursework, community and organizational learning experiences, and career skills to their students to prepare them for the job market. This trend is a response, in part, to the dearth of academic job opportunities, and to the demand by master's level students for training that will give them a competitive edge over peers in other disciplines. In this chapter, we look at several of these programs in terms of their origins, similarities, and differences.

In general, applied anthropology programs are characterized by an emphasis on problem-solving and collaboration. *Problem-solving* refers specifically to the

identification of, and engagement with, organizational, community, and societal issues. *Collaboration* can be understood as a joint cooperative activity, not just between students and professors, but between students and professors *and* clients, community members, and others who contribute to the discovery and solution of problems by working together. In the programs we looked at, both the focus of the problem-solving and the form and extent of collaboration are influenced by such factors as the university and college mission, the setting (e.g., local, global) in which the joint activity occurs, and the economic climate.

We wrote this chapter to speak to the concerns of both students and faculty. Students should find this chapter useful for the contrasts we draw between academically oriented and applied programs, commonalities and differences between applied programs, and ideas for selecting an applied program. Faculty should benefit from our discussion of the applied program life cycle, the ability to craft an applied program with a high degree of fit between faculty and student interests and local conditions, and the hopes and expectations expressed by students for future applied program offerings.

The Emergence of Applied Programs

If there were ever an American theme that captured the essence of Elizabeth Briody's graduate training in anthropology, we believe it was self-reliance. The requirements of her program – core classes, thesis, language proficiency, qualifying exams, fieldwork, and final defense – provided a structure for her MA and PhD training (1978–85). However, she quickly perceived her graduate experience as isolating from both a peer-relationship and a learning standpoint. Her classmates tended to keep to themselves, working independently as they absorbed classroom lectures, prepared for exams, and planned and conducted field projects. Briody found few opportunities for interactions or joint activities. Those professors who served as mentors and provided guidance on her academic work were training her to become what they were – academicians who worked on their own anthropological studies and contributed to scholarship mainly through sole-authored publications. Briody figured out that if she were to succeed, she would have to rely largely on herself in making her own way.

Contrast Briody's graduate experience with that of Marisa Deline a generation later. Deline was enrolled in an applied anthropology program from 2007 to 2009, and graduated with a master of Applied Anthropology degree.[1] The theme of collaboration is exemplified in two particular experiences that were part of Deline's training. First, one requirement for her pre-internship class was to conduct 10 informational interviews with organizational and community members. That exercise turned out to be an initial step in building her network of professional contacts. In addition, she and another classmate conducted the interviews together, which enabled them to cooperate on the assignment, learn from each other, and reduce their initial nervousness associated with interviewing. At another point in her

program, Deline accessed her professor's contacts and approached a practitioner (also a departmental adjunct) to work with her on an independent study. The readings, discussions, and final product – a realistic work plan that Deline developed – occurred within the context of a strong mentoring relationship. Career questions and advice flowed freely. Both of these experiences illustrate how much some anthropology programs have evolved from the academically oriented programs, and the benefits to learning and networking from the wider community that can result.

We have tried to capture key dimensions of this change by comparing academically oriented programs of the 1980s with programs today (see Table 32.1). Three broad themes run through changes in anthropological training. First, training is no longer solely grounded in the academy. While the basic research paradigm continues to predominate in many academically oriented programs (particularly those granting PhD degrees), there has been a growth of interest and activity in application. Today, there are 28 anthropology departments that are members of the Consortium of Practicing and Applied Anthropology Programs (COPAA 2012). In many of these

Table 32.1   A comparison of academically oriented and applied anthropology programs

	Academically oriented programs (early 1980s)	*Applied programs (late 2000s)*
Culture	Autonomous, self-reliant, independent, somewhat isolated; characterized by the "lone anthropologist"	Group-based, collective, integrated; characterized by people working together
Course content	Theory, method, and substantive area	Theory, method, and applied courses and experiences
Goal	Academic position	Non-academic positions, and sometimes options for additional academic training
Career-related preparation	Own field project, teaching and research assistant positions	Internships, class projects, own field projects
Skills	Developing theoretical abilities, designing and conducting field research, scholarly writing, teaching	Integrating theory with problem-solving, working with others to diagnose issues and implement solutions
Mentoring	Done by individual professors	Done by professors, adjuncts, alumni, practitioners, students
Networks	Dependent on self or on own professors	Dependent on self, but typically aided by others
Professional anthropology associations	Little direct outreach to students	Some outreach to students, with benefits to students specified

departments, coursework, class projects, and internship preparation and follow-up have been designed to connect students with community and organizational issues, hone their problem-solving skills, and ready them for the job market.

Second, anthropological training is now more likely to be collaborative in programs with an applied focus. Students may work with other students on a class project that is guided by both a professor and a client, linking together theory and practice. Master's-level applied programs are the most likely to offer internships, where the student, faculty adviser, and client identify and complete an agreed set of goals. When it is done well, such cooperation brings multiple perspectives and experiences to bear on real world issues. The student benefits from hands-on work experience, the faculty adviser from community connections, and the client from the student and faculty efforts and insights. Recommendations are typically posed and discussed by the applied project team and client. Applied programs today are also more likely to be linked to applied and practice-oriented professional associations including the Society for Applied Anthropology (SfAA), the National Association for the Practice of Anthropology (NAPA), or the aforementioned COPAA.

Third, the internal, disciplinary focus within many anthropology programs is shifting outward (Bartlo 2012). This change is noticeable in several ways: in application-oriented coursework, readings, and internships; in the integration of practitioners as lecturers and mentors into academic programs; and in the growth of program linkages with outside constituencies. As this shift occurs, programs benefit from increasingly wider networks, providing visibility and the potential for support.

We believe that comparing the Briody and Deline cases is instructive in another way. Although self-reliance has always been fundamental to any job search, today's recent applied graduates have "practiced" the craft of job market engagement as part of their formal training. While they rely primarily on themselves, they have also learned that it is useful – and professionally expected – that they will connect with others for advice and support, and develop this network of contacts in a variety of ways. These entrepreneurial skills, together with their anthropological toolkit, give them a high probability of finding interesting and challenging work throughout their career.

Continuity with the Past

A "must read" for those thinking about applied anthropology programs is *Anthropology for Tomorrow* (Trotter 1988). Its framing and messages continue to be useful for anthropologists who are either developing applied programs or expanding existing ones. The book's orientation can be likened to a two-way flow in which academia can play a significant role in human problem solving, and anthropological practice can have an important presence in the broader context of student training. The future is viewed as encompassing both worlds, even as they are in a continual state of flux, through a willingness to connect and collaborate as an integrated whole.

This orientation to the connection of theory and application is part of a broader movement within the discipline to draw attention to the value of applied anthropological training and anthropological practice. For example, Rylko-Bauer (2006) and her colleagues point out that applied anthropology has contributed significantly to the "shaping of professional organization, evolution of disciplinary subfields, and establishment of ethical standards . . . [along with being] a productive source of anthropological concepts, perspectives, and theory." Other researchers highlight the rise in anthropology graduates who find work outside academia (Price 2001; Fiske et al. 2010), and the obligation to broaden student training beyond presumed academic positions. Indeed, early arguments for the professionalization of the discipline (Chambers and Fiske 1988; Nolan 1998) are part of the ongoing characterization of anthropological practice and the "professional" anthropologists associated with it.

Growth and Development

Applied anthropology programs exist within a particular historical, institutional, socio-economic, and political context. Such programs are shaped by features internal to the departments as well as external to both the university and the wider community. Faculty contemplating the development of applied programs should look to the ways in which the faculty composition, university mission and constraints, and the local setting can be leveraged as assets in developing and structuring the curriculum and hands-on work experiences.

The applied anthropology program life cycle

We recently carried out a CoPAPIA-sponsored study to examine how and why programs of applied anthropology become established and sustained (Briody and Nolan 2011). We used the Delphi method to gather perspectives from 23 faculty members at 15 institutions. Respondents indicated that internal factors such as faculty expertise and faculty consensus in relation to program goals and structure had a considerable effect on the character of their program as it developed. They pointed to external factors such as the availability of job opportunities, local interests and expectations, and university pressure and constraints as major influences.

Our study also revealed some of the obstacles that applied programs face as they develop. First, there was typically a lack of consensus within anthropology departments about the role of application – often because a number of faculty members had little experience or interest in applied work. Second, tension often emerged between anthropology departments and university administrators. For example, there may be opposition to applied programs in a basic research university, or concerns expressed about adding more graduate programs. Third, applied programs typically ran into resource shortages relating to personnel and funding.

Fortunately, according to our Delphi respondents, applied programs generally learn to deal with the obstacles they face. Consensus within the departments improved through such means as faculty willingness to build relationships (e.g., with practitioners, community members), commitment to the program, and hiring. Tension with the university administration tended to dissipate as the program incorporated the university mission into its planning and as its value to the university became evident. And, while resource shortages might continue to exist, creative solutions were often devised to cope with them. Thus, by the time an applied program has "gone to scale" and engaged the wider university and local community, it was likely to offer greater stability and fewer unexpected challenges to entering students. Of course, even applied programs that have been active for many years may experience disruption if departing faculty leaders are not replaced, if funding is curtailed, or if program interest and energy dissipate.

Collaboration and problem-solving at the core of applied programs

Effective applied programs require collaboration and partnership, as well as significant long-term effort. At a minimum, applied programs require faculty to reach consensus on the curriculum, and community partners to serve as supervisors and mentors to students. Applied programs, collaborative by design and execution, create interdependencies between the faculty, students, and outside partners. Applied programs also extend and reinforce the decades-long growth in action anthropology and community-based participatory research spearheaded by applied anthropologists such as Tax (1960, 1964), Dobyns et al. (1971), and DeWalt (1979), and adapted for use with today's challenges through such means as rapid assessment techniques and new technologies (Kedia 2008; Briody et al. 2010).

The applied program orientation to collaboration and partnering fits well with some broader societal trends. Social networking sites, for example, are booming. Organizations enter into joint ventures, strategic alliances, and non-equity collaborations. Mentoring programs have become a common way for young, less experienced people to benefit from the knowledge and competencies of seasoned professionals. Collaboration enables individuals, groups, and organizations to engage in greater outreach and to benefit from a broader range of learning opportunities.

Problem-solving is the other prominent element associated with applied anthropology programs. It is most often evident in class projects for clients, internships, and job searches. For example, projects are undertaken not solely because of their theoretical merit, but because there is a problem or issue that warrants a solution. The investigation of a particular issue might be proposed by faculty or students, or by a client. The goal is typically to describe and explain what's going on and then offer potential solutions to address the problem. Students frequently gain experience in problem-solving through internships and other kinds of volunteer and work opportunities. Recognizing, understanding, and solving problems are an ongoing

part of the world of work, and students use their internships as a way to improve their skills in problem identification and resolution.

Problem-solving is also linked with the search for employment. Since relatively few jobs for master's-level graduates have the title "anthropologist," an array of strategies, including networking, may be necessary to find a desirable position. Applied programs help to develop and hone that problem-solving orientation – a critical skill in the anthropological toolkit, and highly useful in the job hunt.

Applied Program Commonalities

Perhaps the most common feature distinguishing applied from academically oriented anthropology programs is the internship or practicum option. CoPAPIA also sponsored a recent interview-based study of 20 applied faculty members and students/recent graduates (Bartlo et al. 2011). Nine of the 10 applied programs represented in the study offered internships as a key part of their program requirements. This experience, including its preparatory and post-internship/practicum phases, became a mechanism for connecting theory with practice, books and lectures with experiential learning, and the university with the broader community. The internship was also an effective way to link students with the job market since the majority of students in applied programs used these experiences and the networks associated with them to identify post-graduation employment.

Applied programs shared other elements as well. CoPAPIA interviewees reported that seven of the 10 applied programs integrated job skills into the core curriculum through such means as methods courses, applied courses, and grant and résumé writing. Six of the 10 programs encouraged networking opportunities with alumni. Five of the 10 programs brought or encouraged students to attend anthropology conferences. Four of the 10 programs held workshops or other kinds of exercises to help students translate anthropological skills to the job market. In addition, four of the 10 programs recommended that students network with practitioners, including adjunct members of the anthropology department, as a strategy for understanding the job market, getting advice, setting up some informational interviews, and following up on job placement leads.

Applied Program Differences

Applied programs are not monolithic in their history, development, or current approach to student training. Indeed, we discovered no single model that explains how they are structured or operate. The applied programs we looked at were at different stages of their life cycle and/or were subject to different kinds of constraints (e.g., related to size, faculty interests). Some programs were quite new and had only one or two faculty members engaged in applied program and curriculum development. Other programs had been around for years – even decades. In general, newer

programs and those in which few faculty members consult for organizations and communities tended to have relatively fewer offerings compared with larger, more mature applied programs.

The CoPAPIA interview-based study also explored some of the specific features of four mature and long-standing applied programs (Bartlo et al. 2011) which we summarize here.

The University of Memphis

The University of Memphis Anthropology Department, which grants both a bachelor of arts and a master of arts degree, was established in 1972 and celebrated its thirty-fifth anniversary of the master's applied program in 2012 with special events for those connected with the department past and present (University of Memphis 2012). Memphis, located on the banks of the Mississippi river, initiated its applied master's program in 1977. The program offers dual concentrations in (1) medical anthropology, and (2) globalization, development, and culture.

Faculty members in the Memphis program actively cultivate and integrate community members – especially alumni – into all aspects of program functioning. Alumni are viewed as the lifeblood of the program because they are so much a part of its "everyday activities" (see Figure 32.1). They serve as part-time instructors. They help students network. They also hire interns and graduates of the program, as indicated in this statement:

> Our graduates are in the (local) job market. A lot are called back (to campus). We've had opportunities to meet with them. We can network with them. We can volunteer our time with them to get our foot in the door.
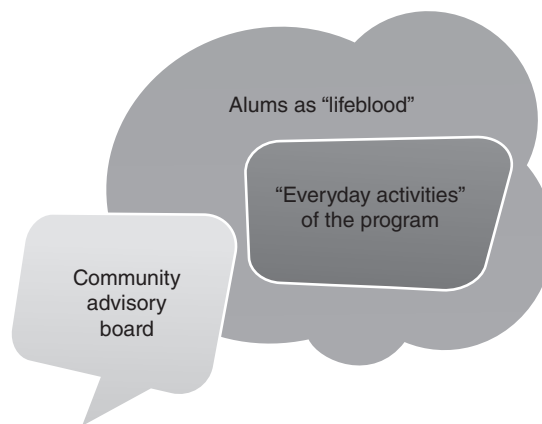

Figure 32.1 Visual representation of the applied anthropology program at the University of Memphis

Faculty members appreciate the "critique and evaluation of the program" that they receive from alumni. Such feedback, along with input from the program's Community Advisory Board, helps to guide the program and keep it fresh. Alumni connections to the program are robust and long-lasting. For example, when the SfAA held its annual meeting in Memphis in 2008, we were told that about "150 alums came . . . This number of alums represented about half of our alums." It is the strength and durability of the alumni network, in particular, that gives this applied program its strong practice foundation. That network is fueled in part by job market connections in the surrounding area.

The University of Maryland, College Park

The Maryland Anthropology Department was established in 1974. In 1984 it became the first program in the United States to offer an MAA. degree – a master of applied anthropology – which is the only master's degree offered by the department. The department also grants a bachelor of arts degree and began granting a PhD degree in 2007. The department has three specialization areas including (1) anthropology of environment, (2) anthropology of health, and (3) anthropology of heritage with a focus on historical archaeology and applied cultural anthropology.

Adjunct faculty members are one of the key ways in which Maryland's applied program is distinctive (see Figure 32.2). Many anthropologists work for the federal government and various other organizations and institutions in and around Washington, DC – just 11 miles from College Park. Twenty-two anthropologists are listed as adjuncts on the website (University of Maryland 2012). They perform the same kinds of functions as alumni at the University of Memphis: giving lectures, supervising independent studies, offering career advice, and assisting with the job search. For example, we were told that:
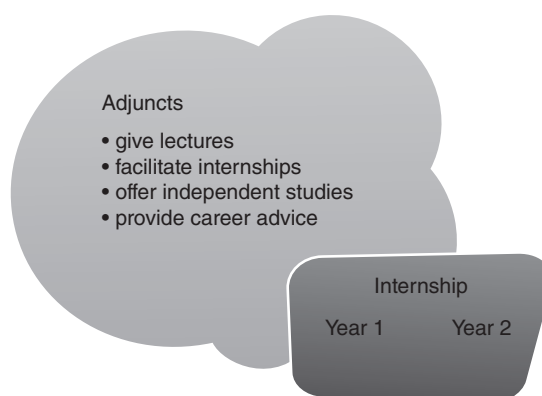

Figure 32.2 Visual representation of the anthropology program at the University of Maryland, College Park

> Our department uses the adjunct members well. Yesterday, an M.A.A. student defended his proposal. The student will work at the Bureau of Land Management. An adjunct faculty found that opportunity.

The timing of the internship, between the first and second years of the M.A.A. program, emphasizes its centrality to learning. Adjuncts help to facilitate internships – both through their networks and their ability to find placements for students. As one interviewee reported:

> The value of the adjunct is enormous. It is important to reach out to them. They can help you understand how your interest in anthropology can translate to a career.

In the last few years, adjuncts have begun working with faculty and students on research grants as well.

Northern Arizona University

The Anthropology Department at Northern Arizona University was created in 1985. At that time, faculty members undertook an intensive effort to design and implement an applied master's program which would operate alongside the more academically oriented thesis program. Located in Flagstaff (elevation nearly 7,000 feet) and surrounded by a large pine forest, the department grants a bachelor of arts and a master of arts degree (Northern Arizona University 2012). The master of arts offers three emphasis areas: (1) archaeology, (2) sociocultural anthropology, and (3) linguistic anthropology.

The culture of this applied program is built around neither alumni nor adjuncts, though both are important to how the program functions. Instead, the centerpiece of the program is the "cohort philosophy" (see Figure 32.3). Program faculty developed
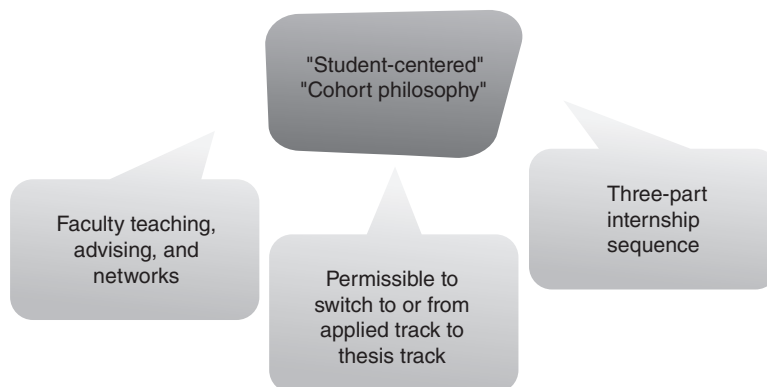

Figure 32.3 Visual representation of the applied anthropology program at Northern Arizona University

consensus around using the structure of the cohort progression to build and extend student networks. Entering cohorts are encouraged to build their own networks, taking advantage of those of their student peers, faculty, and others connected with the program. These networks are a contributing element to an individually tailored curriculum, and ultimately individual career paths. A three-part internship sequence, including the periods prior to and following their internship experience, is a core part of student learning and job preparation. Later, students discover that "the cohort effect is a deliberate part of the job search process. Even after the end of the program, they [applied students] are helping each other." Locally, the archaeology graduates have found that their "cohort networks maintain [the] level of staffing" in the national parks and national forests. The cohort philosophy engenders strong, tight-knit connections among the students, so much so that we were told, "The thesis students asked if the department could create a cohort progression for them" – which subsequently occurred.

The University of North Texas

The Anthropology Department at the University of North Texas uses its website to teach prospective students about anthropology, applied anthropology, and the range of anthropological careers. The program, which is part of a college of applied social sciences, grants a bachelor of arts, a master of arts/science (both on-campus and online options), and a dual master's in applied anthropology and public health. Located in Denton, Texas, the department was established in 1990 and formalized its applied focus by 1997. Today, the program offers several specializations including (1) business, technology, and design anthropology, (2) migration and border studies, (3) medical anthropology, (4) anthropology of education, and (5) environmental and ecological anthropology.

The University of North Texas program stresses "the practical use of anthropology to solve problems and improve people's lives" (University of North Texas 2012). Students engage in multiple client interactions over the course of the program through various project experiences (see Figure 32.4). We were told, for example, that some of the required core classes "had a client attached to them and almost all of the electives had them." Class projects are a key mechanism for exposing students to issues facing organizations and communities, sharpening their research skills, and engaging them in problem solving and decision making. One student indicated that the professor "set up a project before the class even started. So they (the professors) sort of used their connections in the community or wherever." Another type of project experience is the practicum (now known as the applied thesis), a type of internship in which the student designs and carries out a major client project. As in the other three applied programs, students are expected to find their own clients. A formal agreement is created with the client such that "There is a three-way between the student, the professor, and the [client]." The combination of the class projects and the practicum/internship experience prepares students well for the job
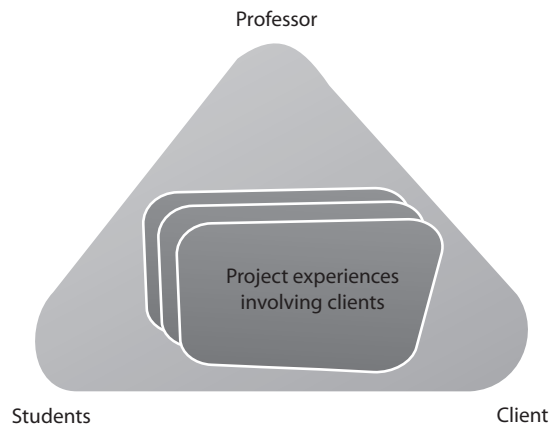
Professor

Project experiences
involving clients

Students   Client

Figure 32.4 Visual representation of the applied anthropology program at the University of North Texas

market, enables them to make an impact on both local and global community issues, and helps fulfill the mission of the College of Public Affairs and Community Service.

These four applied programs build on their individual strengths to create interesting and challenging learning experiences. Each operates using a collaborative orientation with the potential to benefit all parties involved (e.g., students, faculty, community members). Each figures out its own ways to connect with and beyond the locale in which it is situated and offers mechanisms for integrating alumni, adjuncts, and other groups into the university setting. Finally, each trains students to be problem-solvers who seek solutions to thorny organizational and community challenges. The diversity of these four models suggests that prospective applied anthropology programs have many options open to them. Faculty members can take stock of their own competencies and interests, and the local conditions, and then develop and execute a plan that is consistent with them, making periodic adjustments as necessary.

Student Reactions to Applied Training

At least three recent studies have sought student feedback on master's-level training. NAPA sponsored a survey in 2000 of 113 graduates from six applied master's programs in the United States. One question asked for recommendations for improving applied program curricula. Dozens of suggestions emphasized "specific work management and workplace interaction skills" along with particular work-related skills (e.g., data collection and analysis, report and grant writing, evaluation, networking) (Harman et al. 2004: 5–6). The study also found that more recent graduates reported greater continuity between the training they received and its applicability to their jobs. The authors speculated that applied programs may be keeping pace with updating their curricula to be responsive to workplace environments generally.

In 2009 CoPAPIA conducted a large survey of 758 anthropology master's gradu-ates – both applied and academically oriented – from 128 US, 12 Canadian, and two Mexican universities (Fiske et al. 2010). Respondents expressed an overall satisfac-tion with their master's education. Consistent with the earlier NAPA study, respondents confirmed the importance of workplace preparation and application skills within the master's-level curricula. Their top recommendations included technical writing (e.g., proposals, grants), project design, development, and management, presenta-tion skills, budget preparation, analysis and execution, and networking.

The 2010 CoPAPIA interview-based study solicited suggestions for improving preparation for the job market within applied anthropology programs (Bartlo et al. 2011). Recommendations were associated with six domains. First, students desired more "professionalization" preparation, including better training on how to sell anthropological skills as well as develop proposals. Second, they sought more real world experiences such as internships and "smaller projects on tighter deadlines." Third, mentoring and guidance were seen as important – "someone pointing out my strengths and skills," or an opportunity for "long-term relationship building." Fourth, they stressed the value of face-to-face access with anthropological practi-tioners. For example, "In school . . . you could also bring in guests who could speak, or who could give an inspirational talk." Fifth, they emphasized virtual access to practitioners: "Having a more active on-line community . . . to learn about profes-sional opportunities . . . students who are looking for internships right now for the coming summer could really benefit from that." Finally, students wanted more coverage of survey and focus group methods as well as quantitative analysis. All of these suggestions reflect a desire for improved alignment between applied program training and current employment options. There is no evidence in the study that students want to undercut the educational content of their program. What is required is an appropriate balance between orienting students to the job market while ensuring that the substantive course material is robust and useful.

Choosing an Applied Program

To conclude, we'd like to offer some thoughts on how students might choose an applied anthropology program. In choosing a program, it is helpful to have a general understanding of the kinds of work in which anthropologists are engaged. There are many resources available to assist with that search.

A good place to start is with the career DVDs offered through the American Anthropological Association (Briody and Bodo 1993; Smiley 2006; Altimare 2008). There are publications describing jobs held by anthropologists (Wasson 2006; Guer-rón-Montero 2008; Strang 2009), or planning an anthropological career (Nolan 2002; Briller and Goldmacher 2009; Ellick and Watkins 2011). Workshops offered through anthropological organizations (e.g., SfAA, NAPA) can assist in a non-academic career search (Nolan 2010). Some websites are worth exploring (including

AAA 2012), as well as various online groups such as LinkedIn Groups (e.g., Ethnographic Praxis in Industry Conference, Consumer Anthropology, NAPA).

Websites are also informative. Anthropology department websites provide considerable insight into the people, scope, and requirements of applied programs. The philosophy, areas of concentration, research interests, and courses are listed. The work of departmental members, including students or recent graduates, may be featured and often enhanced with photos or video clips. Departmental newsletters and current events may be posted.

Informational interviews with faculty and students can be used to confirm what was learned via websites and to gather additional information. Questions can be posed about such matters as program structure, expectations, workload, graduation rates, and post-graduation job placement. These conversations can reveal how much energy and enthusiasm permeate the program, the likelihood that solid working relationships can be formed, and the extent to which departmental members share common interests. Finding a good "fit" between the program and the prospective student is the goal. Documenting the entire investigative activity – what is absorbed from websites, conversations, campus visits, and other means – enables informed decision-making. Some additional networking and/or some guidance from a mentor are likely to be helpful in sorting out priorities.

There is an important long-term benefit to this process: the knowledge acquisition, coordination, and relationship building skills used in an applied program search are essential in the training, employment pursuits, and career development of practitioners. Establishing a base of support, working cooperatively with others, and partnering on projects when appropriate make a valuable connection between anthropology's traditional value of self-reliance and that of collaboration. While the graduating anthropologist still approaches the job market and career prospects as an individual, they do so within the context of a networked community that they have created.

Note

1   We thank Marisa Deline for her helpful comments on an early draft.

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