

**Academic Program Review for the  
Department of Anthropology, University of New Mexico**  
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The Academic Program Review Committee for the UNM Department of Anthropology has studied the department's organization, operations, and facilities. During an on-site visit between October 24 and 26, 2018 the committee met with groups and individuals from the department and university administrators. We were sent a thorough Departmental Self-Study prior to the onsite review that prepared us for the visit. The on-site visit and Self-Study have given us an understanding of the department's strengths and challenges, and we are pleased to provide the following summary of our review and recommendations.

**Executive Summary**

The Department of Anthropology is a premier program at the University of New Mexico, and it plays an important role in establishing the university as a major research institution and serving the state's diverse population. The department's success depends on university and private support, but it has managed with a comparatively limited budget to obtain regional, national, and international recognition. We point to three major areas of concern, all of them inter-related: the lack of clear governance procedures for the department as a whole; the autonomy of three sections based on the subfields of archaeology, ethnology and evolutionary anthropology; and substantial difficulties in effective communication at different levels across the department and within some sections leading to lack of transparency, confusion, and anxiety.

We make three recommendations for action at the end of this report.

**Departmental Strengths**

The Department of Anthropology is among the top fifteen programs in anthropology in North America. It is known internationally for its stellar faculty, students, and the research conducted by both. It is highly regarded by the administration at the UNM, and the department's national and international prominence increases the stature of the university. The success of the department is aptly summarized in its Self-Study. Here we note its history, continued record of excellence in scholarship, and outstanding service to the discipline, as well as continuing success in graduate education.

The department has a history of strength in its three subfields of anthropology, archaeology, ethnology, and evolutionary anthropology. Since the inception of the

department in 1928, faculty and students have played a central role in the study of the American Southwest. Their work has shown how Southwestern cultures and histories have created the exceptional diversity that is New Mexico. The archaeology subfield, in particular, has made a commitment to the public place and public service of anthropology within the state. UNM archaeologists have a long-tradition of excellence in the study of Southwestern archaeology and have made a significant impact through their public archaeology program. The department's Masters in Public Archaeology is making important contributions to the academy and to the public and provides a model for the kind of engaged, community-based scholarship that is sure to be a critical part of anthropology for years to come. The Ortiz Center's recent restoration and curation of the Smith Family totem pole in collaboration with First Nations' leaders from British Columbia, along with its broader intellectual mission, is an exemplary example of this kind of engagement. A proposed initiative for the creation of a Chaco Canyon interdisciplinary research hub would build on the expertise of UNM archaeologists and graduate students and long-standing field schools. Support for such a hub from the UNM administration would solidify the UNM anthropology department as a center of excellence in Southwest archaeology for years to come. UNM ethnologists have produced distinguished work in collaboration with indigenous communities across the Americas that complement the department's focus on the Southwest. An internationally recognized program in evolutionary anthropology has emerged as a cutting-edge leader in evolutionary approaches to the study of human and primate biology, behavior, and evolution. Especially promising is the impending move of an extremely productive group of evolutionary anthropology faculty and students to the new state-of-the-art Physics & Astronomy and Interdisciplinary Studies Building. The creation of this facility will strengthen the ability of UNM evolutionary anthropologists to conduct collaborative, interdisciplinary research that will undoubtedly advance our understanding of the human condition.

The Department has made substantial progress in responding to the 2009 External Review recommendations. Specifically, the graduate program has been streamlined by reducing the number of doctoral students admitted each year. In addition, considerable upgrades have been made to facilities utilized by faculty and students. These changes have led to improvements in the ability of UNM anthropologists to conduct their research and teaching. Although work remains to be done in these two areas, especially in a time of declining resources, faculty members continue to carry out innovative anthropological research. They publish papers in high-profile, high-impact peer-reviewed journals and produce books that are widely read. UNM faculty support their research with extramural funds obtained from highly competitive public and private sources.

Since the last APR 10 years ago, the department has made changes to the graduate program and funding with an eye towards the successful graduation and employment of graduate students. These changes have had a positive impact. The graduate program is large and dynamic. When we met with the graduate students we found them to be enthusiastic and dedicated. They especially appreciated the

ethos of collaboration that they have found at the UNM, especially within specific laboratory groups. The department continues to graduate students who are successful in finding employment, which reflects well on the effectiveness of the department's graduate program.

We found that the department demonstrates a substantial commitment to teaching and training graduate students. This extends to undergraduates as well, a fact that is quite commendable for such a research-active faculty. While enrollments in anthropology undergraduate classes rose steadily between 2009 and 2013, they have declined since then. This decline is clearly a concern, and the department has made preliminary efforts to identify the cause and to develop strategies to address the issue.

Overall, most of the Department's facilities (in particular, the Hibben Center, Maxwell Museum, anthropology building and its offices) are excellent, as good as or better than most comparable departments across the country. Jennifer George, the Department Administrator, gave us a thorough tour of the facilities, and we were impressed, not only with the array of spaces available for research and teaching, but with Ms. George's command of the Department's activities, and her anticipation of its future needs. While some of the labs are quite substantial, we note that many archaeologists expressed the need for a dedicated teaching lab for archaeology.

### **Departmental Challenges**

It is remarkable how successful the department has been in satisfying its research and teaching missions, and, indeed, in serving as national leaders in the field given the seriousness of the challenges that it faces. It will be no surprise to hear that the charges of sexual harassment and gender discrimination in AY 2015-2016 that led to the dismissal of a member of the ethnology faculty have had profound effects, not only on ethnology, but on the department as a whole. While the remaining ethnologists have made efforts to forge a path forward, the repercussions of this traumatic set of events are clearly ongoing, and have had deleterious effects on the department at many levels. At the same time, these events and their consequent effects strike us, in many ways, less as the cause of the lingering resentments and anxiety we observed, than themselves the outcome of some very long-standing problems with the governance structure of the department as a whole. The history of governance challenges is well known to members of the department and the administration at UNM, and there is no need to review them here. In our view these challenges are primarily the result of the lack of an effective overarching governance structure for the department as a whole. The lack of clear mechanisms and procedures make it difficult for faculty members to determine why matters such as merit raises, resource allocation, promotion criteria, curricular changes, and mentoring assignments are handled in certain ways. We were told in a meeting with departmental officers that procedures crafted by committees that include faculty at all ranks led to retaliation in the past and might do so in the future.

The 2009 Program Review held that, “[t]he subfields and their individual members have been allowed to develop largely independently and the result is that the Department is uneven in its strengths and not well integrated towards its goals.” While it is normal and expected for departments of anthropology to have highly diverse and specialized intellectual agendas, and to allow a good deal of autonomy to subfield specialists in matters of research, and even curriculum development, when there are no effective institutionalized practices for communicating and collaborating across these subfields it can lead, not only to the uneven development across the department, but also to fractious relationships and the inability to work effectively even within specific subfields. It is abundantly clear that this has been the case in the department, as tensions within ethnology and archaeology have been extremely difficult to navigate, and have produced dysfunctional governance.

The consequences of these governance challenges are especially problematic at three levels. First, mentoring faculty is fraught. We heard from Associate Professors, who have been promoted, that the process of probationary review is opaque, and that they had received different information and advice from different sources within the department (and perhaps across the university). Associate Professors similarly described a lack of clarity with the procedures and expectations for promotion to Professor, a situation that has clearly led to a swelling in the ranks of Associates, some of whom are qualified for promotion. These kinds of mentoring questions can only be addressed when a department is integrated and unified in its understanding of procedures and practices and when clear mentoring documents are in place.

Second, is the issue of advising graduate students, which is closely related to the question of mentoring faculty. Despite the general success of the UNM anthropology graduate program, our meeting with a large group of graduate students from all three subfields and the alumni survey in the Self-Study highlight some areas of concern. From our site visit and the Self-Study, we learned that some students did not feel they were receiving consistent advice about the expectations for getting through the program. Some of them said they relied solely on their advisers for guidance, and – in fact – felt constrained from seeking advice from others (including other students) on these matters. It was clear that students in each of the subfields were getting quite different advice—some expressed surprise when they heard fellow students describe the advice they had been given and the steps they had taken to advance to PhD candidacy. The alumni survey suggested that the department did not prepare its graduates for careers beyond the academy. This indicates that the department has an opportunity to rethink how they provide professionalization training in pedagogy, collaboration with colleagues, and communicating to broader audiences beyond the academy. Our discussion with graduate students also reinforced this call for professionalization. Tracking the careers of students as well as listening to their concerns is necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of any graduate program. While the data from the alumni survey suggest that UNM anthropology students go on to successful careers, many (40%)

failed to respond. The department should prioritize collecting data on the career outcomes of PhD and MA students every year to capture these missing voices.

Third, the challenges of departmental integration and communication are revealed in substantial problems of transparency. Many faculty members expressed dismay at their inability to be fully informed about matters such as budgeting, merit review, and even hiring policies. This lack of transparency is especially a concern because it generates, not only confusion, but also genuine anxiety about one's standing in the Department. A few faculty members indicated that they felt constrained from participating in certain discussions because they feared retaliation from their colleagues. It was especially disturbing to hear that students felt they could not share information about their research or interests with their peers because they worried that their faculty advisers would exclude them from resources and opportunities available to other students. What this suggests is that the lack of transparency in overall communication has created a climate in which it is possible for individual faculty members to act without clear accountability to the department as a whole. This kind of autonomy is detrimental to an atmosphere of any truly collaborative efforts, which an academic department must have.

In addition to these three challenges that follow from the weak integration of the department as a whole, we identify three additional issues that need to be addressed. First, declining undergraduate enrollments present an excellent opportunity for the department to rethink its curriculum. A department-wide Curriculum Committee has been established to begin this process, and we hope this effort will continue with the input of all faculty members. As is the case with other matters outlined above, clear procedural mechanisms need to be established to effect changes recommended by the newly formed Curriculum Committee.

Second, we gained a perception that the climate in the department is problematic. We heard confidential accounts indicating that practices of gender discrimination – though not sexual harassment – are pressing concerns. Further, it was our own observation (and it is telling that no member of the department raised the point with us) that the department has not been successful in its efforts to diversify. In a state like New Mexico with a majority minority population and constituency, and especially in a discipline like anthropology that is committed to engaging with human variation in all respects, it is surprising to find a department as homogenous as UNM's. We recommend that the department make a concerted effort in its hiring policies to find scholars from underrepresented groups whose contributions can enrich its offerings.

These are the pressing concerns that relate to the governance structure and overall climate of the department. More immediately, the department and administration face a third major issue regarding leadership. Professor Field has identified the importance of codifying practices and procedures that have heretofore been “oral traditions” and legacy practices in the department. We share his concern and applaud his efforts to remedy this situation. But it remains the fact that important

procedures relating to hiring, advising, mentoring, and funding need to be codified, and this is a tall order. Professor Field's term as Chair ends at the end of this academic year, and many department members expressed concern about his successor and the lack of departmental procedures for appointing his replacement. The department and administration therefore find themselves facing a conundrum. How can they select a Chair who is likely to be successful given the absence of clear processes and procedures? Alternatively, should they focus on developing the necessary procedures that will assure the success of future leadership and overall governance in the Department given the very limited timeframe? Here we feel that mediation is necessary and recommend that the department and administration develop a facilitated process that would simultaneously identify a clear way to select the next Chair and develop robust procedures for other aspects of departmental governance that are designed to cut across subfields and professorial ranks. It is apparent to us that not just integration across the department, but communication within and among the subfields is currently too fraught for this process to be successful in the absence of mediation, or some other method requiring and promoting such vital discussion. One possibility would be to appoint an interim chair from outside the department. The key would be to find some one who is process- and procedural-oriented and who can assist the department in creating mechanisms that promote transparency, equity, cross-subfield integration, and collegiality.

Fortunately, there is evidence that departmental integration can be attained if the steps we recommend are taken. As already noted, the department has formed a Curriculum Committee to address the undergraduate curriculum as a whole. The formation of this committee is a good first step towards inter-subfield communication that, if successful, could serve as a model for other committees on advising and mentoring, for example, that will help bridge divisions across the department.

The ethnology subfield, which was so depleted by recent events, appears to be taking positive steps to move the program forward. The graduate students we met with from ethnology (admittedly a small sample of first and second year students) were optimistic about the program, and felt they were obtaining the support and advice they needed to be successful. Teaching and training students effectively will require hiring more ethnologists. This is the most pressing current faculty need in the department. Fortunately the ethnologists await the arrival of an excellent anthropologist who was hired last year; there are plans to hire another ethnologist this academic year. We support these hires. At the same time we feel strongly that as a condition of these and future hires, the Department be required to produce a clear set of procedures for how junior faculty will be mentored through their probationary term. These mentoring guidelines must reflect the best, current practices of the profession. This is especially important if the department wishes to hire a more diverse faculty. In the absence of such clear procedures, it is likely that junior faculty will find themselves in the same situation of confusion and anxiety we observed.

### **Recommendations to the Department of Anthropology**

1. The department and administration devise a plan to create a facilitated process designed to craft clear procedures and a governance structure, including a mechanism to appoint a new chair. This could mean appointing a chair from outside the department, who can help develop the necessary policies that will be required for successful integration of the three subfields into a unified department of anthropology.
2. The department immediately establish a set of procedures for mentoring junior faculty and guidelines for faculty promotions, especially to full professor.
3. The department develop a Diversity Plan. This can include reference to curriculum, programing, and student recruitment, but should also include a plan to reach out to scholars from underrepresented groups in anthropology.