Dear Dr. Galchinsky:

Thank you for the invitation and opportunity to visit Georgia State University and to review its Anthropology program. The list of authors of this report is alphabetical, as we have not chosen a committee chair.

1. Executive Summary

The Anthropology department possesses a small, but extraordinarily productive, faculty across the dimensions of scholarship, teaching, mentoring, and service. The scope of anthropology traditionally incorporates four intellectual areas and their connections, which together form a holistic national training standard: archaeology, biological anthropology, social or cultural anthropology, and linguistic anthropology; and the application of this knowledge in the modern world (i.e., applied anthropology). With 11 full-time permanent faculty members, the GSU Anthropology Department nevertheless manages to present the full scope of the field of anthropology to its undergraduate and graduate students. In what follows, we will suggest ways in which anthropology can contribute more effectively to the University’s Strategic Plan, without straining the existing human resources.

2. Contributions to the Discipline

a. To which subfields of the discipline does the department make the most significant scholarly, creative, or clinical contributions (as appropriate)?

The department makes significant scholarly contributions across the field of anthropology. The contributions appear to be slanted toward biological and archaeological anthropology in terms of both major funding and student participation in research. In terms of community engagement and global problems, it slants toward cultural and linguistic anthropology. This seems quite normal.
b. To what extent are the faculty number, composition, and diversity sufficient to support the research and educational missions of the department?

The number of faculty overall and within subdisciplines is inadequate to maintain the progress it has made in recent years. Given higher administration’s mandate for budget neutral proposals, we offer recommendations that rely on existing resources or established strategic plans for investment, which would contribute to significant growth in enrollment, external funding, and national reputation.

The ability of the department to offer broad instruction across the four traditional fields of anthropology is admirable. This commitment to the holistic ideals of anthropology prepares students for a broader range of employment opportunities. The number of faculty, however, has not increased in a manner commensurate with the growth of the department’s M.A. program. At the same time, success in grant production has required the department to rely on rotating Visiting Lecturers and PTIs to meet instructional needs, with the former teaching upper division and graduate courses and serving on M.A. Committees. This situation is detrimental to continuity in the graduate program, especially.

With 82% of the faculty identifying as white and 62% as female, the composition of the department reflects national trends. The department exhibits significant diversity in the national origins of its faculty. Nevertheless, students did, understandably, express a desire for African-American representation among the faculty.

Considering these points, we support the department’s goal of seeking two new tenure-track hires through funding already committed for the Next Generation Program and the budget-neutral conversion of visiting and part-time positions to Lectureships. Moreover, we underscore the desirability of ensuring a diverse pool of applicants, particularly for tenure-track hires.

c. Based on your knowledge of similar departments in the discipline, evaluate the overall strength of the department.

The department is intellectually solid and comprehensive. They do an extraordinary job with what they have. Their M.A. program has become a model of such programs; indeed, when UNC Charlotte was developing their graduate program a few years ago, they looked directly to this program for inspiration.

3. Quality of the Department’s Undergraduate and Graduate Programs

a. For each of the department’s programs, evaluate the quality and currency of the curriculum in terms of disciplinary standards and trends.

The undergraduate curriculum is well-designed to introduce students to the broad discipline of anthropology, ensure the acquisition of necessary knowledge and skills, and provide flexibility to pursue topical or subdisciplinary interests. The courses are appropriately geared toward current trends within the discipline and the specific expertise of faculty. We do not see specific impediments to timely completion of the degree.
The graduate program has achieved national recognition as a "Distinguished Terminal M.A. Program" by the American Anthropological Association, and for good reason. Students receive excellent instruction across the discipline and generally benefit from rigorous training in their selected focus, although the addition of a biomedical anthropologist with expertise in epidemiology would strengthen the focus in medical anthropology. Extraordinary growth of the program reflects this national reputation for excellence. We were, however, uncertain as to the value of an internship option as distinct from a practicum option for the M.A. degree. It seems to us that an internship appropriate for a graduate project, that is, one that engaged the student in research and/or application of anthropological knowledge, would not differ significantly from a practicum, and that the distinction may be confusing to students. We recommend that the department consider consolidating these two options under the single national standard of a practicum option.

b. Evaluate the quality of both incoming and graduated students in the department’s programs, relative to discipline-specific norms.

Overall, students in the Anthropology Department at GSU are comparable in quality to other peer institutions in terms of undergraduate and graduate admission test scores and GPA. Of note, a significant percentage of the department’s undergraduate majors graduate with Honors.

c. Based on your professional experience, are the enrollment, retention, and graduation rates appropriate? If not, what changes might the department make to improve them?

It merits note that anthropology is rarely taught in high schools, making undergraduate enrollment and recruitment a greater challenge relative to more familiar social science fields (e.g. psychology, political science, sociology). Even so, the department has impressive undergraduate retention and graduation rates, despite a decline to 76% six-year graduation rate for the 2009-15 cohort. Enrollments of majors appear to have had an anomalous peak in spring and fall of 2013, but have seen a more modest decline of about 12% since. There exist some opportunities to reverse this trend and increase undergraduate enrollments. We learned that the University’s undergraduate advising office does not provide adequate and consistent guidance to students (1) who should be directed toward the field based on relevant interests.; and (2) who are seeking assistance within the anthropology major. Most discover the major through serendipity: taking an introductory course by chance, rather than as a result of advising. Majors reported that lower division university advisors seem largely unfamiliar with anthropology, while the turnover in upper division university advisors decelerates progress towards the degree.

Also significantly, many universities utilize their Introduction to Biological Anthropology course (in this case ANTH 2010) in more creative ways. In some departments, this class has a laboratory component and teaches about important scientific subjects that a Biology department simply does not offer (notably human paleontology, primatology, race, and human genetics). By offering such a course to satisfy an undergraduate science requirement, it can remove curricular pressure from the Biology department and attract pre-meds into anthropology, where they will also discover the area of medical anthropology. This is often a very successful conduit into medical school. Another growth possibility would be in the serious development of online education; this would require investing in a Lectureship, but would significantly boost both overall enrollment and recruitment to the major, particularly from newly absorbed perimeter campuses.
d. Are there appropriate resources and support structures for the department’s educational programs?

The library holdings are excellent. There are abundant opportunities for field schools, study abroad, and other signature experiences that substantially enrich learning, and students have access to some funding for international study. If the College decides to follow the recommendation in (3c), it would require a small investment in teaching assistantships, a budget for regularly augmenting a fossil/skeletal cast collection, and a 3-D printer (the newest fossil specimens are available on-line, and a department can print them out for class use), but might have a significant curricular impact.

e. Evaluate the potential for growth of the department’s graduate programs.

There is no potential for growth without expansion of the faculty. Indeed, the success of the faculty in obtaining research grants, which allows them to buy out their teaching, also may create a shortfall in the course offerings in any given semester. Existing resources and the university’s Next Generation recruitment plan afford timely means to address the most urgent departmental needs.

4. Quality of the Department’s Research Culture

a. Based on your knowledge of the discipline, what is your assessment of the quality of the department’s faculty?

GSU’s Anthropology department is excellent. They love teaching and research, and have been universally successful at both. Current students and alumni express their satisfaction. The department is presently “middle-heavy,” with only two full professors, both men. The committee understands that this demographic issue will soon be addressed. At the same time, support for faculty leave at the senior associate professor level is essential to address the imbalance in faculty rank more rapidly across the campus. Budget neutral means to afford this are addressed later.

b. From a disciplinary perspective, what is your assessment of the research areas in which the department is already strong, and areas with the potential for further growth?

There are opportunities for cooperation between departments and programs that are being under-utilized here, particularly given the breadth of the field of anthropology and the research programs of the current faculty. One potential area for growth is in medical anthropology, particularly a researcher with expertise in human biology and epidemiology. Research in this specialization is growing exponentially at the national level, and it holds tremendous potential for collaboration across GSU programs such as the School of Public Health and Institute of Gerontology, among others. Additional potential growth areas include business and design anthropology, museums, and digital humanities.

c. What is your assessment of the support structures for faculty and student research (e.g., grant-writing support, travel grants, laboratories, student funding, administrative support, etc.)?

Support for faculty travel is excellent. Student support could be improved, such as expanded scholarships for Study Abroad programs. As noted in (4a), senior associate professors are in dire
need of a system for getting a semester’s leave in which to write; it is possible to meet this need through creative and budget neutral initiatives (see 5.d.). We applaud the administration’s commitment to providing appropriate laboratory space with minimal disruption of the research conducted there, and we were encouraged by actions taken shortly after the review to ameliorate short-term concerns among students and faculty about the lab transition.

d. Do you have any recommendations for improvements in the department’s research culture, productivity, and results?

The department’s research culture is excellent. We saw three areas where there might be some profitable tweaking or potential growth. First, the faculty should review their use and allocation of graduate assistants to ensure consistency and balance in allocations across subfields and faculty supervisors, assigned duties, and expectations regarding work quality and weekly work hours. Second, the faculty as a whole should discuss the distribution of service responsibilities, and possible rotation of faculty through the major roles. It is important to stress that the faculty voiced satisfaction with their service assignments and, crucially, tenure track Assistant Professors are protected from excessive service. Nevertheless, discussion would foster balanced loads, and scheduled service rotations would prepare faculty to step in when a colleague is awarded leave or grant buy-out, and promote broader understanding of governance (for instance, rotating representatives to the college tenure and promotion committee would allow all associate professors to view portfolios and expectations for promotion to full professor). Third, both the department and college should support and incentivize outreach for the development of cooperative research with other departments and programs (for example, Sociology, History, and Public Health), and especially with local, grassroots, governmental, non-governmental, for-profit and non-profit organizations. Such organizations might include those working in the realms of healthcare research, housing and community development, museums and cultural heritage, business and design, education, faith-based and social services, public safety, immigrants and refugee advocacy, etc.

5. Goals

a. Are the goals the department has outlined in its self-study appropriate for the unit?

Yes, although we place some goals as a higher priority.

The highest priority is to augment their faculty through the Next Generation initiative. One recruitment area would be in Human Biology or Biomedical Anthropology (we consider this broadly, to incorporate medical anthropology foci such as epidemiology, gerontology, or nutrition). This could potentially interact profitably with Public Health, Gerontology, Biology, and Sociology. The second area proposed by the department is Digital Humanities in support of its proposed Museum Studies certificate (see below). This is appropriate, as Digital Humanities is a rapidly growing field for virtually disseminating, archiving, and providing scholarly access to museum collections and places of cultural heritage. Alternatively, we see a greater accord with the University’s strategic plan in the recruitment of a scholar in Business and Design (or Corporate) Anthropology. This is an exciting area of applied anthropology that would complement the department’s existing strengths in the context of the University’s goal to
establish partnerships in the local business community. The New York Times has been running an ad featuring business and design anthropology on its front page: https://www.nytimes.com/video/arts/100000004801103/the-power-of-being-human.html?

We fully support the proposal to use existing funding for Visiting Lecturers to support the hiring of one or more full-time instructors. This initiative would satisfy demand for quality instruction – particularly as faculty with grants buy out of courses – and provide stability in teaching and student mentoring. Instructors and/or proposed tenure track hires could also allow the department to develop online courses, which would return the investment with increased enrollment and the recruitment of majors, and allow the department to keep pace with national trends towards growing online courses and programs.

There is some interest in developing certificates in Ethnography and Museum Studies. A certificate in Ethnography could increase enrollment from other campus programs and draw new revenue from public and corporate entities willing to pay for workforce training in qualitative methods, while a certificate in Museum Studies drew significant interest from students and holds the potential to increase enrollments and provide cultural heritage institutes with more skilled staff. Yet it does not seem reasonable to expect existing faculty to expand their already strained load as the quality of training programs and research would suffer. We recommend that: (1) certificates be inter-departmental and feature interdisciplinary coursework to spread the workload and benefits; (2) market studies be conducted to gauge demand, target recruitment (i.e., agencies willing to subsidize workforce training in ethnographic and qualitative methods), and identify employment prospects; and (3) the department and university revisit the cap on collateral coursework that counts as degree hours; currently students can apply only 6 collateral credit hours towards the degree, reducing demand for certificates and slowing progress towards the degree. Nationally, graduate schools are revising policy to count between 9 and 12 credit hours of collateral coursework towards a Master’s degree.

The proposal for a B.S. degree could strengthen undergraduate recruitment among students wishing to pursue research on human biology; prepare for graduate study in medicine, nursing, or public health; or transfer from other B.S. majors without incurring requirement and credit hour penalties. To accomplish this, the department requires the proposed faculty line in human biology/biomedical anthropology, and support to meet demand for courses that fulfill degree requirements. Study is advised to gauge demand and ensure that a B.S. would recruit new majors, rather than simply pull from the pool of B.A. majors.

We place the development of a doctoral program as a lower priority, or a very long-term goal. The faculty appears willing to table doctoral plans until more data are available for strategic planning, such as requisite resources and the potential impact on MA assistantship funding, the quality of MA training, and the job market for doctorates.

b. Are they in accord with disciplinary trends?

Biomedical and Corporate Anthropology are very much on the cutting edge of intellectual trends in anthropology. Interdisciplinary certificates in Museum Studies and in Qualitative Methods are also popular on many campuses.
c. Are the priorities reasonable?

Rapid and exponential growth in the graduate program and the exceptionally high level of research productivity among faculty suggest that new initiatives which receive appropriate resources and support are likely to prove successful. However, without these resources the existing faculty cannot add to their current burden of teaching, research and service.

d. Are the resource needs realistic?

Requests are appropriate and largely represent budget neutral initiatives that use existing Visiting Lecturer lines and tap into existing Next Generation recruitment plans. Our recommendation to make any new certificate programs inter-departmental and interdisciplinary would make greater use of existing courses and instruction. Our recommendation to increase the availability of leaves for senior level associate professors can similarly be accomplished with existing resources. For example, the College of Arts & Sciences at The University of Memphis uses grant salary recovery and buy-out funds to subsidize leave for other faculty (each one-year buy-out for a Fulbright or post-doctoral Fellowship supports two competitive one-semester leaves). All of these initiatives hold promise of returns on the investment through increased student enrollment and employment prospects, increased faculty research and grant productivity, and growth in the reputation of the department and university.

e. Are any changes or additions warranted?

As noted, we recommend that the department explore Business and Design Anthropology as a strategy to enlarge the faculty in accordance with the University’s Strategic Plan.

6. Summary and Recommendations

a. Summarize the department’s major strengths and challenges.

The Department of Anthropology at GSU boasts a talented, committed and productive faculty, devoted undergraduate and graduate students, and an environment that promotes high quality teaching, research, mentoring, and service. The chief barriers to continued growth are its greatly overextended and relatively small faculty, and a dearth of leave opportunities for senior associate professors that would ensure their promotion and enhance the university’s national reputation.

Dr. Kozaitis is universally admired as an effective chair. She should be given the opportunity for a leave to complete the revision of her book manuscript and earn a promotion. She has managed a collegial and productive group of scholars and developed a resected, and very functional program with a modest faculty size, and modest salaries, in an expensive place to live.

b. List your recommendations.

Departmental Recommendations

1. Recruit a tenure track hire in biological/biosocial anthropology and epidemiology using Next Generation funding.
2. Recruit a tenure track hire in design and business anthropology using Next Generation or other available funding. We view the proposed hire in Digital Humanities as viable, but less strategic.

3. Combine existing Visiting Lecturer lines to hire full-time Instructors/Lecturers.

4. Conduct market analysis of the demand for new certificate and degree programs.

5. Invest in online course design, beginning with ANTH 1102 and 2020.

6. Reconsider the role of ANTH 2010 at the college level to fulfill a science requirement to free up resources in Biology.

7. Collapse the MA Practicum and Internship requirements to standardize professional training and ensure consistently high quality culminating experiences.

8. Experiment with the format of 4/6000 courses (e.g., graduate supervision of undergraduate projects, separate undergraduate and graduate discussion groups, hybrid content).

9. Explore combining GA awards to offer top students full funding and better stipends.

10. Discuss faculty service, and promote equity and scheduled rotation of assignments.

11. Strengthen interdepartmental links to build interdisciplinary certificates/degrees, and research partnerships.

12. Address any deficiencies in MA writing through free online courses (e.g. Coursera), referral to a writing center, and remedial requirements where appropriate.

13. Create a scheduling template to anticipate course rotations, and to avoid scheduling conflicts (e.g. between required and elective courses), to maximize enrollments and avoid cancellations.

14. Systematize MA advising and tracking by creating a semiannual review and intervention to promote progress toward the degree. Explore paths for termination and reinstatement.

15. Evaluate and track course success rates to promote retention and graduation.

16. Systematize alumni tracking, and recruit alumni to mentor and train students (e.g. grant writing or career workshops), and advance networking and job referrals for graduating students.

17. Expand community partnerships for collaborative research, student placement, mentoring, fellowships & GA lines, and fundraising (e.g. governmental, non-governmental, for-profit, and non-profit agencies such as museums, CRM firms, healthcare research groups, and community development, education, public safety, and refugee and immigrant service organizations.

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18. Establish an Anthropology Advisory Board composed of active alumni and community partners who can support strategic planning, curriculum review, certificate and degree planning, networking, fundraising, and other initiatives.

Administrative Recommendations

1. Support leave for senior level associate professors using existing funds (e.g. salary recovery from grants, fellowships and post-docs).

2. Support use of Next Generation funding to exploit profitable new directions in anthropology.

3. Address turnover in university advising and ensure that students are referred to anthropology.

4. Modify existing policy on collateral hours, to allow graduate students to apply at least 9 credit hours towards the degree, as a means to boost certificates and second Masters’ degrees.

5. Incentivize public engagement to spur recruitment, external funding, fundraising, student internships and employment, and strengthen the university’s reputation in the community.

Respectfully submitted,

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