Introduction

The Review Team was very favorably impressed with the enthusiasm, collegiality and dynamism of the Department of Anthropology at Georgia State University. The faculty’s focus on discovering new anthropological knowledge and effectively disseminating it to their field and students is to be applauded. The Department’s faculty is demographically young; this is a source of their greatest strength (e.g. the potential for growth) but also provides them with their most serious challenge in attaining their eventual goal of establishing a Ph.D. program. We are confident that with the appropriate amount of internal planning and decision-making, and with the requisite assistance from the Dean’s and Provost’s offices, the Department will be successful in meeting its strategic objectives. We are also aware that the budgetary climate does not allow for the kind of support needed to achieve a new Ph.D. program without rethinking how resources beyond the department can be harnessed to make the Ph.D. in “Urban Applied Anthropology” a reality. Such a degree is needed in the discipline, and it would provide Georgia State with a comparative advantage over other Universities in Georgia, and indeed in much of the United States.

This document will be structured following the External Reviewers’ Report Template’s instruction to take “into consideration the Dean’s comments and focus.” We will therefore frame our commentary around the “three issues” raised by Dean Adamson and Associate Dean Romski in their response to the Department’s self-study (dated 8 January 2010): 1) faculty promotions and external funding, 2) the undergraduate and graduate curricula, and 3) Ph.D. program development and faculty growth. We will conclude with a bulleted summary of recommendations.

Faculty Promotions & External Funding

The tenure-leading faculty of the Department are collaborative, research-active and thoughtful scholars who individually and as a group appear to be on track for tenure and promotion. For example, Assistant Professor White, who is standing for T&P this year, published her book on leprosy in Brazil with Rutgers University Press in 2009. Assistant Professors Glover and Margomenou (both in archaeology) and Turner (biological anthropology) are working together to establish a laboratory of archaeological sciences that will have outstanding potential to attract significant external funding in support of their research and students.

The senior faculty of the Department -- all of whom are Associate Professors -- are generally not as research-productive as they aspire to be, due to their shared considerable
administrative duties. Each has the responsibility of directing one of their unit’s programs (e.g. Associate Professor Guano directs the Graduate Program, Associate Professor Williams directs the Undergraduate Program, and Associate Professor Kozaitis serves as Chair). Nevertheless, they continue to conduct their research, submit manuscripts and publish their work. Although their promotions to Professor may be delayed, each is focused on this goal and we are confident that given enough time they will ultimately be promoted. They clearly have a plan for continuing to conduct and publish their research, leading to application for promotion to Professor.

The Department’s junior faculty have been very active in pursuing external funding in support of their research programs. The Department hired wisely in this regard in that three Assistant Professors (Glover, Margomenou and Turner) had received NSF Dissertation Improvement Awards as doctoral students. Their history of submitting proposals continues as faculty at GSU: Glover has a proposal under review at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in support of his coastal archaeology project in Mexico, and Margomenou has a proposal pending at National Geographic’s Waitt Institute of Discovery for her Aegean research (that has been funded previously by grants from the Institute for Aegean Prehistory). Turner has an NSF proposal under review to further fund her bioarchaeological work in Peru. Last year, Turner was awarded a senior research grant for her Peruvian research from the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, one of the most prestigious private institutions that funds anthropological investigations. Assistant Professor Patico has applied for a research fellowship with the American Council of Learned Societies to fund her ethnographic research in Atlanta and plans a submission to Wenner-Gren as well. Assistant Professor White intends to submit proposals to NIH and FIPSE (Fund for the Improvement of Secondary Education, a U.S.-Brazil Higher Education Consortium). The senior faculty members, again owing largely to their administrative responsibilities, have not been as active in pursuit of external funding as their junior colleagues. Nevertheless, they too are planning new research projects to be supported by external sources. For example, Associate Professors Guano, Kozaitis and Williams are preparing applications for Fulbright Fellowships to be submitted this year.

One suggestion we have for the administration that would streamline the grant proposal submission and award process is to add or educate staff familiar with the lesser-known but still highly-regarded agencies that fund anthropological research (like the Wenner-Gren Foundation). This would remove some of the administrative burden of preparing budgets and accounting for the awards from the faculty member whose time could then be more productively devoted to conducting the research. A suggestion to the anthropology faculty is to think more creatively regarding funding sources that may be available or can be identified. A number of philanthropic corporations and private foundations exist in the Atlanta area that may be a fertile source of support for research with local applications. Perhaps conversations with GSU’s development officers would be a good first step in the pursuit of these additional funding sources. In keeping with our recommendation that a new Ph.D. program needs to set itself apart from others in the State and country, the cultivation of local foundations and donors at the very outset of the proposed Ph.D. program could help jump-start the program. Georgia State and the Department have availed themselves to internship opportunities in the Atlanta area. The next step would be to formalize these internship opportunities and at the same time cultivate the different organizations so that they support the M.A. and future Ph.D. program.
Finally, we would like to emphasize the unique nature of research pursuits within anthropology. Anthropologists by their training are interdisciplinary and multicultural, and employ approaches that span the spectrum present in entire Colleges of Arts and Sciences. The anthropology faculty at GSU are an excellent example in this regard: some are searching for funding from traditional, major federal agencies such as NSF and NIH (similar to their colleagues in Biology and Psychology) while others are funded by fellowships from Fulbright and ALCS (like faculty in social sciences and the humanities). Although these latter awards are not as large and often do not provide overhead costs back to the campus, they are nonetheless very prestigious and should be highly valued by the administration in that they enhance the reputation and prestige of the university. We also recognize that becoming “grant-active” faculty means that faculty and students apply for and use grant opportunities, no matter what the size. Small grants often involve just as much preparation and administrative support as larger grants, but the payoff in terms of research and professional self esteem is high.

Undergraduate and Graduate Curricula

The undergraduate program has been remarkably successful over the past several years growing from 80 majors in 2006 to over 220 today, a nearly 3-fold increase in four years. In our discussions with the department’s students, we were told that anthropology’s faculty are universally regarded as dedicated, caring and enthusiastic teacher/scholars – qualities that help explain why their major courses are regularly filled to and beyond capacity. Another indicator of anthropology’s success in undergraduate instruction is their lone general education course: “Introduction to Anthropology.” This course, taught by most of their faculty, is offered 11-12 times annually with over 700 students enrolling per year. New anthropology majors are “born” every term after their experience in this introductory course. They often gravitate to the anthropology student club, another strength of the program; club members conduct outreach in the community, study together and provide a welcoming environment by regularly sharing lunches and socializing in the department. In addition, majors in anthropology have recently participated in the Georgia State Undergraduate Research Conference and last year two won awards for “Best Paper” and “Best Poster.”

One undergraduate curricular initiative of the department that we support is to add “Introduction to Biological Anthropology” as a core course option to partially satisfy natural science requirements at GSU. This course is taught within the theoretical framework of evolutionary biology but through the unique biocultural prism that anthropology provides and as such would be an excellent addition to the core. As an aside, this course does partially fulfill natural science requirements at both the University’s of Florida and Tennessee, the academic homes of two of this document’s authors. A wider audience for Biological Anthropology can also show the relevance of the Department and professors in the foundation of health-related majors. The emphasis on human biology in current biological anthropology has proved to be a very important course for pre-med and other health science majors at other institutions.

The Review Team has several recommendations that may relieve some of the pressure that the faculty is experiencing on their undergraduate teaching generated by the major’s robust increases in enrollments. First, we encourage the formalization and expansion of for-credit service learning/internship opportunities for undergraduates. More credit hours earned towards
the degree in the city of Atlanta and its environs will enrich these students’ learning experiences, benefit their communities and free-up classroom time for the faculty. Second, we encourage the faculty to identify courses in other departments that can be petitioned for anthropology credit, once again reducing the number of upper-division courses necessarily offered by anthropology faculty. Third, we encourage more research opportunities for undergraduates with anthropology faculty. The benefits to the students are considerable, but this will aid faculty as well in their research pursuits. An added advantage may be increased use of “independent study” and/or “directed readings” classes for majors that may somewhat reduce their credit-hour needs from enrollment-stressed major classes.

The suggestions presented above can only go so far in relieving the pressure on undergraduate teaching in the department. We strongly encourage the Dean to consider adding another full-time Lecturer to the anthropology faculty. This additional teaching capacity at the introductory and major levels will have the greatest positive impact on instructional delivery for the department. The experience of full-time Lecturer Papavasiliou, hired this fiscal year, is encouraging in this regard since she reported to us that she perceives herself as an integral member of the faculty teaching both lower and upper-division courses, conducting research and advising students. We encourage the central administration to promote the construction of larger lecture halls (>200 student seats) in newly-acquired campus buildings. If several of these were to become available, the teaching personnel necessarily devoted to introductory instruction could be reduced by at least 50% (e.g. 5-6 sections of intro taught per year, rather than 11-12).

Anthropology’s MA program has also undergone significant growth over the last few years, increasing from 24 students in 2006 to 37 today. The Review Team had the opportunity to interact with these graduate students at a lunch provided by the department and we were quite impressed by how large a proportion of the graduate student body decided to join us. Without doubt, they are a passionate, enthusiastic, diverse and thoughtful group with a broad and fascinating set of research interests. Although their thesis projects are as varied as the discipline, they are unified in their high regard for the faculty who they described as caring, warm, and sincerely interested in their well-being and professional development. The fact that many of them regularly “hang-out” in the department until evening hours speaks volumes about anthropology’s collegiality and welcoming environment.

The recent growth in the graduate program has a downside however: more students today remain unfunded. The department has 15 GRAs and these graduate assistants describe an interesting range of duties from presenting the occasional lecture in introductory classes to assisting professors in their research. Nevertheless, the fact remains that over half of the current cohort of MA students are matriculating without stipends or fee-waivers. There was some confusion voiced by these unfunded students about the process by which the faculty assigns assistantships. We encourage the department to provide greater transparency of process and decision-making to all students in these assignments. We urge the administration to consider adding graduate assistantship lines to the department and increasing the hardly-adequate $2000 annual stipend, although we acknowledge that doing so in the current budgetary climate is problematic at best. The faculty’s effort to increase external funding is to be praised in this context because this is a way to secure support for graduate students that is largely independent of state and university money.
A curricular criticism expressed by a number of the graduate students involved the courses that concurrently enroll both upper division majors and MA students (colloquially referred to as “4-6” classes). The grads complained that these classes were presented at a level that often was not as challenging as they expected and they would have preferred that these courses were taught as “stand-alones” at the graduate-level. The Review Team understands that current teaching capacity limits the number of graduate-only courses that can be offered thus necessitating the widespread use of these “4-6” classes. We have a couple of suggestions that can free-up faculty class time and may ultimately allow splitting some of these combo-classes. First, increase the number of graduate credits that can be taken outside of the department from 6 to 9 to reduce some of this pressure on graduate instruction within the department and to provide valuable perspectives from cognate disciplines for the students. Second, encourage for-credit graduate internships and allow these to count towards satisfying MA requirements. Expanding the service-learning component provided in the graduate “praxis” course into a full-fledged off-campus internship during the following semester or summer may be a way to accomplish the dual goals of providing thesis project ideas (or perhaps even data) to the graduate student and reducing the number of credit hours that have to be provided by faculty in classroom instruction. Service learning courses are becoming more recognized in higher education: giving them appropriate credit is a clear way to signal their importance to the Department and College.

Ph.D. Program Development & Tenure-Track Faculty Growth

There was universal consensus among the faculty and MA students that a Ph.D. program should be developed within the department. One faculty member, initially skeptical about the proposition, is now fully supportive and persuasively told us that there may not be a compelling need for more anthropology Ph.D. programs to be established in the USA, but there certainly is a need for one in Atlanta. Emory University’s doctoral program, although highly regarded, is very small and narrowly focused (archaeology is not even represented) while the University of Georgia’s ecological anthropology concentration is quite different from what GSU can offer. (The Review Committee was also told that U.GA’s location “may as well be in Athens, Greece” as far as the local Atlanta student population is concerned).

The open niche that can be filled by the proposed Ph.D. program in anthropology at GSU is best-described as an engaged anthropology that can leverage the unique human and urban resources available in Atlanta, as well as in the international contexts that the current faculty’s research programs have established. The faculty understand that a 3-5 year timeframe (at a minimum) will be necessary to establish a Ph.D. During this period, the existing scholarly potential in the department must be maximized by promoting the Associates to Professor and the successful navigation of T&P by the Assistant Professors. This human capital must be augmented by incorporating more courses outside of Anthropology into the Ph.D. than is customarily the case. An engaged or applied Ph.D. demands skills and perspectives beyond those typically found in anthropology curricula. Secondly, the Department will have to encourage the participation of anthropologists in other departments and units in the Ph.D. program so as to not overwhelm the faculty with too much Ph.D. committee work. Finally, the Department needs an addition of at least three more tenure-track faculty (see below) to attain the necessary “critical mass” in support of a nascent Ph.D. program.
Over the next year, the Review Team recommends that the department researches other successful anthropology Ph.D. programs in urban settings (e.g. City University of New York, U. Illinois-Chicago) to help in their decision making as the process moves forward. We also strongly urge the department to begin internal discussions addressing the impact of a newly established doctoral program on the existing MA and undergraduate programs. Potential questions to be considered could include: Is the terminal MA still needed or will it simply become a stepping-stone to the Ph.D.? Will the other programs (and their students) suffer from inattention with the increased proportion of faculty energy and effort devoted to Ph.D. student education and training? We believe that such questions should be addressed in advance of establishing a Ph.D. program and that the well-being of the undergraduate and MA programs should be monitored following initiating the Ph.D. program.

Since faculty growth is necessary in establishing the doctoral program, the Review Team was pleased to see that the department is a key player in three cluster hire proposals that have recently been submitted to the College. We applaud the bold plan of the Provost and President to add 100 tenure-track positions over the next five years to the GSU faculty. The three positions that anthropology hopes to obtain will help them reach the necessary “critical mass” for a Ph.D. program, will augment existing strengths within the department and forge stronger ties with partner-programs, and will take advantage of local resources and institutions in developing new anthropological knowledge. For example, the field primatologist proposed in the Primate Social Behavior cluster will create stronger interdisciplinary ties between Anthropology, Biology and Psychology. This hire’s focus on primate behavior in the wild will add new approaches and data to the research being conducted on captive non-human primates in Psychology’s “Language Research Center.” Within the department, the addition of this primatologist would extend the capabilities of the biological and medical anthropologists currently on staff. The urban archaeologist proposed for the Institute of Contemporary Visual & Material Culture will have the very exciting MARTA archaeological collection at their disposal. This unique Atlanta cultural resource will provide research and training opportunities for the faculty and their students for years to come.

Lastly, the addition of a linguistic anthropologist (in the proposed Language and Culture cluster) will enhance current strengths in socio-cultural anthropology by adding a currently unrepresented sub-field. This hire would be critical for gaining understanding of normal language acquisition in cross-cultural perspective, as an essential complement to the current and proposed language centers at GSU focusing on problematic language development in a largely American context. The ideal candidate would have interest in multilingualism, sociolinguistics, and immigrant language experiences in urban contexts. This part of the discipline has been very successful ever since William Labov and Dell Hymes brought an emphasis on cultural as well as linguistic competence into the field of Language and Culture. A final benefit of Anthropology’s participation in these three cluster hire proposals is expanding the interdisciplinary research agenda of the Department in conjunction with other programs throughout the university.
Conclusion

In sum, the Review Committee perceived GSU’s Department of Anthropology as an upand-coming unit that is developing a reputation set to rival other highly-regarded small to midsize departments of anthropology around the country. Their independence from geosciences and their growth (in both enrollments and faculty size) since the last review placed them on their current trajectory which they hope to maintain with in-house promotions and the addition of new faculty lines. If these objectives can be attained, we believe that their mid-term goal of establishing a Ph.D. program is a reasonable expectation in 3-5 years. Finally, we want to recognize the leadership of Associate Professor Kozaitis, Chair of the Department. The faculty and students were unanimous in their praise of her vision, collegiality, supervisory and management skills, and her facilitation of their professional growth. We are certain that without Professor Kozaitis at the helm, the department would not have enjoyed its successes over the last several years nor would its outlook for the future be as bright.

Final recommendations:

- Undergraduate program: Expansion of biological anthropology course into general university curriculum. Formalize internship and engaged service learning courses as a key characteristic of the program. Meet to discuss growing demand for upper division courses due to large numbers of majors.
- Graduate program: Reduce reliance on dual undergraduate/graduate classes to provide more graduate-only classes. Incorporate the help of anthropologists in other units of the University into graduate mentoring or committee work. Consider the structure of the MA and future Ph.D. in terms of expertise and training outside of the Department. Include grant writing and ways of generating support within the formal structure of the graduate curriculum. Utilize Graduate Assistants to further the goals of the Department, including giving them more responsibility in teaching so as to free up faculty for research and writing.
- Research: Develop on-going meetings, workshops, and other sessions with College and University Grants’ office personnel. Focus on the bioarchaeology lab as a grant and contract center as well as a research center. Reward grant active faculty in terms of tenure and promotion, merit increases, class scheduling, and Graduate Assistant use. College initiative needed to help younger faculty be part of grants from other, more grant-active departments as co-PI’s or investigators.
- “Second Century Initiative” cluster-hire proposals: Consider using the proposals that are supported to recruit faculty interested in the unique blend of a world-perspective on anthropology with an Atlanta-based focus for research and graduate opportunities. If an urban, applied focus is adopted, then prospective faculty through these hires will be scholars who have experience in areas of urban studies, immigration, diversity interactions, and the unique settings of cities, especially Atlanta.
- Ph.D. program: Determine a few select areas in which to focus and admit Ph.D. students from the existing MA cohort accordingly. Begin the Ph.D. with a structure of support, mentorship, and interdisciplinary courses as a base. If at all possible, hire at least one more faculty at the full professor level with experience in graduate education. Consider doing a partnered Ph.D. with an allied unit, especially in the first few years of a Ph.D. program.