

# **Practitioner and Academic Collaborations in the Training of Students: Opportunities and Challenges**

**Panel Sponsored by the Consortium of Applied and Practicing Anthropology Programs  
(COPAA)**

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## **Organizers**

Margaret Graham, Judith Freidenberg, and Karen Quintiliani

## **Abstract**

Many academic departments offering degrees in applied anthropology have established relationships with practicing anthropologists. Yet, little is known about how collaborations between practitioners and applied anthropologists in academic settings operate and the challenges and opportunities they offer for student training and the development of the field of applied anthropology. This panel explores the experience of practicing anthropologists. Panelists will discuss how collaboration enhances student education and fieldwork; the challenges faced by practitioners who don't hold permanent department positions; and the possible directions for improving interaction between departments and practitioners through local applied anthropology networks.

## **Panelists and their positions**

**Cathleen Crain, Ph.D.** and **Nathaniel Tashima, Ph.D.** are the founders of LTG, Inc., a nationally recognized anthropological consulting firm with 20 years experience specializing in health, human services, community, and economic development. Their firm has established a collaborative relationship with the Department of Anthropology, University of Maryland, providing students with internships and in some cases employment after graduation.

**Jean Gilbert, Ph.D.** is a medical anthropologist. She worked for Kaiser Permanente for 10 years as the Director of Cultural Competence for Kaiser Permanente in California. She serves on numerous national committees focused on health care and cultural and linguistic competency. At California State University, Long Beach, she teaches medical anthropology and conducts research on the use of interpreters in clinical settings and the quality of cultural responsiveness training in American medical schools, while employing and advising MA students. She is also currently operating a consulting firm, Cultures in the Clinic, providing technical assistance/education to healthcare organizations and professional schools.

**Linda Kaljee, Ph.D.** is an Assistant Professor at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, Department of Pediatrics. Her research has focused on adolescent health particularly in relation to HIV/AIDS prevention. She has worked on research and educational program development projects in the United States, China, and Viet Nam. In addition, she has been involved in socio-cultural studies in association with vaccine development and trials for enteric diseases in Asia. Dr. Kaljee is a graduate of the University of Maryland Masters of Applied Anthropology program, and she has continued a relationship with the program as adjunct faculty, supervising student internships, and hiring graduates of the program.

**Rob Winthrop**, Ph.D., is an environmental anthropologist. He is currently Senior Social Scientist at the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), US Department of the Interior, which manages lands and resources over much of the western United States. His responsibilities include agency-wide programs, policy, and training to support the BLM's social science capabilities. Before joining the BLM in 2002 he worked as a consultant specializing in indigenous cultural and environmental issues.

**Lhee Vang** is a Master's student at California State University, Long Beach. She is completing her thesis on Hmong refugees with diabetes and their healthcare decision-making patterns.

### **Summary of discussion and recommendations**

At the Society for Applied Anthropology Annual Meeting in historic Santa Fe, New Mexico (April 5-April 10, 2005), COPAA sponsored a panel discussion focused on how practicing anthropologist contribute to the training of students receiving degrees in applied anthropology. The panelist represented a wide range of experiences in the public and private sectors and different relationships with academic departments. The panel also included a Master's level student. The panel discussion and the dialogue after the formal presentations resulted in recommendations for enhancing student training and academic collaborations. An overview of these recommendations follows. It should be noted however, that the panelist went beyond a dualistic discussion about practicing versus applied academic anthropology. Rather the panelist offered a broad, practical vision and approach to student training and institutional collaborations. Given the distinguished careers of the panelist (described below) and their mentoring of students and their contributions to the field of anthropology, COPAA has helped to bring to the forefront the ideas and insights of practicing anthropologist.

The panelist focused on how academic departments can improve the training of students and prepare them for working on research projects, in government agencies or private institutions, as consultants, or on policy issues. After working with students and in collaboration with academic departments, the panelist made the following recommendations:

#### **1. Students need practical skills and training in using qualitative and quantitative research methods**

Academic anthropologists often do not see themselves in the role of training students for the working world. Yet students need practical skills in order to compete for jobs and to understand how agencies deal with policy issues. Students need to know how to write letters, grant proposals, reports, and executive summaries. They also need training in qualitative and quantitative methods and to understand how these approaches work together. They need skills in being trainers and in facilitation as well as in public speaking. Moreover, skills in developing workshops and videos have become important as institutions seek to disseminate ideas and to develop new training opportunities.

#### **2. Internships are too short and greater communication needed between departments and agency mentors**

Internships are a critical part of student training in applied anthropology. However, as the panelist pointed out, these experiences do not guarantee the students receive the training they need unless the advisors or academic departments communicate with the agency mentors. Students need to understand that they may or may not be able to have face-to-face with clients depending on when they come into a project. It is difficult for practicing anthropologist to mentor students adequately if the internship is short term and only requires 10 hours per week. This limits how much the students can do on a project. One solution is to have ongoing communication with practicing anthropologist that take on mentoring roles, so students can move into internships at the beginning of projects or at logical junctures that would be mutually beneficial. It may be necessary for departments to rethink the length and time commitment of internships or have students tailor their experiences to the agencies and projects they are interested in.

### **3. Students need to network**

Academic departments need to reach out to local practicing and applied anthropology networks or help to create them. Students will benefit from the local connections and it will enhance communication between anthropologists.

### **4. Learn how professional schools train students**

The panelist agreed that training in anthropology provides students with a unique, holistic perspective. At the same time, if students are not able to articulate and enact the values and practices of anthropology then we have failed to train them adequately for the working world. Professional schools guide students systematically through a training process that provides them with specific skills that can be applied to different issues and in different settings. Applied anthropology programs should examine the way this is done and adapt it to the discipline.

### **5. Enhance institutional collaborations with practicing anthropologists**

The panelists have productive and rewarding careers. Their career trajectories illustrate the many roles and contributions anthropologists can have in society. These experiences are invaluable to academic departments, particularly those granting applied anthropology degrees at the MA or Ph.D. levels. In these departments, adjunct teaching positions (or other equivalent positions) would allow greater interaction between practicing anthropologist, students, and applied anthropologist. Advocating for ongoing positions in departments legitimates the contributions of practicing anthropologists and creates a community of anthropologists working for various types of institutions and social issues.