

# Helping Graduates Begin Their Careers

US Anthropology and the Career Readiness Commission



**CAREER READINESS  
COMMISSION**

**Riall W. Nolan**

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities

Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia

November 5, 2021

- Traditionally, anthropology departments prepared their graduates to be university professors. They still do.
- But there are no longer very many academic jobs for anthropology graduates.
- At the same time, there are more jobs than ever outside the university for people with anthropological skills and training.
- We call anthropologists in these non-academic jobs practitioners.
- Few US faculty members have experience with practice, and are therefore not well-equipped to teach it to students.
- We set up the Commission on Career Readiness to help address this problem.

- The Commission is a group of volunteers, and includes practitioners, students and university instructors.
- Our overall goal is to improve academic training in anthropology so that students are better equipped for non-academic jobs.
- We believe that changing and improving the training that anthropology students receive requires us first to understand what it is that we do not know, and then making a plan to use what we find out to help instructors and students.
- Although the target audience for our work is primarily instructors (and through them, students) our focus in data-gathering is on practitioners now working outside the academy.

# Current Projects

We have **six current projects**. For each, we have a **four-phase process**.

**Phase One** is **brainstorming**: what information do we need; and how will we get it?



**Phase Two** is **discovering**: collecting and analyzing data.



**Phase Three** will involve **testing and problem solving**, in collaboration with our stakeholders.



**Phase Four** will be devoted to **promoting and implementing** our ideas.

## Our Current Projects:

1. A Delphi Survey of Practitioners
2. Collection of Existing Training Material
3. Identifying Work Sector Differences
4. Documenting Departmental Initiatives
5. Identifying Key Organizations
6. Charting the Future of Practice

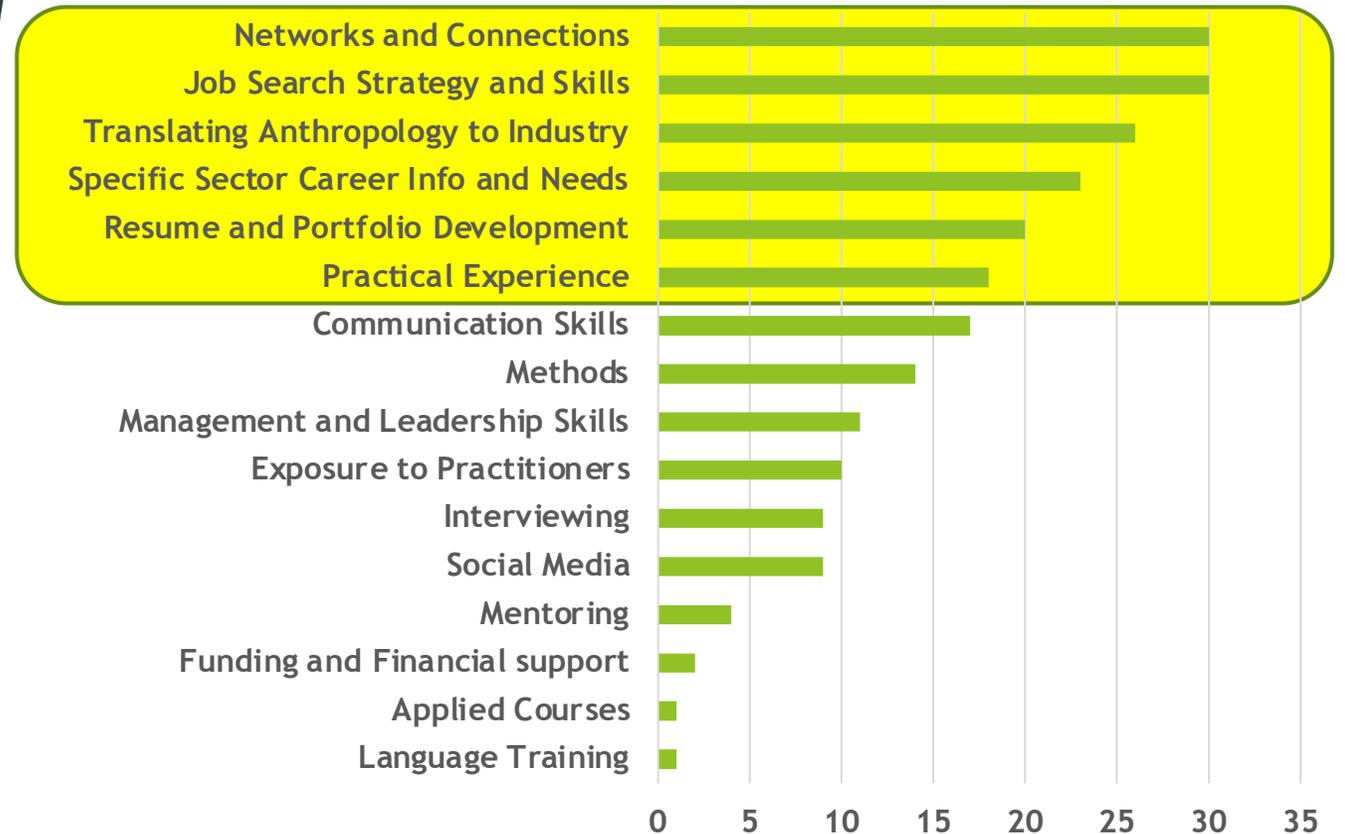
# A Delphi Survey of Practitioners

We used a Delphi survey to find out from practitioners what would have been helpful in their academic training to (a) help them find a non-academic job; and (b) do that job successfully.

We surveyed 34 current anthropological practitioners and received over 500 responses. The frequency counts are presented in the next series of slides.

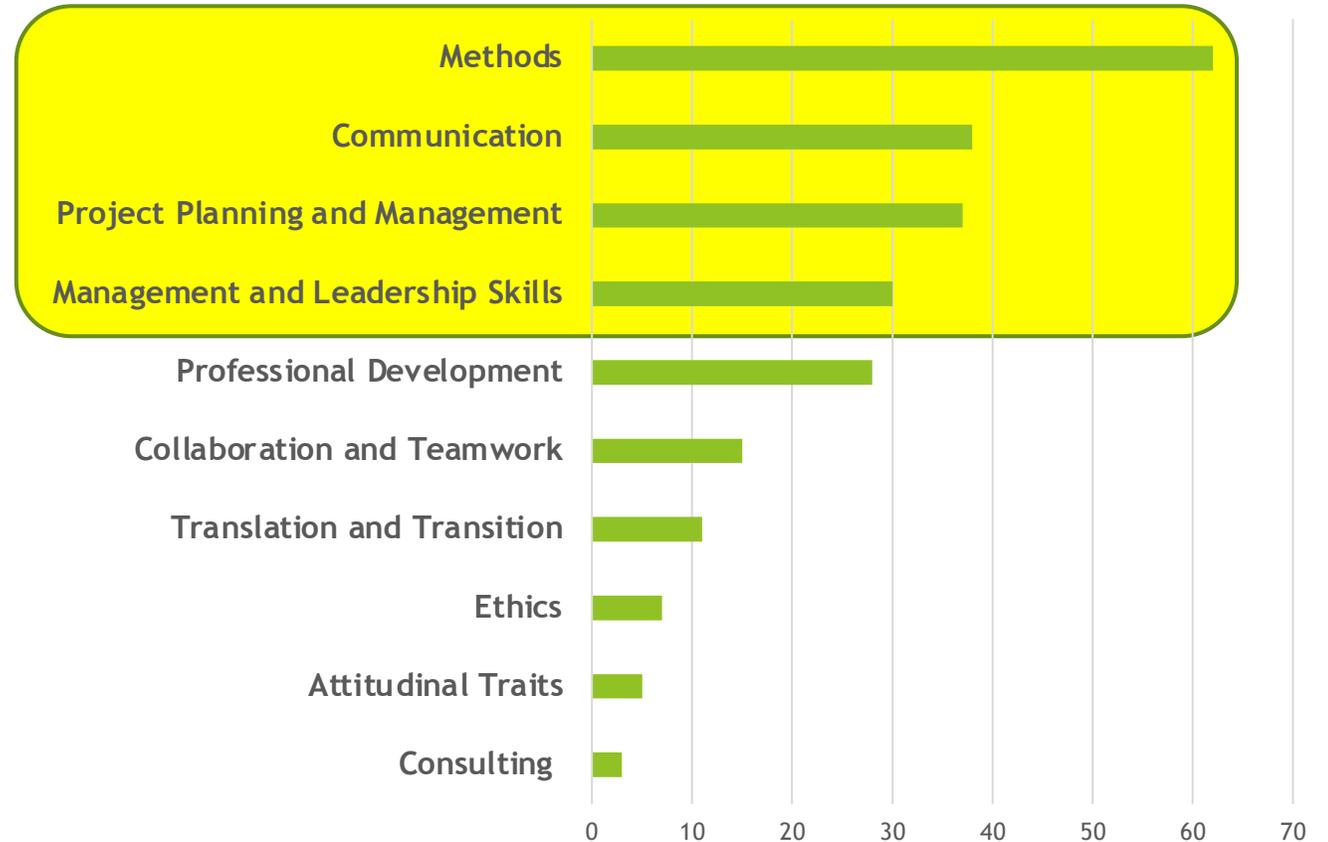
## Frequency Counts: Question 1, Getting a Job (n=227)

- The striking thing about these responses is that none of the top six things listed are addressed in most US anthropology programs, whether at the graduate or undergraduate level.



- Here, responses center on the skills needed to do a non-academic job.
- Methods are taught in most US programs, but practitioners signaled the need for training in newer, more diverse methods (such as GIS).
- The other top skill-sets listed, as before, are not commonly taught in US anthropology programs.

Frequency Counts, Question 2: Doing a Job  
(n = 237)



# What Are The Next Steps?

Members of the Commission are now looking at how to use what we have learned so far.

We plan to:

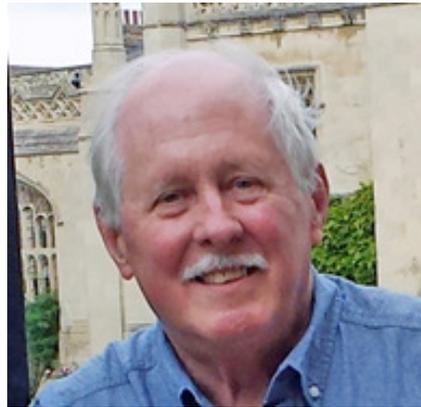
- ❑ Follow up with a more detailed survey on what specific methods are needed by practitioners,
- ❑ Organize a series of training workshops to help instructors modify their teaching to better address some of these concerns,
- ❑ Generate lists of resources available for instructors to use,
- ❑ Develop templates for courses, course modules, and exercises relating to practitioners' needs, and
- ❑ Conduct further interviews with practitioners and instructors on selected areas of practice and application.

# For More Information

Get in touch with either of us:



**Elizabeth K. Briody**  
elizabeth.briody@gmail.com



**Riall Nolan**  
rwnolan@purdue.edu