



CAREER READINESS COMMISSION

THE COMMISSION'S FIRST YEAR: A SUMMARY REPORT

Riall W. Nolan & Elisabeth K. Briody
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The purpose of this short report is to summarize what the Commission did in its first year. Much more detail is available in reports and online; here, we simply want to provide a handout for colleagues and a springboard for further discussion.

OUR MISSION



Who We Are: An independent network of volunteers – practitioners, students and instructors from all subfields of anthropology.

What We Do: We engage in short-term research on aspects of practice, and share what we learn with the wider anthropological community. We advocate for improvements in academic training. We provide networking and discussion opportunities for practitioners, students and instructors, focused on the realities of practice today. Our overall goal is to improve anthropological training so that students are better able to apply their knowledge and skills in the workplace.

Who We Serve: We serve three groups of people: practitioners, who provide us with information about the current realities of practice; instructors, who prepare students for careers in application and practice; and students, who will become the face of anthropology to the world at large.

How We Serve: We engage in research, meetings, training, publications, outreach and advocacy on matters involving ways to better prepare anthropology students for careers in application and practice. We work with individual students and instructors, and also with courses and departments. We liaise with national and local anthropology associations. We sponsor meetings and conferences, and present, train and teach at other professional gatherings.

PLANS FOR YEAR ONE

Our overall goal for Year One was to build a base of understanding of practice today, through a series of short and focused research projects.

We created seven work groups (comprising 4-8 members each), and tasked each one with specific goals. The seven work groups had these goals: Identifying gaps in anthropology training

1. Identifying and compiling existing resources for training
2. Exploring some of the salient characteristics of the practice workplace
3. Looking at how anthropology departments have tried to incorporate practice and application into their curriculum
4. Identifying anthropology support organizations and how they might influence training
5. Looking at what practice might be in the future, and how to prepare for this
6. Developing a common narrative structure to explain anthropology to others

Each work group followed a roughly similar process in its work: brainstorming the scope and substance of the topic to be looked at; discovering salient characteristics of the topic or issue; analyzing what the results might mean for anthropological training; and implementing specific steps arising from the data.

Not all groups worked in the same way, or to the same schedule. Not all groups produced similar sets of results. For example, Group 2 was involved in creating a repository for existing resources relating to application and practice. Their efforts included compiling these resources, categorizing and tagging them, and developing a search function so that users could find what they were looking for quickly. Groups 1, 3, 4 and 7 gathered data through Delphi surveys, interviews and focus groups with practitioners and instructors. Their insights enabled us to write reports, present findings, and develop one-page tools for use by instructors and students.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Research

Website repository of existing resources (e.g., article, podcasts, client proposals and presentations).

Website *World of Work* blog.

Resources Inventory

Presentations to a wide variety of national and international groups

Training and Workshop Sessions

Fordham Conference (recordings are available on our website)

Website

Network of Commission members (300+ as of August 2022)

Network of anthropology associations (20+).

Commission-developed materials: these included a series of one and two-page summary “tools” to convey key information to students and instructors.

Online Presence: Website and LinkedIn

Publicity and Information: Newsletter, Bi-Monthly Zoom meetings

WHAT WE LEARNED

What did we learn in the past year?

1. There’s a high degree of interest in the work of the Commission by both individuals and associations.
 - Consistently high attendance at bimonthly Commission meetings
 - Consistently positive email comments association with the bimonthly newsletter
 - Ability to access SfAA, AAA and other associations to provide occasional updates to their Boards
 - Highly positive reviews from Conference attendees and presenters
 - Unsolicited emails and comments from scores for people emphasizing how important this effort is
2. Our rapid assessment generated a great deal of learning and insight
 - It confirmed a lot of what we all already knew.
 - It turned up some new areas for us to look at.
 - It revealed gaps that we ought to address.
 - We now know that there are a large number of obstacles, some of them complex, which come together to keep anthropology from changing.
 - Change will therefore take a long time, and be difficult.
 - With this in mind, the main task which lies ahead is intelligent and focused discussion on how to organize for the promotion and management of needed changes.
3. We learned other things, too, about how effective our work processes were:
 - Our work took too long and was sometimes not well focused.
 - It’s important to choose volunteers carefully.
 - It’s important to choose group leaders carefully – people who have a track record of working well with others, prioritizing tasks, setting deadlines and producing results on time.
 - Small groups work better than large groups; they are easier to schedule and they seem to exhibit a greater sense of ownerships.
 - We might want to be more directive at the outset in getting the groups started off.
4. Finally, the shape of the future is coming into view, slowly:
 - Changes will occur at the level of individual instructors and individual departments, rather than disciplinary-wide. It will be important, therefore, to focus our efforts on where we can show visible positive results, rather than attempting a wider makeover.

- Long-term forward planning is essential, particularly with respect to sustainability and succession.
- We need to think about what the most appropriate structure is for this, and set up arrangements which allow us to work most effectively.

NEXT STEPS

Developing Standards for Training

Identifying and developing the components of a common core for training.

Developing Materials and Methods

Adding new resources to the website repository, particularly in the areas of (1) job search, career preparation, and types of career paths; and (2) more practice materials related to biological anthropology, linguistic anthropology, and archaeology.

New one-page tools to explain the anthropology narrative to others.

A new one-page tool series focused on skill-oriented class assignments.

A one-page tool series on potential career paths.

Establishing and Building Out Networks and Linkages

Using the World of Work blog as one expansion mechanism.

Developing a Framework for a Community of Practice

Finding ways to connect practitioners with one another, and with students and instructors, through a broad and inclusive community of practice.

Establishing a speakers' bureau.

Engaging in Training and Capacity-Building

Finding ways to build capacity in instructors and departments for preparing their students for careers in application and practice.

Making available six modular trainings from *Anthropologists on the Public Stage* to increase and enhance anthropology's public presence and voice.

Holding on-line discussions on specific topics, with Commission leaders as moderators.

Continued Data Gathering

How and where students get their information about careers

Publishing

Encouraging the further development of a literature of practice, both by producing such literature ourselves, encouraging others, and identifying needed topics for future work.

Improving and Expanding the Website

Gathering student input through a UX study

Publicity

Finding ways to increase and enhance our public presence and voice, not just within the anthropology community, but outside it, with other professional communities.

Creating a Summer Internship for a Student