Anthropology in Practice

Oregon State

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Great Learning but More Internships, Please!

I am a third-year student who is majoring in Cultural and Linguistic Anthropology and minoring in Geography at Oregon State University. It is my pleasure to share my career objectives, how I would prepare myself for the workforce, and some additional resources I might need with the Career Readiness Commission.

Since I am still a student, my first priority is to finish my undergraduate study in the next one or two years. After graduation, I would like to pursue a Master's degree before developing my career. I am planning to continue my exploration in the field of anthropology.

Reflecting on my experience as an anthropology major, I have learned a lot of knowledge as well as skills, not to mention that I have gained a lot of experiences in my undergraduate education. All these have helped me prepare for my graduate education. Concerning the knowledge, I have learned about other cultures and the ways they may differ from my own background and expectations no matter which subfield is emphasized. These differences are not viewed as a problem to be overcome but as a resource that can yield new ways of thinking and new opportunities for me. I am getting more familiar with a wide range of behaviours, beliefs, and values, and these are likely to be more culturally sensitive and flexible in dealings not only with my future co-workers and clients but also with my neighbours and the community. With all this knowledge, I am able to live and work in a world that is increasingly multicultural and global. For example, I am a speaker of Cantonese, Mandarin and English. Code-switching is a very common linguistic behaviour among my family members and my friends. It is also common to me in my anthropology education because there are a lot of cross cultural researchers in Anthropology. It is interesting for me to learn about other cultures and the ways they may differ from my own background and expectations.

Regarding the skills and experiences, I have learned how to collect quality information,

analyse information to identify important details, and relate those particulars to a larger issue. This skill has helped me strengthen my ability to think in terms of whole systems, rather than just the individual parts of those systems. I have also learned how to make use of multiple techniques to study a topic, considering various interpretations of the results. In addition, I have learned to be an anthropologist who often examines "behind the scenes" aspects of issues to be sure the right questions are being asked in the first place. These habits make me a good critical thinker and a contributor to many kinds of projects, from start to finish. Furthermore, I have realised that what people know is of limited use if it cannot be conveyed to others, so the discipline also equips me with written and spoken communication skills. Clear communication relies on clear speaking, writing and providing appropriate background information, and being aware of one's audience are very important in anthropological research. I would say the ability to write reports and create presentations that are comprehensible and relevant is in demand across many sectors of the economy and is essential to many areas of employment.

There are several other skills that I wish I had. They are the skills of computation and statistics, and skills of data gathering and interpretation. I would also like to further improve my time management.

In order to move to the next phase after my undergraduate education, I have already made use of some helpful resources. Firstly, the OSU graduation application website is very helpful for me to look for things which I need for applying for a graduate school. Secondly, the website called Focus 2 is also very helpful for me to take a career self-assessment. It combines four assessments of my work interests, values, personality and leisure preferences and then matches me with real career options. Other websites like My Next Move and the Career One Stop are also helpful for me to look at the job titles, duties, skills, salary information etc. Even if I have decided to further my studies and postpone my career, I find all these resources very useful to get to know more about myself.

If possible, it would be a good idea for anthropology departments to provide me with some internship opportunities so that I can have more hands-on experiences before I join the real-life workforce or before I start a graduate degree. Last but not least, the departments may provide more study or career forums in the final year of my undergraduate education.

Before I end this blog post, I would like to tell the members of the Career Readiness Commission that I have been nominated for the Schoenstein Sustaining Excellence Scholarship in 2022, sponsored by the OSU Alumni Association. Though I am still awaiting the result, I feel honoured and become more motivated to move to the next stage of my own development.