



CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Anthropology MA Career Experiences

An Overview of CoPAPIA Survey Findings

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With AAA support, over summer 2009 CoPAPIA conducted an online career survey of anthropology master's degree alumni. The overall purpose was to better understand the career trajectories of master's degree holders from all major fields of anthropology, and to determine how they have evaluated and applied the knowledge and skills acquired in their anthropology programs. The survey covered three general areas—education, career and associations—and was open to anyone who had obtained a master's degree in any anthropological specialization from a North American institution prior to 2008. There were 758 respondents in the primary pool of analysis, with great breadth geographically and among universities, although respondents were mostly female and overwhelmingly white. Two-thirds of respondents were master's-only degree holders; the remaining respondents were working on PhDs or had already obtained them.

Careers

Most MAs were able to find a job within six months of receiving their degrees. By far the largest employer cited by respondents was academic institutions, followed by nonprofits, consulting firms and governments. Many respondents reported having multiple employers. The data suggest that MA anthropologists often work in very broad areas, in which many skills and a holistic, multidisciplinary approach are vital. One of the most revealing findings is that 87% of all respondents indicated that skills learned *outside* the discipline are significant to their career positions. Among all respondents, the top skills listed as important for the near-term of their careers included familiarity with various research

cultural, applied, physical and other specialties. Archaeologists' degrees were more important in their getting a job and were often part of their job descriptions, and their supervisors were more likely to understand their archaeological training and contributions. Respondents with MAs in cultural, applied, physical and other anthropology specialties were more likely than MA archaeologists to agree that a PhD would enhance their careers. Respondents with PhDs generally earned more than MAs, although both seemed at or slightly below national levels for their respective degrees. Men and women had near income parity at the PhD level. Although men earned somewhat more at the MA level, income differences by sex appeared much smaller than national averages.

Education

As a whole, respondents were very positive about their master's degree educations, with some three-quarters expressing satisfaction with the quality, depth, breadth and relevance of their educations, as well as the career preparation provided. However, MAs with archaeological specialties were much more likely to be satisfied with their educations than their counterparts with cultural, applied, physical or other specializations. Differences between these two groups appeared often, although certainly not always, throughout the survey.

Just over half of all respondents agreed that they hoped to combine their anthropology MA with some other education or training in pursuit of a specific job or career. This included training in health, business, environment, history, education, development and public administration; cultivation of communication skills, such as writing and speaking; and experience with community-based research methods and project design, development and management. Two-thirds of those with archaeological special-

ties strongly agreed that they entered graduate school to pursue a specific job or career, while less than one-third of those with MAs in cultural, applied, physical or other specialties strongly agreed. Archaeologists were also more likely to agree that an MA was sufficient for their career interests.

Associations

Two-thirds of all respondents had a current affiliation with an anthropological organization, and nearly 100 different anthropological groups were mentioned, from local to international. Networking was cited as the most important reason to join an association by far, but access to publications and keeping up with the field were cited as the two second-most important reasons for joining an association. PhDs, men and respondents with an archaeological focus were far more likely to provide positive responses about their organizational affiliations than MAs, women and those with cultural, applied, physical or other specialties.

A comprehensive survey report is currently being developed and will be posted soon on the CoPAPIA survey page of the AAA website (www.aaanet.org/cmtes/copapia/MAalumnisurvey.cfm).

Terry Redding was coordinator for the 2009 AAA/CoPAPIA Masters Alumni Survey and is a principal at Beta Research Associates.

Shirley Fiske and Niel Tashima are contributing editors of Anthropology Works, the monthly column of the Committee on Practicing, Applied and Public Interest Anthropology. They can be contacted at sjfiske@yahoo.com and partners@ltgassociates.com.

AWARD RECIPIENTS

To be included in a future Award Recipients column, submit your award information and photo to Jona Pounds at jpounds@aaanet.org.

Carlos Vélez-Ibáñez (Arizona State U) has been selected to receive the Outstanding Support of Hispanic Issues in Higher Education Award, presented by the American Association of Hispanics in Higher Education (AAHHE). AAHHE is an agent of change for improving education, thus enabling Hispanic students to fully participate in a diverse society. Each year, this award is given to an individual in the community who has demonstrated outstanding accomplishment and support of Hispanic issues.

KUDOS

To be included in a future Kudos column, submit your information and photo to Jona Pounds at jpounds@aaanet.org.

Janet Dixon Keller (U Illinois) has been promoted to the position of associate dean in the Graduate College at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Keller, a former *American Anthropologist* editor, is currently the editor of *Ethos* (the journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology), and curator of Oceanic collections at the Spurlock Museum.

ANTHROPOLOGY WORKS

methods and technologies (eg, GIS, research design), as well as writing and communications in general, management, grant writing and teaching.

Overall, archaeologists seemed to have career roles somewhat more explicitly connected to their academic training, compared to MAs with