ANTHROPOLOGY DEPARTMENT ASSESSMENT PROGRAM
Tenth Annual Assessment Meeting
3:00 – 4:30 p.m., Cramer Hall 141
June 5, 2013

Present
Shelby Anderson (Anthropological Archaeologist)
Virginia Butler (Anthropological Archaeologist)
Sharon Carstens (Socio-Cultural Anthropologist)
Michele Gamburd (Socio-Cultural Anthropologist)
Charles Klein (Socio-Cultural Anthropologist)
Jeremy Spoon (Socio-Cultural Anthropologist)
Natalie Vasey (Biological Anthropologist)
Douglas Wilson (Anthropological Archaeologist)

Accomplishments
The core faculty of the Anthropology Department met to discuss curricular cohesion across the Anthropology curriculum. During the past ten years, we have amply assessed our learning goals and outcomes. This year, we focused instead on the skill sets we felt our students should have learned by the time they graduated. Some of these skills (e.g., critical thinking, communication, methodological and ethical competency) overlap with our existing set of learning goals. Others, however, are new or newly packaged/conceptualized.

At a prior faculty meeting (May 22, 2013), we decided to spend our assessment meeting having a departmental conversation about how to scaffold incremental exercises throughout the core courses in our undergraduate curriculum. At that meeting, we brainstormed a rough list of skill areas.

At the meeting on June 5, we further discussed and refined our list of desired undergraduate competencies. Using our existing curriculum map, we then mapped out a) to what extent each of the core courses currently taught those student skills and b) to what extent each class could teach those skills if the instructor made some changes to the assignments and/or lectures.

We shared an understanding that introducing coverage of particular skills should not unduly shift focus away from the course’s subject matter. In addition, we agreed that exercises enhancing particular competencies would build throughout the curriculum from introductory courses for freshmen, through the core course at the junior level, to the 400/500 level methods courses.

Skills and Competencies
We determined that the following five skill groups or competency areas were crucial for graduating seniors.

1. **Library research skills.** Under this category we listed skills such as the ability to locate information using library resources (search engines, key words, Boolean operators) and write a literature review.

2. **Communication.** We divided this competency into three sub-parts.
a. **Writing.** Students should be able to write well. Their skills in this area should include, at a minimum, the ability to craft a well structured argument, appropriately create and use introductions and conclusions, write paragraphs with topic and summary sentences, and reliably and accurately use citation and reference formats. They should have mastery of the conventions suitable for their chosen subfield of anthropology.

b. **Numeracy.** Students should be able to understand numerical data; craft tables, charts, and graphs; and present scientific data through appropriate means of scientific illustration.

c. **Oral presentation.** Students should have competency in presenting information orally (with and without visual support such as PowerPoint).

3. **Critical thinking.** In this category we included student mastery of analytic thinking. For example, we felt that students should be able to distinguish between fact and opinion, demonstrate mastery of content by crafting descriptive summaries, deploy evidence to support or refute arguments, and understand the relationship between theory and data. We discussed Bloom’s Taxonomy of Cognitive Objectives.

4. **Professional etiquette.** We debated what to title this category, under which we included interpersonal skills such as the ability to interact appropriately in community engagement and other professional settings. We felt that students would benefit from explicit instruction and practice with these skills, which will help prepare them for future careers.

5. **Research design.** In this category we put competencies and abilities such as knowing the difference between inductive and deductive reasoning, understanding how to put together and implement a good research project, grasping how to select appropriate methodologies, and identifying ethical considerations when dealing with archaeological materials and human and animal subjects.

**Curriculum Map**

Once we had created our five main categories (above), we mapped them onto our curriculum map.

The curriculum map lists all of the regularly taught core courses, including our freshman-level introductory courses, our junior-level cores, and our methodology courses. We chose to use these classes because undergraduate majors must take these in order to graduate with a BA or BS from our department.

For each course, the individuals who teach the material regularly mapped out what level of engagement they felt the course offered with a particular skill or competency. Each person also indicated the level of engagement that s/he felt the course could offer with some targeted adjustments in the future.

The curriculum map that we crafted is included at the end of this report.

**Future Discussions**

We did not discuss electives at our meeting on June 7, but we noted that students would benefit from consistent instruction in the five core skill groups in all anthropology classes. Future discussions may address this matter.
We agreed in the future to take up the question of whether we want to develop departmental checklists and/or create an assignment database (perhaps housed on the I:drive or on Google Docs). We also considered working with Meredith Farkas, our librarian, to create consistent scaffolding for library research exercises and practices.

Next fall, we hope to bring our adjunct and fixed term faculty into conversations about these core competencies.