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“There’s a Lot You Can Do with It”: Anthropology Undergraduates Talk about Their Professional Futures

What do anthropology students think about their professional future? In what ways does the study of anthropology provide competencies or skills that will be useful in the workplace? Research fellows from Illinois State University, Indiana University, and St. Mary's College of Maryland conducted individual interviews, focus groups, or surveys of alumni or graduating seniors to examine narratives about the perceived usefulness of anthropology in securing and sustaining professional employment. Employing the metaphor of an “inverted funnel” shows that while an undergraduate anthropology major may appeal to a smaller range of the overall student population, hence the narrow end of a funnel, their education instills broad and critical thinking about issues, an appreciation for and ability to relate to human cultural and social diversity, and an empathic orientation to understand individual diversity. Thus, anthropology undergraduates successfully carve out job niches over a wide range of economic sectors and professions that are represented by the broad end of the inverted funnel. [critical thinking, empathy, employment readiness]

Introduction: What Are You Going to Do with That [Anthropology] Degree?

Despite declines in overall undergraduate enrollment in the United States over the past decade (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center 2019), many graduating high school seniors and their families expect to attend college as part of their preparation for transition to a more independent, self-reliant future. Because anthropology is largely absent from the K-12 curriculum in the United States, many students choose only to major in anthropology after beginning college, often the result of taking an anthropology class or freshman seminar with an anthropologist (see Kvitek et al. this issue). To earn a bachelor's degree in anthropology usually takes about four years, and during this period students make many important decisions. We explore choosing a major(s), one of these important decisions, in this volume. All of the articles in this issue provide some answers to the question, *how do anthropology majors approach the question of what comes after college?* Ideally, current anthropology students become anthropology alumni after successful completion of their major requirements and then head into “the real world” to make a niche for themselves. However, the path forward to gainful employment after earning an anthropology degree is often unclear.

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Anthropology students and other liberal arts majors often receive mixed messages about the value and purpose of their college education. Students' desire for meaningful studies that develop their values and perspectives (see Ding et al. this issue) is frequently pitted against neoliberalism's instrumental imperative that education result in career placement. This is the tension that Goldmacher (2010) so well documented for anthropology students in her dissertation "Something You Love and Something More Practical': Anthropology Undergraduate Education in the Neoliberal Era." The undergraduates in Goldmacher's study knew that their degree imparted valuable skills but they did not know how to articulate its specific usefulness and thus found it difficult to see job opportunities related to anthropology. As a result, she found that "they all experience some anxiety about this uncertainty, perhaps because they cannot envision a consonant identity and status that both incorporates the ideals of anthropology and neoliberalism" (Goldmacher 2010, 102). Building on Goldmacher's findings, we show how some anthropology students today reconcile this dilemma and what values they find in their degree. More specifically, this article draws primarily upon research from three sites, Illinois State University (ISU), Indiana University (IU), and St. Mary's College of Maryland (SMCM), and sheds light on the question "What do anthropology majors think about their professional future?" Additionally, this article discusses specific examples of ways by which students acquire useful experience, knowledge, and skills to prepare for their professional future.

Methods and Background

In this article, AAA research fellows from ISU, IU, and SMCM describe what they learned from their campus peers about the professional potential of an anthropology degree. This article draws upon multiple sources of primary data collected by the fellows at these three sites. Individual in-depth ethnographic interviews of individual students or faculty provided the largest source of data for research fellows at ISU, where 22 students were interviewed, and at IU, where Kvitek was the sole researcher, and five students were interviewed.¹ Three of these students were in their first year of college, one in her third year, and one in his fourth and final year of undergrad. Kvitek adopted a combined voluntary response and convenience sampling methodol-

ogy to recruit interviewees. She engaged student interviewees in semi-structured interviews over coffee at various cafes near campus. These sessions were recorded, transcribed, and then deconstructed via thematic analysis. St. Mary's College research fellows opted for a "group discussion" approach and conducted five focus groups over a period of five weeks during the spring semester (2019) that involved 43 undergraduate students. Approximately four and a half hours of discussion was recorded. The majority of focus group students were anthropology majors, and the total number of students represented 73 percent of all SMCM anthropology majors.² There were two focus groups for senior anthropology majors, two focus groups with majors in their junior or sophomore year, and a fifth focus group comprising students who completed the Introduction to Anthropology course the previous semester. Additionally, St. Mary's had data from alumni surveys completed in 2016 ($n = 74$, a response rate of 57 percent) and 2019 ($n = 63$, a response rate of 39 percent). Additional results were obtained from responses to an annual senior exit survey completed by 83 anthropology majors (a response rate of 71 percent) and 25 minors between 2014 and 2020.

Research fellows and their faculty mentors at each site (Roberts at St. Mary's and Hunter at Illinois State) conducted preliminary analyses of the data we collected, before working together to identify common themes or student concerns across sites that form the substantive basis for subsequent description and discussion in this article.

Follow Your Passion and Earn the Degree First

Across our field sites the researchers examined students' concerns and their understanding of the relevance of their academic studies to various aspects of their future selves. Students' plans for life after college varied. Some talked about continuing their studies, including by applying to graduate school in anthropology or another discipline; others talked about service careers and specific jobs and professions outside of anthropology; some understood their college years as a time of exploration and did not yet have specific postcollege plans. A common thread among students' responses was an appreciation for anthropology's versatility, and for the ways it prepared them broadly or creatively for

thinking and working in a diverse and complex world. Indeed, an anthropology degree generally does not provide a linear career path. Our research shows that students view this as desirable; in fact, the broad training in critical thinking, cross-cultural perspective, empathy, and social justice freed these students to consider multiple career routes.

At Illinois State, most anthropology majors discovered the field through college coursework, and several had yet to consider what kind of career they would pursue postcollege. These students said they chose to major in anthropology as a discipline that held their interest. They imagined that what they were learning was valuable, but could not articulate any specific postgraduation plans. This is not altogether surprising since we interviewed students at different stages of their college paths. Some were sophomores and juniors who had only recently declared their major in anthropology, but even some senior students expressed few or vague plans about what they would do after college. For some students, college was a time of exploration; they imagined they would find a path for themselves after graduation. For these students, “college” appeared to be a time of life that was not directly linked to any particular career aspiration. For these students, the college years offer a liminal space between adolescence and adulthood, which is still free of decisions about the “real world.” Seniors without immediate plans spoke of “taking a year off” before perhaps going to graduate school, continuing in part-time jobs they currently held or finding a job that would allow them to get by while they decided next steps. College offered a chance to discover one’s passion and to connect to personal values (see Ding et al. this issue). So, it is not surprising that even some seniors had no clear postgraduation plans. For these students finishing college was the only immediate goal.

In focus groups at St. Mary’s College, senior students gave more thought as they approached the end of their college careers and prepared for graduation. For the two focus groups composed of junior and sophomore anthropology majors, Research Fellow Mehaffey, who completed his senior capstone project paper in spring 2019 using project data, wrote that students were somewhat defensive when asked what they planned to do with their degree after graduation. This was a topic that did not play well at home with their families. “One student quoted their parents as having said, ‘Oh like you’re never going to make any money.’ Several

students reported usually cutting conversations about what they planned to do with their degree short” (Mehaffey 2019, 24). As at Illinois State, St. Mary’s juniors and sophomores often did not have clear career plans or concrete ideas about how to use their anthropology degree and emphasized anthropology’s broad applicability:

Students in the middle of their undergraduate education were less able to articulate specific skillsets developed by their major, however many students referred to anthropology’s versatility. Several students mentioned how anthropology is interdisciplinary. This seems to be a big selling point for anthropology, because it allows students who are not sure of the path they want to pursue after college to try out different aspects of the major. Some students mentioned interest in going to graduate school but still were unsure. Several also reported wanting to get a job before pursuing graduate school. A small minority of participants in these two focus groups cited a specific goal after college. (Mehaffey 2019, 24–25)

Among seniors, however, Mehaffey found “that two general camps emerged, the first of which was unclear as to what future job they would pursue and the other which were pursuing a career in archaeology.”³

When asked about this observation many students answered with reference to the breadth of the discipline. One student said, “Because it is such a holistic major you can literally do anything.” The fact that anthropology does not necessarily place students on a direct career path was seen as a benefit for those who were somewhat unsure as to what they wanted to do for the rest of their lives. (Mehaffey 2019, 22)

An Inverted Funnel: Broadly Prepared Graduates

In interviews with students at Illinois State, the tension between anthropology and more job-specific majors was apparent, yet students envisioned many ways that anthropological knowledge could be applied in the “real world.” Students talked about arriving at the realization that there was much they

could do with a degree in anthropology. One former education major, Kim, explained how she enjoyed her anthropology courses but had not initially considered the major because she didn't know what she could do with the degree. That changed when she met with the anthropology program advisor and learned where ISU alumni are working after graduation: "It was just a wide range, like from working [in the insurance industry] to being caseworkers; it changed my view on what I saw myself doing. Now I feel like I can do whatever I want [with my degree in anthropology] ... after I graduate."

Erica, a student veteran and double major in English and Anthropology, said that growing up she was pushed toward careers such as nursing, law, teaching, and business. She was not sure how she might parlay her degree in anthropology into a job, but she expressed both the understanding that her college degree need not lead to a specific job and also that training in anthropology had many potential applications. Erica could more easily imagine finding work directly related to her English major, as an editor or a teacher, than anthropology. However, she noted that plenty of people study other liberal arts without planning to pursue careers in those fields. Likewise, she argued that there were potentially broad applications for anthropological knowledge from all subdisciplines and she listed potential uses for linguistic anthropology, biological anthropology, cultural heritage, and basic cultural awareness. She also noted, "People don't understand how practical anthropology can be" and pointed to the role of anthropologists in market and consumer research as one example.

Despite her own view of anthropology's practical applications, Erica understood that the lack of a clear or direct career path for anthropology students could be unsettling for others. She said "I think you have to have an open heart to major in anthropology because of the uncertainty [of finding a specific job with this major] but you have to be willing to accept that uncertainty to be able to continue with it." Another student, Remilda, echoed this: "Only people who truly believe in the values of anthropology [e.g. appreciation of cultural diversity] would be willing to major in it." One of the AAA fellows at Illinois State, Abigail (Xue) Ma, called this a "faith in the major," and pointed to what she saw as the privileged position of students to choose a major that did not lead specifically to a job. Coming from a business major in China and discovering anthropology in the United States,

Abigail marveled at the broad education available to American undergraduates.

Returning to the focus group interviews with senior anthropology majors at the SMCM, many of these undergraduates approached the question "what are you going to do with that degree?" with a similar appreciation for the open-ended possibilities it provides. Instead of pursuing a singular career focus and taking the recommended undergraduate classes accordingly as, for example, premed students do, anthropology students said they are drawn toward the major because they recognize the holistic education they can obtain. "Because it is such a holistic major you can literally do anything" stated one graduating senior. Seniors who participated in the focus groups strongly valued the cultural awareness, empathy, and respect that the anthropological approach inculcates. These values were commonly cited as benefits of the major. "You're learning about people and how to just interact with people and how to come at situations, you know, respectfully ..." One student said, "Anthropology ... prepares you for, like, real-world applications whether or not it's within the field of anthropology ... gaining the kind of ... cultural awareness ..." Cultural awareness and empathy were skills these students interpreted as broadly applicable to a wide range of careers, and comments from alumni surveys supported this the idea that cultural awareness and empathy are important skills people can use to establish a positive and productive workplace environment.

The fact that anthropology does not necessarily place students on a direct career path was seen as a benefit for those who were unsure as to what they wanted to do for the rest of their lives. While they may not have a specific career in mind, they understand the importance of the skills they are learning in classes and how these can be applied to any profession in the future. Syllabi at St. Mary's list Course Learning Outcomes organized into *knowledge* and *skills* domains, so students were able to list the ethnographic or archaeological tools they had learned to use.

A senior anthropology major, Kori, elaborated on her thinking about what she could do with an anthropology degree after graduation. She explained that because she was an anthropology major, some people in her life expected her to go straight to graduate school after finishing undergrad. This was because of the belief that graduate training was the only path available to pursue

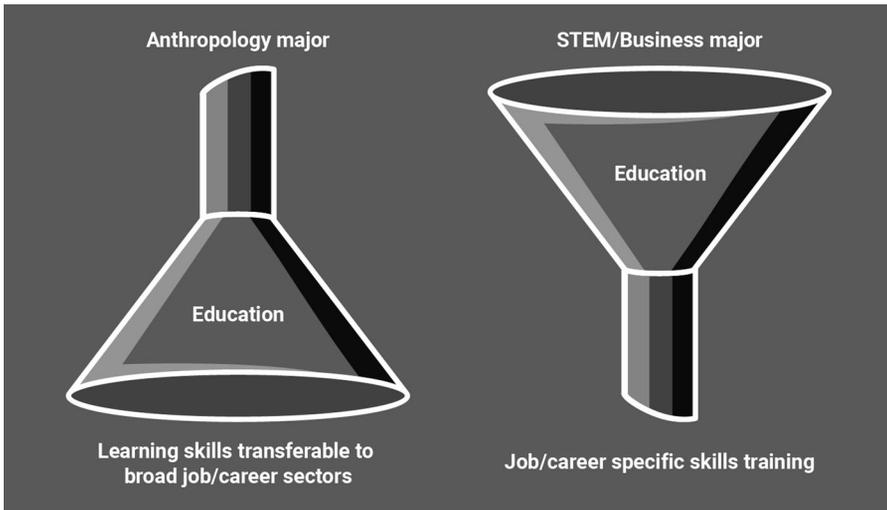


FIGURE 1. The inverted funnel: anthropology prepares students with broad, transferrable skills.

anthropology professionally. Kori explained to the other participants in her focus group:

Yeah. I think a lot of people assume that I'm going to immediately go to grad school. And I'm like, no that's not like the path that everyone has to take. And like, I honestly say to a lot of people, yes I use my anthropology major not so much to get me a job, but to sell me to the job ... But I feel like the anthropology major just does a really good job of, if anything, giving you tools for higher-order thinking and problem solving and things that are going to make me look good to an employer.

Kori explained that she did not believe graduate school is always the best next step. Instead, she sees value in the skills she was learning in her anthropology classes, and believes that graduate training may not be necessary to secure a job she wants. Kori confirmed that while she may not pursue anthropology as a career in the future, her anthropology classes were still beneficial to her professional pursuits because they prepare students with skills applicable to most jobs.⁴

The St. Mary's team suggested the analogy of an “inverted funnel” to represent the preparation for employment offered students in the discipline of anthropology (see Figure 1). To understand the inverted funnel analogy, consider that STEM fields typically capture a much larger group of incoming first-year students than anthropology, that is, they

enter the large end of a funnel. These students enter college for career training and, after graduation, are prepared to look for jobs in very specific sectors in the professional world. They are “funneled” through a specific curriculum to the smaller end and find jobs that directly relate to what they studied during their undergraduate years. Inversely, we found that anthropology appeals to fewer incoming students who enter the small end of the funnel, but emerge prepared for a broad range of professional opportunities and options in terms of employment upon graduation. As a result, the students who are drawn to the major are interested in what anthropology offers, and come to understand that critical thinking, cross-cultural awareness, communication, and research skills are broad-based skills that allow them to have options once they graduate.

Our findings about postgraduate possibilities from discussions or interviews with current student majors are echoed in the responses to the St. Mary's 2019 alumni survey. Prospective graduates were not mistaken by valuing the broad and holistic preparation of an anthropology degree. Of 55 SMCM alumni respondents, 27 percent were working in a job directly related to the major and another 29 percent somewhat related to the major, while 44 percent reported their work not related at all to anthropology. Nearly half (45 percent) of the alums stated that their study of anthropology and work with the faculty prepared them “a great deal” for the kinds of interactions with coworkers required of their current job followed by 35 percent stating “somewhat.”

One alumnus wrote that while they were required to learn some career-oriented “hard skills” specific to their job, it was the “soft skills” (e.g., appreciation and respect for diversity of perspective, empathy and cultural humility, interpersonal skills to establish rapport, and relatability) they obtained from anthropology classes, which made them suited for their position in the first place. Another alumnus responded to the question about the impact of their anthropology major on their current occupation by stating:

Anthropology is an underrated and misunderstood subject; it teaches critical thinking, places an emphasis on the broad and varied spectrum of human perspectives, and encourages folks to think outside of their own “box.” Any professional field could benefit from having a subject matter expert in figuring out why people think/do/act/buy/etc. the way that they do!

Current St. Mary’s students and alumni both agreed that the anthropology major is valuable and provides a foundation for graduate school or the work world. Instead of being focused on pursuing a singular career, they appreciate anthropology because there will be many options for employment. And employers often provide specific training for job related tasks, but generally are unable to train new employees on how to communicate and collaborate effectively, or how to demonstrate respect for workplace diversity in a way that contributes to a positive workplace culture and environment which can enhance productivity. These are areas of competency where anthropology undergraduates have an advantage.

At IU, students agreed that “there’s a lot you can do with it” in reference to the job prospects and continuing education paths that they anticipate will be available to them after majoring in anthropology. The subtext of the phrase was that anthropology gave them a generalized education about various spheres of human activity, institutions, etc., the knowledge that they felt they would be able to “spin” into a career. They believed that this “spinning” process would land them in a career that would be meaningful to them and strongly linked to their anthropology background. Interestingly, at IU, all but two participants said they wanted a career in academia; but IU participants also shared a sense that, compared to other liberal arts majors, anthropology had more professional applications.

One respondent distinguished anthropology from “less real” majors, like philosophy, a field that she thought you could only study or teach. In contrast, she said there was “a lot you could do” with anthropology in the real world, citing a job listing for an environmental management position that requested a trained archeologist.

“It’s All about Marketing Yourself”

Having internalized neoliberal values and discourses about job readiness, current students faced not so much a choice between “something they love” and “something more practical” as Goldmacher’s (2010) participants did, but felt responsibility for synthesizing these values and translating their passion into a set of job-ready skills. As one Illinois State student said, “Picking a major you love doesn’t always mean living in a box, either. Life after college is all about marketing yourself.”

Learning to market yourself is not generally part of the undergraduate anthropology curriculum. Two alumni from St. Mary’s College agreed with the Illinois State student above stating that their anthropology studies actually enhanced their ability to market themselves. One noted, “Employers seem to be intrigued by my undergraduate studies. Having a degree in anthropology shows that you are intellectually curious about the world around you and can think critically in an unbiased manner, as well as garner research effectively and learn from your experiences. From what I can tell, these are pretty desirable skills [for prospective employers].” In the same vein, another alum stated, “I market my major as a focused experience in research, project planning and execution, oral and written communications, and culturally-sensitive interpersonal interactions. It hasn’t failed me yet.”

The alumni survey at St. Mary’s verified that anthropology provided a broad foundation that could be oriented toward any number of career paths. The 55 respondents to the 2019 alumni survey provided their job titles that were used to determine what types of work they do. Education was the largest sector (24 percent) and included alums who work in educational settings as administrators, faculty, teachers, or coaches. The private sector (23 percent) was a close second, with alums working as senior editors, senior experience designers, store managers, and even a wine buyer for a “Big Box” retailer.

Health careers (15 percent) included a behavior therapist, research analysts and assistants, and a patient care advocate. Eleven percent of the alums were pursuing graduate training in either anthropology or public health, with an equal number of respondents (11 percent) working in either federal or state government agencies. Alumni with an archaeology concentration had the most “direct” path to employment, with 9 percent of alums employed by a Cultural Resource Management firm or the National Park Service, and with a final 7 percent of alums working with nonprofit organizations. A number of St. Mary’s archaeology students begin their employment as archaeologists “next door,” literally, working with the Historic St. Mary’s City’s archaeology department. Overall, this sample is illustrative of what a cohort of alumni with anthropology degrees have accomplished in the work world.

The idea that one could “do anything” with a degree in anthropology, or at least not be limited by their degree, was evidenced in the list of potential careers listed by interviewees at Illinois State. Among students who articulated specific professional goals, interviewers recorded a diverse array of imagined futures, including careers in film, theater, politics, police enforcement, city planning, and nonprofit organizations, as well as work related to more stereotypically anthropological fields such as museums, archaeology, and academia.

Students valued the broad and holistic nature of anthropology and imagined ways to apply their learning in the major to many potential jobs. This gave some students the freedom to pursue the education they desired, but it also meant that students had to become proficient at translating and articulating anthropological skills and knowledge for potential employers and to reduce their anthropological education to easily recognized “job skills” when asked, “what are you going to do the that major?”

Analyzing the data from both alumni surveys at St. Mary’s, Research Fellow Daniel Mehaffey saw that “students adjust their course of study and future plans to incorporate neoliberal values and the liberal arts, both of which are enumerated in institutional structures in anthropology” (Mehaffey 2019, 15). Synthesizing these competing values, Mehaffey argued, increased students’ *agency*, “the socially mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn 2001, 112) and provided the potential to resolve Goldmacher’s dilemma (2010) of student’s intrinsic interest in the values of studying anthropology with the neoliberal pressures they face to gain experience, knowledge,

and tools they can market to land a job after graduation. Following Goldmacher and others (Stein et al. 2016, 164) Mehaffey also called on higher education to do a better job of helping students articulate the practical applications of their liberal arts degrees:

In order to integrate the powerful pressures students feel to gain lucrative employment, engage their interests, and facilitate the growth of personal competence and confidence, colleges must train and encourage anthropology students to articulate the benefits that their liberal arts education brings to employers. (Mehaffey 2019, 15–16)

The Anthropological Toolkit

As shown by St. Mary’s alumni and students across the field sites, anthropology’s focus on an appreciation of cultural diversity and interpersonal skills was often stated as a specific aptitude that could be applied professionally. For instance, one St. Mary’s alumnus explains:

I think anthropology has given me the interpersonal skills that I’ve always wanted ... basically just being able to relate to people on a personal level, because I think that’s what makes a lot of the interactions in business, to be honest with you ... having the ability to sit down with somebody and be able to communicate but also to actually connect with and hear their point of view.

Another alum wrote the following in response to a prompt about how the experiences, knowledge, skills, or values acquired as an anthropology major were used in employment or work after college:

I have better cultural competence and have done well in cross-cultural settings. I am able to take a step back and think about challenges in the workplace, especially regarding international clients or programs, rather than assuming. Through the major, I learned to write strong papers, give presentations, and collaborate with others. They are all integral in my current and former work.

While many of the skills this alum mentions are shared across many social sciences and humanities degrees, anthropology places special significance on

Corps volunteer working in agriculture. She was inspired to study anthropology because of its approach to “explaining intersectionality” and “the cultural competence aspect.” She appreciated courses on food justice and sustainability that were directly related to her interests in the food and agriculture sector, but testified that getting a degree in “anthropology is setting me up to *understand* what I want to do.” To effectively accomplish her goal of service, Lola felt she must “learn how to fluidly integrate into any culture that I want, whether that’d be, internal, like within this country, or internationally. I think my anthropology major is going to help me do that.” She continued, “I think of the Peace Corps, also, as a huge ethnographic experiment ... In order to really understand and do anthropology, it has to be applied.”

Caleb, a multilingual Latinx student in his junior year, discussed his plans to pursue a future as an officer in the United States Air Force. Hoping to travel and raise a family in different countries, environments, and cultures, he values his background in linguistic anthropology because he believes it will assist him in understanding the intricacies of language and respectful communication with others outside of his own culture.

Fellows at Illinois State interpreted anthropology majors’ goals for international service and travel as a desire for “cultural cosmopolitanism,” an aspirational outlook emphasizing “empathy, toleration, and respect for other cultures and values” and about “reaching out across cultural differences through dialogue, aesthetic enjoyment, and respect; of living together with difference” (Werbner 2008, 2). The humanism of cultural cosmopolitanism stands in contrast to the more dominant economic and culturally homogenizing force of globalization.

At IU, one respondent who was double majoring in anthropology and environmental studies said she added anthropology because of the way it implicitly valued human beings, in what she felt was a stark contrast to environmental studies. These comments made the IU researchers wonder whether, as “climate nihilism” grows more intense, anthropology will become a major that is made up of students who are highly concerned about the environment but remain in love with, or at least fascinated by, humans and human activity.

Research at IU also provided some insight into what younger, primarily first-year, students were thinking about their future lives after graduation. Research Fellow Kvittek prompted students to

respond to open-ended questions near the end of the interview about what they envisioned their ideal future work–life balance to be. Would they be more interested in the possibility of a “9 to 5” job, or a career that overlapped more with their life, hobbies, interests, desire to travel, and so on? Two women majors emphasized the central place of family in their imagined future. The place of family in their future was so central that they said building a family would come first in their adult lives, and the nature of their family situation would determine their life work. But these participants all spoke excitedly about the prospect for work-related travel to interesting places. This opportunity seemed for many to be a significant part of what drew them to anthropology.

Preparing Students for Their Future: Conclusions and Recommendations

An anthropology degree generally does not provide graduates with a direct or linear career path. This article supports findings from the other pieces in this special issue in which anthropology students do not view the lack of career certainty or specificity as an undesirable trait for the major. The broad training in critical thinking, cross-cultural perspective, and social justice issues appears to be among the more important aspects of anthropological study students appreciate. What the students in this study have made clear about what they want out of college is not a vocation but an education that allows them to think critically and grow personally.

It is clear that, despite some progress in this direction, colleges and universities can do more to help students prepare for their future. As Daniel Mehaffey concluded:

The ways that students ideally learn to think, speak, and write in a liberal arts college do in fact prepare them for a wide variety of future jobs and global marketplaces. In fact, as the world becomes more globalized, the unique way that anthropology degrees empower students to learn about and connect with peoples of different cultural backgrounds is more important than ever. Employers do benefit from hiring anthropology majors. Students need [to acquire] the language and the confidence in their own competence in order to promote

themselves in the job market. The technical skills required for students to do this are things that educational institutions can strive to incorporate into their curricula. [Mehaffey 2019, 33-34]

While the focus of this article has been to showcase the results the research fellows produced from three of the five anthropology programs represented in this volume, there are clear overlaps with findings discussed in this chapter with findings from researchers at the University of Louisville and Wheaton College. To close this chapter, we offer the following cross-cutting findings about anthropology students and programs that potentially resonate with other undergraduate anthropology programs.

Many undergraduate anthropology majors do not have specific career goals early in their college years. Faculty can help students understand the value of anthropology for potential career paths at every level and help them articulate the ways their skills are “transferable” for potential employers as they approach graduation. For example, required courses in anthropological research methods or capstone courses provide an opportunity for students to “practice” presenting their skills through exercises in writing a résumé, presenting their research projects to faculty or peers, or learning “best practices” in how to conduct themselves in an interview with a potential employer. Students can be better prepared for both understanding key issues in our global society while also acquiring competencies and confidence that will strengthen their career readiness after graduation.

Throughout this volume, we describe anthropology programs as communities of practice that socialize each new cohort of student majors by encouraging them to adapt the requisite academic knowledge and practices for successful completion of program requirements to earn an anthropology degree (see Kvitek et al, this issue). Although the anthropology programs in this study vary in curricular structure, pedagogical practices, and the number and institutional expectations for their faculty members, the majority of faculty mentors involved in this project have committed to take some action within their departments to better prepare future students for transition to the workplace. This study suggests that it is both desirable and possible for anthropology programs to learn from one another about how their undergraduate students have creatively used their anthropology major for seeking

prospective employment. The AAA’s Department Services Program and the Consortium of Practicing and Applied Anthropologists provide numerous resources for programs seeking to discuss curricular changes or prepare students to talk with prospective employers about their anthropologically informed abilities and competencies. More recently, the [Anthropology] Career Readiness Commission has begun work to look at career preparation for anthropology students at all levels of educational achievement (<https://anthrocareerready.net/>, accessed June 15, 2022).

Of course, the opportunities to establish undergraduate experiences that help students develop the competencies and confidence in their abilities to pursue a successful career vary within and between programs. As this volume illustrates, all students benefit from “learning anthropology by doing anthropology” (see Jackson, Storey, and Ginsberg, this issue), and archaeology students perhaps have the clearest pathway from undergraduate archaeology to working with a Cultural Resource Management firm. We suggest that it is important for anthropology programs and supporting professional organizations to continue efforts that promote expanded discussion about the long-term benefits for the discipline of anthropology, for example, attracting more undergraduate majors, if we can better demonstrate more clearly that undergraduate anthropology students can acquire valuable workplace skills with the competencies and sensibilities that contribute to being a “good global citizen.”

We encourage anthropology programs to recognize that an important resource for their current students is the program’s alumni from their institution. Alums have valuable career or work experiences they can share with their younger peers. They embody examples of successful transition from college to career or workplace. We encourage anthropology programs to consider how they can expand their community of practice beyond current faculty, students, and the discipline, to include their alumni. The University of Memphis provides an excellent example of how local alumni are active members of their community of practice and contribute to the training of current MA and BA students (Feldman et al. 2021).

Finally, as we will see in more detail in the next article, campus career centers could become more valuable partners for anthropology programs and their current cohort of students. Cultivating a positive and productive relationship with the career cen-

ter requires an investment of effort by both faculty and program leadership. Once faculty have a good understanding of the types and levels of support career centers can provide, they can design activities in required courses for majors to identify and apply for internships, practice writing résumés and cover letters for specific positions, try informational interviewing, or go through mock job interviews. These are a few examples of pregraduation activities that can help students translate their knowledge, skills, and values into language prospective employers can recognize and understand.

Notes

Acknowledgments. Research was conducted with Institutional Review Board approval for a multisite ethnographic study by American University (project #2019-203). St. Mary's College of Maryland has an IRB Authorization Agreement with American University (IRB Registration # IRB00002239). Illinois State University accepted the American University IRB approval for the first stage of the project, then received continuity approval (IRB-2019-203 and IRB-2019-745). Indiana University Bloomington accepted the American University IRB approval for the entirety of the project (IRB-2019-203).

1. At Illinois State, Maria Kitchin ('20, MS '21) was the lead researcher who assisted in data collection and analysis by Alexis Lange ('20) and graduate student, Abigail Ma ('20).

2. SMCM had three research fellows in 2019, Daniel Mehaffey ('19), Melody Raynaud ('21), and Colette Nortman ('22). The focus group proceedings were recorded in the psychology department's Human Interaction Lab and subsequently transcribed. Participants were given a \$10 cash incentive for their time, with pizza and drinks provided for everybody at the conclusion of each group session.

3. St. Mary's College students who pursue an archaeology concentration are required to take an archaeology field school before graduation. Many of these students benefit from additional opportunities to do paid internships and develop their excavation or lab work skills working on projects with SMCM archaeologists or archaeologists at adjacent Historic St. Mary's City or nearby Jefferson Patterson Park and Museum. More generally, archaeology students often participate in field schools where they receive direct training and therefore are able to find jobs for "shovel bums" or Cultural Resources Management.

4. As it turned out, Kori graduated with a B.A. in Anthropology and a minor in Museum Studies. She spent the year after graduation working as a seasonal park ranger at a state park, and applied to a Master's Program in Recreation and Parks Management for AY 2020–21.

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