



The Society for Applied Anthropology

ENVIRONMENTAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Making a Difference in the World Applied Anthropology Internships

Environmental Anthropology internships provide students with the opportunity to contribute to society and to develop applied skills by using social science methods to address environmental protection and community health problems. These public service-oriented internships can readily serve as the practicum part of an applied anthropology program. They enable students to work as part of collaborative teams, develop people skills and political savvy, and confirm their sense of disciplinary responsibility and ethics.

There is a critical need for apprenticeship opportunities in the applied social sciences. Textbooks present histories, ideas, technical problems, and methodological approaches, which can be explored in classroom discussions. But classroom experiences rarely capture the intensity and complexity of problem-solving settings, where deadlines, fiscal constraints, personality clashes, conflicting agendas, and a myriad of other factors typically come into play.

Internship Examples

Environmental Justice Issues and the Cherokee Nation

Undergraduate Brendan Lavy worked as an environmental justice intern with the Cherokee Nation Office of Environmental Services. Working under the supervision of Director Dwayne Beavers, Lavy provided assistance to residents of the Cherokee reservation in Tahlequah, Oklahoma.

His internship work included researching environmental justice issues, environmental protection mandates, and assessment strategies. Lavy's research activities also included interviewing key informants, attending reservation-based ceremonies and events, and providing technical assistance to grassroots groups served by the Office of Environmental Services.

This project was especially successful because of the active involvement of a faculty internship mentor/academic advisor who contacted the Environmental Services Office of the Cherokee Nation to solicit their interest in hosting an intern. She traveled to the Cherokee Nation to introduce the intern, attended project planning meetings, helped develop the scope of work, and conducted site visits during the internship period to monitor progress and provide feedback and support.



Photo: Ed Liebow

The Cherokee Nation Department of Environmental Services is responsible for protecting the Nation's 14-county historical area in northeastern Oklahoma. The Nation hosted SfAA Environmental Anthropology Intern Brendan Lavy, who helped develop a public information guide to environmental justice issues and resources.

An equally important factor in the success of this internship was that the intern worked under the direct supervision of a project host who had specific needs and uses for the internship product.

Outcomes: Based on the research he conducted, Lavy developed text for the *Primer Manual for Community Empowerment, Public Participation and Environmental Justice*, a public information document written for the American Indian community. The Primer Manual was incorporated into the EPA's *Guide on Consultation and Collaboration with Indian Tribal Governments*. <<http://es.epa.gov/oeca/main/ej/fgconsult.html>>.

For Additional Information on the Cherokee Nation Office of Environmental Services, see <<http://www.cherokee.org>>.

Environmental Justice and Neighborhood Risksapes in Hamilton County, Ohio

During the summer of 1997, University of South Florida student Julie Pelle completed an internship with the Hamilton County Environmental Priorities Project (HCEPP), in Cincinnati, Ohio. Pelle worked with neighborhood residents and environmental and social justice groups. She compiled background socioeconomic data on neighborhoods and communities, mapped known environmental hazards (toxic release inventory-reporting industries, SUPERFUND sites, and other documented environmental threats) in relation to neighborhood demographics, and documented community perspectives on environmental issues. She communicated her findings in reports and presentations to HCEPP staff and advisory committee members.

Outcomes: This internship provided Pelle with a structured problem and a chance to apply social science methods and tools to achieve concrete outcomes. Since she had lived in Cincinnati before, she needed less time to conduct background research, identify key informants, and develop a sense of rapport. Thus, she achieved internship goals and completed anticipated outcomes within her established time frame. The internship experience refined her research and analytical skills and generated the data necessary to complete her applied anthropology master's thesis. Her work also supported a regional environmental planning process by strengthening HCEPP efforts to identify problems relevant to affected communities. Pelle's internship work demonstrated to HCEPP staff the importance of considering sociocultural features in demographic data to insure that disproportionate exposure to environmental hazards is not missed.

For additional information on Julie Pelle's internship with the Hamilton County Environmental Priorities Project:
<<http://www.sfaa.net/eap/eappapers.html>>

For additional information on the Hamilton County Environmental Priorities Project: <<http://www.queencity.com/hcepp/secondpage.htm>>

Community Dynamics and Environmental Protection in Chicago

Elizabeth Babcock's 1997 internship with EPA Region V Office of Public Affairs involved assessing existing data and developing additional information sources for a directory of Chicago-area environmental organizations. Babcock used ethnographic research methods to identify and interview representatives from environmental and public health organizations in Chicago. She worked with members of the community and agency staff to incorporate directory information into the Greater Chicago Initiative strategic planning process.

To develop the directory, Babcock assembled a brief history of each organization and its programmatic goals; identified the most pressing environmental and/or public health issues from a range of local perspectives; developed a social network matrix describing the interconnections between environmental organizations in Chicago, noting entry points and community contacts; and documented the sources of environmental data used in strategic planning or programming.

Outcomes: Babcock's work produced a directory of some 200 organizations involved with environmental, community, and public health concerns in the Chicago area. Ethnographic work with community based organizations provided data and insights that broadened public agency understanding of neighborhood issues and nongovernmental organization dynamics.

In her project report, Babcock noted that community-based organizations conceptualized environmental issues as quality of life issues, while city-wide environmental organizations generally identified ambient contamination, species preservation, or regional development as key issues. She also found that a relatively small subset of environmental organizations were the "conveners" of large projects and issues in Chicago, while local environmental activists expressed resentment of the intrusion of "outside" activists who offered suggestions and took action without understanding local dynamics.

This internship demonstrated to project sponsors the value of in-house social science expertise. This led to the subsequent hiring of a social scientist for EPA's Region V office. The project also strengthened the intern's professional resume and expanded professional contacts, leading to subsequent consultation opportunities.

For additional Information on Elizabeth Babcock's internship project publication: <http://www.sfaa.net/eap/babcock.html>



Photo: Michael Paolisso
*Environmental Anthropology Intern
Mark Wamsley and Fellow Shawn
Maloney interview watermen and other
community residents affected by
Pfiesteria-related fish kills in the
Chesapeake Bay.*

Preparing Students for an Internship

Internships provide educational opportunities at any stage of a degree program. However, from the perspective of the internship host, useful technical assistance can only occur if the student has had training and experience regarding environmental issues, community structure and values, and applied social science methods and techniques.

Environmental knowledge: Students need to acquire technical competence and scientific literacy on environmental issues. Ideally, preparation for an environmental internship should include substantial course work in fields such as ecology, environmental studies, geography, public health, epidemiology, or environmental toxicology.

Social and cultural structure and values:

Anthropologists bring distinctive skills and knowledge to environmental problems. These include the ability to develop rapport, work with culturally diverse communities, assess the sociocultural context of environmental problems, analyze human dimension impacts, and facilitate information flows by serving as a “culture broker.” A culture broker is someone familiar enough with the values and practices of two different culture groups to be able to serve as an intermediary, or go between, as representatives from these groups seek common ground. Other useful skills include the ability to conduct archival research, and to communicate effectively both orally and in writing.

Applied social science methods and techniques:

To participate effectively in an internship, students should have completed course work on anthropological research design, data collection methods and techniques, and both qualitative and quantitative data analysis. Because environmental policy is typically based on cost-benefit analysis, interdisciplinary training should include economic theory and methods. Course work should also treat practical problems of applied research, including:

- guidelines for ethical practice;
- the nature of the work setting of practicing anthropologists;
- strategies for ensuring the effective use of applied research;
- the role of practitioners in furthering the discipline’s theory and knowledge; and
- the legal context of anthropological practice, especially as it relates to environmental impact analysis.



Photo: Rich Stoffle
Diane Austin works with Eunice Surveyor, a Shivwits Paiute elder, to document cultural values and concerns associated with resources downstream from Glen Canyon Dam on the Colorado river corridor.

Developing Environmental Anthropology Internships

To serve as an applied anthropology practicum, internship projects must be problem-focused, involve a specific set of activities that apply social science methods and techniques to the problem, and reflect the professional responsibilities and obligations of the discipline. The key components to developing a successful internship program are described briefly below.

Internship project goals: Goals should reflect the convergence of professional interests and organizational needs. Internship projects should be structured with activities and expectations that meet both the educational and employment training needs of the intern, and the project-specific technical needs of the sponsoring organization. Incorporating collaborative work with community members, agency personnel, and persons from other disciplines is especially valuable, since this reflects the reality of applied social science work.

Negotiating the internship work contract: The scope of work contract should be negotiated by the intern, with the involvement of the academic advisor and internship sponsor, *before* the start of the internship. Internship work contracts should reflect the ethical concerns of the discipline, and discuss project activities with reference to human subject requirements.

The contract should specify internship goals, responsibilities, activities, timelines, reporting requirements, obligations of the project host toward the intern, and anticipated outcomes. It should also demonstrate project feasibility within a given timeframe, with clear reference to compensation agreements, academic course credit, and program requirements.

Finally, the contract should outline strategies for revising the internship work plan as conditions change or new information or needs become apparent. Changes to the internship project scope of work should be agreed to by the intern, project host, and faculty advisor.

Internship host and faculty advisors: Successful internships typically involve the active participation of internship hosts and faculty advisors in project planning, internship work, and project reporting. These mentors provide information, resources and advice; monitor the progress of internship activities; and critically review project reports. It is useful for the faculty advisor to be in contact with both the intern and the project host. The advisor can then act as both mentor and advocate for the student, and ensure that contract obligations are met by both parties. Providing evaluative feedback is an important role for internship sponsors and advisors. Interns need to receive oral and written evaluations of their work during and following their internships.

Documenting internship activities: An applied anthropology practicum should include systematic efforts to document and interpret the internship experience. Interns should keep a journal with a daily record of activities, notes from formal and informal interviews, and related observations and thoughts. This daily record provides the means to prepare internship project reports as well as subsequent papers or presentations, and forms the basis of future research opportunities.

Professional responsibilities and ethics: Internship projects should be structured and conducted with attention to obligations and responsibilities articulated in the ethics statements of professional membership organizations. The Society for Applied Anthropology Ethics Statement guides the professional behavior of its members—regardless of the specific circumstances of employment—and should provide the standard by which the internship is developed, negotiated, implemented, and reported. Many interns and practitioners include a copy of the SfAA Ethics Statement with their work contracts. The SfAA Ethics Statement is posted at <http://www.sfaa.net>.

Where to get Additional Information on Environmental Internships

Finding appropriate internship placements can be as simple as responding to advertised position announcements. Internship opportunities are typically posted on bulletin boards at university internship program offices, career centers, and various environmental and social science departments. Increasingly, internship opportunities are also advertised on the Internet. Web sites for the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Energy, the National Park Service, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and the U.S. Forest Service all contain information on student internship and post-graduate fellowship programs. Many state and local agencies also offer paid and unpaid internship opportunities, as do nonprofit environmental organizations, with positions advertised on web pages and telephone job hotlines. Students and faculty can also contact community-based organizations and public agencies, and identify problems of mutual interest that an intern's work might address.

Further resources for internship opportunities in environmental anthropology:

The Center for Environmental Citizenship is a national non-partisan 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to educating, training, and organizing a diverse, national network of young leaders to protect the environment. It provides a searchable database for environmental internship and job opportunities in nongovernmental organizations. <http://www.envirocitizen.org/enet/jobs/index.asp>

The Institute for Global Communications lists employment openings, internships, and volunteer positions for a wide variety of nongovernmental organizations. Hit the econet web link, and then the jobs/internship link for current listings. <http://www.igc.org>

The Environmental Careers Organization lists nationwide environmental internship opportunities offered through a partnership between EPA and the Environmental Careers Organization (ECO). Interns must be U.S. citizens and, depending upon the position, can be a currently enrolled student or a recent college graduate. <http://www.eco.org/>

Summer jobs with U.S. government land-management agencies such as the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and the Bureau of Land Management can be a rich source of jobs and internships in environmental fields, including forestry, fisheries, wildlife management, and cultural resource management. Check listings under “summer employment” at <http://www.usajobs.opm.gov>

NOAA/Sea Grant fellowships provide opportunities for students enrolled in a graduate or professional degree program in a marine or aquatic-related field at a U.S. accredited institution of higher education to participate in the Consortium Research Fellows Program. One Sea Grant fellow per state is awarded each year. <http://www.nsgo.seagrant.org/Knauss.html>

The Office of Personnel Management’s Presidential Management Intern Program offers environmental internships with a range of federal agencies. Students are nominated by the appropriate dean, director, or chairperson of their graduate academic program. <http://www.pmi.opm.gov/>

The National Network for Environmental Management Studies (NNEMS) is a comprehensive fellowship program managed by EPA’s Office of Environmental Education that supports student and postgraduate internship and fellowships in the EPA. Research fellowships include a stipend and are available in environmental policy, regulation, and law; environmental management and administration; environmental science; public relations and communications; and computer programming and development. Fellowships are offered to undergraduate and graduate students who meet certain eligibility criteria. Complete application information can be obtained in the Career Service Center (or equivalent) of participating universities and the NNEMS website. <http://www.epa.gov/enviroed/NNEMS/index.html>

EPA’s National Center for Environmental Research and Quality Assurance (NCERQA) operates several programs which seek to improve educational opportunities for students interested in environmental careers. In fiscal year 2001, student programs offered through NCERQA include Science To Achieve Results (STAR) Graduate-Fellowship awards for masters and doctoral level students in environmentally related fields of study. <http://es.epa.gov/ncerqa/fellow/>

The STAR Program offers Minority Academic Institutions Undergraduate Fellowships for bachelor level students in environmentally related fields of study. In fiscal year 2001, this program offered 25 new fellowships to undergraduate level students for support during their final two years of undergraduate study and a Summer Internship at an EPA facility between their junior and senior years. <http://es.epa.gov/ncerqa/rfa/ungradmaifell01.html>



Environmental Anthropology Projects focused on community-based approaches to environmental protection throughout the U.S.

Environmental anthropologists analyze and resolve human and ecological problems posed by energy extraction and use; agriculture, forestry, fisheries, mining, and other resource development; pesticide exposure, toxic waste disposal, and other environmental health issues; environmental restoration; tourism, public lands, and cultural resource management; the protection of traditional knowledge, values, and resource rights; and environmental education

The Society for Applied Anthropology was incorporated in 1941, with the mission of promoting the scientific investigation of “the principles controlling the relations of human beings to one another” and the wide application of those principles to practical problems.”

In 1996 the Society established the Environmental Anthropology Project, funded through a five-year cooperative agreement with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The aims of the project were to provide technical support for community-based approaches to environmental protection and to improve the understanding of how cultural values and social behavior affect environmental management decisions.

Theresa Trainor served as EPA’s project officer from the project’s inception. Barbara Rose Johnston directed the project for its first four years; Robert Winthrop served as director for the final year of the project. The Review series was produced by Barbara Rose Johnston, and Gabrielle O’Malley and Edward Liebow of the Environmental Health and Social Policy Center. The Reviews solely reflect the views of their authors, not those of the Environmental Protection Agency. Society officers (including Jean Schensul, John Young, Linda Bennett, and Noel Chrisman) and a project advisory group provided oversight during the course of the agreement. Many Society members served as mentors for the project’s interns and fellows, and as reviewers for its reports and publications.

The Society for Applied Anthropology is grateful for the financial support and professional cooperation of the Environmental Protection Agency and its staff. For more information on the Society and the Environmental Anthropology Project, please see our web site: www.sfaa.net.

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