Anthropology of Higher Education TIG

Newsletter

By James H. McDonald, Ph.D., University of Montevallo
Co-Chair

SfAA 2018 Philadelphia

This year's conference in Philadelphia marks another extremely strong year for the Anthropology of Higher Education TIG with 31 organized events. Ninety-four papers were presented in organized sessions along with 38 roundtable contributions. The sessions were remarkably rich, covering an arc of topics almost too diverse to easily characterize. All of them, though, touched upon the diversity of higher education and the challenges of navigating a volatile environment.

The format for presentations is also evolving in some interesting ways. As in Santa Fe, we had two mini-cluster of sessions. This year the focus was on higher education leadership in one, and the international credentialing of health care professionals in the other. There were also seven roundtables, including two that were capstone sessions summarizing and examining how the different papers in each session came together.

The leadership mini-cluster had participants with intellectual backgrounds in communication, sociology, law, music, and anthropology / archaeology. Major session themes included adaptation and resilience within leadership and multiple identities in leadership roles. Perhaps one of the most anthropological presentations was delivered by a non-anthropologist – a Professor of English – who did a masterful deconstruction and analysis of the tenure and promotion process. The health care credentialing mini-cluster major theme focused on preparing health care professionals for sustainable futures in a complex, global environment. Among the many topics addressed by papers and panelists was the thorny issue of understanding cultural differences beyond the surface notion of cultural competency.

As with previous years, the meeting was tied up with a final capstone session. Each capstone serves as a reflection and building opportunity. When the higher education group kicked off in 2015 in Pittsburgh, the conference theme was "Continuity and Change." Brian Foster and Don Brenneis put together a series of panels that focused on volatility and transformational change in higher education. At that meeting, there were three organized sessions, one capstone session, and an informal discussion about how the anthropology of higher education group might evolve within the SfAA: ten presentations and lots of interest. At that informal session, our main question was: were we one and done, or did the idea have legs?

From ten to 130+ presentations in three years is a remarkable building project. The capstone in Philadelphia focused on how we can best work to institutionalize our TIG. Fittingly, the theme of the 2018 meeting was "Sustainable Futures," and that is our goal with the TIG as we move forward. We have succeeded in creating a new governance structure. We are working toward a centralized repository for our activity through a web site, a social media presence and listserv, and database management.

SfAA Portland 2019: Engaging Change in Turbulent Times
With the 2018 meeting barely in the rearview mirror, we need to already look ahead to the 2019 Portland meeting, whose theme is "Engaging Change in Turbulent Times." That certainly seems to fit thematically with the general thrust of the TIG.

Michael Paolisso (U of Maryland, mpaoliss@umd.edu) is serving as the Program Chair and Don Stull (U of Kansas, emeritus, stull@ku.edu) will serve as the Annual Meeting Coordinator. While we have explored session, roundtable, and capstone formats, we might consider experimenting with workshops, plenaries, and posters. Nothing should be off the table.

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A few potential themes that have been discussed include:

- The role of athletics
- Internal and External Politics
- Changing Demographics
- Funding
- Sector Competition
- SfAA On-Line Community

The Anthropology of Higher Education now has an SfAA Community page. Please go to the web page at: http://community.sfaa.net/group/anthropology-of-higher-education?xg_source=activity
If you do not already have one, create your own personal community page at: http://community.sfaa.net/

Once you have your own personal SfAA on-line community page, you can join the TIG's page by simply going to the TIG's community page and clicking on a radio button in the upper right of the page that invites you to join.

Governance Structure

The TIG's new governance structure is now officially in place. The governance team is happy to field ideas about the upcoming meeting and the overall progress and direction of the TIG.

Co-Chairs:
- Lauren Herckis (Carnegie Mellon U, lrhercki@andrew.cmu.edu)
- Jim McDonald (U of Montevallo, jmcdonald@montevallo.edu)

Co-Chair-elect:

- Orit Tamir (New Mexico Highlands U, otamir@nmhu.edu)

Vice Chairs:
- Nancy Uscher (U Nevada-Las Vegas, nancy.uscher@unlv.edu): mini-clusters, events, conferences outside of anthropology
- Jennifer Wies (Ball State U, jrwies@bsu.edu): publications
- Tazin Daniels (U of Michigan, tazindaniels@gmail.com): Database and conference sessions and schedule

Advisory Board Chair
- Brian Foster (U of Missouri, fosterbl@missouri.edu)

Advisory Board
- Diane Austin (daustin@email.arizona.edu)
- Karla Davis-Salazar (karla.davis@usf.edu)
- Joe Donaldson (DonaldsonJ@missouri.edu)
- Brian Foster (fosterbl@missouri.edu)
- Pablo Mendoza (medoza@iup.edu)
- Robert Rubenstein (rar@syr.edu)
- Susan Schalge (susan.schalge@mnsu.edu)
- Nicole Taylor (ntaylor@txstate.edu)
- Kristen Vogt Veggeberg (kristen.vogt@scouting.org)

Getting the Word Out

As applied anthropologists, we want our ideas and insights to influence thinking, action, and policy in the larger world of higher education. The TIG is intentionally breaking out of the trap of insularity that goes along with disciplinary comfort zones. The TIG has taken an important set of

steps in that regard.

First, our sessions have been intentionally interdisciplinary, which makes for a very broad and comparative discussion.

Second, we have begun to branch out into conferences outside of anthropology. Toward that end, a group of TIG members (Brian Foster, Steve Graham, Robert Rubenstein, Jim McDonald) ventured out to Minneapolis to attend the Network for Change and Continuous Innovation (NCCI) conference whose theme was "Twin Missions: Honoring Tradition / Shaping the Future. Our session was entitled, "An Anthropological Perspective on Aligning Traditions and Change in Higher Education: Navigating Constituencies with Conflicting Interests." Our colleagues that focus on quality and continuous improvement are dedicated systems thinkers and aim at creating efficiencies in our complex university ecosystems. I think we were all struck by the fact that this was a part of the university that we never really knew existed, and that has its own specialized language and approach.

There was a fascinating dynamic tension between their interest in finding universal best practices and the realization that whatever best practices means, it very much happens in a specific institutional context. Thus, universal best practices in quality and improvement is hard to find.

I recently attended the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and found it to be one of the most interesting and innovative conferences on higher education that I've ever attended. There are, of course, many other key higher education and disciplinary associations that might work well.

Third, we are getting the word out through publications. The book MS that was the product of the 2015 Pittsburgh SfAA is now finally out with Information Age Press: Foster, Brian L., Steven W. Graham, and Joe F. Donaldson (2018) Navigating the Volatility of Higher Education: Anthropological and Policy Perspectives. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Press.

We also have a special issue on the "Changing World of Higher Education" published in Practicing Anthropology (Vol. 39, No. 2, 2017). This 13-article issue was built out of presentations at the 2016 SfAA meeting in Vancouver, BC.

Jennifer Wies (Ball State U, jrwies@bsu.edu) is our TIG point person on publications and can help us think through placement of clusters of papers in journals and books, as well as individually submitted pieces. One potentially important new twist: Jennifer will be happy to work with chair/presenters in individual sessions to find placement for publishing the session as a "cluster" of papers in a journal.

Other publications are in the works! Let's start planning for Portland! Note that the deadline for submitting abstracts for sessions or individual papers is **October 15th**.

Anthropology of Higher Education TIG Board Meeting

Present: Anne Larrivee (Penn), Kristen Vogt Veggeberg (UIC); Joe Donaldson (U of MO- Columbia); Lauren Herckis (CMU); Orit Tamir (NMHU); Nicole Taylor (Texas State); Robert Rubenstein (Syracuse); Brian Foster (U of Missorui – Columbia, Chair) Attendees who are not members of the Board: Daniel Ginsberg (AAA); Audrey Ricke (IUPUI); Sally Robinson;

MINUTES FOR APRIL 4, 2018 MEETING:
Introductory Comments

- Agenda and notes from Jennifer Wies distributed, Brian announced that minutes from February will be sent out to the board
- Brian Foster distributed notes from a conversation with Jennifer Wies; we need to develop a process for publication; these notes provide details on how to organize papers and provide support for authors; more on this topic below
- Brian announced that his part time employment will end on June 30th, Vickie has retired and Cathy Giles has temporarily taken over some of Vickie's roles assisting with SfAA archiving and other tasks.
- Brian will serve as chair of the TIG

- board (for the next year); Lauren Herckis and Jim MacDonald will co-chair the TIG; Orit Tamir will serve as the co-chair designate; Jennifer Wies will serve as the Vice Chair and will facilitate the publication of research results; and Nancy Usher will serve as the other Vice chair; Taz Daniels, the third Vice Chair has taken the role of sorting through the individual paper submissions and grouping them to sessions for the Anthro of Higher Ed TIG, and will schedule these and submitted sessions
- Networking is critical for engaging people to present at the annual meeting. The board will help with networking functions, but Lauren mentioned that other TIG members should be involved with networking

Publications

- Brian announced that a book published by IAP titled Navigating the Volatility of Higher Education: Anthropological and Policy Perspectives is about to be released, filled with TIG papers from the 2015 SfAA conference. In addition, a special issue of Practicing Anthropology has been published, and a second IAP book of papers from Vancouver is receiving positive input from the editors; revision of the proposal is underway.

TIG affiliates

- This year's conference had over 100 papers submitted for the TIG; this is the third year that we have had 100 presentations at the SfAA meeting
- Brian noted that the database of the Anthropology of Higher Ed TIG includes over 450 affiliates

TIG Goals/Policy Impact

- Discussion about the TIG's role in trying to take on the chaos of higher ed and bring all the pieces together; the TIG will assist with coordination of publications and information that will impact policy; we will also organize sessions in a broad range of Higher Education organizations' meetings, on campuses, and otherwise get our message to administrators and others who have impact on higher education policy
- To get the word out- it was proposed to have live events at the ACE, APLU, AAC&U, and other higher education organizations, and will organize campus seminars, webinars, and/or other kinds of events

Communications

- Discussion about TIG Communications: A closed Facebook group has been created by Anne Larrivee; https://www.facebook.com/groups/1669931016434579/?ref=br_rs; Anne will touch base with Paulo as well as Lauren and Jim about website options
- Another option for the TIG is the SfAA on-line community (but there was some concern about the effectiveness of the platform)

Data Management

- There was concern over who will manage the database with information about all the TIG affiliates; Vicki updated and managed this sheet in the past. She also sent affiliates a copy of a newsletter, information on all sessions at the upcoming meetings, sent information on the TIG to new affiliates, and more. Her retirement in November left a significant issue for the TIG; more on this below.
- When asked if SfAA could assist with the management of our members, it was mentioned that there was no formal list of SfAA TIG members; the TIG could accept a gift to finance a part-time worker, but the TIG does not have the resources to hire someone
- The SfAA does not have the resources to manage grants, but can accept gifts
- Questions of web presence, list-serv, drop box, data management, and sustainability
- Publications
- Brian mentioned that we will need people to serve in editorial roles, interested panel participants could submit papers for books or special journal issues, Jennifer will provide support and find publication avenues, people who have papers they would like to publish should get in touch with Jennifer

List of suggested journal titles:

- Scientific American
- Human Organizations
- Practicing Anthropology

- Anthro. Education Quarterly
- Sapiens
- Review of Higher Education
- Journal of Higher Education
- Higher Education
- Hybrid Pedagogy
- The Choice Journal
- Innovative Higher Ed

- Trusteeship
- Change
- Inside Higher Ed
- Chronicle for Higher Education

Other journal areas of interest: public admin, public policy, medical ed, museum, outreach, the arts, library science.