

Report of External Review Team

Anthropology Program at Western Carolina University

May 2014

I. INTRODUCTION

The external review team for the Western Carolina University (WCU) Anthropology Program in Cullowee, North Carolina, visited the campus on April 2-3, 2014. The review team consisted of Dr. Diane Mines, Professor of Anthropology, Appalachian State University, Dr. Robbie Ethridge, Professor of Anthropology, University of Mississippi, and Dr. Jay Scifers, Professor of Athletic Training, Western Carolina University. On April 2, the review team's first meeting was with Provost Alison Morrison-Shetlar, Department Chair Ted Coyle, and Director of Assessment David Onder. This was followed by a tour of the anthropology department and facilities with Dr. Coyle, including tours of the forensic and archaeology laboratories with Drs. Cheryl Johnston and Jane Eastman, respectively. We then met with Dean Richard Starnes, Ted Coyle, and David Onder. This was followed by a lunch meeting with some selected students and alumni, followed by a meeting with the department faculty (minus the chair). Originally, this meeting was scheduled with Drs. Jane Eastman, Hartwell Francis, and Ann Rogers, and did not include the forensics faculty, with whom we were to meet separately. However, the forensics faculty decided to attend the first meeting, so the first meeting then included all of those previously mentioned as well as Drs. John Williamson and Cheryl Johnston and lecturer Nicole Jastremski. This meeting was followed by a tour of the Forensic Osteology Research Station (FOREST) with Dr. Cheryl Johnston. On April 3, the review team spent the morning compiling our findings from the previous day. We also requested a private meeting with Dean Starnes that morning. This was followed by an exit meeting with Provost Morrison-Shetler, Dean Starnes, David Onder, Ted Coyle, and Dr. Carol Burton, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies.

A week prior to our meeting, David Onder forwarded to us the internal self-study, the campus guidelines for external reviewers, and the 2007 review materials and self-study. These materials also included current *curriculum vitae* of the faculty, course syllabi, program outcomes, and other data. However, given the short time-frame, the team had only briefly perused the materials before their visit to WCU. Each studied the materials more closely upon arrival and following the site visit.

II. STRENGTHS OF THE UNDERGRADUATE ANTHROPOLOGY PROGRAM

1. Faculty

Without doubt, one of the strengths of the anthropology program is the dedication and commitment of the faculty to teaching and mentoring. This strength aligns well with WCU's commitment to teaching and, in fact, could serve as a model for such a commitment. The anthropology program has

approximately 150 majors, of which more than 100 are in the forensics concentration. The six full-time, permanent faculty, therefore, carry heavy teaching loads, yet they thrive in this task. Each expressed enthusiasm toward teaching, pride in their students, and a real commitment to hands-on (engaged) pedagogies. The faculty go above and beyond in their attentions to students' needs (intellectual and otherwise); they show much concern and care for student growth as anthropologists and as world citizens; and, to a person, each understood teaching to be a first priority in their professional lives (which, of course, has an impact on faculty research activities, as discussed in the "Concerns" section)

When we interviewed the program's students, they spoke very highly of the faculty. They marveled at the time and energy their mentors put into working with them, and they clearly appreciated the dedication of their professors. Many remarked on the fact that most faculty were available for one-on-one mentoring whenever students needed it, and they much appreciated this. Students also mentioned that the teaching and mentoring they receive is not limited to the skills and concepts needed in anthropological training, but also includes training in the "soft skills" needed in any professional setting—examples of "soft skills" included learning to express oneself effectively in speaking and writing, being respectful of other opinions and ideas even if one does not share them, learning to be a good mentor, and so on. Students were confident in the preparation they received from the department and felt ready to move into their next professional roles, whether working in the private or public sector or attending graduate school. It is safe to say that the anthropology department at WCU turns out life-long devotees of the department and that their students carry excellent WCU experiences with them for life.

2. Program/Curriculum

The faculty is dedicated to engaged learning, and recently instituted an engaged learning requirement to formalize a process they have been doing for years. The faculty is quite active in promoting undergraduate research in all avenues of anthropology—forensics, archaeology, biological, cultural, and linguistics. They have done this through their hands-on training in the labs, field schools, and international education. Although it requires much more time and effort from the faculty, many of the upper-level anthropology courses are writing intensive, which is an important aspect of a university education. Faculty members also encourage students to present their findings at scholarly conferences and other outlets and mentor students as they prepare for such presentations. In fact, the department has a strong history of student involvement in the WCU Expo and the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) programs (see Table 1). In other words, through engaged learning, the faculty promotes undergraduate research opportunities, professional socialization of undergraduates, and imparts an enthusiasm for the discipline. By formalizing the engaged learning experience as part of the curriculum, the department addressed a recommendation in the 2007 review which suggested that the curriculum have a capstone class. Formalizing the engaged learning also aligns with WCU's 2020 vision and it also formalizes a task that is somewhat invisible because it is typically not "counted" in year-end reviews. However, the review team had a concern that any additional faculty time required in making engaged learning a requirement for graduation may fall heavily on the forensics professors who bear the heavier load of majors (100 out of the 150). Students will undoubtedly want to fulfill this requirement by

completing research within their area of interest, i.e., forensics, and they will call on those professors to guide them through this requirement. We have some recommendations below in this regard. We were particularly impressed with many of the lab-based classes and lab-learning opportunities afforded by the anthropology program. These labs were in forensics and archaeology, and, although small, in both cases the faculty maintained excellent learning labs and collections (although we have some recommendations for some expansion and maintenance issues below) and each smartly utilized these labs and collections for hands-on work with students. Cultural anthropologists have offered ethnographic experiences abroad and in the region, through various field schools and on-site ethnographic training programs, and the archaeologists offer summer field schools either in the region or abroad (however, we did not have the opportunity to thoroughly evaluate these). It is unusual for a department of this size to have such good lab-based and field-based learning opportunities, and these are definite strengths of the department.

The anthropology department has a degree in General Anthropology (BA) and a degree in Anthropology with a forensics concentration (BS). The majority of majors are in the forensics concentration. This concentration was instituted in 2003 and has grown especially since 2007. Despite its growth, however, faculty positions have not kept pace with enrollment growth and just two full-time faculty and one instructor are dedicated to the concentration. This small number of faculty, however, manages to oversee intensive hands-on training and provide ample opportunities for undergraduate research for over 100 majors. The program has clearly been maintained by the sheer energy and dedication of the two full-time faculty, and we have concerns about “burn out” and the sustainability of such an arrangement (see below). In addition to the labs mentioned above, the FOREST, or the decomposition facility, offers a unique opportunity for undergraduate forensic majors to work directly with human remains. Such a forensics concentration with these sorts of opportunities for undergraduates is quite unique and undoubtedly draws students to WCU and the concentration. The FOREST is a strength of the department. However, as addressed below, to maintain the strength of the forensics concentration will require substantial institutional attention and a commitment of additional resources.

The anthropology program also houses the Cherokee Studies program, which is an interdisciplinary program that includes anthropology, health sciences, literature, history, and modern languages. The director of this program is Dr. Jane Eastman, in anthropology. This, too, is a unique program that perfectly aligns with the WCU 2020 vision of regional engagement. Western Carolina is in the heart of Cherokee country, and the university is only a few miles from the Qualla Boundary, the reservation of the Eastern Band of Cherokees, with whom the program maintains close ties. The program also includes Cherokee instructors who are integral to maintaining a Native orientation to the program. Of particular interest is the program’s active association with the Cherokee language revitalization program of the Eastern Band. Dr. Hartwell Francis’s work in Cherokee linguistics provides students with multiple opportunities to work in the revitalization program and with Cherokee-speaking people. In addition, Dr. Eastman’s archaeological experience with the Cherokee past provides another opportunity for students to engage with a descendent community in their archaeological projects. This sort of engagement with indigenous communities is cutting edge as we all work toward decolonizing our methodologies. In fact, this program’s engagement with local Cherokees is nothing short of astonishing—

despite the small size of the program and associated instructors and faculty, the program has a vital presence with the Eastern Band and maintains a productive and enlightened partnership between the academy and an American Indian Nation, something rare in academia. However, to date, these are largely opportunities waiting to be fully realized (although we were given to understand that Dr. Francis' position will soon become permanent, which will enhance his standing in the program). As indicated below, we recommend strengthening and deepening Cherokee Studies in order to realize the great potential of this program.

The department additionally has an Appalachian focus through their cultural anthropologists, although this focus is not formalized as much as the forensics concentration or Cherokee Studies. The Appalachian focus, too, aligns with WCU's 2020 vision of regional engagement. Yet, as with the Cherokee Studies program, we see the Appalachian focus as an only partially fulfilled opportunity for WCU to move toward its 2020 goal of regional engagement. The department's recent hire, Dr. James Veteto, who specializes in the environmental anthropology of Appalachia, will help to strengthen this focus tremendously. Dr. Veteto, who has an active fieldwork agenda, will certainly enhance the existing opportunities for students to conduct ethnographic fieldwork and local, on-site research. Such opportunities are critical because students doing field-based research do not have to travel to distant locations that oftentimes are prohibitively expensive. Furthermore, Dr. Veteto's interest in environmental anthropology brings a cutting-edge perspective to this regional engagement. All in all, we see these developments as an important opportunity for the WCU community.

When considering all of the above, the review team's opinion is that the opportunities afforded by the Cherokee Studies program and the Appalachian/environmental focus of the anthropology program could be relatively easily strengthened and realized through a modicum of administrative support, attention, and resources. Therefore these two areas of study would require relatively small investments and yet would have great payoffs. The forensics concentration, on the other hand, is clearly a strength of the department and the university, but it will require considerable attention and resources to sustain as a viable concentration.

In terms of the curriculum, the department recently revised their undergraduate major requirements for General Anthropology and for the forensics concentration. Generally, this revision more fully realizes a broad anthropological training across the four sub-fields of archaeology, linguistics, cultural, and biological (forensics is a part of biological anthropology) and gives more structure to the program than the previous curriculum requirements. We do, however, have some recommendations below for additional structure to the requirements, and, as expressed above, we fear that the engaged learning requirement may turn out to be quite a burden on a portion of the faculty. The new curriculum, overall, squares well with WCU's 2020 vision of strengthening and deepening the undergraduate learning experience through utilizing resources already available.

Table 1: Summary of Anthropology Program Undergraduate Research Activity 2007-2012

Year	WCU Expo Presentations	NCUR Presentations	Rank in CAS
2007	5	1	5 th
2008	2	2	6 th
2009	1	0	8 th
2010	4	3	5 th
2011	4	4	3 rd
2012	3	5	6 th

3. Facilities

We found the offices and labs of the anthropology department, overall and with the exception of FOREST, to be nice and adequate. The faculty office spaces are convivial. A student lounge area promotes student community and bonding. The space is neat and clean, uncluttered, and makes for a good learning and teaching environment.

The lab facilities are adequate and maintained well, but they could be enhanced. Given the importance of these labs in the program, it would be worthwhile to consider ways in which the spaces could be expanded and some equipment needs addressed (see “Recommendations” below).

FOREST is certainly an unusual facility to have available for undergraduate training, and for that reason one could consider it a strength. However, as addressed below, in its present state the facility is more of a liability than an asset and the university should consider a major infusion of resources into the facility if they wish to maintain it.

III. CONCERNS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The review team shared concerns that can be summarized under the headings of faculty research and development, curriculum, resources/facilities, and morale issues.

1. Faculty Research and Development

The anthropology department’s intense commitment to engaged teaching, student research, and advising for 150 majors falls on only six faculty members. While Student Credit Hours (SCH) production is within the range expected by WCU, the additional engaged learning focus of a small program with so

many majors results in many hours of work that is not adequately measured by SCH production. Granted, the teaching focus of the faculty is clearly a priority, as befitting the teaching mission of WCU, but the excess time-commitment needed for hands-on and engaged pedagogy appears to create structural impediments to faculty research activity. Research is certainly lagging in the department. The review team agreed that such structural features have joined hands with the culture of the department, such that faculty members perhaps too readily use their “commitment to teaching” to justify a much weaker commitment to research activities. Attenuated research activity was also noted in the 2007 program review. The *curriculum vita* submitted for our review indicate that the most recent peer-reviewed articles by faculty were four that appeared in regional publications in 1999, 2002 (2), and 2011. Most publications listed for the faculty were older than this or, if more recent, tended to be smaller, non-peer reviewed pieces such as book reviews, technical reports, and small notices. Conference presentations were more recent but also spotty (however, the *vita* we were provided appear to be incomplete in some cases, so we cannot make any definitive statement here). Obviously a teaching focus is important, but some creative solutions might be available to enhance faculty research (see “Recommendations” below).

While this weak publication record can be explained in part by workload issues, there are signs that this is not the only impediment to research. For example, it appears that faculty have not taken advantage of, and in fact seemed upon our inquiring to be unaware of, opportunities for research funding, course reduction, and faculty development that are offered internally at WCU. Additionally, we saw very little evidence of external grant or fellowship activity.

The Promotion and Tenure document spells out expectations clearly, and recognizes four categories of scholarship according to the Boyer model. Each category counts variably for points depending on length, scope, audience, peer-review, and other standard criteria. For example, a single-author academic book counts as four points, a peer review article in a major journal counts as two, a regional peer-reviewed publication or technical report counts as one, and minor pieces (book review, conference presentation, manuscript review, non-peer review articles, etc.) count as a half point. Requirements up to promotion to Professor are fairly rigorous, requiring an average of one point a year, and insisting upon significant peer-review publications (from the first or second category above), a rich array of varied kinds of scholarly activity, and a “superior record with a clear and consistent program of scholarly activity.” Post-tenure, however, the rigor drops off and one can drift along indefinitely with no peer review publications required. In other words, there is no incentive for senior faculty to maintain an active peer-reviewed research record. This seems to describe the case somewhat for some WCU Anthropology faculty who publish book reviews, present at regional conferences, and often “facilitate undergraduate research that results in a presentation.” Therefore, senior faculty members are not encouraged to conduct an active research agenda.

The faculty are all associate or full professors, and James Veteto has been hired as an incoming assistant professor. The department can also anticipate some retirements in the coming years. This situation, where senior faculty are not modelling research activity, in tandem with some of the language in the promotion and tenure document itself, seem to set junior faculty up for inadequate research and scholarly development. Starting with the latter, a close look at the requirements for first year review indicate that the only research product expected by this time is a general “plan” for research. The

expectation is, therefore, that junior faculty will not make any progress on research during their first year. A junior faculty member, however, has just completed their dissertation and needs to be actively encouraged from the start to publish from and then build on their doctoral research. Junior faculty should be encouraged to be working on grant or fellowship proposals as well. There are no specific requirements for the third year review, either, so there is no incentive for junior faculty to push themselves to publish quickly or to establish a work routine that includes writing, publication, and grant activity. The document also makes it clear that teaching must “*never* take a secondary role” to research. Such a statement strongly discourages research and sets the tone for maintaining a department culture where scholarship and research takes the back seat or, worse yet, where research is treated punitively as a deviation from a valorized focus on teaching.

Second, we are concerned with the ability of senior faculty to mentor junior faculty in research, grant-writing, and internal professionalization opportunities when they themselves seem relatively disinterested in these activities. We think some intervention here would be timely. Since junior faculty will be joining the department as senior faculty retire—including, as mentioned above, one junior faculty member beginning 2014-15—we think that now is the time to rethink the role of research in the anthropology program. The best junior faculty will want an environment that nurtures research along with teaching. We think it worth some effort to rethink how to retain and encourage junior faculty while reframing the program’s culture to strive for a teacher/scholar model, one which emphasizes teaching but also values and rewards research. Research and teaching are complementary, not opposed, activities. Research is an activity that enhances university-level teaching and has a profound impact on keeping curriculum current to relevant movements in scholarship. Teaching and research ought not to be seen as an either/or choice. Each informs the other. An active research agenda on the part of faculty—and the current readings, methods, and theories that such research brings to the classroom—is a critical component of preparing undergraduates for increasingly competitive graduate programs.

2. Curriculum

Let us reiterate: the teaching activities of the anthropology faculty are in many ways excellent, attentive, devoted, and engaged. However, course syllabi are one place where the relative weakness of research may be taking its toll. Active researchers will “teach what they want to learn,” thereby integrating research activities and up-to-date readings into classroom life. Course syllabi that were provided to the review team were, on the other hand, disappointing in their relation to current scholarship in the field. In some syllabi, the most recent readings were as old as twenty years. Textbooks were used even in upper division courses. And while textbooks may be appropriate for human evolution and forensics courses, there, too, contemporary readings in these quickly changing fields seemed to be missing, or at least were not clearly indicated.

The department has recently updated its curriculum by (1) combining liberal studies courses with the introductory level courses for majors, (2) structuring major course choices a bit more by requiring majors to take at least one course in each subfield, (3) better integrating the forensics concentration into the General Anthropology requirements, and (4) requiring students to enter into an “engagement”

contract that focuses some of their work on community engagement, creatively defined. These changes are positive, and faculty members are clearly committed to their work with students.

Despite these fixes, however, the curriculum remains only loosely structured, especially at the upper-division level. In the General Anthropology program, in particular, there seems to be little attention to how to move students into increasingly advanced courses on contemporary theories and issues in the field; it is difficult to tell what distinguishes 200, 300, and 400 level courses (all seem similarly structured, with similar amounts of reading, textbook reliance, etc.). Below, we recommend some further curriculum revisions to address some structural and teaching equity issues, but briefly these include (1) teaching larger sections of the introductory courses, with all faculty rotating into and out of these courses, which would (2) free faculty to teach smaller and more rigorous courses at the upper division, while also offering some clear structure to the curriculum in junior and senior years. (3) One new course, in engaged research or engaged anthropology, could be added so that instead of choking all faculty with multiple independent studies each semester (which is a serious workload issue), faculty members would receive credit for teaching a course guiding multiple students into their engaged projects. This latter idea would also ensure a more equitable distribution of engagement mentoring among the faculty.

The Cherokee Studies Program is a potentially wonderful program for WCU, currently housed in anthropology. The review team sees this program as an underappreciated departmental asset that needs some real institutional support. We agree that anthropology is the logical place to house and nurture this program. The integration of the program with the department remained a bit unclear to the review team; it seems that it could be a powerful center of engagement for the program and the university.

3. Facilities and Resources

As noted above, the facilities are generally quite nice. The review team identified three areas of concern.

First, while the lab spaces are functional, they are a bit cramped and small, and in need of some enhancements. We noticed several empty offices on the lower floor of McKee Hall near the forensics lab. These offices could be converted into case study labs for the forensics program; a move which would allow more students working in the labs, and allow better and safer access to the collections for research. Further, given the sensitive nature of some of these materials, we thought that the labs needed better security and controlled access for students enrolled in the programs (see recommendations).

Second, we had some concerns about the archaeology storage/curation facility and some of its collections. It should be noted, in general, curation of archaeological collections is subject to state and federal regulations as per the Native American Graves and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). WCU needs to ensure that the department has the resources to comply with these regulations. With that in mind, our first concern is the exposed water and steam pipes that run along the ceiling of the curation facility on the ground floor of McKee. One burst pipe would result in a great deal of damage to the collections, which are currently stored in cardboard boxes. Plastic containers would, at least, protect the collection against water damage. Second, there are some USDA Forest Service collections housed in this facility. These collections should either be transferred to the department or taken away to be housed appropriately in

Park Service curation facilities. Third, the curation room houses a donated collection of Native American artifacts. These are improperly curated and they also appear to include funerary objects and even some skeletal remains. These objects and remains need to be (but do not appear to be) in compliance with NAGPRA (a federal law, yes, but moreover an ethical issue with ramifications for relations between your institution and Native American tribal members and institutions), and need to be made so without delay. Professor Eastman is a knowledgeable archaeologist who can advise about the needed equipment and processes. The archaeological “wet lab” (the lab in which artifacts are washed and sorted) needs some silt filters in the sinks and other relatively minor equipment (see “Recommendations” below).

The third matter of concern is FOREST, a.k.a. The Body Farm. Above, we noted the unique nature of this facility and the unusually rich experience in forensic science that your undergraduates are afforded because of this facility. We see why WCU considers it to be a “gem” in its crown. Yet, it also looks like “a disaster waiting to happen.” Security is lax (anyone could gain access to the FOREST with just a little effort and take pictures or engage in other mischief), and the situation has been made worse now that a trail with public access runs within yards of the facility (we were told that people on the path could detect the unmistakable smell of human decomposition). Students and faculty are forced to use their own vehicles to transport bodies to the facility. Students have been permitted to work in the FOREST without supervision (certainly a safety issue on several fronts), and the faculty member in charge of the facility appears to have delegated oversight of the facility to his more junior colleague, who has no release time or additional salary to oversee the facility (and so cannot be there to supervise students all the time). This facility, in order to assure safe and effective operation, requires a major influx of funding for security, equipment, bathroom facilities, and designated, full or part-time professional staffing. Human remains need to be treated by high ethical standards. If the university cannot provide the needed resources, we think it would be wise to shut the FOREST down. University officials should be made aware of the situation.

4. Morale Issues

It is impossible to discern in a few hours the complexity of the relationships and histories among a group of colleagues who have worked together for many years. And we know that faculty morale is low across the UNC system due to stagnating wages and seemingly relentless political denigration of the university as an institution. But by the end of our visit, it was clear that there were several lines of fission in the program. When the forensics faculty forcefully entered our meeting with the general anthropology faculty even though they were assigned a separate time, we were awoken to the fact that discord was a problem. During that meeting, some faculty members were silent and others spoke freely. After the group meeting, some faculty came to us individually to report privately on dissatisfactions. We have no way of determining the full complexity of the dynamics at play here. Certainly the junior faculty members expressed some dissatisfaction with leadership, thinking that decisions in the program were not made in an open manner and that faculty evaluations, workloads, and compensations were not always made in an equitable manner. There also appeared to be some serious gender inequity issues regarding workload and compensation. This was true for both the program as a whole and the forensics program, in particular. Clearly some guided mediation would be helpful if the department is to grow, thrive, and provide a nurturing environment for junior faculty.

In conclusion, we found the department to have many core strengths. The faculty members were open to the process of evaluation, and they seemed to genuinely want to have a great department. We also found some areas for improvement. We think that a combination of professional development programs, internal course reduction for research, creative curriculum discussions, and some funded faculty retreats with mediation would go a long way to creating better integration of several aspects of the program: integration of teaching and research, integration of the Cherokee Studies Program with the Anthropology program, integration of forensic and General Anthropology, integration of courses within a more structured General Anthropology concentration, integration of pedagogy to contemporary issues in anthropology, and integration of the faculty through collegial, equitable, and open processes.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

The review team has some specific recommendations aimed at opening discussion among program faculty and administrators about how best to address some of the concerns outlined above. Some of them are quite specific (silt traps in drains) while others are intended as collegial prompts to open conversations about possible changes that the program might consider implementing in stages over the long term to strengthen and build up aspects of the program. We will begin by suggesting some possible ways to strengthen scholarship in a manner that also integrates it with teaching in alignment with the university's core mission. We then move on to related curriculum suggestions including interdisciplinary ones, and end with some recommendations and options concerning the facilities, funding, and staff.

1. Faculty

In order to engage in research and publication, faculty first and foremost need time to develop projects, pursue them, and then write (or film, or perform, etc.). Any aspect of the scholarly process can be undertaken with students, in order to promote the ideal teacher/scholar model that fits the mission of a comprehensive university. The first recommendation, therefore, is that faculty work with their Dean and Faculty Development or Research offices to investigate opportunities for both internal and external funding for scholarly pursuits and grant writing, in addition to managing occasional course releases to encourage research productivity. As senior faculty become more engaged in their own scholarship, they can create a culture in which junior faculty can thrive.

As tenure-track junior faculty enter the program, we recommend they be offered some formalized mentoring with active and successful research/teacher scholars from allied programs on campus. Currently, the departmental culture is not conducive to junior faculty mentoring. Many current faculty are not pursuing research in a rigorous fashion, so they may not be the best mentors for junior faculty trying to launch an active research program as they also begin teaching.

We recommend, further, that the department consider increasing the rigor of scholarly requirements for tenure-track junior faculty during years one through three, in order to set-up success not only in completing the tenure process but also in establishing early the habit of research and scholarly

teaching. It would also be useful internally, perhaps, to re-examine the department guidelines for promotion and tenure to determine if scholarship requirements for re-appointment, tenure, and post-tenure review are adequate and in-line with the College of Arts and Sciences and WCU, in general.

Find funding for a guest lecture series or make better use of the WCU Visiting Scholar's Committee perhaps. Bringing in other anthropologists from nearby institutions or even ones further afield brings new ideas into a department for both faculty and students.

Faculty need a context in which they can maintain good morale, expect fair treatment and open decision making processes, and pursue their interests with collegial support. Because the current department morale seems to be a bit troubled, we recommend that the college or faculty development specialists on campus provide funded opportunities for faculty retreats and/or other mediation activities in order to improve collegiality and collaboration among departmental faculty members. It might be a good moment to initiate retreats and program transparency with regard to faculty review and recruitment as the new department head takes over next year. One task we recommend in this context is a review of gender inequity issues within the department (particularly with regard to forensics faculty workloads and compensation).

2. Curriculum

By increasing the emphasis on scholarly activity among anthropology faculty, the currency of teaching content throughout the curriculum will likely improve on its own, but we would recommend that faculty consider teaching not "what they know," but "what they want to learn." This could be accomplished through upper division seminar offerings in "current topics in anthropology," where faculty could engage in a collaborative learning process with their more advanced students. Alternatively, or simultaneously, faculty could slowly update course content throughout the program, adding newer readings here and there in all their classes. However it is accomplished, we recommend that faculty update course syllabi to better reflect current theory and practice in the field. Additionally, better delineation between student expectations of courses at the 200, 300, and 400 levels is desirable.

We recommend an increased support of forensics faculty with advising and student engagement. Because of the disproportionate number of forensics students, these faculty are quite burdened by the engagement process (and now a requirement). One solution would be to hire new faculty in biological anthropology or forensics who could share advising loads. Another is for all faculty in the program to share advising equitably. Designing a more efficient structure for managing student engagement projects would also help. As mentioned above, student engagement contracts are often made as independent studies one by one with individual faculty members. This increases faculty workload unduly and also is more likely to create inequities in workload as students seek out their favorite professors. An alternative model the review team floated was as follows. Increase enrollments in (and find bigger classrooms for) low-level and liberal studies courses in order to free up faculty hours for teaching smaller upper division courses (without impacting the overall departmental SCH production), including perhaps a designated capstone or engagement course which would allow faculty to manage engagement contracts in a designated course. They would of course continue to engage students inside and outside the classroom,

but now faculty would also receive appropriate academic credit for this important, but time-consuming, task. Furthermore, lower-level anthropology courses should be taught by all departmental faculty in order to more evenly distribute the workload. Creating specific courses as either capstone courses or “engaged” courses will help to better identify areas of higher faculty workloads and better distribute faculty workload across the department.

We would recommend the program work towards a more robust integration and development of the Cherokee Studies program in both faculty development and curriculum/concentration design. It would be wonderful to take full advantage of this unique opportunity to engage students in meaningful service to the region. Dr. Lisa Lefler, a medical anthropologist in health sciences, is affiliated with the Cherokee Studies program and could be a potential useful link in connecting anthropology undergraduates to Cherokee Studies. Opportunities provided by the Cherokee linguistics program are not being fully realized at this time due—we discern, perhaps—to a level of disconnect between linguistics and anthropology. Formally identifying anthropology as the “home” for the linguistics program would be helpful in maximizing opportunities for student engagement. Additionally, Dr. Francis’s position should be converted from soft money to permanent funding.

Likewise, we think there is an excellent opportunity to build the Appalachian focus of the anthropology program. Appalachian Studies nicely connects the program to the region and aligns beautifully with the mission of WCU as a regionally engaged institution. The addition of Dr. Veteto’s expertise and field experience to the department will greatly expand this content area and we recommend he be offered institutional support to build alliances in the region. Dr. Lisa Lefler, in health sciences, would also be an asset to this development because of her specialty in regional health from an anthropological perspective.

Finally, if so desired we think that the program can improve connections with alumni through social media and alumni surveys, engage program alumni with the department via alumni events (i.e., homecoming tailgate) and educational offerings (i.e., continuing education events, lecture series, etc.).

3. Facilities, funding, and staff

As noted above, we find the facilities generally to be adequate. But particularly in archaeology and forensics, there are some upgrades needed and some issues to be considered.

Regarding the archeology lab, several changes/additions should be made. These include:

1. Installing silt filters in the sinks of the archeology lab.
2. Ensuring compliance with NAGPRA with regard to all collections within the department.
3. Moving collections from cardboard boxes to plastic boxes in order to protect the collections from the potential water damage caused by a burst overhead pipe.
4. Determine a proper location for the USDA Forest Service collections currently housed in this facility.

For all lab facilities, provide increased security and improved access by installing card-readers for student access to the labs and the first floor of McKee after hours and on weekends. This increased level of security will allow for better protection of laboratory materials and also allow for better tracking of lab use (should a problem arise). Card-readers could be installed for the archeology lab, the forensics lab, and the outside door to the first floor of McKee.

We noticed some empty office space on the first floor of McKee, next to the existing forensics offices and lab. We recommend that these empty offices be made available to the Anthropology Department to be used as forensics case rooms. This would ease the burden on the existing lab and make more space for student projects.

Regarding the forensics facilities and staffing: considerable attention and resources will be needed to sustain the forensics concentration in the future. Among these are:

1. Investigate the addition of a third full-time faculty member in the forensics concentration (conversion of lecturer position to fixed-term faculty position OR hiring a bioarchaeologist who could teach forensics students and also provide a more robust “four field” training for all majors).
2. Investigate possibility of securing additional funding for forensics program through increased Equipment and Technology (E&T) monies or annual student fees for all anthropology majors or forensic concentration students
3. Address concerns with the FOREST facility with regard to security (additional fencing, working security cameras, bathroom facility, storage building, full-time staffing of the station)
4. Consider relocating the FOREST to a more secure/protected location (away from the hiking trails around the new Health Sciences building)
5. Provide vehicles for transporting human remains to and from the FOREST (this vehicle could also be used for archeological projects)
6. Establish a clear set of protocols for operation of the FOREST that are in line with national standards at similar facilities across the country (see, for example, University of Tennessee or Scientific Working Group for Forensic Anthropology [SWGANTH] guidelines)
7. Establish a process of formally recognizing and rewarding faculty time for supervision of the FOREST, or hire a part-time or full-time staff member to run the facility.
8. If most of these considerations cannot be funded, we recommend the university consider closing the FOREST as it presents the possibility of becoming a “public relations nightmare” for the University.

If FOREST cannot be maintained safely, the program could still run a forensics concentration easily with multiple hands-on teaching opportunities in the labs. In addition, the forensics program could even more readily integrate with the department as one of the four sub-field areas commonly seen in anthropology (archaeology, linguistics, cultural and biological).

V. SUMMARIES

1. Summary of Strengths

- Faculty dedication and commitment to teaching.
- Hands-on and lab-based and field-based teaching.
- Engaged learning requirement.
- Forensics concentration.
- Cherokee Studies.
- Appalachian/environmental studies.
- Adequate facilities.

2. Summary of Recommendations based on Concerns

- Faculty should become more engaged in research through seeking internal and external research support and course releases.
- Develop a mentoring program for junior faculty that encourages and supports junior faculty research and promotes a culture of research.
- Increase the pace of the research requirements for promotion and tenure for junior faculty for the first three years.
- Develop a guest lecture series / utilize the University's Visiting Scholar program.
- University should provide funding for a mediated retreat for the faculty to address morale issues and other faculty development concerns (curriculum, research facilitation, etc.).
- Improve connections with alumni and track post-graduates.
- Update courses, syllabi, and reading assignments to reflect current trends in anthropology.
- Increase support of forensics faculty by creating a new line for the forensics concentration (a bioarchaeologists was mentioned by the faculty), turning the current lecturer line into a fixed-term faculty line, and/or having all faculty share in the forensics advising equitably.
- Design a more efficient structure for managing the required engagement projects, such as designing a capstone engagement course rather than multiple independent studies.
- Strengthen and deepen the Cherokee Studies program.
- Strengthen and deepen the Appalachian focus.
- Address the issues in the forensics and archaeology lab noted above.
- Address the issues of the FOREST facility noted above or consider closing it.