



ASSOCIATION BUSINESS

PAWG Presents Recommendations

For Better Serving Practicing Anthropologists

AAA PRACTICING ADVISORY WORK GROUP (PAWG)

Less than half of all anthropologists holding a doctorate degree and virtually all anthropologists with a master's degree work outside of full-time academic positions. In short, a majority of anthropologists practice anthropology in highly disparate work settings. At the same time, many anthropologists working outside of academia do not join nor retain membership in the AAA because they believe the organization does not serve their needs well.

In fall 2003, the AAA established the Practicing Advisory Work Group (PAWG) with a mandate to develop recommendations for how AAA might better serve anthropologists employed outside academia and the organizations that employ them.

PAWG presented its report to the AAA executive board at the November 2006 annual meeting in San José, California. The board accepted the report and in spring 2007 will begin considering action upon the dozens of recommendations from PAWG. Based primarily on two sets of interviews with practicing anthropologists and with organizational representatives that employ them, a draft report was reviewed by an expert panel representing a broad array of non-academic anthropologists. The interview and expert panel feedback provided the basis for the PAWG report.

The key finding providing the foundation for PAWG's recommendations is that the AAA should become a more inclusive professional organization that welcomes, values and serves all anthropologists equally.

To develop a more inclusive organizational structure, PAWG recommends that the Institutional category of AAA membership be renamed and redefined as an Organizational membership that is open to a much wider array of organizations having a demonstrable professional or scholarly interest in anthropology than is currently the case. Furthermore, PAWG recommends that sufficient staff and funding be provided for outreach to each major category of organizational members.

PAWG also makes a series of practical recommendations concerning education, training and development; improving the annual meeting to make it more relevant to a more diverse constituency of anthropologists; considering participation with other organizations in regional and specialized meetings; enhancing the career development of anthropologists; increasing the visibility of the AAA and more effectively publicizing the benefits of membership; improving the Internet interface by

which the AAA presents itself to practicing anthropologists and the public interested in anthropological research; considering the provision of improved group rates for health and liability insurance; and integrating practicing anthropologists better into AAA publication programs.

Many of these recommendations can be implemented at little cost to the AAA. For instance, increasing the representation of practitioner anthropologists in the leadership and publications of the AAA and recruiting a practicing anthropologist to edit a new column on practicing anthropology for *Anthropology News* do not require capital outlays or funding from the AAA. Similarly, the AAA website can represent the needs and interests of non-academically based anthropologists and their employers much more effectively.

As the AAA considers implementing recommendations from PAWG, it will be important



Members of the AAA Practicing Advisory Work Group (PAWG) met during the 2006 AAA Annual Meeting in San José: (L to R) Dennis Wiedman, Chair Linda Bennett, Tony Paredes, Susan Squires, Judy Tso and T J Ferguson. Kathleen Terry-Sharp (not pictured) serves as AAA liaison to the group. Photo courtesy of Judy Tso

for the association to work collaboratively with its sections, including NAPA; Local Practitioner Organizations (LPOs) across the country; the 24-member departments of the Consortium of Practicing and Applied Anthropology Programs (COPAA); and other interested organizations and parties. PAWG also suggests it be established as a standing advisory committee of the AAA to continue the work it has begun.

Further information about PAWG—including its report to the executive board in November 2006—can be found at www.aaanet.org/pawg/.

Introducing Profiles in Practice

Shirley Fiske (*Profiles in Practice* Contributing Editor)

I am pleased to be asked to adopt the job of contributing editor for Profiles in Practice for *AN*. The column will highlight the variety of roles and jobs of practicing and professional anthropologists, and profile them and their work in a way that enhances the dialogue and awareness of what practicing anthropologists do.

In my quarter century of work as a practicing anthropologist, I have consistently seen the utility and creativity of anthropologists and anthropology in a wide range of practice venues. Most recently I worked as legislative assistant to Senator Daniel K Akaka (D-HI), staffing his work for the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, including energy, environment, public lands, natural resources and national parks. Prior to this job I worked for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration as an anthropologist, program manager and director of outreach for the National Sea Grant College Program. In my past I have also worked in academia and done consulting for Native American groups. I commend the most recent *NAPA Bulletin* (#20) for engaging, instructive stories of women practicing anthropologists forging careers outside of academia. I hope to bring this diversity and excitement to this column for the benefit of all anthropologists.

The most recent impetus for the column stems from the recommendations of the Practicing Advisory Work Group. The idea of a "profiles" column has been included before in *AN* and has been encouraged by AAA staff and contributing editors, so it is a concept with conceptual antecedents. I am counting on all of you readers to provide feedback and direction so that we make the column interesting and relevant.

The idea for this column is to provide profiles of anthropologists from a broad range of professional sectors, including those anthropological pioneers in sectors with which we are not as well acquainted, such as finance, banking and investment. It might also include marketing, housing developers, tourism and heritage, philanthropy, museums, economic development and planning, to mention a few. In addition, I hope that the selected "profilees" will comment on a set range of topics so there is continuity across job sectors and over time during the first year's columns.

At this point, with the advice of PAWG Chair Linda Bennett and *AN* Managing Editor Stacy Lathrop, we will start with four general questions, and leave room for contemplative and creative response by the profilees. The questions are: What happens in the "world of finance" (or whichever sector is under discussion)? What was your career path to getting to where you are? Why are anthropologists or anthropology valuable where you work? What are the main challenges you as a professional anthropologist encounter in your workplace? How might a national association, such as the AAA, assist in addressing some of these challenges, and how might the AAA better serve anthropologists taking paths leading to careers outside of the academy? Challenges may have ethical, gender, structural or political dimensions, among many others.



Shirley Fiske (R) with her former employer Senator Daniel K Akaka (D-HI).

Please contact Shirley Fiske at sjfiske@yahoo.com if you are a potential profilee, know one, or have contacts and ideas for this column.