

To: AAA Executive Committee
Bill Davis, AAA
Suzanne Mattingly, AAA

From: Pamela K. Stone, Chair, Committee on the Status of Women in Anthropology, (COSWA)

Re: COSWA Annual Report for 2005

COSWA has had a very busy year, catching up from the missed meetings of 2004, contributing one major session and workshop to the AAA meetings of 2005, contributing to the governance of the organization, and carrying out a large survey of the AAA constituency in order to work towards our goals of promoting gender and social equity within the discipline of anthropology.

ACTIVITIES in 2005

- *COSWA Meetings* – COSWA held one long face to face meeting on the second day (Thursday) of the AAA annual meetings, which had been preceded by two teleconferences, approximately 2 hours each: one in February, and one in September. The opportunity to share views and work around a table afforded by an actual meeting is extremely valuable and should definitely be maintained, especially in light of the fact that the 2004 meeting was not conducted on a face-to-face basis and thus some of the Board had never met and a number of issues were not addressed. Clearly the problems of connecting in person over the course of the year made the option of the teleconferences invaluable in keeping the committee focused and working towards larger goals. In addition to the formal meetings, a good deal of business was conducted by exchanges of documents, and discussions, via email.
- *AAA Session: “Women and Work: contributions from the Four Fields of Anthropology”* This COSWA session was organized by Pamela Stone and Christina Wasson (and they both presented the Introduction to the session). Board member Keri Brondo presented her research. This session was originally slated for the 2004 meetings and COSWA felt that it was such a strong and diverse group of participants organized for 2004 that we should continue with the same group if possible so that their research could be presented at the annual meetings. This session brought together a wide range of approaches and insights into understanding gender relations within culturally and biologically situated work practices and ideologies and presented the work from each of the four fields of anthropological inquiry. The first half of the session was constructed to highlight recent work in archaeology and physical anthropology, culminating in a discussion by the distinguished scholar of archaeology and gender studies, Sarah Nelson (and former COSWA board member). The second half of the session focused on the work of linguistic and cultural anthropologists and culminated in the discussion by noted linguistics anthropologist (Helen Safa), Wrapping-up the session were comments and discussion from the former president of AAA and distinguished scholar Louise Lamphere. This session was designed to compliment the workshop presented by

COSWA. There was a moderate turn out to the session (see concerns later in this report), but it was well received by its audience.

- *AAA Workshop: “Women and Work - Anthropologist’s Own Experiences”*. Organized by Patricia Wattenmaker and Trudy Turner grew out of the unrealized workshop organized for the 2004 meetings by Sarah Trechter and Trudy Turner and restructured for 2005. COSWA members Keri Brondo, Barbara Lemaster and Trudy Turner served as panelists. This workshop served to connect the experiences of women in anthropology with other women to discuss and consider the hardships and accomplishments of women engaged in anthropological research across the four fields of the discipline. It also served as a forum to present preliminary findings of the workplace survey that COSWA had administered this fall. Turn out for this workshop was less than we had hoped for (see concerns later in this report)
- *Working Conditions Survey* – This survey of departments has been underway for a number of years, gaining and losing momentum with the changing COSWA board. In 2002 former COSWA chair Miriam Chaiken along with AAA Director of Academic Affairs, Kathleen Terry-Sharp, had reviewed a draft of the survey instrument. Since this time the survey has been under discussion and review, and this year a team comprised of board members, Christina Wasson, Trudy Turner, Keri Brondo, and Tara Hefferan, took the lead and working with AAA Director of Academic Affairs Kathleen Terry-Sharp and AAA membership manager Richard Thomas and finalized the survey and put it out to the AAA community through the use of an on-line survey document. Preliminary findings were presented in the COSWA sponsored workshop, and discussed by the COSWA board in our meeting at the annual meetings.
- *Mentoring Data Base* COSWA continues to maintain the mentoring database through the web site.
- *COSWA Web Site* - COSWA continues to utilize the web site these efforts are coordinated by AAA comptroller Suzanne Mattingly. Discussion have begun on how to more effectively use this resource for soliciting input from the larger anthropological community, as well as using it to post the final reports of the workplace survey, as a forum to showcase papers presented in sessions sponsored by COSWA, and as a way to get larger input for recipients of the Squeaky Wheel award which to date has been only at the discretion of the COSWA board.
- *Squeaky Wheel* – because of timing this year COSWA did not have a Squeaky Wheel recipient.

Plans for 2006

- *Continuation of Analysis of Working Conditions Survey* – COSWA is planning to continue work on the survey and analysis of the results. It was determined that for a more thorough evaluation of the workplace that the survey should be reopened for an

additional couple of weeks to allow for greater participation, Then the results of this larger data base will be assessed and analyzed, and reported on through short articles in the AAA newsletter (AN) and on-line (COSWA web page), culminating in a presentation at the 2006 Annual meetings.

- *AAA Session 2006 and AAA Workshop 2006* – COSWA is planning to continue to have a session and workshop that are tied together and related to the annual theme as determined by the AAA planning committee. As of the Annual meeting the particulars of 2006's session and workshop were being discussed but were not solidified. This will be a primary topic for the winter teleconference.
- *Workplace Survey* – COSWA will be continuing to assess and evaluate the workplace survey begun about 6 years ago and administered in October-November of 2005. The assessment of the data will be disseminated to the larger AAA constituency via the Anthropology Newsletter, the COSWA/AAA web page and through the 2006 workshop at the AAA annual meetings.
- *Utilizing the Web* - COSWA is planning to utilize and update their web page space via the AAA web site, as this is becoming a more utilized space to connect with the larger AAA body. Discussions on how to do this and to make it very user friendly are under way.
- *Other* – COSWA will continue to serve as a forum to discuss the role of women in anthropological workplaces as well as to expand this dialogue to include individuals who are not employed in “traditional academic” positions but are still active and engaged members of the AAA facing similar issues within their non-traditional academic workplace environments. In addition COSWA will also continue to acknowledge women who are making a difference for women through the squeaky wheel award.

Ongoing Concerns

It is important to remember that the Council on the Status of Women in Anthropology was formed 25 years ago to support the Executive Committee and to monitor gender discrimination within anthropology and to pursue greater parity for women by monitoring, advocating, and educating the anthropological community. In the last 25 years the issues are still the same and have increase to include other areas and disciplines where women are often marginalized because of their gender.

The on-going “workplace” survey should help to shed light on the current climate within academic departments across the United States for women, however this survey does not address those women working in non-academic roles, in applied situations and other anthropologically connected and intimately related fields of study and action. In light of this and via discussion with the COSWA Board it appears that the mission statement for COSWA may need to be adjusted to reflect the diversification of anthropological

workplaces that fall now under the purview of the AAA. In addition I would call for a review of the role and power of COSWA in managing issues of inequity and parity within the anthropological workplace. In the last year one incidence of inequity was brought to the attention of Board by a member of the AAA community but no action was ever taken because no one could establish what COSWA could do and what power the board has, or does not have. The mission statement for COSWA (posted on line) states that COSWA is to “*set up a system for censuring departments that failed to make good-faith efforts to hire in gender-neutral ways*”. Yet this appears no to have been done.

Without a system in place recognized by the Executive Board, COSWA can still function and maintain its three major directives “monitoring, advocating, and educating” (see on-line mission statement) but will never be recognized as a force to consider when anthropological workplaces are not acting or hiring in gender equitable ways. Not only is this problematic for issues relating to women but by default reveal parallel problems that may affect equity for other traditionally marginalized groups. As anthropologists this is problematic and needs to be addressed.

On a less serious note, but still of concern in terms of the dissemination of information through the COSWA sessions and workshops at the Annual meetings, in the last 5 years COSWA has had its session and it’s workshop fall back-to-back on the Friday of the Annual meeting. This has allowed for a strong turn-out to both as well as afforded COSWA the opportunity to connected interesting research with a forum for dialogue. This year this was not the case and the both the session and the workshop were disjointed from each other losing the continuity that there were constructed to have. I strongly encourage the Executive Board to consider making the Friday time slots a given for COSWA.

Conclusions

COSWA has been acknowledged as one of the more effective working groups within the AAA. We have been strongly supported by our AAA liaison Suzanne Mattingly, as well as by other important members of the AAA staff, Kathleen Terry-Sharp, Richard Thomas, and others, without whom COSWA would be much less effective. The members of COSWA are busy and hardworking professionals, and they should individually and collectively be thanked for their important service to our profession. I am grateful to all for having the opportunity to work with such a wonderful group of colleagues on issues of mutual concern.

Respectfully submitted, February 2006, by Pamela K Stone, COSWA Chair 2005