Dear friends and alumni,

The Department is thriving! We have over 300 majors (a number that always grows as the school year progresses), eighteen terrific new graduate students, and four amazing new faculty members! And thanks to two of our new colleagues, the University of Washington’s Africa Program is enjoying a renaissance. We’ve completed some office remodels to accommodate the new faculty, and soon we will open the doors to a new, state-of-the-art computer center on the fourth floor. And, by the time you receive this newsletter, our beautifully redesigned, user-friendly web site should be up and running.

Most encouraging of all, donations from friends and alumni have reached a record level — up by 1,700% (yes, that’s not a typo; there has been an increase from $6,200 in 2003 to $106,000 so far in 2004)! With all of this activity going on, the sense of excitement is palpable. I feel completely unique. We’re presented with mental maps of where they had to say:

from new faculty —

“The department feels lively and friendly. There’s a feeling of anticipation, as if change is in the air. I really enjoy the healthy outspokenness of everyone in faculty meetings, especially around the topic of the department’s future directions. I feel like it’s a very exciting moment to be joining the department.”

“My main impression so far is that the members of the different sub-disciplines of science share a sense of community and mutual respect. That feels different from many other departments.”

“I’ve been very impressed with how understanding and supportive everyone has been in dealing with all my stupid questions like… how do I work the copy machine… where’s the fax machine… how do I get back in the building when I lock myself out in the middle of the night… (now, of course, I’ll need to follow up with my research to find out why anyone was in the office at that hour).”

from new graduate students —

“Faculty members possess a wealth of knowledge. Among the various professors, that knowledge is both amusingly diverse and still always complementary.”

“The faculty members are very accessible, supportive, and encouraging.”

“The curriculum is excellently structured and very coherent. It feels completely unique. We’re presented with mental maps of...”

from students —

“I was scared before coming here, but this is a very friendly place.”

“The professors really encourage students to pursue their own interests. They’re so open to the idea of students being comfortable with their own ability.”

“Students get together to work in groups according to their various interests. There are several brown bag lunches and student initiated reading groups. There are lots of venues for students to exchange ideas and learn from one another.”

As you can imagine, it was very gratifying to hear these comments, and not only because they’re so positive. As faculty members we do, indeed, work hard to create a student-centered intellectual program that is coherent, challenging, and exciting, and an environment that is productive and supportive. It looks like we’re succeeding!”

Of course, I may never know whether these new colleagues and students were just telling the ethnographer what they thought she wanted to hear...

Dr. Richard Pelman, one of Seattle’s top physicians (as recently chosen by Seattle Magazine), is heading a campaign to establish a graduate student fellowship in the name of his favorite professor, Dr. Daris Swindler, whom he fondly remembers from his own student days in our department. Now a clinical professor of urology in the UW School of Medicine and an associate of Bellevue Urology Associates, Dr. Pelman traces the blossoming of his professional passion to a course he took thirty years ago with Dr. Swindler. Dr. Pelman’s words explain it best:

“It probably has to do with being fifty-something that I find myself reflecting more often on my past and future. A half-century of experiences — my progression from school to career, the challenges of raising a family, and my social and economic responsibilities — ultimately (and hopefully) lead to a sense of peace and fulfillment. Bumps always occur on the road of life, whether they’re merely minor vibrations or occasional severe obstacles. But, however these glitches present themselves, I’ve convinced that a great education helps smooth the road.”

“Reflecting on my own education in the Department of Anthropology, I’m thankful for the many worldviews I learned about. Being better able to understand the messages of culture and people has helped in so many instances in my career. Today, as a urological surgeon, I’m constantly reminded of my physical anthropology courses, where I gained a wealth of knowledge about human anatomy and was awed by the integration of structure and function within our personal machines. Most of all, I feel indebted to Dr. Daris Swindler, whose “Comparative Primate Anatomy” course changed my life. It was over our baboon cadavers that I first began to appreciate the specialized adaptation that any species, human or otherwise, requires to be successful. Of all the courses I took at the UW, there was none that grabbed my attention or encouraged my enthusiasm more than that one.”

“I deeply believe that those of us whose roads have been relatively free of bumps have an obligation to support and encourage those who are beginning their journey. For this reason, as well as to honor Dr. Swindler, I have provided the lead gift to establish the Daris Swindler Graduate Fellowship in Biocultural Anthropology. I hope it will help other students discover an experience that may define their careers. I hope that the recipients, in reflecting on Daris Swindler’s career, will continue to enlighten and inspire others the way Daris did for me.”

“Recently I have met current graduate students in the Department of Anthropology and have been energized by their focus and knowledge. I marvel at the work they are undertaking and I am reassured that anthropology is more relevant and necessary than ever.”

“I invite you to help support these talented individuals and honor Dr. Swindler by contributing to the fellowship fund. For more information, please contact the department chair, Dr. Miriam Kahn at mkahn@uw. washington.edu or (206) 543-5740.”
Ten Years of Advising and Mentoring: Diane Guerra

Although she greatly enjoyed working with young children Diane decided that she was ready for a change of pace. Having worked as the office manager for the recruitment office of the Educational Opportunity Program at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), Diane decided to take a job as an academic counselor at UIC’s College of Engineering. It was there that Diane realized she had found a career that matched her interests and her personality to a T.

When her husband accepted an offer from the English Department at George Washington University in Washington, Diane moved to Seattle with him and has made a home for herself here at the university. Along the way, Diane completed her master’s degree in education with a concentration in curriculum and instruction. Fitting with her current responsibilities in the department, in addition to her usual duties, Diane recently took on the responsibility of working with the department’s sub-discipline curriculum committee to develop a blended teaching schedule that bridges curriculum and the needs of advising.

Over the years, Diane has advised engineering, math, and anthropology students. If you ask her, she’ll tell you just how she finds working with anthropology students the most fulfilling of all. Because anthropology students study and strive to understand the myriad of human beings in all their cultural diversity, Diane feels lucky to be in a position to support them as they take up some of the most important concerns we face in the world today.

Alum Nina Jabolenski Breaks New Ground with Theory of Skin Color

Archaeological research can play a pivotal role in weakening and dismantling harmful biases and stereotypes, bringing empirical facts to bear on questions of racism, bigotry, and misunderstandings. When it comes to the highly charged topic of human skin color, archaeology cannot rewrite history, but it can help lay the foundation for a value-free understanding of how and why human skin color varies.

Nina Jabolenski, a paleoanthropologist who received her PhD in physical archaeology from the University of Washington in 1998, has determined that skin color is an evolutionary adaptation. Her findings were recently published in the Journal of Human Evolution and are the first comprehensive theory of skin colorization.

Variations in skin color occur because over millennia, populations of human beings migrated across the Earth and have had to adapt to the amount of ultra-violet radiation (UVR) they find upon settling on different regions. The degree of skin pigmentation is related to two conflicting physiological needs: the need to protect the body against the breakdown of essential compounds that are sensitive to UVR (such as folic acid, B vitamins), while simultaneously allowing just enough UVR into the skin to allow for the synthesis of vitamin D-3.

Both folate and vitamin D-3 are essential for healthy reproduction. Folate is required for normal cell division and development of an embryo’s nervous system, while vitamin D-3 maintains healthy blood levels of calcium and phosphorus, promoting bone growth and protecting the body from osteomalacia. More UVR can not only cause skin cancer, but it can also break down folic acid, which compromises a pregnant women’s chances of having a healthy baby. Too little UVR can lead to osteoporosis due to low calcium and phosphorus absorption. As Jabolenski explains, “Skin color is in essence a biological art between protecting yourself from exons UVR, while allowing a little UVR to help produce vitamins.” How these women have linked skin color and sun exposure, but Jabolenski is the first to propose a direct relationship between sun exposure and the reproductive mechanism regulating skin color.

With any luck, Jabolenski’s research will go on far toward changing the way people think about skin color. “We can take a topic that has caused so much disagreement, so much suffering, and so much misunderstanding, and completely divert it,” she says. “We’ve all the same under the skin.” Jabolenski’s findings on skin color don’t happen by chance; “It’s something that evolved for a good set of biological reasons. And it takes the wind out of women and men (and even whole species) that would be too weak and dangerous, the vital role played by skin color in human evolution.

West African War and Violence

New UW Asst. Professor studies West African War and Violence through a Fresh Lens

Sierra Leone has a particular allure for anthropologist Danny Hoffman. The west African nation began as an independent state in the early 1960s, scholars conducting fieldwork in the West African nation have been embroiled in some of the most innovative studies of power dynamics and governance, ritual practices, urbanization and gender relations. But with the outbreak of war in 1992, the understanding of culture in Sierra Leone took a very different turn. Images of civilians maimed by teenage combatants become synonymous with the Mano River region of Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea. No wonder then that Danny Hoffman is more closely associated with the violent upheaval of wars and post-Cold War African “tribal” violence. This year’s “Patriotic flames of liberation” are the lessons through which most observers now see events throughout West Africa.

With his work in Sierra Leone and elsewhere in the region, Danny Hoffman and others at the University of Washington anthropology professor Danny Hoffman have been examining the understandings of social life in Sierra Leone. Danny’s research — along with that of other anthropologists, political scientists, economists, and historians specializing in African conflict zones — suggests that these aspects of war which appeared most sensational or dramatic are not evidence of a threat from the modern world or an eruption of ancient tribal animosity. They are, rather, closely interconnected with today’s global economy.

The Amuró militia with which Danny Hoffman fieldwork appears in media coverage of the “tribal” violence by the Commonwealth of Nations. Many of the young men who joined the militia claimed that initiation made them immune to the bullets of their enemies, and they drew a parallel to the hustlers of legend as a way to explain their own extraordinary powers. Danny Hoffman, a political scientist who researches and teaches on Africa, suggests that the conflicts in Sierra Leone and Liberia are caused by the way that many combatants were roaming rural areas, creating and operating networks of hunters andwarriors. Likewise, campaigns for the profits of the diamond trade in the wake of the global economic crisis is more relevant to understanding the conflict than are ethnic tensions. In short, the questions which have always interested scholars of Sierra Leone — questions about participation in the war — have always interested scholars of Sierra Leone and post-colonial economics. Where are the traditional and generational power structures — remain the most important question of all even under the seemingly radical shifts in social landscape brought about by the war.

Stories of Hope

Asst. Professor Rachel Chapman’s Journey in Anthropology

The paths we take as anthropologists are many and varied, and knowing where we’ve come from often helps explain how we arrived at studying what we do. The story of how really hard faculty member Rachel Chapman came to study health care among women begins with her birth.

Chapman was born to a black, unwed teenage mother just before civil rights were legally extended to all Americans. She was adopted into her mother’s family in south Texas, Diane Chapman taught at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, before coming to the University of Washington.

The first time Diane Guerra met Rachel Chapman was in 1998, while Diane was on her way to advise a student. Rachel Chapman came to study health care among black women in the U.S., regardless of class. In each setting she studies, she is consistently confronted with two conflicting physiological needs: the need to protect the body against the breakdown of essential compounds that are sensitive to UV radiation (such as folic acid, B vitamins), while simultaneously allowing just enough UV radiation into the skin to allow for the synthesis of vitamin D-3.

Because anthropology students study and strive to understand the myriad of human beings in all their cultural diversity, Diane feels lucky to be in a position to support them as they take up some of the most important concerns we face in the world today.

Office of Primate Conservation Biological Anthropology Bio.

Why should we care if many primate species are endangered? And what can be done to protect them from extinction? A UW PhD student and Undergraduate Lecturer Leila Porter will spend a quarter exploring answers to these questions in a course called “Primate Conservation.”

Porter, who earned her PhD at the State University of New York at Stony Brook in 2000, has been a lecturer at the University of Washington since 2001. Her research has focused on the behavioral ecology of small-bodied monkeys (tamarins and Goeldi’s monkeys) in the Bolivian Amazon, one of the most diverse regions for primates in South America, boasting fourteen different species.

During the course of her dissertation research, Porter realized that questions about primate conservation are not simply related to controlling deforestation, habitat loss and primates will quickly disappear. Primates are a taxonomic group whose ecological and evolutionary importance is very high. Therefore, the protection of the primate species is considered endangered. Thus, unless initiatives are undertaken to protect these species and their habitats, they are likely to become extinct due to their small real estate. A state that would be both tragic and dangerous, given the vital role primates play in their ecosystems.

Luckily for conservationists like Porter, primates are a useful taxonomic group on which to focus efforts: they are ecomorphs and charismatic animals, making their “flagship” species to promote the conservation of the ecosystems they inhabit. In addition, because the size of most primates is too small for the rainforests to thrive, primate species are aflaghip species for some of the most threatened ecosystems in the world. Porter has worked with several organizations and non-governmental organizations to develop protected areas in the Bolivian Amazon, but conservation campaigns and education are vital to increasing awareness of the threat of extinction.

As a next step, Porter brings her campaign to the University of Washington campus with her course “Primate Conservation,” in which her students look at topics that make species vulnerable to extinction, including behavior, feeding ecology, reproduction, and distribution. In addition, students discuss the design and implementation of conservation plans to protect primates and their ecosystems, looking at case studies from around the world. At the end of the quarter, students formulate proposals to protect a region of tropical Amazon forest and then present their conservation plans in what is sure to be an engaging and passionate debate.

Primate conservation is an issue of global concern, and making sure University of Washington students are well-informed in a small but promising accomplishment; increasing awareness is an important step towards creating global interest and support for conservation initiatives. Danny Hoffman keeps private species thriving and their rainforest homes intact, and we in the University of Washington, Department of Anthropology are thrilled to do our part.
Winnowing ‘culture’: Negotiating Milestones
June 2003 – August 2004

2004; 2004-2005 Undergraduate Asian Studies Fellowships
2004-05 National Science Foundation
Tapoja Chaudhuri, University of Washington (sociocultural), "Tantric forces in the distribution of apparently standardized cemeteries," March 2004
Bryan Tilt (sociocultural), "Risk, pollution and sustainability in Schum, China," August 2004

Milestone

Graduate student awards and fellowships for 2004-05

Jennifer Achterberg, 2004-05 Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology Fellowships
Cheryl Alipio, Sigma Xi Grant, Summer 2004; 2004-2005 Undergraduate Asian Studies Initiative TA
Mirna Aldana, 2004-05 Comite Nacional de Cien y Tecnologica y el Ford-Hawaii Program for the Social Sciences Scholarship
Phoebe Anderson, 2004-05 University of Washington Department of Anthropology/james fellowship study in Bogor, Indonesia
Shelby Amsden, 2004-05 University of Washington Department of Anthropology/on fellowship
Jenniefer Bencivenga Andrea, 2004-05 Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology/National Institute of Child Health and Development fellowships
Dana Blumberg, 2004-05 Marie Curie Fellowship (for studies at University College, London)
Tania Blumfield, 2004-05 Jackson Foundation China Fellowship; 2004-2005 Student Council for the Society for East Asian Anthropology
Kristine Bonny, University of Washington Graduate School: School Council fellowship, Autumn 2004
Sara Bremew, 2004-05 United States Community Fellows Research Grant; 2004-2005 National Science Foundation Dissertation Improvement grant
Julie Brugger, 2004-2005 National Science Foundation Dissertation Improvement Grant
Chi Yang Chao, 2004-05 Harvard-Yenching Scholarship
Tanya Chestnutt, 2004-2005 Women’s Greens-National Development International Fellowship
Barbara Griffin, 2004-05 Multicultural Collaborative Teaching and Learning Project, University of Arizona; 2004-2005 Minority Achievement Program
Philip Gruen, 2004-05 National Science Foundation Dissertation Improvement Grant
Matthew Hale, 2004-05 Jackson Foundation China Fellowship
Cam Hoang, 2004-05 Foundation fellowship
Robert Ingenito, 2004-05 FLAS (Foreign Language Area Studies) fellowship
Leah Kousinski, University of Washington Graduate School: School Chester Fritz Fellowship for International Exchange, Summer 2004; 2004-05 Fulbright-Hays Fellowship

Archaeology
Shelby Anderson (Moundville, AL) Erinie Harlief (Eagle River, AK) Colby Phillips (Denver, CO) James Taylor (Johns Hopkins, FL)

Bioarchaeological
Sophia Cull (Munomedical, NJ) Katherine Warner (Cleveland, OH)

Environmental Anthropology
Ya Huo (Guangzhou, China) Jaya Ramkesh (Bel Air, MD)

Sociocultural Anthropology
Robert Allen (Greenwich, TN) Heath Clark (Seattle, WA)

Anthropology
Jennifer Derringer Aranda (Seattle, WA) Amanda Poole (Durham, NC) Jiyun Moon (Seoul, Korea) Nanessa Raimo (Cairo, Egypt) Chinghla Meikaphythm (Phn, Thailand) Yoon Min Seul (Seoul, Korea) Ma Siscawati (Bogor, Indonesia)

First Year Graduate Students

Jenny Can, 2004-05 Postdoctoral Research Assistant for the Southwest National Resource Depew

Post-doctoral
Emily Jones, 2004-06 Post-doctoral Research Assistant for the Southwest National Resource Depew, Land, Culture, and Society Program at University of Arizona
Mary Shuck, 2004-2007 Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award, Individual fellowship for three years to be done at the Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology, National Institute of Child Health and Development

Faculty Transitions
J. Benjamin Fitzhugh, received a promotion to Associate Professor in Autumn 2004, Professor James Nason, will retire in December 2004

At the request of Peggy Yeager, long-time supporter of the anthropology program, archaeology faculty and graduate students traveled to the San Juan Islands this past June to survey Trump Island. The Yeagers, who live on the island, were interested in whether any evidence of Native American settlements might be found. After a lovely boat ride, a delicious lunch, and a great deal of shovel testing, the archaeologists were sorry to report that they found only one large flake (identified by Dr. Angela Clove... of course). They did, however, have a marvelous time and thank the Yeagers for their continued support... and their insistence that they escape Denny Hall for a day!