



Physical Anthropology Section – 2009

H79 Forensic Anthropology Academic and Employment Trends

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The goal of this presentation is to offer valuable insight into the current trends of the profession, to students seeking higher education in forensic anthropology, and to professionals in the field.

This presentation will impact the forensic community by examining employment and academic trends directly affecting the future of the field.

The goal of this project was twofold: (1) to evaluate current physical anthropology graduate programs affiliated with AAFS members, and (2) to evaluate the type and frequency of employment opportunities available in forensic anthropology.

For the first objective, 41 anthropology programs were evaluated. Forensic science programs including those with an anthropologist on staff were not evaluated as they are under the purview of the Forensic Science Education Program Accreditation Commission (FEPAC). This project was accomplished with assistance from members of the AAFS Physical Anthropology Section Ad-Hoc Education Committee. Of these 46 programs, 32 were highlighted as having a learning environment best-suited to forensic anthropology students. Criteria for recommendation included the availability of a graduate program in anthropology, presence of an AAFS member on staff who is available to serve as mentor, and availability of a specified Master's or PhD concentration or degree track in forensic anthropology. This review process is ongoing based on changes including individual retirement, membership status in the AAFS, and the development of new programs. The number of recommended programs is expected to change in the future.

For the second objective, members of the AAFS Physical Anthropology section were invited to participate in an anonymous, broad-spectrum survey which addressed key issues concerning academic background, employment, and professional affiliations. The survey responses were then compiled to assess the range of employment options available to those who specialize in forensic anthropology. Non-traditional or non-academic opportunities were also included. The survey encompassed issues seen as relevant to students, educators and professionals. Topics addressed included the number, size and location of universities staffed with forensic anthropologists, the size of the graduate program offered and any relevant short courses or workshops offered. Topics regarding professional and educational background of the instructors were also addressed, as well as the extent to which students were included in relevant research and/or presentations.

Sixty-nine percent of AAFS members participated in the survey. Results showed that 54% of those who participated held a doctoral degree, 34% held a MA/MS or MSc degree, and 7% held a BA/BS degree. Eighty-five percent of all participants held a degree in Anthropology. Reported employment affiliation included academia (44.5%), medicolegal agencies (19.1%), federal agencies/institutions (12.7%), museums (2.7%), non-profit/non-governmental (2.7%), self-employed/consultant (5.5%), and unemployed, retired or students (12.7%). Of those who had an academic position, 26.9% were assistant professors, 25% were full professors, 19.2% were tenured Associates, 25% were adjunct professors and 3.8% were untenured associates. Over half of those who participated in the survey reported regularly including students in their research and/or mentored graduate students. Approximately 46% responded that they did not have any graduate students with a concentration in forensic anthropology. Results also showed that the states with the most forensic anthropologists were California, Hawaii, New York, and Texas. Thirty-seven percent of survey participants reported earning between \$50,000-\$75,000 annually, 28.6% between \$75,001-\$100,000, 16.9% over \$100,000, 11.7% between \$25,000-\$50,000, and 5.2% reported earning less than \$20,000.

In addition, a survey was taken of job advertisements posted on the AAPA website from the last six years. This showed a wide range of career opportunities available to individuals with specialized training in forensic anthropology. Of 839 job listings, 321 or 42.3% could be filled by someone with training in forensic anthropology. Listings for specialists in physical/biological anthropology were the most prevalent (187), followed by positions in anatomy (82) and forensic anthropology (32). Osteology (14) and skeletal biology (6) positions had the fewest listings. Thirty-four post-doctoral positions were available in forensic anthropology and 72.3% were tenure-track positions.

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