



## Physical Anthropology Section – 2011

### H13 Introducing COFFA: An International Consortium of Forensic Anthropology Programs

*Ann H. Ross, PhD\**, North Carolina State University, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Campus Box 8107, Raleigh, NC 27695-8107; and *Erin H. Kimmerle, PhD\**, University of South Florida, Department of Anthropology, 4202 East Fowler, Soc 107, Tampa, FL 33820

After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the challenges faced by young researchers and practitioners in academia.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by introducing a consortium with a mission to provide support for faculty in forensic anthropology in the realms of promotion and tenure and curriculum development. Additionally, membership information in the consortium will be presented.

In 2010, the International Consortium of Forensic Anthropology Programs (COFFA) was founded as a consortium to provide support for faculty and departments who teach forensic anthropology (<http://www.coffa.usf.edu>). The mission is to support the development and success of fundamental education and training for students, faculty, and practitioners of forensic anthropology.

In the past decade, many new educational programs have started at universities where there was not a tradition of teaching or practicing forensic anthropology. In part, this is the result of the high demand by students due to the so-called “*CSI effect*.” For a fresh forensic anthropology PhD, it can be challenging to navigate through the standard roles of university responsibilities, when time is divided among teaching, administration, research, and consulting practice. Even more taxing, can be negotiating the unique roles and challenges forensic anthropologists face trying to incorporate case work into an academic model (i.e., the unique relationship between casework as research and teaching opportunities for students).

A recent 2009 survey presented by the physical anthropology section of the AAFS showed that there were 32 academic programs suited for forensic anthropology training at the time the survey was conducted (<http://aafs.org/sites/default/files/pdf/PAEmploymentTrends.pdf>). The criteria for making it on the list included an AAFS member on faculty that could mentor students, a graduate level forensic anthropology course, and a graduate program in anthropology.

However, the number of resources and professional networking outlets are lacking for forensic anthropologists. Therefore, similar in model to the Consortium for Practicing and Applied Anthropology Programs, COFFA started with eleven initial members including: Hamline University, Department of Anthropology; LSU, Department of Geography and Anthropology; NCSU, Department of Sociology and Anthropology; Mercyhurst College, Department of Anthropology; MSU, Department of Anthropology; Texas State University – San Marcos, Department of Anthropology; University of Coimbra, Research Centre for Anthropology and Health; UGA, Department of Anthropology; UCF, Department of Anthropology; UF, Department of Anthropology; USF, Department of Anthropology.

Most higher learning institutions have specific guidelines for attaining promotion and tenure, which are evaluated according to the realms of teaching, research, and service/engagement. Most institutions incorporate Boyer’s (1996, p. 32) “Scholarship of Engagement,” which stressed the importance of faculty and universities applying their expertise to “our most pressing social, civic and ethical problems.” Although engagement is an evaluation criterion and is outlined in most university guidelines, most traditional academic departments still do not count the applied or engaged scholarship, which defines forensic anthropology during the tenure and promotion process.

COFFA was established to provide faculty support in: (1) tenure and promotion recommendations for programming in forensic anthropology; (2) best practices and lessons learned in teaching forensic anthropology; and, (3) guidelines for training practicing forensic anthropologists. Over the next year, COFFA will develop a set of recommendations on: (a) how to develop meaningful ways of defining, documenting, evaluating, and promoting diverse forms of scholarship in forensic anthropology; and, (b) how to raise awareness and recognition for practical applied work in forensic anthropology among department chairs, deans, and members of tenure and promotion committees (e.g., scholarship of engagement). Additionally, COFFA members plan to develop documents that provide models and suggestions for undergraduate and graduate level curriculum development in forensic anthropology. These documents will provide COFFA members opportunities to share resources and to learn from each others’ experiences in developing guidelines for the design and administration of degree-granting graduate training programs for practicing forensic anthropologists.

#### **Forensic Anthropology, Education, Promotion and Tenure**