

Evolutionary Anthropology Society

Mary K Shenk, Contributing Editor

One of the attractions of the evolutionary framework is that it provides theory and methods that can apply broadly across domains (e.g., culture and biology, natural and social science) that are conventionally kept segregated. A new federally funded graduate training program, described below, illustrates the kind of exciting cross-disciplinary integration that can result.

New IGERT Program in Evolutionary Modeling

Submitted by Eric Alden Smith (EAS President)

Washington State University (WSU) and the University of Washington (UW) have been awarded a National Science Foundation IGERT award to create a graduate training program in "Model-Based Approaches to Biological and Cultural Evolution." The NSF IGERT Program (see www.nsf.gov/crssprgm/igert/intro.jsp; www.igert.org/) is designed to foster innovation in graduate training, particularly to encourage cross-disciplinary collaboration. The WSU/UW IGERT award will establish a novel Ph.D. training program emphasizing evolutionary processes of adaptation and diversification in genetic, cultural, and behavioral domains. This program will train students in cutting-edge methods for analysis of evolutionary processes and outcomes across these domains, including computational modeling, game theory, and phylogenetic analysis. The program aims to produce professionals versed in evolutionary approaches integrating the study of biology and culture, familiar with the most important perspectives and quantitative techniques for studying culture change and the evolution of social behavior. The program is funded for five years with the possibility of renewal.

The program director is Tim Kohler, an archaeologist at WSU well known for both archaeological field research in the Southwest US, and for computer simulations of the interactions between environmental, social, and demographic aspects of Anasazi prehistory. The UW portion of the program is directed by yours truly. Other faculty include archaeologists Karen Lupo and Ben Fitzhugh, primatologist Jessica Lynch Alfaro, biologists Mike Webster and Mike Alfaro, and biocultural anthropologists Barry Hewlett, Darryl Holman and Donna Leonetti.

Students may enter the program through one of five participating PhD programs in three units: Archaeology or Biocultural Anthropology at UW, Archaeology or Evolutionary Anthropology at WSU, or the School of Biological Sciences at WSU. Students will spend at least one term taking courses or pursuing research at the sister institution, and will form research teams across these universities and disciplines, allowing students to draw on relevant expertise in either sponsoring university. In addition, Fellows may pursue research at our collaborating institutions: the Santa Fe Institute, the Centre for the Evolution of Cultural Diversity at University College London, Le Centre Universitaire de Recherche et de Documentation en Histoire et Archéologie in the Central African Republic, and the University of Costa Rica School of Biology.

Collaborative student research by teams containing both anthropologists and biologists will focus on problems such as (1) emergence and maintenance of cooperation in social systems; (2) statistical phylogenetics and cultural transmission; (3) cophyletic and

coevolutionary dynamics of biological and cultural traits; (4) comparative analyses of cultural systems (and pre-adaptations for them) across species; and (5) computational methods, including agent-based modeling, for integrating evolutionary ecological and cultural transmission approaches to explaining culture change.

Fellows will be supported from IGERT funds for 2 years, with the possibility of a 3rd year of funding to be competitively determined, at the NSF-mandated rate of \$30,000 per year (plus full tuition, and a competitive annual supplement of up to \$8,000 for research expenses). National Science Foundation regulations require Fellows to be U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

During the 2006-2007 academic year, as we ramp up this program, WSU and UW have each admitted two Fellows. In the following years we will support up to nine Fellows (new and continuing) annually. We urge interested students to visit:

<http://depts.washington.edu/ipem/> (IGERT Program in Evolutionary Modeling)
<http://libarts.wsu.edu/anthro/gradstudies.html> (WSU Anthropology)
<http://www.sci.wsu.edu/sbs/gradstudies.php3?pageID=4> (WSU SBS)
<http://depts.washington.edu/anthweb/programs/graduate.php> (UW Anthropology)

EAS Sessions at AAA Meetings

This year the EAS will be sponsoring several sessions at the AAA meetings in San Jose. Full details can be found at the EAS website, www.evolutionaryanthropologysociety.org, but here is a short preview:

1. "Evolutionary Perspectives on Human Behavior," a poster session organized by EAS President-Elect Patricia Draper and Elizabeth Cashdan (Nov. 16, 10:15 am - 12:00 pm, Exhibition Hall 2, McEnery Convention Center [MCC]).
2. "The Evolution of Inequality," a Presidential Session organized by Eric Smith and James Boone (Nov. 17, 10:15 am - 12:00 pm, Room B2, MCC).
3. "Cultural Dimensions of Kin Investment: The Foundations of Kinship and Family," organized by Donna Leonetti, Brooke Scelza, and Mary Shenk (Nov. 18, 8:00 – 9:45 am, Room D, MCC).
4. "Current Trends and Directions in Evolutionary Studies of Cooperation," organized by John Patton (Nov. 17, 4:00 – 5:45 pm, Room B3, MCC).

In addition, the EAS Annual Business Meeting will be held on November 18 from 12:15-1:30 pm in Room C2 (MCC) and Bill Irons will again be hosting a party for EAS members on Saturday evening (place and time to be announced at the Business Meeting). We hope to see many of our members at the meetings this November!

Contributions to this column are welcomed and may be sent to mshenk@unc.edu. EAS columns are archived at www.evolutionaryanthropologysociety.org.