

2023-24 Activities Report from the Committee on Diversity of the AABA

Submitted by Susan Antón (Chair, AABA COD)

Equity, inclusion and community building are truly everyone's work. Although we report here on the formal work of the COD only, we do not mean to diminish the important work being done across the AABA by many constituencies.

The aim of the AABA Committee on Diversity (COD) is to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion within the field of biological anthropology. Established in 2006 and incorporated into the (then) AAPA bylaws as a standing committee in 2011, the COD is a consortium of member-developed subgroups overseen by an appointed chair and a steering committee. There are now ten (!) formalized interest groups¹. We encourage AABA members to join groups that interest them and/or develop missing groups. The overarching COD has a Chair appointed by the AABA Executive Committee and a Steering Committee comprising at least one member from each of the interest groups. The subgroups are organized along standards that are developed independently by each subgroup.

The Committee on Diversity remains vibrant and generative. AABA COD is a 'bottom-up' organization and we are excited to recognize two new interest groups, COD-SABA (South Asian Biological Anthropologists) and COD-NIBA (Native and Indigenous Biological Anthropologists) who will hold their first events at the 2024 AABA meetings (more on this below).

COD Events at the 2024 AABA Conference

COD will host a number of activities at the 2024 meeting, both virtual and in-person. Many are open to all attendees, a few are by invitation. Event details may be found in the subcommittee reports that follow.

Wed March 20th – 8:30-5pm *COD IDEAS Student Scholars Workshop* (selection via application)

Wed March 20th – 2:00-5pm *COD WIN Workshop: Negotiating Change in Professional Settings, a workshop and mentoring opportunity* (open to all)

Wed March 20th – 5-6 pm *COD WIN Happy Hour* (open to all; cash bar)

Wed March 20th – 6-8 pm *COD URS Undergraduate Research Symposium* (open to all)

¹ Committee on Diversity Increasing Diversity in Evolutionary Anthropological Sciences (COD-IDEAS); COD Women's Initiative (COD-WIN); COD Undergraduate Research Symposium (COD-UGRS); COD LGBTQQIAA interest group; COD Anthropologists Outside of Anthropology Departments, Contingent, and Teaching Focused Faculty (COD-AACT) Task Force; COD International (COD-I); COD Transforming Anthropological & Scientific Knowledge (COD-TASK); COD Disability; COD Native and Indigenous Biological Anthropologists (COD-NIBA); COD South Asian Biological Anthropologists (COD-SABA).

Thurs March 21st – 8-10 am *COD IDEAS Faculty Scholars Mentoring Meeting* (Faculty Scholars group members)

Thurs March 21st – 11 am -12 pm *COD Disability Organizational Meeting* (open to all)

Thurs March 21st – 5 pm *COD IDEAS & COD International Mixer* (open to all, cash bar)

Fri March 22nd – 10am-11 am *COD NIBA Inaugural meeting of the nascent COD Native and Indigenous Biological Anthropologists subcommittee* (open to all)

Fri March 22nd– 12:15-2:15 pm *COD IDEAS Alumni Network Speed-mentoring Event* (open to all program alums)

Fri March 22nd - 12:15-2:15 pm *COD AACT Subcommittee meeting and listening session* (open to all)

Fri March 22nd – 12:30-2pm *COD LGBTQQIAA Business Meeting* (open to all)

Fri March 22nd – 2:15 -4:15 pm *COD-Disability: Nothing about us without us! A conversation on mentoring and being mentored for disabled scholars and allies* (open to all)

Fri March 22nd – 4-5 pm *COD-SABA Chai Hour* (open to all)

Fri March 22nd – 4:15-6:15 pm *COD-LGBTQQIAA Workshop: Queer and Trans Field Safety* (open to all)

Sat March 23rd – 8-9am *COD Steering Group* - (COD Subcommittee Liaisons)

Sat March 23rd – 9:15-10:15 am *COD International Committee Meeting* (open to all)

COD Works with the AABA Executive Committee and the AABA Early Career Liaison

The COD regularly brings initiatives to the AABA executive committee and likewise serves in an advisory capacity when the President and board seek our input. To this end, the COD Chair attends executive committee board meetings as an ex-officio liaison.

In 2023-24 the AABA Early Career Liaison, Justin Lund, aimed to work with COD to address issues related to native and indigenous scholars in the discipline generally and AABA meetings in particular. Over the year he worked with the executive committee on several topics. With VP Kristi Lewton, he worked to ask scholars to carefully consider each of the images they might use in presentations to contextualize potentially sensitive visuals images. And Justin has envisioned the 9th COD interest group, COD-NIBA, which will meet for the first time in 2024 to collectively consider future work and initiatives.

Stephanie Meredith, AABA Executive Committee Member and COD-LQBTQQIAA Liaison, along with COD-LQBTQQIAA members took up important work in response to increasingly harsh legislation across the U.S. related to gender and sexuality. They worked with the executive committee to draft the AABA statement on Trans Lives and have work in progress on other issues related to gender and sexuality (see below).

COD Chair, Susan Antón, worked with the executive committee to update the AABA Officers Handbook, particularly related to COD process, protocol, and history.

Highlights of 2023-24 activities by COD groups (mostly in order of founding):

NEW! COD-NIBA (est. 2023; chair Justin Lund): The mission of COD-NIBA (Native and Indigenous Biological Anthropologists) is to cultivate a vibrant and supportive community for the next generation of Indigenous biological anthropologists. Rooted in our shared commitment to preserving and advancing Indigenous knowledge, we strive to create a space that fosters collaboration, mentorship, and innovation. By nurturing a network of Indigenous researchers, we aim to amplify diverse voices, promote cultural sensitivity in anthropological research, and contribute to the empowerment of Indigenous sovereignties. Through collaboration, education, and advocacy, we seek to bridge the gap between traditional wisdom and scientific inquiry, paving the way for a future where Indigenous perspectives shape the forefront of biological anthropology.

NEW! COD-SABA (est. 2023; co-chairs Sabrina Agarwal and Sheela Athreya): COD-South Asian Biological Anthropologists (SABA) aims to increase the participation and representation of students, scholars, and practitioners of biological anthropology who are of South Asian identity or descent, or who have South Asian community ties. We aim to offer professional support and camaraderie, and an organized voice on issues relevant to South Asian members of the AABA

ESTABLISHED SUBCOMMITTEES

COD-IDEAS (est. 2006; co-chairs Jada Benn Torres, Agustín Fuentes, Ripan Malhi, & Susan Antón): The new COD-IDEAS NSF grant was funded (by PIs Graciela Cabana and Zaneta Thayer and Co-Is Susan Antón and Ripan Malhi)!!! The programming extends and expands the original NSF-funded COD-IDEAS workshop (at the AABA meetings) for developing pathways into biological anthropology, adds regional in-person COD-IDEAS workshops in different parts of the country, and adds programming for faculty development through the career lifecycle. The AABA COD-IDEAS Workshop will run all day Wednesday in advance of the 2024 meetings.

The first annual IDEAS Regional Meeting will take place in Nashville, TN on October 24-26th, 2024. Jada Benn Torres is the local host. Keep an eye out for the call for applications sometime after the AABA meetings!

COD-IDEAS continues to staff an AABA booth at SACNAS, the STEM Diversity Conference (Sacnas.org). NYU supported faculty and student participation to attend and staff the booth in 2023. This has raised the discipline's legibility to STEM students.

At the 2024 AABA meeting in Los Angeles, IDEAS will reprise the events of AABA 2023, adding back a Wednesday Workshop.

COD-URS (est. 2010; co-chairs Cara Wall-Scheffler & Marcie Myers): In 2023, we held our 12th Annual Committee on Diversity Undergraduate Research Symposium (COD URS). We accepted 49 posters representing 34 labs for the in-person session. We had three presenters who only presented at the virtual symposium (noon PST on Wednesday, April 4), though a few of the in-person presenters attended as well. Eleven of the fifty-two first-authors were first generation college students, and at least ten of the 34 labs were from programs that do not offer advanced degrees in anthropology. Across all the presentation options, we were able to support a total of 81 undergraduate students in their biological anthropology research. This symposium continues to offer a crucial opportunity for students to meet and talk with graduate students and potential graduate advisors. We had fantastic representation from across AABA elected officers (nearly all past presidents back to 2012!) and other senior members who came to support the students. In the virtual setting, we were also able to facilitate mentoring by graduate students who were unable to attend the in-person meetings due to funding, including several international graduate students, making the COD URS an opportunity for lots of different kinds of students.

This year (2024) we will provide an in-person symposium only, taking place on Wednesday, March 20 in Los Angeles. We currently have 66 posters, representing 50 labs from across the world. We further will have an international group of mentors, providing in-person guidance and opportunities for each of the presenters. In total we expect nearly 90 undergraduates to participate in this year's conference.

COD-WIN (est. 2013; co-chairs Michelle Bezanson & Anne Stone): The subcommittee held virtual committee planning meetings and hosted an interactive panel discussion at the 2023 AABA meetings. The panel was titled: '*Experiencing and negotiating the dynamics of power: Beginning the conversation*'. This was a community conversation about experiences surrounding power dynamics, including roundtable discussion about recognizing power imbalances and strategies for addressing them. Speakers included Sheela Athreya, Michelle Bezanson, Thierra Nalley and Anne Stone, and 22 AABA members at all career stages attended the workshop. It was a very successful event with most participants wanting more.

COD-WIN includes committee members: Meghan Holms, Stephanie Poindexter, and Rebecca Rogers-Ackermann as well as two new members, Thierra Nalley and Jessica Rothwell (graduate student member). Following the workshop, we have had several virtual meetings to discuss ideas for the 2024 CODWIN event:

COD-LGBTQQIAA (est. 2013; steering committee liaison Stephanie Meredith):

COD-LGBTQQIAA held their business meeting at the 2023 AABA meetings, during which time the group discussed the need for an Association Statement on Sex and Gender in response to increasingly harsh legislative efforts across the country to deny health care and personhood to transgender and gender non-conforming people. Jonathan Bethard and Stephanie Meredith held a listening session on the idea of such a statement in September. Samantha Archer, Zachary Dubois, Alexandra Kralick, and Rick Smith composed a Statement in Support of Trans Lives that was endorsed and published by the Association in November. Zachary DuBois and Stephanie Meredith are chairing the effort toward a Statement on Sex and Gender, which has been pared back to a "Primer on Sex (and sex-based biologies)," and are currently soliciting interested authors to construct subdisciplinary writing teams.

Austin Lawrence and Chris Stantis continued to host "Bite-size Bioanth" meetings on Zoom. Ellis Locke and Stephanie Meredith have organized a workshop for the 2024 AABA meetings on *Trans and Queer Field Safety*.

COD-AACT (est. 2013; chair Jessica Westin): COD-AACT is regrouping. The subcommittee has an open discussion meeting at the AABA on Friday. If you identify with or are interested in any part of our acronym (non-anthro department or teaching-heavy positions, contingent or contract faculty assignments), please attend our meeting to discuss ideas for workshops, panels, sessions or anything else for future meetings and the AABA in general. Ideas may also be sent to current chair Jessica Westin.

COD-International (est. 2014; chair Rebecca Ackermann): COD-I held a brainstorming meeting at the 2023 AABA meetings as well as a follow-up virtual meeting later in the year. We will also be co-hosting a mixer with COD-IDEAS on Thursday evening, and holding a business meeting on Saturday morning.

COD-DISABILITY (est. 2022; chair Katie Kinkopf): COD-Disability's mission is to foster belonging and provide a cultural space for disabled biological anthropologists (broadly conceived), to advocate for cultural change in the AABA with regard for disability as an intersectional and politicized identity, as well as devise long-term, sustainable, accessibility recommendations to amend the existing AABA poster and presenter guidelines. At the 2024 meetings, COD-Disability will hold an organizational meeting to recruit members, discuss future goals, and offer a supportive space for disabled and disability-identified or allied members (Thursday 11am-12pm). COD-Disability will also sponsor a mentorship and networking event, *Nothing About Us Without Us! A conversation on mentoring and being mentored for disabled scholars and allies*. AABA members interested in joining COD-Disability should reach out to Katie Kinkopf at kinkopf@berkeley.edu.

Interested in starting another COD subgroup? Please contact Susan Antón the COD Chair.

Interested in joining a subgroup? Please contact the subcommittee Chair or attend their events.