Department gets a new Chair!

Message from the Chair

I am very pleased and honored to join the Department as the new Chair after spending 15 years at the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom. The Anthropology Department at Utah has a distinguished history, with three members of the National Academy of Science on our Faculty and many respected and distinguished Professors. We have continued that tradition of excellence with our recent hiring of new Faculty members whose research and teaching covers a broad range of fields related to human behavior and evolution. The Department will be expanding again in 2014 and I look forward to reporting on new hires in the coming year. We will be developing new outreach events that offer you, our alumni and donors, an opportunity to take part in local Anthropology activities and we will also unveil a new, updated website towards the end of 2013. So watch this space for updates!

Professor Elizabeth Cashdan, President-Elect

This past July Professor Elizabeth Cashdan attended the 25th annual Human Behavior and Evolution Society Conference, where she was appointed the new President-Elect. She and U of U graduate student Layne Vashro were also finalists in the New Investigators Competition. We congratulate her on this exciting new position.

Upcoming Events

Lecture Series
Prof. Frank Marlowe
University of Cambridge
"Warfare among Foragers"
When: Oct 31, 2013 at 2:15pm
Where: William Stewart Building 208

Lecture Series
Prof. Alan Rogers
"Genetic Evidence for a Neolithic Population Explosion in Europe"
When: Nov 7, 2013 at 2:15pm
Where: William Stewart Building 208

Lecture Series
Prof. John McCullough
"Man's Greatest Mistake. Again: The Evolutionary Triumph of Rube Goldberg"
When: Nov 21, 2013 at 2:15pm
Where: William Stewart Building 208

We are pleased to announce that Professor Leslie Knapp joined the faculty of the University of Utah as Chair of Anthropology during the Summer of 2013. Professor Knapp comes to Utah from the University of Cambridge, where she most recently served as Head of the Division of Biological Anthropology. Dr. Knapp, a primate geneticist, is a prolific and well-known scholar whose research spans a variety of topics in primate immunogenetics and molecular ecology. We are delighted to welcome her to the Department and the University!
Excavation on the Coast of San Luis Obispo

Anthropology graduate students Erik Martin, Kate Magargal and Peter Yavorsky joined Assistant Professor Brian Coddin in the excavation of a prehistoric shell midden along the coast of San Luis Obispo (SLO) county, California. The University of Utah team joined others from Cal Poly State University. SLO lead by Professor Terry Jones and Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) archaeologist Mike Taggart. Situated along an undeveloped tract of land called the Pecho Coast, the site is located within PG&E lands. Because the property is largely undeveloped, the site is well preserved. However, it is subject to erosion by the Pacific Ocean and much of the prehistoric material is lost annually due to storm surges. As such, the project was designed to test the deposit for potential inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places and to sample the deposit along the eroding cliff edge. The preliminary results suggest that the inhabitants of the site lived there during the Mid-Late Holocene and focused on hunting marine mammals and collecting red abalone. These findings add to our growing understanding of prehistory of this region and helps us know more about the long-term records of human and environment interactions that characterize Western North American prehistory. This inaugural collaboration between the University of Utah and partner organizations promises to grow in upcoming years with more opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students alike.

Lab Construction Almost Finished

The Department of Anthropology Biological Laboratory has been extensively remodeled and expanded and the final stages of refurbishment will be completed by the end of October. The Laboratory will serve as the central location for molecular genetic research. The space will continue to host Professor O'Rourke's active Ancient DNA research, examining patterns of genetic variation in prehistoric populations of Arctic peoples and fauna, as well as corn domestication in the American Southwest. Additionally, the rooms will now host Professor Knapp's new Evolutionary Genetics research focusing on MHC genetics, host-pathogen interactions, and non-human primates. Space will also be dedicated to hormone research, an area of increasing interest to many Faculty members in the Department. There are now naming opportunities available in the new laboratory and nearby student offices. Contributions from donors that supply equipment or technology entitle donors to name space within the lab or office. Donors can also contribute named scholarships to allow graduate students to study in the new spaces. Additionally, since the lab has not yet been formally named, a major donation could recognize the contribution by naming the laboratory after a particular donor. To make a contribution, please see the bottom of this newsletter.

Investigating the Lemurs

Professor Melissa Schaefer spent a good part of her summer in Madagascar investigating sub-adult feeding competency of both living and extinct lemurs. Specifically she collected data on feeding behaviors of the gentle bamboo lemur (Hapalemur griseus) and on sub-adult nutritional deficiency in several species of sub-fossil lemurs. These projects are an extension of her previous research into primate growth patterns.

Investing in Student Opportunity

Undergraduate and graduate students face staggering living and increasing tuition costs and many exceptional students are unable to pursue academic opportunities due to these mounting financial challenges. If you would like to help an undergraduate grow academically and individually by providing funds for them to continue their studies or gain research experience in Anthropology or to assist an Anthropology graduate student with tuition, research costs or conference funds, please contact Linda Metka, Development Director at the college of Social and Behavioral Science. Please email lametka@hotmail.com for more information. Donations to the Anthropology Department are vital to ensure a strong future for our graduate and undergraduate education programs. Pledges for future gifts and named endowments can also secure their future.