

2024-25 Activities Report from the Committee on Diversity of the AABA

Submitted by Susan Antón (Chair, AABA COD)

The AABA Committee on Diversity (COD) works to provide programming and research to support inclusive excellence, diverse perspectives and equitable opportunities 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. As of 2025, there are ten formalized interest groups¹, nine of which are active in programming. We encourage AABA members to join groups that align with their interests and/or develop missing groups. AABA COD is a 'bottom-up' organization. If you see the need and want to start an interest group, please contact us.

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 according to standards that are developed independently by each subgroup.

COD Events at the 2025 AABA Conference

COD will host a number of activities at the 2025 meeting. Many are open to all attendees, a few are by invitation. Event details may be found in the subcommittee reports that follow.

Wed March 12th – 8:30-5pm *COD IDEAS Student Scholars Workshop* (selection via application)

Wed March 12th – 1:00-5pm *COD WIN Workshop: Empowering women leaders in biological anthropology* (open to all)

Wed March 12th – 5-6 pm *COD WIN, IDEAS and INTERNATIONAL Happy Hour* (open to all; cash bar)

Wed March 12th – 5-8 pm *COD URS Undergraduate Research Symposium* (open to all)

Thurs March 13th – 8-10 am *COD IDEAS Faculty Scholars Mentoring Meeting* (Faculty Scholars group members)

Thurs March 13th – 11 am -12 pm *COD Disability Planning Meeting* (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-NAIBA); COD South Asian Biological Anthropologists (COD-SABA).

Thurs March 13th – 12-2 pm *COD LGBTQQIAA Subcommittee meeting* (open to all)

Thurs March 13th – 12:15-2 pm *COD AACT Subcommittee meeting* (open to all)

Thurs March 13th – 2:45-4:45 pm *COD AACT Workshop Staying HIP High Impact Practices in Teaching Biological Anthropology* (open to all)

Fri March 14th – 9am-11 am *COD NAIBA Native and Indigenous Biological Anthropologists Subcommittee meeting* (open to all)

Fri March 14th– 12:15-2:15 pm *COD IDEAS Alumni Network Speed-mentoring Event* (open to all program alums)

Fri March 14th – 4-5 pm *COD-SABA Chai Hour* (open to all)

Sat March 15th – 8-9am *COD Steering Group* - (COD Subcommittee Liaisons)

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

COD Works with the AABA Executive Committee

The COD regularly brings initiatives to the AABA executive committee and likewise serves in an advisory capacity when the AABA seeks our input. To this end, the COD Chair (Antón) attends executive committee board meetings as an ex-officio liaison. Several COD subgroup leaders and former leaders, Meredith (LGBTQQIAA), Fuentes and Cabana (IDEAS), Athreya (SABA), Lewton and Stone (WIN), also hold separate elected or appointed roles on the AABA executive committee.

COD has been an important contributor to AABA statements and policy. Currently, Zachary Dubois and Stephanie Meredith are chairing the effort to develop a *Primer on Sex (and sex-based biologies)* a resource of incredible importance given recent federal positioning regarding the existence of only a sex binary.

Highlights of 2024-25 activities by COD groups (mostly in order of founding):

COD-IDEAS (est. 2006; co-chairs Jada Benn Torres, Agustín Fuentes, Ripan Malhi, & Susan Antón): During the second year of COD-IDEAS NSF grant (by PIs Graciela Cabana and Zaneta Thayer and Co-Is Susan Antón and Ripan Malhi), the group held a regional in-person meeting, developed a recurring (monthly) virtual faculty circle session, and ran an in-person workshop at the Los Angeles AABA meeting.

At the 2024 AABA meeting in Los Angeles, IDEAS re-inaugurated the day long Wednesday Workshop. The second workshop will be held in Baltimore in 2025. Given the possible funding freeze by the federal government, the AABA has generously agreed to support the

workshop in the event that NSF freezes the funding. Fourteen undergraduate and graduate students and 10 faculty are participating in the workshop, with an additional 3 faculty participating as Faculty Circle Members.

The first annual IDEAS Regional Meeting was held in at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, TN on October 24-26th, 2024. Jada Benn Torres served as local host along with faculty facilitators Graciela Cabana, Zaneta Thayer, Susan Antón, and Jesse Goliath. Thirteen students (7 undergraduate, 6 graduate) were selected to attend. The Nashville regional meeting followed an agenda similar to the workshop held at the AABA meetings.

Faculty circle networking and problem-solving sessions are hosted monthly by Cabana and Thayer.

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 2024. This booth has raised the discipline's legibility to STEM students.

COD-URS (est. 2010; co-chairs Cara Wall-Scheffler & Marcie Myers): In 2024, we held our 13th Annual Committee on Diversity Undergraduate Research Symposium (COD URS). We accepted 66 posters representing 50 labs for the in-person session. Twenty of the sixty-nine first-authors were first generation college students, and at least eighteen of the 47 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 89 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 the AABA, including elected officers (nearly all past presidents back to 2012!) and other senior members who came to support the students. Suffice it to say that the atmosphere was buzzing!

This year (2025) we will again provide an in-person symposium, taking place on Wednesday, March 12 in Baltimore. We currently have 80 posters submitted, representing 62 labs from across the world. We further will have an international group of mentors, providing in-person guidance and interactive opportunities for each of the presenters. In total we expect around 107 undergraduates to participate in this year's conference, making this the largest symposium to date.

COD-WIN (est. 2013; Meghan Holms and Stephanie Poindexter, co-chairs: Michelle Bezanson & Anne Stone, 2024 co-chairs): The subcommittee held virtual committee planning meetings and hosted an interactive panel discussion at the 2024 AABA meetings. The panel was titled: '*Negotiating Change in Professional Settings: A Workshop and Mentoring Opportunity for all Women AABA Attendees*'. This was a community conversation about experiences surrounding professional and personal transitions as an anthropologist. This included roundtable discussion about how to set boundaries and document interactions/progress/goals in a professional setting. Speakers included Stephanie

Poindexter, Rebecca Rogers-Ackermann, Amanda Wissler, Theirra Nalley and Anne Stone, and 28 AABA members at all career stages attended the workshop. It was a very successful event with all participants activity engaged for the duration of the workshop.

CODWIN includes committee members: Meghan Holms, Stephanie Poindexter, and Rebecca Rogers-Ackermann, Thierra Nalley, Amanda Wissler, Kathryn Reusch, and Jessica Rothwell. Following the workshop, we have had several virtual meetings to discuss ideas for the 2025 CODWIN event.

COD-LGBTQQIAA (est. 2013; chair: Austin Lawrence, steering committee liaison: Stephanie Meredith):

COD-LGBTQQIAA held their business meeting at the 2024 AABA meetings. The group discussed efforts from the last year and ongoing new projects. Ellis Locke and Stephanie Meredith organized a successful and well-attended workshop on *Trans and Queer Field Safety* during the 2024 AABA meetings. In November 2023, AABA published a Statement in Support of Trans Lives authored by Samantha Archer, Zachary DuBois, Alexandra Kralick, and Rick Smith.

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)." Sub-disciplinary writing teams were established for and written contributions are currently being solicited. Contributions from each writing team will then be assembled into a working document by the editorial team.

Chris Stantis and Austin Lawrence continued to host "Bite-Sized BioAnth" meetings on Zoom, this year featuring presentations by Sana Saboowala and Alysha Lieurance. Ariella Johnson approached the group about a partnership with the Leakey Foundation for a special Pride Month episode of Lunch Break Science. There was not enough planning time to make this possible for an episode in June of 2024, but this effort will be revisited in early 2025 for a potential Lunch Break Science episode in June of 2025.

Finally, Austin Lawrence was elected as the new chair/"cat herder-in-chief" of COD-LGBTQQIAA. Many thanks to Stephanie Meredith for her work and many years of leadership of the group. Stephanie will continue as the group's COD steering committee liaison.

COD-AACT (est. 2013; chair Jessica Westin):

COD AACT will hold a planning meeting and a workshop at the Baltimore meetings. The workshop *Staying HIP: Using High Impact Practices in Teaching Bioanthropology* will facilitate the sharing of ideas for implementing High Impact Practices (HIPs) in teaching bioanthropology. The American Association of Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) maintains a list of 11 high-impact educational practices (HIPs) that have been shown to benefit college students from diverse backgrounds. HIPs include First-Year Seminars/Experiences, Writing-Intensive Courses, Collaborative Assignments and Projects, Undergraduate Research, ePortfolios, Service Learning/Community-Based Learning, and Capstone

Courses/Projects. Our HIPs open house will offer participants the opportunity to drop in to learn more about specific HIPs and get ideas on how they can be implemented into their own classes. This workshop is offered by Anthropologists Outside of Anthropology Departments, Contingent and Teaching-Focused Faculty (AACT) Task Force, a sub-committee of the Committee on Diversity.

COD-International (est. 2014; chair Rebecca Ackermann): The in-person roundtable workshop scheduled for the 2024 AABA meetings, entitled “*What’s in a Name? A lot in fact, which is why anthropologists should care*” had to be cancelled due to circumstances outside of the committee’s control. COD-I held a business meeting at the 2024 AABA meetings as well as a follow-up virtual meeting later in the year. We also held a mixer at the 2024 AABAs. In 2025 we plan to hold a group discussion at our business meeting focusing on the experiences of international students in the USA. Our intention is to open up the discussion on barriers to success in bioanth, potentially producing something similar to this where we capture and tell stories: <https://anthrosource.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/aman.13752>.

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 2025 meetings, COD-Disability member Tara Lepore is organizing a workshop titled: *Disabled and Neurodivergent Community, Perspectives, and Identity in Biological Anthropology* on Friday. This workshop grew from conversations at the COD-Disability events from the 2024 meetings. COD-Disability will hold a planning and networking meeting on Thursday. AABA members interested in joining COD-Disability or our Discord server should reach out to Katie Kinkopf at kinkopf@berkeley.edu.

COD-NAIBA (est. 2023; chair Justin Lund): The Native American and Indigenous Biological Anthropologists (NAIBA) group held its inaugural meeting during the 2024 American Association of Biological Anthropologists (AABA) conference in Los Angeles, California, on March 22, 2024. The meeting took place offsite at Bluestone Lane Coffee, offering a relaxed environment for community-building and discussion.

We were thrilled to welcome 10 AABA members from diverse Indigenous backgrounds who expressed interest in joining our group. Additionally, three AABA members, unable to attend in person, reached out to express their support. We also received contact from one researcher who expressed their desire to serve as an ally, although they were not present at the meeting.

Thanks to professional funds provided by the NAIBA chair’s university, we were able to offer coffee and pastries to attendees. The primary focus of the meeting was to foster connections, exchange ideas, and discuss opportunities for the group’s future. We explored

the possibility of future meetings and potential conference sessions to highlight the work of Indigenous biological anthropologists.

Challenges in Organizing a Conference Session: Unfortunately, a conference session did not come together as planned. A significant portion of the NAIBA membership (9 out of 13) consists of students, and the complexity of the session organization process posed a challenge for those with varying levels of mentorship at their home institutions. The steps involved in submitting a session proposal, creating abstracts, and paying membership and registration dues well in advance of the conference were daunting, especially for students without prior experience in this process. To address these challenges, the NAIBA chair plans to dedicate time at the 2025 AABA conference to demystify the session-organizing process and provide mentorship to students. This will likely take the form of an in-person discussion or a workshop series designed to help students navigate the process successfully.

Looking Ahead: 2025 AABA and Future Growth: At the 2025 AABA conference, NAIBA will host an Indigenous Scholars breakfast, generously funded by Agustín Fuentes. We aim to expand attendance and continue fostering networks that support Indigenous scholars, while building a sustainable community for Indigenous biological anthropology.

Plans for Funding and Sustainability: The NAIBA chair is currently exploring options to create funds that will support NAIBA initiatives, such as travel scholarships, workshops, mentorship, and professional development. Two possible structures for managing these funds are under consideration: 1) integrating the funds within the AABA organization, or 2) establishing a separate nonprofit entity that would handle grants, donations, and other financial contributions. The NAIBA chair plans to meet with the AABA treasurer to initiate discussions on these options and determine the best course of action for securing and managing these resources.

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. We hosted our first Chai Social and organizing meeting at the 2024 Annual meetings in Los Angeles, with about 15-20 attendees gathering for introductions and social networking. We also took a survey prior to the meetings to gauge overall interest, with 30 respondents. Over half who responded were doctoral students (just over 53%) with the remaining postdocs, and faculty or independent/govt agency scholars. All indicated they would enthusiastically join SABA events at the annual meetings. We look forward to hosting another Chai Social at the upcoming 2025 annual meeting in Baltimore, with the goal to network, mentor, and share any issues relevant to SABA. For the 2025 meetings we will also solicit discussion items via

email from the membership beforehand and share them at the Chai Social for follow up and/or action following the meetings.

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.