

2025-26 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 2026, 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.

It's an understatement to say that this has been a hard year for the kinds of work that the COD does and the communities we serve. The individual subcommittee reports reflect this uncertainty along with the remarkably resilient community building that has sprung up around it. And the long term programming continues. We are grateful to the AABA and the Executive Committee for their support and partnership.

COD Events at the 2026 AABA Conference

The resilience and intention of the COD subcommittees is reflected in the expanded programming and activities at the 2026 meeting. Virtually all of these are open to all attendees, a few are by invitation or application. Event details may be found in the subcommittee reports that follow.

Wed March 18th – 8:30-5pm *COD IDEAS Student Scholars Workshop* (selection via application)

Wed March 18th – 1:00-5pm *COD WIN & BA WMN Workshop: Language in a Time of Uncertainty: Walking the Walk When you can't Talk the Talk* (open to all)

Wed March 18th – 5-6 pm *COD IDEAS, LGBTQQIAA and INTERNATIONAL Happy Hour* (open to all; cash bar)

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).

Wed March 18th – 6:30-8 pm *COD URS Undergraduate Research Symposium* (open to all)

Thurs March 19th – 8-10 am *COD IDEAS Faculty Scholars Mentoring Meeting* (Faculty Scholars group members)

Thurs March 19th – 11 am -12 pm *COD Disability Planning Meeting* (open to all)

Thurs March 19th – 11:30-1:30 pm *COD LGBTQQIAA Subcommittee meeting* (open to all)

Thurs March 19th – 12:15-2 pm *COD AACT Task Force planning meeting* (open to all)

Thurs March 19th – 5-7 pm *COD WIN & BA WMN Happy Hour* (open to all)

Thurs March 19th – 7:45-9:30 pm *AABA Townhall: Navigating the Current Landscape in Biological Anthropology. Organized by Margarita Hernandez, Horvey Palacios, Carter Clinton, and Raquel Fleskes and COD-IDEAS* (open to all)

Fri March 20th – 9am-11 am *COD NAIBA Native and Indigenous Biological Anthropologists Subcommittee meeting* (open to all)

Fri March 20th– 12-2pm *COD IDEAS Alumni Network Speed-mentoring Event* (open to program alums)

Fri March 20th– 2-4 pm *COD- Disability: Disabled and Neurodivergent Community, Perspectives, and Identity in Biological Anthropology* (open to all)

Fri March 20th – 4-6 pm *COD-SABA Chai Hour* (open to all)

Fri March 20th – 5-6:30 pm *COD-NAIBA Workshop: NAGPRA and Biological Anthropology 35 Years Later: Continuing the Conversation* (open to all)

Sat March 21st – 8-9 am *COD Steering Group* - (COD Subcommittee Liaisons)

Sat March 21st – 9-10 am *COD International SubCommittee Meeting* (open to all)

Sat March 21st – 1:30-5 pm *COD IDEAS Symposium: Empowering Diversity, Enriching Science: IDEAS in Action* (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 (as do the chairs of Ethics and HCARE). Several COD subgroup leaders and former leaders, Fuentes and Cabana (IDEAS), Athreya (SABA), Taylor, Lewton and Stone (WIN), also hold separate elected or ex-officio roles on the AABA executive committee.

Highlights of 2025-26 activities by COD groups (mostly in order of founding):

COD-IDEAS (est. 2006; co-chairs Jada Benn Torres, Agustín Fuentes, Ripan Malhi, & Susan Antón) and COD-IDEAS Program Committee (est 2016; co-chairs Graciela Cabana & Zaneta Thayer): The COD-IDEAS committee tackles a core mission of the COD: To address underrepresentation of racialized minority scholars in biological anthropology. The main activity of the committee since 2016 has been the *COD IDEAS Program*, an intensive daylong workshop in advance of the meetings, other activities throughout the meetings, and (more recently) regional meetings. The program was initially funded by NSF in 2016 (PIs Antón and Malhi) and again in 2024 (PIs Thayer and Cabana, Co-Is Antón and Malhi). Alas, along with many other federal grants, particularly those related to broadening participation in STEM, the latter grant was **cancelled** in April 2025, two years early. The termination occurred after the *IDEAS Program* at the AABA 2025 Annual Meetings in Baltimore. Fifteen undergraduate and graduate students and 10 faculty participated in the workshop, with an additional 3 faculty as Faculty Circle Members. Unfortunately, the remainder of the events scheduled for 2025 were severely curtailed or put on pause.

In the wake of the grant termination, the AABA generously agreed to support *the IDEAS Program* at the 2026 Annual Meetings in Denver, Colorado. The IDEAS Program Committee (chaired by Cabana and Thayer) will provide the day-long workshop and other scheduled events throughout the 2026 meeting. 16 student scholars and more faculty scholars, along with program alumni will participate.

At the 2026 meetings, the COD-IDEAS Committee is co-sponsoring the Thursday AABA Townhall *Navigating the Current Landscape in Biological Anthropology*. The Townhall is the brain-child of organizers Margarita Hernandez, Horvey Palacios, Carter Clinton, and Raquel Fleskes. Additionally, the IDEAS committee invited podium symposium *Empowering Diversity, Enriching Science: IDEAS in Action* on Saturday afternoon highlights the research of IDEAS Program Alumni.

Beyond the AABA, the COD-IDEAS committee continues to staff an AABA booth at SACNAS, the STEM Diversity Conference (Sacnas.org). NYU co-sponsored faculty and student participation in 2025. This booth has raised the discipline's legibility to STEM students.

COD-URS (est. 2010; co-chairs Cara Wall-Scheffler & Marcie Myers): In 2025, we held our 14th Annual Committee on Diversity Undergraduate Research Symposium (COD URS). We accepted 80 posters representing 63 labs for the in-person session. Fifteen of the 80 first-authors were first generation college students, and at least twenty-three of the sixty-three labs were from programs that do not offer advanced degrees in anthropology. In total, we were able to support 104 undergraduate students in their biological anthropology research making 2025 the largest undergraduate symposium in AABA history. 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 (2026) we will again provide an in-person COD Undergraduate Research Symposium, taking place on Wednesday, March 18 in Denver.

COD-WIN (est. 2013; Meghan Holms and Stephanie Poindexter, co-chairs 2025): The subcommittee held virtual committee planning meetings and hosted an interactive panel discussion at the 2025 AABA meetings. The panel was titled: *'Empowering Women Leaders in Anthropology'*. This was a community conversation to explore challenges and strategies for women in roles of authority, discuss inclusive leadership and team building in environments traditionally dominated by men. A combination of panel and small group discussions focused on getting comfortable in roles of authority and tools for inclusive leadership. Speakers included Alex Brewis, Andrea Taylor, Kaye Reed, Julianne Stamner, Erin Vogel, Dipuo Kgotleng, Maria Nieves-Colon, and 40 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, Tierra Nalley, Amanda Wissler, and Jessica Rothwell. Following the workshop, we have had several virtual meetings to discuss ideas for the 2026 CODWIN event, which will be in conjunction with the Bioanthropology Women's Mentorship Network and entitled *COD WIN & BA WMN Workshop: Language in a Time of Uncertainty: Walking the Walk When you can't Talk the Talk*.

COD-LGBTQQIAA (est. 2013; chair: Austin Lawrence, steering committee liaisons: Austin Lawrence and Stephanie Meredith): COD-LGBTQQIAA held their business meeting at the 2025 AABA meetings. The group discussed efforts from the previous year as well as ongoing projects and goals for the coming year.

Following the success of the *Trans and Queer Field Safety* workshop organized by Ellis Locke and Stephanie Meredith, the group discussed the possibility of developing similar symposia to be held in future years, which may also include collaboration with the Education and Outreach committee. Luca Pozzi and Siobhán Cooke volunteered to coordinate this exploratory effort.

The group continued a discussion about developing a sober social event to be held at the AABA meetings that could help increase group visibility and participation. Following discussion with the COD Steering Committee, COD-LGBTQQIAA will be joining the IDEAS & International Community Social for the 2026 AABA meetings in Denver.

The "Bite-Sized BioAnth" virtual seminar series, led by Austin Lawrence and Chris Stantis, went on hiatus for 2025, but is set to return with multiple virtual seminar events in 2026. The group also discussed the possibility of a collaboration with Arielle Johnson and the

Leakey Foundation for a special Pride Month episode of Lunch Break Science or some other special event. This event was not possible in 2025, but discussions are ongoing.

Finally, the group discussed the future of the 'gAyABA' buttons that have become a staple at the AABA annual meetings. There was consensus among the group that we should continue producing and distributing buttons at the annual meetings. Laura Hunter volunteered to design buttons for the 2026 AABA meetings in Denver. Beginning with the 2027 AABA meetings, a design contest will be held for buttons, with a call for designs going out in early fall and voting taking place in late fall or early spring. The group decided to donate the proceeds from distribution of buttons. The combined proceeds from previous years' buttons (\$5,605) were donated to The Trevor Project during a 4x matching campaign, for a total financial impact of \$22,420. This donation was coordinated and handled by Stephanie Meredith. Proceeds from buttons in future years will be donated to local LGBTQ+ organizations in the cities in which the AABA annual meetings are held.

COD-AACT Task Force (est. 2013; co-chairs Liz Soluri & Jessica Westin): The Anthropologists Outside of Anthropology Departments, Contingent, and Teaching Focused Faculty (AACT) Task Force has the following events planned for the 2026 AABA meetings in Denver: Thursday lunch: COD AACT committee planning meeting

At past conferences, we had success with poster sessions, panels, and workshops focused on themes in teaching and the job market for teaching-focused, non-academic, and/or non-anthropology jobs. We hope to plan something along these lines for the 2027 conference.

We are also working on rebuilding and expanding the group to ensure members can create and maintain community around these themes.

COD-International (est. 2014; interim co-chairs Maja Šešelj and Jessica Brinkworth): COD-I held a business meeting at the 2025 AABA meeting. We also held a mixer at the 2025 AABAs. The climate of 2025 has put our membership under pressure, it has been difficult for our group to communicate or complete outreach due to safety concerns (social media accounts of internationals in the U.S. are subject to surveillance, for example). In early 2026 members have agreed to a monthly support hour (times to alternate to accommodate our membership in very disparate time zones). We may ask that the AABA publish the dates and times on the website. With policy and enforcement in the U.S. becoming increasingly fluid, we do not think COD-I has the person power to relay updates to the AABA on most of those shifts. Our goals for 2026 are to 1) provide social support for internationals in the U.S. or engaging with U.S. institutions via a support hour 2) capture barriers policy creates to a) our success in the field b) our interaction with U.S. institutions 3) introduce COD-I to new AABA members. Policy and enforcement practices have chilled the desired to share our stories publicly. We have not yet pursued story capture as we intended in 2025 (e.g. like this <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 for the organization and its members. At the 2025 meetings, COD-Disability member Tara Lepore organized a successful workshop titled: *Disabled and Neurodivergent Community, Perspectives, and Identity in Biological Anthropology*. At the 2026 meeting, COD-DISABILITY will have a business and planning meeting. Those interested in joining COD-Disability or our Discord server should reach out to Katie Kinkopf at kmkinkopf@ncsu.edu.

COD-NAIBA (est. 2023; chair: Justin Lund): The Native American and Indigenous Biological Anthropologists (NAIBA) group held its second annual meeting during the 2025 American Association of Biological Anthropologists (AABA) conference in Baltimore, Maryland, on March 14, 2025.

We are deeply grateful to Agustín Fuentes for generously donating the group's breakfast. The gathering provided an important space for community building and dialogue, and we were honored to share the meal with special guests Anne Stone, Stephanie Meredith, Jenny Raff, Rick Smith, and Kim TallBear. Their presence contributed meaningfully to our conversations about the future of Indigenous leadership and collaboration in biological anthropology.

NAIBA membership continues to grow. While attendance was not formally recorded at the 2024 meeting, we estimate that Indigenous membership is approaching 20 scholars and professionals. Moving forward, the NAIBA chair will prioritize more systematic membership tracking and organizational development to strengthen our collective efforts.

Members continued discussing the possibility of organizing an AABA session highlighting NAIBA and the wide range of scholarship, community engagement, and professional contributions represented within our membership. Given our current size, we anticipate that developing a full session may be more feasible within the next one to two years.

NAIBA is enthusiastic about sponsoring the upcoming NAGPRA workshop, scheduled for March 15, 2026. This workshop aims to bring Tribal professionals into dialogue with AABA members, fostering reciprocal exchange and strengthening relationships between Tribal Nations and the discipline. We are also excited to welcome Tribal guests to join us at the NAIBA breakfast in conjunction with the workshop.

COD-SABA (est. 2023; co-chairs/co-founders Sabrina Agarwal and Sheela Athreya): COD-SABA was established in 2023 to provide a community for biological anthropologists who identify as South Asian or whose work is primarily in the region. We equally aim to organize the voice of our members on matters relevant to the AABA. In 2025 we hosted

our second Chai Social at the AABA Annual meeting in Baltimore. Around 15 people attended, of which 11 were new members signing up. A mentoring program following the one by the Women's Mentoring Network was proposed. Some ideas that would allow members to connect were also discussed. Attendees suggested setting up a Slack channel for SABA members to post questions, share work, and form collaborations. For international students, guidance on funding opportunities and scheduling an online meeting for them specifically would allow participation by students who are unable to travel. For the 2026 meetings we will host a Chai social and solicit volunteers to help implement some of these programs.

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.