

## **2025-2026 REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT**

Written by Anne C. Stone

It is my honor and privilege to report that despite the challenges of the last year, AABA members are living up to our mission to advance understanding of the evolutionary histories and diversity of the human and primate lineages, their biology, and life experiences through time. In doing so, we celebrate these activities as we convene for our 95th Annual Meeting in Denver and continue our work to foster diversity in our discipline, including through support of the IDEAS program.

This year as President, I sent out a monthly newsletter to the membership to keep our community informed of AABA activities and news. At the Annual Business Meeting, we will report on the many activities that were carried out through the year thanks to the effort and dedication of the many people who volunteer their time to keep the Association running and flourishing. I extend a heartfelt thank-you to all these volunteers. We will celebrate those who have been awarded our highest honors for research, service and outreach, including two new mid-career awardees. We will also celebrate the trainees who are selected for awards based on their amazing presentations at our annual conference.

For this Report, I focus on several initiatives of the President and the Executive Committee.

### **Executive Committee Activities**

The Executive Committee met monthly basis throughout the year except for July and August, convening ten times since the last Business Meeting. AABA Officers also met monthly basis, with a standing meeting held the week before each Executive Committee meeting. Additionally, officers convened for a full-day meeting on August 22, 2025, at AABA Headquarters with Brett Burk, Lori Strong, and others from Burk & Associates to review the business and financial standing of the Association and plan strategy for the coming year. As outlined in the Treasurer's Report, AABA has a particularly strong financial standing as our gains from investments were considerably more than our expenses for the preceding year. Therefore, the officers once again decided to increase our investment in the Association's activities. With the support of the Executive Committee, we increased support for several committee activities and decided to support the IDEAS program when it lost funding from the National Science Foundation. We also voted to expand the number of Cobb awards this year. In addition, while the pilot run of the international travel support program was successful, because of the current challenges for international visas, we unfortunately decided to suspend this program this year.

To support the long-term financial health of the Association and our vibrant community, the Executive Committee established two endowed funds for which we are currently fundraising. The first is the AABA Community Fund will provide long-term financial resources for the Officers and Executive Committee to undertake activities that provide support to our membership and/or the broader community of biological anthropologists to enable more participation in AABA's professional activities, including, for example, subsidizing food costs at the annual meeting or travel expenses to participate in AABA events. The second is the AABA Presidents' Fund which represents financial support by and in honor of Past Presidents of AABA to the current President. The pay-out from this fund will provide financial resources for the President to undertake activities that build, enhance, or repair the sense of community among the AABA membership. This would include, for example, financial support for travel, honoraria, and catering for the Presidential Panel/Keynote or similar events at the AABA annual meeting, and/or other activities that further this aim.

Each of these funds will be established with donations received through fundraising and \$30,000 from the Association. Donating to AABA has been facilitated through a new “Donate” link located on the homepage of the <https://bioanth.org> website. Fundraising for the Community and Presidents’ Funds will require a new donation model for AABA members and supporters to embrace, but hopefully, these two Funds will grow to have a large enough endowment to provide financial security for the types of initiatives that significantly augment and enhance AABA’s scientific programs. In addition, Dr. Amandine Eriksen, the early career liaison to the executive committee has worked with our treasurer, Dr. Jonathan Bethard, to establish an AABA Planned Giving Protocol. I thank both for working to improve financial support for the AABA.

### **Task Force on the Ethical Study of Human Remains Recommendations**

The Task Force on the Ethical Study of Human Remains has concluded its important work in the last year, and we thank co-chairs Drs. Ben Auerbach and Fatimah Jackson for their leadership. Their proposal for the management and oversight of community partnership and ethical stewardship of human remains will be published in the *American Journal of Biological Anthropology* along with a commentary by Drs. Auerbach and Jackson. The Task Force decided to focus on treatment of African American human materials across many domains. Their work helps to set foundations for sustained advances on the part of the Association to engage positively with communities and to attend to ethical issues in all aspects of our work. The ad hoc Committee on Community Partnership, led by newly appointed chair, Dr. Shamsi Berry, is charged with taking the recommendations of the task force and developing an implementation plan of carefully crafted policies, guidelines, and best practices that are sensitive to the needs and desires of communities in balance with scholarly practices, objectives, and prospects. These should apply broadly to matters involving human materials in research and teaching, as well as in other professional activities.

### **Wiley Publishing contract and a new editor for the *American Journal of Biological Anthropology (AJBA)***

Another major task on the Executive Committee’s Agenda was the renewal of the AABA’s contract with Wiley Publishing which ended December 31, 2025. The Wiley Publishing contract runs in tandem with the contract for the Editor-in-Chief of the *AJBA*. I would like to express my gratitude to the members of the two ad hoc committees that were formed to address these deadlines, particularly to the chairs of these committees. Past president Leslea Hlusko chaired the AABA/Wiley Contract Negotiation Committee with members Trudy Turner (*AJBA* Editor-in-Chief 2020-2025), Anne Grauer (AABA Past President), Anne Stone (AABA President), Graciela Cabana (Co-Editor of the *Yearbook of Biological Anthropology*), and Brett Burk (Burk & Associates). The conversation with Wiley proceeded productively, and we signed a new contract in late December. Ripan Malhi chaired the *AJBA* Editor Search Committee with members Avriel Licciardi (Wiley Publishing representative), Clark Spencer Larsen, Tracy Kivell, Lyle Konigsberg, and Robin Nelson. The call for the new editor was posted in early February 2025, with applications due March 31, 2025. In the fall, Dr. Connie Mulligan agreed to serve as *AJBA* editor and began her term on January 1, 2026. On behalf of the Association, I also would like to especially thank *AJBA*’s past Editor-in-Chief Trudy Turner. She has done an outstanding job guiding the Association’s official journal over the past five years. These years included the name change from the *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* to the *American Journal of Biological Anthropology*, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the shifts in the academic publishing landscape.

### **Cognate organization cost shares**

Our annual conference involves logistical and other kinds of support for related organizations, including the American Association of Anthropological Genetics (AAAG), Dental Anthropology Association (DAA), Human Biology Association (HBA), Paleopathology Association (PPA) and, in alternating years, the

Paleoanthropology Society (PAS). Of these groups, the HBA, PPA, and PAS offer programs supported by registration fees. Close evaluation of AABA conference budgets indicated that the AABA subsidizes elements of these programs. Therefore, the AABA initiated discussions with leadership of HBA, PPA, and PAS regarding program costs and strategies to offset the subsidies from AABA registrations that support these programs. This resulted in AABA signing agreements with HBA, PPA, and PAS about meeting planning and costs that go into effect with the 2026 AABA conference.

### **New Executive Committee Members**

With this annual meeting, the composition of AABA's Executive Committee will change. Three elected members of the Executive Committee are reaching the end of their terms. Many thanks to Vice President Dr. Amy Rector for all her hard work over the past two years. Thanks also to the Secretary, Dr. Kristi Lewton. Her thoughtfulness and organization have kept the executive committee on track, and she has led the charge of implementing our new online system and setting up the new Web and Communications Committee. Dr. Leslea Hlusko has served as President-Elect, President and Past-President, bringing new ideas to evolve the development efforts of the association to support our members and particularly our trainees. We will welcome three newly elected Executive Committee Representatives to fill these positions (Drs. Michelle Singleton, Christopher Schmitt, and Anthony Di Fiore, respectively). Early Career Liaison, Dr. Amandine Eriksen's term on the Executive Committee ends after a year dedicated to supporting the treasurer. She researched planned giving for 501c3 scientific organizations and established an AABA Planned Giving Protocol. Student Liaison, Abigail Houkes completes her term in which she worked to support students. Like Dr. Eriksen, she has been a valuable member of our group. We thank our junior colleagues for their hard work and look forward to continued engagement with both individuals. Our new Early Career Liaison, Dr. Jessica Rothwell, brings interests in professional development to the Association. In addition, incoming Student Liaison, Audrey Arner, will be leading efforts for intentional community-building and visible recognition of student contributions. We are delighted to be joined by these remarkable early career colleagues.

### **Additional Changes to Standing and Ad Hoc Committees**

The President, with the agreement of the Executive Committee, appointed new Ethics Committee co-chairs, Drs. Maja Šešelj and Dawnie Steadman, to lead the committee in the coming years. They are tasked with updating the AABA code of ethics which was last revised and approved in 2003.

Two new ad hoc committees were formed in the past year. A new Science Policy subcommittee for Science Advocacy is chaired by Dr. Kate Clancy. They are tasked with training AABA members to communicate their science to a broad audience and to advocate for science at local and national levels. In addition to a webinar on writing op-eds, they are co-hosting a workshop with the Professional Development committee on "Effective Science Communication Strategies in an Age of Willful Disinformation" at the 2026 meeting. The second ad hoc committee is the Bystander committee, chaired by Dr. Stephanie Meredith. This committee is implementing Active Bystander training in partnership with ADVACEGeo before of the conference to ensure that AABA committee chairs and conference session chairs all have a basic toolkit for dealing with any issues of bullying and harassment that may arise during conference activities. They are also tasked with becoming certified as trainers to lead these workshops for members in the future. Finally, under the leadership of the treasurer, an ad hoc committee on financial policy was established with me and Drs. Anne Grauer, Leslea Hlusko, and Steve Leigh as members. This committee works with the treasurer to ensure that the AABA endowment is managed well.

### **Annual Conference in Denver**

Our Vice President and Program Chair, Dr. Amy Rector organized our 2025 and 2026 conferences, beginning each with receipt of symposium proposals in July and working steadily to make each a resounding success. It is with deep gratitude that I thank her for her incredible service to the Association. Along with Dr. Rector, I thank our colleagues on the Program Committee for their important service including abstract review and composing scientific sessions. I also thank Brett Burk, Lori Strong and the rest of the team at *Burk & Associates, Inc.* for their assistance with conference organizing as well as other AABA business. This year, they have worked hard to increase the number of exhibitors and sponsors for our meeting. Our Local Arrangements Committee, Drs. Jamie Hodgkins, Steve Leigh and Todd Yokely collaborated with the Advance Team to plan the conference. Activities and initiatives at the conference this year include:

#### **Continuation of the AABA eats Program**

At the AABA meetings in Baltimore in 2025, we piloted the AABA eats program, and attendees who registered for the in-person conference as a student, postdoc, or contingent faculty received a \$50 gift card when they collected their registration. AABA eats was inspired by a survey of biological anthropology graduate students (Houkes & Cirillo, 2024 *AJBA* meeting supplement, p. 75) that found that 50% of students are on government aid and 29% access food pantries to meet basic needs. Additional discussion revealed that postdocs and contingent faculty also often are in financial duress. This program was successful, and the executive committee voted to continue it at the AABA meetings in Denver, where the funds will be distributed via Venmo to make the process simpler and reduce costs for processing.

#### **AABA Award Winners**

In 2026, AABA celebrates an amazing group of scholars and colleagues who continue to make important contributions to our discipline. This year, Dr. Clark Spencer Larson receives the Charles R. Darwin Lifetime Achievement Award. Our Gabriel Lasker Service Distinguished Service Award goes to Dr. Lyle Konigsberg. Dr. Himani Nautiyal receives the AABA and Leakey Foundation Communication and Outreach Award in Honor of Camilla M. Smith. We also recognize two inaugural Mid-Career award winners: Dr. Katherine Amato (Research) and Dr. Doug Boyer (Service). Finally, I extend my congratulations to this year's Cobb Professional Development Awards and the Student Presentation Prize and Pollitzer Travel Award winners.