

## American Association of Physical Anthropologists (AAPA) Ethics Fellows Program

### *Introduction and Purpose*

The AAPA Ethics Fellows Program is intended to serve two central purposes. The first purpose is to raise the level of ethical literacy among the AAPA membership by providing meaningful resources on topics relevant for biological anthropologists. The hope is that these materials will assist members in (1) identifying and addressing the ethical, legal, and social issues and (2) anticipating implications of their research. The second purpose is to provide interested members—particularly those early in their careers—an opportunity to engage actively with the Ethics Committee and gain experience with ethics educational and research projects.

### *Program Description*

Each year the Ethics Committee may select up to two (2) scholars to serve as Fellows. The role of an AAPA Ethics Fellow is anticipated to vary from year to year to accommodate ongoing and emerging needs and priorities of the Ethics Committee and, to the extent possible, to allow the individual to explore his/her own interests in ethics. The following are examples of how an individual might serve as an Ethics Fellow:

- An individual with broad interests in ethics might advise the Ethics Committee with the development of a collection of case studies to help AAPA members better understand or teach others about issues relevant to their research or scholarship.
- An individual with specific interest in ethics of information access might advise the Ethics Committee by conducting a discrete research project (such as a survey of the publication policies for relevant journals, research funding agencies, or data repositories) and preparing a preliminary report for the Ethics Committee that could be further developed and shared with AAPA members.
- An individual might advise the Ethics Committee in the organization of a workshop, symposium, panel, or other event to be held during the annual meeting.

The AAPA Ethics Fellows Program is designed to coincide with a year of service beginning and ending at the AAPA annual meeting. The term duration and dates are subject to change and subject to negotiation for exceptional circumstances as the Ethics Committee determines is appropriate. The Ethics Committee has the discretion to offer current fellows the option to extend the fellowship for a second year of service.

Each AAPA Ethics Fellow will have a member of the Ethics Committee designated as his/her mentor for the fellowship. The AAPA Ethics Fellows Program is non-residential. Fellows will be expected to fulfill their responsibilities remotely and will interact with members of the Ethics Committee primarily through email, phone calls, and online meetings. Fellows will be included in Ethics Committee events and meetings.

### *Fellowship Benefits*

The primary benefit of the AAPA Ethics Fellows Program is its educational and professional development opportunities. Fellows are not provided a salary or stipend.

### *Eligibility*

To be considered for the AAPA Ethics Fellows Program, the interested individual must:

- Be a member of the American Association of Physical Anthropologists in good standing;
- Hold at least a bachelor's degree;
- Have a well-articulated interest in ethics issues relevant to the field of biological anthropology;
- Be willing to perform tasks at the direction and under the supervision of the Ethics Committee for 12 months; and
- Submit a letter of interest, two-page CV, and three references before the applicable deadline.

### *Selection Process\**

The deadline for consideration as an AAPA Ethics Fellow for 2018-2019 is **November 15, 2017**.

Applicants must provide the following materials:

- A letter of interest (2-page maximum length) explaining the applicant's interest in ethics issues and answering the question posed for the upcoming fellowship year;
- A two-page abbreviated CV summarizing the applicant's education, experience, and relevant skills and activities;
- Three letters of reference from current members of the AAPA (as a signed pdf document; 2-page maximum length per letter).

The question for all applicants for 2018-2019 is as follows:

*Today social media is used as way to connect with family, friends, colleagues, and even strangers around the world. Social media platforms (such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) curate user experience while also giving users the freedom to decide who does and does not see their profiles or postings. The use of social media has gained popularity across ages, genders, and income levels. For example, 68% of adults in the United States use Facebook.<sup>1</sup>*

*Social media is not only used by the general public but also researchers and scientists,<sup>2</sup> who have been using these platforms to discuss ideas, distribute study findings, recruit participants, and crowdsource information (including crowdsourcing the development of syllabi for textbook-free courses). A limited number of professional organizations<sup>3</sup> have provided guidelines for the acceptable use of social media. Given the ubiquity of, and consequent reliance on, social media platforms for research and training purposes, we must consider whether the use of such platforms brings its own set of ethical issues.*

*Imagine this scenario:<sup>4</sup>*

*While perusing Twitter, you come across a tweet with a picture of a cranium that catches your eye. The post is asking if anyone can identify a possible species or origins for the cranium and includes the hashtags #crowdsourcing, #identify, and #bones. You decide to answer the call and take a closer look at the picture but find it to be of bad quality. Hoping to find more pictures posted on the profile of the person who posted it, you click on the user's name. There are no other pictures posted of the cranium, but there are several other bones pictured with similar hashtags. This seems odd to you, and you notice that the user's name is an alias and that the user has not filled out the "bio" or "about" section. You think you can identify the cranium and think it is of an extinct rare animal, but the odd Twitter profile raises some flags. Think about the ethical questions raised by this and similar situations. What guidance do you think the AAPA could provide its members to help them better understand the ethical challenges involved so that they are able to engage social media for research more responsibly?*

Applicants should submit all application materials in one email to [jennifer.kristin.wagner@gmail.com](mailto:jennifer.kristin.wagner@gmail.com) using the subject "AAPA Ethics Fellows Application."

The Ethics Committee Co-Chairs will review submitted application materials, conduct phone and/or online interviews of candidates, and select up to two (2) individuals for the AAPA Ethics Fellows Program. The Ethics Committee is not required to select fellows, and there may be years when no fellows are selected.

Individual(s) selected for the AAPA Ethics Fellows Program will be notified in January. Those who accept the opportunity will be expected to attend the AAPA annual meeting and will be welcomed as an incoming Fellow at the Ethics Committee business meeting.

### ***Inquiries***

Individuals with questions about the AAPA Ethics Fellows Program may contact the Co-Chairs of the AAPA Ethics Committee:

Jennifer K. Wagner, J.D., Ph.D.  
AAPA Ethics Committee, Co-Chair  
[jennifer.kristin.wagner@gmail.com](mailto:jennifer.kristin.wagner@gmail.com)

Graciela Cabana, Ph.D.  
AAPA Ethics Committee, Co-Chair  
[gcabana@utk.edu](mailto:gcabana@utk.edu)

### ***History***

The AAPA Ethics Fellows Program was launched in 2016 by AAPA Ethics Committee Co-Chairs Jennifer Wagner and Graciela Cabana. Two Fellows were selected for the inaugural 2016-2017 programmatic year: Jennifer Eyre and Kristina Zarenko. Fellows for 2017-2018 were Jennifer Eyre, Kristina Zarenko, and Tisa Loewen. Below are the essay questions used for the application process in previous years:

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.pewinternet.org/2016/11/11/social-media-update-2016/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.nature.com/news/what-all-those-scientists-on-twitter-are-really-doing-1.21873>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.ashg.org/2017meeting/pages/general.shtml>

<sup>4</sup> <http://blog.nus.edu.sg/leopardcat/2013/03/14/crowd-sourcing/>

## 2016-2017 Question

Significant changes to chimpanzee research have occurred in recent years. In 2011 the Institute of Medicine issued a report on biomedical and behavioral research involving chimpanzees indicating that, despite their important contributions to science, most chimpanzee research projects are not necessary.<sup>5</sup> In 2012 the National Institutes of Health (NIH) stopped breeding chimpanzees.<sup>6</sup> In 2013 President Obama signed into law amendments to the Chimpanzee Health Improvement, Maintenance, and Protection Act passed by Congress (the CHIMP Act Amendments of 2013) to enable most chimpanzees used for research to be retired to a federal sanctuary system.<sup>7</sup> Chimp Haven, Inc. is the first and only authorized sanctuary.<sup>8</sup> In June 2015 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced a final rule changing the threat level for captive chimpanzees from “threatened” to “endangered,” thereby elevating their protected status to the same level as wild chimpanzees.<sup>9</sup> In November 2015 NIH Director Francis Collins informed agency administrators in a leaked internal email of the decision to send its remaining “reserve” colony of 50 NIH-owned chimpanzees to a sanctuary and its plans to phase out NIH support for other chimpanzee research.<sup>10</sup> These policy decisions to wind down invasive research on chimpanzees and attempt to improve the quality of life for chimpanzees bring their own ethical challenges. What are the main ethical challenges posed by these developments and what action (if any) should the AAPA Ethics Committee take to address this topic?

## 2017-2018 Question

Achieving research participation through voluntary, informed consent can be difficult in many communities with whom anthropologists engage in research. For example, community characteristics (such as extreme poverty or limited education) and circumstances (such as resource disparities) create challenges for the design of research projects that, on the one hand, provide adequate recruitment incentives and anticipated benefits of participation and, on the other, avoid undue influence or coercion.

Imagine this scenario:

An early career investigator wants to conduct a longitudinal study of diabetes in a community that has very limited access to healthcare. The research will involve collaboration with a local health professional who will help with collection of blood, urine, and saliva samples for the research. The community proposed for the study is located in a geographic region where there has been a recent spread or outbreak of Zika,<sup>11</sup> Chikungunya,<sup>12</sup> and West Nile<sup>13</sup> viruses. The investigator has enough funding for the project to provide mosquito nets, insect repellent, condoms, and even over-the-counter acetaminophen (Tylenol®) for the targeted sample of research participants but not for the entire community. The investigator plans to be in the community to conduct the research six weeks each year, for the next five years. Additionally, the project timeline allows for the investigator and the research team to be in the geographic area for two weeks before and two weeks after the project itself, during which time they could travel, interact with community members, or engage in humanitarian efforts. The research team is planning a site visit to finalize project plans.

The head of the investigator’s institution has requested a meeting with the investigator to understand the study’s potential scientific impact and societal implications. She further asked the investigator to advise her on any important ethical aspects as she evaluates the investigator’s project for potential consideration in upcoming budget talks with governmental representatives.

Thinking broadly about the ethical dimensions of scientific research,<sup>14</sup> the federal policy on the protection of humans involved in research as set by U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (i.e., the Common Rule<sup>15</sup>), the AAPA Code of Ethics,<sup>16</sup> and other issues (e.g., consideration of what makes potential research populations “vulnerable”<sup>17</sup>; potential duties

<sup>5</sup> <http://iom.nationalacademies.org/Reports/2011/Chimpanzees-in-Biomedical-and-Behavioral-Research-Assessing-the-Necessity.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., <http://www.wired.com/2013/06/nih-research-chimps/>

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., <http://www.nih.gov/about-nih/who-we-are/nih-director/statements/statement-presidents-signing-bill-enables-nih-retire-research-chimps> and [www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-reduce-significantly-use-chimpanzees-research](http://www.nih.gov/news-events/news-releases/nih-reduce-significantly-use-chimpanzees-research)

<sup>8</sup> See, e.g., <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/09/140912-chimpanzee-haven-retired-research-animals/> and [http://dpcpsi.nih.gov/orip/cm/chimpanzee\\_management\\_program](http://dpcpsi.nih.gov/orip/cm/chimpanzee_management_program)

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.fws.gov/news/ShowNews.cfm?ID=E81DA137-BAF2-9619-3492A2972E9854D9>

<sup>10</sup> See <http://www.nature.com/news/nih-to-retire-all-research-chimpanzees-1.18817>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/Chikungunya/index.html>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.cdc.gov/westnile/index.html>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02691720903364282?journalCode=tsep20>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/regulations/common-rule/index.html>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.physanth.org/documents/3/ethics.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> E.g., <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-8519.00362/abstract;jsessionid=82134682016FED729A39161EC93D68AE.f02t01>,

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ruth-macklin/research-ethics-and-ebola\\_b\\_6037052.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ruth-macklin/research-ethics-and-ebola_b_6037052.html), and <https://medium.com/matter/did-big-pharma-test-your-meds-on-homeless-people-a6d8d3fc7dfe#.nlzfzjv4q>

*to provide ancillary care when conducting research; the growing movement to involve “citizen scientists”<sup>18</sup> and participants as partners in the conduct of research<sup>19</sup>; how research plans could or should optimize resources and research opportunities—including perhaps collaborations with virologists, immunologists, and public health officials; and how the extended time could be spent to further multiple priorities concurrently), identify three lines of ethical inquiry for the institution head and provide guidance on her evaluation of whether this project is a model of research excellence that should be highlighted during upcoming meetings with government representatives.*

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<sup>18</sup> E.g., <http://scistarter.com/page/Citizen%20Science.html> and <http://www.birds.cornell.edu/citscitoolkit/about/defining-citizen-science>

<sup>19</sup> E.g., <http://www.pcori.org/research-action>