



# THE SAA'S HISTORICALLY UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS SCHOLARSHIPS FUND

## A NEW OPPORTUNITY AND CHALLENGE

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**T**he Society for American Archaeology's Mission Statement asserts that "to serve the public interest, SAA seeks the widest possible engagement with all segments of society," and its Statement on Diversity says that the SAA "is committed to promoting diversity in our membership, in our practice, and in the audiences we seek to reach through the dissemination of our research" (<http://www.saa.org/AbouttheSociety/tabid/54/Default.aspx>). Notwithstanding these aims, some groups have been, and continue to be, underrepresented in archaeology and in the SAA. More significantly, failing proactive recruitment efforts, this demographic imbalance may become even more stark in coming decades.

The SAA Board of Directors recognized these issues several years ago by setting up a Diversity Initiatives Task Force, which submitted its recommendations in 2011 (Rogers et al. 2011), and by creating the Minority Scholarships Committee (MSC). In principles and objectives, the MSC roughly parallels the Native American Scholarship Committee. By its charge, the MSC, "oversees the Historically Underrepresented Groups Scholarships program by developing guidelines and policy, publicizing the program, selecting the recipients, monitoring the program, and recommending changes in guidelines as needed." These are "intended to encourage members of underrepresented ethnic minorities to complete archaeological field schools and to pursue undergraduate and graduate degrees in archaeology, thereby contributing to diversity in American archaeology." The MSC strategy is modeled on the successful Native American Scholarship Fund's incrementally developed field school, undergraduate, and graduate awards.

As members of the MSC, we'd like to sketch why supporting the Historically Underrepresented Groups Scholarship fund is not just "doing the right thing" but also a way to practically assure the SAA's future relevance and vitality. Being archaeologists, we will give you some data to support our assertions.

### Demography: USA and Canada in the Twenty-First Century

The 2010 U.S. Census (Humes et al. 2011:4 Table 1) indicates that 63.7 percent of the U.S. population identify themselves as non-Hispanic white (Figure 1). Since 2000, this group had the slowest growth (1.2 percent) of any census category for race<sup>1</sup> and ethnicity. Faster-growing census categories include African American (12.3 percent growth since 2000), Asian (43.3 percent growth), Pacific Islander (35.4 percent growth), two or more races (32 percent growth), and Hispanic or Latino (43 percent growth). Projections suggest that these trends will continue in the next decades, regardless of shifts in immigration rates (Ortman and Guarneri 2009).

The recruiting pool for future archaeologists is rapidly changing. The 2010 census showed that 46.5 percent of US residents under 18 identified with a census category other than non-Hispanic white (Groves et al. 2011: 22). This K-12 demographic is the future of our discipline (Figure 2). Specifically for the SAA, the data presage a dramatic demographic shift toward groups from which very few archaeologists have been recruited in the past.

The SAA's 1994 Member Survey of over 1,600 members provided the first well-documented baseline for assessing demographic trends, including ethnicity, in North American archaeology. Zeder's analysis noted that the survey

provides empirical support for the impression one gets attending any major archaeological gathering in North America, that American archaeologists are a homogeneous group composed almost exclusively of people of European ancestry. *People of Hispanic, African American, Native American, or Asian ancestry make up only 2 percent of respondents* [Zeder 1997:9, emphasis ours].

Zeder (1997:13) concluded that, though archaeology aims to

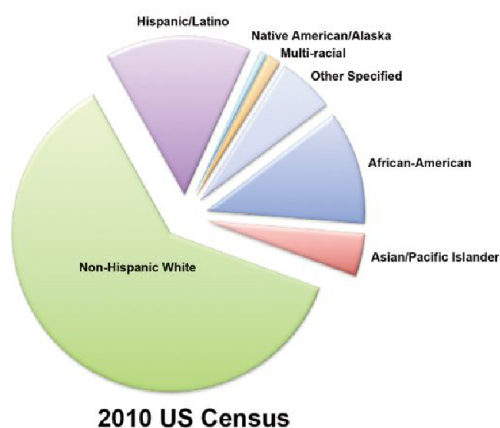


Figure 1. Distribution of racial and ethnic groups in the 2010 census data. "Asian" and "Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander" categories combined for consistency with Figure 3. Hispanic/Latino ethnic category includes a diversity of racial self-identifications. Source: Humes et al. 2011.

understand diversity in the past, the North American discipline is "starkly homogeneous."

Canada, home to 4.6 percent of current SAA members, has also seen dramatic changes in ethnic composition. In Canada, East and South Asians comprise the preponderance of non-First Nation minorities. These minorities increased from about 4.7 percent of Canada's total population in 1981 to around 16.2 percent in 2006 (Statistics Canada 2008). Between 2001 and 2006 alone, this population segment grew at five times the 5.4 percent total population growth rate (Statistics Canada 2008).

The Canadian Archaeological Association has not conducted surveys comparable to those conducted by the SAA, nor does it request ethnic affiliation data from its members, but Canadian members of the MSC believe it unlikely that the ethnic composition of archaeological professionals is keeping up with these demographic trends.

The SAA's 2002 and 2010 Needs Assessment Surveys (Society for American Archaeology 2003, 2011) indicate that ethnic balance within the SAA has changed somewhat since 1994, with about 16 percent of current membership identifying as members of groups other than non-Hispanic white (Figure 3). However, the increase from two percent in 1994 to 16 percent in 2010 is not keeping pace with the present or projected demographic composition of North America. Moreover, close study of the by-age breakdown in the 2010 survey indicates that the 84 percent "non-Hispanic white" segment of the SAA is not simply a Baby Boom effect that will shift to a more ethnically diverse composition when that generation's many senior members

cycle out of active participation in the SAA. Among surveyed archaeologists under 35, 82 percent identify as non-Hispanic white. Absent significant new recruitment, 10 years from now, the membership of the Society will probably still be predominantly white, with even higher proportions of this ethnic group among its senior leadership. Viewed in the context of the 2010 demographic profile for U.S. K-12 students, the disparity between SAA membership and societal composition may become *more* pronounced in two decades.

One could claim that, because the percentage of non-white members has increased at an increment of close to one percent per year since 1994, that these demographic patterns "naturally" will produce greater ethnic diversity in the SAA, with yet another 16 percent of members recruited from non-white groups in another 16 years, bringing the society closer to US national demographics.

However, one can also argue from the data that, failing proactive recruitment, incremental progress will still leave the society well out of balance with national demographic composition by 2028, when a majority of college-age people will be from non-white ethnic groups. A laissez-faire perspective also does not consider that the one percent per year growth may fall off, due to the differentially heavier impacts on minority families of college-eligible students of the home mortgage debacle, parental layoffs in a poor jobs market, and recent, steep increases in state college tuitions (College Board 2011). As is the case with entry into small business ownership, members of minority groups are differentially affected by economic downturns, due to markedly

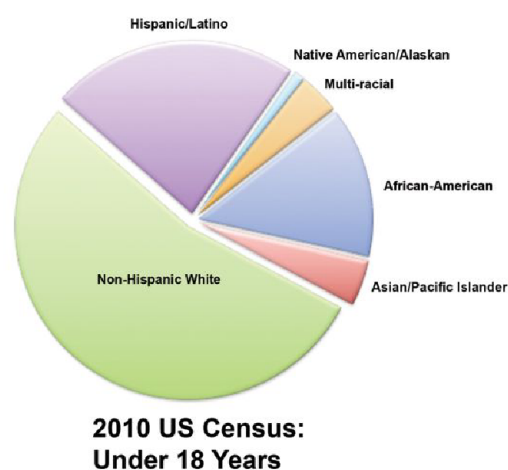


Figure 2. Distribution of racial and ethnic groups among youth under 18 years of age in the 2010 census data. "Asian" and "Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander" categories combined for consistency with Figure 3. Hispanic/Latino ethnic category includes a diversity of racial self-identifications. Source: Humes et al. 2011.

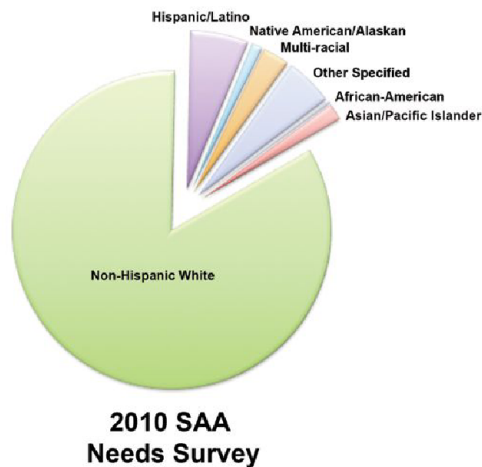


Figure 3. Distribution of self-identified ethnicities in the 2010 SAA Needs Assessment Survey (Q4, N=3012). Source: <https://ecommerce.saa.org/saa/staticcontent/staticpages/survey10/index.cfm>.

lower median levels of family income (College Board 2011: 24) and familial wealth accumulation (Fairlie 2008).

### Does It Matter?

One could argue that this is simply an ethical problem and that the correct action is for the Society as a whole to live up to the goals of its mission statement by increasing the diversity of its membership. Another argument for proactively recruiting underrepresented groups is that, as we have learned from the greater participation of women and Native Americans/First Peoples in the profession, diversity among archaeologists significantly enriches our ability to generate self-critical theory and method (Leone and Preucel 1992).

If these worthy goals are not sufficiently compelling, then consider that anyone who values the SAA's role in protecting American archaeological heritage should view building a socially diverse membership as a practical strategy for maintaining the society's relevance in the twenty-first century. Promoting public appreciation and preservation of our archaeological heritage is a central goal of North America's archaeological societies. Regional and national archaeological societies have made archaeology and the deep American past relevant to many North Americans of European ancestry, thereby positively influencing cultural resource legislation and implementation. Incorporating more persons from groups historically underrepresented in archaeology will enable the discipline to continue prospering and contributing intelligibly in our increasingly diverse political contexts. Without establishing its relevance with other communities, the SAA's painstakingly nurtured public appreciation of

archaeology may wane—and with it, a commitment to conserving national archaeological heritage.

### What Kind of Scholarships?

As one of several tactics to recruit a broader segment of society into archaeology, the MSC has proposed to the Board that the awards eventually parallel those of the Native American Scholarship Fund. The NASC originally focused on field schools but it quickly became apparent that a wider range of needs existed. Support now includes college tuition, books and supplies, and similar expenses. However, the MSC believes that summer field school scholarships for college-age students from historically underrepresented groups are centrally important. Archaeological field training is an unofficial prerequisite for entry into graduate programs and entry-level public archaeology jobs. The MSC surveyed Canada/US and domestic college-sponsored overseas field school costs for 27 programs in 2011. The average expected student expenditure for a field school offering academic credit was around \$5,800 (Figure 4). When one eliminates overseas field schools—these ranged from Antigua-Barbuda to Ethiopia—domestic field school costs average a healthy \$3,530. However, this is only part of the cost of field training.

Few college financial aid packages cover summer coursework or lab and field training outside the regular academic year, making such study an out-of-pocket expense. Moreover, the time required for rigorous field instruction, even if near home, is usually incompatible with paid employment. Even working at minimum wage, a student could gross around \$4,600 in a 16-week summer. In combination, these facts present many students from low-income backgrounds with a major economic barrier to intensified participation in archaeology. This may be especially true for students who are the first in their families to attend university, who come from communities where archaeology is an unusual career choice, or whose families or university financial aid programs expect them to earn a share of college expenses over the summer. Thus, a field school scholarship package should go toward offsetting *both* the program cost *and* the financial losses incurred through participation in field training. The Native American Scholarship Committee (NASC) has long acknowledged this fact in their well-established Scholarships for Archaeological Training.

The NASC has supported Native American students' entry into careers as anthropological archaeologists for nearly two decades. Using income from the donation-based Native American Scholarship Fund, the National Science Foundation grants, book royalty donations, and proceeds of its Silent Auction at SAA Annual Meetings, the NASC regularly offers field training scholarships (now up to \$5,000), as well as some undergraduate educational scholarships (up to \$5,000), and graduate fel-

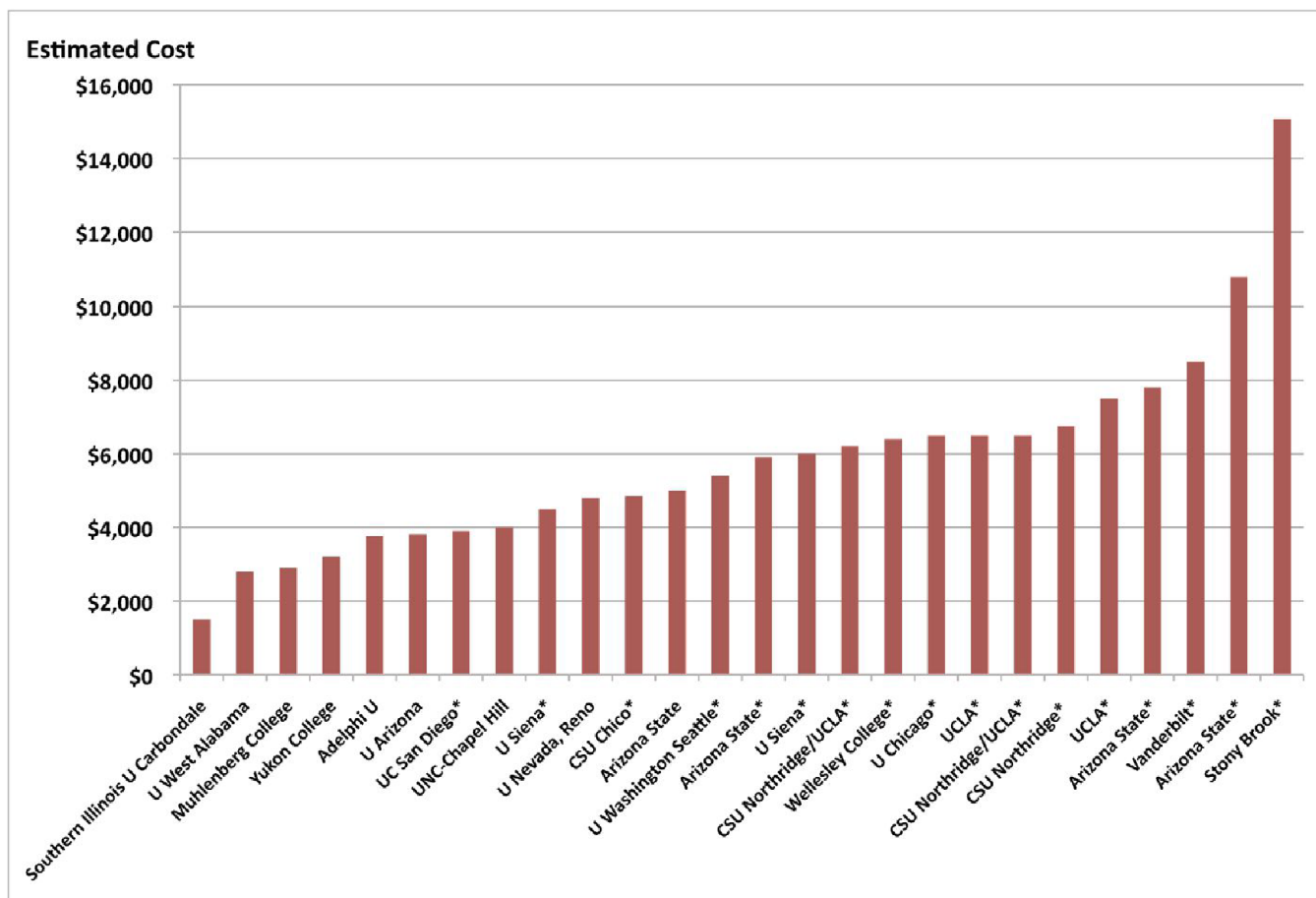


Figure 4. Costs of 2011 public and private institution archaeological summer field schools, from MSC survey of advertised schools. Overseas field schools noted with an asterisk.

lowships (up to \$10,000). The Historically Underrepresented Groups Scholarship effort would be designed to establish sound funding for its scholarships and to pursue all possible avenues for developing higher education.

### Minority Scholarships Committee's Functions

To swiftly offer a parallel set of scholarship opportunities to students from historically underrepresented groups without waiting decades for an endowment fund to reach critical mass, the SAA Board of Directors implemented an annual fund for the scholarships, allowing scholarships to be given directly from donated funds, rather than solely from interest earnings. Meanwhile, the MSC is pursuing other lines of fundraising.<sup>2</sup> The MSC has a representative, Jason de Leon, on the SAA Fundraising Committee.

The MSC has developed a scholarship solicitation, application, and selection process, modeled on the well-established NASC process. The first solicitation for applications will be published in an issue of *The SAA Archaeological Record* and online. Applications and nominations will be reviewed and ranked by a panel of reviewers from the MSC. Recipients of Historically Underrepresented Groups Scholarships will be required to submit a brief report on their field school experience, which will form part of the MSC report to the SAA Board.

### Who Is Eligible for the HUG Scholarships?

After assessing SAA survey data, the MSC and the Board of Directors concurred that the HUG Scholarships program should encourage applications from "underrepresented minorities," typically targeted by federal guidelines, as well as members of other groups that are strikingly underrepresented in the SAA, for

example, persons of East and South Asian ancestry (Figure 3). Eligibility criteria approved by the SAA Board are as follows:

Applications are encouraged from U.S. and Canadian citizens who are (1) members of North American ethnic minority groups historically underrepresented in American archaeology, including, but not limited to: African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latino/as, Chicano/as; (2) enrolled in a full-time academic program leading to a degree in anthropology/archaeology at the time of application; (3) a member of the Society for American Archaeology. *Note*: for the present, Alaskan Natives, American Indians, Native Alaskans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders are encouraged to apply to the Native American Scholarships program for parallel funding opportunities.

Language for (1) was adapted from criteria of the American Anthropological Association's Minority Dissertation Fellowship (funded since 1999), with specific amendments to parallel and complement the NASC eligibility criteria, and criteria (2) and (3) are used by the NASC.

A few points can be clarified. First, the application form and review process refines the grosser-grained ethnic survey categories to recognize the existence of "minorities within minorities" with differential economic advantages. Second, since the NASC has previously included not only Native Hawaiians but also all Pacific Islanders as "Native peoples" within their purview, we have not included this group in our eligibility criteria.

Third, the MSC will initially seek HUG Scholarship applicants from underrepresented minorities in the U.S. and Canada only. This is in part because the members of the MSC believe themselves best equipped to assess such applicants on the basis of their application package. This is also in part because we presently believe that most members of "historically underrepresented minorities" in Latin America are of indigenous affiliation and would thus be eligible for a scholarship through NASC. Should Latin Americans who are from non-indigenous minorities emerge as applicants, the MSC have been accorded the flexibility to develop policy changes.

Finally, in developing our policy, MSC chair Gifford-Gonzalez consulted with then-NASC chair Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh on several occasions. As individuals, rather than committee chairs, we shared the perspective that the missions of the two committees may ultimately lead to establishment of a combined, diversity scholarship committee to solicit, review, and disburse student support. However, in the short run, the SAA Board of Directors deemed it important to use the energy of a new, fully staffed committee to begin the fundraising and publicity activities for this other cohort of underrepresented groups.

## Conclusion

Public outreach, one of the principles of archaeological ethics articulated by the SAA, is enhanced when the discipline includes people who are members of the population with which they seek to communicate. This was demonstrated during the intense controversies over the African Burial Ground in Manhattan, and in the steps toward their resolution with concerned communities. Greater diversity among practicing archaeologists in the academy and in public archaeology thus not only enriches the discipline's intellectual life, but also facilitates outreach to a broader range of communities and legislative bodies in the years to come.

The SAA's low representation of archaeologists of African American, Latino, South Asian, East Asian, Pacific Islander, and other, non-European heritage likely results from the interaction of diverse social factors, only some of which are under our control. These include an historic disinclination for first-generation-to-college students to opt for such fields as archaeology, and our discipline's lack of investment—literal and figurative—in making the initial steps toward entry into archaeology more attractive and economically feasible to students from underrepresented groups. Archaeology and the other social sciences have been unusual career choices for first-to-postsecondary-education students from less privileged sectors of society (National Center for Education Statistics 2005: vi). Such preferences were strikingly reflected in archaeologist Warren Barbour's (1994) "Musings on a Dream Deferred," in which he recounts the negative reaction of his middle class, African American uncles and stepfather to the notion that he would not follow them into their careers in medicine and pharmacy, and his grandfather's spirited defense of his choice to be an archaeologist, as one underwritten by their achievements in their own professions.

Funding scholarships is but a single step in bringing the composition of the SAA closer to parity with North American populations as a whole, but it is an important one. Scholarship outreach to students from underrepresented groups signals that we as a profession have invited them to join our ranks and to carry on the Society's mission.

Most of us have had a helping hand along our way into careers in archaeology, from a Work-Study job, to a Pell Grant, to that one, strongly encouraging instructor. Support provided by the Historically Underrepresented Group scholarships will pay forward that kind of help. It will not only assist individuals to realize their goals of entering careers in archaeology but also will assure the resilience and relevance of American archaeology into the future.



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### Notes

1. The US Census Bureau continues to use the term "race" to describe geographic variations in ancestry and culture that most anthropologists would be happier terming "ethnicity," and it reserves the latter term only to make the Hispanic/Latino vs. non-Hispanic/Latino distinction. Our citation of 2010 Census categories in no way diminishes our anthropologically informed view of "race" as a socially constructed category rather than a biological reality.
2. In 2011, NSF Archaeology declined to fund a MSC grant application paralleling the one which it had funded for the NASC.



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