Greetings to all the friends of the department of anthropology at CSUEB.

As the new associate chair of the department, I wanted to reach out to the broad community of students, alumni, and emeritus faculty to let you all know about some exciting developments in our program, and also to ask for your help. First the news:

We are inaugurating a new annual prize for the best student research papers in anthropology!

Thanks to a generous “seed” donation from Dr. Lindy Li Mark, Emerita Professor of Anthropology, the department will be starting a new tradition this spring. We will hold an annual competition for the best research papers (one undergraduate and one graduate) in anthropology. Papers will be judged by a committee of students, in consultation with a faculty advisor. The winning students will receive $200 each. We hope that this prize will help students feel their hard work and creativity is recognized and valued by the department, and that it also spurs students on to higher levels of excellence in research and writing. For students on the committee, the process of peer
evaluation should help develop the spirit of a community of anthropologists on campus. (We hope to raise additional funds to keep the prize going for many years into the future.)

The C.E. Smith Museum is preparing an exhibit on migration stories of the CSUEB community, utilizing DNA analysis – opening Winter quarter

The upcoming exhibit of the C.E. Smith Museum will focus on migration stories of the CSUEB community. Dr. George Miller and the students in the Anthropology and Museums class have been working hard to develop the exhibit, which draws on information from DNA analysis (drawn from samples volunteered by dozens of CSUEB staff, students, and faculty), as well as personal narratives and other data. The exhibit demonstrates the tremendous diversity of our community, tells the stories of immigration pathways, and provides a lesson in the science of DNA analysis. This is an exciting exhibit, incorporating all four fields of anthropology into a museum experience that will have resonance for each visitor. The exhibit is scheduled to open in the winter quarter.

The department has developed and applied anthropology option for both undergraduates and graduate students

When Dr. Laurie Price joined the CSUEB (then CSUH) faculty in 2000, she led the effort to develop an applied focus within the department as an option for students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Medical anthropology, museology, cultural resources management, economic development, and policy and program evaluation practices are all aspects of applied anthropology students can learn more about here at CSUEB. New courses, a new option in our MA program, and the hiring of a second faculty member with applied expertise (myself) have helped the department to offer students the opportunity to put their academic training into practice. While the department continues to provide purely academic classes in all four classic subfields (archaeology, physical anthropology, socio-cultural anthropology, and linguistic anthropology), students who wish to may take courses and undertake internships to prepare themselves for careers that draw directly on anthropological theory, methods, and data. Student internships have included work for the National Forest Service, the National Park Service, a non-profit organization dealing with child abuse issues in Pakistan, a cancer research foundation, a retail music
store, a CRM (cultural resources management) firm, and a disability resource center.

We are conducting a search for a junior professor of physical anthropology.

The department is currently conducting a search for a physical anthropologist to join our faculty. Dr. Alan Almquist’s classes in the physical anthropology subfield are consistently popular among both anthropology majors and students in other disciplines at CSUEB, and we’re excited by the prospect of having another physical anthropologist working with us. If all goes well, someone new will join our faculty in the Fall of 2006!

The anthropology department has been merged with the sociology department at the level of departmental administration.

In the fall of 2004 the department of anthropology was joined with the department of sociology under a single chair. The current chair of both departments is a sociology professor, Dr. Benjamin Bowser. This year a new position, associate chair, was created, and it is filled by me, an anthropologist. While the departments are exploring other potential benefits of this merger (possible cross listing of courses, for example, or joint hires), at this point it is merely an administrative convenience. It has, however, provided an opportunity for students and faculty to start cross-department conversations about the kinship between our disciplines – drawing into focus our shared intellectual heritage as well as differences in methods and topics. In practice, this has meant very little change in how students experience the department and its programs, as we retain independence in terms of curriculum.

As you can see, there is a lot going on at CSUEB’s department of anthropology. But we have more work to do.

We attract a wonderful group of core students to our major, and a good number of non-majors find their way to several of our courses (mostly to fulfill General Education requirements). But the department needs to attract a lot more students. Without more students, we will not be able to support the diversity of classes and programs we currently provide. We do a lot with very few faculty, but as current faculty retire we need to ensure that the
department maintains its strength – and new hires will depend on demonstrating sufficient student demand for our courses. Over the next several months I would like to work with students and faculty to create (and begin to implement) a plan to spread the word about how fascinating and relevant anthropology is. Indeed, many students on campus don’t even know what anthropology is. I would like our department to become known on campus as the department to come to in order to understand the diversity of human experience.

**Here’s how you can help:**

**If you are a current student**

Tell other students about your anthropology classes. Tell them what interests you about anthropology. Bring up topics from anthropology in your conversations. Make a personal goal of telling one other student something positive about anthropology each week. If you are a member of a student organization, let me know. If there is any possibility for me to come to your organization to tell students how anthropology might be relevant to their interests (this would be particularly true for business organizations, cultural-affinity organizations, or political and service organizations), I’d be happy to arrange a presentation.

Communicate with me, or with other anthropology faculty, to let us know what you would like to see in the anthropology major. I am hoping to hold some open meetings in the winter with anthropology majors to ask you questions about your experience, but also feel free to email me with comments and suggestions. These can be suggestions for new classes, changes in the schedule, requests for clarification about the major requirements, etc. The more I learn from students about what works well and what can be improved, the stronger the department will become.

**If you are an alumnus / alumna**

I am interested in hearing from you about three topics. First, I’d like to hear what you’re doing. Are you working (or volunteering)? If so, are you using your anthropological training in any way? (Do you work cross-culturally? Do you analyze systems, organizations, ideas? Do you work with scientific data similar to those you may have dealt with in your archaeology or physical anthropology classes? Have you traveled abroad?) Secondly, I’d be interested in hearing feedback about your experience with the department while you were here.
What did you like best about the anthropology major? What courses were most valuable? And, thirdly, do you have any suggestions for how we can improve what we do? Do you have ideas for new courses, or changes in our operating procedures? How could we have made anthropology more exciting, or more relevant to your post-college life?

If you are an emeritus professor

I joined the faculty in 2002, just after Lindy Mark became Emeritus. There are a number of you I haven’t met. I feel strongly that the department owes each of you a debt of gratitude for all you did over your years of service in establishing anthropology here at Hayward. If you have suggestions or ideas about the future of the department, or if you would like to be more personally involved, please don’t hesitate to contact me. I’m interested in building the broadest community of CSUEB anthropologists I can. And if you are interested in participating in the student prize initiative, I’d be happy to give you information on how you can help.

To all of you: I’m excited about the future of the department of anthropology at California State University, East Bay. If you have ideas, stories, or suggestions for me or for future reports, please let me know. You can reach me at laura.nelson@csueastbay.edu

Thanks.