

All About Discovery!

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## Anthropology Professor Awarded Sundt Professorship

What role does human intervention play in sustainability? Does the past have anything to teach us about the problems we face today? Dr. Rani Alexander, archaeologist and professor in NMSU's Department of Anthropology, has spent much of her career investigating these questions. This year, Dr. Alexander was awarded the prestigious Sundt Professorship for 2013-2015 to explore these issues with NMSU students in a unique course, known as HON 450V The Sundt Honors Seminar. This Spring's seminar is entitled "The Archaeology of Sustainability" and will include a Spring Break trip to archaeological sites on the Yucatan peninsula.

Archaeology is unique in its ability to address questions of sustainability because, as Dr. Alexander points out, it provides the only direct "evidence . . . of human environmental relations in the past." Dr. Alexander will be examining opposing interpretations of the Maya Collapse by comparing Jared Diamond's popular book, *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, and *Questioning Collapse: Human Resilience, Ecological Vulnerability, and the Aftermath of Empire*, edited by Patricia A. McAnany and Norman Yoffee. Students will investigate the tensions between collapse and resilience for a chosen topic on the trip.

Dr. Alexander, much of whose work has focused on Mesoamerica and the Maya, also points out the importance of critical inquiry into how we interpret and present history and the cultures of those whose archaeological remains are studied.

Traditional Euro-American narratives of the Maya Collapse can leave students and the general public with the impression that the Maya disappeared long ago. Yet, the story is much more complex. Yucatan is of special interest because Maya city states endured longer and more successfully than the rest of ancient Mayan civilization. It is easy to trace the connections between the former inhabitants of archaeological sites and modern-day Maya-speaking descendant communities.

Dr. Alexander is excited to be taking students to the Yucatan, letting them experience the wonderfully vibrant contemporary Yucatec [Maya] culture. Students will examine small-scale enterprises during their time in Yucatan, such as native Yucatec cacao and honey production – operations which have never lent themselves well to large-scale monocrop production, but which have great potential for preserving biodiversity – one strategy that Dr. Alexander points to as an important element of sustainability and resilience. Dr. Alexander's own interest in sustainability did not develop until after she became interested in archaeology, and she points out that "if you're fascinated by collapse . . . the opposite side of the coin is resilience." (Continued on Page 6)



Dr. Rani Alexander  
NMSU 2013-2015 Sundt Professor

## Graduate Spotlight

*These profiles feature just a few of the current MA students who are receiving funding for conducting their MA research. Anthropology Department Head Miriam Chaiken notes, “thanks to a new funding pool from our Dean Christa Slaton, and contributions of our alumni to the ‘Friends of Anthropology’ fund, we are now able to offer grants of up to \$1,000 to our MA students to complete their graduate research. We have been able to fund students working internationally as well as close to home, and students working on projects as diverse as primate behavior, to the archaeology of bee-keeping in the Yucatan, to students studying the perpetuation of traditional foodways. This is very exciting and provides crucial support to our students and permits them to conduct important original research.”*

### *Richard Wright: Using GIS to Address New Mexico Health Disparities*



An impulse decision to go right instead of left had profound results for Richard Wright, M.A. candidate in Anthropology. Wright, who was preparing to major in English upon entering New Mexico State University as a freshman, decided that the Anthropology orientation tour to his right looked more interesting than the English tour to his left.

“[T]hey took us on a tour of Breland, and actually the first professor that I met was Dr. Benefit. . . . and she had me identify *Australopithecine* skulls. . . . I was hooked after that.” If Richard has his way, his decision will have a significant impact on others, too. A Santa Fe native, he will soon be using ethnography and Global Information Systems (GIS) technology to research border region health disparities in the hopes of finding ways to address health issues faced by the underserved in New Mexico. “I think that was another reason why I chose to do health and health policy and focus on New Mexico, because it actually is my home and it impacts people immediately connected to me.”

Richard will be interviewing both healthcare providers and community members during his research and trying to understand how multiple factors might be interacting to influence health outcomes. He plans to examine, for example, “how heavily socioeconomic factors” influence New Mexico healthcare. GIS technology will be used to vi-

sualize healthcare data in Santa Fe and Doña Ana counties to “see if the two regions differ based on their geographic location.”

Richard’s research will focus on allowing community members to define their own healthcare issues as a way to empower them to be actors in improving healthcare in their own communities. “I’m going to somehow try to have [community members] spatially conceptualize where they see themselves in their own system of healthcare. I want them to identify what they see their problems as, and then work alongside healthcare institutions to try to address those problems in the long run. I’m going to try to get some sort of community modeling going on from the ground up. And hopefully we can use GIS as a sort of a tool for urban planning in the long run or something like that.”

Richard hopes that the study will help other researchers begin to think about health and related socioeconomic factors in more geographic terms, as well as act as a jumping-off point for further anthropological research working towards better health education and finding solutions to health disparities. The potential for this research to improve communication about health within the community is very important to him: “At the very least I want to use my thesis and research as a tool to inform the public of their own conception of their healthcare situation and then maybe use that to create an outlet for dialogue between healthcare institutions and their community.” In that vein, Richard also plans to use GIS to make his findings accessible to the community by “creating community friendly [poster] layouts” of his research findings.

### *Brandon McIntosh: Researching Fuana in Yucatec Subsistence Strategies*

What can turkey bones tell an archaeologist? Some pretty interesting things, as it turns out. Brandon McIntosh, who is in the process of analyzing data gleaned in large part from ancient bird remains in Isla Cuvituk, Yucatan, is examining the cultural and biological evolution of



the Yucatec region, its history of human-environment relations and settlement patterns, the economic patterns of the region in relation its resources, and the area’s biodiversity compared to other regions between 900 and 1520 CE. Specifically, he is looking at subsistence strategies and whether people of this time were hunting wild tur-

keys or domesticating them. Preliminary analysis suggests that turkeys were being hunted rather than raised as livestock. The age dynamics of Brandon’s zooarchaeological data suggest only adult birds were present, whereas if turkeys were being domesticated in this time period, one would expect to also see the bones of younger turkeys.

Brandon is also employed as a research assistant at the Florida Museum of Natural History (FLMNH) as part of a larger project that is examining the domestication of turkeys. Most work on understanding the history of human-environmental relation and human settlement patterns to date have focused on plant domestication, not animal domestication, making research on turkey domestication an important new factor in understanding such issues in the Americas.

Brandon hopes to continue working in archaeology in both academic and public service capacities. He enjoys the conservation side of archaeology and sees archaeology as a discipline that can provide context for better understanding how the environment can be appropriately cared for. He plans to pursue a PhD after finishing his Master’s degree.



### *Iliana Villegas: Addressing Modern Day Slavery*



Iliana Villegas's undergraduate Criminal Justice class in human trafficking had an impact. As a graduate student in the Department of Anthropology, she will soon be in Guatemala interviewing active participants in the fight against human trafficking, research funded in part by an NMSU Department of Anthropology grant. "I feel very blessed that I've gotten this opportunity. . . and very grateful."

Common forms of human trafficking – that is, modern day slavery – include forced labor and sex trafficking. It is a large industry, and Iliana believes there is too little awareness about the issue: "I just wish people understood that it exists. . . that it's still happening, even in this country with runaways, with young ones getting lured." It is often related to poverty and resultant attempts at migration, but there is no "typical" profile of human trafficking victims. "It can happen to anybody," says Iliana. Trafficking victims may be lured through false modeling offers or other false job opportunities, or may

fall victim as a result of problems faced in migration and deportation. While a great deal of human trafficking research looks at the U.S.-Mexico border, Guatemala – especially its border with Mexico – is important to the issue in part because migrants attempting to reach the U.S. often get caught in Mexico and are deported to Guatemala regardless of citizenship, leaving them in a situation in which they are vulnerable to traffickers.

Iliana, who is also interested in the related issues of human rights, citizenship, and migration, hopes that her research will give the academic and activist communities a better understanding of the full process of human trafficking and the approaches of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to victim recovery so that they can improve efforts to help victims. After finishing her M.A., she hopes to complete a PhD in Anthropology or Justice Studies and to eventually teach and work in advocacy with either an NGO or governmental organization.

For anyone who is interested in knowing more about human trafficking and how to help fight it, Iliana recommends *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy* by Kevin Bales and the Polaris Project at [www.PolarisProject.org](http://www.PolarisProject.org).

### *Addison Warner: Archaeology of Chultuns*



Addison Warner, graduate archaeology student, recently received a unique opportunity to work with the Slovak Archaeological and Historic Institute (SAHI) under the direction of Dr. Milan Kováč in Uaxactun in northern Guatemala. As part of their team, Addison worked on excavating chultuns – subterranean limestone chambers built by the Maya – and testing whether or not these chultuns might have been used for food storage. Most of Addison's excavation covered the Tzakol period from about

150 or 250 CE to 400 CE.

For his tests, Addison placed different foods, such as dried corn, cacao, red and black beans, yucca, manioc, and *kamote* (sweet potato), in different conditions within and outside of the test chultun and checked them every day for level of decomposition or preservation. Results showed that foods placed in closed containers exhibited some fungal problems due to high humidity, while foods placed in the open in the chultun fared somewhat better. Controls held outside of the chultuns at room temperature fared the best. Addison believes that the level of preservation of most foods placed in the chultun was high enough to possibly warrant using the chambers as temporary food or seed storage

facilities. He has created a written report of his findings for the Guatemalan government and plans to return to continue working on other aspects of the SAHI project in the future.

Addison has received funding through the NMSU Department of Anthropology and through the Center for Latin American Studies.



*Testing food preservation and decomposition rates in a chultun*

## Alumni Spotlight

### *Terry Moody: Leader in Cultural Resource Management and Historic Preservation*



*Terry Moody with Dr. Clarence Fielder in Phillips Chapel C.M.E. Church*

Terry Moody, NMSU Anthropology alumna, has been busy since receiving her M.A. in 2003. After leaving NMSU, Terry worked as a field archaeologist and curator as contractor for the Department of the Army and later as the State and National Register Coordinator for the New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs Historic Preservation Office. “Of course,” Terry stresses, “education and outreach were essential components of this position,” a job duty well-suited to Terry’s interest in giving back to the community. She regularly comes back to NMSU to talk to students about cultural resource management and historic preservation, and she continues to be involved in efforts to preserve Phillips Chapel C.M.E. Church for which she wrote a nomination for the National Register of Historic Places as a graduate student.

Terry began her career with undergraduate degrees in commercial and fine art and history. Before going back to school to obtain her M.A., she coordinated the American Culture Program at Randolph-Macon

Woman’s College, in Lynchburg, Virginia. After deciding to pursue an advanced degree in Native American Studies or Museum Studies, Terry began exploring her options through the Larom Summer Institute of Western American Studies, Buffalo Bill Historic Center, Cody, Wyoming, where she enrolled in a course taught by Dr. Lawrence Loendorf (retired) of NMSU, who encouraged her to look into anthropology as a field of study. After examining different programs in anthropology in the southwest, Terry decided that the Department of Anthropology at NMSU was the best place to help her realize her goals to work in cultural resource management and museums.

In addition to working with Dr. Lawrence Loendorf on NMSU cooperative agreement projects documenting rock art in the southwest, Terry also worked in collaboration with African-American history scholar Professor Clarence Fielder to write the National Register of Historic Places nomination for Phillips Chapel C.M.E. Church, as well as create a museum exhibit on African-American history in Las Cruces. The exhibit was later expanded and incorporated into a traveling exhibit sponsored by the African-American Cultural Center and Museum to include additional displays of African-American history in New Mexico developed by other historians. The exhibit continues to be shown in numerous museums and cultural centers in New Mexico, most recently in Las Cruces at the NM Farm and Ranch Museum. Terry’s collaboration with Professor Fielder continues today as they partner to complete Fielder’s memoirs, which will include the history of Las Cruces’ African-American community.

Moody credits the “associations, opportunities, and experiences” gained through NMSU in helping her “to find work in the field of cultural resource management and historic preservation.” She further explains that “all the theory classes provided me with other skills and abilities that contributed to my success in the professional arena in writing research designs, historic contexts, and understanding the various cultures, past and present, that would become part of my professional life.”

Anthropology has both personal and public importance for Terry: “I chose the field of anthropology to gain a better understanding of the culture of the people who populated North America in ancient times as well as through historical times. Anthropology offers so many ways to gain a perspective about the [culture] of (Continued on Page 5)

## Department of Anthropology

### Archaeology

Rani Alexander  
Beth O’Leary  
William Walker  
Fumi Arakawa

### Biological Anthropology

Brenda Benefit  
Monte McCrossin

### Cultural Anthropology

Miriam Chaiken, Dept. Head  
W. Thomas Conelly  
Don Pepion  
Scott Rushforth  
M. Lois Stanford  
Mary Alice Scott

### Emeritus

Christine Eber  
Edward Staski  
Wenda Trevathan

University Museum  
Anna Strankman

### Affiliated

Weldon Lamb  
Jennifer Robles  
Judy Berryman  
Debra LeBeau  
Silvia Torezani

### Staff

Barbara Burrell



## Paul Deason: Commitment to Service



Paul with wife, Diana

*"I am able to talk to, and bring to the discussion . . . archaeological and cultural awareness to plans and policies."*

Paul Deason doesn't stop. After years of working with the military on numerous projects involving combat simulation, military operations other than war, humanitarian relief, anti-terrorism, and other projects, he went back to school for his fifth university degree. Deason's previous educational experience had focused on education, physics, and experimental statistics and research methods. He has long had an interest in promoting peace, helping people succeed, and in helping countries to preserve their art, history, and culture. In 2004, he was awarded the President's Medal for Voluntary Service by President George W. Bush. Through his military work, Paul also became interested in human behavior, and so when Paul decided to pursue formal study again, he turned to anthropology at NMSU.

While studying at NMSU, Paul interned with El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro Trail Association (CARTA) researching and preserving Herbert Yeo's papers surveying "the Rio Grande, its tributaries and drainage, [and] many previously unknown prehistoric settlements," as well as supplementary photographs taken by Yeo's wife. The detailed information found in the Yeos' work could prove an invaluable resource for paleohydrologists and archaeologists with an interest in the Rio Grande region. Paul later served on the CARTA board of directors and has also volunteered his skills in museum care at Branigan Cultural Center. Today, he serves on the New Mexico Spaceport Authority board, the Department of Justice Anti-Terrorism Advisory Council, and the boards of the Las Cruces Civitan, the Las Cruces Academy, Doña Ana County Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC), and the FBI's InfraGard El Paso. He is also director of Science Technology Analysis Team, LLC. A family man, Paul credits his wife, Diana, as his "driving motivation."

Anthropology Department Head Miriam Chaiken notes, "we are so grateful to Dr. and Mrs Deason for their generous gift to "Friends of Anthropology." Paul's commitment to paying it forward is helping support the research of our current MA students, another invaluable legacy.

Though he doesn't currently work directly in an anthropological field, Paul speaks of the value of wearing his "anthropology hat" in his work. Because of his anthropological education, Paul says, "I am able to talk to, and bring to the discussion . . . archaeological and cultural awareness to plans and policies." He sees anthropological knowledge as an important factor in understanding the human costs and benefits of development projects and hopes to also one day see anthropological scholarship integrated with fields such as law and business. Paul continues to look for ways to serve his community. No doubt he will find them.

anthropological knowledge as an important factor in understanding the human costs and benefits of development projects and hopes to also one day see anthropological scholarship integrated with fields such as law and business. Paul continues to look for ways to serve his community. No doubt he will find them.

## Terry Moody, Cont.

people, their lifeways and dynamics of surviving; it provides students and professionals with great tools in research, working with people of diverse cultures, and field methods to explain past events, that cross over into many academic and professional arenas. I have visited many museums and prehistoric and historical sites, and found great value in how these venues can teach the public about the dynamics of cultures, living together in various environments, in peace and conflict, and how technologies developed to aid people in maneuvering throughout small and large landscapes, in sustenance, protection, and creating beauty in the fundamental and functional. The information these venues impart often come from anthropological and historical studies, which provide both intrinsic and extrinsic value to a broad spectrum of individuals." Not only that, but heritage resource management, according to Terry, "includes research of important places that are meaningful to preserve as a legacy

that will provide for present and future generations a greater understanding and appreciation of where humans have come from and how they have lived together and treated each other and the environment."

*"Anthropology offers so many ways to gain a perspective about the [culture] of people . . . it provides students and professionals with great tools . . . that cross over into many academic and professional arenas."*

After years of dedicating herself to cultural resource management and historic preservation in the public and private sectors, Terry is now building her own business in Heritage Resource Management. It is exciting work, and she looks forward to continuing to give back using her archaeological training when her new firm is established: "I see myself continuing in the historic preservation and cultural resource profession long after the time I could retire. It is a very rewarding occupation."

## Anthropology Professor Awarded Sundt Professorship, Cont.

She elaborates on this connection in greater detail: “Resilience theory and ecology and socio-ecological systems are just a natural fit with earlier theoretical approaches to cultural ecology. Investigating the Maya collapse in Yucatan becomes a paradox when faced with the resilience of contemporary Maya culture on the peninsula.”

Flexibility appears to be key. All state-level political systems experience cycles of growth and decline, but Dr. Alexander believes that solutions to modern issues such as desertification may be different than solutions to ecological problems in the past. Technological solutions are generally the rage today, but other strategies, such as involvement in biodiversity restoration projects and encouraging small-scale farming, are likely to be more important over the long term.

As a leader in the Department of Anthropology’s archaeological track, Dr. Alexander emphasizes comparative, holistic methods, criti-

cal scholarship, and connecting the past with the present.

She is currently working in collaboration with the Bureau of Land Management on projects at Lake Valley, a nineteenth century New Mexico mining town, and Dripping Springs, a former New Mexico sanatorium. Ghost towns, after all, are prime examples of non-resilient, unsustainable communities.

In case your perusal of this newsletter has made you inclined to open your wallet and send some green good wishes our way, we want to let you know that there is now a way for you to make tax deductible donations to “Friends of Anthropology” at NMSU, through the Foundation for NMSU. We have our own account (number 102314 in case you need it) and if you donate through the secure web site the funds will come directly to us...not to the football team, not to paving parking lots, not for buying library books...directly to anthropology!

To make a donation select the following web site: <http://fndforms.nmsu.edu/giving.php> and then click on the option to “Find a giving area or fund.” If you then type in “Anthropology” you can select the option it will offer for “Friends of Anthropology”. Once you have chosen to be our friend you can follow the directions to make a donation. Whether you are inclined to give \$10.00 or \$1,000.00, please know we are very appreciative, and our long-term goal is to use these funds to support future student learning opportunities. We are truly grateful for your support.

### We Want to Hear From You!

What have you done since graduation? Do you have any news or an event you would like to contribute to the Department of Anthropology newsletter? Please fill in the information coupon and attach it to your news story. Send it to: New Mexico State University, Department of Anthropology, MSC 3BV, P.O. Box 30001, Las Cruces, NM 88003-8001 or email your news to [mchaiken@NMSU.edu](mailto:mchaiken@NMSU.edu).

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Degree and Year Graduated \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

My News \_\_\_\_\_