With the first issue of A.L.P.A.C.A. Newsletter, we bring you an interview with Dr. Jon Kent, founder of A.L.P.A.C.A. and current MSU Denver Archeology Professor.

What year did ALPACA first appear as a student organization at MSU Denver and what brought about the vision to create it?

It was between the first and second year of my employment at Metro. (Between 1986-1987). We had a group of very interested students from various subdisciplines (mostly archaeology at the time), who wanted to be an officially-recognized entity on campus, and who also were wanting to interact with national anthropology student organizations (both SAA and AAA at the time). UCD had tried a couple of times to put together a student club, but failed.

What were the primary goals that you hoped ALPACA would provide for students when the club started?

Initially, it was communication. A printed monthly newsletter was begun, and meetings were held once every two weeks. We were (and still are to a large degree) a commuter campus, so “finding out” (what others were interested in, about grad schools, research opportunities, etc.) was the major priority.

For students interested in archaeology and searching for off-campus programs to take part in, what would you recommend?

Attending lectures around town, volunteering with curating collections at colleges, universities, museums, working on outreach with History Colorado, signing up as a federal archaeology paid intern, shadowing CRM field workers, etc.

Dr. Jon Kent

Professor of Archaeology

As the founder of ALPACA, what kind of involvement do you want to see come from the club and its members?

Because “members” (we insisted that anyone who wanted to be part of the club, was) were here for only a couple of years, many transferring in from community colleges, we struggled to find people who could establish continuity from one year to the next—i.e., build a tradition of sorts. I think that has changed as we are getting a much higher percentage of students here for all four years of undergraduate work. I would like to see the club continue to build a sense of identity by establishing traditions. An archive would certainly help. Delegation of responsibilities to involve more students would help. It would also be important for the club to take a more active role in reaching out to the area’s high school and middle school administrators, faculty and students in order integrate anthropology into their curricular core to a much greater extent than at present.
Was there any anthropologist/conference/event you had in mind for ALPACA to host when you first conceived of the club?

It was important to share new discoveries, especially in archaeology and hominid evolution (remember it was the 80’s, so access to such information was less available than now). We also had regional speakers come in who were doing research in different parts of the world, from all four subdisciplines. We especially invited graduate student advisors from UCD, DU, Boulder and CSU to come discuss graduate admissions with our students. We also threw some great parties.

Do you consider there to be a relation between the extracurricular involvement of students in organizations like ALPACA and the opportunities afforded to them in the future as a result of participation?

Many of our most successful graduates (in terms of careers and graduate studies) have been active in ALPACA on some level. Many were able to get their first post-graduate job by networking at professional conferences, getting involved in national student organizations, and participating in fund-raising activities locally (you never know whom you can meet selling home-made cookies for the club!).

Why did you select Anthropology as your field of study? Is there something you wish you had been informed of before beginning? Can you offer any tips and tricks of the trade or something you wish you would have known starting out?

I selected it because it was fun, intellectually challenging and different. If I had known all of that earlier, I would have started in anthropology in undergraduate school. I think the most useful "trick of the trade" is learning how to interact with others by paying a great deal of attention to what interests them, rather than using folks as a sounding board for what interests you.

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Can you give a brief summary of how you ended up choosing to be a professor?

The short version is that when I started teaching as a graduate student, I didn’t like it a lot, but knew that my job options would likely include teaching. As I sought to consistently expand my options, I started my own contract firm, worked with the federal gov’t (National Park Service, BLM), worked as a project manager for a huge international engineering company, and taught a course here and there. Finally, the tenure-track job at Metro opened up, and because of the diversity of my work experience, they hired me to teach here (this was when Metro was more of an opportunity school for those who otherwise might not be in college). I liked what the school stood for and loved the students. I decided to stay.
Is there a culture or site that you haven't worked at, but want to?

I have to be vague here because there are lots of places where I haven't worked and would like to do so in each of them. The range includes: a site of the E. European/African paleolithic, a Roman villa, a Chinese imperial tomb, and a Caribbean shipwreck to name a few.

Finish the sentence: The world is going to: be an ever more amazing place to live.

And what about Bill Nye the Science Guy?

That's my daughter's generation—I had Mr. Wizard.

What research projects are you currently working on?

Andean agro-pastoralism and the socio-political independence of herders in state level societies; animal and human sacrifice in archaeology; rodents as ancient environmental indicators in New Mexico; communication networks in the prehistory of Colorado's Front Range.

Do you have any professional advice to students who would like to pursue a career in archaeology?

Do it, do it now, and don't let anyone tell you you can't.

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Were you ever given a nickname as an undergraduate or while participating in a field-school that reflected an event or mishap related to Anthropology?

I don't know you that well.

Who are some of your favorite anthropologists? Tough question. There are countless colleagues who are doing fabulous work, and I marvel at their insight and dedication. My teachers, of course, influenced my formation in various ways, and like parents,

When you started attending school for anthropology, what culture/location/sub-discipline was most interesting to you?

Archaeology without question. In addition to the reasons I outlined above, it was outdoors. Field work in Guatemala, Ohio, Maryland, Virginia, Missouri, Bolivia, Peru, California and Colorado ensured that I would focus on archaeology of the Americas.

Do you have any advice for students interested in attending graduate school for anthropology?

Never let grad school get in the way of doing the kind of anthropology you want.
Featured Graduate Schools

University of Arizona

Degrees: Master’s, Accelerated Master’s, PhD

Programs: Archaeology, Biological Anthropology, Linguistics, Cultural Anthropology, Medical Anthropology

Requirements: 3.5 Undergrad GPA

Applying: Application Deadlines:
- Master’s and PhD December 15th;
- Accelerated Master’s January 15th.

Tuition and Fees:
- Resident, $859.91/Credit
- Non-resident, $1632.91/Credit

University of Arizona Graduate Website

Colorado State University

Degree: Master’s of Arts in Anthropology

Programs: Archaeology, Bio-Cultural Anthropology, Cultural Anthropology

Requirements: 3.0 Undergrad GPA, 3 Letters of Recommendation, Written Statement of Purpose, Completed Resume.

Applying: Application Deadline February 15th

Tuition and Fees:
- Resident 673.55/Credit Or $5507.02/ 12 Credits
- Non-resident 1632.91/Credit Or $12093.52/ 12 Credits

CSU Graduate Website
Conferences

HPSfAA: Ghost Ranch Retreat
- 9/25 – 9/28
- Ghost Ranch Education and Retreat Center, Abiquiu NM
- http://www.hpsfaa.org/Events

Colorado Archaeological Society: Annual Meeting
- 9/26 – 9/28
- Colorado Springs, Co
- www.coloradoarchaeology.org

Utah Rock Art Research Association: 2014 Symposium
- 10/10 – 10/13
- Kanab, UT

American Anthropological Association: Annual Meeting
- 12/3 - 12/7
- Washington, DC
- http://www.aaanet.org/meetings/

American Academy of Forensic Sciences: Annual Meeting
- 2/16 - 2/21
- Orlando, FL
- http://www.aafs.org/meetings/2015

American Association of Physical Anthropologists: Annual Meeting
- 3/25 - 2/29
- St. Louis, MO
- http://physanth.org/annual-meeting/84th-annual-meeting-2015

Are you wondering how to fund a trip to any of the above conferences (or others)? MSU Denver has a Student Travel Program for those wishing to attend or present at a national conference! For more information go to:

http://www.msudenver.edu/studentactivities/studenttravel/

Featured Organizations

American Anthropological Association

Founded in 1902, the American Anthropological Association (AAA) is the world’s largest organization of individuals interested in anthropology. Although there were several other American anthropological societies in existence at the turn of the 20th century, this new, national organization was formed “to promote the science of anthropology, to stimulate and coordinate the efforts of American anthropologists, to foster local and other societies devoted to anthropology, to serve as a bond among American anthropologists and anthropologic(al) organizations present and prospective, and to publish and encourage the publication of matter pertaining to anthropology” (AAA Articles of Incorporation).

The Society for Linguistic Anthropology (SLA) is a section of the American Anthropological Association (AAA). To join the SLA, please register via the AAA website.

Membership entitles you to a complementary subscription to the Journal of Linguistic Anthropology. You can also join some mailing-lists. More information can be found here.

http://www.msudenver.edu/studentactivities/studenttravel/
The Ghost Ranch Education & Retreat Center, near Abiquiu, NM, is the site of the HPSFAA's annual fall retreat, held this year from September 25th - September 28th. The retreat is a mini-conference set in a relaxed atmosphere and with time for social events. It is a great way to socialize with other members amidst the beauty of the northern New Mexico landscape. The board of directors also usually meets to discuss informant society issues and get input from members. Ghost Ranch is a beautiful place to explore and we truly hope you all are able to attend.

HPSfAA Ghost Ranch Event Page