Report from the AAA Committee on Public Policy

The AAA Committee on Public Policy (COPP) has carried out its function within the context Long-Range Plan Objectives II and VIII. For 2003, the Committee's primary focus was on the development of a draft proposal for an anthropological public policy center, as well as fulfilling our commitments to reviewing and sponsoring Annual Meeting Public Policy Forums, and maintaining our Policy Column in the Annual Newsletter.

OBJECTIVE VIII:

Objective VIII to include: "Encourage cooperative public policy initiatives between the AAA COPP and the SFAA Committee on Public Policy that would benefit practicing anthropologists."

Objective VII.

The COPP developed and approved a draft plan for an anthropological public policy center. The plan was placed on the AAA website. In addition, the plan was presented for feedback at the AAA Annual Meeting in Chicago. Specifically, the plan was presented at a COPP sponsored Public Policy Forum where AAA section leaders provided feedback. In addition, the plan was brought before the Section Assembly, as well as before several section Executive Board meetings. The plan was also discussed at the regular meeting of the COPP where AAA President Liz Brumfiel also provided feedback and participated in discussions. Section endorsements to the draft plan include: Anthropology and Environment, Culture & Agriculture, Biological Anthropological Section, Central States Anthropological Society, National Association for the Practice of Anthropology, and the Association of Senior Anthropologists. Discussions with other sections are ongoing. In addition, AE, BAS, and NAPA have committed funds. Funding requests to other sections are ongoing. As stipulated in the draft development plan, revisions are to be finished by March of 2004 based on input from the AAA meetings. The plan will then be presented to the SFAA at its March meeting in Dallas.

The COPP continued its commitment to organizing and sponsoring Public Policy Forums at the AAA Annual Meetings. Five public policy forums were held at the Chicago meetings with an estimated total attendance of approximately 225. Forum topics included: 1) Education-No Child Left Behind, 2) Health and Social Inequities in the Time of AIDS, 3) Food: The Future of Cooperatives in the Globalized World, 4) Human Rights-Locating Anthropology in Human Rights in the US, and 5) the Anthropological Public Policy Draft Plan. With the exception of #5, each policy forum had at least one section as a co-sponsor. COPP members attended each Forum and provided feedback. The consensus indicated that the Policy Forums were working quite well, though the COPP agreed to initiate procedures to ensure Policy Forums did not replicate regular sessions.

The COPP also fulfilled its commitment to regular AN policy columns. Columns were contributed on education, environment, human rights, and the development of the public policy center.
For 2004, the COPP expects to focus considerable attention on developing the Public Policy Center following the schedule and activities specified in our draft plan. The goal is to provide a final plan to the AAA Executive Committee by the 2004 Annual Meeting. In addition, the COPP will fulfill its obligations to Public Policy Forums and the AN Policy column, as well as updating the COPP portion of the AAA website.

OBJECTIVE II

Project 1. LRPC liaison efforts.

Efforts to promote public policy sessions have been successful and will continue to be promoted in 2003 and 2004. The number of submissions and the range of sections involved in submissions is an indication of success. It is unclear the extent to which this requires a liaison versus the simple publicity of public policy forums and other activities of the COPP. It may be a more suitable primary function for a liaison to participate in COPP meetings and ensure that public policy initiatives as laid forth in the long-range plans are constantly communicated and up-dated between the COPP and the LRPC. In addition, the COPP will continue to promote the involvement of non-anthropologists in Public Policy Forums. An important objective for 2004 would be to have anthropological policy makers formally identified and involved in AAAS sessions, as well as other non-anthropological events.

Project 2. Database of policy experts.

The database of experts has been assembled and is used primarily for Association purposes. The COPP will continue to up-date the database of experts. In addition, for 2003-2004 we propose to develop a more expansive COPP website that will include a call for policy action alert notices and policy briefing papers.

Project 3. Evaluate policy sessions.

This does not appear to be an activity the COPP has engaged in above and beyond monitoring the number of submissions and the range of section interests. We suggest that evaluation be construed to mean number of proposals and the range of sections submitting proposals. The COPP has accomplished the task of specifying topical priority areas for the Policy Forums and will continue to prioritize topics in the future. However, the primary issue is the lack of connection between the quite successful Policy Forums and follow-up action via the COPP or other policy initiatives. We suggest the long-range plan specify that the COPP should develop and execute a plan of action for 2003-2004 by which the Public Policy Forum activities in Project 3 are formally linked with the Public Policy Initiative articulated in Project 4.

Project 4. Public Policy Initiative

This will be a major, if not the major, effort of the COPP in the next two years. A Public Policy Initiative Planning group has been formed as a collaboration between AAA and SFAA (hence the need for the specific collaborative recognition under Objective VIII). Sections of the AAA, to include the C&A and AE, as well as the COPP, organized and held a special policy conference at
the University of Georgia as part of an evolving process to develop an anthropologically-oriented public policy initiative. We suggest the AAA Long-Range Plan continue to formally recognize the goal of developing a collaborative Public Policy Initiative, with the specific task of 2003 to be formalizing a process for development, a timetable, stakeholder input, and funding opportunities. For 2004, the task will be to have a concrete proposal finalized by the AAA Annual Meeting.