Abstract

The Applied Anthropology Laboratories (AAL) in the Department of Anthropology at Ball State University focuses on providing student-centered hands-on training in archaeology and heritage management. As we move toward becoming an increasingly student-focused operation supported by grant and CRM funding sources, we have been able to provide students diverse opportunities to engage outside of the classroom through both experiential and immersive learning. This operational shift of focusing on student learning has resulted in a substantial increase in paid work opportunities for more students, internships, assistantships, and volunteer opportunities. These opportunities result in students graduating with job experiences in research, archaeological survey, report writing, and other transferable skills valuable in an increasingly competitive job market.

Background

The Applied Anthropology Laboratories was founded as the Archaeological Resource Management Services (ARM) in 1978. Since then, our focus has shifted from offering cultural resource management (CRM) services to public and private agencies to expanding student education beyond the classroom. This is accomplished through practical experience, most often paid, in the application of technical and scientific Anthropological knowledge.

Student activities are funded externally through service contracts and grants. In recent years, grants have increased and diversified. This mix provides research opportunities for students, encourages student participation, and provides students a more complete picture of the discipline. Students, undergraduate and graduate, are involved in all aspects of the projects from proposal development through report submission. We have sustained a robust increase in paid student, hands-on learning opportunities. (Figure 2)

This work-integrated learning experience develops more experienced and qualified professionals entering into a competitive job market. Unlike traditional field school models, AAL is not a class. Students graduate with experience as paid employees meeting real client deadlines and producing a quality product.

Goals: #LearnWorkDiscover

Learn. Promote the value of anthropology and archaeology as STEM research and education.

Work. Combine standard and innovative approaches to assist communities, government agencies, and industry in the integration of cultural preservation with community economic development.

Discover. Become a nationally recognized leader in student-centered research and public service.

Student Participation

Student participation takes many forms including paid work, unpaid internships, or volunteering for public archaeology events. Participation is noncompulsory for graduation, so an engaging variety of activities is vital to attract and retain student participation.

Since 2009 student participation rates increased significantly and have stayed very high (see Figure 1). This high level of hours has created a new problem, a limit in the number of students we can find to fill opportunities. We are focusing heavily on student recruitment to fill available experiential learning opportunities resulting from our grant-funded activities.

Paid: Contracts and Grants

The AAL is supported through both contracts and grants. In recent years, grants have increased and diversified. This mix provides research opportunities for students, encourages student participation, and provides students a more complete picture of the discipline. Students, undergraduate and graduate, are involved in all aspects of the projects from proposal development through report submission. We have sustained a robust increase in paid student, hands-on learning opportunities. (Figure 2)

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Unpaid: Trainees, Volunteers, and Internships

AAL student participation is not limited to student employment on grants and contracts. Students without the required prerequisites undergo 20 hours of training before becoming employees. Internships provide research opportunities for students, encourages student participation, and provides students a more complete picture of the discipline. Students, undergraduate and graduate, are involved in all aspects of the projects from proposal development through report submission. We have sustained a robust increase in paid student, hands-on learning opportunities. (Figure 2)

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AAL Funding

Since AAL’s operational shift to focus on student-centered hands-on training in archaeology and heritage management, funding sources have diversified to include grants. Over this short period of time, grant funding has significantly increased to support new student learning opportunities and paid employment in the field.

Since 2011, AAL has been awarded over $2,200,000 in grants. Current trends suggest that this number will continue to increase, with many more hours of paid student involvement in coming years. AAL has increased student recruitment efforts to meet this new demand.

Outcomes

AAL provides a student-centered educational and professional experience unique to Ball State University. Our student-focused operation connects classroom learning to the real world in a variety of ways. These opportunities are made possible through CRM contracts with private clients and high levels of grant funding from the National Science Foundation, National Endowment for the Humanities, Indiana Department of Natural Resources (Historic Preservation Fund), National Park Service (NPS) American Battlefield Protection Programs, NPS Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act and other external and Ball State University funding.