

November 18, 2020

Dear Anthropology Student,

Welcome to college and the anthropology department! I'm a 4th year medical anthropology student and I'm excited that you're coming to Ohio State to study anthropology. I'll spare you the pithy "college is the best 4 years of your life" spiel since you've probably heard that enough at this point. But I'd love to share what I wish I had known when I was standing in your position. So, here's my words to a younger me.

1. When you tell people that you're studying anthropology, they might have a million assumptions what that means as far as getting a job after graduation. They may assume that you're the next Temperance Brennan from the TV show *Bones* and that you're going to solve murder cases and look at bone fragments for the FBI. Some might think that you're preparing to go off to the most remote parts of jungle and live among some primitive society taking field notes on what they are like. Hell, many people will just ask you what anthropology is and what in the world people do with that. But the most frightening assumption to me is the look of pity that I receive which wordlessly would say, "Oh no. You're never going to find a job". So, I'm telling you now, the sooner you learn to smile politely and shake that off, the better you will be. Don't start off discouraged, you'll only view the rest of your time just getting more and more discouraged.
2. Anthropology is the best of psychology, sociology, and biology rolled up into a diverse toolkit, so practice identifying the skills you learn and be prepared to market them. Prepare a brief definition of anthropology that you could give to someone who has never heard that word before in their life, you will end up needing it more than you might think. Once you have that, keep a short list in your mind of how that definition leads to a brief discussion of what makes you unique as an anthropology student and the specific skills that you have, making you different than just any other social sciences student. Don't be afraid to toot your own horn sometimes. When you begin having professional interviews, that is what you have to do to tactfully be the hireable candidate you know you really are.
3. Find an internship! Handshake will be your best friend when you start trying to do this. Apply to everything you are qualified for and take every interview even if it isn't your first choice. I had 7 interviews during my 3rd year winter break at a bunch of different places around Columbus, and I thought I only wanted to actually work for one of those places. When that place didn't offer me what I thought was my dream internship, I thought I was settling for the next best thing. What I thought was a mediocre 2nd place turned out to be the best experience of my time in college. I had the privilege to work at an awesome non-profit where I was able to help people and learn so much not only about the job, but about myself and people. I ended up extending my internship because I loved working there so much. Unpaid internships may seem like a waste of time especially for busy college students, but there are scholarships and grants that you can seek to take care of the financial part, and the skills that you gain from that experience are exactly what you want to come out of college with. Your resume will thank you later.

I hope even one thing I said will be helpful to you. College is hard but learn to make it less hard on you. Make connections with professors and other students because you need a team to get through these 4 (or 5, 6, 7, however many) years. Welcome to the best department on campus and go Bucks!

