Body Donation at the Forensic Anthropology Center at Texas State: Internship Report

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I interned at the Forensic Anthropology Center at Texas State University (FACTS) from May-December 2012. Interning at FACTS was essentially an exercise in participant-observation for my thesis research examining the motivations of donors to FACTS. In my time at FACTS I have gained a better understanding of the donation process, the utilization of donations for research and teaching, and the importance of advancing forensic anthropological research. My participant observation also included assisting FACTS staff with long-term projects such as fundraising, public relations, and compiling a history of the establishment of FACTS.

In order to understand the motivations of donors to FACTS I conducted semi-structured interviews with living donors-those who have registered to donate themselves to FACTS upon their death. I also interviewed next of kin donors-those who have donated a loved one. Participants were questioned regarding their motivations to donate to FACTS, their understanding of the research at FACTS, their perceptions of FACTS, and their beliefs on why others choose not to donate to FACTS.

This report will include a description of my internship responsibilities and duties at the center, the relevance of this internship for my thesis research, and the knowledge gained by interning at the center. I will also discuss the importance of conducting participant-observation for my particular research topic.

OVERVIEW OF FACTS

FACTS facilitates research through a whole body donation program. Body donation to such organizations is crucial as it offers important opportunities for research on topics, including human decomposition processes, the postmortem interval, human skeletal variation and forensic osteological methods. FACTS encompasses the Grady Early Forensic Anthropology Research Laboratory (GEFARL), the Osteological Research and Processing Laboratory (ORPL), and the
Forensic Anthropology Research Facility (FARF). GEFARL houses the skeletal collection, histology and casting equipment, and the offices of the Director, Dr. Wescott and Coordinator, Ms. Sophia Mavroudas. ORPL is located at the entrance of Freeman Ranch and contains the processing suite and research laboratory. The processing suite utilizes stainless steel equipment while the research laboratory contains an x-ray machine and drying tables for the desiccating and labeling of processed remains. FARF is also located at Freeman Ranch and is the outdoor research facility where all decomposition research is conducted.

FACTS also hosts a variety of professional courses to increase awareness of the relevance of forensic anthropological research. Examples of the courses include: Human Remains Recovery, Forensic Facial Reconstruction Sculpture, Identifying Human vs. Non-human Bone, and Methods in Forensic Anthropology. These courses are offered to members of the law enforcement community to utilize in homicide, crime scene, and medico-legal death investigations. Most courses are available for forensic anthropology students as well. A select few are also offered to the general public such as the Forensic Facial Reconstruction Sculpture course which can be taken by those wishing to improve their portraiture skills or gain a better understanding of cranial features.

THE DONATION PROCESS

FACTS has received over one hundred donations since its establishment in September 2008. Donations are utilized to study decomposition in the Texas Hill Country and also as part of the modern skeletal collection. Decomposition studies analyze variables that affect the rate of decomposition such as climate, scavengers, insects, and personal factors such as pathologies, weight, and lifestyle. The modern skeletal collection provides research material for a variety of
studies. Currently, skeletal remains are measured and catalogued into a research database shared with the University of Tennessee.

The donation process begins when a potential donor contacts FACTS. Donors will be referred to the Director or Coordinator who will guide the donors through the process and address questions or concerns. Potential donors need to ensure that they or their loved one does not have an infectious disease such as AIDS, tuberculosis, hepatitis, or an antibiotic resistant infection such as MRSA, and does not weigh over 500 pounds (These regulations are necessary to ensure the safety of FACTS staff from blood borne pathogens as well as to ensure that staff will be able to successfully transport the donation without injury). Donors must also complete a biological profile, which includes medical and dental history, list of places lived, habitual activities, etc. This set of paperwork must be witnessed and signed by two other adults as well as the donor’s next of kin. Photos of the donor throughout their life are also appreciated for research on facial reconstruction. Transportation to FACTS is discussed once paperwork is complete. FACTS staff will pick up donors free of charge within a 200 mile radius of FACTS. If donors reside outside of this radius, they must arrange for transportation to the facility through a mortuary transportation company or be flown into Austin Bergstrom International Airport.

Once donations are received by FACTS, they are transported to the Osteological Research and Processing Laboratory. Donations are stripped of all clothing, personal items, and identity. An identification number is assigned and the transformation from person to donation is complete. Photographs detail every step of the donation process. Using a standard body diagram chart, placement of medical interventions is documented which could include: autopsy sutures, tracheal tubes, the location of catheters, pacemakers, and other medical devices, as well as
bruises and other wounds. Identifying features such as scars and tattoos are noted. Blood, hair, and nail samples are taken for future research.

The donation is then transported to FARF and delivered to a pre-selected location. Ideally the location will be free of remnants of a previous donation and will be relatively easy to get to. A stake indicating the identification number and the date of placement is hammered into the ground marking the location of the donation; more photographs are again taken. A cage may be placed over the donation to prevent local fauna from scavenging. In other circumstances, the donations will be placed uncaged to measure the effects of scavenging vultures on the rate of decomposition.

FACTS staff observe daily changes in the longitudinal decomposition of donations until they have ceased to decompose. Other factors observed and documented include the rate of insect activity, the extent of skin slippage, gaseous stages such as the bloating and sinking in of the abdominal cavity, the amount of bodily fluid secreted onto the ground, the pungency of odor, and the temperature and weather conditions each day. Most donations do not reach the point of skeletonization but in fact mummify due to the dry climate of the Texas Hill Country. Occasionally, donations are buried in preparation for the Human Remains Recovery course instructing anthropology students as well as the law enforcement community in the proper methods of locating, excavating, and analyzing buried human remains.

After thorough documentation of the stages of decomposition, donations are again transported to the Osteological Processing and Research Laboratory. Donations are disarticulated and then boiled as necessary to remove remaining flesh, tissue, and hair. This is called processing. If after the boiling stage organic material remains, staff will remove material by hand and re-boil the bones if necessary. Each bone is then carefully analyzed. The skeletal remains are
then dried and labeled with the identification number. Once completed, the remains are transported to the Grady Early Forensic Anthropology Research Laboratory for permanent placement in the modern skeletal collection.

PROFESSIONALISM, UNDERSTANDING AND SUPPORT, AND AUTHORITY

During the defense of my thesis proposal, I was advised by Dr. Spradley to observe the Director and Coordinator’s interaction with living donors and next of kin of donors. Dr. Spradley emphasized that before beginning my own interviews, I would need to be comfortable speaking with participants bereaving the loss of a loved one as well as those who had questions about the donation process or research conducted at FACTS. Dr. Wescott and Ms. Mavroudas are able to successfully interact with both living donors and the next of kin of donors because they maintain a professional, understanding, supportive, and authoritative demeanor. I was able to observe their interaction with a number of donors and apply this knowledge to my own interviews.

It is important to ensure that during a time of mourning, FACTS staff will be able to register and arrange transport of the donation efficiently. Professionalism is key to ascertaining necessary personal details from donors such as medical and occupational history, habits, and facets of life history including socioeconomic status, number of pregnancies and miscarriages if applicable, and vices including habitual smoking or alcoholism. Because of the sensitive nature of the information collected, it is imperative to communicate effectively while being respectful of the mourning process one may be experiencing.

I was able to more fully engage with my interview participants because of the understanding and supportive demeanor I observed in the Director and Coordinator. Living and next of kin donors expressed the value of and belief in the utility of donating for continued progress in the discipline; this was demonstrated by Dr. Wescott and Ms. Mavroudas through
their reciprocation of this belief. Many donors viewed my interview as a follow-up to the
donation of their loved one. Exuding my own understanding and supportive demeanor during the
interviews reinforced the positive experience of the donation process. Dr. Wescott and Ms.
Mavroudas are never overzealous or treat FACTS as an industry only concerned with increasing
the number of donations. In addition, they note any special requests in the donor’s file. Many
times families request to be informed when their loved one became part of a new research project
or when their skeletal remains could be visited.

I learned throughout my interviews that many next of kin donors had not encountered an
anthropologist before donating their loved one to FACTS. Sophia and Dr. Wescott demonstrated
an authoritative demeanor to convey their expertise in the emerging and ever-changing field of
human decomposition research. They express to donors and their families that forensic
anthropological research on human decomposition is relevant and necessary. They stay current
on the latest research, needs of the law enforcement and forensics communities, and trends in the
funeral industry to enforce this reasoning. Donations facilitate the commission of cutting edge
research for practical application in law enforcement, forensic science, and anthropology. In
addition, being on the cutting edge of research is admittedly attractive for many donors. Often
times, donors request to partake in a specific research project such as the studies conducted on
vultures’ effect on rate of decomposition. Finally, expressing an authoritative demeanor exposes
the public to anthropology. The majority of donors I interviewed learned of FACTS or forensic
anthropological research through documentaries presented on the Discovery or National
Geographic Channel. This was the sole stated reason for deciding to research donation to FACTS
for many donors.
Moreover, each donation requires an immense amount of paperwork and follow-up to make sure all necessary documents are filled out appropriately and accounted for. Sophia and Dr. Wescott navigate through several industries to acquire necessary information. Receiving donations requires an understanding of the legal system, the medical system, and the determination of cause and manner of death (medico-legal system). Navigating the legal system requires comprehending laws concerning the receiving and transportation of donations. The medical system inevitably requires being able to understand medical terms and how a donor’s medical history affect anatomical and skeletal remains. Finally, the medico-legal system requires that Sophia and Dr. Wescott understand how to specify cause and manner of death, generate and distribute death certificates to next of kin.

BETWEEN SCIENCE AND EMPATHY

At FACTS, the Director and the Coordinator contribute both a scientific and anthropological perspective. While they are each trained in the methods and practical application of forensic anthropology they must also do something that most forensic anthropologists do not normally encounter, actually talking to the some of the same people they will later study. Their positions entail that they become familiar with the donor’s life history as well as the utilization of their remains. They are responsible for working with donors as people as well as a donation.

This responsibility can be admittedly difficult for even a trained professional. One might think of these roles as complete opposites, such as that of a social worker, an advocate for the living, and that of a mortician, a caretaker for the dead. It is not always easy to move between the roles of anthropologist and scientist.

As a participant-observer and interviewer, I also found myself navigating between positions and viewpoints. Throughout my internship, I learned details about donors’ lives
through participant observation or interviews. Sometimes, I learned details through both mediums. For example, I gained knowledge about a particular donation from listening to the personal account of the investigation of his death from the detective assigned to his case, by observing his decomposition as a donation, and through an interview with his next of kin.

It was my medical anthropology training more than my background in forensic science that taught me how to appreciate multiple types of understanding. Medical anthropology engages in the ethnographic inquiry of the scientific understanding represented in medicine. This overlap of culture and medicine can be extended to the study of the cultural reaction to the biological phenomenon of death, as it is in the study of motivations to donate to FACTS.

DESCRIPTION OF DUTIES

I was able to assist in each stage of the donation process as well as perform other daily tasks and was part of a team that picked up donations within the 200 mile radius. This process involves coordinating with staff at the medical examiner’s office, hospital, nursing home, or other facility to effectively transport the donation out of the premises. The doctor or other professional who declared death must also sign appropriate paperwork to enable FACTS to complete a death certificate. Donations are then immediately transported to ORPL in preparation for observation of their decomposition at FARF. I assisted in documenting the state of the donations transported to ORPL and collected samples in the process mentioned earlier in this paper. I also helped transport the donations to FARF and placed them in a predetermined location.

In addition, I inputted donor information into the database created for FACTS to organize each donor’s personal information in a researchable format. I also helped other graduate students photograph and document the daily changes of decomposing donations at FARF. As
previously mentioned, sometimes donations are buried in preparation for a workshop instructing
how to locate, excavate and examine buried human remains. I assisted in burying three
donations. Several of these donations were buried five months prior to being exhumed.

One of the most valuable learning experiences I participated in was the processing of
mummified or skeletonized donations. These donations had ceased to decompose and thus were
ready for matriculation into the modern skeletal collection. I had the privilege of being taught
how to process by two experienced anthropology students and was able to immensely expand my
knowledge of the human body. This can be a lengthy procedure depending on the amount of
organic material remaining. Particular bones are also inherently difficult to process. For example,
femurs have a large surface area and consequently contained many sites for muscle and tissue
attachment. Throughout this experience, I was constantly in awe of the uniqueness of this
opportunity. I truly received the best hands-on training in osteology.

Furthermore, processing connects the donor’s life history with scientific observation. I
was able to view how bones change their shape, size, and strength over time due to variables
such as age, occupations, or hobbies. For example, a donation that participated in long-term
manual labor was identified through the robustness of their scapulae and vertebrae in comparison
to other more gracile appearing bones. A tennis player was identified through the difference in
size of one humerus from the other. I processed donations from a variety of ages including: a
fetus, a donation my own age, and many from the elderly. In addition, I observed other student
identify certain pathologies such as cancer and osteoarthritis through skeletal remains.

“I DON’T NEED IT, YOU CAN HAVE IT”

As previously stated, my internship was completed in conjunction with the ascertaining
of data for my thesis. My experiences as an intern coincided with those as a researcher. The goal
of my research was to understand why donors are motivated to donate to FACTS. The participant-observation allowed through my internship provided me with a deeper understanding of the donation process and enhanced my interview skills. By understanding the donation process I was able to compare and contrast the participants’ perceptions of FACTS with the utilization of donations by FACTS. These perceptions also allowed for a better comprehension of their motivations to donate.

Furthermore, by interning at FACTS I was able to learn the correct terminology to describe the process of becoming a donation. For example, terms like “processing,” “placing,” and even the addressing of the donor as a donation number were terms used by the FACTS staff and students. Living and next of kin donors described these terms using words like “cleaning,” “lying out in the field,” and of course, addressing themselves by the donation’s name. Being able to correctly correlate these terms allowed me to understand what the donor was describing and how they perceived their body would be utilized as a donation.

With the support of FACTS and Texas State University’s Institutional Review Board, data was collected for my thesis through semi-structured interviews with living donors and next of kin donors. These populations were sent a letter by Dr. Wescott. The letter informed donors of the purpose of this research and provided my contact information for voluntary participation. I conducted a total of sixty three donor interviews in person and over the phone. I audio-recorded the interviews and transcribed each verbatim.

In addition, the majority of the donors regarded the interview as a follow-up to registering their own body or donating the body of their loved one. Many had questions such as where to locate information on the FACTS website, how to arrange for transportation to FACTS, what types of questions could be answered by FACTS staff, etc. Interning at FACTS provided
me with the insider knowledge to answer these questions or direct the participants to someone who could. I also was able to have access to people with the experience, knowledge, and willingness to answer questions of my own.

I questioned interview participants on their perceptions of FACTS, their understanding of the research conducted, their beliefs on why others chose not to donate, and their motivations to donate to FACTS. Examples of questions include: What led you to choose to donate your body/your loved one to the Forensic Anthropology Center at Texas State University-San Marcos (FACTS) versus another type of funeral option?; What was this process like?; How do you feel about this experience now?; How do you feel about your decision? At the end of each interview, I obtained demographic information such as annual household income, occupation, and education level. Upon completion of the interviews, each transcript was coded and analyzed using content analysis.

MOTIVATIONS FOR DONATION

Interviewing donors provided insight into the variety of motivations to donate to FACTS. There are four motivations for the participants I interviewed to donate to FACTS: an interest in the scientific process, the opportunity to be helpful, donation as an alternative to a traditional funeral, and the cost effectiveness of donation to FACTS.

*Interest in the Scientific Process*

Participants employed in law enforcement or forensic science are motivated to donate because of the utility of the research conducted at FACTS to their respective fields. They relate research conducted at FACTS to solving homicide cases and investigating crime scenes. One participant stated, “there is no better way for a crime scene officer to give back than to, you know, add to the science.” These participants have worked directly with forensic anthropologists
and decided to donate after interacting with FACTS staff through a field school or after utilizing the service of another forensic anthropologist.

Other participants were motivated by their fascination with forensic science. Donation to FACTS allows them to partake in forensic research in a way that was previously unattainable. They learned of donation to forensic anthropological research facilities by watching television shows such as *CSI* or *Bones* and documentaries about FACTS or the Forensic Anthropology Center at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville on the *National Geographic* and *Discovery* channels. Every participant also acknowledged reading “The Body Farm” by Patricia Cornwell, “Stiff” by Mary Roach, or novels written by Kathy Reichs or Jefferson Bass. Although these participants are not directly exposed to forensic science in their workplace or daily lives, they maintain a fascination with the research, viewing it as exciting and innovative. One participant stated, “I thought it was really exciting because I think that forensic aspects of, you know, dating death and learning about death through microbiology is really exciting.” In describing the registration process to donate, one participant stated, “It’s actually a little adventurous. For me anyway. I think it’s cool that my body’s going to be rotting in a trunk somewhere. Maybe it’s the macabre aspect of it that is appealing.” Another participant who donated her next of kin to FACTS stated the donor felt like her experience as a donation would be, “like another season of *CSI.*”

Participants wanted the donation of their body to aid crime-solving. They envision their donation as having a direct impact in the finding of missing persons and the identification of cause and manner of death. One participant stated, “I just want to catch criminals. Maybe that’s what it is about the whole thing, I want to catch criminals.” Furthermore, participants envision the donation of their body as contributing to the “serving of justice,” “I can hope that justice will
be served because of something that's learned from our donation.” Again, participants acknowledge that although they are not employed in the fields of law enforcement or forensic science, their donations are contributing to the furthering of the respective fields, “the only thing I know, and this comes from my TV education, is I guess that I can hope that justice will be served because of something that's learned from our donation.”

The Opportunity to Be Helpful

Participants want their remains to be helpful, to have a continued purpose, or equate donation to FACTS to organ donation. Participants with a professional background in education value the utilization of donations to teach students in the forensic anthropology program or law enforcement training courses. For this group, it is appealing to be utilized as a tool for the continued education of others instead of allowing their remains to be interred in a traditional manner. One participant stated, “I think it’s a wonderful idea. I mean instead of just letting it, you know, do nothing, it’s giving opportunities for people to learn things from it and to further education and to further science and that’s basically why I did it. I think it’s a wonderful opportunity to be able to donate to future education and to the future because somebody’s going to be using it.”

Participants are motivated by the perception of continuity of their remains after death. They want their remains to directly impact or benefit someone else’s life and have a continued purpose. One participant stated, “Because that was not just an event that would be passed over but it would be useful, possibly to, you know, other people. So that, that was just a wonderful thought to think that he could do something that wonderful for other Texans.”

Other participants are motivated to donate to FACTS because they equate donating their body with the donation of their organs. Participants hope that if viable, their organs will be
donated to those in need. Several of these participants take proactive measures to ensure to “prepare themselves for donation.” This includes keeping up with scheduled doctor’s appointments to guarantee that they, and their organs, are healthy enough for donation. One participant stated, “And, as I repeat myself, if it is going to help somebody that is what you should do. You don’t want to see somebody walking around blind and I just got back from getting my eyes checked for diabetes, I have no diabetes in my eyes. So I have been checked out thoroughly because I am donating my body so maybe that would help, too.”

*Donation as an Alternative to a Traditional Funeral*

Participants express negative opinions towards traditional methods of disposition and are motivated to donate due to a fear of being buried or cremated, a preference for the location of FACTS, and the view that they live an alternative lifestyle and therefore should choose a non-traditional method of disposing their remains. One participant described her motivation to donate as, “On the more emotional level, even though I do recognize it [my body] as a vessel and I won't be aware of anything once I'm gone, the thought of being entombed in a box or put into a crematorium, not air conditioned…”

Participants were attracted to disposition in the “natural setting” of FARF in the Texas Hill Country as an alternative to burial or cremation. One participant describes her next of kin’s decision to donate as, “He felt like I had opened up some sort of Eden to him with this idea because we live out in the forest. And we love the forest.” Furthermore, while discussing funerals one participant stated, “I've just always thought they were unnecessary, and you know I, I just thought that this kind of thing is just perfect for me and my line of thinking.”

The majority of next of kin donors chose to donate to FACTS solely to honor the wishes of their loved one. This decision would not have been made or even conceived if the donor had
not previously requested to participate in this type of donation, “We were all in agreement for what he had wanted to do. It was important because it was so important to him. He would always remind me what he wanted to do.”

Cost Effectiveness of Donation to FACTS

The high cost of traditional funerals is a motivation to search for a cheaper option. Participants describe the funeral industry as an “enterprise” concerned only with increasing profits at a time of grieving and vulnerability. Donation to FACTS bypasses the pressure to spend money on a funeral while also alleviating the possibility of leaving behind a financial burden for family members. One participant stated, “I think that spending money on a funeral you might as well take $2 to $10,000 and flush it. And if I want to flush that much money, I’ll do it while I’m living. And so it was an opportunity to serve science and also to dispose of a body in a way that wouldn’t cost the family.”

Participants repeatedly reflect on their own experiences planning funerals for a loved one as traumatic. This experience encouraged them to plan for their own death and seek information about whole body donation, “And I just thought one that it was, first of all, to not make decisions before death was sort of a selfish thing. It was not kind to your loved ones, people who can make very uninformed decisions, or to sort of guess what the deceased wanted to have instead of really discussing the situation beforehand or having any real input from the deceased because they didn't want to face it themselves.”

Furthermore, although planning a funeral was a traumatic experience for some, the unexpected expense of a funeral was even more traumatic. Some participants acknowledge that they cannot afford a funeral, even with a pre-arranged payment plan. They are motivated to donate to FACTS not because it is a cheaper option than a funeral but because it is the cheapest
option available to anyone within the two hundred mile pick-up radius of FACTS, “The major reason I decided to donate in the first place was financial. Funerals are very expensive and I come from a pretty poor family. When my parents died they didn’t make any arrangements beforehand and left me and my two sisters with expenses and I didn’t want to do that to my family, if something happens to me… funeral arrangements and donating seemed to be my only choices.”

APPLICATION

The results of my thesis research can be put into practice through the utilization of applied anthropology. Applied anthropology allows for scientific research conducted at FACTS to be placed within the context of the donor’s perspective. Understanding the variety of motivations to donate to FACTS permits FACTS staff to become better informed of the myriad of decisions involved in the determining of a method of disposition, better identify those likely interested in this type of donation and market the donation process towards them, increase the availability of information regarding the donation process, and increase public knowledge of forensic anthropology.

PRESENTATION TO FACTS

Speaking with donors provided insight into their perceptions of FACTS. Since most of the participants viewed the interview as a follow-up to registering to donate or donating their loved one I believe this encouraged the addressing of any concerns or suggestions. It also invited the participants to recount any difficulties in the process that FACTS should be aware of. Several participants registered to donate or donated a loved one in the early stages of FACTS and noted that they had seen signs of improvement. The website has noticeably improved with the addition of a FAQ section as has the pickup time for donations within the 200 mile radius. Obtaining a
death certificate has improved as well as communicating to the next of kin how to find this information. Overall communication with donors and their families has also improved with the addition of a full-time coordinator.

I would like to present any remaining concerns and suggestions to all those affiliated with FACTS. There is always room for improvement. Participants provided an array of practical suggestions such as: providing a list of mortuary transportation companies in each major metropolitan area within a 200 mile radius that have been utilized in previous donations; speaking with chaplains, social workers, and nurses in hospitals, hospices, etc. about the purpose of FACTS and how donations are transported to FACTS; and including FACTS on the list of institutions accepting whole body donations published by the Texas Anatomical Board.

CONCLUSION

I conducted several projects for Dr. Wescott or Ms. Mavroudas as part of my internship. These projects embraced the relationship between forensic anthropology and the community. Specifically, Dr. Wescott and Ms. Mavroudas wish to increase awareness of FACTS and improve operations at FACTS through greater funding and the improvement of courses. These projects again highlighted the importance of applied anthropology and increasing attention towards the context of the public’s perspective.

I assembled a list of law enforcement agencies in Hays and surrounding counties to send course information to. The hope is that they will be better informed and educated about forensic anthropological research and be aware that FACTS is a valuable resource they can utilize for consulting purposes. Each agency was sent a letter outlining information on future workshops and courses directed toward law enforcement.
I compiled a list of corporations that frequently donate to non-profit organizations. Included in this list were criteria for eligible organizations, contact information, and a link to the online registration process if applicable. In searching for donating corporations, I had to relay the benefits of the research conducted at FACTS for a variety of different communities including: the San Marcos community, the law enforcement community, the scientific research community, and the medical research community. In describing the research and needs of FACTS to meet the variety of criteria, I was able to include a wide range of organizations on the list. The list included corporations such as H-E-B, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Motorola, and Target.

FACTS is not necessarily a well-known research center across North America. I assembled a list of anthropology departments that employ professors in more than just cultural anthropology. It is hoped that this list will attract researchers interested in utilizing FACTS and increase awareness of the purpose of FACTS. This list included: the name and location of the institution, the chair and their email address, and the address of the appropriate department. In order to find this information, I used the American Anthropological Association’s AnthroGuide. This annual publication contains the contact information for all institutions affiliated with the AAA as well as the research interests of each anthropology professor and any research centers or laboratories in each department. If the institute employed professors or researchers with an interest in biological anthropology or archaeology or contained teaching laboratories in these subfields, I included them on the list. The final count included 307 institutions. This list will be utilized to send an email to the chair and a formal letter to each department.

It is important for courses to evaluated, improved, and modified if advances in research deem necessary. I completed a project in which I summarized the evaluations of the past three Human Remains Recovery courses. At the end of each workshop participants fill out an open-
ended survey rating the instructor’s performance as well as detailing any comments, concerns, or suggestions. The ratings are given on a scale of 1 to 5. I averaged the rating for each instructor in each course. In addition, the participants in each course complete an exam at the beginning of the course and at the end of the course. I calculated the average increase of exam scores for each course.

Finally, I am currently engaged in a project to construct a history of the founding of FACTS using, as an initial resource, a database of all of the publications regarding FACTS thus far. I plan to interview those involved in the establishment of FACTS as well as former staff.

In addition, since being established the center has expanded FARF and built ORPL. The number of living and next of kin donors has steadily increased each year. A greater number and variety of courses are being offered including the Forensic Facial Reconstruction Sculpture course with renowned forensic artist Karen T. Taylor. Very soon, the modern skeletal collection will be large enough for outside researchers to study donations.

Interning at FACTS has enriched my understanding of the scientific and cultural dimensions of forensic anthropology. I was given complete access to the donation process by FACTS staff and donors who were both eager and excited to facilitate my questioning. Due to their willingness to work with me, I have gained a substantial amount of knowledge regarding modern cultural perceptions of death as well as the innovative field of forensic anthropology that continues to seek information benefiting scientific knowledge. I am grateful for the opportunity to have had such a multidimensional learning experience.