

A Brief History of the American Museum of Natural History Graduate Training Collaborations

The AMNH graduate program began with the study of geology and vertebrate paleontology in the 1890s under the direction of Henry Fairfield Osborn, who held the dual position of professor of biology (and later zoology) at Columbia and curator of vertebrate paleontology at the Museum (and organized these departments at their respective institutions in 1891). William Diller Matthew, the most noted and influential zoo-geographical theorist of the time, completed his doctoral studies at Columbia and AMNH and then joined the curatorial staff of AMNH. In 1896, when Franz Boas became lecturer in anthropology at Columbia (three years later he was selected as the new department's first professor) and assistant curator of ethnology and somatology at AMNH, he launched the study of anthropology at both institutions.

Subsequently—in 1908, under the direction of the biologist W. K. Gregory (who also held dual positions at Columbia and AMNH)—the program took its present form, stressing both education and research at the highest level. In the 1920s, famed anthropologist Margaret Mead studied under Franz Boas and held positions at both Columbia and the Museum. After World War II, the program expanded to encompass biology with the participation of George G. Simpson and Norman Newell. In these years, three or four students participated annually in the refashioning of evolutionary theory into a synthesis embracing genetics, paleontology, ecology, and taxonomy. There were many notable graduates from this post-war period, including John Ostrom, Leigh Van Valen, Stephen J. Gould, Niles Eldredge, Eugene Gaffney, Walter Coombs, Bob Hunt, Margery Coombs, Patricia Rich, Tom Rich, and Bruce MacFadden. Graduate training partnerships with the City University of New York began in the 1970s at Queens College (continuing today with multiple programs at the CUNY Graduate Center), Cornell (Entomology) in 1989, NYU in 2002, and Stony Brook University (Physics & Astronomy) in 2007; the museum has had similar programs with Yale University, and is a founding and continuing member of the New York Consortium on Evolutionary Primatology. In 1991, the New York State Board of Regents admitted AMNH into the University of the State of New York, and amended the museum's charter in 2006 and 2015 to include the Richard Gilder Graduate School (RGGS) and its Ph.D. and MAT training programs. The RGGS is the umbrella for all university-level training partnerships, continuing to build and foster training collaborations with our historic and other new partner organizations.

Recent alumnae/i hold posts at prestigious national and international institutions. For example, some of the paleontology graduates from the Columbia-AMNH/RGGS collaborative programs since 1980 that are helping to lead the current generation of scientists and educators include Amy Balanoff (Johns Hopkins U.), Stephen Brusatte (Edinburgh U., U.K.), Marc Carrasco (Diablo Valley College/UC-Berkeley), Jianye Chen (Inst. of Vertebrate Paleontology & Paleoanthropology [IVPP], Beijing, China),

Richard Cifelli (U. of Oklahoma / Sam Noble Museum), Gregory Edgecombe (Natural History Museum, London, U.K.), John Flynn (AMNH), Sherri Gabbert (Washington U. School of Medicine), Jonathan Geisler (NYIT-COM), Gina Gould (Museum of Innovation and Science, Schenectady Co., NY), Sunny Hwang (W.W. Norton & Co.), Alexander Kellner (National Museum of Brazil), Daniel Ksepka (Bruce Museum), Bruce Lieberman (U. of Kansas), Peter Makovicky (U. of Minnesota), Jin Meng (AMNH), Matthew Mhlbachler (NYIT-COM), Sterling Nesbitt (Virginia Tech U.), Rui Pei (IVPP, Beijing, China), Diego Pol (Museo Egidio Feruglio, Trelew, Argentina), Paul Sereno (University of Chicago), Michelle Spaulding (Purdue U. NW), Julia Tejada-Lara (Caltech), Alan Turner (Stony Brook U.), Abagael West (U. of Pittsburgh), André Wyss (U. of California, Santa Barbara), and Hongyu Yi (IVPP, Beijing, China)