Richard Gilder Graduate School
AT THE AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

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 the eminent Henry Fairfield Osborn. Osborn 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 (the year Osborn was appointed President of the Museum) 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. Notable graduates from this post-war period include Niles Eldredge and the late Stephen J. Gould. Partnerships with CUNY began in the 1970s at Queens College and NYU in 2002. In 1991, the board of regents admitted AMNH into the University of the State of New York.

Recent alumnae/i have held posts at prestigious national and international institutions. Since 1980, paleontology graduates, in particular, that have led the current generation of scientists include: Daniel Bryant (Geo-Cleanse International), Gregory Edgecombe (Australia Natural History Museum), John Flynn (AMNH), Gina Gould (Florida State Museum), Alexander Kellner (National Museum of Brazil), Bruce Lieberman (University of Iowa at Ames), Bruce MacFadden (University of Florida at Gainesville and the Florida Museum of Natural History), Paul Sereno (University of Chicago), Paul Vrana (Harvard University), and André Wyss (University of California at Santa Barbara).