Jessica Gunson, PhD

Research Program Lead | PhD, Biological Anthropology

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

Research Program Leader and PhD scientist who takes complex initiatives from concept to delivery across teams and partners without direct authority. Led a multi-year, NSF- and Fulbright-supported program across universities, conservation organizations, and government agencies in two countries: plans, milestones, reporting for senior stakeholders, and a process redesign that doubled output with no added headcount or budget. 4 years of experience managing externally funded projects and grant reporting. Has taught undergraduates and mentored student researchers.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Project Management, Concept to Delivery
- Planning, Milestones & Oversight
- Reporting to Senior Leaders
- Process Improvement & Efficiency
- Cross-Functional Alignment
- Partner & Stakeholder Relations
- Grant Funding & Reporting
- Research, Analysis & Reporting
- R, SQL

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Research Program Lead | Jan 2022 – Aug 2026

U.S. Fulbright Scholar Program, hosted at Pandrillus' Drill Ranch | Cross River State, Nigeria

Promoted to lead a multi-year, NSF- and Fulbright-supported international research program across 2 field sites with no existing playbook to inherit.

- **Program Delivery:** Led a multi-year, NSF- and Fulbright-supported international research program spanning universities, conservation organizations, and government agencies across Nigeria and the United States, with no existing playbook to inherit
- **Process Improvement:** Diagnosed a resourcing inefficiency through root cause analysis of performance data and implemented a systemic fix by redesigning team structure and workflows – doubling data collection output with no increase in headcount or budget
- **Reporting:** Built the reporting infrastructure used to monitor data health and program performance for institutional and government stakeholders across two countries
- **Senior Stakeholders:** Partnered directly with institutional and government leadership to structure ambiguous, high-stakes problems and translate findings into decisions that shaped program strategy
- **Team Leadership:** Led and formally mentored a distributed research team, setting quality standards and operating procedures that held up with no day-to-day oversight

Graduate / Quantitative Researcher, PhD Program | Aug 2019 – Jan 2022

New York University, Evolutionary and Biomedical Primate Biology Group | New York, NY

- **Analysis & Research:** Applied hypothesis testing, regression, and modeling to complex, real-world datasets, identifying root causes behind unexpected patterns rather than accepting the first explanation
- **Funding:** Wrote and defended a competitive, peer-reviewed National Science Foundation grant proposal ($35,533), combining it with Fulbright funding to raise $64,033 total in combined support
- **Teaching & Mentorship:** Served as Adjunct Instructor for "Human Evolution" to 40+ students per semester and mentored a high-school research team through NYU's ARISE program on comparative ACE2 variation and SARS-CoV-2 susceptibility across primates

EDUCATION

PhD, Biological Anthropology (MPhil 2023) | New York University | *New York, NY* | 2026

BS, Biology | University of Florida | *Gainesville, FL* | 2016