

Students' Data Analysis Efforts for College Hill Neighborhood

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College Hill Re-Envisioned: Students' Data Analysis Efforts for College Hill Neighborhood

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What a start to a new school year - face masks, social distancing, and more hand sanitizing!

Beyond re-adjusting to a "new normal" here on campus, re-envisioning is taking place adjacent to the UNI campus at the nostalgic College Hill Neighborhood.

Leading this endeavour was Dr. David M. Grant of the College of Humanities, Arts, and Sciences. Grant lives in the College Hill Neighborhood and has served on their community relations committee. Since being on the committee, he has reached out to the group in order to help them and students who live, work, and shop in the College Hill area.

Grant led his Capstone Course: Analysis of Social Issues class with efforts to create a re-envisioned college hill as their public project. This Analysis of Social Issues course is offered to Junior students and beyond, and defined by the university as: critical thinking skills applied to rhetoric about issues confronting society - how to use philosophy, logic, social science and natural science to critique arguments and engage in meaningful discourse.

The students were able to collaborate with the non-profit organization: College Hill Partnership. In efforts to assist the College Hill Partnership surveys were created and data was collected to make needs for residents of the College Hill neighborhood more visible.

In an effort to create community engagement in the College Hill Neighborhood, the students found it necessary to offer improvements to Seerley Park and provide a free library as part of their public project.

"We have worked on improvements to Seerley Park and the installation of the free library. Students had to talk with other students, and community members near the park as well as city managers and staff to help coordinate all the pieces involved in any public project," states Grant.

The combination of students talking with other students, as well as community members made this a valuable learning experience for the students; hence, why Grant saw this re-envisioning as an opportunity to

create a service-learning project for his students.

Grant also explains how he was able to create a real-life, public project for his students instead of a typical writing project that he had done previously.

He states, "I was not trained to teach abstract outcomes, but to teach to the real stakes involved. For me, that has been in shifting students from writing [a] project to me, the artificial audience of the teacher, to having them write to and for the real audiences of a community."

The expectations and concepts learned in the classroom were put to the test, which is exactly how Grant wanted it. His students were able to feel a sense of accomplishment by the real-world work they were able to do. The authentic engagement that was produced has a more lasting impact for everyone involved.

These class efforts are listed in conjunction with both service learning and a sustainability certification. As well as support goal two of the Civic Action Plan for UNI: Campus Vitality - to enhance resource and facility development to provide an enriched campus life experience which is both environmentally and fiscally responsible.

Thank you Dr. Grant, and students, for your efforts to make UNI an engaging campus that puts forth good work with Cedar Valley community members in mind.

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