



Appalachian
Regional
Commission

2019 Appalachian Teaching Project
Projects & Participants
(In Order of Presentation)

Crystal City Marriott at Reagan National Airport
Arlington, VA

Friday, December 6, 2019

Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Development

9:00 AM – University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN

“Increasing Economic and Entrepreneurial Opportunities by Promoting Outdoor Recreation Among Underrepresented Visitor Groups”

Description: Travel and tourism is a \$60 billion dollar per year industry in Appalachia. Coincidentally, African American tourism is also a \$60 billion dollar per year industry in the United States. Interestingly, however, these two seemingly related industries are almost mutually exclusive. While the Appalachian Region contains or is near large segments of the nation's rising black middle class (Birmingham, Atlanta, Washington, Charlotte, etc.), minority visitation to the region is shockingly low—particularly in rural areas. The phenomenon raises important issues of equity and justice. It also, however, represents a significant lost economic opportunity for the region. This year's class studied the barriers to outdoor recreation among minority populations and develop a fundable and concrete strategy to address these issues. Students worked with community and agency stakeholders to develop strategies to promote and increase minority participation in outdoor recreation in Appalachian communities.

9:15 AM – Frostburg University, Frostburg, MD

“Living off the Land: A Western Maryland Experience”

Description: Working with existing documents and archives, Frostburg State's project emphasized ARC's Goal 4: Natural and Cultural Assets, which is to “Strengthen Appalachia's community and economic development potential by leveraging the Region's natural and cultural heritage assets.” Students used historical materials to research the history, folklore, and traditions of life on a historic western Maryland farm and to develop preliminary plans for projects and activities featuring that material. The students' work is particularly important to the Evergreen Heritage Center, which explores western Maryland's rich agricultural history. While the Evergreen Heritage Center has a successful record of offering programs, events and camps tailored to K-12 students, board members hope that an additional emphasis on regional heritage and history will allow the Evergreen to expand its audience and outreach opportunities. While the Evergreen is off the beaten path, it is in

close proximity to the much-used Great Allegheny Passage hiking-biking trail. FSU students specifically addressed how the Evergreen can best engage that audience.

9:30 AM – Fairmont State University, Fairmont, WV
“From Rail Beds to Trail Heads: Moving Forward Through the Past”

Description: Fairmont State University students engaged with the Marion County director of Homeland Security and Emergency Management to identify and locate forgotten coal mine towns and other historical sites that are found adjacent to the rail trail from Shinnston to Fairmont, WV. Students researched and created a trail map identifying the sites, which were placed at trail entry points. Students also presented the sites to Monongah Elementary fourth graders and arranged a trail biking day for those interested in seeing the actual sites. Monongah students, with the assistance of media teacher Connie Boggs, wrote and recorded verbal information which, was included as QR codes on the new trail map. Fairmont State students researched the possibility of purchasing historical markers to be placed on the trail at actual identified sites, and they interviewed local business owners to understand the significance of their property in closing a five-mile trail gap that would complete the Parkersburg to Pittsburgh (P2P) corridor through Fairmont, and how the Appalachian Teaching Project can assist with that development.

Workforce Barriers, Community Health, and the Opioid Crisis

10:30 AM – Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA
“Opioid Use Disorder’s Impact on a Northern Appalachian Workforce”

Description: This project is a multi-method approach that used both qualitative and quantitative data to better understand the landscape of the opioid epidemic in Indiana County and its impact on the local workforce. Students collaborated with the Armstrong-Indiana Drug & Alcohol Commission (AICDAC) to identify the occupations and industries that have the highest prevalence of opioid use by workers and created data informed recommendations for labor stakeholders. Students from Dr. Adams’s Medical Anthropology and Dr. Poole’s Applied Anthropology courses utilized ethnographic interviews and participant observation to understand the nature of the opioid epidemic in our county. Students from Dr. Vick’s Labor Economics course performed a comprehensive literature review of the research on opioid use and economic outcomes. Students also explored links between opioid abuse and dynamic changes in employment and poverty status. The end goal was to create an informed list of recommendations that can be adopted by AICDAC and other community entities to aid in the reduction of workforce loss related to the opioid epidemic. To ensure sustainability, student researchers also worked to identify funding streams and grants that AICDAC can apply for to implement programming.

10:45 AM – Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, VA
“Identifying the Needs and Options for Recovery to Work Programs in Southwest Virginia”

Description: As clearly illustrated in the ARC-supported report (*Appalachian Diseases of Despair*), substance abuse and its sequelae are widespread, increasing, and much higher in Appalachia versus non-Appalachian areas. Within the region, deaths from alcohol, prescription drug, and illegal drug overdose; suicide; and alcoholic liver disease/cirrhosis of the liver, and in particular drug overdose deaths, are particularly heightened in Central Appalachia. This increase in substance abuse, particularly opioid addiction, presents numerous challenges to rural Appalachia communities in Virginia, particularly as it relates to services needed, and often not available, for persons in recovery. This project was designed to support community partners’ efforts in their recovery-to-work programs by identifying barriers and potential solutions to those barriers. Supporting recovery-to-work opportunities addresses the clear need for long-term and sustainable solutions to the opioid crisis. Partnering with Virginia Rural Health Association, students conducted research on recovery-to-work programming needs and opportunities in Southwest Virginia.

**11:00 AM – University of Pittsburgh at Bradford, Bradford, PA
“What’s for Dinner? Examination of food insecurity in a rural northern Appalachian community”**

Description: The University of Pittsburgh at Bradford students collaborated with Metz Culinary Management, the Panther Pantry, and the Office of Community Engagement to assess food insecurity and food resource utilization at a rural northern Appalachian University. Food insecurity can affect physical and mental health and wellness among college age students and can negatively impact educational success. Decreased academic performance and truncated academic pursuit linked to food insecurity may also have negative consequences on community composition and the availability of a ready workforce. At institutions which serve proportionally large numbers of first-generation and Pell-eligible students, this impact may be especially acute. Veterans, LGBTQ, and older students may also be disproportionately affected. This student-driven project worked with the University and the local community to assess levels of food insecurity, perceived levels of health, and food resource availability and utilization. Students obtained baseline data on the scope and impact of food insecurity in this community and developed suggestions to strengthen available resources through collaboration with community partners. Data obtained will also support the procurement of external funding to help to assure sustainability.

Community Development through Cultural Heritage and the Arts

**11:30 AM – Ohio University, Athens, OH
“Walking the Winding Road in Southeast Ohio”**

Description: Ohio University students collaborated with the Little Cities of Black Diamonds (LCBD) Council to determine key findings, action items, and next steps based on a series of community discussions focused on intergenerational knowledge and vision sharing. Located in Southeast Ohio, the LCBD is a micro- region within Appalachia made up of 56 towns built during the coal boom of the late 1800s. Athens and Perry Counties are part of the LCBD region and are often listed as economically “distressed” or “at-risk” by the Appalachian Regional Commission. During 2018-2019, Ohio University ATP students, along with the LCBD and the Ohio State Center for Folklore Studies, planned a series of community discussions focused on intergenerational knowledge and vision sharing. These focus groups were completed in the summer of 2019, and students analyzed the data from the transcribed conversations of the focus groups. In addition, students presented the findings to the LCBD Council and collaborated with the Council to develop a list of action items and next steps. The overall goal of this project was to provide the LCBD with key insights to support and develop ongoing asset-based community development in Southeast Ohio.

**11:45 AM – Union College, Barbourville, KY
“Public Perception and Awareness of Knox County, Laurel County and Whitley County Kentucky Artisans”**

Description: Knox County, Laurel County, and Whitley County, Kentucky have a plethora of local artisans (musicians, visual artists, folk artists, actors, authors, local food ways, etc.). However, economic growth opportunities are limited because the majority of the artisans do not have a business or marketing plan for their product or services and consequently, these services seem to be hidden jewels. Union College students collaborated with the Knox County Chamber of Commerce, the Knox County Arts, Crafts, Humanities Council, the Laurel County 4-H Agent, the Whitley County Fine Arts Coordinator, the Kentucky Arts Council, Berea College, and Knox County Promise Neighborhood to determine the public perception of Knox, Laurel, and Whitley County Artisans in regards to their products and services, and brought awareness to these artisans of opportunities for business and marketing plan development.

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Saturday, December 7, 2019

Community Planning and Asset Development

9:00 AM – University of North Georgia, Dahlonega, GA

“Mount Hope Cemetery Preservation Project: Leveraging a cultural heritage asset to strengthen community development”

Description: The Appalachian Studies Center at University of North Georgia collaborated with campus, local, and state partners to restore, interpret, and promote Mount Hope Cemetery, in Dahlonega. Because Lumpkin County is one of the top 100 fastest growing counties in the nation and the University of North Georgia one of the fastest growing in the state, the city leaders must balance competing demands from newcomers, students, and tourists alike. Cemetery tourism is a rapidly growing niche market of cultural and heritage tourism in the United States, particularly for locations that played a major role in pivotal points of our nation’s history. With proper planning, Mt. Hope could provide valued green space not only for those interested in history and genealogy but also for other user groups. In Year 1 of the project, students developed their leadership and strategic planning skills to put partnerships and resources in place. They met with each partner and learned how community economic development planning proceeds collaboratively. They also visited other cemeteries that have increased tourism and developed a mock-up of a visitors’ guide featuring 10 mini-biographies.

9:15 AM – Alfred State College, Alfred, NY

“Re-imagining Downtown as Destination: A Vision for Sustainability and Growth in Bolivar, New York”

Description: Allegany County has one of the highest poverty rates in New York State, and is home to a number of small communities, such as Bolivar, with limited resources and part-time governments. These villages and towns need assistance in many ways that include developing plans to assist them in creating a vision for their future sustainability. In Fall 2019, Professor William Dean led one section of the Architecture and Design Department’s Urban Design Studio in partnering with the Village and Town of Bolivar as the subject for the semester’s Appalachian Teaching Project. This was the first year of a two-year project working in coordination with the Allegany County Department of Planning, and continues Alfred State’s 20-year commitment to enhance the quality of the built environment in Allegany County and the surrounding region through the promotion of sound design and planning principles. Under the supervision of Professor Dean, the 14 fourth-year architecture students applied their education in architecture, historic preservation and adaptive reuse, and urban design to the challenges facing Bolivar.

9:30 AM – Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College, Harlan, KY

“Kingdom Come Swappin’ Meetin’: Revitalizing Traditional Culture”

Description: Southeast Kentucky Community and Technical College students from Alexia Ault’s Appalachian Studies class collaborated with the Kingdom Come Swappin’ Meetin’ planning

committee to revitalize this two-day fall festival, which has been held on the Southeast campus for over fifty years. What started out as a knife swap has turned into an annual community festival celebrating Appalachian culture and crafts. However, over the past few years, the festival has dwindled. Fewer community members attend and fewer demonstrators are hired. However, this festival has the opportunity to be a cornerstone of SKCTC and fulfill the mission to celebrate Appalachian culture, as well as to contribute to a sustainable economy. Students worked with the committee to revitalize the event by analyzing past festivals, creating detailed mission and vision statements, designing a project implementation plan, and creating an evaluation tool for the 2019 Swappin' Meetin'. This project was designed to encourage greater community participation and to boost growth within the festival.

9:45 AM – Auburn University, Auburn, AL
“Cultural and Economic Development in Shorter, Alabama”

Description: Macon County, Alabama is an ARC-designated distressed county. The Macon County town of Shorter recently welcomed a new, private housing development, but in the process of development, stakeholders discovered an African American cemetery adjacent to the property. A cemetery in disrepair is a challenge for this new housing development. However, a cemetery that appropriately memorializes the deceased and reflects the care and concern that the community has for its past will contribute to the success of this new housing development. In addition, this project has the potential to bring together groups within the community. Auburn University students assisted the Town of Shorter, Macon County Economic Development Authority, and local citizens with research and recommendations related to the adjoining community asset, the African American Cubahatchee Cemetery.

Appalachian Waterways and Parks

10:45 AM – Appalachian State University, Boone, NC
“Sustainable Development in the New River Valley Watershed”

Description: Appalachian State University's 2019 ATP project focused on Goal 4 from the Appalachian Regional Commission's Strategic plan, which pledges to “Strengthen Appalachia's community and economic development potential by leveraging the Region's natural and cultural heritage assets.” Specifically, students worked in the New River Valley Watershed to build the capacity of the community partner to efficiently utilize limited resources in sustaining the rural economy and environment of Ashe County, North Carolina and surrounding areas. This project employed a combination of service learning and grassroots knowledge to increase the capacity of our partner to improve water quality as well as economic futures in the watershed.

11:00 AM – Young Harris College, Young Harris, GA
“Connecting Volunteerism, Science, and Community Engagement to Protect Water Quality in a Southern Appalachian Watershed”

Description: Southern Appalachia, and specifically the Hiwassee River watershed, is experiencing increased land use changes as a desirable retirement and tourist destination. Recently, shifting land use pressures have stressed water resources, which, while providing short-term economic benefits, represents a long-term economic and social cost to Appalachian communities. In many cases, there is a lack of water quality data available to determine the magnitude of effect of certain land use practices. Young Harris College students collaborated with the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition (HRWC) to analyze water quality data collected by citizen scientists throughout the watershed to determine the impact of land use on water quality such that data-driven recommendations can be developed for the greater community to address the need for balancing economic development with protection of Appalachia's natural water assets. In addition, the project partner used project

results to prioritize future restoration activities within the watershed and to better communicate with the greater community.

**11:15 AM East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN
“Rocky Fork State Park: Linking Natural and Economic resources through Oral Histories and Community Engagement”**

Description: Lamar Alexander Rocky Fork State Park (LARFSP) in Unicoi County became Tennessee's 55th state park in October 2012. The park was renamed in January 2019 to honor US Senator Lamar Alexander for his support and early involvement in securing federal funding to preserve some of the Park's formative land tracts. The LARFSP now includes 2,076 acres of wilderness, is adjacent to the Cherokee National Forest, and has a trail system that links to the Appalachian Trail. Rocky Fork has many important features that make it an important natural and cultural asset to the community. In the past, the valley was heavily logged and also served as an outdoor recreation area for the community. Building on the work of last year's project, ETSU students conducted fieldwork in the park and its community, continuing the collection of oral histories about land use and local importance of the Rocky Fork area, assisting park rangers in the use of these findings, and used the results to create a digital display for the proposed LARFSP Visitor's Center.