

***For privacy of the organization, mentions of names and specific location have been redacted**

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Reflective Memo

For my Public Writing project, I worked with [REDACTED] (and collaborated with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]) to help [REDACTED] improve their outreach and accessibility within the communities that they hope to serve and gain support from. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] are the founders and operators of [REDACTED], and they have been working tirelessly to address the needs of the Carver-Jeter community in Opelika through [REDACTED]'s services. Located at the intersection of two of the five most food-insecure areas of Lee County, [REDACTED]'s community garden aims to directly impact individuals through food awareness and production as well as building community. [REDACTED] has installed sites and conducted garden programming with several schools in the Opelika area, and they currently focus their work most substantially with students from the [REDACTED] (an alternative school in Opelika). They are also a non-profit organization, depending solely on community partners and donors to fund their programs. The needs that we worked with [REDACTED] to solve are raising awareness for who [REDACTED] is and what they do, increasing the accessibility and attractiveness of their website and information, and, in the future, making the donations page more tangible.

In order to address these needs, we first met with [REDACTED], as well as their semester interns ([REDACTED] and [REDACTED]) to make ourselves more aware of the organization as a whole. I drove to the community garden space in Opelika every couple of weeks on Thursday mornings so that I could meet with [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED] and interact with the students from the [REDACTED] who came out to participate in garden programming. We

determined throughout the process that the primary audience for the website was community members. This group is composed of people of all ages – families, adults, Auburn students – and the [REDACTED] (directors) needed our assistance editing their website write-ups to welcome all community members to the space. Our secondary audience included adults in the surrounding areas who would contribute to [REDACTED] with donations or volunteer service, and we worked to include the appeal to these individuals in the descriptions, as well.

[REDACTED]'s intern [REDACTED] is a communications major, and she spent the semester redesigning the website from scratch. Each write-up I worked on was to be uploaded to the new website, so I worked closely with [REDACTED] (semester intern) to make sure that we had the website write-ups completed by the time her internship for the semester ended on December 6th. I first edited the write-ups to give them a more friendly and welcoming tone to match [REDACTED] [REDACTED]'s (the organization's) demeanor. I then used the accessibility tools on Microsoft Word to determine the Flesch Reading Ease score, the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level, and the percentage of passive sentences in each write-up. The rest of my editing consisted of making changes to improve the organization and Reading Ease score and lower the grade level so that the website would be easily understood by people with varied levels of education. Our initial idea was to do informational write-ups in physical informational installations in the community garden space, but because of budgetary constraints, we determined that the best use of our skills would be to help with the free project of updating the webpage. Donors, volunteers, and most importantly community members will access the website. Our goal moving forward is to have a physical form of the same information about [REDACTED] and their projects so that we can distribute it to local organizations, reaching community members who may not have access to the internet, as well.

In our meetings with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] (other students from our class working with the same organization), we talked through ways to increase interactivity with the webpage through blog and social media style guides. They created the style guides for those genres of [REDACTED] public writing, and we kept in touch throughout the process to share updated information about our mutual understandings of [REDACTED] needs after each meeting at the community garden. We determined that if we want people to read the informational write-ups, we want to make sure we are also drawing them to the page where this information can be found, and social media activity will draw people to find out more about [REDACTED]. These meetings also helped me realize that there are essentially limitless possibilities for public writing work, and they made me excited about exploring these possibilities moving forward into next semester and in my future career.

Beyond meetings in-person at the community garden space (which was our main form of communication with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and their staff), we communicated with [REDACTED] via email. As I drafted edits, I tracked my changes to the documents that [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] (the directors) sent me and sent them to get feedback and have any editing queries answered that I needed to complete the write-ups. I also sent a write-up that I wrote myself about the lesser-known, fun, free pieces of the community garden for [REDACTED] to add to their webpage descriptions to meet the need of bringing more community members simply to spend time in the space. I will continue work with this project throughout the spring semester, hopefully extending the smaller blurb through blog posts with more detail. I am looking forward to being able to use [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]'s style guides to help [REDACTED] continue their blog posting.

The most influential principles of design that informed our design process were those less directly related to visual elements (since we worked mostly with editing for the rhetorical appeal of informational write-ups) and more related to conscientious design practices. Andrew Shea's

Designing for Social Change was extremely beneficial for guiding our work with [REDACTED]. We began by immersing ourselves in the organization by going on regular visits to the community garden space throughout the project. I got to know the interns and program facilitators, and I got to see the students and community members that we were aiming to appeal to in action. I also worked to build trust with each member of [REDACTED], because being straightforward about my interests and strengths as well as understanding the goals and strengths of [REDACTED] was important to me. I spent the first meeting at the site talking with [REDACTED] (the director) about my studies, career interests, and future plans and got to know his background and interests, as well, which helped me gain a more informed perspective on the reasoning behind [REDACTED]'s formation. Within the budgetary and time constraints of this project, we utilized local resources (i.e., [REDACTED]'s (semester intern's) website design work and [REDACTED]'s (director's) write-ups) to make an impact within the organization. The most important of Shea's design principles that we kept in mind through our work was designing with the community's voice. All of our work centered around making the website information more accessible as well as welcoming to our target audience of community members. I had frequent check-ins with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] (directors) as well as [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] (interns) to be sure that the information I was working with was accurate to the organization and also tonally appropriate for the needs we were working to address. I wanted all stakeholders to know that they had a say in the final published write-ups, so I prioritized direct feedback each time I visited the community garden. I also plan to continue engagement with [REDACTED] in the spring by helping write blog posts, making a physical form of their information, and making their donations page more tangible by including specific project information.

Every couple of weeks, I visited the community garden site to check in with the [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED]. I communicated with [REDACTED] (directors) via email or in person with questions we had, and I exchanged comments and drafts of the write-up edits with them throughout the process. I also edited all of the write-ups and wrote the short addition to the community garden page, tracking changes and making sure that the final versions were uploaded to the new website as intended in terms of accessibility. As a group of four, [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and I met a few times to check in about our progress on the project and determine which groups should do which work within our [REDACTED] group. That group dynamic worked very well, and I appreciate everyone's willingness to collaborate to best help [REDACTED]. I think that our work in total was beneficial to both our interpersonal collaborative skills and [REDACTED] as a whole. With the Needs Assessment, [REDACTED] and I worked on Google Docs to combine the information we had both collected and to develop a more cohesive understanding of the organization. For the Pecha Kucha presentation, [REDACTED] and I each wrote 10 slides, and I put together our collective work to present to the class.

This project has helped me gain insight into the professional nature of public writing, given me an informed perspective on the principles and process of design work, and made me feel more comfortable and confident moving forward as I pursue public writing work in the future. [REDACTED] (The directors) prioritize giving students responsibility and opportunities for hands-on work through [REDACTED], and I think beyond any specific design principle practice, I have seen the direct benefit of this type of leadership and hope to implement it in my classroom one day as they do at [REDACTED] and as we have in our Public Writing class. I have learned the power of immersing myself in an organization as well as continued and consistent communication to create public writing that truly meets the needs of an organization

and maintains a degree of professionalism necessary to achieve in any project. Also, the personal touch that the [REDACTED] (the directors) value in their interactions is part of what makes [REDACTED] as unique and valuable as it is; I strive for this sense of community in my work, and moving forward, I will draw on my experiences with [REDACTED] to remind myself to prioritize people first in any work that I do. Pertaining to working with others, I have seen the importance of collaboration and communication throughout this project. Adaptability and organization were key elements of this project, as well, because things almost never go exactly as planned, and having a plan you can adapt from is essential to complete projects successfully. I now feel that I have tangible, professional experience to draw from as I continue my career in education and public service.