## Bringing the Human Back to Center:

## Connecting students to place & each other through the collaborative creation of a labyrinth on campus

Mary P. Donahue, Professor of Art & Art 422/Graphic Design Practicum class -



Could a quiet walk in nature be a balm for anxiety-ridden college students? A way to center themselves and their intense emotions? According to a 2018 report from the American College Health Association, more than 60% of college students said they had experienced "overwhelming anxiety" in the past year while over 40% said they felt so depressed they had difficulty functioning. Has the constant use of and "connection" to digital devices disconnected us from what it means to be human? And has this obsession with electronic media affected human health? A May 2019 article in Outside magazine, "Ask Your Doctor if Nature is Right for You," details a new movement where doctors prescribe nature and outdoor activity as a prescription for our modern-day ills.

The concepts of labyrinths have a long human connection beginning with carvings dating to the Neolithic and Bronze Age periods. They were found in Greek mythology and popular in the Roman Empire. A more developed form of the labyrinth occurred in medieval times, the most famous being at Chartres Cathedral and is still in use today. In North America, Native American medicine wheels and Robert Smithson's 1973 earthwork, Spiral Jetty, echo this idea.

Our collaborative campus project proposes building a labyrinth on a hill above campus in an abandoned water cistern used for the town's water in the early 1900s. The project will involve students from across disciplines starting with design students who will help with concepting and initial design of the site. They will also contribute work in signage and collateral materials and help with the physical aspects of building the labyrinth along with students in art appreciation, sculpture, ceramics, science, communications and public relations and other classes. The project will also become a job site for the annual campus-wide volunteer

otherwise enjoy doing—like exercising.	nicians and offering f	funding for pilot proj-	Outsid
Behind closed doors, some providers will		rr was president of his	Nature R:
also admit that prescribing time in nature makes them feel better personally. "It's hard		American Academy of o test the use of nature	
for us, through the fatigue and burnout, to		r Cardozo, as well as at	
be focusing all the time on the problem list,"		Jniversity's Children's	
says Zarr. "I sometimes need a break from the negativity." Talking about getting outdoors,		nter. In the summer of agues launched a web-	tor's recommendation can matter a go deal. Meta-analyses of multiple studies su
he says, is "a positive thing to do in the room."		ool, DC Park Rx, con-	gest that, for example, you're almost fo
		of green spaces around	times more likely to attempt to lose weig
FOR ZARR, a typical park prescription starts with two questions: What do you like to do	CONTRACTOR SERVICE CONTRACTOR SERVICES AND AN ARCHITECTURE OF THE SERVICE CONTRACTOR SERVICES AND ASSESSMENT OF THE SERVICES	onal as Park Rx Amer- in 17 states now use it.	if your doctor suggests it.  "Providers can motivate people to chan
outside? And where do you like to do it?		ctor of physical therapy	their behavior," says Megan McVay, a ps
		at George Washing-	chologist who studies weight-loss dec
EXPOSURE TO NATURAL STIM	MULI LOWERS	ton University who works with children	sion-making at the University of Florid The trouble comes when the new behavi
BLOOD PRESSURE, REDUC		with disabilities, re-	is difficult to sustain. "People's motivation
		members when Zarr	comes and goes. A prescription could g
HORMONE LEVELS, PROMOT		first pitched her de- partment the idea.	people to the park, but it may not keep the going back," McVay says. She believes the
HEALING, BOLSTERS IMM		"I thought, This is	regular programs in parks, like ranger ou
FUNCTION, RAISES SELF-ESTE		amazing—this is ex-	ings or meditation classes, could help peop
MOOD, AND REDUCES INFLAM	MATION.	actly what we need.  For kids, being out-	who arrive based on a nature prescription build a habit out of a suggestion.
		side is so motivat-	Last May, when Zarr presented his pr
"With that," he says, "half my prescription		e of her patients-for	scription software to Georgetown University
is done already. It gives me a baseline place		th developmental dis-	sity's family-medicine department, one the final questions from the largely recept
and activity that they feel good about. Then it's my job to push it up a notch in terms of		fficulty walking—may ey're inside a clinic or	audience was about any evidence from ra
frequency and dose."	at home. "But if ther	e's a really big hill and	domized control trials. Zarr acknowledg
Zarr has the bookish air of a Manhat-		leaves at the top of it,"	that no large trials existed yet. "I prom that I am trying to get that evidence," he to
tan intellectual (glasses, receding hairline) combined with the physique of a triathlete.	she says, "they'll keep Now the million-	dollar question is: Do	the physicians, "but let's not wait for that
Despite a busy clinical and travel schedule,	these programs work	? While it's too soon to	A few months later, the National Institu
he walks, cycles, or hikes outdoors three or		outcomes, like depres- shift noticeably in pa-	of Health would decline to fund a trial the Zarr and his collaborators had propose
four times a week. "I try to get out for my own mental health," he says.		get outdoors, we have	Such studies are expensive, says Char
When I visit, articles about hypertension		ic. For starters, a doc-	Lindblad, executive director of the progra
share space on his desk with how-to guides			
on Shinrin-yoku, the Japanese art of forest bathing. But nature medicine is a relatively			
new preoccupation for Zarr. Around 2010,			V- N- 1940
"something shifted," he says. That's when he			S Your New HMO IDS HAVE A BIG ROLE
heard Richard Louv give the keynote speech at the American Academy of Pediatrics'		IR HEALTH —K.S.	IDS HAVE A BIG ROLE
national convention, connecting the rise in			
childhood obesity and ADHD to kids spend-			the national parks, which see some 330
ing more time inside. "Whenever I go to a talk or read a book," Zarr says, "I ask myself,			he country's most important health care a program called Healthy Parks Healthy
Is that what I see in my own clinic? And I real-	People, which so	ought to promote the ide	ea that the parks are a national wellness
ized that there was a lot of truth to what he	and fitness reso	urce. Now it's looking to	double down on some of the program's
was saying." So many of Zarr's pediatric pa- tients and their family members were suffer-			vestments in community gardens and ment of nature prescriptions. As part of
ing from anxiety, obesity, and ADHD. "They	the initiative, the	e Park Service is having	individual parks host physicians, medi-
were on their devices constantly," he recalls.	cal students, and	d researchers so that sta	aff can collaborate with them to develop
"Their routines were horrible. I thought maybe a nature prescription would solve a		orojects and events. nes on the heels of Nation	nal Park Rx Day, an annual event launched
lot of these seemingly unrelated problems."			outside is good for us. Last year's edition
The timing was right. Inspired by news	saw events in 69	parks in 34 states and in	ncluded hikes with doctors, al fresco yoga
coming out of Australia, leaders from the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy, the		kshops on plant-based	nutrition. ching on," says Diana Allen, chief of the
National Park Service, and the U.S. Fish and			But there are a lot more opportunities to
Wildlife Service had just begun training cli-		tors and other people fr	

behind New Mexico's Prescription Trails. "If we had money, we would have done them a long time ago."	around 50 children and parents in the UC network. When I visited last fall, she'd j received a referral for a cancer patient w	just Nature Rx
In terms of clinical evidence, the move-	had completed chemotherapy.	
ment is still in its infancy, says Bita Kash, di- rector of the Center for Health and Nature at	On the first Saturday of November crowd of kids and parents gathered in	the
	lobby of the hos tal's Oakland clir	spi- Her dark curly hair was down, and sh
"I HAVE SO MANY THINGS I H	One by one, far	mi- hear me!" she shouted as children ran t
ABOUT," SAYS TINA IGBIN	nes neaded into p	
IMMIGRANT FROM NIGERIA. "B	wellness chec	ck- Igbinakenzua told me later, after we'd dis
HERE, I AM VERY OK. WHEN I	upo una coano	
PRAY TO BE THE SAME WAY I	the health benefit	fits so beautiful." Igbinakenzua was referred t
TRATIO DE LIBORITA	of nature. Wa	
The state of the s	through an outde	oor hospital. She's up by 5 A.M. every morning
Houston Methodist Hospital in Texas, which was established last year in collaboration	brochure published by the East Bay Regio Park District, which supports SHINE, wh	
with the Texas A&M Science Center and for-	kids lined up at a child-high water fount	tain my God, there is so much stress," she said
mer first lady Laura Bush's program Texan by Nature. "We are where physical exercise	to fill Nalgene bottles emblazoned with EBRPD logo. Sunlight streamed in from	
used to be about 30 years ago, when it started to take off," Kash says. She is confident that	glass-roofed atrium stairwell, illuminat two 16-foot photographs of redwoods.	
exposure to natural stimuli improves health.	When the checkups finished, Raz	ani wiches (lunch is part of every SHINE trip
"But," she adds, "I know I have to prove it."	stepped up onto a chair near the front do	
TINA IGBINAKENZUA was speechless. We	Parallel Paris Carlo	
were in a forest just outside Oakland, Cali- fornia, surrounded by 150-foot-tall coast		
redwoods. A shaft of light illuminated the	Open Up and Say Awe	
ground before her, and she was overcome with emotion. Soon enough, her natural	NATURE'S HEALING POWER MA BLOW OUR MINDS —K.S.	AY BE IN ITS ABILITY TO
exuberance overcame her awe. "I love this		
place," she said.  Igbinakenzua was brought to the woods		ne spent outside with health benefits, one of search is the role awe plays in our well-being.
by a program called SHINE (Staying Healthy	According to findings published las	st summer in the journal <i>Emotion</i> , the kind of
in Nature Everyday), run by pediatrician Nooshin Razani at the University of Cali-	amazement we experience during of dict lower stress and higher levels of	outdoor activities has a singular ability to pre- if well-being and life satisfaction.
fornia at San Francisco's Benioff Children's	Craig L. Anderson, a postdoctoral	fellow in psychiatry at the University of Califor-
Hospital. An early adopter of prescribing nature, Razani had noticed that despite want-		hors designed two studies looking at different hey followed youth from underserved commu-
ing to, patients in her clinic often struggled	nities and military veterans suffering	g from PTSD on one-to-four-day whitewater-
to spend time outside. "We serve extremely diverse clients," she says, "but the common		plete daily surveys and journal entries, then he results showed that the more awe the par-
thread is poverty." Getting out is hard, and	ticipants reported experiencing, the	e better their self-reported well-being was and
critics of park prescriptions argue that those who could benefit most may be too busy,		d study, college undergraduates recorded their hen researchers analyzed the data to measure
poor, or unwell to make it happen.	how everyday experiences in nature	related to various positive feelings. Again, awe,
For this reason, Razani says, "we felt that it was unethical to simply tell our patients to		the feeling we have in the presence of some- inderstanding, proved to have a unique power.
go outdoors." Trained as a physician in San	While other emotions also correlate	ed with daily life satisfaction, the students who
Francisco during the AIDS crisis, she takes an activist's approach to medicine. Convinced		riences in nature—say, watching the sunset or ported the highest levels of short-term satis-
that her low-income patients needed nature	faction and longer-term well-being.	
as much as the wealthier Bay Area residents who flock to Muir Woods and Yosemite, she		ese vastly different contexts, can have an im- lat we don't necessarily have to go whitewater
launched SHINE in 2014 and in 2016 founded	rafting—just day-to-day awe can be	e really important."
the UCSF Center for Nature and Health, the country's first hospital-based nature re-		out the dosage—how often people need to do st," he says. "Then we can make the argument
search program. One day each month, Razani and her colleagues lead a nature outing for		e dollars to get people outdoors and treating





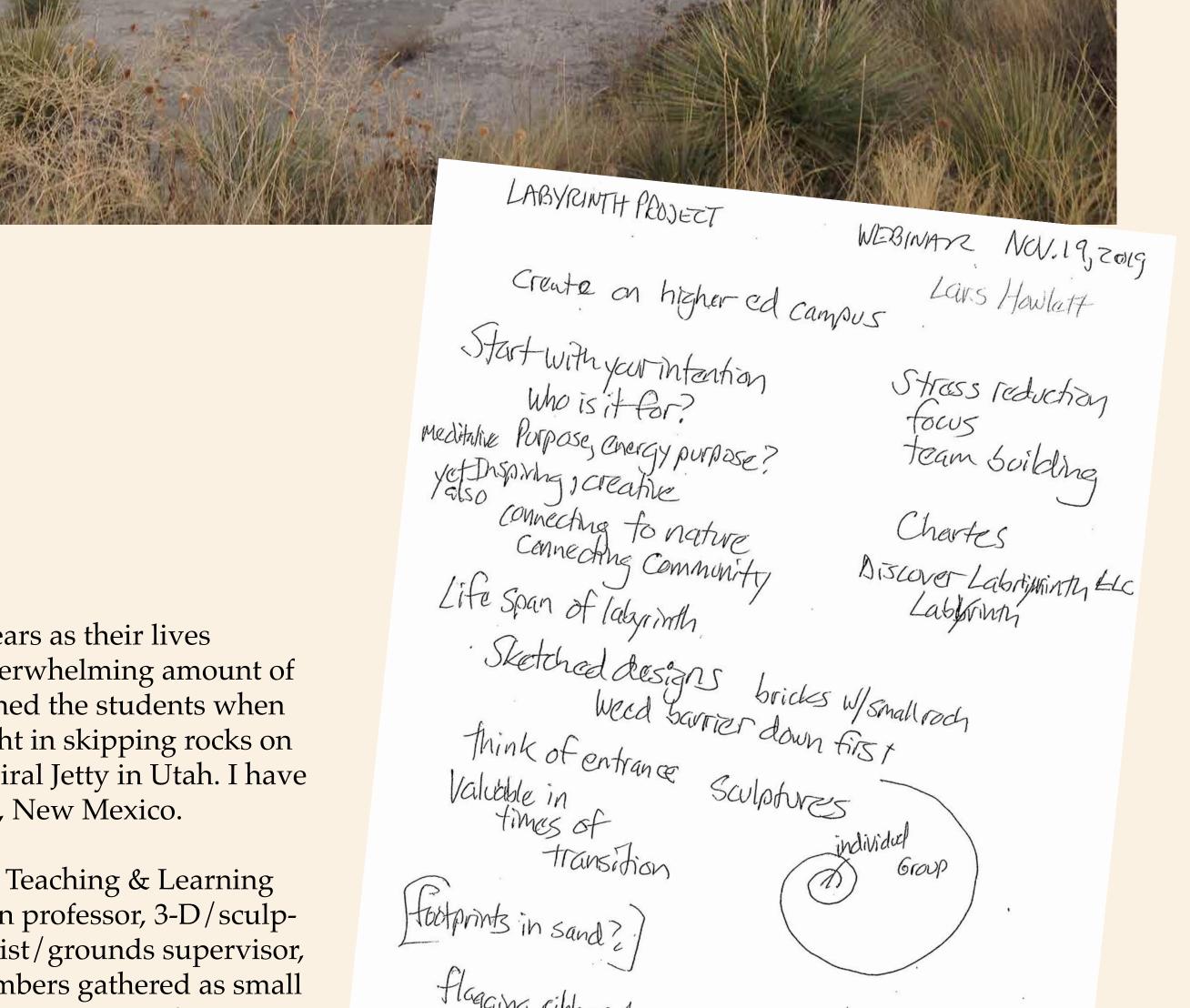
## Beginnings:

As an art and design professor, I have noticed the changes in students over the years as their lives become more digital. And frenzied and anxiety-ridden. The multi-tasking, the overwhelming amount of stimuli, the distractions have affected all of us in negative ways. I have also watched the students when we take trips outside the classroom and out in nature. I have watched them delight in skipping rocks on Yellowstone Lake. I watched them get lost in walking the sand and rock of the Spiral Jetty in Utah. I have watched them concentrate on the path of a labyrinth on Museum Hill in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

This project started as a discussion among campus members brought together by Teaching & Learning Center Instructional Tech & Design Specialist, Elizabeth Ledbetter. Our art/design professor, 3-D/sculpture professor, instructional technology and design specialist, campus horticulturist/grounds supervisor, public services librarian and community members who are artists and clergy members gathered as small informal groups to view selected parts of Labyrinths in Higher Education via Verditas, a non-profit organization that inspires transformation through the labyrinth experience. <a href="https://www.veriditas.org/higher-ed">https://www.veriditas.org/higher-ed</a>

The other place we started from was just that—the place. Our campus is set against part of the geographical features that define where we live—the Pine Ridge escarpments of northwest Nebraska, representing the edge of the High Plains. Within the hills that climb to the ridges on the south edge of campus is a historic cistern that was once used as the water supply for the town of Chadron. It is a circular crater in the hill with the remains of brick support walls on the north rim. The cistern is a short fifteen minute hike from campus and trails through native grasses and yucca plants. From the top of the cistern's walls is a panoramic view of campus and beyond to the Black Hills of South Dakota. Walking down into the cistern, one's focus becomes the circular space and the sky above.

CSC students walk the Spiral Jetty, Utah.





## Beginning the Design Process:

This past spring semester 2020, I brought in my ART 422/Graphic Design Practicum students (Jennifer Boyer, Shania Macomber, and Christopher Wright) on the beginnings of the Design Process for creating a labyrinth on our campus. We began with research—the human history of labyrinths, the use of labyrinths in healing in places like hospitals and in higher education. We discussed the ideas of mental health and

Art 422/Graphic Design Practicum Collaborative Semester Project - Spring 2020 CSC Labyrinth Design and Materials Write at least a paragraph and include a few bulleted points with information that you find for each of these topics. Include your sources below each paragraph. 1. Research what labyrinths are and their use in human history (You can look for other sources as well.) Research labyrinths in higher education, use of labyrinths in healing or hospitals. 3. Research labyrinths and mental health, stress reduction. 4. Research the effect of nature on physical health, mental health, stress reduction, etc. 5. Research earth art, earthwork, or land art and find one artist and describe their work and direct experience. Labyrinths relate to a wholeness and are used as meditation and prayer tools. They represent a journey to our own center and back out to our own world again. This can help you discover and understand who you are. When humans walk on these paths, we use our right sides of our brain. Humans use intuition, imagery, and creativity along these paths. There is only one choice to be made, which is whether to enter or not. With a passive and receptive mindset, you will be able to walk this spiritual path. "The Labyrinth." Lessons for Living, 4 Apr. 2013, www.lessons4living.com/labyrinth.htm Labyrinths are great for college students when they need a place that is quiet, where they can reflect on themselves, and a place where they can relax. It has been found that then is a mental and emotional sense of quietness and stillness that people get walking through labyrinths. Labyrinths on campuses have been used for teaching, service learning, relaxation, faith services, open walks, community building, counseling, and many other uses. Some universities have used labyrinths for weekly walks to promote reflection and personal and professional growth for faculty, staff, and students. Some have been used to offer walks as a part of a wellness program for stress reduction and self-care. Others have been used in the course curriculum for first year students and transfer students for making a successful academic and social transition. Even building or creating a labyrinth can help students learn how to work Bigard, Michelle F. "Walking the Labyrinth: An Innovative Approach to Counseling Center

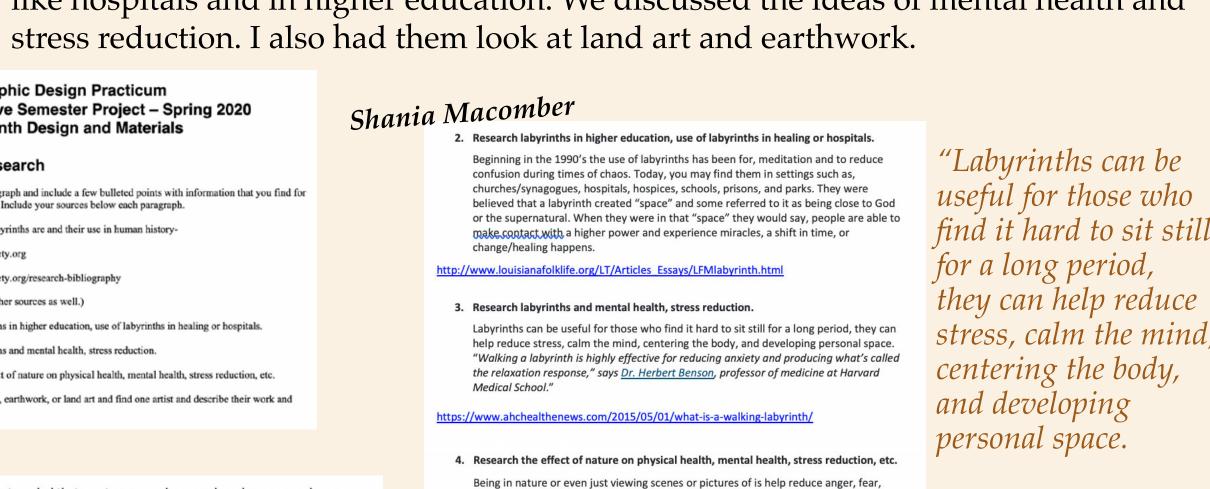
Outreach." Journal of College Counseling, vol. 12, no. 2, 2009, pp. 137-148., https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1002/j.2161-1882.2009.tb00111.x Studies have found that walking labyrinths can lead it reduced stress, it can promote health benefits on mental and physical health, and increase cognitive performance. By

schools, hospitals, prisons, parks, churches, clubs, spas, spiritual retreats, and many other places. Lizier, Daniele, et al. "Effects of Reflective Labyrinth Walking Assessed Using a Questionnaire." Medicines, vol. 5, no. 4, 2018, p. 111., doi:10.3390/medicines5040111 Labyrinths on campuses have been used for teaching, service learning, relaxation, faith services, open walks, community building, counseling, and many other uses. Some universities have used labyrinths for weekly walks to

continually doing this form of meditation, it can improve brain efficiency for attention and impulse control. Meditative walking impacts mood as it reduces activity in the sympathetic nervous system. Slower walking has led to reduced symptoms of anxiety and stress. Walking on a labyrinth can help improve attention and judgment-free awareness of the present moment. The mind-body connection people experience from this has been found to impact people's thoughts

on their lives and the importance of living with compassion. Because of the many benefits studies have found about the effects of labyrinths, they can be found all over communities like in

promote reflection and personal and professional growth for faculty, staff, and students. Some have been used to offer walks as a part of a wellness program for stress reduction and self-care. Others have been used in the course curriculum for first year students and transfer students for making a successful academic and social transition. Even building or creating a labyrinth can help students learn how to work together with others.



stress, and can increase pleasant feelings. Being exposed to nature makes you feel better emotionally as well as contributes to your physical wellbeing, reduces blood pressure, heart rate, muscle tension, and the production of stress hormones. Research done within hospitals, office, and schools has found that even one plant in the room has ffective for reducing https://www.takingcharge.csh.umn.edu/how-does-nature-impact-our-wellbeing anxiety and producing 5. Research earth art, earthwork, or land art and find one artist and describe their work what's called the relax Jon Foreman creates many different land art creations. He mostly uses stone, which he ation response,' says finds he can manipulate the best; whether it be color, size, angle, shape, or spacing/placement. I like this rock land art because it reminds me of the middle of a Dr. Herbert Benson, professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School."

Christopher Wright Labyrinths have been scientifically proven to lessen the severity of mental health problems like moods, anxiety, nervousness, and depression. Hospitals, universities, and other public institutions have implemented the ancient theory and practice of labyrinth designs in their infrastructure for people to use. The labyrinth is typically a circular design with a walkway that weaves in a circular motion. The person walks on this and reaches the epicenter where they repeat the pathway going back to where they entered. The Labyrinth is sometimes seen as a symbolic path that mimics the reality of life and the natural flow of our thoughts. John W. Rhodes, the TLS Research Committee Chair, takes reference from the Bibliography of Articles and Studies Related to Labyrinth Research" that holds citations from various scholarly articles that share the "labyrinth effects" a person is influenced by. A study in 2006 shares that 58% of people (there is no count of the number of people took part in this experiment.) felt less agitated after a labyrinth walk. (Rhodes 31) A study for anxiety shares that 63% of participants felt less anxious. (Rhodes 32) 59% of participants felt clearer after a labyrinth walk when having been in a "hectic circumstance and felt energized

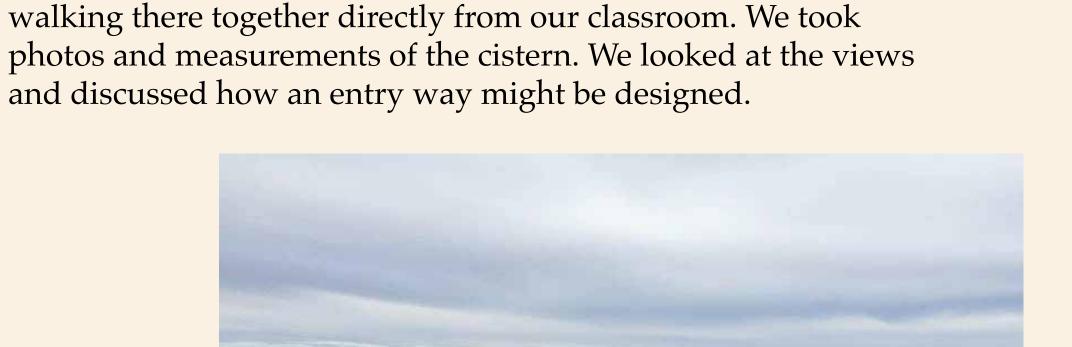
> Society: Learn about Labyrinths, labyrinthsociety.org/about-labyrinths. Rhodes. John W. "Commonly Reported Effects of Labyrinth Walking." Labyrinth Walking, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, July "A study in 2006 shares that 58% of people (there is no count of the number of people who took part in

2003-2020 ZD-CMS driven - © Zee Designs - zeedesigns.com. The Labyrinth Society: The Labyrinth

A study for anxiety shares that 63% of participants felt less anxious. 59% of participants felt clearer after a labyrinth walk when having been in a "hectic circumstance and felt energized afterwards."

this experiment) felt less agitated

after a labyrinth walk.



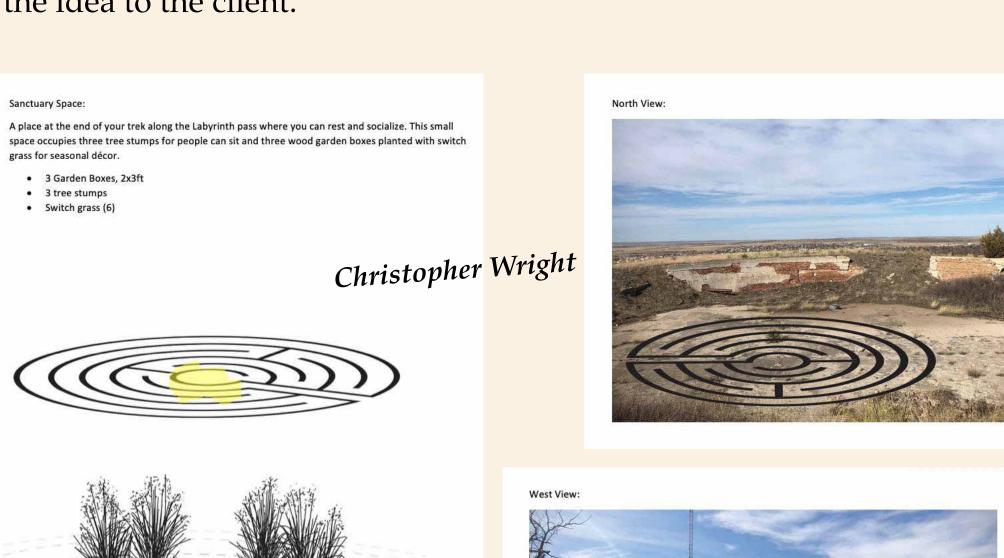
JANUARY 2020...We took a field trip to the proposed site,



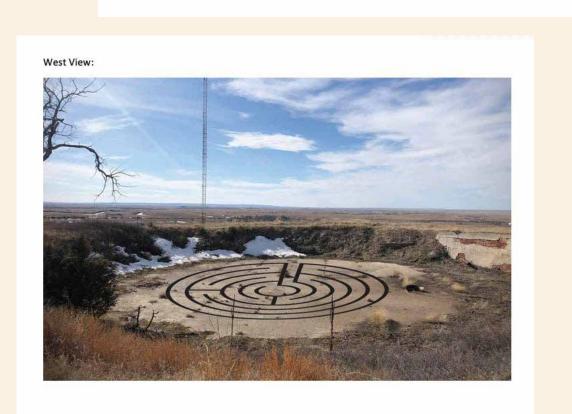
• Walking Space is 30in x 10(number of walkways) = 30ft Border Space (gravel, shrubs, grass, rock, etc.) is 12in x 1ft = 12ft

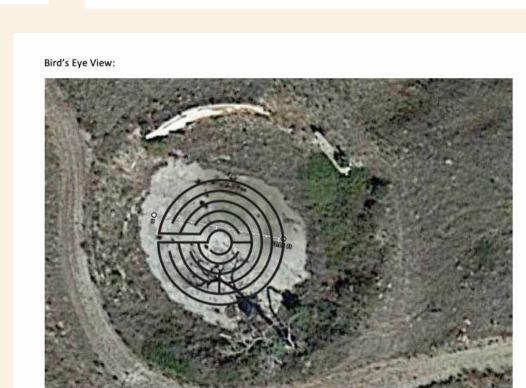
**CSC Labyrinth Proposal** Location: west area of C Hill Why a labyrinth for CSC? site photos? A benefit for CSC students and community? Use by various classes and student groups on campus--ideas of history, art? historical labyrinths Mental health reasons? Stress release? Experiencing nature? your front elevation sketch Reasons for a labyrinth at CSC Back up the why with your research. Use specific details, statistics. How are the reasons above relevant to CSC stu-The process: how do we make it happen? Funding? - student senate, res lye, club fund your bird's eye view What kinds of materials? hook saging) Big Event? community members range Unb natural soince, res life; sand/twio

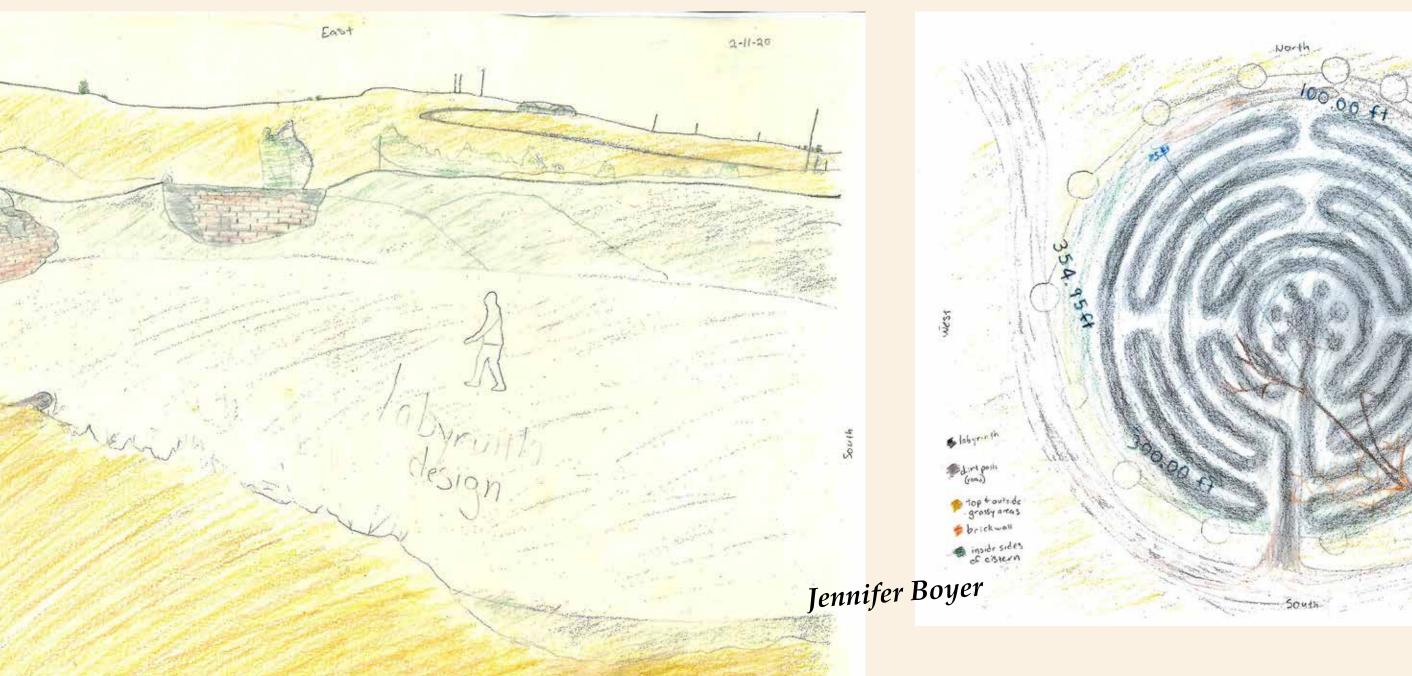
FEBRUARY 2020... Our campus landscape planner/horticulturist/ grounds supervisor, Lucinda Mays, met with the students in class and discussed how to think about a site and its materials. She talked with them on how to use tissue sketches over photos of the site, create drawn plans and showed examples. She explained how a "Front Elevation Sketch" sells the idea to the client and the "Bird's Eye View Sketch" explains the idea to the client.



CSC students skip rocks on Yellowstone Lake, Wyoming







Our campus landscape planner/horticulturist/grounds supervisor, Lucinda Mays, was able to share a tip from our geology professor, Michael Leite, on a way to measure something in the landscape from Google maps.

https://www.google.com/maps 1 click on link 2 enlarge photo of cistern 3 place cursor on place you want to start measuring 4 right click 5 scroll down to Measure 6 click a series of marks 7 to finish, click on the first mark = length of line as well as area!



NEXT STEPS... Our in-class meetings for the semester ended abruptly in March. As I tell students with many assignments, this is an experiment. We hope to present these ideas to our administration and the CSC Foundation so we may get permission to move ahead on working at the site. We'll need to figure out how to actually build the labyrinth at this site, what materials might be used and how to fund the materials. But once we can solve these parts of the design problem, the ways the campus and community can benefit from the project are many. We see this as a way to engage students across campus and across disciplines. History and literature students can use the labyrinth to explore its use throughout culture and history. Students in art appreciation, art history, and 3-D design/sculpture can relate this to land art and participate in the making of a land art piece with the physical placement of materials and building of the labyrinth. Graphic design students have and will participate in the research, measuring, planning, sketching, and mapping of the design as well as the design of signage and brochures, and other materials. Ceramics and 3-D design/sculpture classes can create earth-friendly sculptural pieces to enhance the site. We also see this as a job site for the annual campus day of volunteering, The Big Event.

We can create a place of art, of history, of wonder, of contemplation, and of peace. A refuge to connect us to nature and to each other in unsettling times.

Contact info: Mary Donahue, Chadron State College

mdonahue@csc.edu

15th annual University and College Designers Association's **Design Education Summit:** HUMAN CENTERED JUNE 2020