

Travis Hartwell

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Climate Corps Independent Study Reflection

This was the most fulfilling course I have ever had the pleasure of taking. The goal of my project was to create a climate vulnerability assessment for the town of Manchester, CT. This meant that my partner and I would need to research the town and discover what climatological threats it is faced with. The town had engaged in a community resilience building workshop in 2022 that highlighted a lot of key threats. For Manchester, the primary threats turned out to be flooding and extreme heat. However, climate change has such a wide range of primary and secondary impacts that we would be able to go into much more depth than the workshop had, provided we had the right data. I felt decently well-prepared because we spent the previous semester in the Climate Corps working on our mock climate vulnerability assessments for the imaginary town of East Lowland, but there was a lot more depth to this project than I expected. One of the challenges that I faced was navigating a bunch of new tools, databases, and documents that I had never seen before. I used a lot of tools from the U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit, but I also found a few that did not work at all. I encountered some unreliable data as well. These are now challenges that I feel prepared to face when I start my career.

Another big challenge was the lack of a structure. The project was very independent, which was a blessing and a curse. We were able to work around our schedules, which was nice for when we had very busy weeks. Unfortunately, every week turns into a busy week, and I have not developed the discipline to get much work done without a looming deadline. However, it was great experience for the real world when I will need to make my own schedule and set my own deadlines. We decided to have meetings almost every Friday to check in and share some of our

progress. This helped me to focus on specific aspects of the project each week because I wanted to have something to share with our community contact.

The project developed into a bit more than just a vulnerability assessment. We decided to make educational materials for the town in the form of a website. This involved some basic information about climate change and its impacts, as well as how residents could best prepare for said impacts. A big part of that was informing residents about the town's excellent level of disaster preparedness. We felt that this was how we could have the greatest impact on residents of Manchester. It was great to be able to work with my partner, Ziyuan, as well as our community contact, Ms. Lindberg. I feel as though one thing that had been missing from my college education was working with people who are passionate about the work they are doing. We finished our vulnerability assessment, but Ziyuan and I plan on continuing to work on the website we have made during the summer.

Working with town government officials was an enlightening experience. It felt a lot more professional than anything I've done in college, but it was not as intimidating as one might think. I now feel much more prepared to work in a professional environment. I look forward to making more real progress in the environmental field, however slow and incremental it might be.

I wish I had spoken to more residents of Manchester during the semester. While we did speak to some people such as the deputy director of public works, the town engineer, and people from the senior center, I believe that speaking to other residents would have given me a better idea of what they really care about. On top of helping us to form a better website that people will actually care to look at, it would have been excellent experience for me. I will definitely keep that in mind if I do work like this in the future.

