Collaboration Accelerator

University of Dayton

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Collaboration Accelerator

An art education scholar who wants to help trauma patients. A mechanical engineering student who plays fast-pitch softball. It’s not common for students with such different backgrounds to work together. But a pilot program in
Dayton is exploring what can be accomplished when they do.

It's called the Collaboration Accelerator, and it's a partnership between the University of Dayton, the Air Force Research Laboratory, the Wright Brothers Institute and The Collaboratory.

“The origins came out of a conversation about what happens when we’re able to put imagination and creativity to the test,” said Brian LaDuca, director of ArtStreet at the University of Dayton.

The 11-week summer internship involves 12 University students and one recent graduate living and working at ArtStreet.

They come from a diverse group of majors, including business, biology, graphic design, applied mathematics and sports management. They're focusing their different talents on human-centered problem solving, LaDuca said.

They are also laying the groundwork for cross-sector collaborations that future groups can build on, said Peter Benkendorf, founder of The Collaboratory, which offers space and a support system for people to collaborate in downtown Dayton.

“The community is at an exciting time and we need to be continuously thinking differently about how we go at challenges, whether they’re economic, social or creative,” Benkendorf said.

“We need to have more people and more diverse backgrounds in the conversation if we really want to transform,” he said. “In our diversity, we will be far more successful.”

The pilot program is testing ArtStreet's new Institute for Arts Nexus (IAN) in a professional setting. IAN is an experimental curriculum to develop creative and innovative skills in students of any major.

The summer group was turned loose to explore two open-ended challenges: Imagine a vibrant, exciting and innovative future for Dayton; and find a way to move technology transfer forward.

“We just took the chance to do something out there, creative and different,” said Gurjot Kaur, a pre-law student from Beavercreek and one of the summer interns. “It wasn't something I'd seen before.”

They devised an idea for a sensor for bicycle riders to alert them to vehicles approaching from behind.

“We set our minds on biker safety,” said Andrew Harbach, a chemical engineering student. “We tried to come up with something that would suit current trends.”

For the Dayton challenge, they developed Project Gem City, which places large gems around the city
“Dayton has so much potential for growth,” said Harbach, from Centerville. “That was something I didn’t expect: to love my hometown even more.”

They’re keeping other details of their work secret until they meet with partners of the project on Friday, July 31, and unveil their immersive, interactive installation at ArtStreet.

The installation will be open to the public on Aug. 10. For more information, call 937-732-5123.

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