

GRACE INTERNS RESEARCH COMMUNITY ISSUES

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Students from Houghton and CLK schools spent the summer roaming the streets of Calumet and Laurium in the name of scientific research.

These students spent the last six weeks as GRACE Program interns. They mapped their surroundings, collected data and learned Geographic Information Systems (GIS), a computer mapping software, to improve their communities.

“These were 11 high school students who had a very, very rudimentary understanding of what they were coming into. By the end, they were doing advanced statistical analysis, they were asking really important questions, they were fully engaged in trying to figure out ‘What is it about our communities that make them so great?’ or areas where we could really make them so much better,” said Assistant Professor of Geography/GIS Don Lafreniere.

With the help of GIS, the students used their findings to answer their own research questions. The topics ranged from the relationship between the population and the number of cigarette butts on the ground to statistically determining which local park was the best.

Despite the hours of research, the interns recognized the value of their work.

“It took us a long time and it was a lot of work, but in the end, it was worth it, I think,” said GRACE Intern Cameron See, who will be starting 11th grade this fall. “It can help tourism, it can help city planners know where they need to fix things or where they should make things feel more safe.”

The GRACE Internship Program is a collaborative effort between Michigan Tech, the National Park Service and the Western Upper Peninsula Planning and Development Region.