TU ANTHROPOLOGY TEAM HELPS NATIONAL PARK SERVICE GET CONNECTED
Networked Anthropology Forges Paths to the Future

A CLOSER LOOK
As the National Park Service (NPS) celebrates its centennial, Towson University anthropology professors Matthew Durington and Samuel Collins are leading a collaborative, curriculum-based, student-involved study of NPS’ Potomac Heritage Trail. The study would help the NPS to understand who uses its sites and how. It could also give the historic park service a picture of its next 100 years with the help of one very modern research tool: networked anthropology.

The trail is both a place and a series of connections. People connect to the trail when they plan a trip, visit, post photos and share events. They also connect with each other through the trail, via social media groups and clubs that focus on the way they use the area. They connect to other trails, parks, institutions and groups through the use of the trail, too. Durington and Collins believe the linkages demonstrate areas for growth as the NPS modernizes.

TU students conducted field research, scoped out trail locations and their visitors, and used cutting-edge technology to advance research design—skills that are highly valued after college. Durington and Collins will report their research and findings to the NPS in 2017.

SERVICES/SOLUTIONS/OUTCOMES
• Student research opportunities
• Greater connectivity between users of Potomac Heritage Trail
• More effective signage
• Increased resources and services
• Fundraising opportunities

CONTACT
Matthew Durington, Ph.D.
Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminal Justice
Phone: 410-704-5256 Email: mdurington@towson.edu

Sam Collins, Ph.D.
Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminal Justice
Phone: 410-704-3199 Email: scollins@towson.edu

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National Park Service
www.nps.org

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