

**Eisen Application for Funding:**  
**Eisen Experiential Learning Endowment Grant**  
**Dr. David Sheffler History Department**  
**Red Hill Cemetery Project**

We seek \$2,000 in funds to research the history of Red Hill Cemetery in Ware County, Georgia. In cooperation with the Okefenokee Heritage Center, the Red Hill Cemetery project seeks to document the oldest African American Cemetery in Waycross Georgia. Over the last half century, the site has suffered from neglect, intentional vandalism, and aborted efforts at redevelopment, leaving the nearly six-acre parcel overgrown with brush and pines and marked by open graves and toppled monuments. With as many as 2000 burials, some of them dating from the 1800s, the cemetery, even in its current condition, memorializes the lives and struggles of an African American community during a period of monumental political, social, and cultural change. By mapping and recording graves, developing a database of names and dates, and conducting oral histories of surviving family members, the Red Hill Cemetery project will record often-neglected voices before they fall irretrievably silent.

Ware County—about ninety miles from Jacksonville—owns the site and plans on transferring title to the Okefenokee Heritage Center (OHC), a non-profit historical society dedicated to interpreting the rich culture and history of this region. Elizabeth Welch, Executive Director of the OHC, is applying for a major federal grant to inventory, preserve, and interpret the history of the cemetery. Ms. Welch has asked the Department of History at the University of North Florida to conduct a preliminary history of the site and the people buried there in order to prepare a federal grant. We have already made arrangements to team with CSX to conduct a LiDar survey of the site, which will provide a more detailed picture of the number and location of the graves. Eisen Experiential Learning Endowment funds will allow us to continue this work and expand student research opportunities.

Funding from an Eisen Experiential Learning Endowment will also contribute to UNF's mission of community engagement. UNF would send a team of three researchers (one faculty, one undergraduate student, and one graduate student) to Waycross, Georgia (county seat of Ware County) for a period of one week in the spring of 2018. Working closely with Ms. Welch, they would visit the cemetery, record the names on visible gravestones, and conduct research on the lives of those buried at this site. This would entail spending two days in the City of Waycross archives, two days at the County Courthouse, and two days working in the records maintained by the OHC. Our team would also work with Ms. Welch to identify descendants of those buried at the site in order to obtain additional historical records and conduct oral histories at a later date. Upon completion, our preliminary history would form one component of a much larger history to be conducted by UNF, in partnership with the OHC over two semesters. Upon completion of historical research at the site by UNF and the OHC, Ms. Welch will apply for a National Endowment for the Humanities Grant to refurbish, inventory, and

interpret the history of the cemetery. UNF will likely be involved with the OHC and the history of this region for years to come.

Specific funding from an Eisen Experiential Learning Endowment grant will be used in the following way:

Travel	3 persons in two cars,	One round to Waycross for two cars	180 miles per car	\$.45 per mile	\$162.
Hotels	3 persons	Six nights		\$65/night	\$1,170.
Food	3 persons	Six days		\$36/day	\$648.
Copies	1000 pages copied			\$.25/copy	\$250.
Digital Recorders for Oral Histories	2 Olympus Digital Recorders (Model WS 853)			\$80/recorder	\$160.
Incidentals					\$110.
Total					\$2,500.

We expect this project to take place over one week in the spring of 2019. This is an inter-departmental project led by History, Anthropology and the Writing Center. We hope to involve students from the History Honors Society, Phi Alpha Theta, Anthropology, and our Senior/Graduate Research Seminar on Public History (AMH 4491/5934). Dr. Bliss’s spring public history seminar will emphasize working in local historical archives and interpreting local and regional history for a broad public. While students in Dr. Bliss’s spring class will not be required to participate in the project in Waycross, they will be eligible to do so if they want to.

Upon completion, our team will write a twenty-five page research report on the history of those buried in the Ware County cemetery. Our team will also record data from gravestones in an appropriate database. It will share all such information, including any oral histories, with Ms. Welch and the OHC.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact Dr. David Sheffler at 904-620-1856 and/or at david.sheffler@unf.edu