

COMBINING HEALING, ART, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND GARDEN DESIGN INTO A UNIVERSITY CAMPUS MEMORIAL

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ABSTRACT

The article critically examines the University of Idaho “Healing Garden and Memorial” conceptualized as a response to the tragic deaths of four students in an off-campus house in 2022. Built in 2024 with donor support, the memorial is analyzed in the broader context of memorials built on the U of I campus since the 1900s.

The paper argues that U.S. colleges and universities serve a unique communal role, fostering a strong sense of community and identity that connects students, alumni, and supporters. Within this context, memorials are seen not just as static monuments, but as ongoing, community-driven processes of grieving and healing. These spaces allow the deceased to remain emotionally integrated into campus life. The paper addresses two questions:

How can memorials in university settings work as an ongoing conduit to healing, a tool to sustain bonds among the people living, studying, and working on campus, as well as the alumni, families, and affiliates off campus? How can memorials support and integrate memories of the deceased in the living and evolving campus community?

The paper uses the “Healing Garden and Memorial” design-build project as a case study and the literature review and classification of existing memorials on campus as data that inform the case study process. The method is a distillation of framework from literature applied to understanding existing precedents on the U of I campus, then to the projective design of a new memorial. The University of Idaho’s Healing Garden is analyzed as a blend of artistic, participatory, and healing practices, where community involvement shaped both the design process and outcomes.

The study highlights a shift in grief theory: rather than detachment from the deceased (as in modernist Western deterministic approaches to dealing with death and grieving), ongoing emotional bonds are seen as therapeutic (as amply explored by contemporary theories in psychoanalytic grief literature). However, the authors note that the lack of scholarly attention to how the specific mission of higher education in relation to supporting this emotional continuity influences the way memorials are conceptualized and built on campuses.

By investigating the U of I memorials as built spaces and memorial practices, and then cross-referencing that data with findings from the literature review, the paper concludes that contemporary psychoanalytic grief theories have informed the design of U of I’s memorials. Ultimately, the paper calls for deeper exploration of how college campuses can use memorials as living, healing spaces that sustain collective memory and connection.

Keywords

Healing, Grief Therapy, Community-Engaged Design, Memorial Practices, Memorial Design

1 INTRODUCTION / METHODS

The University of Idaho is in the town of Moscow, in Latah County, located in the North Central region of the state. Established in 1889, the U of I, which counts almost 12,000 students, is a public land-grant research university, and was the state's sole university until the 1960s. This paper examines the university "Healing Garden and Memorial" which was driven by the tragic murder of four U of I students on November 13, 2022. While the homicide shocked the local community and had nationwide resonance, the murderer's trial is scheduled to start this fall 2025. The memorial was built in spring 2024 thanks to donors' support. This study extends to all memorials built on the U of I campus since its inception.

This paper analyzes the University of Idaho "Healing Garden and Memorial" within broader literature concerned with the shifting over time of commemorative practices and memorial forms. It explores how the project engaged healing processes by using social and participatory practices (the project as conduit to active healing) and how those practices led to design parameters and defensible design solutions. The paper addresses two questions:

How can memorials in university settings work as an on-going conduit to healing, a tool to sustaining bonds among the people living, studying, and working on campus, as well as the alumni, families, and affiliates off campus? How can memorials support and integrate memories of the deceased in the living and evolving campus community?

Ultimately, this research evaluates campus memorials by looking at them from a different angle, which reflects the evolution of grief therapy and helps shed light on evolving Western approaches to dealing with death and grieving: severing versus retaining bonds with the deceased, by integrating these bonds into the fabric of a community.

A literature review is conducted to identify key theories and trajectories across the U.S. regarding grieving processes as approached by psychoanalytic grief and memorials literature. The authors compare theories in psychoanalytic grief literature, which affect therapeutic interventions used in grief counseling, to theoretical approaches in the study and design of memorials. The authors suggest that both psychoanalytic grief counseling and memorials have followed a common trajectory, which is to challenge a deterministic approach to dealing with death and grieving, attributed to modernist Western culture, by recapturing a human-centered approach to mourning and remembering.

Findings from the literature review are used to evaluate memorials on the University of Idaho campus. A specific focus is on the most recent memorial built on campus, the "Healing Garden and Memorial". As faculty involved in design studios dealing with the memorial's conceptualization and making, the authors reflect on the design process and outcomes, understanding this memorial as a collective and individual process which fits in the broader contemporary picture of a human-centered approach to grieving and remembering.

The research uses a classification scheme based on variables abstracted from the literature review and from the feedback gathered from the memorial's design process. The evaluation of the existing U of I memorials is made under two critical paradigms used to evaluate public artworks: the "productionist" paradigm and the "semiotic" paradigm. The "productionist" paradigm seeks to evaluate public artworks through the examination of practices, structures and procedures of production. The "semiotic paradigm" leverages the concepts of iconographic reconstruction, thematic design, production of "place" and "meaning", arguing that there exists some "quality of place" that can be captured through the practices of planning and design, and that public art has managed to distill and articulate these essences, investing abstract concepts with a social meaning (Hall & Robertson, 2001).

2 LITERATURE REVIEW: REMEMBERING AND MEMORIALIZING

The paper explores two approaches in dealing with death and grieving: severing versus retaining bonds with the deceased, arguing these approaches influence the way memorials are criticized and designed. "Remembering" suggests performing an on-going work of elaborating and reconstructing a memory on a daily basis, thus retaining bonds. "Memorializing", on the other hand, a term derivative of memorials, is associated with statically preserving, fixing a memory (severing bonds).

Paragraph 3.c explores how these two approaches influence the design of memorials in university campuses. This paragraph explores how the literature review is used as a framework to assess existing U of I memorials on how they fit and where there are gaps.

2.1 Severing Bonds: Memorializing

The way several memorials are designed and/or criticized reflects an outdated theory in psychoanalysis which used therapy and the grieving process to help patients sever bonds with the deceased, instead of nurturing those bonds. A product of modernist Western culture, a psychoanalytical process whose standpoint is that grief can come to an end or be resolved, is similar to a medical model, where etiology and symptoms can be generalized and monitored as they follow their prescribed course (Attig, 1996). Based on Freud's (1957) assumptions that a mourning process should lead to detachment from the lost person, so that psychological equilibrium can be restored, this on-going theoretical perspective has dominated psychoanalytic grief literature throughout the twentieth century (Hagman, 2001; Marwit & Klass, 1994; Silverman & Klass, 1996; Stroebe, 1992; Stroebe & Schut, 2005). Failure to relinquish emotional ties with the deceased is equated with pathology (Noppe, 2000).

The body of literature discussing what or whom memorials symbolize, evaluates memorials as end-products, monuments that commemorate, once and for all, certain events or people; almost the conclusion of a process of grief. An example of this perspective is the 1980s analysis and evaluation of war memorials built at the turn of the 1900s. Scholars see these sculptures as authoritative gestures of the dominant parties to assert certain values in the built environment. War monuments debate issues of identity and memory "serving particular interests and ideological positions" and sustaining power relations. In Savage's account of post-Civil War monument building in the American North and South, monuments are described as "memories in stone" which, forgetting the contribution of African Americans, are "icons of whites only" (Gillis, 1996, p.9, 10). The widespread movement which led to war monuments' removal has been justified by the criticism of their being expressions of white male dominance and political hegemony.

An analysis of memorials as mere products or artefacts, without considering the practices that might have revolved around their conceptualization or making, or the yearly rituals that give them consistently new meanings and life, suggests these artefacts suffuse a sense of losing touch with the past, as lived experience and people are reduced to nationalistic representations. However, more recent literature, while considering memorials as spaces or sculptural works, scrutinize the memorials' potential for eliciting an interactive response from visitors. These critics use a "semiotic paradigm", which leverages the concepts of iconographic reconstruction, thematic design, production of "place" and "meaning", arguing that there exists some "quality of place" that can be captured through the practices of planning and design by investing abstract concepts with a social meaning (Hall & Robertson, 2001). Stevens and Franck (2015) see memorials as "spaces people can enter and move through, and they support opportunities for a variety of actions, many of which generate sensory experiences". These scholars recognize that since the 1980s there has been a robust "transition from free-standing "statue monuments" to "spatial" ones". Through on-site observation and criticisms of built memorials, they investigate the wide variety of people's activities at memorials and the many ways in which the design of memorials allows and encourages such variety. It is noted that spatial memorials are often designed to invite visitors to enter, to draw close and touch parts of the memorial; the use of tactile materials, water features, plants, helps in providing such engagement. However, these studies do not investigate the process of making the memorial, whether the community was involved, nor the way in which grief or healing processes were considered as active components of the memorial's design process. The noted absence of specific symbolisms in memorials, which seems to render the intended message universal, seems to further distance the design of memorials from those core issues.

2.2 Nurturing Bonds: Remembering

In recent years, the way memorials are designed and/or criticized aligns with recent psychoanalytic theories suggesting that one common aspect of the grieving process is the need of the bereaved to establish an emotional link with the deceased. Typically, this is done through the act of remembering. Remembering the dead can give purpose and consolation to the living (Junge, 1999) because memory (the ability to remember) "establishes life's continuity. It gives meaning to the present as each moment is constituted by the past. As the means by which we remember who we are, memory provides the very core

of identity" (Sturken, 1997, p.1; Hallam & Hockey, 2001). By arguing the therapeutic benefits of maintaining close emotional bonds with the deceased, several scholars in grief counseling challenge the 'broken bonds' hypothesis (Attig, 1996; Hagman, 2001; Noppe, 2000; Klass, Silverman, & Nickman, 1996; Silverman, Nickman, & Worden, 1992; Stroebe, 1992; Vickio, 1999; Walter, 1996). Instead of aiming for grief to resolve, authors advocate for considering grief as a normal and reoccurring part of life, with variations and fluctuations in intensity (Attig, 1996; Hagman, 2001; Neimeyer, 2001a). Neimeyer (2001a) suggests that the main goal of grieving is the continual reconstruction of meaning after a loss; mourning within this paradigm involves the "transformation of meanings and affects" associated with the relationship to the deceased (Hagman, 2001, p. 24); an on-going transformative grieving process can offer growth and greater awareness of an individual's sense of identity.

One important aspect of moving away from the medical model of grief, is that the focus of treatment shifts from individual recovery independent of social relationships (because Western society values autonomy (Noppe, 2000) to focus on the relationships between the bereaved individual and his or her environment and also the relationship to the person they lost (Klass & Walter, 2001). The medical model fails us because, "a model of isolated mourning does not recognize the important role of others in mourning" (Hagman, 2001, p. 21). Levels of perceived emotional and social support from others have been significant in the bereavement process (Brabant, Forsyth, & McFarlain, 1995; Dyregrov, 2003; Klass, 1993). An example of this new understanding of the goals of grief therapy is the use of terms such as "accommodation" rather than recovery, or resolution (Silverman & Klass, 1996). Accommodation is dynamic, continual, and relates to others as the social environment changes, and development takes place (Silverman & Klass).

New techniques in grieving therapy promote a process of continuous re-elaboration of one's relationship with the deceased. They include art therapy and a shift from individual to group therapeutic sessions (support groups), where feelings of grief and memories of the deceased can be shared. Construing narratives (keeping memories alive through storytelling) through group discussions and the making of artworks, helps patients sustain positive bonds and find meaning in the loss. Art therapy and group counseling offer alternative perspectives and insights and help integrate the transformed memory of the loved one into a person's life (Attig, 1996; Bosticco & Thompson, 2005; Klass; Neimeyer, 2001b; Walter, 1996). Linking objects (such as personal items used by the deceased, photographs and possessions) can serve as symbolic representations that help connect and maintain a link from the living to the dead (Vickio, 1999; Volkan, 1981).

The post-modern era and a largely secular culture have resulted in a shift towards a multiplicity of perspectives and a concern to recognize huge variations in the experience and outward manifestations of bereavement (Homans, 2000; Stroebe et al., 1996). An instance of the changing theories in grief therapy which effect criticism and design of memorials is the rise of interest in indigenous/ pre-industrial traditional practices and spaces of grieving and memorializing, or in modern practices that seek the traditional ways of living with grief. Instead of focusing on memorials as monuments or end products of grief, the scholars understand memorials as individual or collective daily practices of remembering the deceased and engaging in grieving, and in this way they recognize them as essential parts of the process of healing. Klass (1996) points out that in grief therapy, linking objects that belonged to the deceased (transitional objects) provided comfort to bereaved parents as physical proof that the deceased's memory and presence would live on; scholar also points out how in Japan ancestors' worship through rituals performed at a home altars is an important part of culture. Bermudez & Bermudez (2002) suggest that in Latino culture, altars created at home are often used to idolize, memorialize and communicate with deceased loved ones. Similar principles are found in the recent creation of vernacular memorialization in virtual space or domestic shrines. Venbrux and Wojtkowiak (2009) point out that, while house shrines seemed to have virtually disappeared from Roman Catholic homes in the Netherlands, a 2005 survey showed their re-emergence, irrespective of religious denomination, as an on-going manner to preserve the deceased's post-self. Concepts of ancestors and forebearers are still present in global cultures and offer precedents for a humanistic view of the memory of the dead co-existing with the living. In Yoruba culture, ancestors are deeply revered, and their presence is felt through various daily practices and rituals. These practices (which include ancestors' small shrines placed in households; yearly festivals; divination sessions; offerings and rituals as well as other spiritual practices such as prayer and meditation) serve as constant

reminders of the ancestors' influence and guidance in daily life, shaping people's beliefs, values, and social interactions by ensuring the ancestors' legacy continues to shape the present (Romkalilu, 1993). Navajos (the largest tribe of Indians in the United States) believe that when someone dies a violent death, the "chindi" (term referring to the spirit of a deceased person in Navajo culture) is left behind as a malevolent spirit that can cause harm, and proper ceremonies are needed to restore balance if someone comes into contact with a "chindi" (Cox and Thompson, 2022).

Scholars list vernacular memorialization in virtual space (digital grieving, which requires the constant exchange of feelings and memories among interested individuals) as well as planting trees, roadside memorials, and spontaneous memorials made by significant objects commemorating victims placed at sites where disruptive events occurred, along with creating quilts and personalized urns, as examples of the way people have used art and created their own rituals to remember, honor, and transform their relationship with a loved one who has died (Zeitlin & Harlow, 2001; Clark & Franzman, 2006; Doss, 2002). Memorial benches are seen as "material, representational and more-than-representational"; as places of performances of remembrance and 'continuing bonds', often accompanied with a text found on plaques 'storytelling the deceased', these "articulate belonging, rootedness in the locality and the continuing attachment of the bereaved to the deceased" (Sidaway, 2016).

Foote and Grider (2016) point out that since the 1980s spontaneous memorials (vernacular or shrine memorials) have received a lot of attention from scholars. These vary in size and form; they include flowers, candles, notes, signs, posters, religious objects, and other mementos left at a tragedy site. They are included in other spontaneous or planned events, a repertoire of rituals and memorial activities has evolved, such as candlelight vigils or silent processions (Post et al., 2003) and are seen as a contemporary trend.

Overall, literature points out the therapeutic aspects of impromptu memorials in the continuity of the process of construing the memorial (a prolonged temporal realm), the involvement of concerned individuals in the making of the memorial, and the possibility of sharing grief in a public setting with others.

The interest of scholars in design that can integrate such processes is low. Dealing with the design and post-evaluation of the Melbourne Korean War Memorial creation process, its designers raise four concerns: "How do we design it to address the social relevance of the war memorial today? How do we integrate it into the urban landscape providing a sense of inclusion? How do we accommodate the sensitivities and needs of multiple stakeholders including veterans? And how do we actually make it?" (Kuys et al., 2025). Designers tap on the idea that "Memorial sites are spaces of shared memory that give different possibilities to express and interpret individual and collective loss" (Wagoner & Brescó, 2022) and that "such a process is not only about mourning but also can help individuals and societies to reinterpret the past, and in so doing, construct new orientations to the future" (Wagoner, 2017). To address their queries, they suggest creating an immersive experience by creating a space that one can enter; engaging storytelling through symbolism, and using co-design as a method to involve the community in selecting appropriate symbols that represent different parties. As a result of the co-design process, the built space integrates symbols that, by representing diverse communities, help all recognize a past as well as make it part of a standing legacy for the present and future generations. The paper uses the above findings in considering the U of I memorials' physical form and how the intended message is conveyed, if literally (through texts or figurative artworks) or with symbolic means, and how symbols help people connect to a concept expressed visually and spatially (Tables 1 and 2).

2.3 Design of Memorials in University Campuses: Memorializing Versus Remembering

Wesener, Peska and Trevino (2023) suggest that, while a university institution has a responsibility to provide opportunities for people to heal following a tragedy, research is insufficient and does not provide guidance on what specific initiatives are most effective in the healing process. This seems a pressing matter, considering that instances of homicide and mass murder did not begin to be marked until the late 1960s (starting with South Carolina State University (1968) and continuing with Kent State and Jackson State (1970); through the 1970s and 1980s such events were occasionally honored until, by the 1990s, they were marked regularly. (Foote & Grider, 2016).

Foote and Grider (2016) undertook a comparative study of American colleges' memorials over the past century to determine how they changed over time, broadly distinguishing two categories: permanent and ephemeral memorials (also referred to as vernacular memorials and spontaneous shrines). However, they focus on the memorials' political dimensions of public memory and commemoration; how the past is represented (constructed socially and expressed materially in landscape, public memorials and heritage sites) to express hegemonic relations of power and authority (Azaryahu 1996, 1999, Dwyer and Alderman 2008, Foote and Azaryahu 2007). Ephemeral memorials are seen as "public displays of grief", which showcase the role of politics and protest in the memorialization process. Permanent memorials are understood as tools for "locating history and its representations in space and landscape" (memorializing), which is ultimately a matter of addressing "the question of 'who we are' that becomes an issue of what we share and do together as a community". For the sake of this paper, Foote and Grider's exhaustive list of permanent memorials in U.S. campuses (artworks, statuary, gardens, reflecting pools and ponds, buildings, benches, plaques; and other memorials belonging to the larger tradition of honoring heroes, victims and martyrs such as place names, street names, and building names, and sculptures erected on campuses after the First and Second World Wars) provides a useful comparison with U of I memorials in Table 1. Foote and Grider (2016)'s study recognize that colleges memorials can express a set of shared historical experiences and attitudes which define and bond a community; the memorial is expressive of "public memory" -- part of the symbolic foundation of collective life—at the heart of a community's sense of identity. However, by avoiding to investigate how the community actively participated in the memorials' conceptualization and making, or the memorials' afterlife – how memorials are a tool to help people sustain memories of the deceased, and how remembering helps healing processes – the scholars reinforce the ideology of a memorial as mere object statically "memorializing" an event or a decedent, rather than actively embedding memories in the social fabric of the place. Ultimately, such critiques frame memory and memorials as an 'invented tradition', a selectively embellished, even mythologized version of events which serves political ends (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, Cosgrove and Daniels 1988, Norkunas 1993).

While those scholars investigate U.S. campus memorials as built forms (rather than processes of healing, which is the focus of this paper) the way memorials' aesthetics tap into abstract symbols of loss rather than figurative representations, finds some application in the study of the U of I campus (Tables 1 and 2, classification row 2-shape and 3-message). Examples include the use of trees as symbols of life; plaques on rocks as symbols of permanence and eternal remembrance; gardens, pools and benches as places for reflection or prayer, or other symbols, such as circles representing community, love, and unbroken faith or gateways recall imagery of the passage from life to death. Foote and Grider highlight a tendency to include only the names of the deceased and perhaps birth and death dates, with no mention of the event which caused the deaths. Overall, the trend is not to develop entirely new symbols for death, dying and bereavement, but rather to blend traditional symbols into complex new arrangements

Wesener, Peska and Trevino (2023) study of memorial practices established at Virginia Tech and Northern Illinois University, investigates expressions of mourning in university campuses' post-crisis, what forms they can take and their varying degrees of formality and planning. While these authors do not focus on permanent memorials, their insights are among the few that address the way a university or college institution can provide responses that assist in the community's healing process. Looking for affective strategies to restore a culture and support the members of the community, the authors examine research in the area of crisis intervention. Hobfoll et al. (2007) list five key elements that should be promoted in all immediate and midterm crisis interventions by university officials: a sense of safety and calm, self-efficacy, community efficacy, connectedness, and hope. "Rituals" are tools that assist in "reestablishing feelings of control, belonging, and social solidarity within and beyond one's immediate community" (Eyre, 2006, p. 442), and generally providing opportunities for members of the community to gather, remember and express themselves in mourning, and reconnect with the community (Herman, 1992).

In conclusion, Wesener, Peska and Trevino suggest that university and colleges' responses to a crisis need to actively engage members of the community as participants and co-creators of activities that help them bond, remember the deceased in meaningful ways, and collectively take a healing journey.

University and colleges institution's responses are varied. Paragraph 6 compares the following list made by Wesener, Peska and Trevino with a brief list of activities supported by the U of I to initiate and sustain

the community's healing journey in the aftermath of the tragedy that spurred the "Healing Garden and Memorial". The scholars' list includes organizing community gatherings, such as candlelight vigils; providing a space for personal reflection, including website and online journals or message boards on campus; commemorating milestones; commemorative events designed to offer opportunities for memorial expressions in many forms -- musical performances, art displays, multifaith services, events for injured students and victims families to connect with community members and university leadership. Researchers "have reinforced the significance of social support for those who are traumatized, including the value of social responses to death, grief, and mourning" (Eyre, 2006, p. 443), and these responses provide that opportunity. Researchers point out the relevance of ephemeral memorials as expressions of grief will naturally occur in a variety of forms, many impromptu and unplanned by the university. They list spontaneous memorials, and virtual memorials. "Spontaneous expressions of grief are now the rule rather than the exception following sudden, tragic death in, for example, fatal road crashes, acts of murder, and disasters" and "advances in technology and increasing use of the Internet have resulted in the development of virtual memorials" outpouring of support from around the world (Eyre 2006, p. 443-442). When a tragedy strikes, thousands of cards, letters, and banners expressing condolences will pour into the university. Expressions of grief come in all shapes, sizes, and sometimes in large volume.

Meaningful opportunities for the community to "do something" as a contribution to healing include fundraising as a support mechanism, with colleges and universities may want to set up designated accounts, and some individuals and groups creating their own items (magnets, ribbons, T-shirts, etc.) to sell in an effort to raise funds. Events are planned so that each event build on the previous; the events are designed to help the community come together collectively, but also in small groups sensitive to the needs of diverse individuals, so that all can begin moving forward at their own pace on the continuum (transition) from grieving to healing. The campus events need to inspire self-confidence and community confidence and instill the knowledge that the campus community will prevail and recover. To this end, the tone of each event provided by the campus should validate the initial shock, disbelief, and grief while still affirming that the environment is safe. As time passes, the message becomes one of resilience, healing, and hope (Wesener, Peska and Trevino, 2023)

Wesener, Peska and Trevino have not investigated the use of memorials as long-term community healing initiatives. Eyre (2006) suggests "the importance of remembering the past is illustrated in the erection and maintenance of permanent reminders of tragic events" (p. 452). The creation of a memorial site, as with all other long-term healing initiatives, has "the potential for disagreement in the design, cost and location" because of its "huge symbolic and political significance" (Eyre, p. 453). The community and key stakeholders will expect to be asked to offer their input on this important initiative. Whether through programs, rituals, or policies, a university must also give consideration to long-term healing. Most importantly, the healing initiatives in the aftermath of a crisis show the world the heart and soul of the institution.

3 THE UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO MEMORIALS

The research has established that U.S. Colleges and universities are about community building; this sense of community is extended beyond the campus itself, to former students, supporters and alumni. In the aftermath of the tragic death of some of its members, the university as an institution needs to nurture and restore this sense of community. How can memorials work as an on-going conduit to healing, a tool to sustaining bonds among the people living, studying, and working on campus, as well as the alumni, families, and affiliates off campus? How can memorials support and integrate memories of the deceased in the living and evolving campus community?

Ultimately, this research evaluates campus memorials by looking at them from a different angle, which reflects the evolution of grief therapy and helps shed light on evolving Western approaches to dealing with death and grieving: severing versus retaining bonds with the deceased, by integrating these bonds into the fabric of a community.

Like most university campuses in the U.S., the University of Idaho has several memorials, which have been built in diverse points in time, starting from the campus' inception. To answer the above questions, the authors examine all memorials on campus, attempting to understand how they participate in the daily

life of the community, which includes the students, faculty and administrators working and living on campus, as well as the community of parents, alumni and supporters living off campus. The research then focuses on the 2023 University of Idaho “Healing Garden and Memorial”; propelled by the tragic death of four UI students in fall of 2022, the memorial was built in spring 2024.

The methods for this research are a distillation of framework from literature applied to understanding existing precedents on the U of I campus, then the projective design of a new memorial (the U of I students memorial). Deming and Swaffield’s book on methods in Landscape Architecture frames projective design (design research) as the projection of new landscape compositions to address the question/s raised by the study. The research questions are typically driven by a desire to generate new types of conceptual design solution, in this case a memorial space. Normative design operations (its familiar stages – inventory, analysis, synthesis) may be used as a research method, if deployed as part of a wider strategy and design. Steenbergen (2008) specifies that in design research the object or design expression (in this case a memorial) is determined, the research is a design evaluation and involves design classification and typology.

This research involved inventory – a classificatory procedure for gathering and organizing information. The paper investigates the memorials on U of I campus by using a classification scheme (Table 1) where variables (concepts and criteria) are abstracted and cross-referenced from the literature review, archival research, and gathered from the “Healing Garden and Memorial” design process; the memorial is read both as physical artefact and as a facilitator of community-driven memorial practices. It is noted that none of the existing literature specifically addresses the questions we are attempting to answer. As such, the authors have created this framework that is used in the evaluation. Paragraph 5 and paragraph 6 clarify how the analysis of precedent informed projective design inquiry, and elaborate on the approach of the projective design process.

The study of the U of I built memorials (artefacts) considers their physical form and how the intended message is conveyed, if literally (through texts or figurative artworks) or with symbolic means, and how symbols help people connect to a concept expressed visually and spatially. Considerations in paragraph 3.b (Sidaway, 2016; Wagoner & Brescó, 2022; Wagoner, 2017) and 3.c (Foote and Grider (2016) inform Table 1 column 2-Shape and column 3-Message, including the transition from sculptural memorials to spatial ones and the way the latest are designed to encourage visitors’ interaction with the memorial’s features (paragraph 3.a; Stevens and Franck, 2015).

To understand how each memorial participates in campus life, its location is considered (Table 1, column 1-Location). Discussions with students in the U of I memorial design studio surfaced that location of memorials might help integrate memories of the deceased in the living campus community. The location’s relevance in memorials is supported by the “Healing Garden and Memorial’s design charrette outcomes (see activity 4. “Map your Journey: Draw how you move through campus on a map”) which then informed the memorial’s finalized design proposals. Paragraph 6 shows how these findings informed the finalized design of the U of I memorial space (Figure 9 – circulation schemes and plan drawings). Table 1 shows how memorials built throughout campus in diverse periods have strategic locations that make them visible and integrated into campus design. Table 1, column 4- Participation in Campus Life, finds that most of the existing memorials are encountered daily by members of the university’s community because of their location. Figure 1 shows the diverse memorials on campus (above) and their location around the core campus area – the lawn around the Administration building (Figure 1).

The study of the processes that revolve around the memorial, considers whether the community (and what members of the community) were involved in its conceptualization or making (Table 1, column 5-Community Participation), what memorial practices are connected to the memorial, and how these practices engage the community on campus and beyond (Table 1, column 6- Community Involvement). Considerations for the study of these processes were sourced from the literature review (Wesener, Peska and Trevino, 2023).

Table 1. Classification of memorials on U of I campus based on variables abstracted from the literature review, archival research on the U of I campus memorials (see Notes for Table 1) and gathered from the U of I “Healing Garden and Memorial” design process.

MEMORIAL	1-Location	2-Shape	3-Message	4-Participation in campus life	5-Community participation in conceptualizing and making	6-Community involvement and support
Memorial Benches	Scattered throughout U of I campus; placed in Shattuck Arboretum and Botanical Gardens; bike and pedestrian trails	Seatings with memorial plaque	Through text/ plaques as symbols of permanence and eternal remembrance	Daily encounter/ visited by relatives	Memorials continuously added	Can be sponsored through a donation and honor an individual * University of Idaho Foundation: https://myuidaholegacy.org/ways-to-give/gifts-that-make-an-impact-now/
Memorial Presidential Grove	Placed on Administration Lawn* **	Trees + dedication plaques **	Trees as symbols of life. Planted since 1911, when President Theodore Roosevelt visited the campus	Daily encounter	Memorials continuously added	Possibility for community to sponsor “Commemorative and Recognition Trees” (https://www.uidaho.edu/dfa/facilities/landscape/commemorative-trees)
Memorial Steps	Placed on a side of Administration Lawn	Stone and concrete steps	Historical memory -- commemorates the original Administration Building, which burned in the 1900	Daily encounter. Placed along path leading to WW1 Memorial Grove, Shattuck Arboretum and Botanical Gardens and adjacent fraternities	Made after a competition in 1932 ****	Institution and community support
World War I Memorial Grove	Adjacent Memorial Steps and Shattuck Arboretum	10 red oaks and 22 spruce trees	Trees as symbols of life. Planted in 1919 to honor 32 University of Idaho students killed in World War I *****	Daily encounter		Conceptualization and making supported by relatives of the deceased, alumni, and U of I institution
Hello Walk	Oblique path traversing the Administration Lawn and leading to the campus core.	Stone and concrete path	Symbol of collegiality and community spirit since the campus' inception	Daily encounter, as students travel from campus dorms and Greek buildings to their classes	Named after sixth UI President Alfred Upham, who practiced the custom of saying hello as he moved along the walk to work	Institution and community support
Spanish-American War Memorial	Along the Hello Walk	Bronze sculpture of common soldier on stone pedestal	Sculpture as symbol of permanence and eternal remembrance; Commemorating U of I students who perished in the Spanish-American War	Daily encounter	Commissioned and made in 1899 *****	Institution and community support
Sacagawea and Jean Baptiste	To be placed	Bronze sculpture	Figurative commemoration of one specific individual. Representative of the Shoshone-Bannock Tribe	Landscape Architecture Program's design studio with students placings' proposals	Donated to the University of Idaho by alumni in 2022	Institution and community support
Memorial Paving Bricks	Placed around sororities and fraternities	Brick paving with dedications	Textual commemoration of specific individuals. Honoring deceased students with names and dedication	Daily encounter	Continuously added Participatory	Students-driven

Informal memorials	Arbitrary	Gathering of objects that belonged to the deceased and religious symbols such as crosses	Commemoration of specific individuals with names and objects as well as students' gatherings	Temporary encounters/ typically removed shortly afterward	Sporadic/ participatory	Students-driven
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In conclusion, the U of I memorials are embedded in the campus, with daily encounters integrated in the fabric of the rolling hills and mature vegetation of the place. Most of them, such as trees, benches and paving stones, are ongoing projects.



Figure 1. Memorials scattered on campus, from right to left: Hello Walk with Memorial Grove, Figurative sculpture commemorating Common Soldier in Spanish-American War; Commemorative Bench; Commemorative stone; Ephemeral Memorial; Memorial Bricks (above). Memorials' locations are mapped on campus aerial view (below).

4 THE "HEALING GARDEN AND MEMORIAL"

The "Healing Garden and Memorial" was the culmination of a number of activities supported by the U of I to initiate and sustain the community's healing journey. A university website page (uidaho.edu/remember) was set up soon after the homicide of the four students on November 13, 2022. This webpage provides several ways in which community members and the institution can and have been actively engaged in the process of remembering the victims and supporting each other. A live-streamed vigil was held immediately after the homicide of the four students; since then, student-led vigils were planned for the anniversary of the students' deaths. GoFundMe pages were established by the Greek Life and friends of the deceased to help support the victims' families; families have created a scholarship endowment named after the deceased. By providing "solidarity images" to be used in social media to show support (symbols such as circles, which typically represent community, love, and unbroken faith) as well as memorable phrases such as "vandal strong", "community", "in our hearts" and "vandals together" (the "vandal" is the U of I mascot) the uidaho.edu/remember website page acts as a virtual memorial.

During spring and fall 2023, the university and the College of Art and Architecture envisioned and led the “Healing Garden and Memorial.” U of I constructed the memorial in spring 2024, supported by donations gathered through a university-sponsored website.

Defined as a “student-led, community-engaged design”, the memorial as a physical space and the memorial practices that led to its conceptualization and making were orchestrated by U of I landscape architecture and architecture students (overall 18 students committed for one semester) with faculty working collaboratively in design studios. Faculty involved in this process were: Scott Lawrence (architecture design build studio); Mandi Roberts, Roberto Capecci and Kanghyun Lee (landscape architecture design studios). The project was strongly supported by Shauna Corry, Dean of the College of Art and Architecture, and Blaine Eckles, Dean of Students.

In the words of Mandi Roberts who led the design studio “A few months later as winter was emerging into Spring in 2023, a few people from the University almost simultaneously had the same idea – that we could find a path to healing from within...through the College of Art and Architecture...as teachers, community leaders, students...we could create a place to honor these four, as well as others we have lost by coming together in design and by doing something...taking action! I think of this as HEALING FROM THE INSIDE OUT..... It was a project of collaboration—we engaged so many others—the families, friends, people in the community—from other colleges and departments on campus, the town, and experts in understanding the healing power of landscapes and design of memorials. U of I landscape architecture and architecture faculty, and students worked together to envision the process, facilitate the process, and work through design solutions, prior to being built”.

The research explores how the “Healing Garden and Memorial” design engaged healing processes by using social and participatory practices (the project as conduit to active healing) and how those practices led to design parameters and defensible design solutions.

The “Healing Garden & Memorial” was started on the belief that the creative process should be inclusive, with community involvement shaping design outcomes. This approach follows contemporary trends in grief therapy counseling, which challenge a medical model to healing, which fails us because “a model of isolated mourning does not recognize the important role of others in mourning” (Hagman, 2001, p. 21). New techniques in counselling suggest that perceived emotional and social support from others are significant in the bereavement process. By promoting hands-on activities and discussions amongst diverse members of the broad university community, design brought people together and gave them the possibility to “do something” and to express their feelings; the design process itself became a healing process—collective healing therapy.

Along the fall semester 2024, the traditional studio activities that pertain to the design process (Figure 2) – site surveys, site analysis and evaluation (step 1 of the process); case studies research, discussions with invited speakers, and a one-day art activity involving students led by art faculty Stacy Isenbarger (step 2); creation of design alternatives, master planning, detailed design (step 3) became occasions for discussions through interdisciplinary (architecture and landscape architecture) group work and weekly students’ presentations to each other and to an ad-hoc committee made of several university faculty and administrators. The number of people taking part in these committees was on average 6/8 faculty/administrators (including Dr Corry, Dr Blaine Eckles, and Raffaella Sini as landscape architecture program director) and the students developing the project.

Along the design process, there were also small-scale group meetings with alumni and employees, professionals, Moscow’s community members, and friends and relatives of the deceased. These were “listening sessions” which helped students gather input for the design, and gave all community members the chance to express their feelings and participate in the effort. The meetings and events along the design process were planned so that each event was built on the previous; the events were designed to help the community come together in different configurations, with encounters in larger or smaller groups were sensitive to the needs of diverse individuals, as a support for people to process their grief at their own pace.



Figure 2. Methods and Learning Focus Areas; the design process and learning opportunities. © 2025 University of Idaho All Rights Reserved.

The first part of the design implementation (step 3) was a university-wide charrette – a collaborative and interactive workshop created and administered by the students and overseen by the College of Art and Architecture (CAA), which invited representatives from U of I and the City of Moscow. In the charrette, among others several U of I students and members of the Greek houses participated. The charrette had 150 people registered, with participation of 92 people registered and several people who came without registering. The event saw the students collaboratively craft and oversee several interactive activities and artworks (Figure 3) which served to help participants feel connected and useful through hands-on creation of models, collages, and collective co-creation of scenarios. The choice and organization of the activities and artworks drew from what was learned from the study of existing U of I memorials (paragraph 5), the literature review, and the varied activities (case studies research and making of artworks), as well as meetings and discussions with invited speakers and faculty, which helped students grasp issues and potentials of healing gardens, memorials' design, and dynamics and methods of community-engaged design.

In the aftermath of the charrette, the students gathered to reflect on the collective outcomes of the diverse group meetings and the charrette, to abstract usable design parameters leading to defensible design solutions. They placed these data in slides that were presented and discussed in focus groups, and informed the finalized design proposals. The research attempts to read this data and intersect it with the two final design solutions proposed by students to the committee.

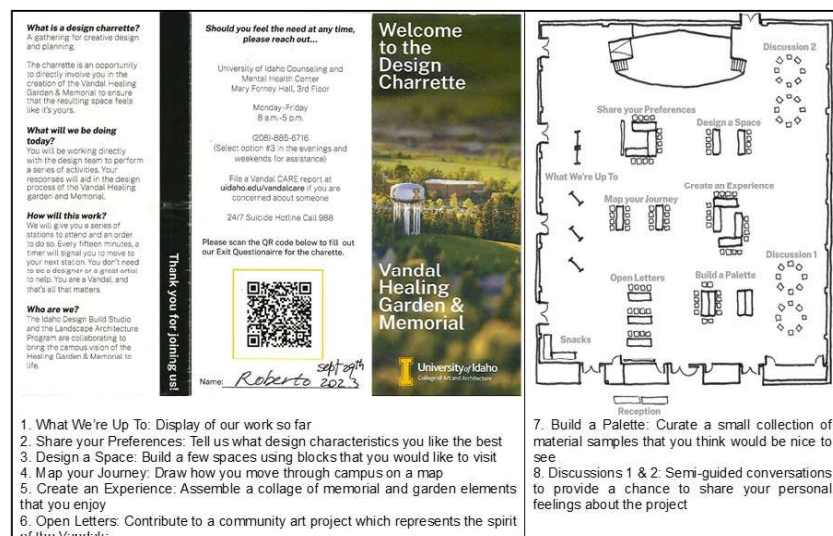


Figure 3. Charrette Flier distributed to community members, with invitation and map of charrette stations. The event had a total of 9 stations, of which 8 were dedicated to a specific activity (listed above). Each participant was directed to 7 stations. © 2025 University of Idaho All Rights Reserved

It is noted that several of the proposed activities crafted by the students for the charrette address queries pertaining to memorials as built artefacts, which have surfaced from this research's literature review.

In activity two, "Share your Preferences", participants were asked a series of questions using a slideshow and individual worksheets onto which they recorded their personal responses to the various broad design characteristic spectrums the students identified for the "Healing Garden and Memorial". Forty-four worksheets were collected and compiled from participants. Students recorded the minimum, maximum, and median values for each response and compiled the data into charts (Figure 4) summarizing: "When we asked about the Impact of the design, people generally leaned towards Subtle rather than Grand, but not entirely. Regarding the crowding Capacity the site should hold, there was a more centered answer between Communal and Intimate with a lean towards Intimate. The strongest consensus was among the last three preferences: the design should be primarily Abstract in Symbolism, to allow for individual interpretation and adaptability to different people, but not foregoing a way of representing [the deceased]. The Experience should be an Immersive one, that allows for an exploratory experience of discovery, supplemented by a Meandering Movement through the space, with different options for approach, entry, and circulation throughout." Students suggest how these findings informed the finalized design: "in conclusion from the findings, we see the community prefers a semiprivate space that is immersive, experiential, and creates a journey for the visitor. The Healing Garden & Memorial space is imagined to be a meandering, immersive space that utilizes abstract symbolism in a subtle way to create an experience that is conducive for reflection and healing in both communal and intimate circumstances". The finalized design proposal (circulation schemes and design models in Figure 9) show the attempt to conceptualize a meandering space. The sectional view and images of the built memorial space (Figure 10) show the attempt to frame an immersive space, and use abstract symbolism (the Beacon sculptural work, realized and placed on site).



Figure 4. Discussion table at Charrette. © 2025 University of Idaho All Rights Reserved

Activity 4. "Map your Journey: Draw how you move through campus on a map" responded to the designer's commitment in placing the memorial so that it would be traversed daily by the students, in this way becoming part of the living community on campus, integrating memories of the deceased into community life. Responding to the charrette's outcomes, the memorial was placed centrally on the campus, intersecting students' daily routes to and from classes and recreational areas (Shattuck Arboretum and Botanical Gardens; Memorial Gym)

The activities "3. Design a Space: Build a few spaces using blocks that you would like to visit" and 7. "Build a Palette: Curate a small collection of material samples that you think would be nice" (Figure 5) acknowledge the idea that memorials should invite visitors to enter, to draw close, and even to touch parts of the memorial. This was learned from the literature review (Stevens and Franck, 2015). Sensory experiences provided by tactile materials, water features, plants, help in providing such engagement. The built memorial garden uses a variety of paving (gravels and soils of different colors) and diverse ornamental flowering plants; the main pavilion and seating are made of natural materials such as Corten steel and wood, which lend warm color and textures (Figure 10). Because of considerations based on management issues and the region's climatic conditions, water features were not considered. Overall, by attempting to respond to community members' tastes, the memorial is a tool for continuous engagement that fuels the healing process on a daily basis.

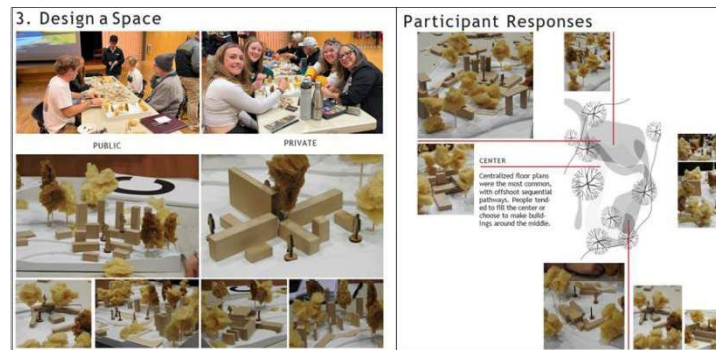


Figure 5. Activity 3. “Design a Space: Build a few spaces using blocks that you would like to visit”. © 2025 University of Idaho All Rights Reserved

The feedback gathered from Activity 3 (Figure 5) highlighted the community’s need for a diversification of “private spaces” (comments included: “being alone together”; private space near or inside and around trees; the ability to have choices in pathways and moments of rest; a design providing a sense of orientation; need of something that occupied visitors’ vision while thinking) as opposed to “public spaces” (the possibility of a central point/amphitheater like area; seating areas; sphere or columns where people can walk around; design that is driven by landscape; natural barrier permeable walls).

In Activity 7 (Figure 6), participants gravitated towards natural wood colors and elements and expressed the need for a “connection to Nature”; Several groups came up with lighting the opaque yellow tile to give off a yellow glow for the memorial; most participants stayed away from flashy or heavy materials; groups wanted to see color from the vegetation of the garden.

As a result of this feedback, the finalized design and built memorial are configured as a linear park, where seating areas and a “permeable” wood beams structure (the main pavilion) are scattered along winding paths enveloped by trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants that provide shelter but do not hide. Directionality is easy to decipher, a central area for gatherings is provided (see Figure 9).



Figure 6. Activity 7. “Build a Palette: Curate a small collection of material samples that you think would be nice”. © 2025 University of Idaho All Rights Reserved.

Activity “5. Create an Experience: Assemble a collage of memorial and garden elements that you enjoy” and 6. “Open Letters: Contribute to a community art project which represents the spirit of the Vandals” tap into the idea that a memorial is a repository of symbols that express certain messages. In this case, the messages concern a community and how it wants to define its identity. One of the results of activity 6 was the consideration that the Healing Garden and Memorial” should invite community members to keep giving feedback and express feelings about the deceased. The finalized pavilion has an open box structure where visitors can place messages in rolled paper sheets (Figure 10).



Figure 7. Activity 5. “Create an Experience: Assemble a collage of memorial and garden elements that you enjoy”. © 2025 University of Idaho All Rights Reserved.

In activity 5, after completing the collages, participants were asked to describe their space in three words. The most commonly used words included: “naturalistic, peaceful, timeless, inviting, radiant”.

As a response to this feedback, the built memorial exhibits lush vegetation and is placed adjacent to the university's Arboretum. An artwork defined as “Beacon” was built for the memorial and placed in the backdrop of the Arboretum and overlooking the memorial. By lighting at night, the Beacon symbolizes the “Vandal Strong” community and all its members.



Figure 8. Activity 6. “Open Letters: Contribute to a community art project which represents the spirit of the Vandals”. © 2025 University of Idaho All Rights Reserved.

As attempted when evaluating the other memorials present on the U of I campus, this study considers the memorial's fall 2023 design solutions and the built memorial by using a classification scheme (Table 2) based on variables abstracted from the literature review, the study of other U of I memorials, and gathered from the U of I “Healing Garden and Memorial” design process.

The study considers the proposed memorial's physical form; how the intended message is conveyed through the form, if literally (through texts or figurative artworks) or with symbolic means; how/if these symbols help people connect to a concept expressed visually and spatially. To understand how the memorial participates in the life of the campus, its location is considered. To understand if the memorial actively engages its visitors, the memorials' features are scrutinized.

Table 2. Classification scheme based on variables abstracted from the literature review, study of other U of I memorials, and gathered from the U of I “Healing Garden and Memorial” design process.

1- Location	2-Shape	3-Message	4-Participation in campus life	5-Active engagement through design features	6-Community involvement and support
Placed along a commonly used path on the campus-core	Elongated shape, with pavilion and other seating areas (to provide open and enclosed reflection spaces)	Through trees and plants as symbols of life; symbols of permanence and eternal remembrance (insertion of the sculptural work the Beacon) Symbol of collegiality and community spirit (pavilion) Textual commemoration of specific individuals. Place honors deceased students with names and dedication	Daily encounter/ supports journey through campus by students and visitors (connecting classes with Memorial Gim etc.) but also connecting a place of peace and reflection to Shattuck Arboretum and Botanical gardens and adjacent fraternities/sororities + Memorial Grove	Memorial messages continuously added in pavilion's box structure. Diverse tactile materials, features, textures, and plants, help provide community engagement	Management / upkeep supported through donations Website: Students-driven Institution and community support Conceptualization and making supported by relatives of the diseased, alumni, and U of I institution Possibility for community to sponsor a “Commemorative and Recognition Trees” (https://www.uidaho.edu/dfa/facilities/landscape/com-memorative-trees)

**Figure 9. Finalized designs.****Figure 10. Built memorial, spring 2025.**

5 CONCLUSIONS

The unique mission of U.S. colleges and universities is to help cultivate a strong sense of community. These institutions, as a whole, exhibit a very strong sense of community and identity that spreads beyond the campus itself, to former students as well as supporters and alumni. In this framework, memorials can reveal how a community can respond to disaster, by defining memorialization as an ongoing

humancentred community-driven approach to grieving, remembering, and healing. In conclusion, campus memorials should function as a daily conduit to healing, and as a tool to sustaining bonds among the people living, studying, and working on campus, as well as the alumni, families, and affiliates. However, the study found scarce literature investigating how the particular mission of university and college institutions practically influences the way memorials are conceptualized and built on campuses.

By investigating the memorials on the University of Idaho campus, and the recent “Healing Garden and Memorial” as built spaces and memorial practices, and cross-referencing that data with findings from the literature review, the authors find that contemporary theories in psychoanalytic grief have been applied in the U of I memorial’s design process, and do influence the way memorials on the U of I campus are conceptualized and built. Specifically, the paper finds that the realized memorials (artefacts) and the processes that led to their making have strived to retain and nurture bonds with the deceased, integrating the memory of deceased students into the community. First, the “Healing Garden and Memorial” uses a community-engaged design process promoting hands-on activities and discussions amongst diverse members of the broad university community. Design brought people together and gave them the possibility to “do something” and to express their feelings; the design process itself became a healing process—collective healing therapy. Secondly, a charrette was integrated into the design process which helped gather community members’ design suggestions that were translated into design. The charrette’s activities and the translation of the charrette’s gathered data into design were mediated and informed by the literature review, the findings from the study of the U of I memorials, and lessons learned from other activities that took place during the design process (discussions, listening sessions, art activities, etc.). Thirdly, the memorial’s built form, as a result of these activities, is purposely shaped to keep on a daily basis the university community on and off campus connected, nurturing extended bonds.

Now that the memorial has been built, the research would benefit from the memorial’s post evaluation, which has not been done yet. In relation to this paper, some questions are: How was the design process done differently as compared to case studies examined in the literature review? In what ways was it successful or did it fail based on the literature review gaps?

Traditionally, memorials tend to punctuate the landscape and range from statuary to spatially complex sculptural works, installations, or memorial ephemera. The literature review could not find case studies of memorials in university campuses that comprehensively embrace memorials’ design processes and design outcomes (the built memorials) to address the complex task of nurturing bonds among the living and working campus community and its deceased members, in spite of the fact that research has long established that a university as an institution has a mandate to nurture and restore this sense of community. In essence, the “Healing Garden and Memorial” on University of Idaho attempts this task by putting forward the idea of creating memorials as immersive, healing spaces, and exploring the design process as a participatory healing process.

Notes for Table 1

* Can be sponsored through a donation and honor an individual

“Memorial or Tribute Gift. You can honor a grandparent, a parent, a spouse, a loved one, a faculty member or someone else close to you by establishing a memorial or tribute gift. This gift connects you and someone special in your life with the University of Idaho’s mission, celebrating innovative thinking, community engagement and transformative education for generations to come. You can fund a memorial or tribute gift with cash, appreciated securities, real estate, or tangible personal property”.

** The Administration lawn, which is a common that marks the core of the campus, was conceptualized with the first U of I masterplan made by the Olmsted Brothers in 1908.

(Report of University of Idaho. Brookline, Mass. , May 28th, 1908. Olmsted Brothers)

**** Jones, Jedd. Design for Memorial Steps competition, 1933. #1-241-47a. University of Idaho Library. Weblink: <https://www.lib.uidaho.edu/special-collections/dm/dm2000/steps.html>

**** (2) Arbor Notes May 2013 WWI Memorial Restoration, in: Arbor Notes Collection. A Newsletter of the University of Idaho Arboretum Associates, University of Idaho Library, weblink: <https://www.lib.uidaho.edu/digital/arbornotes/items/arbornotes41.html>

***** Sculpture of common soldier in Spanish-American War, 1899, to commemorate U of I students perished in the war.

<https://harvester.lib.uidaho.edu/posts/2017/01/10/spanish-american-war-memorial.html> Spanish-American War Memorial: <https://harvester.lib.uidaho.edu/posts/2017/01/10/spanish-american-war-memorial.html>

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