

NEW JERSEY 101.5

January 16, 2024

Collecting COVID Artifacts – Students at NJ University Chronicling Pandemic

By Dino Flammia



We recently lived through an incredible moment in history. Students at Centenary University want to make sure it's well documented.

Operations at the private institution were turned upside down by the coronavirus pandemic. A chronicling of the university's response — including the actions of students, staff, and administrators — and the school's bounce-back as the threat subsided was the focus this past fall of a group of students in a public history class.

The project proved to be more than a one-semester gig, so members of Centenary's history club will keep the momentum going during the spring semester.

MEDIA Coverage



Centenary University Associate Professor of History Noah Haiduc-Dale, and students (Photo provided by Centenary University)

The class has interviewed students, faculty, and staff to record their experiences handling an unprecedented emergency. Also, students collected items related to the pandemic, including masks, campus signage, and communications sent to the Centenary community.

"We have photographs of volleyball players playing volleyball with a mask on, and cross-country runners running with a mask on," said Noah Haiduc-Dale, associate professor of history.



MEDIA Coverage



Haiduc-Dale said students were shocked to find barely a mention of the 1918 Spanish flu pandemic's impact on Centenary when they were looking through the university's archives.

"Through this project, students have learned about the importance of saving items of historical significance," Haiduc-Dale said. "Our failed hunt for artifacts from the early 20th century flu pandemic has given students a greater appreciation for the role of archives and their own responsibility to preserve the history that surrounds us."

Many of the students involved in the project were first-year Centenary students when the pandemic took over New Jersey and forced schools to close. It wasn't until spring 2021 that Centenary students had the option to come back to campus for classes.

Haiduc-Dale, who was recently named the university's archivist, said the ongoing project will ideally turn into a permanent presentation on campus. Haiduc-Dale said the project could benefit from more interviews with professors, regarding the challenge of teaching during a public health emergency.



Photo collected for Centenary University COVID archive (Photo provided by Centenary University)

—*—