Hurricane Harvey (August 2017) is tied with Hurricane Katrina (August 2005) as the costliest tropical cyclone on record, and is also the costliest tropical cyclone in the history of the U.S state of Texas, inflicting $125 billion (2017 USD) in damage, primarily from catastrophic rainfall-triggered flooding in the Houston metropolitan area. It was the first major hurricane to make landfall in the United States since Wilma in 2005, ending a record 12-year span in which no hurricanes made landfall at such an intensity in the country. In a four-day period, many areas received more than 40 inches of rain as the system slowly meandered over eastern Texas and adjacent waters, causing unprecedented flooding. Harvey was the wettest tropical cyclone on record in the United States. The resulting floods inundated hundreds of thousands of homes, displaced more than 30,000 people, and prompted more than 17,000 rescues.
As I watched this play out in the news, I started thinking about how I might take students from Rimrock Jr./Sr. High School in Bruneau, Idaho to Houston, Texas to help those in need. So, seven months later on March 21st, six students and I boarded a plane in Boise, Idaho bound for Houston, Texas. Those on the trip included Elizabeth Rodriguez, Liza Hurtado, Christian Sharek, Martin Gomez, Samanta Elizondo, Martha Araujo and Cory Freese.

Upon arrival we headed over to Texas Southern University. Texas Southern University is medium-sized, 4-year, public university. This coed college is located in a very large city in an urban setting and is primarily a commuter campus. It offers bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees. Total undergraduates is around 8,000 with first-time degree-seeking freshmen around 2,000. The best part of TSU was meeting the TRIO Upward Bound staff. The director Deanna Ashley-Lemon was so delightful and Jose Cavazos was an awesome tour guide.

On Thursday, March 22nd, we visited the University of Houston. The University of Houston is a large, 4-year, public university. This coed college is located in a very large city in an urban setting and is primarily a residential campus. It offers bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees. Total undergraduates is around 38,200 with First-time degree-seeking freshmen around 5,000. U of H is an outstanding university that prides itself on diversity and education.
That afternoon we headed over to Rice University. Rice University is a medium-sized, 4-year, private university. This coed college is located in a very large city in an urban setting and is primarily a residential campus. It offers bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees. Total undergraduates is around 4,000 with first-time degree-seeking freshmen around 1,000.

One thing that stood out at Rice University is the architecture. Specifically, the Raymond and Susan Brochstein Pavilion. Situated in Rice University’s Central Quadrangle, this garden and plaza embraces a glass-walled pavilion. The quadrangle is part of the Beaux-Arts campus plan developed in 1912 by Ralph Adams Cram. This pavilion transformed a one-acre lawn into a hub of student activity.

Surrounding the pavilion, a concrete plaza provides space for outdoor dining, shaded by a steel trellis that extends from the pavilion’s roof. Linear beds of horsetail grass define the edges of the plaza, separating it from the adjacent pedestrian walkways. Uniting the pavilion and the library, a wide concrete walk bisects two garden rooms, each planted with a bosque of lacebark elm set in beds of decomposed granite and edged by masses of African iris. At the center of each garden room, water cascades from a trough-like fountain into a basin lined with beach stones. Movable seating on the plaza and in the garden rooms allows for informal gatherings.

That evening we attended the Houston Rockets Game at the Toyota Center. The Houston Rockets won the game 100 - 96 in overtime. It was amazing to watch Eric Gordon (scored 42 points) and James Harden (scored 40 points) play. The 2018 season marked the best record for the Houston Rockets since 1994 with a record of 64-16. In 1994 the Houston Rockets record was 58-24 and they won the NBA Championship that year.
Friday, March 23rd, we joined Rebuilding Together Houston and repaired a home on the north east side of Houston that was hit by Hurricane Harvey. They jumped right in to learn about how the house was submerged in five feet of water and the needed repairs. We removed water logged wood, replaced rotting two by fours, attach wood siding, primed and painted the siding, all within five hours. The students took pride in their work as if it was their own home. They worked so well as a team communicating needs and served one another.

Saturday, March 24th, we took some time to visit the Galleria mall. Spanning 2.4 million square feet of space, housing 400 fine stores and restaurants, two high-rise hotels, and three office towers, The Galleria is Houston's most popular retail and tourist destination, meeting every style and taste.

We flew home that night tired from our adventure but fulfilled because we were able to give to a community in need.

When asked what one thing you learned on this trip the student said the following:

“There are a lot of opportunities out there.”

“That there are programs that help you pay for college.”

“I learned I need to save and balance money.”

“College’s give students a lot of opportunities.”

“I learned how to fix up a house.”

All this was possible because of a generous grant from U.S. Ecology, the support of the school board at Rimrock Jr./Sr. High School and TRIO Upward Bound at Boise State University.