

Capstone Scholars Blueprint

Capstone Scholars Program Mission Statement:

The Capstone Scholars Program, through partnerships with campus and community constituents, recruits high achieving students to the University and enhances their development both in and out of the classroom, thus preparing them for a life of learning, service, and engagement. The Program supports the mission of the University of South Carolina and is guided by its dedication to learning, commitment to diversity and devotion to the values of the Carolinian Creed.

Goal # 1

Assist in the recruitment of a high quality Capstone Scholars freshman class to help the University in meeting student enrollment goals.

Link to Division Goal and Outcome: Contributes to Division Goal #6/Outcome B by recruiting high achieving students with a significant geographic diversity.

Analysis of Goal Achievement:

We revised the annual Capstone Scholars brochure and distributed it to almost 1,500 prospective students and families. Additionally, we redesigned our website to include student testimonials, videos, and highlight student successes. During the heavy recruiting season in March 2010 we received 3,500 hits on our main page with over 1,500 looking at our opportunities, housing options, and requirements.

We presented the Capstone Scholars program at 2-3 Open House events, Scholars Day, Carolina Junior Preview, and an admission event with high school guidance counselors. Additionally, during the recruiting period of March 2010, we have met with over 20 prospective students and families. Over the course of April 2010, we met with an additional 12 families. See results of recruiting efforts below for Fall 2009 compared to Fall 2008.

2009-10 Freshman Class

- Approximately 498 Capstone Scholars
- 54% Female / 46% Male
- 46% In-State / 54% Out-of-State
- Scholars come from 24 different states
- Mean SAT: 1307
- Mean GPA after freshmen year: 3.54

2008-09 Freshman Class

- Approximately 524 Capstone Scholars
- 57% Female / 43% Male
- 47% In-State / 53% Out-of State
- Scholars come from 27 different states
- Mean SAT: 1300
- Mean GPA after freshmen year: 3.60

Initiative: Prepared electronic and printed information describing opportunities within the Capstone Scholars Program, revised Capstone Scholars website, and individually meet with prospective students and parents.

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Goal # 2

In cooperation with our campus partners, develop meaningful and appropriate intellectual, social, and service opportunities and encourage student participation in the opportunities.

Link to Division Goal and Outcome: Contributes to Division Goal #1/Outcome A,B, and C by providing an engaging outside-of-the-classroom educational opportunities.

Analysis of Goal Achievement:

For the Fall 2009 semester, we held ten (10) Capstone Conversations. In addition to the Conversations, we also held alternative opportunities such as weekly News & Views current event discussions, offered two (2) Office of Fellowships and Scholars "Last Lecture Series" to our students and six (6) other alternative conversations from around the campus. Average attendance for Capstone sponsored lectures was 76.

For the Spring 2010 semester, we've held (6) Spring Times lecture series where faculty present articles from the New York Times. Additionally, we've offered two (2) OFSP "Last Lecture Series" as well as seven (7) other alternative lecture events held around the campus. Each week we've also held News & Views current events discussions. Average attendance for Spring Times lectures have been 25.

For the Fall 2009 semester, we held four (4) Capstone Cinemas and offered five (5) alternative cinema events from around campus. For the Spring 2010 semester, we held four (4) Capstone Cinemas; two of which included student content. Additionally, we've held one alternative cinema. Average attendance for the Cinemas has been 107.

The annual Capstone Scholars Maymester trip will be a service learning trip to Ecuador. A trip to Vietnam/Cambodia was originally planned but had to be canceled due to low enrollment. The Capstone Scholars Office offered 12 additional passport travel grants in addition to the travel grants offered by the Study Abroad Office bringing the total of Capstone Scholars being awarded travel grants to over 60.

At the beginning of the Fall 2009 semester, we invited the Office of Fellowships and Scholars Programs to speak at the Welcome Luncheon during Welcome Week. Additionally, we've had the OFSP office present at a Hot Cookie Friday to reach over 80 Capstone Scholars (both 1st and 2nd year students).

We enrolled seven (7) Capstone Scholars in the Spring 2010 University 290 course inspired by the Roadtrip Nation PBS TV series.

Events targeted towards 2nd year students, such as Challenge U, struggled for attendance. Next year, all 2nd year Capstone Scholars will live on the same floor in South Quad to promote better buy-in.

To enhance our leadership offerings, we partnered with PEAK Adventure (Heathwood Hall) to facilitate their climbing tower (5 events).

Students were asked which aspect(s) of the Capstone Scholars motto an event targeted. Dream Big was reported 20% of the time, while Impact the Community and Leave a Legacy was reported 39% and 26%, respectively.

Initiatives: Capstone Conversations, Spring Times, News & Views, Capstone Cinemas, Hanging Out Wednesday and other University lecture series provided opportunities for faculty, university staff, and community leaders to interact with Capstone Scholars. The Maymester trip to Ecuador and Service Fridays allowed for students to reach out to their community.

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Goal # 3

In cooperation with our campus partners, optimize student retention by increasing engagement in campus life and by providing assistance that leads to student success and satisfaction.

Link to Division Goal and Outcome: Contributes to Division Goal # 2, Outcome E: Facilities, programs, and services meet the needs and expectations of students and other constituents.

Analysis of Goal Achievement:

Meg and David personally made contact with approximately 60 freshman and sophomore Capstone Scholars that had a GPA that fell below a 3.0 for the fall semester. These students were referred to the ACE Center, where students will receive help to meet academic goals and improve their grades. Students were made aware of other support and consoling services available at the university through publication. We placed flyers and magnets for services offered in the welcome packets of 480 incoming freshmen. We tracked the satisfaction of students through a survey at the end of the fall semester. We had 60 Capstone Scholars complete a survey. This number was lower than last year due to two factors. First, we distributed the surveys at the end of the fall semester. In the past, we distributed them at the beginning of the spring semester. Second, we did not offer any incentives this year for completing a survey. In the past we offered incentives, such as gift cards for completing a survey. In order to see the numbers increase again for surveys in the spring, we will offer incentives again.

Capstone Scholars “Fellows” are Capstone Scholars who are recognized as the most involved students. Each activity, event, research project, study abroad trip, leadership position, etc. is accompanied by a point total. Students reaching 40 points by their 2nd year become Capstone Scholars “Fellows.” For 2010, we had 15 2nd year Capstone Scholars reach Fellows status. For the first time in the program’s history, 1st year students reached Fellows status – 7 freshmen. Additionally, 53 1st year students are within range to attain Fellows status at the conclusion of their 2nd year. This can be largely attributed to the semester requirements Capstone Scholars are required/encouraged to complete. There is no “penalty” for not completing the requirements, so we are encouraged by those numbers.

At each event held, students were asked to rate the event on a scale from 1-5 (1-least positive; 5-most positive) based on how it impacted the student and what the student learned from the event. The average rating for Capstone Scholar events was 4.44.

In Fall 2009, 6 freshmen left the program – most cited living off campus or in another residence hall as main factor. In Spring 2010, 3 students left – two because of athletics and one because they transferred to the Honors College. In Fall 2009, 23 sophomores left the program – 9 of those transferred to the Honors College. In Spring 2010, 10 students left the program – 3 left for the Honors College. Other reasons cited were financial reasons (unable to pay \$100 semester fee) or other time commitments. Transferring to another college was not a major factor in any case.

Initiatives:

Students were reminded to maintain good grades in order to keep their scholarships at the university. We put magnets and flyers advertising services offered to students in the welcome packets for all incoming Freshmen Capstone Scholars. We created a survey at the end of the fall semester. The survey was sent out to all freshmen and sophomore students through e-mail. We also distributed the surveys at our final social event of the semester. We created an attendance sheet that would serve as a means to gather data, as well as capture what students would like to see for future events and speakers.

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Goal # 4

Encourage interactions for the Capstone Scholars with faculty, staff, and members of the community outside the classroom.

Link to Division Goal and Outcome: Contributes to goal #1/Outcome B by offering students activities outside of the classroom which will benefit them educationally by having them interact with and get to know faculty members.

Analysis of Goal Achievement: Capstone Scholars were provided with a plethora of activities to help them become engaged with faculty outside of the classroom setting. We continued with the Capstone Conversation series having two professors speak. We also continued with our promotion of the Out to Lunch program having 19 students take advantage of the program.

We actively helped students find mentors for their Magellan Scholars applications, and had 8 students who were awarded Magellan Scholarships. We also had 4 Capstone Scholars who were awarded Mini-Grants. Beginning the 2009-2010 academic year, we've had 34 students receive Magellan Scholars awards. The fantastic part is that of that number we've seen 23 3rd and 4th year students (former Capstone Scholars) receive Magellan awards. We are encouraged that students are engaging in research once leaving the Capstone Scholars program since we have worked closely with Julie Morris in Undergraduate Research to promote their office.

We implemented new programs to increase faculty/student interaction. We began the faculty dinner series which served as a chance for students to interact with their faculty in a casual environment outside of the classroom. We have had participation from Business, International Business, Pre-Pharmacy, Nursing, and Exercise Science thus far. We also began the Spring Times lecture series which serves as a chance for faculty members to speak on an article from the "New York Times." We have had 6 professors from different departments participate thus far in this activity.

Students are enjoying the benefits they are receiving from our efforts increase faculty interaction. The Faculty Dinner Series has consistently received excellent rankings from the students that attend. Our Spring Times and Capstone Conversation series consistently have high attendance from Capstone Scholars. We hope to increase the amount of Faculty Dinners that we have for students opening it up to more majors.

While Capstone Scholars are required to complete five activities per semester (with a typical event counting as one point); we do not have penalties in place for students who do not complete the requirements. That said, many University 101 instructors build the requirements into their Fall syllabus. Inevitably, participation is high during the fall semester. Spring semester is where we have traditionally seen major drop offs in participation. This year, however, we had a record number of students participate in the program. In Spring 2010, 56% completed a community service project, 55% completed a personal challenge, 65% attended a Capstone Conversation, 64% attended a Capstone Cinema, and 73% attended a social event. For the 09/10 academic year, the average number of participation points for freshmen was 12.36 and 12.66 for sophomores after two years in the program; great news!

Initiatives: Had a wide variety of faculty and staff to participate in the Capstone Conversation and Spring Times Lecture series, encouraged Capstone Scholars to seek out faculty mentors for undergraduate research experiences, encouraged Capstone Scholars to take their professors to lunch via the Out to Lunch Program, initiated the Faculty Dinner Series as a way to have students interact with faculty outside of the classroom, and invited various partnering offices on campus to events such as Hanging out Wednesday and Hot Cookie Friday to make students aware of these opportunities, but to also have them interact with staff members.

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Goal # 5

Sustain a workplace environment where highly qualified staff are hired, provided professional development resources and opportunities, retained, and earn recognition as campus and national experts in programs and services for students.

Link to Division Goal and Outcome: Contributes to Division Goal #2/Outcome C by hiring qualified employees that will enhance the Capstone Scholars Program.

Analysis of Goal Achievement:

The Capstone Scholars Program recently added a second Assistant Principal to help focus on our 2nd – year student experience and promote student/faculty interaction. We sought a candidate with a Masters degree in Higher Education and Student Affairs with relevant work experience as we wanted an individual that could contribute to the success of the program.

Initiative: Hired a second Assistant Principal.