A University Resource

The Capstone Program was originally funded with a generous grant from the Ford Foundation. Since 1995, more than 4,800 students have participated in nearly 1,100 projects for more than 750 organizations. Their work has enabled clients to analyze complex issues, make tough decisions, identify new opportunities, and advance their missions. Through careful oversight and guidance, the program has become a valuable service that NYU Wagner proudly offers to the city, the region, and the world.

Capstone Sponsorship

Thank you to FJC: A Foundation of Philanthropic Funds for its financial support of this year’s Capstone program.

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Agencies wishing to explore the possibility of entering into a Capstone partnership with NYU Wagner, please go to wagner.nyu.edu/capstone for more information.
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Capstone is Learning in Action

**Capstone**, in architecture, is the crowning piece of an arch, the center stone that holds the arch together, giving it shape and strength. Wagner’s Capstone program plays a similar role, by providing students with a centerpiece of their graduate experience whereby they are able to experience first-hand turning the theory of their studies into practice under the guidance of an experienced faculty member. Projects require students to get up-to-speed quickly on a specific content or issue area; enhance key process skills including project management and teamwork; and develop competency in gathering, analyzing, and reporting out on data. Capstone requires students to interweave their learning in all these areas, and to do so in real time, in an unpredictable, complex, real-world environment.

As part of the core curriculum of the NYU Wagner Masters program, Capstone teams spend an academic year addressing challenges and identifying opportunities for a client organization or conducting research on a pressing social question. The summaries in this booklet represent the culmination of this year’s 82 projects.
Advanced Projects in PNP Management
FACULTY: ERICA FOLDY

New York City Fire Department
*Delivering the Message to Success: Diversity Recruitment*

The New York City Fire Department’s (FDNY) mission is to protect the lives and property of New York City residents and visitors. Implicit within the department’s values of service, bravery, safety, honor, dedication, and preparedness, is a commitment to have its workforce reflect the diverse population of residents it serves to protect. The FDNY charged the Capstone team with two major objectives: 1) developing improved messaging aimed at attracting minorities to the FDNY, and 2) understanding causes of FDNY candidate attrition between registering and completing the firefighting exam. The team conducted a thorough review of previous assessments of FDNY messaging, five focus groups of minority firefighters, interviewed key staff, and administered several surveys in order to identify existing problems and develop effective messaging solutions.

Capstone Team: Adam Ray Cross, Merav Fine, Jaqueline Matos, Morgan Monaco, Eunice Ok, Elizabeth Patterson

Palladia, Inc.
*Talent Management: Developing a Strong Workforce in Social Services*

Palladia, Inc. is a nonprofit social services agency in New York City serving families and individuals struggling with abuse, homelessness, domestic violence, and trauma. In an increasingly competitive environment for government funding and social service professionals, Palladia requested a Capstone team to examine its human resource practices in hopes of improving its approach toward attracting, developing, and retaining talented staff. The team reviewed existing literature to determine best practices in talent management and employee engagement and conducted interviews and focus groups with agency staff and peer organizations. Using the information collected, the Capstone team identified opportunities for improvement, creating a list of recommendations targeting professional learning and development, internal communication, rewards and recognition, and human resource operations. The team’s final recommendations will enable Palladia and its staff to provide stronger and more effective services.
and conducted focus groups and market research to help Snug Harbor analyze its current audience. The team used current audience data and information about peer organizations to craft recommendations for Snug Harbor to develop its audience, enhance visitor experience, and market its evolving brand identity successfully. As a result, Snug Harbor gained a deeper understanding of the demographics and behaviors associated with its different audience segments and improved its ability to connect and engage visitors.

Capstone Team: Linna Fang, Anna Gray, Adriana Jacykewycz, Ashley Johnson, Chrissy Oliva

Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden
Understanding Your Audience

Snug Harbor Cultural Center and Botanical Garden is a hidden gem in NYC; a place where history, architecture, art, theater, dance, music, and horticulture converge to provide dynamic experiences for all ages. The diversity of programming and attractions at Snug Harbor poses a unique challenge for audience marketing, development, and program design. The Capstone team designed and launched an online survey

Advanced Projects in PNP Management
FACULTY: SARA GRANT AND MERLE MCGEE

AFS-USA
A Study of Volunteer Diversity

AFS-USA is a nonprofit organization working toward a more just and peaceful world by sending American high school students to live and study abroad, and receiving international students in homes and schools across the United States. AFS-USA relies heavily on volunteers in the U.S. to support its participants and on the American school system to provide educational opportunities. In its most recent strategic plan, AFS-USA declared increasing volunteer diversity as one of its primary initiatives and requested a Capstone team to explore methods to achieve this. The team evaluated the organization’s ideology, volunteer structure, and recruitment and marketing plans, focusing on diversity amongst non-host volunteers. This included analyzing volunteer demographics, researching best practices, and conducting interviews with staff and volunteers. The team then compiled its analysis to produce a report of findings and recom-
Recommendations for AFS-USA to increase diversity amongst its volunteers.

Capstone Team: Meghan Bernstein, Emily Gross, Helen Tsang, Charlie Van Scyoc, Gila Ward Menda

College and Community Fellowship
Assessment of Academic Support Program and Development of Program Manuals

Founded in 2000, College and Community Fellowship (CCF) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to eliminating individual and structural barriers to higher education, economic security, long-term stability, and civic participation for women who have criminal convictions (including those currently and formerly incarcerated) and their families. In the last two years, CCF has been in the midst of refining its Academic Program to make improvements in the organization’s delivery of programs and services. At a critical juncture, CCF enlisted a Capstone team to assess the operation of its Academic Program structure and document its methods of service delivery. The Capstone team developed a Staff and Student Manual to record CCF’s redesigned academic programs and services and to guide new and current staff through the program. The team also produced an Assessment Report, detailing the team’s analysis of the program and focusing on suggestions for improvement in recruitment, communication, and data sharing. The refined program model, in its documented format, will be used by CCF to better inform and inspire donors, funders, and the CCF Board.

Capstone Team: Luanna Azulay, Victoria Choong, Nana De-Graft Duncan, Lily Papakhian, Benjamin Taylor

East Harlem Tutorial Program
Diverse Recruitment

The East Harlem Tutorial Program (EHTP) is a nonprofit organization that works with students in East Harlem to achieve academic and personal success and to become future community leaders. Due to a variety of factors in the education reform space, EHTP is currently experiencing rapid expansion. As the organization is currently adding one class grade per year to its charter schools, it must hire additional staff and volunteers to meet growing needs. EHTP enlisted the help of a Capstone team to develop a recruitment strategy. The team conducted research of teachers and volunteers at the organization, as well as local and national peer organizations, to identify effective recruitment methods. Using this data, the team produced an enhanced recruitment strategy and implementation plan to ensure the diverse makeup of EHTP is able to mirror the makeup of East Harlem in terms of race, ethnicity, and personal and professional background, as the organization continues to undergo accelerated expansion.
Footsteps
*Measuring Steps to Success*

Footsteps is an organization that helps Ultra-Orthodox Jews who choose to leave their communities to integrate into broader society. They accomplish this goal by providing emotional, academic, and career development support. These include individual consultations with social workers, social and networking events, career and personal development workshops, as well as referrals to GED-prep organizations. Footsteps has previously conducted a strategic planning process using extensive narrative surveys. The Capstone team’s task was to develop a preliminary impact assessment based on the previously collected data, create a logic model, and propose indicators and measures for Footsteps to use going forward. The final report proposes a series of leading indicators that will give Footsteps the ability to quickly indicate if clients are on the right track and make timely changes to maximize impact.

Capstone Team: Conor Bevan, Katherine Hartman, Braeden Mayrisch, Richard Tran, Julia Ward

Hazon
*Strengthening Hazon’s New York Bike Ride*

Hazon is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating healthier, more sustainable communities in the Jewish world and beyond. For more than a decade, Hazon has held a multi-day fundraising bike ride, considered to be the organization’s most powerful, transformative experience, and its largest fundraising event. At its peak, the New York Bike Ride attracted 350 participants and generated $400,000 in revenue, but in recent years both participation and revenue have declined. Hazon requested a Capstone team to conduct an analysis of the Bike Ride fundraising event and formulate recommendations to reverse the downward trend. The team assessed the organization’s current strategies (i.e. fundraising, marketing, and social media), completed an environmental scan, analyzed data related to the event, and interviewed Bike Ride participants and stakeholders. The team then produced recommendations to increase Bike Ride participation and revenue, allowing Hazon to effectively pursue its mission.

Capstone Team: Grace Cheong, Hadas "Dasi" Fruchter, Ashley Jackson, Eric Kaplan, Douglas Meredith
**MFY Legal Services**  
*Evaluation of a Consumer Rights Project Hotline*

MFY Legal Services is one of New York City’s oldest legal aid organizations. Since 1963, they have provided free civil legal assistance on a wide range of issues and advocated to end root causes of inequality. In 2005, MFY launched the Consumer Rights Project (CRP) to provide advice and representation to low-income New Yorkers on issues such as bankruptcy, identity theft, and financial exploitation. Today, this project includes a hotline for callers to receive pro bono legal counsel from MFY attorneys. MFY engaged the services of a Capstone team to evaluate whether the hotline is an effective tool for meeting its clients’ needs. The team interviewed and shadowed CRP staff, created a data-collection tool, surveyed previous hotline callers, analyzed data, and conducted industry research. The team’s final report outlined recommendations to streamline the hotline process and explored alternatives beyond the hotline to better serve the community.

Capstone Team: Elizabeth Benjamin, Chelsea Brownridge, Michelle Fitzgerald, Tahira Pratt, Erica Rippy

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**Advanced Projects in PNP Management**  
FACULTY: RONA AFFOUMADO

**Girl Be Heard**  
*Developing a Performance Measurement and Management System*

Girl Be Heard (GBH) is a nonprofit theatre company bringing global issues affecting girls to the center stage by empowering young women to tell their stories. GBH requested a Capstone team to develop a performance measurement and management system in order to capture the impact of their programs on young women and audiences. The team executed an internal analysis of GBH’s current programming through organizational research and interviews with board members, staff, and clients; then conducted an external landscape analysis of peer organizations and GBH funders in order to identify types of information needed to effectively communicate GBH’s impact. Using this information, the team developed performance measures and indicators, data collection tools, and a data compilation system and conducted training sessions with GBH staff. Finally, the team created an implementation and best practices guide to assist GBH in enhancing the system for future programming.

Capstone Team: Jennifer Diaz, Iris Dooling, Rachel Szala Grant, Elandria Jackson, Gretchen Upholt
Advanced Projects in PNP Management and Finance  
FACULTY: BILL THOMAS

Bridge Street Development Corporation  
*Identifying Positive Net-Revenue Generation Opportunities*

The Bridge Street Development Corporation (BSDC) in Bedford-Stuyvesant promotes central Brooklyn’s economic and cultural vibrancy through its community engagement, senior services, economic development, homebuyer assistance, and real estate development programs. Changing neighborhood demographics, along with an inconsistent flow of city funding and a shifting real estate market, have forced BSDC to evaluate how it generates revenues. In order to identify new revenue streams, BSDC enlisted a Capstone team to identify new opportunities for new-revenue generation. The team analyzed BSDC’s audited financial statements, conducted interviews with department heads and central administrators, evaluated the organization’s competitive landscape, and assessed opportunities for geographic expansion. Based on the results of their research, the Capstone team compiled a list of strategic recommendations to enable BSDC to serve its existing population while adapting to a changing local environment.

Capstone Team: Joseph George Manoleas, Habiba Musah, Yelena Pogorelsky, Qianli Zhang

Center for Employment Opportunities  
*Turnover Cost Model*

Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) is a nonprofit organization that provides immediate, comprehensive, and effective employment services for men and women returning from incarceration. Like many nonprofits, CEO manages a double bottom line: aiming to achieve social outcomes while sustaining financial viability. High staff turnover can undermine a nonprofit’s mission by directing funds away from service provision towards costs associated with separation, replacement, and training of new employees. CEO enlisted a Capstone team to explore how staff turnover impacts management decisions, placement data, direct and indirect costs, and additional aspects of its operations. The team provided CEO with a structured methodology conveying the monetary value of human capital investment; specifically how addressing employee turnover can allow CEO to achieve the goals associated with their double bottom line more efficiently. The team also developed a model for CEO to be able to address future turnover.

Capstone Team: Thomas Ansorge, Johanne Peña, Samantha Phillips, Lihong Yin
**THE POINT Community Development Corporation**  
*Sustainable Business Plan and Strategy for Live From the Edge Theater*

THE POINT is a community development organization focused on youth initiatives to revitalize the South Bronx. THE POINT relies heavily on grants, which fund more than 70 percent of its operations, and sought recommendations to reverse the ratio of grants to reliable revenue streams. THE POINT requested a Capstone team to develop a financial strategy that will accomplish three objectives surrounding its award-winning artistic program, Live From the Edge Theater: 1) perform an activity analysis to quantify existing profit and loss per production, 2) apply best-use analyses to identify underutilized revenue streams and solidify revenue that can support operations, and 3) identify, measure, and recommend strategies to implement cost-cutting measures that will decrease expenses per production. The Capstone team produced a final report that explores the effectiveness and efficiency of theater operations through the development of a facilities-management plan encompassing pricing and marketing strategies.

*Capstone Team: Julissa Baez, Arshiya Kherani, Nelson Sotomayor*

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**Lifetime Arts**  
*Expanding Creative Aging Programs Across the Nation*

Lifetime Arts is a nonprofit organization that promotes professional arts programs for older adults throughout the country. Given the organization’s success and rapid growth, Lifetime Arts employed a Capstone team to develop a strategic business plan in order to identify and open new markets for its services. The team conducted relevant market research, reviewed existing surveys, and analyzed the organization’s financial status using findings to ultimately produce recommendations for expansion. The business plan outlined strategies for Lifetime Arts to build earned income streams, explore opportunities and partnerships, refine services and programs, and develop marketing tactics for its anticipated expansion.

*Capstone Team: Catherine Guzman, Hanxiao Liu, Justine Schneider, Michelle Yue Zhao*
Advanced Projects in PNP Policy
FACULTY: CHARLES BRECHER

New York City Department of Homeless Services
Chronic Homelessness

The New York City Department of Homeless Services (DHS) is committed to reducing homelessness through prevention efforts, providing short-term shelter, and ultimately connecting individuals with permanent housing. Chronic homelessness refers to unaccompanied individuals with a disabling condition who have been continuously homeless for more than a year or have been temporarily homeless four or more times within the last three years. These individuals often have both mental and physical health issues that complicate the ability to maintain stable employment and housing. Many different factors contribute to chronic homelessness, but limited information is available revealing characteristics unique to the chronically homeless population. In order to better serve this population, DHS enlisted a Capstone team to design and implement a survey identifying distinctive characteristics of chronically homeless individuals. Survey participants included randomly-selected, single, adult men from New York City shelters. Based on an analysis of the survey’s findings, the team prescribed a series of programmatic and policy recommendations targeted at reducing the number of frequent shelter users.

Capstone Team: Sarah Honey, Tinesha Ross, Madeline Serena

United States Environmental Protection Agency
Case Studies in Supplier Accountability Concerning Environmental Sustainability Efforts: Multinational Firms and Best Practices

As multinational companies continue to expand their environmental agendas, questions arise concerning the effectiveness of these efforts and the firms’ abilities to pass sustainability values onto their suppliers. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was particularly interested in how firms hold their direct and indirect suppliers accountable to codes of conduct and specified sustainability related practices. To identify and add context to company-specific efforts to ensure accountability in sustainability practices along their supply chains, the EPA employed the assistance of a Capstone team. The team researched existing scholarly literature, international reports, and sustainability ratings systems
related to supply chain management and the environment. The Capstone team then developed a questionnaire and conducted interviews with representatives from multinational firms, converting collected data into case studies that highlight best practices across different companies in the food service, consumer product, consulting, and hospitality industries.

Capstone Team: Bianca Girault, Kelsey Sagawa, Megan Skillman

Advanced Projects in PNP Policy and Management
FACULTY: DENNIS SMITH

Community for Education Foundation
Evaluation Design

Overcoming Obstacles Life Skills is a program of the Community for Education Foundation that develops students’ socio-emotional skills to help them improve academic achievement, graduate from high school, and prepare for college and a career. Observing the success of this program among individual students, Overcoming Obstacles sought a method to quantitatively measure its impact and requested a Capstone team to design an evaluation plan and assess program effectiveness. The team collected data through surveys to measure the success of both the middle and high school programs, producing a new data collection system and an assessment tool that employs pre- and post-survey results. Using the resources developed by the Capstone team, Overcoming Obstacles will be able to quantifiably measure the effectiveness of its curriculum and determine areas in need of improvement.

Capstone Team: Susan Calvin, Amy DiBiase, LaShay Massey, Heather Wilson

Legal Information for Families Today
Improving Evaluation Metrics

Legal Information for Families Today (LIFT) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to enhancing access to justice for children and families by providing legal information, community education, and guidance in the family court system. LIFT requested a Capstone team to gather information on program impact and develop a matrix to evaluate future program outputs and outcomes. The team evaluated LIFT programs through qualitative site visits and staff interviews and developed a detailed logic model outlining program components. The logic model and observations informed the creation of a tool kit to assist LIFT in collecting and compiling data points for future evaluation. The information and tool kit will assist LIFT in addressing program needs and evaluating outcomes to
inform staff, board members, clients, and funders. The final report provided a point of reference for LIFT staff to develop a more robust performance measurement system for their programs in the future.

Capstone Team: Noah Bein, Christine Han, Bridget Mercier, Anna Swanby

**New York City Human Resources Administration**

*A Communication Strategy to Decrease Fraud, Abuse, and Waste in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program*

The NYC Human Resources Administration (HRA) is the nation’s largest social service department and provides food stamp benefits to 1.8 million recipients via the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP loses millions of dollars annually to trafficking, fraud, and overpayments. After fraud discovery, the Investigation, Revenue and Enforcement Administration (IERA), a department within HRA, conducts extensive investigations; however, investigations are costly and the amount recovered rarely covers the expense of the investigation. The Capstone team was asked to work with the IREA to improve their external communication strategy to optimize fraud deterrence methods. The team focused on prevention strategies, researching different deterrence methods used in other states and countries, with particular attention on social welfare programs and the private sector. After analyzing IREA's current deterrence systems, the team developed an effective communication strategy based on best practices to decrease fraud, abuse, and waste in SNAP.

Capstone Team: Marne Braddock, Natalie Kianoff, Takafumi Okamoto

**Nonprofit Enterprise at Work**

*Designing and Implementing a Program Measurement System*

Nonprofit Enterprise at Work (NEW) is a nonprofit organization located in Ann Arbor, Michigan, focused on building management capacity and developing solutions for other nonprofit organizations. A small, but robust, organization in a period of growth, NEW was in need of a performance measurement system to track program effectiveness and assess impact. NEW requested a Capstone team to develop a system to help NEW manage programs and operations more effectively, make strategic decisions, develop goals and objectives, demonstrate impact to funders, and hold the organization accountable to stakeholders. Building upon NEW’s programmatic logic models, the Capstone team worked closely with NEW staff to develop a deep understanding of each program’s theory of change and current measurement practices. The team researched best practices in pro-
gram measurement for capacity-building organizations, developed tracking metrics, designed a dashboard, and made a series of process recommendations to help NEW better collect and analyze its internal data.

Capstone Team: Justine Beaton, Allison Raaum, Rose Schapiro

**Times Square Alliance**

*Creating a Performance Measurement System for the Nation’s Largest Public Arts Program*

Time Square Arts, the public art program of the Times Square Alliance, presents leading contemporary art and performances to Times Square’s 400,000 daily visitors; cultivating the creativity, energy, and edge that has made Times Square a national icon. Building on a performance management framework developed by a 2012-2013 Capstone team, the 2013-2014 Capstone team was commissioned to test and refine key indicators of success and create the tools necessary for Times Square Arts to measure its continued progress. The team collected data through audience- and project-specific surveys, compiling and analyzing results to produce a final dashboard that captured quantitative and qualitative measures for the program’s key audiences. Recommendations provided a point of reference for Times Square Arts to fulfill its mission using a critical performance measurement system.

Capstone Team: Bethany Bezdecheck, Madeleine Ehrlich, Mala Hertz, Kara Noesner

**Westchester County Long-Term Recovery Coalition**

*Developing an Engagement Plan for a Disaster Recovery Group*

The Westchester County Long-Term Recovery Coalition (WCLRC) is a group of community organizations that came together in 2011 to facilitate coordination around the provision of long-term practical aid. The coalition had established bylaws and coordinated with key nonprofits, but needed a plan to reinvigorate outreach and coordination with nonprofits, government entities, and volunteers. The Capstone team employed academic literature and conducted interviews with stakeholders and specialists in disaster management to develop an engagement plan for WCLRC. Recommendations included strategies to clearly articulate the benefits of engaging in the coalition to members, provide a framework for sharing information among member organizations, and outlined initial steps to draw organizations to meetings. Based on the plan, WCLRC will be able to more effectively connect nonprofits, governments, and volunteers to coordinate efficiently during disaster recovery periods.

Capstone Team: Keita Nishimura, Genai Rachel Odhner
Advanced Projects in PNP Finance and Policy
FACULTY: GEORGE SWEETING

Move NY
*Travel-Time Savings Resulting from Investments in the NYC Transit System*

The Move NY campaign has developed a plan to relieve traffic congestion and improve roads, bridges, and public transit in New York City. The plan calls for an overhaul of the City’s current tolling regime by implementing congestion pricing, which would toll all drivers travelling into Manhattan’s Central Business District. To predict the impact of tolling on commuter behaviors and its associated effect on revenue, economist and Move NY member Charles Komanoff developed the Balanced Transportation Analyzer (BTA). Move NY engaged the Capstone team to focus on a particular function of the BTA: estimation of travel-time savings resulting from increased investment in NYC’s transit system. Travel-time savings has broad implications for the model, as it draws more riders and revenues to the system. To improve BTA functionality, the Capstone team evaluated costs and expected travel-time savings associated with MTA-prioritized capital projects, utilizing available transit data to estimate the impacts of increased operating expenditures on travel time.

Capstone Team: Jeffrey Mah, Molly Reckson, Abigail Youngblood

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
*Cost Analysis of Ryan White Part A Services in New York*

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) administers funding for a federal grant program, Ryan White Part A. The program provides medical and support services to people living with HIV, functioning as a “payer of last resort” that fills gaps in care not covered by other sources. DOHMH is engaged in a multi-year economic evaluation of Ryan White Part A services in order to better understand the linkages between Part A spending and short-term health outcomes. Results will be used to better inform the HIV Health and Human Services Planning Council of New York in guiding Ryan White Part A spending priorities. The Capstone team analyzed how Part A services are administered in New York City, developed a methodology to define and analyze costs, and prepared a cost analysis tool, documenting findings in a written report presented to stakeholders. The team’s findings will be used to inform Ryan White Part A prioritization decisions.

Capstone Team: Suzanne Wulach, Si Xu, Huanci Yang, Boyang Zhao
State of New York Mortgage Agency
Impact of New Flood Maps after Hurricane Sandy

State of New York Mortgage Agency (SONYMA) provides low-interest mortgages to low- and moderate-income, first-time homebuyers throughout New York State. SONYMA has a portfolio of nearly 33,470 loans totaling $2.9 billion. It is estimated that more than 724 loans in SONYMA’s portfolio were impacted by Hurricane Sandy. The Capstone team was tasked to evaluate the impact of the new flood zone maps on SONYMA’s portfolio, with particular focus on flood insurance premiums and the cost to borrowers for rebuilding and elevating homes. The team analyzed the changing flood zone maps using Geographic Information System (GIS) software, showing SONYMA’s portfolio in reference to Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) new Base Flood Elevation maps, and conducted research of state and federal legislation to provide policy recommendations to SONYMA. As part of its final body of work, the Capstone team published detailed information for new homebuyers on SONYMA’s website, including pertinent background information and flood insurance requirements.

Capstone Team: Susana Cuevas, Shaopeng He, Lu Liu, Mehreen Saeed

Village of Hastings-on-Hudson, NY
Department of Public Works Consolidation

Residents’ demand for lower taxes and improved public services has compelled neighboring municipalities across New York State to investigate possibilities for partnerships in service provision. The Village of Hastings-on-Hudson was considering consolidating its Department of Public Works (DPW) services with the Village of Dobbs Ferry to potentially reduce operating expenses, improve efficiency, and enhance residents’ service experience. Hastings-on-Hudson requested a Capstone team to analyze the impact of the potential consolidation by comparing collective bargaining agreements for DPWs in neighboring villages, assessing real estate redevelopment options for a DPW site in Hastings-on-Hudson, and interpreting the results of a resident satisfaction survey on DPW services. The team's final report outlined community messaging strategies, considerations regarding the fiscal impact of staffing changes, and real estate development suggestions for the Village to consider as they continue to investigate consolidation strategies.

Capstone Team: Rodrigue Alexandre, Maureen Angeles Deboo, Thomas Dierkes, Courtney Jones
Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce
"Brooklyn Made" Certification Program

The Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce (BCC) drives economic development throughout the borough and provides unique resources and networking opportunities for its member businesses. The BCC observed that several firms were branding themselves as "Brooklyn" businesses despite the fact that little to no production of these products occurred within the borough. The Capstone team was commissioned to develop an official certification program that producers could use to promote themselves as authentic, Brooklyn manufacturers. The team conducted in-depth qualitative interviews and surveyed businesses to better understand their sourcing, manufacturing, assembling, and marketing processes. The team then developed a points-based system to verify these elements, along with recommendations outlining steps in program implementation. Combined with research from similar programs across the country, the team produced the first in-depth, quantitative approach to urban manufacturing certification programs.

Capstone Team: Scilla Albanese, Emmett Mehan, Jaleesa Murrell, Yusuf Siddiquee, Patrick Yacco

State of New York Mortgage Agency
Unit Cost Reporting in New York City Government

The State of New York Mortgage Agency (SONYMA) is a public benefit corporation that provides affordable homeownership opportunities for low- to moderate-income first-time homebuyers in New York State. Seeking to increase its market share among qualified first-time homebuyers, SONYMA identified two underlying challenges to this goal. First, there is limited awareness of its mortgage products among loan officers, first-time homebuyers, and organizations that work with first-time homebuyers. Second, SONYMA lacks needed information from these decision-makers about the factors that drive their loan choices beyond its own products. SONYMA requested the help of a Capstone team to address these challenges. The team designed and conducted interviews with key stakeholders, analyzing the results to provide SONYMA with a comprehensive list of marketing recommendations, accompanied by cost-benefit analyses, to increase public awareness of first-time homebuyer loan programs throughout New York State.

Capstone Team: Sneha Goud, Jin Wu, Ziqi Xian
VISIONS
A Business Plan to Create a Residential Rehabilitation Center

VISIONS is a nonprofit organization dedicated to assisting people of all ages with vision loss and generating public awareness about capabilities and needs of the blind and visually impaired in the New York Metropolitan area. Facing the challenge of meeting changing client needs while maintaining long-term viability, VISIONS enlisted the help of a Capstone team to assess the feasibility and sustainability of constructing a residential rehabilitation center for the blind. The team analyzed census data, competitor models, and financial statements in order to provide a program-based, cost-benefit analysis. Additionally, the Capstone team conducted interviews and distributed surveys among employees, clients, competitors, foundations, and vision specialists to provide a comprehensive risk analysis that assessed competition, customer base, staffing, and funding streams. The culmination of these efforts resulted in the development of a comprehensive business plan which the team presented to the VISIONS Board of Directors.

Capstone Team: Lilit Abrahamyan, Yunzhu Chen, Huihuan He, Christina Lin

Advanced Projects in Health Management
FACULTY: RONA AFFOUMADO

New York University Student Health Center
Student-Centered Care

The NYU Student Health Center (NYUSHC) employed a Capstone team to assess the current health care delivery model and provide recommendations to implement a more student-centered service delivery system. The Capstone team reviewed the standards required for health care facilities to become a Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH), the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) school-based health program, and the Kaiser Permanente model to ascertain components of these models that could be adapted to enhance service delivery at NYUSHC. The team used the PCMH self-assessment tool to identify areas within the current NYUSHC system needing improvement, and conducted a student survey to gather feedback on provider-student communication preferences and important features of a student-centered health care model. The Capstone team then prepared a report of its findings for the NYUSHC leadership, including recommendations for system changes and accompanying implementation strategies.

Capstone Team: Eva Bak, Angela Dooley, Regina Hawkey, Winifred MacQuaye, Jose Marin
Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School
Improving the Organization of the Pediatric Endocrinology Division Ambulatory Practice

Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School Pediatric Endocrinology Division specializes in the treatment of all pediatric endocrine disorders including diabetes, disorders of the adrenal and ovarian glands, growth, puberty, bone, calcium, and vitamin D deficiencies. The recent merger between Rutgers Medical School and Robert Wood Johnson Medical Group—a multispecialty physician practice—prompted the Division to request a Capstone team for process improvement recommendations. The team used staff interviews, time and motion studies, comparative analyses, and evidence-based research to gather information relevant to the project scope. The Capstone team’s final deliverable consisted of an in depth report of recommendations for the client to enhance labor productivity, increase access to pediatric endocrinology services, improve departmental workflow, determine performance measurement of physician work RVUs, and optimize patient appointment scheduling.

Capstone Team: Amanda Coron, Jennifer Johnston, Jessica Magnoli, Samantha Roy, Leila Shams

Advanced Projects in Health Policy
FACULTY: CHARLES BRECHER

Cicatelli Associates, Inc.
Sexual and Reproductive Health Coverage for Adolescents through the Affordable Care Act

Cicatelli Associates, Inc. is a New York-based nonprofit committed to improving health care and social services for vulnerable populations around the globe. As a national training center for the Office of Adolescent Health and Center for Disease Control, CAI is playing a key role in reducing teen pregnancy. CAI requested a Capstone team to conduct extensive research on accessibility to sexual and reproductive health services through the Affordable Care Act, focusing on contraceptive benefits available to adolescents. The team studied 11 communities from nine different states, reviewing available marketplace health plans, costs, consumer navigation processes, adequacy of provider networks, and usability of marketplace websites. As a result, the team developed two resources documents for each community: 1) a community profile, informing project participants and community leaders of available contraceptive

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benefits and potential coverage gaps; 2) a template for health care providers to advise patients seeking coverage and reproductive care.

Capstone Team: Alexandra Bernardi, Catherine Dangremond, Rasheeda Davis, Colleen McCullough

Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation

*Obesity in Cypress Hills*

The Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation (CHLDC) is a community-based nonprofit organization in Brooklyn that provides services and implements neighborhood development projects to improve the surrounding community. Obesity, a serious problem that can lead to heart disease, diabetes, stroke, arthritis and certain types of cancer, is disproportionately higher in Cypress Hills than in the rest of Brooklyn and New York City. The CHLDC requested a Capstone team to identify and analyze factors contributing to the local prevalence of obesity and develop recommendations for community action and advocacy. In order to accomplish this, the team utilized primary and secondary data collection methods, conducted surveys, focus groups with community members, key informant interviews with local health and public service members, and a comprehensive literature review of multi-pronged community interventions to promote healthy behavior. The Capstone team’s final recommendations presented a community action plan to effectively address the underlying factors of obesity and sustain long-term impact.

Capstone Team: Tingyin Chee, Sonya Frankowski, Meghan Gerard, Sean McNerney

Legal Action Center

*Medication-Assisted Treatment in New York and New Jersey Drug Courts*

The Legal Action Center (LAC) is a nonprofit organization that advocates for individuals who have experienced discrimination due to addiction, HIV/AIDS, or a criminal record. Working within federal and state health reforms, the LAC has made recent efforts to promote the availability of Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) to improve the health of persons in the New York and New Jersey criminal justice systems. Opioid addiction is typically treated through a multi-faceted approach involving a combination of MAT, behavioral therapies, and detoxification. Despite strong evidence supporting the efficacy of MAT, drug courts do not always offer it. The Capstone team was charged with conducting a comprehensive review of existing MAT practices and policies in New York and New Jersey drug courts. The team conducted a literature review, interviewed key informants, and surveyed the drug courts to assess availability of MAT, barriers that prevent utilization of MAT, and
Bronx Community Health Network
A Comparative Analysis: Clinical Outcomes and Cost

Bronx Community Health Network (BCHN) is a nonprofit organization and federally qualified health center that sponsors fifteen community and school-based health centers in the Bronx. Seeking to improve community health care in a cost effective manner, the BCHN implemented a program to divert patients utilizing unnecessary emergency room care to more appropriate treatment settings. The Capstone team evaluated data from two years prior to and two years after program implementation (2008-2009 and 2011-2012) to determine program efficacy in improving health measures for two selected diagnoses: hypertension and diabetes. The team also looked at the program’s cost effectiveness and return on investment, using results to determine whether the program saved money while improving health of individuals with diabetes and hypertension.
Jamaica Hospital Medical Center
Developing a Cost Benefit Analysis Methodology

Jamaica Hospital Medical Center (JHMC) strives to provide accessible, cost-effective, high-quality health care. Recently, JHMC has implemented three pilot care-transition programs: 1) The Intensive Multidisciplinary Primary Care Team (IMPACT), 2) the Community-Based Care Team (CBCT), and 3) the Hospital Care Transitions Team (CTT). The programs have yielded cost savings for JHMC, and attention to best practices in care coordination has resulted in major improvements in patient care. In the face of diminishing government funds, JHMC requested a Capstone team to develop a cost-benefit analysis methodology to utilize as a demonstration tool to key stakeholders that the programs have positive financial outcomes and patient care improvements. After extensive research and analysis, the team delivered a literature review outlining successful methodologies implemented by other institutions and best practices for achieving accurate calculations, and a methodology to assess the costs and benefits for future care management programs and similar patient-centric initiatives.

Montefiore Medical Center
Assessing the Patient Pregnancy Experience to Impact Patient Satisfaction

Montefiore Medical Center provides comprehensive maternity care for women. As Montefiore aims to improve its patient-centered care, maternity care services play an important role in setting strategic goals; it represents a large portion of Montefiore’s Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems scores, a standardized methodology for measuring patient perspective on hospital care. The Capstone team was engaged to assess the Montefiore pregnancy journey, from prenatal care in the Comprehensive Family Care Center to postpartum treatment in Weiler Hospital in order to identify known drivers of patient-pregnancy satisfaction. The team conducted interviews with patients and stakeholders, assisted in nurse-manager rounds, engaged in direct observations, and completed a literature review on best practices. Analyzing how Montefiore service provision measures against patient expectations and other hospitals in its competitive landscape, the Capstone team provided a roadmap of the Montefiore pregnancy experience with actionable recommendations for improvement in maternity care.
Montefiore Medical Center
Reducing Cancellation and No-Show Rates

The Department of Orthopedic Surgery at Montefiore Medical Center services 100,000 patients annually, providing expertise in hip, knee, foot, ankle, shoulder, hand, and spinal care, as well as sports medicine and oncology. However, fluctuations in the number of no-shows and canceled appointments have directly impacted revenue and productivity. In light of this issue, the Department requested a Capstone team to assess root causes and drivers of current no-show and cancellation rates and to determine the financial and productivity impact. The team conducted thorough process and data analyses and reviewed existing literature to determine common trends and best practices. Based on their findings, the team compiled a list of recommendations to improve appointment registration methods, properly tailoring these techniques to each demographic group to improve likelihood of arriving to future appointments and increase both patient and department satisfaction.

Capstone Team: Ayesha Amin, Suiting Cao, Sarah Crump, Rebecca Hawke, Samik P. Patel, Jazmine Uruchima

William F. Ryan Community Health Network
Increasing Patient Portal Usage and Identifying Best Practices

The William F. Ryan Community Health Network is a family of nonprofit, federally-qualified health centers that deliver care to diverse, underserved communities. With stricter documentation regulations and increased requirements to use electronic health records for patient record-keeping, the Ryan Network requested a Capstone team to formulate recommendations based on best practices to improve the use of an online patient portal, which provides access to key pieces of information from the patient's medical record, for both patients and clinicians. With the help of organizational leadership and frontline staff, the team conducted both patient and clinician focus groups in order to gather data on portal usage and preferences of patients and clinicians. Using this data, the group designed a robust marketing campaign to increase both awareness and usage of the patient portal. The Capstone team then provided evidence-based recommendations to effectively utilize this technology, outlining a tailored approach to ensure the technology is used to help the center meet anticipated requirement changes, provide outstanding patient-centered care, and improve patient outcomes for the patient population as a whole.

Capstone Team: Aysa Abuyaeva, Amy Lpley-Flood, Christopher Monether, Everol Richards, Vickey Tsai
Advanced Projects in Urban Planning

FACULTY: KEI HAYASHI AND STEVEN JACOBS

Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce
Sheepshead Bay Economic Vision Plan

The Brooklyn Chamber of Commerce Neighborhood Entrepreneurship Project aims to assist merchants in accessing resources to help grow their business, providing organizational capacity development to support the upstart and upkeep of local merchant groups. The Capstone team was charged with creating an economic vision plan to serve as a guide for assessing assets and future development of Sheepshead Bay, a coastal Brooklyn neighborhood. Sheepshead Bay is home to a diverse group of residents, businesses, and immigrant populations, and was heavily impacted by Superstorm Sandy. The Capstone team employed various research methods over several months, including interviewing community stakeholders, holding public forums, and reviewing existing case studies. The final report synthesized the Capstone team’s findings, presenting detailed recommendations and ideas to bring attention and investment to the Sheepshead Bay community.

Capstone Team: Faria Hassan Billah, Leda Bloomfield, Henry Minskoff, Alicia Posner, Peter Silow

Enterprise Community Partners
Red Hook EcoDistrict: The Next Wave of Sustainable Urban Development

Enterprise Community Partners (ECP) is a nonprofit organization that has been a passionate and forthright voice, locally and nationally, in the advocacy of issues important to the affordable housing community. ECP is also a national leader in bringing the health, economic, and environmental benefits of green building to low-income neighborhoods. With the emergence of a new idea in sustainable urban development, the “EcoDistrict,” the Capstone team was charged with the task of envisioning the realities of this type of eco-friendly community in New York City and understanding the role of low-income housing in its implementation. Based on health, economic, and environmental parameters, the Capstone team identified Red Hook, Brooklyn, as an ideal site for New York City’s first successful EcoDistrict. In its final report, the Capstone team provided an analysis of existing conditions in the neighborhood and developed a roadmap to achieve a vibrant and healthy community through sustainability measures.

Capstone Team: Joyce Huang, Nolan Levenson, Katelyn Meehan, Abbie Rudow
**Mississippi Center for Justice**  
*Affordable Housing Trust Funds for Mississippi*

The Mississippi Center for Justice (MCJ) is a nonprofit, public interest law firm committed to advancing racial and economic justice and assisting low-income Mississippian to break the cycle of poverty. In an effort to strengthen communities by addressing gaps in affordable housing, the MCJ introduced legislation to establish a statewide Affordable Housing Trust Fund in 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2013, but with limited progress. Rather than continue to pursue a broad, statewide solution, the MCJ commissioned the Capstone team to explore the implementation of an affordable housing trust fund on the municipal level. The team conducted pilot studies for two Mississippi cities, Jackson and Oxford, in order to develop implementation plans for a municipal housing trust fund at each site. The Capstone team’s final report included a practical toolkit for other cities in Mississippi to establish similar models of municipal affordable housing trust funds.

Capstone Team: Joanna Kandel, Lindsay Kerby, Stephanie Sosa, Vrunda Vaghela

**New Orleans Redevelopment Authority**  
*Commerially-Zoned Vacant Lot Temporary Activation*

The New Orleans Redevelopment Authority (NORA) is a neighborhood revitalization organization focused on housing and commercial development efforts to rebuild the City of New Orleans. After Hurricane Katrina, NORA acquired nearly 5,000 vacant lots from the State of Louisiana, 2,000 of which have been sold for residential or green space developments. NORA tasked the Capstone team with developing a temporary activation strategy for approximately 100 of the remaining lots, focusing on revenue generation and blight reduction uses as allowed under the city’s current zoning and legislative framework. The Capstone team examined development demand for the commercially and industrially-zoned lots, researching best practices and economic development strategies from other cities to determine the most appropriate locations for economic development activity. The team then produced an economic development strategy which will be implemented in the summer of 2014 through a Request for Proposal or application process.

Capstone Team: Yiwen (Xavier) Kuai, Johanna Lovecchio, Conor Muldoon, Julien P. Schmitz, Max Weselcouch

**Rutgers Center for Urban Environmental Sustainability and Isles**  
*Trenton’s Food Assets: Data Visualizations and Economic Development*

Trenton, the state capital of New Jersey, is a post-industrial city experiencing numerous challenges including high unemployment rates, a declining population, and high rates of residential and commercial vacancies. In addition to these challenges, access to healthy, fresh food in Trenton is
limited for the city’s 85,000 residents who are served by only two major supermarkets. In collaboration with the Rutgers Center for Urban Environmental Sustainability (CUES) and Isles, the Capstone team conducted comprehensive business and sales data research in order to better understand where Trentonians purchase their food. From this research, the team produced a map of food assets for the city and region, employing GIS and design software to produce rich visuals to help CUES and Isles better understand Trenton’s food challenges. The Capstone team also analyzed vacant and abandoned land within the city and provided site-specific recommendations as to how these sites could be incorporated into Trenton's food system.

Capstone Team: Jonathan Keyes, Norman Ornelas, Jr., Chris Penalosa, Paula Rubira, Joshua Sellers

**Advanced Projects in Urban Planning**

**FACULTY: MICHAEL KEANE**

**Astellas Development Corporation**

*Revitalization of Mermaid Avenue Commercial Corridor*

The Astella Development Corporation (ADC) is a nonprofit organization that works to improve quality of life in Coney Island through commercial and economic development and providing affordable housing. Mermaid Avenue is a key commercial corridor in Coney Island, serving more than 40,000 residents. Before Hurricane Sandy, the corridor was home to 100 businesses with an average vacancy rate of between two and three percent. Sandy’s impact devastated the community, threatening the long-term vitality of the corridor. The ADC commissioned the Capstone team to develop ideas to strengthen and revitalize the Mermaid Avenue commercial corridor. To accurately assess the needs of the community, the team developed and administered extensive consumer and merchant surveys, identifying industries and businesses that would meet resident needs and create a thriving business corridor. In its final report, the team provided a comprehensive retail market analysis and merchant database, recommendations to attract business, and a marketing brochure for potential merchants.

Capstone Team: Tahirah Cooper, Kessia DeLeo, Ben Patrick Fuller-Googins, Brandie Lee Moreno
Staten Island Economic Development Corporation
Recapturing the West Shore

The Staten Island Economic Development Corporation (SIEDC) is a nonprofit organization focused on bringing public and private investment to Staten Island to enhance the local economy. Staten Island’s West Shore has long been overlooked by the region’s industrial, manufacturing, and technology industries as a potential location for new development. The SIEDC is spearheading an initiative to draw these industries to the West Shore by re-branding the area as a business-friendly, forward-thinking, environmentally-conscious industrial zone. The SIEDC requested a Capstone team to develop a strategic plan that re-invents and promotes the West Shore as a viable alternative to other industrial markets in the tri-state area. By identifying obstacles to business development in the West Shore, capitalizing on the area’s unique assets, and applying lessons from comparable industrial parks in the region, the Capstone team delivered a document to guide the SIEDC in re-branding the West Shore as the region’s green technology and manufacturing destination.

Capstone Team: Becky Xibei Jia, Jeremy Kim, Eric Meils, Alex Powell, Jessie Shen

Sustainable Long Island and the City of Long Beach, NY
Advancing Resiliency: A Green Stormwater Mitigation Plan

Following Superstorm Sandy, the City of Long Beach began a comprehensive planning process to determine appropriate solutions for minimizing the impact of severe weather events. The Capstone team was tasked with creating a green stormwater mitigation plan to be implemented in the short- to medium-term that would complement the large-scale infrastructure projects under development. The team’s plan illustrated a range of successful green infrastructure techniques which were then applied within the context of four land uses: streets, lots with buildings, parks and open spaces, and parking lots. In its final report, the Capstone team included a cost-benefit analysis of the green infrastructure techniques and policy recommendations for the City of Long Beach to consider in their efforts to build a more resilient stormwater network.

Capstone Team: Brandon Budelman, Staci Haber, Kevin Schmidt, Lyndsey Scofield, Bob Tuttle
Advanced Projects in International Urban Planning

FACULTY: ANA MARIE ARGILAGOS

Institute for Transportation and Development Policy
Toward Sustainable Transportation

The Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) works to promote sustainable and equitable transportation around the world. The ITDP enlisted the help of a Capstone team to assist in its effort to creatively advocate for sustainable transportation development in the international arena. Building from the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, during which eight multilateral development banks voluntarily committed to directing $175 billion in funding and loans to more sustainable transportation projects around the world, the Capstone team developed resources to evaluate the progress and highlight the successes of this endeavor. As part of this effort, the team traveled to the Philippines to work with the Asian Development Bank in order to maximize the efficacy of their sustainability rating tool, ensuring its effective use in future projects.

Capstone Team: Melinda Hanson, Ann Lee, Samer Saliba, Elliot Ward

UN-Habitat
Sustainable Consumption of Space

UN-Habitat focuses on the promotion of sustainable patterns of urban growth worldwide, with the ultimate vision of adequate shelter for all. The Capstone team was engaged to work with officials in Santa Marta, Colombia, to assist in the development of a citywide plan for land use. Fueled by economic success and internal displacement of families in Colombia, Santa Marta has experienced increased strain on land and resources due to rapid population growth. The land use plan is intended to steer the city away from its current path of uncontrolled growth to one that embodies UN-Habitat’s principles of sustainable urban development. The Capstone team surveyed academics, planning professionals, UN representatives, and local stakeholder groups in Santa Marta to rank potential urban planning interventions that would most adequately address problems of growth. Based on its findings, the team produced a thorough analysis of the plan, citing case studies to substantiate its final recommendations outlining plan priorities and next steps in implementation.

Capstone Team: Jackie Burton, Colin Furness, Hunt Hobbs, Alejandro Schwedhelm
Advanced International Projects
FACULTY: CHARLES BAILEY AND DAVID WINDER

East Meets West
Leveraging Local Resources for Oral Health Care Reform in Central Vietnam

The East Meets West Foundation (EMW) is an international development agency devoted to the creation of sustainable solutions for difficult development problems. Active primarily in Southeast Asia, EMW conducts programs in education, water, sanitation, and health, including a dental program in Vietnam that combats adverse effects of dental disease and poor oral hygiene. EMW commissioned the Capstone team to assess the feasibility of adapting the program to World Health Organization guidelines which emphasize utilization of local resources in preventative dental care. The team conducted focus groups, interviews with key informants, and surveyed more than 400 respondents within commune, district, and provincial health providers to produce a comprehensive list of policy and service delivery recommendations. Reforms encouraged a more prevention-based and sustainable approach and focused on how EMW can utilize existing capacities and resources to improve oral care for underserved children throughout central Vietnam.

Capstone Team: Joanna DuFour, Gina Fleurantin-Zeiss, Oseloka Idigbe, Ryan Norton, David Sangokoya, Haimeng Shi

Global Goods Partners
Development of Training Recommendations for Partner Organizations in Peru

Global Goods Partners (GGP) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating effective, income-generating opportunities for marginalized women and their communities through access to the consumer market for handmade and fair trade artisan crafts. Recognizing that partners require training to improve their production processes, GGP requested a Capstone team to assess the overall needs of three artisan partners. The team conducted a needs assessment by visiting three partners in Peru where they studied communities and their craft enterprises. The team collected information about training methods employed by GGP and other entities and aggregated a pool of training options in use by other women’s artisan communities. The final report included recommendations and training options in four distinct areas: design and production; business and financial management; organizational management; and operations management. Recommendations sought to both improve and strengthen relation-
ships between GGP and its artisan partners and identified available avenues toward more effective, more valuable trainings.

Capstone Team: Baaba Amoah, Gabrielle Goldman, Lizbeth Mckeever, Sarah Rahman, Jin (Valentina) Zhang

**Land is Life**  
*Assessing Waste Management Practices in Ustupo, Panama*

Land is Life works to support indigenous communities in their efforts to protect their lands, cultures, and livelihoods. Working in the Kuna Yala region of Panama, the Capstone team was invited by the island of Ustupo to analyze post-consumer waste. The lack of viable solutions for disposal has resulted in a degradation of both the rich biodiversity and quality of life for the community. The team conducted qualitative research through interviews of key stakeholders, both in Ustupo and mainland Panama, in an effort to understand the problem as a part of a complex system. This systemic approach informed the team’s proposed intervention which was designed to harness the strength of local policymaking to incentivize the removal of plastics through preexisting trade routes. After the intervention idea was voted on by the community, the team incorporated feedback into a business plan to implement the proposal.

Capstone Team: Claudia Castellaños Cordero, Nora Mitnick, Dana Prostano, Diego Riacono, Eli Wilkins-Malloy

**Myanmar Association for Public Policy**  
*Enhancing Food Safety Regulation and Enforcement Responsibilities in Myanmar*

The Myanmar Association for Public Policy (MAPP) is an independent think tank in Myanmar founded by public policy graduates who systematically formulate and introduce relevant policy recommendations to policymakers based on research and evidence. The Capstone team collaborated with MAPP to better understand Myanmar’s food supply chain, its points of vulnerability to contamination, and the regulatory environment. The team conducted interviews with FDA authorities, political activists, scientists, and other stakeholders in the local food safety industry. The team also collected quantitative data in Yangon's wet markets, surveying street vendors’ handling of produce. After identifying the main challenges in food safety, its regulations, and enforcement, the team created a report outlining current local food safety issues and identifying opportunities for setting future policy priorities, while acknowledging World Health Organization and Association of Southeast Asian Nations standards.

Capstone Team: Kinza Hasan, Christopher Kuales, Anna Müller, Sara Piersimoni
Myanmar Association for Public Policy  
Youth Employment

The Myanmar Association of Public Policy (MAPP) is a policy think tank established in 2013 to support policy makers in proposing and implementing effective policies based on research and evidence. MAPP charged the Capstone team with conducting research on youth employment in Myanmar to provide strategic solutions and policy recommendations to address low employment rates among youth in the country and the greater Yangon area. The team approached the project by analyzing the challenges faced by the labor demand (employers) and labor supply (youth). Through focus group discussions with youth, and interviews with employers, recruitment agencies, and stakeholders, the team identified gaps in the labor market. The team analyzed compiled data and conducted secondary research in order to develop country-specific courses of action. The report provided a range of recommendations on actions that MAPP and other stakeholders can undertake to address the issue of youth unemployment in the greater Yangon area.

Capstone Team: Bernice Boateng, Aissata M.B. Camara, Caroline Delaney, Nizar Harake, Mohammed Hosain

Trickle Up  
Evaluation of a Development Program in Guatemala

Trickle Up is a New York-based international development nonprofit that supports people living in extreme poverty by providing livelihood training, savings group formation, and seed capital grants to launch or expand livelihood activities. Trickle Up requested a Capstone team to design and conduct a retrospective evaluation of Trickle Up’s Guatemala program to assess the sustainability of program impacts for former participants, focusing on food security. Collaborating with Trickle Up and partner organization staff, the team conducted in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with women in two communities in Alta Verapaz, Guatemala, all of whom had completed the Trickle Up program in the last two to three years. Based on qualitative and quantitative analysis of research findings, the team provided Trickle Up with an evaluation report, outlining key recommendations for incorporating food security themes into its core activities in Guatemala in order to expand the organization’s range of funding, partnership, and programmatic opportunities.

Capstone Team: Meave Murphy, Lindsay Ross, Regina Saavedra, Ameneé Siahpush, Giorgianna Venetis
Advanced International Projects
FACULTY: KATHERINE BOURNE AND STEVEN SCHALL

Accelerating Market-Driven Partnerships and The Carbon War Room
Adoption and Scaling of Waste-to-Energy Technologies in the Brazilian Agricultural and Livestock Sectors

Accelerating Market-Driven Partnerships (AMP), a nonprofit launched by the U.S. Secretary of State's Global Partnership Initiative, and The Carbon War Room, a partnering organization founded by Sir Richard Branson, commissioned a Capstone team to conduct a feasibility survey on the opportunities and challenges associated with scaling the adoption of Waste-to-Energy (WtE) technologies in Brazil. Adoption of better waste management technology could substantially reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture and livestock production. However, despite the availability of proven and economically viable WtE technologies in Brazil, use remains limited. Given the size of Brazil’s agricultural sector, encouraging broader WtE take-up could be an opportunity to sustainably, and even profitably, reduce the sector’s carbon footprint. Taking on this challenge, the Capstone team conducted a literature review, stakeholder mapping, and qualitative interviews in the field to provide a survey of the most promising technologies, identify market barriers, build potential business models, and bring together a network of collaborative partners. The team’s findings and recommendations will serve to guide AMP and CWR’s multi-year strategic partnership on this initiative.

Capstone Team: Deirdre Heiss, Danyal Syed, Sharlene Yang, Nahyun Yoo, Vittoria Zanuso

CorpsAfrica
Moroccans for Morocco - Participatory Community Development Projects

CorpsAfrica is a nonprofit organization, inspired by the Peace Corps, devoted to community participatory development throughout Africa. CorpsAfrica is in its first year of operations in Morocco. Ten Moroccan Fellows have committed one year of service, part of which is spent living as community members in rural villages facilitating community-driven projects to address local needs. The Capstone team was contracted to create a series of tools to monitor progress and evaluate outcomes of the community-based projects. The team’s deliverables included a Situation Analysis Assessment Tool, Project Work Guide, Community Engagement Monitoring Tool, and a
Project Evaluation Assessment Tool. The tools build upon one another to chart the process, progress, and product of each project. Additionally, the team provided a series of recommendations to promote transparency and accountability throughout the evaluation process in CorpsAfrica’s future iterations.

Capstone Team: Morgan Hume, Caitlin Kelly, Andres Martinez, Roophy Roy, Ai Vuong

**NGO Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security**

*Influence Analysis and Process Improvement*

The NGO Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security (NGOWG) advocates for the equal and full participation of women in all efforts to create and maintain international peace and security. In order to bolster anecdotal reports of its success, the NGOWG requested the Capstone team assess the influence of its advocacy work. The team designed a qualitative influence assessment and interviewed UN member states, Security Council members, UN agencies, civil society actors, and members of the NGOWG to collect a range of perceptions on the NGOWG’s ability to increase awareness and prioritization and affect Security Council policy outcomes. The team then compiled, coded, and analyzed the data to produce a report assessing the NGOWG’s advocacy influence and prescribe modifications to maximize the effectiveness of its efforts. The report’s findings will be used to gain additional support for NGOWG’s work and assist the organization to maximize advocacy influence as it makes strategic planning adjustments.

Capstone Team: Anne Kilby, Michelle Pomeroy, Heather Skolnick

**Transparency International**

*Corruption in the Security and Defense Sector: Case Studies of Colombia and El Salvador*

Transparency International (TI) is a global nonprofit organization that monitors and publicizes corporate and political corruption in international development. Having identified the security and defense sector as a blind spot in existing corruption research, TI requested a Capstone team to evaluate drivers of and barriers to corruption in the sector. The team focused on Latin America, using case studies of Colombia and El Salvador to develop a methodology of investigation. This methodology included desk research, a corruption risk analysis, and interviews with key stakeholders, including bilateral and multilateral donor institutions, civil society organizations, national political bodies, and sector-line ministries. The Capstone team also developed a toolkit for future replication of project methodology. After conducting fieldwork in Bogota, Colombia, the team then compiled and ana-
analyzed the collected information to produce a report of findings and recommendations to assist TI in policy and advocacy efforts.

Capstone Team: Sarah Doolin, Lisa D'Oyen, Mari Haraldsson, Rosie Keegel, Curtis Outlaw, Katherine Wilkins

**UN Free and Equal Campaign**

*Global Message Testing*

The UN Free and Equal Campaign is the first global education initiative on LGBT equality, sponsored by the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN OHCHR) and the Purpose Foundation. The campaign was launched in South Africa in July 2013 to raise awareness about discrimination and violence against LGBT people, and promote greater respect for LGBT rights globally. The Capstone team conducted extensive research on the current landscape of LGBT issues in countries of UN strategic and political interest. Based on findings, the team hired market research companies in India and South Africa, working with them on-site to manage the Campaign’s message testing. After analyzing focus group results, the team provided a detailed report identifying messages with the greatest potential to shift public perception on LGBT issues in the countries of focus. The Capstone team also developed a comprehensive message testing replication guide for future expansion of the Campaign.

Capstone Team: Marc Krokowski, Laura Manley, Ellen Nadeau, Kaitlin Stewart, Aayesha Vichare

**Wireless Access for Health**

*Evaluation of an Electronic Health Record System at Rural Health Units in the Philippines*

Wireless Access for Health (WAH) is a non-profit e-health organization in the Philippines designed to improve local health governance and increase access to better quality health data, management, and provision. The task of the Capstone team was to evaluate the effectiveness of the WAH Electronic Health Record software (EHR) and develop a monitoring and evaluation plan. The team conducted focus groups and interviewed doctors, midwives, and nurses during site visits to Rural Health Units utilizing the EHR system. Evaluating system usability, data quality, and provider perception of patient satisfaction, the team produced recommendations to assist WAH in identifying factors hindering or facilitating adoption of the EHR system. The final report also provided a solid framework for WAH to maintain adherence to the newly developed monitoring and evaluation plan as the organization assesses its internal and external capacity to grow.

Capstone Team: Safiya Arnaout, Naome Jeanty, Heather Keane, Grace Mkemwa
**Brooklyn Bridge to Cambodia**  
*Improving Process and Evaluation*

Nearly 80 percent of Cambodia’s population lives in rural areas and is heavily involved in the agricultural sector. However, many rural farmers live in poverty, unable to provide means beyond subsistence living. Brooklyn Bridge to Cambodia (BB2C) strives to strengthen rural communities by developing small business projects for villagers through its Pump Project, which provides more effective irrigation. The organization acts as a distributor for their Treadle Pump, marketing the pump to villages where members have farming skills and small plots of land. BB2C requested a Capstone team to help design a longitudinal study to assess the impact of the pump in villages where it was adopted. The team leveraged existing survey materials to provide impact measurement recommendations and worked collaboratively with BB2C to construct a new field survey. The team then traveled to Cambodia and worked with the local staff to create, test, and implement the survey, demonstrating to local staff how to leverage survey data.

Capstone Team: Ben Nemeth, Susie Phamornsuwana, Nicole Reyes, Anarrah Ross

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**Advanced International Projects**  
**FACULTY: JOHN GERSHMAN AND ROBERTSON WORK**

**Wireless Access for Health**  
*Comparing Electronic Medical Record Implementation*

Paper-based data collection methods are still common in health clinics around the world. Implementing Electronic Medical Records (EMRs) has the potential to ensure more accurate data, reduce storage costs, and increase efficiency at these health clinics for medical practitioners and administrators. This Capstone project studied the implementation of EMRs in selected health clinics in New York City and New Jersey in order to provide lessons to be used by the Wireless Access for Health Project in the Philippines for their patient and clinic management. Using a literature review, interviews, and observations in New York City and New Jersey health clinics, the information gathered was analyzed and compiled to assist Wireless Access for Health in planning its next stages of implementation.

Capstone Team: Diana Sera
International Labour Organization
Development of a Marketing Strategy Toolkit for Providers to Facilitate Take-up of Microinsurance

The Microinsurance Innovation Facility (MIF), housed within the Social Finance Programme of the International Labour Organization, is a leader in investigating microinsurance as a solution to protecting low-income households against unexpected financial loss. The MIF consolidates and shares emerging knowledge and best practices within the microinsurance sector. The Capstone team was employed to research and examine linkages between the principles of behavioral economics and actual sector practice in the process areas of marketing, product design, enrollment, and claims. The team completed a comprehensive literature review and findings were synthesized into a process framework with recommended marketing strategies. The team also conducted interviews with practitioners and industry experts to validate the created strategies. The final output, a marketing toolkit, recommended select strategies for implementation, providing a point of reference for practitioners worldwide to promote the take-up of microinsurance among low-income populations.

Capstone Team: Ksenia Algunova, Mona Damdinjav, Rosemary D’Monte, Karen Jacobsen

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Evaluation and Refinement of the Measurement and Evaluation Tool for Engagement and e-Participation Self-Assessment Survey

The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) is currently in the process of developing a self-assessment questionnaire for government officials entitled the Measurement and Evaluation Tool for Engagement and e-Participation (METEP). The METEP allows officials to assess their preparedness to engage their citizens, particularly through the use of information and communications technology, to identify areas in need of institutional strengthening and ensure active citizen engagement in development planning. The Capstone team was charged with informing the development and refinement of this measurement tool. The team piloted the METEP on a sample of government officials in Malaysia and Indonesia, and administered the survey remotely to officials in India. Using feedback from the pilot surveys, as well as key benchmarks found in academic literature on survey design, the Capstone team provided recommendations to make the METEP a more effective tool in measuring government readiness to engage citizens in development.

Capstone Team: David Margolis, Gayathri Muthukrishnan, Deepti Nagulapally
UNESCO
Youth and Rites of Passage in Sierra Leone: An Evaluation of UNESCO Foresight’s Local Scoping Exercise

Anticipation and Foresight is an emerging field within UNESCO, contributing to UNESCO’s mission of achieving sustainable development throughout the world in the form of Local Scoping Exercise (LSE) workshops. LSEs are workshops customized to fit local needs and culture that allow participants to project and prepare for the future. The Capstone team was involved in the first West African LSE in Freetown, Sierra Leone, which focused on the issues of youth empowerment and rites of passage. With roughly 60 percent of the Sierra Leonean population aged 15 to 35 unemployed, providing youth with the tools to craft a fulfilling future is a high priority for both the local government and UNESCO. The team conducted a formal process evaluation, consisting of analyses and observations of the LSE’s design, training, and implementation, and developed recommendations to ensure the effectiveness of future LSEs.

Capstone Team: Jean Hon, Vivian Long, Sarah Mirza, Yasmin Patel

Governance Lab
FACULTY: BETH NOVECK AND SHANKAR PRASAD

Governance Lab
Defining and Identifying Expertise: A Model for Better Governance Using ExpertNet

Founded in 2012, Governance Lab (GovLab) is an action research center seeking new ways to solve complex public problems facing governments and nonprofit organizations. “Enhanced Expertise Identification” is one such method, now in its infancy as a field. GovLab requested a Capstone team to determine the essential components of a successful expertise identification system for NYU that could also be used in collaboration with the LivingLabs project and the City of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Conceived as ExpertNet, the pilot launched at NYU in the spring, drawing from sources and comparable projects across the country that redefined expertise as more than credentials or lengthy curriculum vitae. The Capstone team compiled research from first-hand interviews, case studies, online investigation, extensive literature review, and behavioral science methodology to produce a public e-Resource of outcomes and recommendations for use by GovLab and external stakeholders.
**Governance Lab**  
*Open NYU: Crowdsourcing*

Governance Lab (GovLab) aims to improve people’s lives by using technology to change the way we govern. The GovLab requested a Capstone team to undertake pilot projects in units across New York University to explore how crowdsourcing tools can help decision-makers solve problems. Specifically, the crowdsourcing team researched ways in which organizations use crowdsourcing to make smarter decisions. This foundational research fueled the experimental models in the pilot projects. The team also used the research to write a series of case studies housed on the GovLab Wiki, launched this year and available as a resource to the public. Concurrently, the team produced an online research tool to help sort the extensive information available on crowdsourcing. The goal of the tool is to provide an easy and accessible way for those interested in engaging with crowdsourcing to determine which models are most appropriate to meet their needs.

Capstone Team: Andrea Arce, Colin Bottles, Lauren Bush, Danielle Emery

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**National Health Service England**  
*Developing a Research and Evaluation Program of Open Data*

National Health Service (NHS) England, the national health care provider for England, is developing an open data strategy for its health and social care programs. NHS England partnered with NYU’s Governance Lab (GovLab) and the Capstone team to capture the value proposition of open data, measuring the impact of open data on various health care outcomes. To achieve this, the Capstone team conducted background research and literature reviews on the health care outcomes most likely to be affected: accountability, choice, outcomes, efficiency, customer service, and economic development. The Capstone team identified and assessed existing NHS open data streams, interviewed thought leaders in open data and informatics, and compiled current case studies of open data in health care. This information was synthesized into a GovLab report to provide NHS England a thorough understanding of its own open data status, the value proposition of expanding its open data strategy, and a conceptual frame that allows for measuring the impact of open data.

Capstone Team: Naomi Adland, Naomi Berlin, Dinorah Cantu, Marisse Del Olmo, Hallie Martin, Chandan Sharma

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Capstone Team: Brenden Desmond, Jillian Dimaano, Christian Laurence, Claudia Paz, Christina Rogawski, Shammara Wright
New York University Bookstore
Re-engaging the Community for a Sustainable Future

Amidst the significant changes transforming the publishing industry, the NYU Bookstore faces the fundamental question of how to be financially sustainable in a new era of publishing. Through analyzing potential process and planning areas that could be improved, the Capstone team identified a common ingredient among today’s successful bookstores: the ability to capture the interest of their unique audiences. The team determined the NYU Bookstore needed to create a stronger bond with the NYU community and become a “place of engagement” in order to remain relevant. The Capstone team then assisted the Bookstore in launching a competition that challenged the public to design a new product to be sold in the store, generating community interest in Bookstore activities and providing a creative space that the community can enjoy and actively engage in.

Capstone Team: Carmen Jordan Asensi, Faith Brigham, Coby Kalter, Evon Kanu, Pablo Villarreal

New York University Department of Public Safety
Open NYU: Crowdsourcing Employees of New York University’s Department of Public Safety

The Governance Lab (GovLab) is a research, training, and experimentation laboratory that focuses on improving peoples lives by addressing real world challenges through institutional redesign. Through the OPEN NYU project, the Capstone team worked with GovLab, and stakeholders across the University to design and test different processes and technological platforms as a method of engaging the NYU community in promoting better governance decisions. Launching a pilot project, the Capstone team focused on engaging employees from the Department of Public Safety (DPS) as an opportunity to work with staff members that interface with the entire NYU community. The team conducted extensive interviews to identify specific challenges faced by DPS, designing and implementing an ideas-based competition to crowsource creative solutions from DPS officers to then be evaluated by DPS managers and outside experts, exploring whether tapping into employee experience yields more effective and legitimate solutions to governance challenges.

Capstone Team: Elizabeth Calmeyer, Sandra Kim, Theresa Langley, Hortensia Seldner Perez, Rachael Young
New York University Future of Technology Enhanced Education Committee

The Networked Committee: Opening the Field to Find Better Solutions for Technology in Education

NYU’s Future of Technology Enhanced Education Committee (FTEE) is charged with guiding the University’s use of technology to support its academic mission and further its commitment to innovation in teaching, learning, and research. Working with FTEE, whose membership includes a diverse group of faculty and staff from each school within the university as well as the Faculty Senators Council, the Capstone Team analyzed how a university-wide committee with a broad directive might best utilize its resources for more effective decision-making. The team examined theories of change and measures of success, as well as compared methods of other university-wide initiatives for identifying and engaging previously untapped experts and increasing buy-in from the community. This project aims to increase the value of participation in broadly defined decision-making and is intended to be transferable to multiple platforms and contexts. Conclusions gathered by the FTEE Committee, in conjunction with Capstone project results, will be used to help inform formal recommendations submitted to the university in the committee’s final report.

Capstone Team: Corey Blay, Jinny Jeong, Ashley Kolaya, Penny Wang, Damali Wynter

New York University Leonard N. Stern School of Business

Crowdsourcing Alumni Engagement

Universities face an ongoing struggle to keep alumni active and engaged in the academic and social community. Alumni are a strong source of support to universities through donations, job referrals, networking and mentorship. The Capstone team endeavored to enhance alumni engagement at NYU’s Leonard N. Stern School of Business, with the intent to develop a more active community. To accomplish this, the Capstone team experimented with a pilot program in partnership with the Social Enterprise Association (SEA) student organization at NYU. The team employed a crowdsourcing platform to interact with alumni, determining how they prefer to stay involved with the community and why that method of involvement is appealing. Through these efforts, the Capstone team was able to provide the SEA with effective strategies to enhance and maintain long-term alumni engagement focusing on grassroots efforts with other campus groups.

Capstone Team: Ye Jin Chun, Barrie Charney Golden, Emily Thenhaus, Michelle Tulino, Allison Whaley
New York-Presbyterian Hospital
Best Practices For Improving Registered Nurse Retention

Turnover of registered nurses is an increasing concern for hospitals because of its negative impact on patient care, patient satisfaction, and financial stability. New York-Presbyterian Hospital (NYP) requested a Capstone team to examine past and current turnover, causative factors, and identify best practices in nurse retention. The Capstone team researched best practices at top institutions and assessed data from masters-prepared nurses, employee satisfaction surveys, and employee exit surveys. The team’s final recommendations outlined strategies to effectively reduce turnover and retain nurses, including bolstering leadership support, providing outlets for stress management, improving nurse autonomy, and facilitating access to career advancement.

Capstone Team: Jihan Asante, Yvonne Francis-Heaven, Cynthia Gowan, Crystal Matthews, Robin Vellucci

New York-Presbyterian Hospital
Hearing the Virtual Voice of the Patient

New York-Presbyterian Hospital (NYP) currently mails satisfaction surveys to patients in order to guide service-improvement efforts. Seeking to increase the number of patients surveyed and hear the voice of as many patients as possible, NYP had planned to start distributing surveys via email; however, NYP had not consistently collected patient email addresses. To assist NYP, the Capstone team identified best practices for implementing e-surveys, including effective methods of patient email capture and how to educate staff and patients about e-surveys. The team also conducted interviews to identify staff-, patient-, and information system-related barriers to consistent email address collection. The Capstone team’s recommendations included standardizing the email collection process at patient access points, effectively training front-line staff to respond to patient concerns, and ensuring interface between all relevant hospital information systems. The team also identified best practices for increasing response rates regardless of survey delivery method, including personalizing surveys, using the patient’s preferred language, and strategically utilizing email notifications and reminders.
New York-Presbyterian Hospital
Identifying Barriers and Improving the Discharge Process at New York-Presbyterian Hospital Columbia

New York-Presbyterian Hospital Columbia (NYP Columbia) serves the tri-state area and is recognized as a world leader in health care. The Nursing Operations Department requested a Capstone team to evaluate the operations of five medical-surgical units in an effort to identify barriers to the discharge process and suggest improvements. The primary focus of the evaluation consisted of retrospective review of chart data from January 2013 to June 2013. The Capstone team also conducted on-site unit observations, met with department heads and barrier reduction teams, and reviewed best practices in organizations with similar patient populations and organizational structures. The team then produced a report of findings and recommendations to assist NYP Columbia in reducing existing barriers to discharge and develop future quality-improvement initiatives.

Capstone Team: Anabella Aspiras, John Barazzuol, Hugh McGowan, Rebbecca Rosen, Anushka Sahadeo

New York-Presbyterian Hospital
Nursing Satisfaction and Health Information Technology

New York-Presbyterian Hospital (NYP) is New York’s premiere health care organization, governed by a mission to provide state-of-the-art, secure information technology tools to its internal employees. Driven by best practices, NYP strives to optimize the industry’s most innovative information technologies to realize the most effective, highest quality patient care. NYP charged the Capstone team with the task of developing a formal report on nursing satisfaction as related to the implementation of Health Information Technologies (HIT). Following a qualitative data collection, the team formalized a list of nursing-defined perceptions of technologies at NYP, proposing recommendations aimed at improving nursing satisfaction as it relates to HIT. Using industry best practice models, the team’s recommendations focused on optimizing future HIT deployment while increasing nursing satisfaction and streamlining workflow and efficiency.

Capstone Team: Allison Douglas, Rae Jean Hemway, Michelle Pego, Janett Pike, Bethany Sheppard
Immigration and Academic Performance

*Does Being an Immigrant Student Have a Differential Effect in OECD Versus Non-OECD Countries?*

As a result of intensified globalization, immigrants have become an increasingly important component of economies and societies in countries across the world. The Capstone team sought to answer the following question: within the realm of education, how do immigrant households, school systems, and education policies accommodate increased immigration? Using 2009 data from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and World Bank Open Data, the team examined standardized test scores of 15-year-old immigrant students, compared to their native-born peers, across 65 different nations. After controlling for individual characteristics, school facilities, economic development, and education policy of host countries, the team’s results indicated that immigrants outperform non-immigrant students in non-OECD countries, while non-immigrant students outperform immigrant students in OECD countries. Research findings bring to light new questions regarding the adaptation process of immigrant students and the patterns of immigration among developed and developing countries.

Capstone Team: Gloria L. Bernal, Maria C. Figueroa, Jie Zong

New York City School Closure Policy

*The Impact of NYC Middle School Closures on Student Achievement*

With more than 1.1 million students, the New York City Department of Education (NYC DOE) is the largest public school system in the country. Over the last decade, the NYC DOE has been at the center of one of the country’s most aggressive and controversial school reform plans under Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Schools Chancellor Joel Klein. A central tenet of their reform plan was the opening of new, higher-performing schools, while closing chronically under-performing schools. As a result of this approach, between 2002 and 2013, a total of 164 failing schools were closed, while 656 new schools were opened. This study sought to examine NYC’s policy of school closure in an attempt to understand if closing underperforming public schools is an effective approach to improving student educational outcomes. Specifically, the team investigated educational outcomes of interest for students who
were in middle school at the time of their schools’ closures from 2008 to 2012.

Capstone Team: Carina Garcia, Jigitsa Patel, Rachel Perera, Carrie Schindele, Amanda Warco

Political Representation and Health Outcomes

Political Representation and Infant Mortality Rates

In the United States, local, state, and federal governments are divided over how to address issues in the health care system. Over the years, Republican-controlled states have usually taken a conservative approach when addressing social policy issues compared to their Democratic counterparts. Although cross-country research finds that policies aimed at reducing social inequalities have a statistically significant effect on health outcomes, there has been no such study to see if these findings also apply to the U.S. The Capstone team initiated a study using state-level panel data from 1990-2010 to determine if there is a statistically significant relationship between political representation and infant mortality rates. Preliminary results suggested that more Democratic representation in the upper or lower house of a bicameral state legislature is correlated with a decrease in infant mortality rates.

Capstone Team: Kimberly Go, Harvir Kaur, Angel Wei Huang, Scarlett Zhou

United States Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program

LIHTC and Crowd Out: Does Subsidizing Rental Housing Deter Private Investment?

The United States government provides federal tax incentives to promote the construction of affordable housing through the federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program. To date, LIHTC has subsidized the construction of over 2 million affordable housing units, making it the largest ongoing supply-side affordable housing program in the country. Prior research has suggested that LIHTC discourages private investment in new rental housing.

Through their research, the Capstone team aimed to estimate the extent to which crowd-out occurs, using updated data describing housing markets and LIHTC-subsidized construction. The team employed an instrumental variable design to analyze LIHTC and census data from 2000 to 2010.

Capstone Team: Jonathan Bigelow, Benjamin Duchek, Justin Tyndall, Nick Vega
FACULTY AND DIRECTORS

Capstone Faculty

Rona Affoumado, Independent Consultant
Ana Marie Argilagos, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office for International and Philanthropic Innovation, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Charles Bailey, Director of Agent Orange in Vietnam Program, Aspen Institute
Katherine Bourne, Independent Consultant
Charles Brecher, Professor of Public and Health Administration, NYU Wagner
John Donnellan, Adjunct Associate Professor of Public and Health Administration, NYU Wagner
Erica Foldy, Associate Professor of Public and Nonprofit Management, NYU Wagner
John Gershman, Clinical Associate Professor of Public Service, NYU Wagner
Amy Goldman, Independent Consultant, Goldman Healthcare Consulting
Sara Grant, Adjunct Assistant Professor of Public Administration, NYU Wagner
Karen Grépin, Assistant Professor of Global Health Policy, NYU Wagner
Sarah Gurwitz, Independent Consultant
Kei Hayashi, Independent Consultant
Steven Jacobs, Senior Associate, K. Backus & Associates

Michael Keane, Senior Planner, BFJ Planning
Merle McGee, Chief Program Officer, YWCA of the City of New York
Beth Noveck, Visiting Professor, NYU Wagner
Shankar Prasad, Clinical Professor, NYU Wagner
Shelley Rappaport, Research/Operations Associate, MDRC
Steven Schall, Partner, Schall & Russo Planning Works
Dennis C. Smith, Associate Professor of Public Policy, NYU Wagner
George Sweeting, Deputy Director, NYC Independent Budget Office
Bill Thomas, Senior Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, New York Philharmonic
Barbara Turk, Senior Fellow, Community Resource Exchange
David Winder, CEO, WaterAid
Robertson Work, Founder and Director, Innovative Leadership Services

Capstone Co-Directors

Erica Foldy, Associate Professor of Public and Nonprofit Management, NYU Wagner
David Schachter, Assistant Dean for Student Affairs, NYU Wagner
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