

OPTIMIZING PROMOTIONAL RESOURCES TO INCREASE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AT THE GOLDEN SPUR

Chavis McDonald

Director, Customer Experience and Change Management

Business Affairs

March 18, 2026

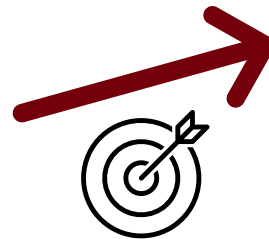


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PURPOSE

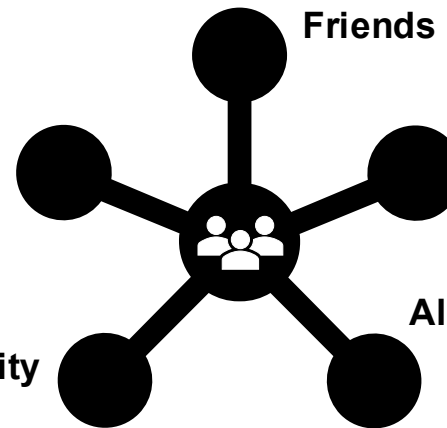
This project involves utilization of internal and external promotional resources to **generate student awareness** and ultimately **increase foot traffic** to The Golden Spur restaurant on campus. Through implementation of live music events, “tailgates” in partnership with Student Life, and student-friendly payment methods, we aim to **track impact** during the 2026 Spring semester and onward.

- **Long-term vision:** The Golden Spur is **THE** restaurant of the University of South Carolina
- **Current state:** what’s good and what can improve?
 - 😊 Very busy on event days (basketball games, performances in Colonial Life Arena and Koger Center)
 - 😊 Noticeable uptick in patronage on Sunday mornings-early afternoons for brunch buffet
 - 😞 Lull on “off” nights during the week (no events in general area)
 - 😞 Under-utilization of Foundation Square



Faculty/Staff

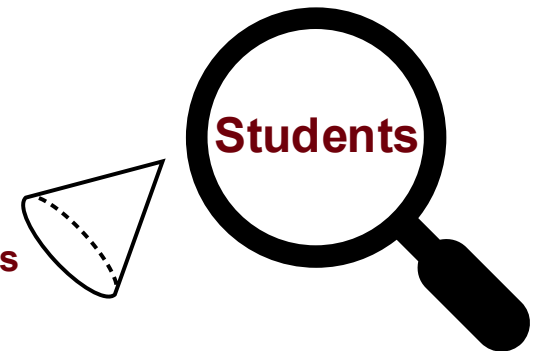
Midlands
Community



Friends of USC

Alumni

Students



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PEOPLE INVOLVED

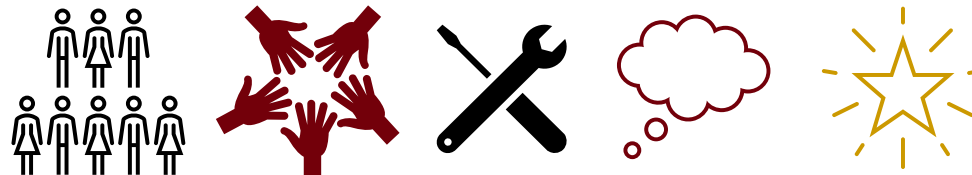


Project Sponsors			
Joe Sobieralski	USC	Senior AVP, Admin. & Finance, Treasurer	Executive Sponsor
Joe Fortune	USC	Director, Business Affairs & Contract Mgmt.	Project Sponsor (USC)
Clete Myers	Aramark	District Manager, Carolina Food Co.	Project Sponsor (Aramark)
Core Project Team			
Chavis McDonald	USC	Director, Customer Exp. & Change Mgmt.	Project Lead
Neal Kelly	USC	Director, Technology Services	IT Lead
Nicole Perez	USC	Marketing/Media Coordinator, Business Affairs	Marketing Co-Lead
Faren Alston-Wells	Aramark	Marketing Manager, Carolina Food Co.	Marketing Co-Lead
Ryan Whittaker	Aramark	Campus Culinary Director, Carolina Food Co.	The Golden Spur Co-Lead
Shannon Hunt	Aramark	Catering Director, Carolina Food Co.	The Golden Spur Co-Lead
Anna-Leigh Taylor	USC	Assistant Director, Campus Programs (RHUU)	Student Life Lead
Jeremy Polley	USC	Assistant Professor, Music Industry Studies	Talent Coordination Lead
Subject Matter Experts			
Bryan Joyce	Aramark	Director of Operations, Carolina Food Co.	The Golden Spur Operations
Hayden Goode	USC	Marketing/Media Assistant, Business Affairs	Photo/Video Editor
Jake Downs	USC	Marketing/Media Assistant, Business Affairs	Videographer
Carrie Kuecks	Aramark	Marketing Coordinator, Carolina Food Co.	Social Media (Aramark)
Kassandra Luis	USC	Digital Mktg./Social Media Coor., Business Affairs	Social Media (USC)

Initial opinions gathered from current students:

- Entrée **pricing** out of budget
- “**High class**” feel to interior
- Un-familiar **brand**
- Inconsistent **history** (different ownership/names)
- Brand **confusion** (The Spur at Campus Village)

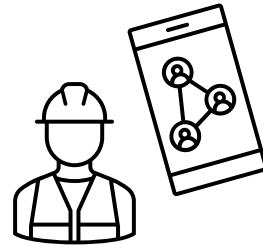
...and many more



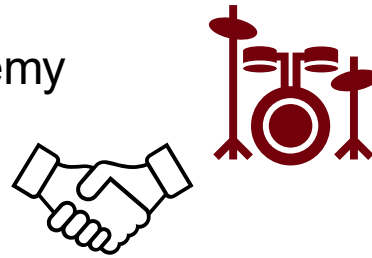
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PROJECT PATH

- Establish Business Affairs-specific marketing team with priority emphasis on The Golden Spur. (Thank you to: Nicole, Hayden, Jake and Kass!)



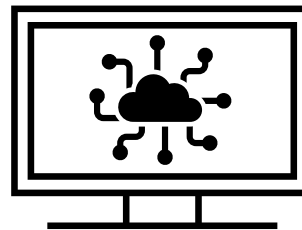
- Collaborate with Carolina Food Co. staff and Jeremy Polley from USC School of Music.
 - Mimic “Live at the Underground” @ Russell House without cannibalizing existing events.



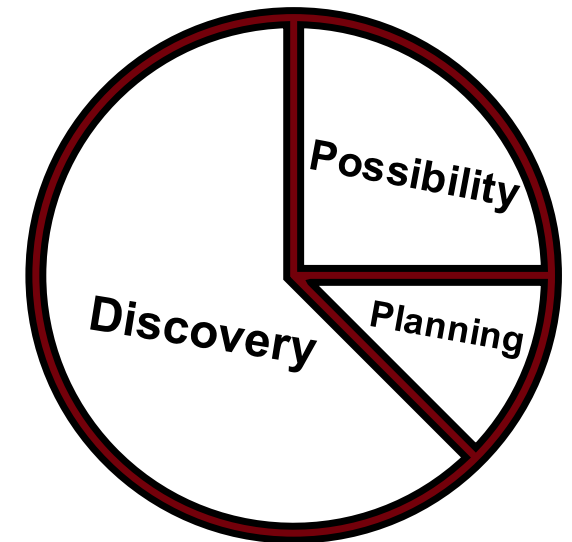
- Gain full understanding on what can and cannot change; temporary menu items/specials without sweeping adjustments to TGS menu/décor.



- Work closely with IT and transactional teams to prove functionality of Meal Plan Dollars; how do we make gratuity work?

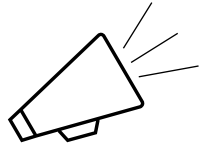


- Partner with Student Life for targeted events.



KEY IMPROVEMENTS

- Unique events and promotions



Bacon cheeseburger sliders

Pita chips w/ pimento cheese

Fried Brussel sprouts

Shrimp and grits

Chicken bacon quesadilla w/

Pico de gallo

- Student-friendly menu specials and drinks (21+ 😊)



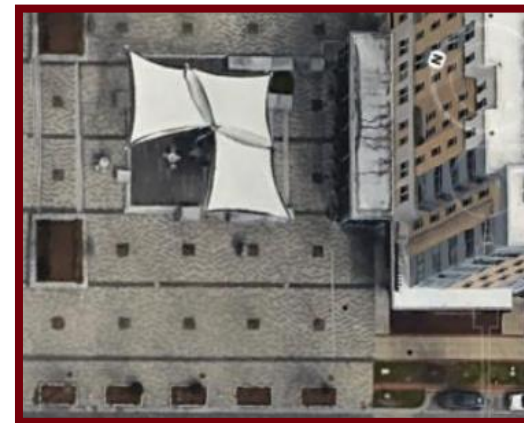
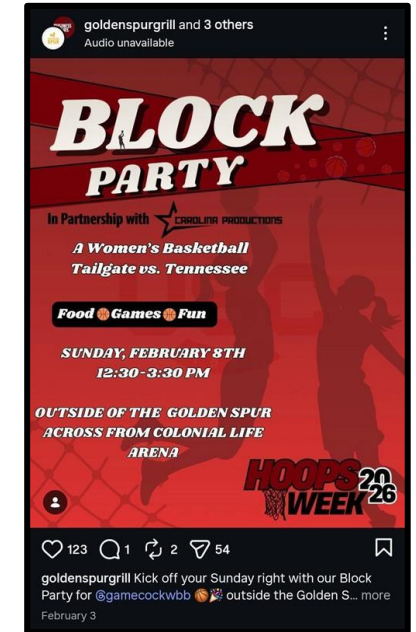
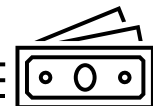
- Partnership with Student Life for targeted “block parties” in collaboration with USC Athletics



- Intentional use of Foundation Square for all aspects of event (meet them where they are)



- Meal Plan Dollar integration



- Band
- Lawn games
- Food/Bev. Stations

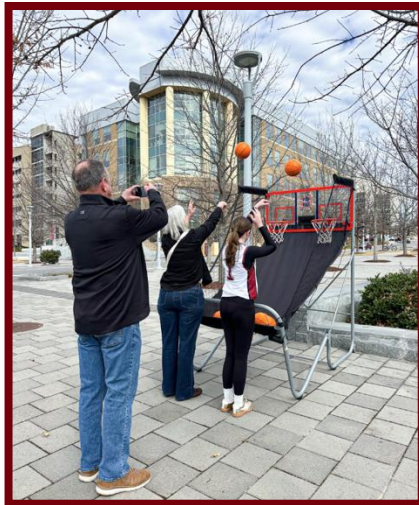


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RESULTS



Say
"cheeseburger"!



Swipe Stats

Feb. 7: **54** student check-ins
Feb. 8: **71** student check-ins



Insta Impact

Oct. 21 Event:

- Views: **6,016**
- Interactions: **87**
- Profile Visits: **28**
- **+1** Follower

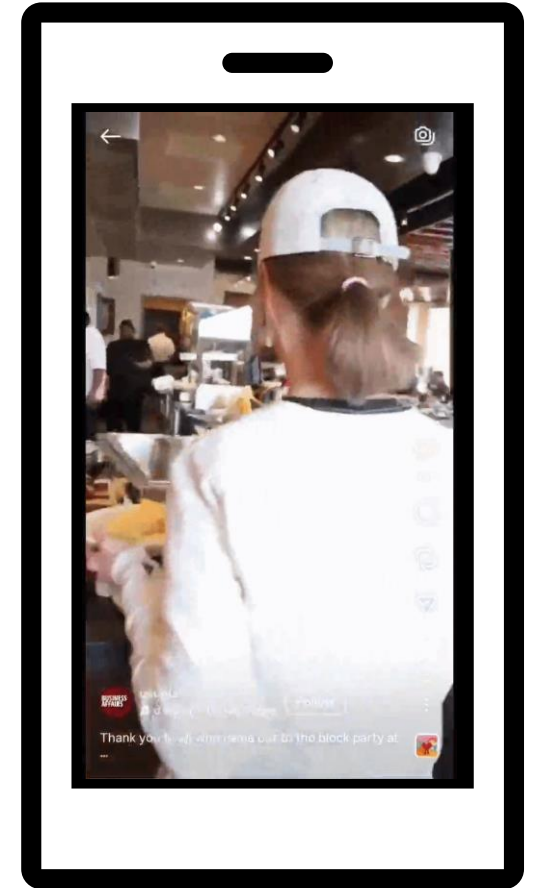
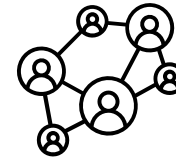


Feb. 7-8 Events:

- Views: **1,479**
- Interactions: **23**
- Profile Visits: **1**
- **+1** Follower



- **3** Total Posts
- **7,495** Total Views
- **110** Total Post Interactions
- **51** Total Profile Visits
- **+2** Followers to **@uscbiz**



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NEXT STEPS

2/16: Meal Plan Dollars Accepted for Payment



Dine-in spend utilizing MPD as of 2/28/2026: **\$3,187**



4/11: Collaboration with Athletics



The event features a live concert headlined by Darius Rucker and Lauren Alaina, plus a free **pre-concert Block Party in Foundation Square** at the corner of Greene and Lincoln streets.

All fans are invited to the free Garnet & Black Spring Fest Block Party beginning at 1 p.m., featuring a meet and greet with Gamecock football student-athletes, food and drinks, inflatables, live music and more.



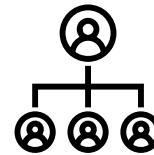
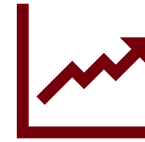
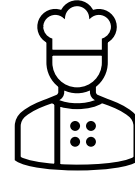
Outdoor music playlist for
ambiance throughout
operating hours



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REFLECTIONS

- None of this happens without a strong dining services partnership – THANK YOU Carolina Food Co. team!
- Progress is not always linear; trying something that doesn't work out as intended can be just as helpful as an instantly successful initiative...it helps you learn your market.
- Every supervisor/leader at USC, or those who aspire to be, should participate in the Improvement Leader Program. Time spent with this cohort and OOE staff helped me understand my own job in more intricate ways.
- The Golden Spur has fantastic chicken wings! Let's have lunch soon.



— *Chin McID*



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THANK YOU!

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