Senior Capstones: National Perspectives and One Capstone Journey

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Introductions



Goals of this Session

- Have an understanding of the national picture of senior capstone experiences
- Understand how the leadership of a capstone experience navigated the institutional environment
- Develop a perspective on how both broad and local viewpoints can inform practice at their institution



Organization of this Session

- Background on Senior Year
- Data from 2016 National Survey of Senior Capstone Experiences
- Development and implementation of a senior capstone experience at the University of South Carolina developed in conjunction with a university integrative learning initiative
- Discussion



Seniors



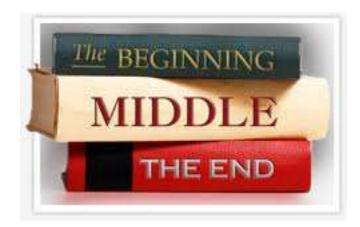


Senior year represents the final opportunity to serve students to prepare them to face the demands that lie ahead.



(Chickering & Schlossberg, 1998; Cuseo, 1998; Gardner, Van der Veer, & Associates, 1998).





Students think about undergraduate experience in 3 phases:

- Entering
 - Middle
 - Exiting



Lane (2014)

Timing of Student Success Programs

First-Year

Orientation

Common Reading

Programs

First-Year

Seminars

Student Engagement



Junior Year

Internships
Study Abroad
Peer Leadership

Senior Year

Capstone Experiences

Job Fairs

Professional Licensing

Graduate and Professional School Applications



What are the opportunities for intervention in the Senior Year?

- Developmentally ready for higher-order thinking
- Integrate learning across curriculum and experiences
- Final determination and demonstration of competency
- Career preparation and placement
- Others?

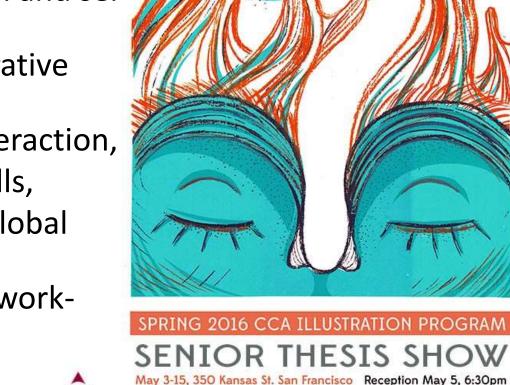


Senior capstone experiences

lead to gains in:

- student satisfaction and selrated gains
- active and collaborative learning,
- student-faculty interaction,
- critical thinking skills,
- understanding of global problems,
- and acquisition of workrelated skills

Brownell & Swaner, 2010, Kuh, 2008; NSSE, 2009



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High-Impact Educational Practices

First-Year Seminars and Experiences

Many schools now baild into the carriculum first-year terminars or other programs that bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis. The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquity, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students' intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars can also involve students with cutting-edge questions in acholarship and with faculty members' own research.

Common Intellectual Experiences

The older idea of a "cose" curriculum has evolved into a variety of modern furms, such as a set of required cummum courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or required participation in a learning community (see below). These programs often combine broad themes—e.g., technology and society, global interdependence—with a variety of curricular and cocurricular options for students.

Learning Communities

The key goals for learning communities are to encourage integration of learning across courses and to movibe students with "big questions" that matter beyond the clawsoom. Students take two or most indeed courses as a group and work closely with one another and with their professors. Many learning communities explore a common topic and/or common readings through the letties of different disciplines. Some deliberately link "liberal arn" and "professional courses"; others feature service learning.

Writing-Intensive Courses

These courses emphasize versing at all levels of instruction and arms
the carriculum, including final year projects. Students are encouraged
to produce and revise various forms of writing for different audiences
in different disciplines. The efficitiveness of this repeated practice
"across the curriculum" has led to parallel efform in such arms as
quantitative reasoning, oral communication, information literacy, and,
on some caregiouse, ethical inquiry.

Collaborative Assignments and Projects

Collaborative learning conthines two key goals, learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one's own understanding by lineming seriously to the imagin of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Approaches range from study groups within a course, to ream-based assignments and wrening, to cooperative projects and research.



Undergraduate Research

Many colleges and universities are now providing research experiences for students in all disciplines. Undergraduate rocearch, however, has been most prominerally used in scenex disciplines. With sensing support from the National Science Foundation and the research community, scientists are rediciping their courses to contract key concepts and questions with maderns' early and active involvement in systematic investigation and research. The goal is to involve underse with actively concepted questions, enquerical observation, cartings-edge unchnologies, and the sense of excitencem that course from working to answer important questions.

Diversity/Global Learning

Many colleges and universities now emphasize courses and programs that help students replicar eatherse, his experiences, and confidences different from their own. These studies—which may address U.S. diserusy, world cultures, or both—other explore "difficult differences" such as racial, etheric, and gender inequality, or continuous stringles around the globe for human rights, threedom, and power. Frequently, intercultural midies are augmented by experiential learning in the community and/or by unity about.

Service Learning, Community-Based Learning

In these programs, field-based "experiential learning" with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The ules is to give student direct experience with some they are studying in the coerculant and with engoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both apply what they are learning to real-world settings and reflect in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the sides that going isomething back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life.

Internships

Internships are another increasingly common form of experiented learning. The idea is no provide students with direct experience in a work setting—untilly related to their career interests—and to give them the benefit of oursest to their career interests—and to give the first beautiful to the first beautiful to the first beautiful to the first beautiful to the course credition. Sens complete as proved or paper that is approved by a faculty member.

Capstone Courses and Projects

Whether they're called "senior captiones" or some other trains, these culminating experiences require students nearing the end of their college years to cryate a project of some sort that integrates and applies what they've learned. The project might be a research paper, a performance, a portfolio of "best work," or an exhibit of artwork. Captiones are offered both in departmental programs and, increasing a general education as well.

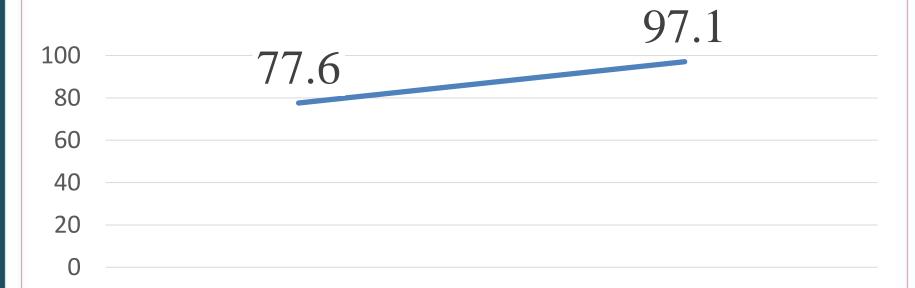


Association of American Colleges and Universities



Prevalence of Senior Capstones (4-year Institutions)

Percentage of Responding Institutions



1999

2011



2016 NATIONAL SURVEY OF SENIOR CAPSTONE EXPERIENCES



National Survey of Senior Capstone Experiences

- Designed to identify senior-specific practices and characteristics of senior capstone experiences
- 2016 Administration
 - Online survey
 - 3,419 <u>institutions</u> were invited to participate
 - 383 responded (11.2% response rate)
 - 332 (93.2% of sample) currently offered at least one capstone experience
 - 99.3% of 4-year institutions (n = 297/299)
 - 61.4% of 2-year colleges (n = 35/57)

Institutional Attention to the Senior Year

Percentage of Respondents 10.0020.0080.0040.0050.0060.0070.00

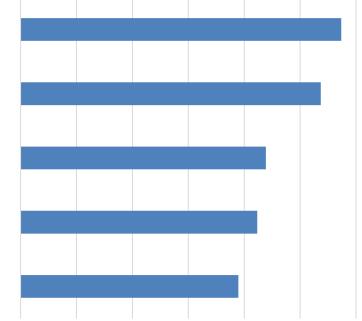


Employment or job-placement study

Participation in a national survey

Alumnae or alumni engagement

Graduation study





Top 10 Campus-wide Objectives for Seniors

Objective	%
Career preparation	71.1
Employment or job placement	62.6
Graduation	61.3
Graduate or professional school enrollment	50.5
Critical-thinking skills	43.3
Preparation for graduate school	39.7
Writing skills	37.0
Alumni/ae support	36.4
Leadership development	35.1
Student satisfaction	34.8

Types of Capstone Experiences

- Capstone course
 - department or disciplinebased
 - Other
- Exam
 - comprehensive
 - leading to certification or professional licensure
- Exhibition of performing, musical, or visual arts
- Senior integrative portfolio

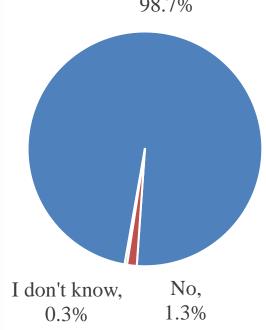
- Senior integrative or applied learning project
- Senior thesis or independent research paper
- Service-learning or community-based learning project
- Supervised practice
 - internship
 - student teaching
 - other



Where are Capstones Offered on Campus?

Academic Department

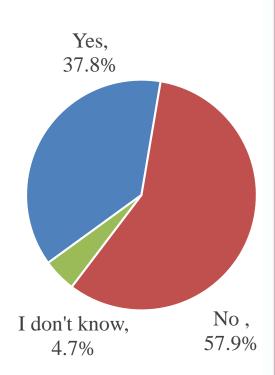
Yes, 98.7%



Co-curricular Program Yes,



Campus-wide Capstone

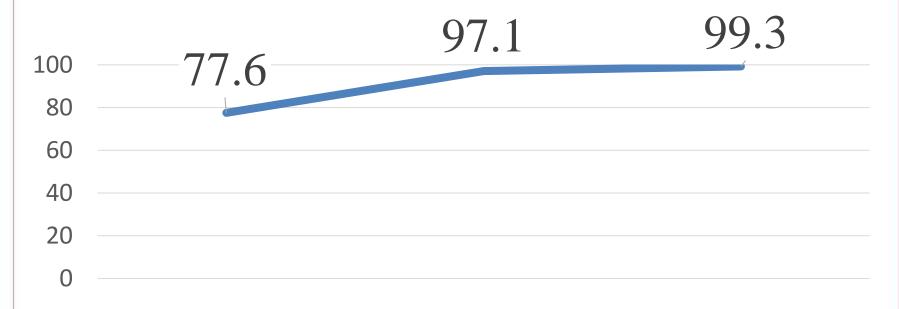


NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

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Prevalence of Senior Capstone Experiences

Percentage of Respondents



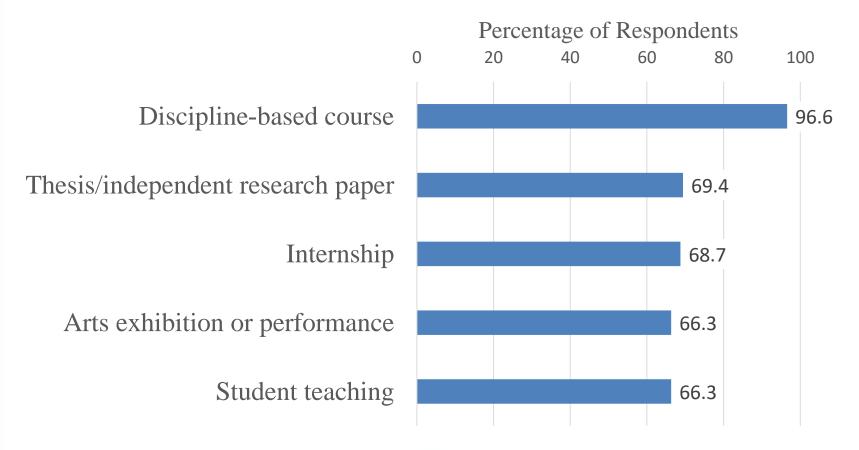
1999

2011

2016



Overall Capstone Experiences Offered in Academic Department





Most Common Capstone by Field of Study

Field of Study	Type of Capstone
Arts and Humanities	Exhibition of performing, musical, or visual arts
Biological Sciences, Agriculture, and Natural Resources	Department or discipline-based course
Physical Sciences, Mathematics, and Computer Science	Department or discipline-based course
Social Sciences	Department or discipline-based course
Business	Department or discipline-based course
Communications, Media, and Public Relations	Department or discipline-based course
Education	Supervised practice - student teaching
Engineering	Department or discipline-based course
Health Professions	Certification or professional licensure exam
Social Service Professions	Internship

Most Common Field of Study by Capstone Experience

Type of Capstone	Field of Study
Department or discipline-based course	Arts and Humanities
Capstone course - other	Arts and Humanities
Exam - comprehensive	Physical Sciences, Mathematics, and Computer Science
Certification or professional licensure exam	Health Professions
Exhibition of performing, musical, or visual arts	Arts and Humanities
Senior integrative portfolio	Arts and Humanities
Senior integrative or applied learning project	Arts and Humanities, Business
Senior thesis or independent research paper	Arts and Humanities
Service-learning or community-based learning project	Social Sciences
Supervised practice - internship	Business
Supervised practice - student teaching	Education
Supervised practice - other	Health Professions

Overall Co-curricular Programs Offering Capstone Experiences



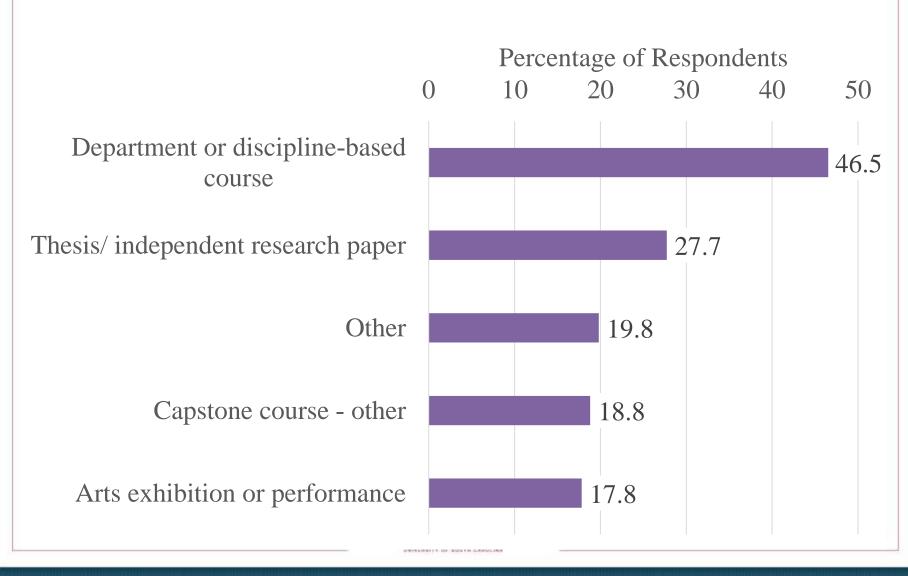
Most Common Capstone by Co-curricular Program

Program	Type of Capstone
Career center	Supervised practice - internship
Honors	Senior thesis or independent research paper
Greek life	Service-learning or community-based learning project
Leadership	Service-learning or community-based learning project
Preprofessional organization	Supervised practice - internship
Service-learning or community engagement	Service-learning or community-based learning project
Student athletics	Service-learning or community-based learning project
Student clubs and organizations	Service-learning or community-based learning project

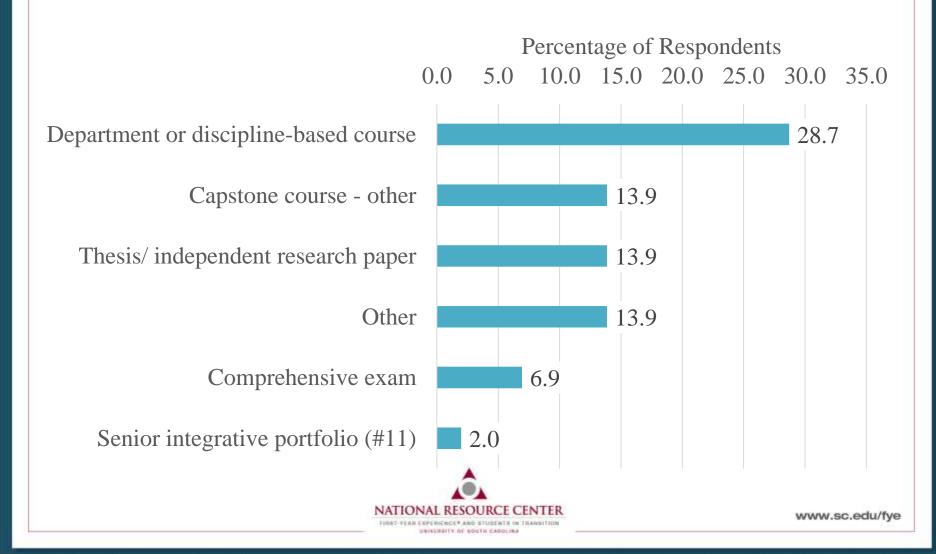
Most Common Co-curricular Program by Capstone Experience

Type of Capstone	Co-curricular Program
Department or discipline-based course	Honors
Capstone course -other	Honors
Exam - comprehensive	Honors
Certification or professional licensure exam	Honors, Preprofessional organization
Exhibition of performing, musical, or visual arts	Honors
Senior integrative portfolio	Service-learning or community engagement
Senior integrative or applied learning project	Service-learning or community engagement
Senior thesis or independent research paper	Honors
Service-learning or community-based learning project	Service-learning or community engagement
Supervised practice - internship	Career center
Supervised practice - student teaching	Service-learning or community engagement
Supervised practice - other	Other, please specify.

Campus-wide Capstone



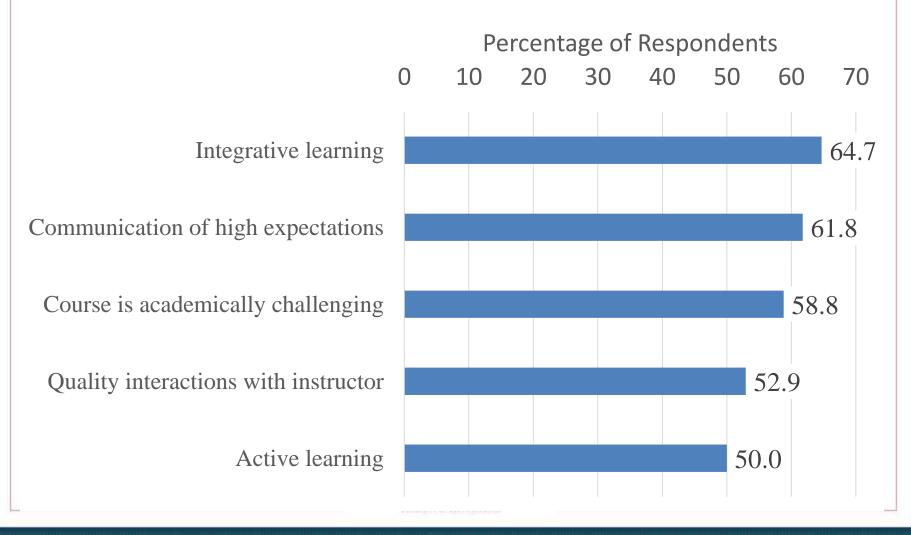
Primary Campus-wide Capstone



Primary Campus-wide Capstone Objectives

Objective	%
Critical-thinking skills	43.0
Integrative and applied learning	32.7
Academic skills	19.6
Career preparation (e.g., internships, co-ops)	16.8
Writing skills	16.8
Analytical or inquiry-based skills	15.9
Self-exploration or personal development	13.1
Graduation	12.1
Employment or job placement	11.2
Ethical reasoning	11.2

Educationally Effective Practices in Campus-wide Capstone



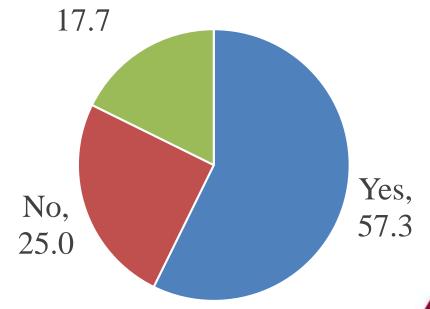
Administration of Primary Campuswide Capstone Experience

Campus Unit	%
Academic affairs	40.6
Academic department(s)	42.7
Career center	2.1
College or school (e.g., college of	
liberal arts)	7.3
Student affairs	3.1
Other, please specify	4.2

Assessment of Primary Campus-wide Capstone

Has capstone experience been assessed?

I don't know,



Most Frequently
Named Outcomes
Measured:

- Critical-thinking skills
- Academic skills
- Writing skills
- Analytical or inquirybased skills
- Problem-solving skills

Take-Aways



The Story of . . .

USCCONNECT

Integrating learning within and beyond the classroom

and the development of our "university-wide" capstone seminar



Carolina Core

- 2005 Initial committee
- 2009 Revised outcomes
- 2012 Implemented

Focus Carolina

- 2008 Initiated
- 2009 Final recommendations BTC, student centered learning

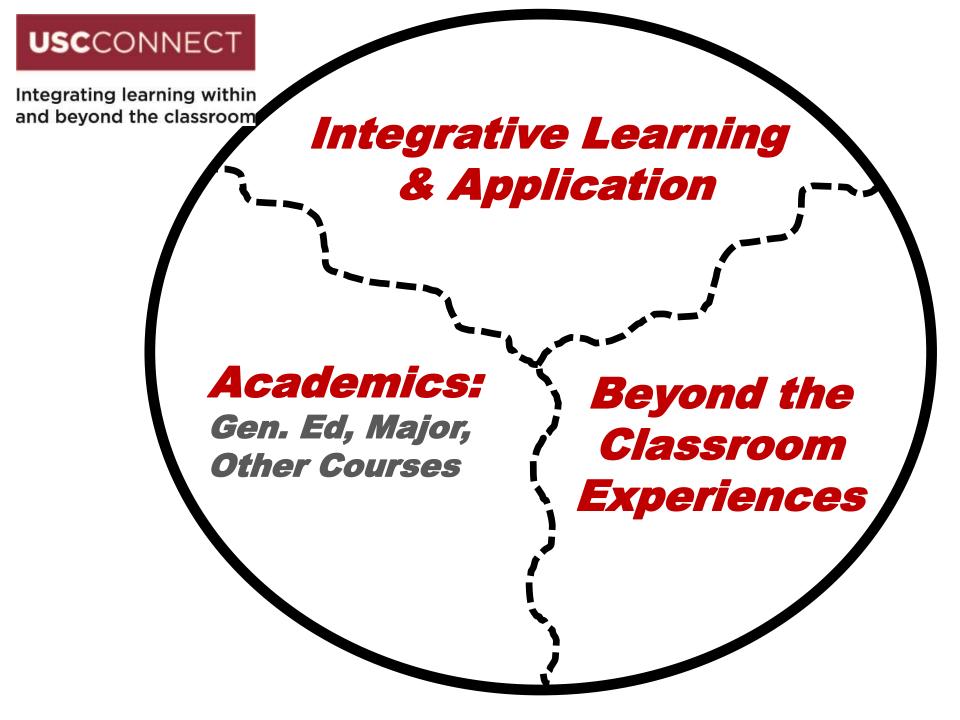
USC Connect

- 2009 RFP
- 2011 Final Proposal
- 2012 Implemented

USC Connect:

- Built over time
- In conjunction with other initiatives
- With broad faculty involvement
- Tied to accreditation





USCCONNECT

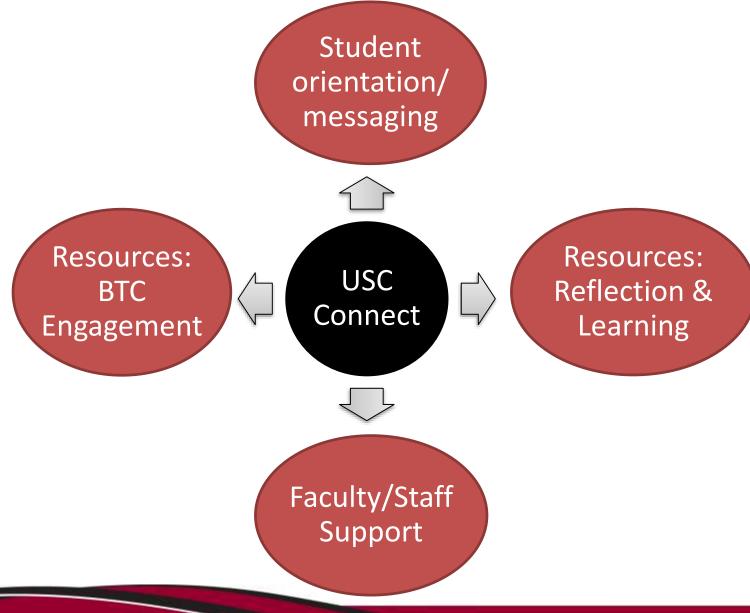
Integrating learning within and beyond the classroom

BTC = Beyond the Classroom Experience

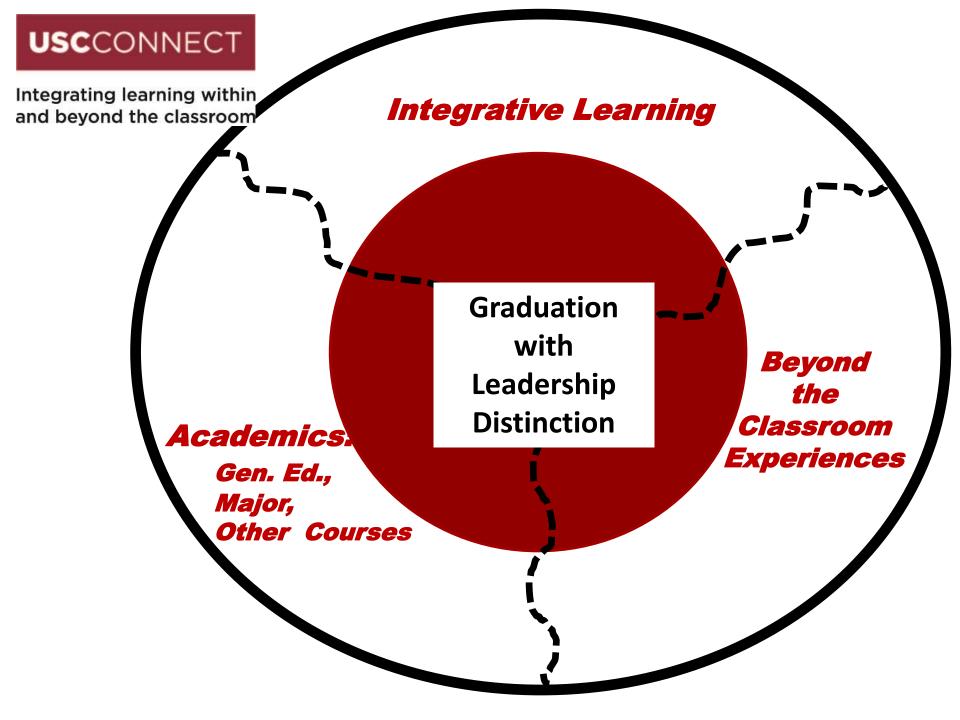
Learning Outcomes:

- Describe how BTC contributes to learning
- Analyze how BTC
 relates to
 concepts/theories (2)
- Apply learning to create solutions









Graduation with Leadership Distinction



On Transcript and Diploma

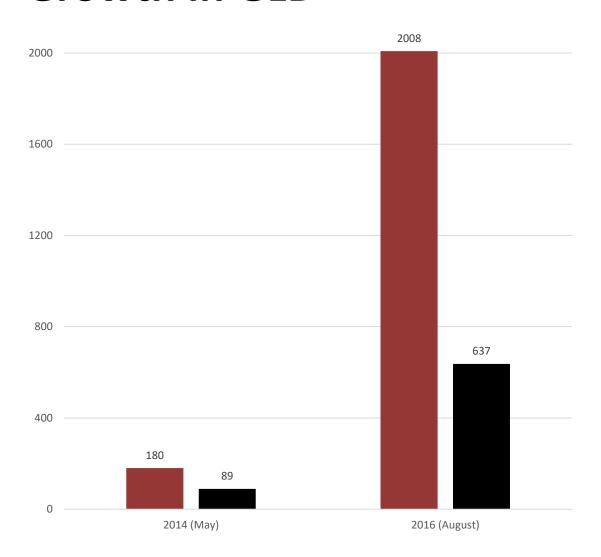
5 Areas of Distinction

- Community Service
- Diversity & Social Advocacy
- Global Learning
- Research
- Professional & Civic Engagement



Growth in GLD

- Total
 Registrants
 since Fall
 2013
- Total
 Graduates
 since May
 2014



Graduation with Leadership Distinction Requirements

- Significant BTC experience
- Enhancement Activities
- 6 credits Related Course Work
- Public presentation/publication
- E-portfolio emphasizing key insights, analysis, application to leadership (completed through course or independently)
 - GPA 3.0 or higher



E-Portfolio

The culminating project of your collegiate experience.

- What have you learned within and beyond the classroom?
- Why is this learning important?
- How does your learning connect across experiences?
- How does it impact your future plans—personal and professional?







UNIV 401

Provides support for students reflecting on their experience and creating an e-portfolio and a presentation for Discovery Day.

- 1 credit taken in the senior year; not required
- Enrollment cap of 14 students per section
- Instructor pay: \$1500



Key Components of UNIV 401

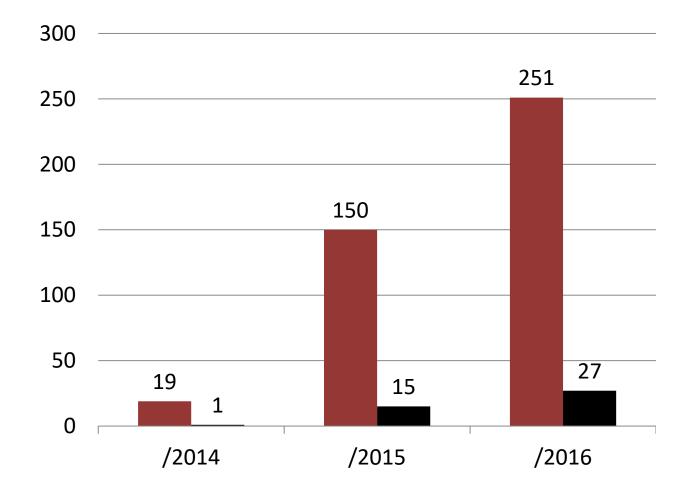
- Build Community
- Revisit/Reintroduce Integrative Learning
- Identify Needs of Learners
- Teach in a Seminar / Workshop Format
- Use Resources self, class, university
- Facilitate transition



UNIV 401 for GLD







Administrative Support

- Part of the President's Leadership Initiative
- Funded through USC Connect and the Office of the Provost
- Administered in partnership by USC Connect and the UNIV 101 Programs Office
- Part-time USC Connect Faculty Fellow leads UNIV
 401 instructor coordination, training, and support



Instructors: Faculty and Professional Staff

- Two half days of required training
 - Overview of integrative learning, GLD, course
 - Assessment of e-portfolios
- Support throughout the teaching semester
 - Weekly messages
 - On-line resources through Blackboard
 - Periodic "brown bag" discussions
 - Individual consultations as needed
- End of semester evaluation
 - Instructor luncheon/focus group
 - Surveys of instructors and students
 - Standard course assessment



Course Evaluation Data Spring 2016 (n=148)

Category	Rating (1-5)	% Agree
Relevant topics	4.40	85
Class time well spent	4.29	84
Prepared me for transition	4.22	78
Valuable experience	4.34	85
Recommend for others	4.33	81
Overall instructor rating	4.62	NA

GLD Survey Data Spring 2015 & 2016 n=159

. . . led me to truly understand my purpose . . .

Category	%
	Agree
Can articulate experience	99
GLD meaningful	87
Better understand beyond-the- classroom experience	82

"Wondering what these four years of college did for you? GLD will help you make those connections"!

Instructor Feedback (Spring 2016, N = 15)

Support	% Rating Valuable	% Top Rating
Training	100	29
Brown Bags	92	67
Weekly messages	100	93
On-line resources	100	86

Other:

- Use of on-line resources: once a month to 2-6 times per week (72% "weekly")
- Recommendation: Pair mentor and new instructor

USCCONNECT

Integrating learning within and beyond the classroom

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