

PAST CAPSTONE CLIENTS INCLUDE

- The Department of State
- Congressional Research Service
- House Judiciary Service
- National Intelligence Council
- Department of Homeland Security
- Department of Agriculture
- The National Park Service
- Princeton University Press
- The State of Texas
- Texas Governor's Office
- Texas High Speed Rail Corporation
- Texas Aerospace Commission
- Texas Office of Rural Community Affairs
- Texas Water Development Board
- San Antonio Metro Health District
- Texas Early Childhood Education Coalition
- Minnesota Council of Nonprofits
- Filene Institute for Credit Union Research
- Capital Area United Way
- Ambassador David Abshire & Laury Foundation
- The World Bank
- Grameen Capital India
- Centra Technology

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2007-2008

CAPSTONE
PROJECTS



THE BUSH SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICE

TEXAS A&M
UNIVERSITY

Capstone projects at the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University are integrative, team-based, applied research projects required of all students. Led by a faculty member on behalf of a client agency, these projects require students to think independently, frame and analyze issues, and apply their academic knowledge and skills.

Capstone students and their course instructors define the project with the client, allocate tasks, and establish deadlines, using effective communication, teamwork, and collaborative learning strategies. The projects fully prepare students to supervise, conduct, and evaluate large-scale public policy research and culminate in a formal, written report and oral presentation to the client.



2007-2008 CAPSTONE PROJECTS

"The Capstone Projects are fundamental to the experiential learning methodology of the Bush School. They are 'real-world' projects prepared for 'real-world' prestigious clients such as the Congressional Research Service, and their results profoundly impact policy at local, state, regional, national, and international levels. The project is essentially 'the rite of passage' to graduation and is the culmination of the student's two-year educational and leader development experience at the Bush School."

DICK CHILCOAT
DEAN, THE BUSH SCHOOL



1 Brazos Community Foundation Project
CLIENT: BRAZOS COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
In partnership with the Brazos Community Foundation, established in 2003 and currently at \$1 million in assets, students explored and identified typical nonprofit capacity building strategies. Students identified community leadership roles through literature reviews and conducted interviews with local nonprofit executives and numerous university officials. The results were compiled into a report that prioritizes community leadership roles for the local region and suggests how those strategies can be incorporated into the Foundation's work. In addition, students organized a fall workshop and a spring forum with work sessions and nationally recognized keynote speakers to help Brazos Valley nonprofits gain more information on the topic.

2 Bilingual Education in Texas: Identifying Best Practices
CLIENT: TEXAS SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
This project studied Texas schools serving Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students. After a thorough review of the literature, the team developed a set of indicators of school success based on the Texas school accountability system. Simultaneously, the team developed a survey of educational practices in bilingual/ESL education and administered that survey to more than 600 Texas teachers who serve LEP students. As the final step of their analysis, the team examined the relationship between their indicators of school success and the classroom practices described by the participants in their survey. Their analysis intends to help identify best practices in bilingual/ESL education in Texas.

3 An Exploration of Issues Related to the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Program in the Gulf Opportunity Zones of Louisiana and Mississippi Post-Katrina
CLIENT: CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE, GOVERNMENT AND FINANCE DIVISION
This Capstone project explored issues related to the extra allocations of Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) through the Gulf Opportunity Zone Act of 2005 (GO Zone Act) which was signed into legislation after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita ravaged the Gulf Coast. Students worked to evaluate the effectiveness of the legislation, specifically the amount of affordable housing the GO Zone Act was able to create. Through face-to-face interviews with stakeholders in the region, statistical analysis of existing databases, telephone surveys with LIHTC developers, county case studies, and current policy evaluations, the team was able to identify the most significant factors in the delay of affordable housing construction. The recommendations stemming from this project intend to assist the Congressional Research Service to develop better methods for addressing affordable housing issues that arise after natural disasters in the future.

4 Railroad Safety, Productivity, and Capacity
CLIENT: CITIZENS FOR RAIL SAFETY
Students on this project engaged in a detailed examination of the freight railroad industry to assess the effects of an increase in freight transportation demand on the industry's safety and economic performance in the coming decades. The research analyzed how the industry has changed since deregulation in 1980, articulated the political and legal environment in which industry stakeholders operate today, and analyzed key trends of safety performance, operating capacity, and productivity. The research also identified key safety initiatives currently implemented in the industry and formulated recommendations to aid policymakers in finding a balance between the market forces that drive industry behavior and regulatory intervention designed to ensure the safety, security, and economic vitality of the freight railroad industry.

5 Local Efforts to Control Illegal Immigration
CLIENT: CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE
This project provided extensive information on cities and counties which have enacted their own immigration legislation to address the presence of unauthorized aliens in their governing area. Students gathered ordinances for review and analyzed the content of the ordinances, studied the corresponding local demographic and economic data, and determined the implementation status of the ordinances. The project also identified emerging efforts in other localities to control immigration. Students visited four high-profile localities in the U.S. and conducted interviews with government officials, community groups, and legal experts to identify local views on the issue. The project concluded with a written report to the Congressional Research Service, analyzing the group's findings in light of both quantitative data and case studies.

6 Human Security and National Security Reform: New Paths for International Leadership
CLIENT: OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR STABILITY OPERATIONS
This 2008 Capstone research continues the work of a 2007 project titled "The Interagency Process in Support & Stability Operations: Integrating and Aligning the Roles and Missions of Military and Civilian Agencies in Conflict and Post-Conflict Environments." The 2007 Capstone study included analyses of interagency efforts in the conduct of U.S. and NATO operations in counterinsurgency warfare in Iraq and Afghanistan. This 2008 study analyzed how U.S. national security policies, strategies, and objectives have changed since 2001. It also estimated the effectiveness of the contemporary national security system, including institutions, organizations, and leadership in addressing what international security experts are calling "human security," or threats to the survival of societies, groups, and individuals.

7 East Asian Security in 2025
CLIENT: LONG RANGE ANALYSIS UNIT, NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE COUNCIL (NIC)
This project supported the National Intelligence Council's production of its report *Mapping the Global Future: 2025*, forthcoming 2009. With China's great rise to power in the background, this Capstone helped assess the most likely security outcomes for East Asia in 2025. The Capstone briefed the NIC and other analysts from the intelligence community and also briefed the China desk team under the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Asian and Pacific Security Affairs in the Department of Defense.

8 Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Counterinsurgency Training
CLIENT: JOINT READINESS TRAINING CENTER (JRTC) AT FT. POLK, LOUISIANA
Two separate but parallel Capstones combined intensive classroom study and civilian support field exercises to U.S. military counterinsurgency operations, focused on the model of interagency Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. Students visited JRTC in Louisiana in March 2008 to play a PRT role during the training of a U.S. Army Combat brigade en route to Iraq. Upon return from Louisiana, students prepared a written report that included recommendations for future PRT role players and trainers for the JRTC.

9 Capacity Building in Meat Exports from Southern Africa
CLIENT: WORLD BANK, TRADE DIVISION
This is the second part of a study that began by asking whether exports to developed countries are hampered by the inability of developing Southern African countries to participate fully in the meat export market. The project was broken up into two segments focusing on the formal and informal sectors. After conducting in-depth research and refining the development problem, students designed a survey and flew two group members to Southern Africa to conduct the survey. The survey was designed to help determine why Southern African countries are not participating at greater levels in the meat export market. Using supportive research, economic development theory, and the survey results, students then compiled a report which was presented to the client.