

# MBA CAPSTONE COURSE

PUT RICE MBA STUDENTS TO WORK ON YOUR  
TOUGHEST MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES



An Invitation and Application for Houston's Community Organizations to Participate in the Rice MBA Capstone Course.



**RICE**

JONES GRADUATE  
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

[business.rice.edu/Capstone](https://business.rice.edu/Capstone)



Star of Hope executives at a Capstone final presentation.

## CAPSTONE COURSE OVERVIEW

The Capstone Course at Rice University's Jones Graduate School of Business brings together teams of MBA students and their professors to develop recommendations that can help community organizations solve critical strategic challenges, such as major growth or expansion plans, organization turnaround strategies, and new ventures by the organization in need of a business plan. The course is offered during the spring semester.

### Capstone Professors Work with You during the Fall to Frame the Problem for the Student Teams

An 8-12 page written "case" that provides details about the strategic challenge and your organization is developed collaboratively with you by the professors before the spring semester as a starting point for the student teams.

### Student Teams Develop Comprehensive Strategic Solutions during the Spring Semester

From January to early May, student teams work through a series of assignments focused on your organization that build from initial assessments of your situation to strategy development to detailed strategic designs and implementation plans. A Capstone Course professor supervises and guides the student teams and is in regular contact with your organization throughout the spring semester to help facilitate a satisfactory experience and outcome for your organization.

### Capstone is Highly-Collaborative between Students, Organizations and Professors

Student teams will interact with your organization throughout the spring semester. Your initial interaction with the student teams working on your project will be

a 2-hour, on-campus session in which you and other leaders from your organization will interactively discuss your situation in detail with the teams. Then, students conduct site visits, interviews with the leadership team; Board members, and staff; request additional information/data; and discuss preliminary ideas and conclusions as they develop their recommendations. The investment of your organization's time is critical to the students' ability to develop rich, detailed strategic recommendations that you may adopt and implement.

### Community Organizations Receive Multiple Near-Term and Long-Term Benefits

Participating community organizations realize many benefits from their Capstone experience:

- Provides you with fresh ideas and multiple solutions for your strategic challenges
- Taps both student and Capstone professor expertise for the strategic recommendations
- Exposes your organization to up-and-coming Houston executives
- Builds and strengthens your organization's long-term relationship with Rice University



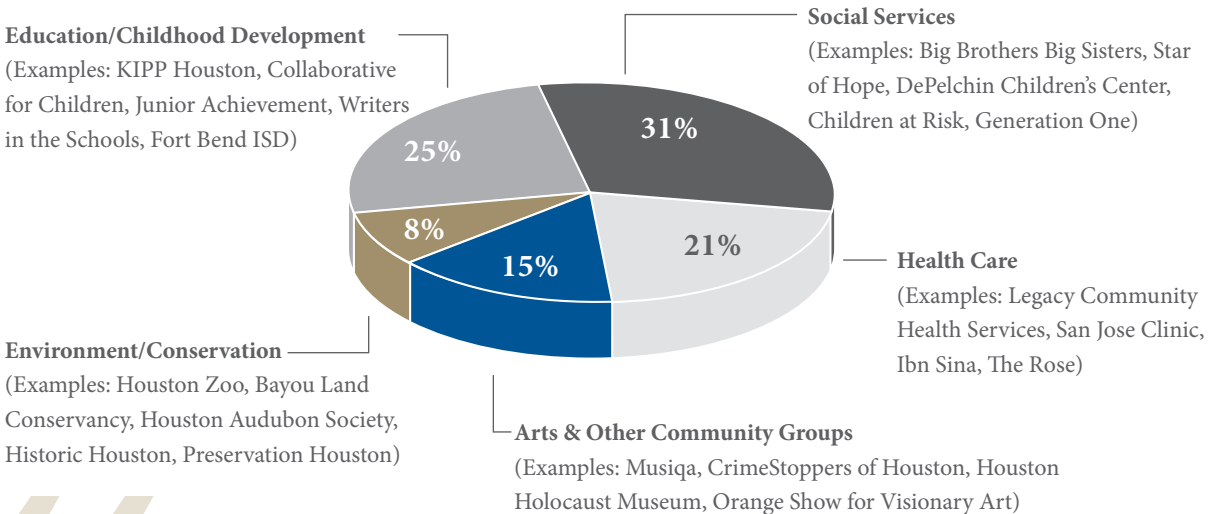
KIPP Houston is a network of 15 public, college-preparatory schools committed to helping PK-12 students from Houston’s underserved neighborhoods go to and through college. In our schools, teachers, families, and students sign a learning pledge called the “Commitment to Excellence.”

During KIPP Houston’s participation with the Rice MBA Capstone Program, we found that the MBA student teams made the same commitment to excellence as they sought the best solutions to our fast-paced, ever-changing, and growing organization. With their fresh vantage point and structured approach, the teams addressed our projects in ways that were both innovative and practical such that we could implement their recommendations directly.

**Mike Feinberg, KIPP Co-Founder and Superintendent of KIPP Houston**



### CATEGORIES OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS SERVED: 2009 – 2015



Ibn Sina’s mission is based on providing affordable access to health care for those who would otherwise have none, including the over one million Harris County residents who are currently uninsured. The Rice MBA Capstone student teams understood the spirit of this mission and crafted growth strategies and associated implementation plans that not only provided an actionable blueprint for our expansion plans but also provided professional presentation materials that we used to procure a sizable funding grant from Houston Endowment.

**Dr. Aijaz Ali Khawaja, Chief Executive Officer, Ibn Sina Foundation**



## WHAT TYPES OF STRATEGIC CHALLENGES DOES CAPSTONE ADDRESS?

During the last seven years, ~125 organizations and more than 1,200 students have participated in the Capstone program. Some organizations have participated in multiple years with different cases. Recommendations address strategic challenges and suggest multiple tactical improvement opportunities. Cases have included:

- Multi-year growth strategies
- Turnaround strategies for distressed organizations
- Business plans for new ventures or major programs
- Programs and financial stabilization
- Replication strategies

## WHAT COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS ARE A GOOD FIT FOR CAPSTONE?

- Mid-sized organizations or a division/segment of a large organization
- Houston-based (no student travel should be required to complete the course)
- Multiple staff members – usually a combination of full-time, part-time and volunteers
- Facing complex, multi-functional strategic challenges
- Either self-sustaining or external funding-supported
- Open-minded to potential new strategies and solutions



# WHAT ARE MY COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION'S RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CAPSTONE PARTICIPATION?

## Is there a cost to my organization?

- No, there is no fee associated with your participation.

## What is the time and resource commitment from my organization?

- The time commitment will vary during the semester and depends on which assignments the students are working on during that time. In late January/early February, organizations can expect from each team a site visit; 6-8 interviews with leadership team members, staff, and Board members; and new information requests. April will include time to get feedback on preliminary recommendations and additional information requests to build out detailed designs. Critical commitments for the organization include the following activities with 5-6 attendees from the leadership team, Board members, and/or staff:
  - Participate in Community Organization Day to meet the teams (~2 hours)
  - Attend the student teams' final presentations
- We ask that you dedicate a member of your organization on a part-time basis during the spring semester to serve as a liaison for student teams and professors to respond to questions, support data requests and coordinate visits/interviews. Active senior leadership support is critical for the success of the project.
- During the fall of 2015, prior to the 2016 spring semester, your organization will be asked to support the professors in developing the initial case by reviewing drafts of the case (written by the professors) and gathering data or other internal information.

## ADDITIONAL FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Are the course and this opportunity only offered during the spring?

- Currently, yes.

### How many teams will be working on our case?

- Typically 1-2 teams work on a case, providing you with multiple perspectives.

### What materials will my organization receive after the course?

- You will receive copies of each team's strategy analysis & recommendation, detailed designs & plans, final presentation, and a 1-2 page comprehensive executive summary of their work after the final presentations in late April/early May.

### Will our confidential business information be protected?

- Yes, maintaining confidentiality of your proprietary information is an important aspect of our work with your organization during the Capstone project. Non-disclosure agreements are available for the student teams to sign, as requested.

# CAPSTONE COURSE TIMELINE FOR THE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

Summer to End of September 2015

## Organization proposal and selection process

- Consider potential projects and obtain buy-in from the leadership team and Board of Directors to apply for the Capstone program
- Complete the Community Organization Application and Project Proposal and submit by August 28, 2015, at the latest.
- Capstone professors are available for consultation while you are developing your project proposal.
- All organizations will be notified of selection decision by the end of September at the latest

January 2016

## Community Organization Day

- Key organization leaders and Board members attend – 2-hour session for Community Organization Day
- Session designed for organization representative(s) to answer questions about your organization for the students

Late April and Early May 2016

## Final Presentations and Deliverables

- Organization leadership team and Board members receive students' final presentations
- Student team deliverables are sent to the organizations for their review and follow-up with student teams, as desired

Early September to End of November 2015

## Creation of an 8-12 page "case" document on your organization and business challenge

- A Capstone professor will be assigned to your organization to draft the case with your input
- Provide professors with the required internal data (i.e., financials and budgets, your community served, organizational structure, competitive landscape, alliances, etc.) to be included in the case write-up
- Student teams are formed and they receive their case assignments

January to Late April 2016

## Working with student teams on information gathering and providing perspectives on evolving recommendation drafts

- Project liaison works with students and professors, including providing additional data, facilitating interviews for students, answering follow-on questions, etc.
- Touch base regularly with Capstone professors to discuss progress and resolve potential issues, if necessary.

# COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION APPLICATION AND PROJECT PROPOSAL

This form will be used to assist the Jones School in identifying appropriate projects for the 2015-2016 Academic Year Capstone Course. Please provide as much information as possible.

To obtain an electronic version of this application or to complete the application form online, please visit: [business.rice.edu/capstone](http://business.rice.edu/capstone)

The application is due by Friday, August 28, 2015.

Community Organization Name \_\_\_\_\_

Physical Address \_\_\_\_\_

Website Address (URL) \_\_\_\_\_

## Person initiating participation on the organization's behalf

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

## Community Organization Brief Description

Please provide a brief description of your organization (i.e., mission, services provided, clients served, facilities, annual revenue/budget, number of employees, year organization was founded, etc.):

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Please describe the project briefly:

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*Please attach a one to two page Word document detailing the proposed project.*

I have reviewed the Capstone Course Community Organization application and information packet and understand the responsibilities of Capstone Course host organizations.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

**How did you hear about the Capstone Course? (circle one)**

Colleague	Rice/Capstone professor	Rice Student
Board or other advisory/employee	Rice University Website	Other

**Contact Information:**

Please feel free to contact the lead Capstone professor directly.

David VanHorn  
capstone@rice.edu

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**Please mail this form to:**

David VanHorn, Adjunct Professor of Management  
Jones Graduate School of Business – MS 531  
Rice University  
PO Box 2932  
Houston, Texas 77252-2932