Talent Scout

A D.C.-based recruiter, with a little help from friends and alumni, finds future Antiochians among Job Corps trainees.

NAME PENDING
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John Capozzi began recruiting prospective students for Antioch after he got a call from Daris Riley, a former IT intern of his in the Washington D.C. government. Unhappy at the University of the District of Columbia and living at home, Riley thought about going away to college, but had no money. Capozzi mentioned an Antioch scholarship endowed in 1997 by his father, who attended the school as an Army Specialized Training Corps cadet during World War II, and persuaded Riley to apply. While he didn't qualify for the scholarship, earmarked for northern New Jersey students, Riley enrolled anyway, getting through with a Pell grant and on-campus and co-op IT jobs. He chose to major in art, indulging a passion for graffiti, designed a video game for his senior project, and graduated in 2024.

Buoyed by the chance to help a college his father spoke of fondly, Capozzi has by now steered some 20 students to Antioch. Reaching out in particular to Pell-eligible, first-generation college students, he pitches the school as a value proposition: Combining Pell grants, paid co-ops, and added on-campus work from Antioch's federal Work College status, needy students can complete their undergraduate education with little if any debt.

Capozzi, who left government three years ago to start a tech-focused headhunter firm with his son, Hans, charges Antioch a modest hourly rate for his outreach efforts. Payments are drawn from the $116,000 Capozzi Family Endowed Scholarship Fund created by the elder Capozzi, who wrote that his two semesters at the college were "long enough to make me a lifelong Antioch convert and supporter."

A number of applicants have been found at centers run by Job Corps, the federal residential job-training program for low-income young people aged 16 to 24.

“I was in a job fair at some college and this guy came up to me and he said, ‘I’m from the Job Corps,’” Capozzi recalled. “He’s like, ‘Our counselor brought us. There’s eight of us here. And I want to go to college. That’s why I came to this job fair.’” The group had come from the Potomac Job Corps Center in Washington, so Capozzi went there and talked about Antioch. Out of that visit, “I got three people.” Capozzi said. “Two of them are going to graduate.”

Begun in 1964 as part of President Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty, Job Corps draws 40,000 to 60,000 enrollees per year, and has survived several attempts to phase it out or abolish it. The Trump administration shut down all 100-plus centers across the country earlier this year, but a federal judge ordered them re-opened. The administration is appealing.

This year’s Job Corps cohort is the largest ever at Antioch: Several students took up the college’s offer of an accelerated admissions process when their center in Phoenix, Arizona closed in June, in between the Trump shutdown and the subsequent court-ordered reopening. Antioch issued a fundraising appeal to help cover the new students’ summer expenses.

While designed to provide career technical training, Job Corps maintains an educational component. Enrollees can earn a high school equivalency diploma, and some centers form relationships with local community colleges to expand their training options. Gaining admission to a degree-granting college is one of three outcomes, along with securing a full-time job and joining the military, that Job Corps counts as successful completion of its standard nine-month training course.

Capozzi typically works with Job Corps centers’ Career Transition Services counsellors. He offers to conduct virtual presentations for individual counsellors or visit a center, as he has done in Georgia and Florida. When he hasn’t been able visit a center himself, Shubham Tiwari, IT director at Capozzi’s company, C Associates, has stepped in. At other times, Capozzi has received help from friends in a network built from years of work in Democratic politics. (He’s a past shadow U.S. representative, an elected Washington D.C. official who advocates for District of Columbia statehood.)

Once someone expresses interest in Antioch, Capozzi follows up. “They fill out a form, and then I pretty much call them relentlessly,” he said. He reminds applicants: “You’ve

got to do your FAFSA form, you've got to get your high school diploma, and you've got to fill out the academic application."

The arrival of the Arizona contingent followed visits by Tiwari over three consecutive days to speak with trainees at the Phoenix
up having deeper conversations with the st
means, its long-term value, and the opport
email. "We discussed how college differs fr
the level of exposure, independence, and g
of how a bachelor's degree could widen the
and position them for leadership roles."



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One of those Tiwari won over was Esmere
Antioch, she's now considering career opti
focus of her Job Corps training. Interviewe
love the green. Coming from Phoenix whe
lawns, trees, leaves, it's very nice."

Since most Job Corps recruits come to Antioch having completed their training, they have already demonstrated that they can commit to a goal and then accomplish it, said Shane Creepingbear, Antioch's director of admissions. "So they have that sort of drive and follow through already built into their character."

Accustomed to a highly structured training program, not all Job Corps enrollees are a good fit for Antioch's freer lifestyle and design-your-own major curriculum. The young man who approached Capozzi at the Washington job fair, for instance, "had some issues at the school" and dropped out after two years.

Capozzi said he's received enthusiastic support from Antioch's president, Jane Fernandes, who visited two Washington-area Job Corps centers last May and also joined members of the Job Corps alumni organization in a video seminar for about 40 CTS counsellors.

Several Antioch alumni have contacted Capozzi and volunteered to help. One is 2000 grad Rebecca Van Wyck, who took four hours off from her research management job at the Institute of Social and Economic Research at the University of Alaska,

Anchorage to meet with a dozen Job Corps trainees at their center in Palmer, an hour's drive away. Those in the room "were thinking about what would happen after Job Corps," and spoke of either advanced technical training or college. One asked if he'd be allowed to ride a skateboard on campus. Yes, Van Wyck assured him. Another wondered if Antioch would accept a major combining computer programming, art, and mechanics. Van Wyck mentioned a faculty member who might be an ideal mentor.

Capozzi would like to get more alumni involved: "I think I tell a pretty compelling story. But if you're an alumni, it's different. You know, I think you can really explain why (someone should come to Antioch) and what you got from it. Describe co-op experiences."

Riley, whose mother died not long after he entered Antioch, set his sights on graduating to honor her memory. He has stayed in Yellow Springs, commuting to a $23-an-hour job as an IT contractor upgrading computer systems for Kettering Health hospitals. In his spare time, he's building music production skills. He and Capozzi have kept in contact. Riley noted appreciatively that Capozzi had come to his graduation.

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