

KESSLER SCHOLARS

Celebrating Program Milestones: The Kessler Scholars Coin Ceremony

Background and Significance

The Kessler Scholars Coin Ceremony is an annual event intended to welcome and introduce new Kessler Scholars to the program and university community. To support early engagement with the Kessler Scholars Program by first-year students, this event typically is held in the fall semester. Students across all years in the Kessler Scholars Program participate in this event as well as campus leadership and, as schedules permit, representatives from the Judy and Fred Wilpon Family Foundation and/or the Kessler Scholars Collaborative to introduce first-year students to the broader Kessler Scholars network that they are joining.

This event is intended to serve as a festive and memorable welcome for new Kessler Scholars. The event may include a meal, music, student remarks, and/or a keynote speaker with significance to your program or campus. As a central part of the event, new Kessler Scholars are presented with a Kessler Scholars Coin customized for each partner campus. During this presentation, new students learn that the coin is a small token that reflects their belonging and importance in a community of first-generation scholars that reaches not only across their campus but also connects them with Kessler Scholars at 15 other institutions.

Image of front of coin and examples of campus customization for the back:



The Kessler Scholars Coin: A Symbol of Belonging

The Kessler Scholars Coin signals a student's membership in the Kessler Scholars Program on their campus and as part of the broader Kessler Scholars Collaborative. The tradition of presenting this symbol of community to each new Kessler Scholar was established at the University of Michigan, home of the founding Kessler Scholars Program, and initially drew on military traditions of challenge coins signaling membership to distinct units.

As the Kessler Scholars Program has evolved and expanded, the significance and the story of the Kessler Scholars Coin has shifted to focus on reinforcing a sense of belonging to the Kessler Scholars Program and to the broader campus community—a central goal of the program's work.

Kessler Scholars Coins are customized by each campus partner with the Kessler Scholars logo on one side and an image of an important campus landmark or an institution logo on the other side. The Kessler Scholars Collaborative supports production of the Kessler Scholars Coin by producing the program logo stamp that can be used across all campus sites; individual campuses are responsible for producing the artwork or logo that will customize the second side of the coin and for the costs of developing that customized stamp and final coin production. We note below the vendor who has supported this work with inaugural campus partners; costs in recent years have averaged about \$15 per coin.

Sharing the Story: Suggested Talking Points for the Coin Ceremony

- The Kessler Scholars Program is built around the idea that students thrive when they are part of a supportive, engaged community, and it is a delight to bring that full community together for this special event.
- Each student here was chosen because they bring a unique set of skills, experiences, and talents not only to our campus but to this close-knit community that is the Kessler Scholars. You have demonstrated strong academic potential and concern about community and making the world a better place. As the first in your family to pursue a college degree, you have shown your ability to persevere and thrive. We are excited to support you on this journey.
- We know that in your time here, you will enrich our campus and other students' lives. When you leave here, we know you truly will make a difference in the world.

- Today, we want to welcome new students to this community and to the start of their college journey. The Kessler Scholars Program was founded in 2008 at the University of Michigan by Judy and Fred Wilpon, whose belief in the power of education to change lives led them to expand this program dedicated to the success of first-generation college students to campuses across the country.
- For more than a decade, students who join Kessler Scholars Programs have received a unique, ceremonial gift in the form of a small Kessler Scholars Coin. This coin represents connection both to the program and to our campus. We hope you will carry this token with you as a reminder of the support and care of this program, your peers, and our institution.
- The Kessler Scholars Coin signals a student's membership in a community that reaches not only across this room and across our campus but to 15 other colleges and universities across the country who, together, make up the Kessler Scholars Collaborative. At each of these partner institutions, students who are Kessler Scholars find the same spirit of community and support to accomplish big dreams.
- The Kessler Scholars Coin is presented to new students as an enduring symbol of belonging and support. We hope the Kessler Scholars Coin will have special meaning to each new student who receives it today, and we hope this token of connection inspires you to continue to lend support to your fellow first-gen scholars and the communities you care most about.

Event Execution

Below are recommendations to help guide the planning and implementation of the Kessler Scholars Coin ceremony on your campus.

- **Length:** This event typically occurs during the fall semester and is programmed for about 90 minutes.
- **Attendees:** To assist with selecting a date, we recommend you work with your Collaborative staff lead to identify potential dates that will accommodate a representative of the Wilpon Family Foundation or Collaborative to join this event. Attendees should include all current Kessler Scholars along with representation from university senior leadership, senior leadership connected to the Kessler Scholars Program, and other staff who

support the program and its execution (e.g. development, marketing, admissions, financial aid).

- **Attire:** This is a celebratory event where students often gather to take individual and group photos. Business casual attire is recommended but you should consider the mood for the event and venue to help determine the preferred attire. If students are asked to dress in business attire, please provide ample notice to make sure students can bring items from home and/ or consider offering funds to assist with purchasing business casual attire if needed.
- **Venue:** This event is often held at a venue on campus. Consider transportation and accessibility needs for all attendees. Due to the intimate nature of this celebratory event, it is recommended that the venue allows for minimal outside disruptions.
- **Coin Production:** The Kessler Scholars Collaborative and inaugural campus programs have engaged merchandise vendor Power Promotions, Inc. to produce the coin and an accompanying pouch or box for distribution to students. To discuss ordering Kessler Scholars Coins for your institution, contact Margarita Cerezo by phone at 866-774-7461 or by email at marga@powerpromotionsinc.com. We recommend at least 8 weeks lead time for placing your order.

Campus-specific artwork for the coin must be submitted as a vector art file (.esp, editable PDF, or .ai file). The coin is 1 ¼” in diameter and required a small hole punch at the top of the coin, so the artwork should account for this. The hole in the coin has allowed students at existing Kessler Scholars Programs to attach the coin to a keychain or backpack or wear it as a necklace medallion.

Things To Do:

The checklist below is provided to help with the planning and implementation of the coin ceremony on your campus. Some recommendations may not be applicable to your local context, so please adapt as needed.

<input type="checkbox"/> Design and order Kessler Coins and accompanying materials (e.g. pouch or box to distribute).	<input type="checkbox"/> Confirm date and time with Wilpon family and Collaborative staff lead.	<input type="checkbox"/> Reserve venue.
<input type="checkbox"/> Identify and secure speaking roles.	<input type="checkbox"/> Create a run of show and program itinerary.	<input type="checkbox"/> Work with dining/catering staff to set the menu.
<input type="checkbox"/> Secure photographer and create photo list. If you want the event to be featured to the campus community, consider a press release or social media post.	<input type="checkbox"/> Create Save the Date and RSVP forms (ask about accessibility considerations and food preferences or allergies).	<input type="checkbox"/> Plan seating chart/assignments.
<input type="checkbox"/> Secure a space for guests to park, if applicable.	<input type="checkbox"/> Consider background music and other artifacts to enhance mood.	<input type="checkbox"/> Gather or develop Kessler branded materials, such as a tablecloth, signage, step and repeat, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/> Determine budget and process to keep track of expenses.	<input type="checkbox"/> Follow up with photographer to gain access to edited photos.	<input type="checkbox"/> Send thank you cards/messages to all involved with planning and implementing the event.

Additional Suggestions:

- Provide both a hand-held and stationary microphone for use.
- Allocate time before the event for students and staff to mingle, connect with visiting guests, and take pictures.
- Strategically seat Kessler Scholars and program staff with the Wilpon family and Collaborative staff when applicable.
- Consider visuals to feature student photos, highlight program events, and/or the Kessler Scholars Program brand.