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Senior Capstone Faculty Handbook: A Resource Guide for PSU University Studies Capstone Faculty

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Senior Capstone Faculty Handbook

A Resource Guide for PSU University Studies
Capstone Faculty

Developed in collaboration by the
Office of University Studies
and the
Center for Academic Excellence
/ Community Based-Learning

PORTLAND STATE
UNIVERSITY

Updated: 8/03

What is the Senior Capstone?

The Senior Capstone course is taken during the 4th, or senior year of PSU students' general education program. Capstone is often confused with internships or other forms of community service. However, the combined goals of:
(1) meeting community needs, (2) identifying learning objectives and (3) intentional reflection on what is being learned distinguishes Capstone from community service, internships, volunteerism and experiential education.

Capstone service experiences are purposefully integrated into the academic curriculum selected by each faculty member. To facilitate the connection between service and readings, faculty should provide structured opportunities for students to reflect critically on their experiences through writing, reading, speaking, listening, and group discussions.

The academic content of Capstone is organized with the goal of addressing community need as defined by the community partners, faculty and course participants.

Capstone uses community service as a vehicle for students to reach their academic goals and objectives by integrating course objectives with community needs.

Program Expectations

• Faculty will provide students with a course syllabus that outlines course assignments, clear grading criteria and instructor expectations, deadlines, community project information, faculty and community partner expectations regarding the community project, approximate hours students should expect to spend in the community, and other relevant information.

• Faculty will provide (or work with students to develop) specific objectives for improvement in students' abilities to (1)communicate effectively, (2) think critically, (3) work in a diverse society, and (4) act in socially responsible ways.

• Students will have the opportunity to meet regularly (meeting frequency and length vary between Capstones) with faculty and peers to address any challenges, questions or concerns related to the community project

• Students will have the opportunity to apply concepts and ideas from their disciplines to the community project, to understand how other disciplinary perspectives relate to the project, and to create final product(s) that reflect the contributions of various disciplinary perspectives. SEE *MOST COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS* FOR IDEAS ON DIFFERENT MODELS OF INTERDISCIPLINARY WORK.

• Faculty will provide opportunities for students to connect course content to the community experience. This can be facilitated using guided/structured class discussion, journals/learning logs, meetings with faculty and/or community partners, regular feedback from faculty, community or peers, periodic assessment of progress, and so forth.

Questions or comments? Please contact Seanna Kerrigan @ 725- 8392 or Janelle Voegele @ 725-8341

Teaching the Capstone Course: Most Commonly Asked Questions

"What are my options for assigning grades in Capstone?"

Grades are entered online using the information system in the "Faculty Web Center," which can be accessed from the PSU homepage (http://www.pdx.edu).

Directions for Accessing Online Grade Sheet
- Access the PSU homepage (www.pdx.edu)
- Click on "Faculty/Staff"
- Click on "Faculty Web Center"
- Click on "PSU Information System"
- Enter your PSU ID (normally your social security number) and PIN (normally your birthdate, month, and year; for example, 010855 for January 8, 1955.)
  If you are faculty who assigns grades for the Capstone, this information should have been entered for you. If your access code does not work, call 725-Help to talk to information technicians who can assist you in setting up your access code.
- Click on faculty services. From here, you can access your class roster, wait lists, and enter final grades.

Capstone faculty have the option of either assigning letter grades, OR the "IP" (in-progress) grade to students for Capstone courses lasting two or more quarters. The "IP" grade is an option only for Capstone courses (UNST 421) and will not be processed for any other undergraduate course. Once students complete the entire Capstone sequence, the "IP" grade on their transcript records will be replaced with the final assigned grade for the entire course sequence. Other grading options are A-F, "W" (withdraw) and "I" (incomplete). The grade of "X" (no basis for grade) will be assigned automatically if you do not choose any of the above options. The PSU schedule of classes contains detailed information about these options, including criteria for use.

University Studies (725-5890) can answer additional questions regarding grade processing (supplemental grade sheets, paperwork and processing, etc.) Robert is also the person to contact to confirm the days, times, and Capstone course description.

Janelle Voegele (725-8341) is available to discuss teaching and learning issues involving grading (clarification of grading options, use of various grading systems or rubrics, and so forth.)

Since most undergraduates in your Capstone courses will not have had previous experience with the "IP" grade, you may want to clarify the process with them if you decide to use the "IP" option. The Capstone student handbook and orientation materials also contain information about the IP grade.

Students participating in special programs with "minimum course load per term" requirements may have concerns about whether the "IP" grade will affect their financial aid or eligibility status. Although the "IP" grade for Capstone has been approved at all levels of the registration process, students with concerns about financial aid or other programs should inquire directly at the appropriate office (Financial Aid, Student Scholarships, etc.) to make certain that the "IP" grade will not impact their eligibility status.

"My Capstone continues for two quarters, and one graduating senior has already contacted me about completing all six credits in one quarter. How can that be arranged?"

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For some Capstone courses, this may not be an option for a variety of reasons (community partner needs to count on a certain number of students over two quarters, course format does not lend itself to this option, and so forth). In other courses, it can be a good option for extra work that may need to be accomplished during the first quarter. IF YOU WISH TO ALLOW THIS OPTION FOR STUDENTS IN YOUR CAPSTONE, YOU MUST FIRST CONTACT SEANNA KERRIGAN, CAPSTONE COORDINATOR (5-8392). Then contact University Studies (5-5890) for assistance completing an additional "Course Maintenance Sheet." The course maintenance sheet will be sent to the registrar requesting an additional section with a six credit option. Your course will then contain two sections (meeting at the same time and location) with two CRN numbers. For example, one section might be listed as three credit hours continuing for two terms, while the additional section lists six credit hours for one term only.

"What if a student requests to drop out after the first quarter of the Capstone and asks to receive a letter grade for the first three credits only?"

Students can receive a letter grade for the first three credits only as long as they understand that to complete the Capstone requirement for graduation, they need to complete six hours within the same Capstone course. Students with further questions should speak with their departmental advisor or contact Seanna Kerrigan, Capstone Coordinator.

"My students need to do a lot of individual work as part of their final Capstone project. How can the structure of this project better support the interdisciplinary nature of Capstone?"

While it's true that some tasks in Capstone depend more on individual than team effort, there are a variety of options for bringing various perspectives to bear on the task. Establish the expectation early in the term that all students will contribute ideas toward addressing challenges that arise in any one individual project. Ask the question "When thinking about this issue, what might be important to consider from the perspective of (each student's discipline)?" Students can compare and contrast course material to concepts and issues they may have encountered in their own disciplines. Journal or learning log questions could be structured so that students are regularly tracking what they are learning by actively considering issues from various perspectives/disciplines. Several faculty have found the use of classroom assessment to be valuable as well. For example, students can respond anonymously to questions such as "List one thing you learned by discussing your project with the group that you would not have learned by working alone" and "List one thing that you think the group learned from you that they may not have learned otherwise".

"My students are working in teams but seem to have difficulty identifying what they can bring from their major and working across disciplines to achieve that"

Most students do not enter Capstone courses with a clear understanding of how they are going to apply their particular major to various community issues. More often this understanding emerges as students begin to grapple with the course material and with the concrete issues that arise within the community project. Like most other aspects of effective group process, working across disciplines is a skill that must be practiced. The use of strategies such as those listed above will help students practice these skills. When Capstone tasks are almost entirely team-oriented, strategies that improve general group process and dynamics will almost certainly improve more specific issues (such as working across disciplines) as well. We have included a few ideas for facilitating group process (see appendix). In addition, feel free to contact Janelle Voegele (725-8341) with any other questions or concerns regarding group process, dynamics or assessment. Janelle regularly conducts brief sessions with Capstone students on group communication, as well as a variety of other issues.

More questions? Feel free to contact: Seanna Kerrigan at 503-725-8392 or Janelle Voegele at 503-725-5642.

Combining Service and Learning: Essential Elements

Community Voice
Capstone courses are developed as an ongoing process that allows individuals or communities with needs to define those needs.

Orientation
Capstone courses include pre-field preparation, training, supervision, monitoring and ongoing support to meet service and learning goals.

Reciprocity
The partnership must be worthwhile and valuable for both the student and the community. There must be reciprocity between all partners involved in the community-based experience.

Reflection
Intentional, systematic reflection must take place in order for students to situate prior knowledge within new ideas and information generated by the community-based experience. Reflection within the context of the volunteer experience encourages introspection in other aspects of the student's life.

Development
Community-based learning occurs in different stages. For example, the learning experience often begins with pre-field preparation and moves to engagement in partnership with the community. Students move from defining and then problem-solving around community needs; from observation to experience to leadership. It is important to remain aware of potential challenges participants may face at various stages in the process.

Meaningful Service
Community-based learning tasks need to be worthwhile and challenging in order to encourage community involvement and to strengthen students' critical thinking skills. Academic rigor is not compromised — academic credit is for learning, not for service.

Diversity
A priority is placed on involving a broad cross-section of students working in diverse settings and with diverse populations in the community.

Evaluation
There are a variety of methods for evaluating student learning in the community-based context and for evaluating the appropriateness and effectiveness of service-learning goals and objectives.

These principles are adapted from: The Wingspread Report: Ten Principles of Good Practice (1993). (Summary report resulting from extensive consultations between the National Society for Experiential Education and more than 70 organizations interested in service and learning.) Howard, J (Ed.) (1993). Praxis I: A faculty casebook on community service learning (pp. 3-12). Ann Arbor: OCSL Press.

The Community Partner's Role in Capstone

The community site can represent multiple aspects of students' Capstone experience: the community needs, the service requirements, the students' expectations about the site and the process of integrating all of the above! To make the most of the community learning environment, faculty and students need to clarify the following with the community partners:

the course goals and objectives

the community goals and objectives

the approximate number of students involved and student availability (specific times, days of the week, expected number of service hours, etc.)

PSU student demographics and general profile of the PSU student population

the level and kind of input faculty will provide to students about their community work

the level of supervision and input the agency agrees to provide

the level and type of responsibility agency staff can expect from Capstone students

the kinds of skills students can bring to their work in the community

clearly outlined, specific expectations regarding the project timeline and the final product the community partner expects to receive

Clarifying Service and Learning Goals: The Use of Learning Agreements

Why use service-learning agreements?

Capstone students are better prepared for the normal ambiguities and "unknowns" in the community-based experience when their responsibilities are grounded within a clear framework of specific objectives and expected outcomes. General course goals and focus are often developed as a result of faculty expertise and community need. Ideally, specific objectives and related outcomes will be determined as a collaborative effort between faculty, community partner and students.

In addition to the Partnership Agreement, which clarifies the role of the community partner and faculty, we recommend the use of service-learning agreements to clarify the role of students in the course and in the community.

A service learning agreement:

translates general course objectives into specific learning objectives, service objectives and activities;

identifies expected service and learning outcomes;

details the specific service responsibilities of the students and agency; and

includes timelines for service and learning activities.

In the initial stages of the Capstone program, faculty have found that learning agreements increase student commitment and reduce potential sources of frustration later in the term. A sample learning agreement follows.

From: Field Instruction Handbook. Graduate School of Social Work, PSU.

The following sample learning agreement includes objectives and activities for the foundation and advanced years of field practicum. The sample may help you to understand how field learning goals can be translated into measurable objectives and activities.

Sample Learning Agreement

Goal I. Professional Growth and Development

Objective A. To utilize supervisory time constructively throughout the year.

1. Prepare agenda for weekly meetings with field supervisor.
2. Review learning agreement bi-weekly and keep supervisor up-to-date on my progress.
3. Use video and/or audio tapes and process recordings to obtain feedback.

Objective B. By March, identify the role of a social worker on an interdisciplinary team.

1. Interview all members of the Geriatric Evaluation Team.
2. Prepare a written summary of each member's role on team]
3. Discuss uniqueness of social work role with field instructor.

Objective C. By June, demonstrate the oral and written communication skills needed in social work administration.

1. Prepare an RFP for distribution to mental health agencies.
2. Make an oral presentation to the Board of Directors of survey results
3. Prepare press release regarding opening of hospice program

Goal II. Knowledge of the Organizational and Community Context of Practice

Objective A. By January, define the agency's goals, policies, and administrative structure.

1. Read agency policy manual and discuss with field instructor
2. Meet with agency director and discuss role of Board of Directors
3. Interview the three program managers and discuss the interrelationship of programs with field instructor
4. Read federal and state legislation mandating services to seniors

Objective B. By February, identify the network of agencies homeless in Clackamas County.

1. Review the rolodex of Clackamas County Information and Referral and discuss service options
2. Meet with emergency housing staff to discuss eligibility requirements
3. Visit family shelter and observe intake process
4. Develop mini-directory of services for homeless youth

Goal III. Development of Social Work Knowledge and Skills

Objective A. By June, increase skills in group therapy by leading an eight-week group on social skills.

1. Co-lead skills group for 9- and 10-year olds girls with field instructor
2. Plan content for social skills groups with pre-adolescent boys
3. Take leadership role in leading group, with field instructor as co-therapist
4. Debrief after each group session with field instructor

Objective B. By June, improve professional record-keeping skills.

1. Provide psycho-social histories to the Treatment Teams, utilizing the agency format
2. As a member of the Treatment Team, develop complete written discharge plans

Objective C. By May, develop a Management Information System for agency.

1. Interview staff as to informational needs and uses
2. Survey existing and required record-keeping system
3. Review literature on management information systems
4. Design new data collection from for intake

Objective D. Develop an employee orientation process and materials by April.

1. Review existing practices and materials
2. Collect written material on agency policies
3. Present orientation proposal to administrative staff
4. Develop orientation presentation for new employees

Legal Issues in Community-Based Courses

(1) HUMAN SUBJECTS REVIEW

The Human Subjects Review Committee is responsible for ensuring that adequate protection is provided for individuals involved as study participants in research or classroom-directed projects.

The following is reprinted from the Application Guidelines for Research Involving Human Subjects(Human Subjects Research Review Committee)

Capstone course activities do not require human subjects review IF the following criteria are met:

- Projects are identified as "classroom directed exercises" and supervised by a faculty member

- Projects will not place subjects at greater than minimal risk

- All data collected by students is recorded anonymously, i.e. without names, Social Security numbers or other identifiers

Faculty and students still have an ethical responsibility to inform community participants of the purpose of the project, the scope and duration of each activity in which they are expected to take part, and the expected outcomes – in essence, to obtain informed consent. In this case, the Human Subjects Research Review Committee is available for consultation in drawing up informed consents or cover letters.

For more information, please contact the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Office of Graduate Studies in Cramer Hall 111 (725-8182) or http//www.gsr.pdx.edu/rsp.

(2) COPYRIGHT ON CAPSTONE FINAL PRODUCTS

Faculty who wish to include a copyright statement on final products are advised to confer with community partners as early as possible so that all parties involved are aware of the copyright decisions and ramifications.

For more information please contact Janelle Voegele (725-8341) or Research and Sponsored Projects Office of Graduate Studies (725-8182) or www.gsr.pdx.edu/rsp.

(3) FACULTY AND STUDENT LIABILITY

The following policy applies to all Capstone faculty (full and part time):

(4) LEGAL QUESTIONS THROUGHOUT CAPSTONE

Please call Janelle Voegele (725-8341) for any questions that arise throughout your Capstone course. Janelle serves as a liaison to the State Attorney General's Office for the Capstone program, and will direct your question to the appropriate resource.

FACULTY ARE CONSIDERED AGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY. STATE EMPLOYEES ARE COVERED BY THE STATE INSURANCE FUND AS LONG AS THEY ARE ACTING WITHIN THE SCOPE AND PERFORMANCE OF STATE DUTIES WHILE UNDER THE DIRECTION AND CONTROL OF THE STATE. SCOPE AND PERFORMANCE OF DUTIES ARE MATTERS OF FACT IN LIGHT OF RELATED CIRCUMSTANCES, INCLUDING:

1) THE DUTIES ACTUALLY ASSIGNED TO FACULTY
2) WHETHER FACULTY ACTIONS WERE UNDER FACULTY OR EMPLOYER'S DIRECTION AND CONTROL
3) WHETHER FACULTY ACTIONS WERE CONSISTENT WITH OR CONTRARY TO ANY STATE DIRECTIVES.

FACULTY ARE NOT COVERED BY THE STATE INSURANCE FUND FOR CLAIMS ARISING FROM THEIR PRIVATE ACTS AND OMISSIONS.

Student Liability Insurance

PSU students are not covered by the State Insurance Fund for claims arising against students for their actions performed during the Capstone. Therefore, the State Attorney General's Office has strongly recommended that PSU take steps to provide students with liability insurance coverage. All Capstone students are automatically assessed a one-time course fee that appears on their tuition statement. This fee will be applied toward liability coverage for the entire duration of the Capstone experience. Policy information can be obtained by contacting Janelle Voegele at 725-8341.

Student Safety in the Community-Based Learning

(1) Capstone Policy on Students in Private Residences
In cases where students are interacting directly with community members as part of their Capstone service work, inform students that they are not to enter community members' private homes/residences under any circumstances.

(2) Capstone Policy on Sexual Harassment
Students have the right to adequate supervision, feedback from supervisors, and a reasonably safe, harassment-free working environment. Sexual harassment comes in many forms, but it is typically the use of power or authority by one person to pressure another person into accepting verbal, physical, or sexual conduct.

(3) Capstone Policy on Requests Directed Toward Students
Requests made of students should be limited to actions that directly pertain to students' agreed-to service and academic responsibilities. Examples of inappropriate requests (outside of agreed-to responsibilities) include, but are not limited to: requests for personal favors, requests for loan of an automobile or other personal property items, invitations to social events not related to Capstone responsibilities, and requests for additional work or service hours above those that are required to complete the service portion of the Capstone.

Feedback on Service

Periodically assess students' reactions to their service experience. In addition to class discussions, an anonymous, written assessment may reveal important items for discussion that may not surface spontaneously during class. For example, students might anonymously respond to the following questions:
(1) What do you like best about your experience at _____?
(2) What could be improved at _____?
Other options for questions (2) included asking if there are any concerns or challenges that students have addressed in class.

1) Make sure students have clear service goals, objectives and activities.

2) Explicitly address the parameters of students' service responsibilities. (For example, mentoring youth does not mean students are obligated to lend them money, give them a ride across town, etc.)

3) Ensure that students are provided with an orientation to the community/agency population.

4) Assist students in identifying skills needed for Capstone experience and developing these skills through designed activities.

5) Use the following student responsibility checklist to help students make informed choices.

Student Responsibility in Community-Based Learning

The Center for Academic Excellence has provided the following information to enhance the learning experience of students and to attempt to protect them from harm.

I. Students should clearly understand the requirements of their community project:

_____ I have a clear understanding of both my instructor's and my community partner's expectations of me.
_____ I understand my parameters (I have thought of the consequences of performing actions beyond my agreed Capstone responsibilities; for example, giving a client of a community partner a ride in my car)
_____ I have identified the skills needed to carry out this project, and I feel comfortable with those skills.
_____ I have identified the skills needed to carry out this project, and I have devised specific plans for strengthening skills with which I am not comfortable or familiar.
_____ I know my client population (I am making every attempt to understand their needs from their perspective).
_____ I know what to do in case of an emergency.

II. Students need necessary legal documents:

_____ If I will be driving, I have a valid license and liability insurance.

III. Students should take responsibility for their behavior throughout the community- based project:

_____ I understand that I am responsible for my own personal health and safety.
_____ I have insurance (if agency requires specific coverage for volunteers).
_____ I understand the waivers I sign.
_____ I have thought of risks involved in this community-based project. For example:

What are clients' special needs?

In case of accidents, what is unsafe?

What can I do to reduce risks by my own behavior, clothing, preparation?

What behaviors fall outside of my job description?

Three legal issues to be aware of throughout your Capstone:

I. Negligence involves a mistake, lack of attention, reckless behavior, or indifference to the duty of care of another person. A reasonable person should have been able to foresee the possibility of injury. (EX: wet spot on floor, child climbing on balance beam)

II. Intentional misconduct or criminal misconduct involves potential harm caused by a volunteer. A volunteer is responsible for any harm caused to an organization or individual if the harm resulted from intentional or criminal misconduct on the part of the volunteer. (A crime is a crime even if you are a volunteer)

III. Invasion of privacy involves confidentiality. Follow the confidentiality policies of the agency. If they do not clearly inform you of the policy ASK THEM for their policy guidelines regarding this. (EX: client histories and personal records are confidential.)

FOUR HELPFUL COMPONENTS OF COMMUNITY-BASED PROJECTS

1) Job description (explanation of duties/responsibilities)
2) Training (knowledge of procedures)
3) Tools to do the job required (appropriate technology, space, etc.)
4) Supervision (feedback from instructor and community partner)

Combining Service and Learning: Some Notes from Capstone Faculty

"The keys for me in the third year of teaching the Capstone have been:

(1) Choosing concrete, doable projects for the students, with solid project goals and parameters, but clear room for the students to make/define/create something original, specific to the community they are working in;

(2) Building in solid time for student reflection activities within classroom time vs. letting them/asking them just to take time to do it on their own;

(3) Jointly deciding with students the work flow and activities, taking into account the context they are working in, i.e. over 2 terms, graduation, etc."

"So many students come in and say that they've heard that this is going to be the easiest course they've had. Then when things get challenging, they're shocked. So now I start out on the first day by announcing that, although many of them may have heard that Capstone is a "cake walk," they should just erase that from their minds because it's just not the case. We talk about why the expectations should in reality be higher – because for one thing, real people are depending on what we produce."
"Contact agencies and collect resources earlier. Get students focused on specific areas earlier in the course. Require more frequent and detailed progress reports from students. Conference with students individually at the end of the first term regarding progress and grade standing (2 term Capstones)."

"Develop clear learning objectives for the pre-field preparation phase, if that's appropriate. If students need to demonstrate a certain level of "readiness" for the field, how will that be assessed? If possible, involve the students in their own self-assessment during this process. Avoid telling them they're not ready...it's more effective if they can suggest to you when they think they're ready, based on solid criteria they have some control over."

"On the first day of class, pay special attention to the explanation of how the content of the University Studies Goals and community service relate to each other. Some students assume that Capstone courses are probably not much different from other courses where they've been required to 'do something' outside of class. When finished, ask students to respond by telling you exactly what they think they will be accomplishing during the term. This can clear up misunderstanding immediately."

"Allow enough time each week for students to participate in structured discussion about their service or project experiences, and to relate their experiences to the readings and other course material. Be especially attuned to the need for students to problem-solve potential challenges they encounter in the early stages of their community responsibilities. Unfortunately, this is usually the same time that many other things are going on in the course, so it can easily be forgotten or rushed. Try to achieve that necessary balance."

"Determine the amount of time students will be expected to spend completing the service component of their course work each week. Give the students an estimate of total time the service component will take and assist them in developing realistic time frames for the quarter."

"Find ways to involve students in setting their own learning goals, and participating in the assessment of those goals. Requiring students to invest in this activity increases their sense of accountability to the process and product."

"Check in with the community agency representative/partner often. Otherwise, they might assume (as they did in my case) that you are automatically aware of certain issues that should be brought to your attention."

"In the beginning we had this idea that the students would just form their teams and then go out and work independently on their project. We found that the students needed much more regular, direct contact with the faculty and assistance with project management than we had anticipated."

"You really need to work at balancing the needs of the community partner and the students. Everyone may have to adjust their expectations as the project progresses. Cut back if needed- do more with less- it's about the learning in the end, and the project details should not overwhelm the learning goals."

Strategies for Student Support
(Corresponding activities are located in Appendix)

The following areas represent some common issues arising for students participating in Capstone courses. For information pertaining to these and other aspects of community-based learning, see references and resources.

TEAMS

Many Capstone courses involve interdisciplinary teams of students working together to address a community need. The Capstone course is an ideal environment for students to enhance their group communication skills. Unfortunately, attention to group process is often overlooked, even though group process and dynamics directly impact the quality of the group's end-product. Attention to process need not take a great deal of class time away from other issues. For an example of how to incorporate group process into ongoing group activities, see Appendix: Quick Strategies for Group Process.

PROFESSIONALISM IN THE COMMUNITY

Students bring a wide variety of skills and expertise to their Capstone experience. Even students who have worked in the community for years may have concerns regarding the knowledge and protocol needed for carrying out specific Capstone activities.
The handout "Interviewing: Strategies for Success" (see Appendix) is one example of guidelines developed for students responsible for collecting qualitative interview data. For examples relating to other aspects of professionalism in the community, contact Janelle Voegele in the Center for Academic Excellence.

ENCOUNTERING DIFFERENCES

Helping students to work effectively in diverse settings is a theme that runs throughout the Capstone program. The following issues and more surface regularly within the Capstone courses: The ability to discuss differences openly and nonjudgmentally, to communicate effectively to individuals from diverse backgrounds, and to understand the belief of another from his or her perspective. "Oppressed Group Perspective" is one of many examples of activities that encourage reflection, critical thinking and awareness of diverse experiences. For more information about resources for diversity issues in Capstone, contact Janelle Voegele or Devorah Lieberman in the Center for Academic Excellence.

IDENTIFYING SKILLS FOR CAPSTONE

The "Portfolio: Assessing Your Skills" assignment developed by Professor Melissa Gilbert (see Appendix) is one example of a framework for students to clearly assess their preparation and skills within the context of the Capstone experience. Not only do such measures help students to track their progress throughout the course, but they also help instructors evaluate students and assess the usefulness of service-learning goals. For more information, contact Janelle Voegele in the Center for Academic Excellence.

References and Resources

THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE FOR CHECKOUT AT THE CENTER FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE LIBRARY (Cramer Hall 303):

Assessing the Impact of Service Learning: A Workbook of Strategies and Methods

Center for Academic Excellence Community-University Partnerships Handbook.

Introduction to Service-Learning Toolkit: Readings and Resources for Faculty. Published by Campus Compact.

Albert, G. (Ed.) (1994). Service learning reader: Reflections and perspectives on service. Raleigh, NC: National Society for Experiential Education.

Connors, K. (1998). Community-university partnerships for mutual learning. Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 5, 97-107.

Ehrlich, T. (2000). Higher education and civic responsibility. New York: Oryx Press.

Eyler, J. & Giles, D. (1999). Where's the learning in service-learning? San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Eyler, J., Giles, D., & Schmiede, A. (1996). Practitioner's guide to refection in service learning: Student voices and reflections. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt.

Gray, M., Ondaatje, E., Fricker, R. & Greshwind, S. (2000). Assessing service-learning. Change, 32 (2).

Howard, J. (1998). Academic service learning: A counternormative pedagogy. In Rhoads, R. & Howard, J. (Eds.), Academic service learning: A pedagogy of action and refection. New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 73, 21-29.

Jacoby, B. (1996). Service-learning in higher education: concepts and practices. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Zlotkowski, E. (1996). Linking service-learning and the academy. Change, 28(1); 21-27.

Internet Web Address for the National Service-Learning Archive: http://csf.colorado.edu/sl

CAPSTONE SUPPORT STAFF: WHO'S WHO

SEANNA KERRIGAN, CAPSTONE COORDINATOR (725-8392)

Seanna's role includes working with community organizations to identify appropriate Capstone projects and working with University faculty to conceptualize propose and revise throughout the University's course approval process.

JANELLE VOEGELE, DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM COORDINATOR (725-8341)

Janelle provides support resources for University faculty and students once the Capstone courses are in place. She provides training and materials on a variety of communication, group process, and diversity issues, as well as service-learning principles and practices. She also coordinates a team of University professionals who provide resources in areas such as health and safety, assessment, reflection, leadership and career development.

UNIVERSITY STUDIES OFFICE (725-5890)

University Studies provides clerical support for the Capstone program and provides an ongoing communication link between community partners and PSU. You can contact them in order to obtain information about the Capstone fair and Capstone-related events.

JUDY PATTON, PROGRAM DIRECTOR FOR UNIVERSITY STUDIES

Judy oversees the University Studies Program, including Freshman Inquiry, Sophomore Inquiry, Junior Cluster courses, and Capstone. Her role is similar to that of a department chair, including overseeing program coordination, authorizing the hiring of faculty, and guiding the continued development of the program.

Appendix

Quick Strategies for Team Process

BEGINNING STAGES: "GENERATING STRATEGIES" ICEBREAKER

Student groups conduct a brainstorm on the theme, "How we could wreck our group and make sure we have a horrible time." Groups then go through items on the list to generate corresponding strategies for success. (If appropriate, these could evolve into group "ground rules".) This ice-breaker works well for initial group meetings as a great deal of humor usually results from the process, and students' "worst group nightmares" and fears are often resolved.

BEGINNING STAGES: ESTABLISHING A FRAMEWORK FOR COMMITMENT

Capstone students are usually aware that the quality of their work group will impact the quality of their community work. Often students have not been expected to explicitly address the subject of commitment to the group process. Capstone teams can address potentially problematic issues before they arise by spending a brief period of time in groups discussing the following:

What factors might influence your group responsibilities this term?
Some examples: Working outside PSU; where you live in relation to others in the group; outside responsibilities; level of commitment to the group; level of familiarity with the community agency, course content, or community work in general; experience/level of comfort working with groups; ADD YOUR OWN...

After students brainstorm these issues, they can then develop specific strategies for addressing situations if they should arise. For example, if one student mentions that his/her erratic work hours could possibly conflict with a crucial placement once or twice, what exactly will the team do to address his or her absence during those times? Who will be called, who will take over? Etc. (Repeat throughout the term if necessary)

HOW I AM IN TEAMS

Students write answers to the following and share briefly with the group:
In teams I tend to ... In teams I tend to avoid ... I like teams where ... I don't like teams where ... How I'd like to be in this group ... How I'd like this group to be for me ...Groups are encouraged to listen respectfully to individual responses and then to assess the overall group profile. For example, what if one group contains six out of seven self-described, "take charge, take control leaders"? What are the implications for working together? Students can gain a great deal of useful insight from this quick process.

And now ... the community project!

Although individual work groups are unique, most problem-solving groups evolve through somewhat predictable phases. When students are aware of these phases they can avoid getting "bogged down" in one or more of them. Janelle Voegele (725-8341) would be glad to share "quick ideas" for raising awareness of group phases, productive conflict and other key group issues. In addition, a "Sequence for Group Problem Solving" (contributed by Devorah Lieberman) follows.

Sequence for Group Problem Solving

Define the problem / Set criteria for evaluation of solution

Take stock of group resources (address the diversity of the group)

Set agenda (plan of action) and outline steps needed to accomplish plan of action

Divide tasks among group members

Reach decision about next steps of process

Contributed by Devorah Lieberman, Center for Academic Excellence

Important Roles Within Task-Oriented Groups

Are students encountering challenges working in groups? Group members may want to consider if their group process could benefit from greater awareness of central group roles.Successful task oriented groups are usually composed of members who are willing to take on or alternate the following crucial roles:

The TASK LEADER
clarifies the goals of the meeting, the meeting agenda, introduces topics and summarizes discussions.

The GROUP LEADER
has good conflict negotiation skills, and makes sure that everyone has had a chance to contribute to discussion and to the eventual end-product.

The TIME-KEEPER
keeps track of how much time is allocated to each issue during meetings and generally keeps the discussion "on task" when necessary. For example, he or she might inform the group that they only have ten minutes remaining and ask if a decision needs to be made or postponed until a next meeting.

The PROGRESS CHASER
makes sure that tasks are completed as planned and on schedule. This person does some of this work between meetings and reports on progress throughout the project.

The NOTE-TAKER
records meeting proceedings such as meeting decisions, who is responsible for particular tasks, what the next steps will be, and so forth.

Interviewing: Improving the Chances For Success

Interviewing is a skill that improves with patience and practice. You can increase your chances for success by maintaining an awareness that misunderstanding and being misunderstood are inevitable in the communication process—your task as interviewer is set up conditions for minimizing misunderstanding and generating useful information. There are a number of things that the interviewer can do to improve the chances of success:

Schedule the interview in advance;

Be clear about the purpose of your interview;

Prepare an agenda (but also be prepared to deviate from the agenda somewhat if doing so seems helpful);

Conduct the interview when and where the respondent prefers, if possible;

Do not cancel the interview appointment if at all possible, and if you must, contact the interviewee immediately and reschedule a time that is convenient for him or her;

Dress appropriately;

Be on time;

Hold the conversation in an area that affords privacy;

Eliminate distractions and uncomfortable conditions;

Begin by clarifying the purpose of the meeting, its anticipated duration, and both the interviewer's and respondent's roles;

Do not expect the respondent to disclose information early in the interview (let the respondent "warm up" to the process); and

Use verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that will help guide the respondent
toward useful replies. "Perhaps the greatest single problem with human communication is the assumption of it."
-anonymous

Group Exercise: Oppressed Group Perspective

Objectives:

To increase awareness of the feelings that are aroused when people attack others for being different or not fitting in

To increase students' abilities to discuss differences in nonjudgmental ways that open further discussion

Steps:

1) Ask each student to pick a group of which he or she is a member that gets "picked on " by others. Examples: student athletes, computer loyalists, tall African Americans who choose not to play athletics, people who don't wear watches, vegetarians, recovering alcoholics, atheists/unaffiliated, or couples who choose not to have children.
2) Divide into groups of three to five.
3) Ask each student to share with the group the negative feedback he or she finds troublesome regarding the group identity. For example, people may try to change the vegetarian or the couple without children.
4) Each group should list some guidelines for responding to these areas of difference with words that show respect and curiosity rather than negative judgment.
5) The whole class can share the best ideas of the groups and formulate a class list of effective feedback when discussing areas of difference.

In-class reflection:

Encourage students to reflect on (and if appropriate, share) feelings aroused by this exercise. If they have gained more awareness of the feelings aroused when one feels minimized or misunderstood they will have increased their abilities to empathize on this issue.

Comments:

Students who have difficulty choosing a group, or make relatively "safe" group choices should have wide latitude, since this gives the students more choice over how much they wish to self-disclose. Regardless of choice, all students can benefit from listening.

Adapted from: Cohen, M. et al. (1995). Multicultural activities for the speech communication classroom. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.