NYU | WAGNER

Student
CAPSTONE
Guide

Welcome to Capstone.

Capstone is learning in action. Part of the core curriculum of the Master's program at the Wagner School, it provides students with both a critical learning experience and an opportunity to perform a public service. Over the course of an academic year, students work in teams – either to address challenges and identify opportunities for a client organization or to conduct research on a pressing social question. Ultimately, Capstone contributes not only to your education, but is a university resource for the public good.

In architecture, the capstone is the crowning piece of an arch, the center stone that holds the arch together, giving it shape and strength. Wagner's Capstone program plays a similar role, by integrating and enhancing student learning in several different arenas: a content or issue area, key process skills including project management and teamwork, and methods for gathering, analyzing and reporting data. Capstone requires students to interweave their learning in all these areas, and to do so in real time, in an unpredictable, complex real world environment.

This **Student Capstone Guide** is an effort to provide all students with a shared base of expectations, information, and resources at the start of Capstone. This Guide includes:
-   A list of important phone numbers and other resources
-   Description of Stakeholder Expectations
-   Ethical Considerations
-   Information on the Capstone Expo
-   How to Include Capstone in your Resume

While we've tried to be thorough, but not overwhelming, this handbook is a work in progress and we welcome your feedback on its content and organization.

As always, the Capstone Program Directors are at your disposal during this process. Please feel free to contact us, or the administrators that we've listed in the important phone numbers section, should you have any questions.

All our best,

Erica Foldy   John Gershman   Elizabeth Larsen
          Capstone Co-Directors

Important Contact Information

While your Capstone Faculty Member will be your frontline resource for help in navigating the Capstone process, we've included the names and contact information of individuals that you can go to for specific needs.

Capstone website: wagner.nyu.edu/capstone/students

Wagner Student Services:

If you have questions about your overall academic progress or your graduation requirements, you should email Wagner Student Services to connect with your Student Services Program Advisor. Send your questions in an email to wagner.studentservices@nyu.edu and include your full name, your degree program and specialization, and your N#.

Capstone Team Dynamics Assistance:

Contact:	Email
Erica Foldy	erica.foldy@nyu.edu

Capstone Reimbursements:

Contact:	Dept.	Phone #	Email
Catherine Falzone	Academic Programs	212.992.8701	catherine.falzone@nyu.edu

Each Capstone team can be reimbursed up to $500 for many expenses.

In addition, supplemental train and air travel support may be available for students who need to travel outside of the five boroughs to conduct their research

Specific and explicit **guidelines on eligibility and reimbursement procedures** for Capstone travel funding and team expenses can be found under Capstone Documents here: **wagner.nyu.edu/portal/students/academics/courses/capstone**

Please read the Reimbursement Form for Capstone Team Expenses carefully before making any purchases.

Wagner Research Librarian:

Contact:	Dept.	Email
Andrew Battista	NYU Libraries	andrew.battista@nyu.edu

Research/Literature Review/Data Management/Data Analysis/GIS Assistance:
Students who need help with research and lit review should contact Andrew Battista. For help with data management (reformatting files, changing files from one software package to another), data analysis (SPSS, SAS, Stata), and GIS mapping, contact/visit Andrew or the NYU Data Services Studio located on the 5th floor of Bobst Library.

This ITS/Libraries service conveniently locates staff, software, statistical computing, and data collection resources to support quantitative research at NYU.

Consultation is available via email (data.services@nyu.edu), telephone [(212.998.3434](tel:2129983434)), by appointment, or on a walk-in basis. Information on workshops and other events is available by subscribing to the ITS/FTS Statistics and GIS Group Listserv at: statistics@forums.nyu.edu. Studio hours are listed on the Data Services page at library.nyu.edu/departments/data-services/.

Room Reservations at Puck Building

As space at the Puck Building has become increasingly limited due to high demand, we encourage students to take advantage of the [reservable spaces at Bobst Library](#) for Capstone group meetings. If you are in a pinch, you can still attempt to book rooms here at Puck through your [Google calendar](#). We've set up the third floor conference rooms and the Student Project room to auto-confirm or auto-reject based on availability so you will receive instantaneous confirmation.

Mutual Expectations for Capstone

Capstone grows out of, and contributes to, a set of interlocking communities. Communities are sustained by mutual ties of responsibility and obligation, gift and receipt. So is Capstone. Capstone has four stakeholder groups, groups that come together to make Capstone work: clients, students, faculty and Wagner itself, as represented by its administration and the Capstone program staff. Each of these groups has interwoven responsibilities to the others; each group gives to the other groups and receives in return.

Students Offer
- Energy, time and engagement
- A range of experience and expertise
- A stance of curiosity and openness to their client, their faculty and each other
- A willingness to re-negotiate and revise the project as necessary
- A finished work product which advances the mission of the organization

Faculty Offer
- A learning environment, both challenging and supportive, in which students can build on earlier experiences, while trying out new ways of thinking and acting
- A set of class meetings, activities and assignments which gives students an overall framework within which to work, but is adaptable to the particular needs of their projects
- Support to the client and its Capstone team, as necessary, to ensure that the project is moving forward to a successful conclusion
- A willingness to act as liaison, as necessary, between Wagner, the client and the students
- An opportunity, towards the end of the course, for students to reflect on the bigger picture within which their project is located
- Useful feedback during and at the end of the project in addition to a final grade

Clients Offer
- A concrete, feasible project
- An identified staff liaison with the Capstone team
- Communication with and support of its Capstone team; an openness to mentoring team members, as well as treating them as work partners
- A willingness to re-negotiate and revise the project as necessary
- Useful feedback during the project and evaluation at the end of the project that can inform the faculty member's grading decision
- An engagement fee, where possible

Wagner and Capstone Program Staff Offer
- An academic environment with a set of supports, including specialization requirements and related courses, which contribute to Capstone's success
- Smooth-running program administration
- A clear and transparent Capstone process
- A variety or resources and support to clients, faculty and student teams
- Openness of feedback from other stakeholders on what's working and not working.

We offer this list of mutual expectations in order to give all stakeholders a general sense of their obligations to others as well as others' obligations to them. Once teams have been matched with clients, we suggest that more specific work agreements be drawn up so that mutual responsibilities are made transparent and explicit.

Erica Foldy
Associate Professor
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erica.foldy@nyu.edu

Ethics Considerations in Capstone:
A Brief Overview for Students

A number of ethical issues can arise in Capstone projects. This memo lays out the most common issues and suggests ways to address them. If you have any questions, either now or as your Capstone project develops, please don't hesitate to talk with your professor or with Erica Foldy, a management faculty member and one of the Capstone co-directors. These issues are important and they can also be confusing, so err on the safe side and get more information if you need to.

We use the term "ethics considerations" to refer to a variety of concerns that can arise in the course of doing data gathering and working with an outside organization. These issues generally fall into two categories:
- Informant-related issues (Informants are the people you speak with to gather information related to your project);
- Client-related issues (Your Capstone client organization)

<u>Informant-related issues</u>

❖ Data gathering, whether done as part of an academic research project or on behalf of a client organization, has the potential to exploit or mistreat the individual informants from whom you are gathering data. For this reason, universities and research institutions generally have strict guidelines for any data gathering from people (as opposed to, for example, using archival information like government records or newspapers). These guidelines are most important when dealing with more vulnerable populations, such as children, prisoners, the recipients of social welfare services, etc. They can be less important when collecting data from organizational employees, though that is not always the case. For example, if you are asking employees to give you information that might be critical about their employer and could jeopardize their employment, then of course you need to be very careful.

❖ Here are examples of projects with different levels of risk to informants:
  ➢ <u>Virtually no risk</u>: Projects involving surveys with fully anonymous data collection: This could include some kinds of web-based surveys or surveys conducted on a street corner that do not ask for name or other identifying information.
  ➢ <u>Low risk</u>: Projects involving interviews about non-sensitive or non-stigmatizing information, but in which readers of the final report may be able to identify who made particular statements. For example, team members might interview the Executive Directors of six nonprofit organizations and provide the client with a list of who was interviewed. Even if the report does not link a statement or quote or opinion with a particular interviewee, it still might be possible to guess his/her identity.
  ➢ <u>Some risk</u>:

- Projects involving interviews in which participants might be under some pressure or coercion to answer in a particular way: For example, employees of the client organization who are being asked to assess an organizational program or policy (which could include assessment of other employees including their supervisor).
- Projects including vulnerable populations, such as children, prisoners, or families involved in some sort of social services such as the child welfare system.

- ❖ Here are the four most important concerns and how to address them.
  - ➢ Do potential informants understand the project and the data collection process?
    - Develop a clear, simple description of the data gathering which will be consistently provided to each informant, either with a written or verbal statement. The explanation should include the purpose of the project, who is conducting the data collection, the specific activities that the informant will be asked to do, and how much time will be involved.
    - If, based on the examples and guidelines above, you think your project does pose some risk to potential informants, this statement should be written, rather than verbal. Work with your professor on this.
  - ➢ Do potential informants understand that their participation is truly voluntary and should be undertaken only with informed consent?
    - Make sure your description of the project includes the stipulation that participation is voluntary and make sure you get at least verbal consent to continue.
    - If, based on the examples and guidelines above, you think your project does pose some risk to potential informants, you should get written consent. Work with your professor on this.
  - ➢ Will informants' confidentiality be safeguarded?
    - In most projects involving data collection from people, confidentiality is critical. This is how you can safeguard confidentiality:
      - Make sure you conduct interviews on sensitive topics in places where others will not know who is participating.
      - Give participants a code number and put this number on any of their materials (completed questionnaires, interview transcripts) so their name is not associated with these materials;
      - Never attribute quotes or other data to a named individual (that is, saying, "one informant said…" rather than, "Molly Jones said…")
      - Do not disclose any informant characteristics if those characteristics could identify a given individual (for example, if you only had one or two informants from Fort Greene, you wouldn't say, "A Fort Greene resident said…").
      - Keep your data and any materials that could lead to the identification of an informant in a secure place. (So, for example, you might choose to keep all your materials in your own home or office, rather than at the client organization, if someone there might have an incentive to look at the data and identify informants.)
  - ➢ Finally, you must ALWAYS receive consent from a participant if you wish to take pictures or make any recordings of an interview, meeting or other event.

- ❖ Some students may be working with a client organization (usually in the health care field) that requires them to go through a formal review process (sometimes called the Institutional Review Board or Human Subjects Review) to safeguard potential informants. If so, you will need to work with the client and your faculty member on this.

- ❖ HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act)
  - ➢ HIPAA is a federal law passed in 1996 specifically to ensure privacy of patient health information. If you are working in a health-care organization, HIPAA could apply to your work, especially if you have access to data about individual patients. If this is the case, confer with your client organization and faculty member about how to handle this.

- ❖ FERPA (Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act)
  - ▪ FERPA is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. FERPA gives parents certain rights over their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. If Capstone students are working in a school or other educational institution, you and the students should find out if FERPA is relevant to their project.

- ❖ For students who think they might wish to publish their work:
  - ➢ If you want to publish your work, and you are collecting data from people, then you will need to go through the Institutional Review Board at NYU. We **strongly discourage** you from doing this since it is labor- and time-intensive and could potentially set you back by months. However, if you still want to do this, then **please understand that it is up to you to learn how to submit an IRB application**, working with someone at the University Committee on Activities Involving Human Subjects. Your faculty member is not expected to support you on this, nor is the Capstone program.

Client-related issues

A different set of issues arise related to the client organization and your relationship with your client. Here are several significant issues and some thoughts about how to address them.
- ❖ Who owns the work produced by the Capstone team?
  - • The final work product is owned by your client organization. However, Wagner reserves the right to publicly list the organization as a client, to keep copies of all Capstone teams' final reports for review by the Wagner community, and to include a brief project description in Capstone promotional materials.
  - • Given this, you may want to work with the client to answer these questions:
    - ♦ Will you have the right to disclose or disseminate the report?
    - ♦ Can you participate in the decision about how the report will be disseminated and to whom?

- Furthermore, <u>you are allowed to use your work in pursuit of your educational or professional careers</u>.

❖ Will Capstone teams have access to confidential and/or proprietary client information or materials?
  - Clarify with your client if they have concerns about any of the information or materials you are working with. Discuss with them how to ensure that confidentiality is maintained and that no proprietary information is inadvertently leaked. If in any doubt, err on the side of caution.
    - This will be particularly important if someone on the team is an employee of an organization that could be considered a competitor of the client organization. This could pose a conflict of interest for that team member. Any potential conflicts of interest should be disclosed to the client organization, so that you can jointly figure out how to address any concerns.
  - Make sure you determine with the client what should happen to these materials after the project is completed.

These are not the only issues, just the most common ones. If other issues arise in your work and you think they should be included in future versions of this memo, please let Prof. Erica Foldy know. Her contact information is on the first page of the memo.

Capstone Expo

The Capstone Expo is an opportunity for all Capstone teams to come together and share process and findings with clients, faculty, administration, and other students. This is a great opportunity for teams to show off the fruit of their hard work, see what other Capstone teams have been working on, and publicly acknowledge their Capstone Clients.

Mark Your Calendars
The 2017–2018 Capstone Expo will be held on May 8, 2018
from 5:00 to 6:30 pm (reception to follow)

For the Capstone Expo, each team writes an abstract and creates a poster board that describes the project's purpose, methodology, key insights, and recommendations.

We encourage you to inform your Clients of the date and time of the Expo at the start of your project, so that they can plan to attend. More event details and RSVP information will become available in mid-Spring.

How to Include Capstone Projects in Your Resume

Be sure to acknowledge the experience as part of an NYU team-based project. For most Capstones, your title should be *Project Associate*:

9/17 – Present	**NEW YORK CITIZENS HOUSING AND PLANNING COUNCIL** New York, NY **Project Associate, NYU Advanced Project in Urban Planning** - Serve on 4-person team consisting of NYU Wagner graduate candidates to identify recommendations for commercial development of Woodside, Queens in response to citywide and regional needs. - Analyze current urban design elements, land use, and housing conditions. - Conduct demographic analysis, including review of population and employment trends in order to determine present and future needs of area and forecast economic growth.

If you are in a Research Capstone, use the following as a guide:

9/17 – Present	**NYU ADVANCED PROJECT IN APPLIED RESEARCH IN PUBLIC FINANCE AND POLICY** **Researcher** - Serve on five-person team consisting of NYU Wagner graduate candidates to analyze the effect of cost and quality of college education on individual's success upon graduation using panel data. - Develop regression models from restricted use data and conduct statistical analysis using SPSS. - Produce written reports of findings.