Capstone: Advanced International Projects I

P11.3127 (003)  
Spring 2010

INSTRUCTOR: Steven Schall  
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DATE AND TIME: Mondays, 6:45pm – 8:25pm  
LOCATION: Waverly Bldg, Rm 370

COURSE SUMMARY

Capstone is learning in action. Part of Wagner’s core curriculum, 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 to address challenges, solve problems and identify opportunities for a client organization. Students will design the approach, conduct the data collection and analysis, and present findings, both orally and in writing, to the client.

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 building on students’ previous coursework and expertise, while also enhancing student learning on policy and management issues, key process skills and research skills. 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. Although divided into teams, the class will work as a learning community dedicated to the success of all the projects.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Capstone integrates and enhances learning in several arenas: a content or issue area, process skills including project, client and team management, and research methods for gathering, analyzing and reporting data. The specific learning objectives are:

A. CONTENT
Students should:

• understand the policy context for their project;
• be familiar with specialized vocabularies required to perform the project successfully;
• be aware of critical research related to their content area;
• be capable of positioning and evaluating their project within its broader policy context.

B. PROCESS
• Overall, students should demonstrate a capacity for flexibility and resilience, as shown by adapting to changing and complex circumstances, balancing competing demands and accepting uncertainty and lack of clarity when necessary.

1. Project Management
Students should demonstrate the ability to:
• assess the client organization and its environment;
• frame and refine the problem presented by the client;
• develop a work agreement with the client for the project;
• develop an internal project work plan with timelines and deliverables;
• monitor their progress against the work agreement and workplan;
• revise the workplan as necessary;
• develop well supported and realistic recommendations.

2. Client Management
Students should demonstrate the ability to:
• develop and sustain their relationship with the client;
• negotiate a work agreement with timelines and deliverables;
• maintain regular and productive contact with the client;
• solicit and integrate feedback on progress against the contract and modify as necessary;
• deliver final product to client’s satisfaction.

3. Team Management
Students should demonstrate the ability to:
• understand group formation and development;
• understand the importance of interpersonal dynamics and team norms;
• create and periodically review their team charter;
• develop clear role descriptions for team members;
• manage team assignments and accountability;
• advocate points of view and negotiate differences of opinion;
• solicit and offer feedback;
• appreciate and learn from cultural differences.

C. RESEARCH
Students should demonstrate the ability to:
• identify appropriate quantitative and/or qualitative data gathering and analysis methods for their particular project;
• follow established sampling procedures to create appropriate samples for their particular project;
• carry out data collection methods appropriate for their particular project, potentially including surveys and questionnaires, individual interviews, focus groups, and access to already existing datasets;
• situate their findings in the broader related literature;
• draw conclusions based on their findings;
• effectively communicate their work both orally and in writing.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

We have identified an array of potential projects. Potential clients will present their projects to you in the first couple of weeks in class. We will ask you for your preferences, but – just to be very clear – we will create the teams based not only on your preferences, but on your previous coursework, work and life experience, other expertise, and team size. Teams are usually comprised of 3-5 students.

The class will involve presentations from the instructor, course consultant and guest speakers, class discussion and team meetings. Course requirements include:
  o enrollment in both semesters;
  o attendance and participation in class activities and team meetings;
  o completion of assignments on time;
  o participation in field work;
  o participation in meetings with clients;
  o participation in preparation and presentation of findings.

Because this course will focus on international projects, some client organizations may not be US based. This will necessitate use of teleconferencing/televideo conferencing for client meetings, depending on the facilities available to the client. Some projects may require international field work which will usually take place during January or Spring break. We will make every effort to secure financial support for travel if such work is necessary, but it may not cover the full costs.

EVALUATION and GRADING

Students will be given two credits for the fall semester and two for the spring semester. At the end of the first semester, students will receive a grade of “IP” to reflect the “work in progress” nature of the year long project. I will assign final grades at the end of the second semester. Students will be graded on both the products they deliver to their clients and evidence of progressive learning throughout the course, based on the Learning Objectives.
50% of the grade is based on work products identified in the milestones as well as any interim deliverables to the client or assigned by the faculty member. 50% of the grade is based on evidence of the individual student’s learning during the course through participation in the team’s work and class activities; his/her ability to act on peer and faculty feedback; individual and team preparation for and performance at client meetings; and end-of-semester faculty, peer and self evaluations. Just as you will rehearse and prepare for oral presentations, I urge and expect you to re-read, proof and possibly ask another person to proof your writing before submission. Each of you will receive an individual grade, that is, individual team members could receive different grades.

COURSE MILESTONES – SECOND SEMESTER
The course has a series of milestones – both activities and products -- that will serve as interim deliverables. I’ve suggested time frames in parentheses, though actual timing during the course of the year may vary depending on the specific situation of each team and client. If there is an update to the syllabus or schedule, I will post it on Blackboard. Students should check Blackboard at least once a week.

These milestones include:

- **BY FEB. 1st:** Revisions to the following key documents, as needed, or confirmation that current documents are satisfactory
  - Team charters
  - Individual learning goals
  - Work plans
- **BY FEB. 8th:** Faculty meeting with each team to review work to date and for the spring semester
  - Teams are expected to provide faculty with all relevant documents (final surveys, literature reviews, in-country interviewees or preliminary findings etc.) prior to the meeting.
- **ON, MONDAY EVENING, FEB. 8th:** Team oral presentations to the class (supplemented by a one-page brief for distribution to classmates) on project status, preliminary findings and implications for successful project completion.
- **BY LATE FEB:** Draft outlines of final reports due in late February (more detailed discussions with each team will occur to prepare or revise schedules to meet this target date)
- **DUE FEB. 26th** to David Schachter and Steven Schall: Each team submits a 150-word description of its project
- **DUE MARCH 22nd:** Each team submits to David Schachter and Steven Schall a list of people to invite to the End Event Exhibition. ALSO, each team informs David Schachter and Steven Schall of its team presentation method (either poster board and/or laptop) for the End Event Exhibition
- Oral presentation of final report to class/faculty for feedback before presentation to client (March or April, to be clarified in more detail);
- **EARLY APRIL**: First drafts of final reports to faculty
- **BY APRIL 25th**: Final Team and Self Evaluations.
- **BY LATE APRIL BUT NO LATER THAN MAY 3rd**: Final reports to client.
- **Capstone End Event**: The Capstone Exhibition is scheduled for **Wednesday, May 5, 2010** from 5:00-6:30 PM at the Metropolitan Pavilion, 125 West 18th Street

**REQUIRED TEXTS**


**CLASS SCHEDULE: SECOND SEMESTER**

During this semester, much of the time will be set aside for teams to meet on their own or with me. The main emphasis is on time spent working with teams and final products. **You must be available every Monday night during class time.** Also, for planning purposes, I’ve posted some potential deadlines, **but these are preliminary and could change.**

**Over the first few weeks, read Flawless Consulting, chapter 13, “Preparing for Feedback,” and Chapter 14, “Managing the Feedback Meeting,”** a helpful guide on how to manage all the data you’ve collected, how to present accurate information and give feedback to your client, and some tips on structuring a conversation with your client.

**Week 1: January 25, 2010**

Class meeting: Will discuss schedule for the spring semester; also each team will provide a brief verbal progress report.

- **Assignment for Week 2 on February 1:**
  - Revisit team charters (by Feb. 1)
  - Revisions to individual learning goals (by Feb. 1)
  - Revisions or clarifications to work plans, as needed (by Feb. 1)

**Week 2: February 1**

Team meeting time, to be discussed and assigned.

- **Assignment for Week 3 on February 8:**
  - Prepare for team oral presentations to the class on project status, findings and implications for successful project completion

**Week 3: February 8**

Class meeting: Team oral presentations to the class on project status and findings

**Assignment for Week 4 on February 22**
Prepare outlines of final reports

[February 15 – PRESIDENT’S DAY – NO CLASS.]

Week 4: February 22
IMPORTANT: “Presentations Skills Workshop,” held in Rudin Forum on the 2nd floor of Puck. 6:45pm – 8:25pm.

DUE FEB. 26th to David Schachter and Steven Schall: Each team submits a 150-word description of its project

Week 5: March 1
Class meeting

Week 6: March 8 – preparing for presentations
Class meeting

Week 7: March 15 – SPRING BREAK – NO CLASS

DUE MARCH 22nd:
- Each team submits to David Schachter and Steven Schall a list of people to invite to the End Event Exhibition
- Each team informs David Schachter and Steven Schall of its team presentation method (either poster board and/or laptop) for the End Event Exhibition

Week 8: March 22
Class meeting: preparing for client meetings

Assignment: Each team should schedule their final presentations to the clients during the period between April 7 and April 19. I should be present.

Week 9: March 29 [This is Passover; I may ask teams to meet on their own.]

Week 10: April 5
Class meeting: Team rehearsals of final presentations

Week 11: April 12
Class meeting: Team rehearsals of final presentations

Week 12: April 19
Class meeting: Report back on client response to final presentations and necessary changes to final report. Discuss preparation for Capstone End Event.

Assignments for Week 14 on May 3:
- Final Project Report
- Final Team and Self Evaluations: *Please get these to me by Sunday, April 25.*

**Week 13: April 26 – Team meeting time**

**Week 14: May 3**
Take a step back and reflect on the year’s work. Celebration!

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