COURSE SUMMARY AND OBJECTIVES

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 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. Although each student will be assigned to a team, the class will work as a learning community dedicated to the success of all the projects.

RELATED HEALTH MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES

Competencies -Course Focus

- The ability to manage teams, projects and people; to work in change-oriented health care organizations; and mentor a diverse and changing workforce
- The ability to draw implications and conclusions to develop an evolving vision that results in organizational viability
The ability to communicate and interact productively (via listening, speaking and writing) on matters of healthcare with a diverse and changing industry, work force and citizenry

The ability to present convincingly to individuals and groups the evidence to support a point of view, position or recommendation

Relevant Content for the following competencies is also included:

- The ability to use information systems and evidence-based management principles for problem-solving, strategic planning and decision-making and implementing and measuring change
- The ability to synthesize evidence, and apply statistical, financial, economic and cost-effectiveness tools/techniques in organizational analysis
- The ability to measure, monitor and improve safety, quality, access and system/care delivery processes in health care organizations
- The ability to engage in continuous learning; to reflect on and assess one's strengths and developmental needs; to seek feedback from others; and establish and sustain a professional development network

MAJOR LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Capstone integrates knowledge acquired throughout the course of graduate study at NYU/Wagner and provides students the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to apply these competencies in the setting of a fully functioning and complex health care organization.

Students completing the course will have successfully demonstrated the ability to:

- Understand the policy context for their project
- Evaluate the project within a broad policy context
- Be aware of critical research and literature related to the projects content area
- Be familiar with specialized vocabularies required to successfully perform the project
- Identify and 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
- Successfully undertake an end-to-end response to a request for assistance from an organization, to include 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, with timeline and deliverables
  - monitor their progress against the work plan
  - revise the work plan as necessary
  - develop supported and realistic recommendations
• Communicate their work effectively both orally and in writing

Students will also 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

**TEAM ASSIGNMENTS**

Students are assigned to projects based on a number of criteria:

1. Student preferences. Each student will complete a form indicating their preferences after reading a description of all the projects available.

2. Team size is usually 3-5 students. The faculty and client will determine the size of the team required.

3. Some projects will require specific skills and experience. For example, a nurse may be needed to review medical records in a clinically oriented project whereas a finance project may require a background in financial modeling.

Assignments are made by the faculty. As in all professional assignments, this may not result in students getting their first or second choices. Student preferences are important and will be considered strongly in making decisions.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

The class will involve presentations from the instructor and guest speakers, class discussion and team meetings. Course requirements include:

• enrollment in both semesters
• attendance at an Advanced Team Workshop scheduled for the end of August/beginning of September.
• attendance and participation in class activities and team meetings
• completion of assignments on time
• participation in field work
• participation in meetings with clients
• participation in preparation and presentation of findings
EVALUATION CRITERIA

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. We will assign final grades at the end of the second semester.

GRADING CRITERIA

Students will be graded on both the products they deliver to their clients and individual performance. 70% is based on client and faculty evaluations of the work products of the team as identified in the agreement with the client. 30% is based on peer and faculty evaluations of individual performance in the team’s work.

COURSE MILESTONES

The course has a series of milestones that will serve as interim work products. Students are encouraged to set learning goals for themselves at the beginning of the course. These can be modified at the beginning of the second semester based on feedback from faculty, peers and their own self-assessment.

In addition, there is a consistent set of milestones (activities and products) that are required of students. Some suggested time frames for selected milestones are found in parenthesis, though actual timing during the course of the year may vary depending on the specific situation of each team and client.

These milestones include:

- development of team norms/team charter (early October);
- “entry conference” with client and faculty to explain the process of the course, establish relationship, assess the client organization, and gain data to clarify the presenting problem or issue and client’s initial vision of a successful project (mid-October);
- summary by team of first meeting with client and clear statement of the problem (October);
- development of preliminary work agreement and work plan; presentation to class/faculty for feedback prior to client presentation (October);
- meeting with client to finalize work agreement and work plan (October/November);
- end of first semester self, team/peer, and course evaluation; discussion of team process and progress (early December);
- submission to client of “Phase 1” work product (December)
- meeting with client to review progress (January/February)
- outline of final project report to faculty (February);
- First draft of final report (end of March)
• oral presentation of final report to class/faculty for feedback before presentation to client (April);
• final report and presentation to client with faculty (April);
• end-of-semester reflection positioning project in larger issue context (end April);
• end of course self, team/peer and course evaluations (end April);
• presentation for end event (May)

**COURSE WEBSITE**

All students registered for this course can access the course website by going to your NYUHome page (http://home.nyu.edu), where the course is listed if you are registered this semester. It is extremely important that you view the course website regularly, and especially on Friday of each week, to look for announcements.

**TEAM BUDGETS**

Each team has a $500 annual operating budget for their project expenses. In addition, Wagner will continue to offer supplemental travel funding for airfare/train travel for students who must travel outside of NYC for project research. While generous, the supplemental travel funding rarely covers all student expenses, and students who choose projects located outside of NYC should be made aware of this when making project choices. Further information is available in the Capstone Student Handbook on our Blackboard site.

**READINGS**

A Student Capstone Guide is available in the “Course Documents” section of our Blackboard website.

**CLASS SCHEDULE- FIRST SEMESTER**

The list of weeks and topics that follows is preliminary and subject to change. The intent is to use class time in a way that enables teams to produce the highest quality projects on a timely basis and achieve the learning objectives of the course. There will be more class based presentations and discussions early on in the course as well as time for team meetings and consultation with other classmates and faculty during class time. The second semester will allow for greater time for team working sessions. Students should expect to meet weekly as a class or team unless otherwise indicated here or agreed in class.

**TEAM BUILDING SESSIONS**

Sign up for one of the sessions being offered in late August and early September. See information you previously received from David Schachter, Wagner Assistant Dean for Student Affairs
WEEK 1: 9/10

Review of syllabus. Discussion of the time table, proposals, reports and presentations.

Discussion of projects with clients.

Assignment: Read client proposals on Blackboard before class. Submit student information form in class.

WEEK 2: 9/17

Discussion of work agreements. No client meetings.

WEEK 3: 9/24

Discussion of projects with clients

WEEK 4: 10/1

Discussion of projects with clients. Students submit project preferences. Team assignments posted on course website by October 3.

Assignment: schedule and conduct initial client meeting during the period from October 8 to October 18. Teams should obtain the professor’s date/time availability as part of the meeting scheduling process. The professor should be present at the meeting. Email agenda for client meeting to professor before meeting for feedback.

WEEK 5: 10/8

Class session will focus on preparation for initial client meeting as a class and in teams. Presentation on establishment of team norms. Initial team meeting to organize and develop list of norms and agree on approach to gathering initial information about the client. Teams create agenda for first client meeting.

October 15: No Class - NYU Holiday

WEEK 6: 10/22

Assignment for class:

1. Team Charter due
2. Submit in class a one to two page memo summarizing your team’s findings from the initial client meeting, including a clear statement of the problem.
Teams will work together in class on a draft working agreement and work plan for the client. Once completed and agreed with the client, this will constitute the “contract” for the capstone project.

Assignment: Submit draft working agreement and work plan to faculty on Friday, October 26.

WEEK 7: 10/29
Team meetings. Review working agreement and work plan with faculty.
Discussion of ethical issues and confidentiality.

WEEK 8: 11/5
Submit revised working agreement and work plan.

WEEK 9: 11/12
Team meetings.

Assignment: Working agreement sent to client by November 12.

WEEK 10: 11/19
Short presentation by each team of their working agreement and work plan.
Team meetings.

WEEK 11: 11/26

Assignment: Final working agreement signed by client by 11/26.

Progress review of initial stages of client work. Each team will present particular issues they face in working with clients so far, and their plans to develop and sustain relationship going forward.

Team Assignment: Submit outline of Phase 1 report to faculty

WEEK 12: 12/3
Team meetings. Self-assessment and peer evaluation instructions distributed.

WEEK 13: 12/10
Team meetings.
Individual Assignment due: First written self assessment sent by email to faculty

WEEK 14: 12/17

Assignments:

1. Peer review of team members submitted in class.
2. Complete end of semester course evaluation in class
3. Submit draft of Phase 1 report to professor

Revise and submit Phase 1 report to client and professor by date indicated on work agreement with client.

Faculty will meet with each team individually to review semester progress, discuss any fieldwork that may be planned and highlight any issues for second semester.

CLASS SCHEDULE: SECOND SEMESTER

During this semester, much of the time will be set aside for teams to meet on their own or with us. The main emphasis is on time spent working with teams and final products, and we can be flexible about the need for formal class meeting times as the semester progresses. However, as needed, we will schedule problem-solving or skill-building sessions, so you must be available every Monday night during class time. Also, for planning purposes, we've listed some potential deadlines, but these are preliminary and could change.

Major milestones for the Spring semester (a detailed schedule will be provided at the first class in January).

January-February  In class summary of project status. (this is each team summarizing where they are with the project, successes & challenges) Mid-project meeting with client. Follow project work plan and submit reports as required by working agreement with client.

March  Outline of entire report due. Draft reports reviewed with faculty and, where appropriate, with client. Effective presentation session.

April  Oral presentation to client. Submission of final draft report to client. Submission of draft report and scheduling of the oral presentation requires faculty approval.

May  Final revised and approved report due. Capstone end event. Poster sessions on projects presented.

While two semesters appears to be a significant amount of time, we must impress upon
you that this course requires weekly effort by each project team and team member in order to successfully complete the course.