COURSE SUMMARY AND OBJECTIVES

This is a two-term course in which students work in teams to perform a project for a client health care, non-profit or public agency. The course will guide students in defining a complex problem and developing solutions for the client in an interactive manner. Students will design the approach, conduct the data collection and analysis, and present findings, orally and in writing, to the client.

Capstone is learning in action. Part of the core curriculum of the Masters 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 -- to address challenges, solve problems, conduct research or identify opportunities for organizational improvement. Capstone contributes to the students’ education, the client organization and is a university resource for the public good.

Capstone is a rigorous course with a high set of performance expectations. It draws from previous policy, management, and statistics courses at Wagner, and guides students in a year-long effort that integrates and applies lessons from these courses. Learning will also come from shared experiences in class as the course progresses. Although each student will be part of a team, the class will also operate as a single team dedicated to the success of all the projects. The work of the capstone is both a critical learning experience and an act of public service.
Faculty will identify potential projects which will be presented by potential clients for student consideration during the first and third class sessions. Students will then be assigned to a project based on a number of factors, including student preference, skills and team size. Teams are usually comprised of four or five students, who bring a mix of skills and experience and have expressed an interest in the project. To the degree possible, students will get one of their top choices of projects.

**KEY COMPETENCIES ADDRESSED IN THE COURSE**

- The ability to manage teams, projects and people; to work in change oriented health care organizations; and mentor a diverse and changing workforce *(Course Focus)*
- The ability to present convincingly to individuals and groups the evidence to support a point of view, position or recommendation *(Course Focus)*
- The ability to communicate and interact productively (via listening, speaking and writing) on matters of healthcare with a diverse and changing industry, workforce and citizenry *(Course Focus)*
- The ability to draw implications and conclusions to develop an evolving vision that results in organizational viability *(Course Focus)*
- The ability to use information systems and evidence-based management principles for problem-solving, strategic planning and decision-making and implementing and measuring change *(Relevant Content)*
- The ability to synthesize evidence, and apply statistical, financial, economic and cost-effectiveness tools/techniques in organizational analysis *(Relevant Content)*
- The ability to measure, monitor and improve safety, Quality, access and system/care delivery processes in health care organizations *(Relevant Content)*
- The ability to engage in continuous learning; to reflect on and assess one’s strengths and developmental need; to seek feedback from others; and establish and sustain a professional development network *(Relevant Content)*

**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

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

There are no required textbooks for the course. Reading assignments for specific sessions are posted on BlackBoard, under Course Documents.

Some recommended reading:
• Brassard M, Ritter D, Oddo F, MacCausland J. The Memory Jogger II: tools for continuous improvement and effective planning, 2nd ed. Salem NH: Goal/QPC; 2010.
• Kovner AR, Fine DJ, D’Aquila R. Evidence-Based Management in Healthcare. Chicago, IL: Health Administration Press; 2009.
• FYI - Website with excellent educational and reference material relevant to the course: Center for Evidence-Based Management - www.cebma.org

METHODS OF INSTRUCTION

The class will involve the following methods of instruction:
✓ Presentations by faculty
✓ Class discussion
✓ Team meetings during and outside of class
✓ Outside speakers
✓ Other readings as assigned
COURSE ELEMENTS AND TIMETABLE

Students will work in teams on a project that is expected to require the entire academic year for completion. The course can be divided into the following components:

Project Identification and Team Assignments – up to 4 weeks
Workplan Development – 4-5 weeks
Workplan Implementation – 4-5 months
Final Report Drafting and Revisions – 4-8 weeks
Prepare and Deliver Client Final Briefing – 2-3 weeks

TEAM BUDGETS

Each team has a $500 annual operating budget for their project expenses. In addition, NYU/Wagner offers 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.

CLASS SCHEDULE

The list of weeks and topics that follows is preliminary and subject to change. Note that it is front-loaded with information and skill building sessions in the first term, and project tracking in the second. The intent is to use the class time in a way that enables teams to produce the highest quality projects on a timely basis. It is likely that we will not meet as a full class each week as the year goes on, to allow teams a chance to use class time to meet. It is also likely that some weeks will be used for faculty-team consultation. Students should expect to meet weekly, whether as a class or as a team.

FALL TERM

SESSION 1: SEPTEMBER 10, 2012 – Overview of Capstone Course; Project Presentations

- Overview and introductions
- Review of syllabus and clarification of course organization and expectations
- Project presentations
- Students complete brief bio form to assist in project placement

Readings:
- Review Capstone proposals posted on Blackboard
- Review Student Capstone Guide posted on Blackboard

SESSION 2: SEPTEMBER 17, 2012 - Overview of Capstone (continued)

- What is capstone really about?
  - Presentation on stakeholders groups (clients, students, faculty, and Wagner)
- Discussion of Capstone by former student(s)
SESSION 3: SEPTEMBER 24, 2012 - Project Presentations; Understanding the Client, Consultant & Team

- Project presentations (continued)
- Students to complete project preference form - due September 26, 2012
  - Include a ½ to 1 page memo stating why you are interested in and especially qualified to participate in your top two project choices

SESSION 4: October 1, 2012 – Team Assignments; Preparation for Initial Client Meeting

- The focus of the session will be three-fold:
  - Assignments to client projects
    - Discussion of team dynamics, team charters and the usefulness of creating and continually refining team “norms” and performance expectations.
  - Team charters:
    - Clients and proposed projects
    - Team norms
      - Creation of team charter, based on norms discussions
      - Each team will designate one member to serve as faculty liaison and one team member to serve as client liaison
  - Preparing for the first client meeting
    - What problem does the client want to solve?
    - What is the client’s expectation of the project management process?
    - What should you learn from the meeting?
    - How can you help your client give you that information?

Readings:

Additional reading material you may find helpful:

Deliverable:
- E-mail team charter to faculty on or before October 8
- To the extent possible, schedule and conduct initial client meeting during the period from October 8 to October 19. Assigned faculty must be present at the initial client meeting. Note that subsequent class discussions and deliverables presume an initial meeting is held within this period. Prepare and submit to faculty by e-mail a two-page memo summarizing the team’s findings from the initial meeting with the client, within 72 hours of the meeting.
SESSION 5: OCTOBER 8, 2012 - Organizing the Project: Components of a Work Plan; an Evidence-Based Approach to Designing and Implementing a Management Improvement Process

- How do you go about helping the client solve the problem?
  - Discussion of the elements of a successful work plan -- project objectives, milestones, and resource requirements
- How do you conduct evidenced-based research on a program/agency or about a specific problem?
  - What information, both within the client organization and external to it, is relevant to achieving your desired results and where can it be found?
  - What data resources are available through various means, including interviews, surveys, literature searches, focus groups, and their application to the team projects?
- Ethics related issues [i.e. does the project qualify as a research project for which Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval is needed?]
- Team meetings:
  - What more do you need from and need to know about the client?
- Students will have an opportunity to review previous capstone work plans

Readings:

OCTOBER 15, 2012 – Fall Break - No Scheduled Class Meeting

SESSION 6: OCTOBER 22, 2012 – Client Meeting Follow-up; Team Meetings

- Teams will make a 10 minute presentation on their initial client meeting
  - What was learned?
  - What will be changed from the initial proposal?
  - What are next steps?
- Remaining session time will be devoted to team meetings with faculty, focused on the development of work plans, in particularly identifying milestones for the team. Background
information gathered about client and in support of the project will be discussed in the meeting.


- In team meeting with assigned faculty, discuss plans for data gathering, literature review, creation of task lists, and project milestones

**SESSION 8: NOVEMBER 5, 2011 – Capstone Presentation: Qualitative Data Gathering and Analysis**

ANITA KAPLAN  
Vice President  
Moskowitz Jacobs, Inc.

- Individual team meetings with Anita Kaplan

**Deliverable due November 12:**

- Proposed project description and work plan, with milestones, for your engagement with the client. Note responsibilities of team members. Written copies to be prepared and e-mailed to faculty in advance of Session 9 class meeting.
- Schedule client meeting to present revised/refined project description and work plan. Meetings should take place between November 13th and November 21st.

**SESSION 9: NOVEMBER 12, 2012 – Work Plan Rehearsals**

- Project work plan presentations  
  - Each team will present a revised project description and work plan to the class for feedback. This will be a rehearsal of the presentation to the client. Following the presentations, faculty will be available to meet with the teams and with individual students about their progress
- At the end of the class, mid-year evaluation forms will be distributed. Forms will include a self-evaluation, evaluation of other team members and a course evaluation. Completed mid-year team/peer evaluation form are due on December 3, 2012.
- Team meetings to discuss work plans, incorporating class feedback

**SESSION 10: NOVEMBER 19, 2012 – Team Progress Review & Team Meetings (Locations TBD)**

- Team meetings with assigned faculty  
  - Team dynamics  
    - Have team norms been useful?  
      - Have they been reshaped/discarded/ignored?  
    - Strategies to cope with common problems  
    - Discussion of team/peer evaluation process
SESSION 11: NOVEMBER 26, 2012 - Managing the Client and the Team - In Team Meetings with assigned faculty (Locations TBD)

- Teams will present results of work plan meetings with clients
- Team meetings to discuss progress and finalization of work plans, incorporating feedback from client

Deliverable due Dec. 3:
- After final review with professor, work plans should be sent to clients and project work should begin. The work plans should include signature lines for team members and for an authorized representative of the client. Signed copies of final work plans to be sent to professor.

SESSION 12: DECEMBER 3, 2012 – Task List/Project Milestones (Dec/Jan) – (Location TBD)

- Team meetings to continue work on projects
  - Discussion of work to be accomplished over the semester break
    - Will the team need to get information from or about the users of the client services?
    - Have you identified what you need to know and how/when/where you are going to get that information?

Readings:

SESSION 13: DECEMBER 10, 2012 - Last Scheduled Class of Fall Semester

- Summary of results of course evaluations
- Discussion of requests by students/teams for additional resources
- Team meetings

SESSION 14: DECEMBER 12, 2012 – Optional Class/Team Meetings (Location TBD)

- Students may wish to schedule an individual meeting with faculty during winter break to review/discuss feedback from the mid-year evaluation, their progress during the first semester and goals for the second semester.

- Each team should schedule a meeting with assigned faculty during winter break (this can be by conference call) to review/discuss the team’s progress during the first semester, tasks to be accomplished during the Winter Break and team activities for the second semester.
SPRING TERM

The second term is structured to allow for regularly scheduled check-ins and consultation among teams, between teams and with faculty on progress in meeting project objectives and milestones defined by the work plans and assignments in this syllabus. Faculty are available by appointment to meet with teams throughout the term as well as during scheduled class time. Instructional presentations in class will be modified as necessary, based on common problems and skill-building activities suggested by the teams’ experiences.

The two major products of the second term are the project Presentation and the project Report.

- The Presentation is the event at which the team presents the client with a summary of findings and recommendations and an overview of the methodology used. It may include the use of visual presentation tools, such as handouts, transparencies, PowerPoint, etc. It may be an interactive session at which the team could be asked to explain or discuss findings, recommendations or methodology and to include/exclude or emphasize or de-emphasize parts of the presentation in the final report.

- The Report is the final document that states the problem, describes in more detail the methodology used to address the problem, proposes and explains the conclusions and may include the source material used to support the report. It may contain other relevant information such as the result of a literature search on the topic or whatever else the consulting team thinks will be useful to the client.

- Both the presentation and the report are expected to be professional products, reflecting graduate level work and of immediate use to the client.

SESSION 15: JANUARY 28, 2013 - First Day of 2nd Semester

- Review any revisions in syllabus for second semester based on course evaluation.
- Outline and format of final presentation & written report (45 minutes)
- Team meetings

SESSION 16: February 4, 2013 – Guest Speaker - TBA

What Makes a Client Engagement Successful?

SESSION 17: February 11, 2013 - Team Meetings (Location TBD)

- Team meetings

Deliverable due March 4:
- Preliminary outline of written report
FEBRUARY 20, 2012 – Presidents’ Day - No Scheduled Class Meeting


Will Carlin
Co-Managing Partner – Vshift
Kimmel Center for Student Life – 4th Floor

SESSION 19: March 4, 2013 – Milestone Check In Team Meetings (Location TBD)

• Team meetings
  o Discuss preliminary outline of written report
  o Review task list/task accomplishments/any interim deliverables
  o Discuss important findings and most important recommendations (to date)

SESSION 20: MARCH 11, 2013 – Team Meetings (Location TBD)

• Team meetings

Deliverable due March 25:
• Rough draft of Report (to include organization, overview of methodology and key ideas on which presentation will be built (need not include final wording). Draft should be e-mailed to professor and delivered in hard copy form at class.

March 18, 2013 – Spring Break - No Scheduled Class Meeting
Team Meetings May Be Held at Option of Team

SESSION 21: MARCH 25, 2013 – First Draft of Written Report/ Team Meetings (Location TBD)

• Team meetings
  o Review first draft of written report with faculty in team meeting

Each team will schedule a final presentation to the client, to take place (to the extent possible, during the period from April 10 through April 22. Assigned faculty must be present for the final client meeting. Teams will sign up for a “rehearsal” presentation to the class on one of the two dates that precede the presentation

SESSION 22: April 1, 2013 – Presentation Rehearsals

• Rehearsals
  • Team meetings

SESSION 23: April 8, 2013 – Presentation Rehearsals

• Rehearsals
  • Team meetings
SESSION 24: APRIL 15, 2013 - Team Meetings (Location TBD)

Continue work on final presentation and project

Due April 22:
• Final draft of written team report

SESSION 25: APRIL 22, 2013 – Self and Peer Evaluations; Team Meetings (Location TBD)

• Team meetings
  o Review final draft of written report*
    ▪ Incorporate any changes as per the final presentation
• Discussion of year-end evaluations and Capstone Expo
  o Final course self and peer evaluation forms will be distributed; evaluations to be returned in class on May 8th, or prior to class that evening

The final written report must be submitted for faculty review no later than April 29, 2013; the final report must be reviewed by faculty prior to submission it to the client

SESSION 26: APRIL 29, 2013 - NO FORMAL CLASS MEETING. CLASS TIME RESERVED; TEAMS ARE FREE TO MEET ON THEIR OWN

SESSION 27: May 8, 2013 - Final Scheduled Class

• Report on final presentations
• Review of class and lessons learned
• Hand in bound copies of final report
• Turn in team/self evaluations
• Course evaluation
• Celebration!

SESSION 28: May 14, 2013 - CAPSTONE EXPO; 5:00-6:30pm; location TBA
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Following is a summary of course requirements:

✓ Enrollment in both semesters
✓ Attendance and participation in class activities
✓ Completion of assignments on time
✓ Participation in field work
✓ Participation in meetings with the client
✓ Participation in presentation of findings

EVALUATION CRITERIA & GRADING

Final grades are assigned at the end of the second semester. Students will be given two credits for the fall semester and two credits for the spring semester of capstone. It is the custom in capstone to report end of first semester grades as IP (Incomplete/Passing) to reflect the “work in progress” nature of the year long project.

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. The final work product is expected to be a professional, graduate level document clearly delineating the problem faced by the organization, the steps taken by the team to address the problem, and recommendations. Findings/recommendations should be comprehensively stated, specifically citing both relevant research and rationale, as well as indicating the sequence of steps suggested.

In order to receive a passing grade, students must meet these minimum requirements:

• Attend scheduled class sessions.
• Participate actively in team meetings.
• Complete specific tasks assigned by the team and identified in the team workplan.
• Work with other team members to produce a written report and to make an oral presentation to the client.

Within the range of passing grades (A to C), differential assessment will be made primarily on the quality of the written final report and briefing. Grades are the responsibility of the faculty, but we will consult the clients regarding their judgment of the quality of the written product and the team’s overall work. All other things being equal, each team member will receive the same grade based on the faculty evaluation of the team’s written product. However, in circumstances where there is clear evidence of uneven contributions among team members, adjustments may be made to individual team member’s grades. Since such situations typically are identifiable in advance of submission of the final report, individuals who may be graded differently than the rest of the team typically will be so advised in advance. Written interim peer evaluations will be required by the faculty near the middle of the academic year, and another written peer evaluation will be sought near the end of the team’s work. These peer evaluations (as well as the faculty members’ independent observation and judgment) will provide a basis for assigning any differential grades among team members.
ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

The Mission of NYU Wagner is:

... to be a path-breaking leadership school of public service, with a faculty of thought leaders who re-frame the way people understand and act on issues of public importance, and graduates who are bold, well-prepared change makers who expertly navigate real-world complexity and produce results that matter.

Academic Integrity is vital to this mission, to education at NYU Wagner and membership in the Wagner community.

It is a core value. It forms the foundation of trust among students, and between students and teachers. Cheating has no place in our community. Academic dishonesty or other offenses against the community are not individual acts affecting only the individuals involved. Cheating violates our communal trust in each other; it is an offense against our community of scholarship. If tolerated, it undermines all we stand for. Honesty matters at Wagner, just as it does in the broader world of public service.

It is a shared value. Administration, faculty and students each play a vital part in promoting, securing and nurturing it. I invite you to visit the NYU Wagner website and review our Academic Code and Academic Oath (www.wagner.nyu.edu/current/policies), as well as the Wagner Student Association’s Code of Professional Responsibility. If at any time you have a question about Academic Integrity or suspect a violation of our code, seek guidance from any member of the faculty or administration.

It is a promoted value. It is incumbent on all members of the community to promote it, through scholarship, responsible participation in School events, assistance to other community members who are struggling with it, and by upholding the codes of the school and the Wagner Student Association.

Included below is a list of resources for understanding and avoiding plagiarism:

- "Plagiarism: What is It and How to Recognize and Avoid It," The Writing Center at Indiana University, www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/plagiarism.html
- “Principles Regarding Academic Integrity,? Northwestern University, www.northwestern.edu/uacc/plagiar.html

Reference Citation:

- For research resources regarding appropriate citation of the many different sources you will use in your work, see Writing on the NYU/Wagner webpage, under "Current Students/Academic Services."
- The use of the AMA Manual of Style is recommended for reference citation. A quick reference guide to this style is posted on Blackboard.

COURSE MILESTONES

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 self assessment.

A consistent set of milestones (activities and products) are required of students. These milestones are integral to successful project management and, while there may be some variations depending on team and client circumstances, course instruction is geared to sequential, and successful, accomplishment of the milestones. Milestones include:

- Team Project Assignment – October 1, 2012
- Development of team norms and charter – October 1, 2012
- Entry conference with client and faculty – October 8-19, 2012
- Development of preliminary work plan and presentation of it to faculty and class for feedback, prior to presentation to client – November 12, 2012
- Presentation of work plan to client – November 13-21, 2012
- Final work plan/work agreement in place – December 3, 2012
- End of first semester: self, team/peer, and course evaluation – December 10, 2012
- Outline of final written report – March 4, 2013
- First draft of final written report – March 25, 2013
- Rehearsal of final client presentation to class/faculty for feedback before presentation to client – April 1 or 8, 2013
- Final presentation to client – April 10-22, 2013
- Final draft of written report – April 22, 2013
- Submission of written report – April 29, 2013
- End of course self and team/peer evaluations – May 8, 2013
- Capstone Expo - TBA