COURSE SUMMARY AND OBJECTIVES

Capstone is a two-term course in which students work in teams to perform a project for a health care organization. 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 service for a major health care organization. Over the course of the academic year students will work in teams -- to address challenges, solve problems, conduct research or identify opportunities for organizational improvement.

Capstone is a rigorous course with a high set of performance expectations. It draws from previous policy and management 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 a critical learning experience and a professional service for a complex health care organization.
Course faculty will identify potential projects which will be presented by potential clients for student consideration during the second class session. 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 ADDRESS IN THE COURSE

The final project report, the final project presentation to the client, as well engagement in class discussion and Capstone team meetings will be used to assess progress against the competencies listed below. No student will receive a B or higher without demonstrating satisfactory progress toward mastery of each competency. The level of competency expected to be achieved is denoted in brackets according to the following key:

[1] = Basic: Foundational understanding of knowledge/skill/competency

[2] = Intermediate: Student demonstrates greater depth of understanding of this knowledge/skill/competency and can use this ability to analyze a problem

[3] = Advanced: Student demonstrates expertise in this knowledge/skill/competency and can use this ability to evaluate, judge, and synthesize information

- The ability to manage teams, projects and people; to work in change-oriented health care organizations; and mentor a diverse and changing workforce (FO/CF/TP/SA) [3]
- The ability to draw implications and conclusions to develop an evolving vision that results in organizational viability (FR/FP) [3]
- 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 (FO/CF/TP/SA/FR/FP) [3]
- The ability to present convincingly to individuals and groups the evidence to support a point of view, position or recommendation (FR/FP/FO) [3]
- The ability to measure, monitor and improve safety, quality, access and system/care delivery processes in health care organizations (FR/FP/CF/TP/SA) [3]
- The ability to use information systems and evidence-based management principles for problem-solving, strategic planning and decision-making and implementing and measuring change (FR/FP/CF/TP/SA) [3]
- The ability to synthesize evidence, and apply statistical, financial, economic and cost-effectiveness tools/techniques in organizational analysis (FR/FP) [3]
- 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 (FO/TP/SA) [3]

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1 FO – Faculty Observation; CF – Client Feedback; TP – Team/Peer Evaluation; SA – Self Assessment; FR – Final Capstone Report; FP – Final Client Presentation
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 organizational context for their project
- Evaluate the project within a broad organizational context
- Demonstrate an understanding of information architecture, the scholarly research cycle, and the context of information in the hierarchy of research evidence.
- Use the evidence-based paradigm to frame an answerable research question, select databases, develop an effective search strategy, locate, retrieve, and identify the tools to critically appraise the literature of healthcare management.
- 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
EVALUATION CRITERIA & GRADING

Final grades are assigned at the end of the second semester. Grades are based on faculty assessment of the overall quality of the Capstone Team’s final written report (including work plan, client contract, search strategy, research design, literature and data collection, analysis and recommendations and timeliness) and an oral presentation of the work to the client. Client feedback will be sought and considered in overall evaluation by faculty. An overall team grade will be assigned to the work of the team; however, each team member’s grade may then be adjusted based upon peer feedback and faculty assessment of the student’s participation in class and in team activities (see page 4 – Guiding Principles for Class and Team Participation).

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.

The final grade is assigned at the end of the second semester. Students will be given 1.5 credits for the fall semester and 1.5 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. Faculty will provide teams with informal interim feedback of the progress of their work at the beginning of the Spring semester.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR CLASS AND TEAM PARTICIPATION

The best way to learn is to actively participate in your education. In this class, participation is defined in terms of the quality of contributions to class and team discussion. There are four prerequisites for successful participation in the work of your team and contributions to the success of Capstone:

- **Be on time.** If you’re not here, you can’t contribute (to class or to team discussions). Taking this course is a tacit agreement with your professor and your team colleagues. I understand there may be infrequent but good reasons why a student may have to miss a class – work, illness, personal emergency or when you are late through no fault of your own. Nevertheless, understand in this course especially, being part of a larger team of colleagues is a major learning objective.

- **Be prepared.** If you have to be here you may as well be prepared. This will help you participate and get the most out of class. It’s a good idea to read ahead in the assignments just to cover any last minute emergency. If you are unprepared and are called on to participate, just say “pass.”

- **Step up.** View the course as a safe test of assertiveness training (speaking up) and filter control (thinking before you speak). Speak in a loud enough voice so that faculty and your classmates can hear what you have to say. I call on students who don’t raise your hands to give everyone a chance to participate.
• **Be Polite.** Feel free to be critical of ideas, but not persons. When you disagree with what someone has to say in class, be courteous. Don’t interrupt. This is how you would want to be treated if you have something to contribute to the discussion.

**FEEDBACK AND QUESTIONS**

I am committed to making this course a valuable learning experience for you. Mid-way through the course I will spend part of a class session evaluating our progress, and will make any necessary changes to keep us on track. I welcome your feedback regarding class at any time in the semester. Also please feel free to ask questions as they arise. It is easiest to reach me by e-mail. I am available to set up an appointment with you as necessary.

If you have a disability that requires special accommodation, please let me know ASAP so that I can be helpful to you.

**INSTRUCTOR BIOS**

**John Donnellan** is Adjunct Professor of Health Policy & Management at NYU/Wagner. He received a Master’s Degree in Public Administration from NYU/Wagner in 1984 and joined the adjunct faculty in 2006. He was recognized by NYU/Wagner as Distinguished Adjunct of the Year in 2011.

Professor Donnellan retired from a forty year career in Federal Service in 2009, thirty-seven of which were spent serving veterans in the Department of Veterans Affairs Healthcare System. From 1991 until his retirement in 2009 he was Director/CEO of the VA Medical Center New York and later the consolidated New York City VA New York Harbor Healthcare System. For his leadership as a federal executive he was awarded the President’s Distinguished Senior Executive Rank Award (1999) and the President’s Meritorious Senior Executive Rank Award (1996, 2002, 2008).

At NYU/Wagner, Professor Donnellan teaches Capstone, health policy and management and management ethics. He is also a member of the Scientific Review Committee of the NYU-NYC Health and Hospital Corporation Clinical Translational Science Institute (CTSI).

Professor Donnellan is a Fellow in the American College of Healthcare Executives (ACHE). He is the author of a number of articles on health services management in ACHE publications, and serves frequently as faculty at ACHE seminars.

**Susan Kaplan Jacobs** is the Health Sciences Librarian/Associate Curator at NYU Bobst Library. Since 1998, she has had primary responsibility for collection development, instruction, reference and faculty liaison for the NYU College of Nursing, Steinhardt School departments of Occupational Therapy, Communication Sciences & Disorders, and Physical Therapy. As adjunct assistant professor of public administration at NYU/Wagner since 2008, she has taught
“Locating Evidence” to nurse leaders every spring. She holds an M.L.S. from St. John's University, an M.A. in Media Ecology from NYU/Steinhardt, and a B.S. in Nursing from the University of Colorado. Selected publications and c.v. at http://guides.nyu.edu/skj1

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

There is one required textbook for this course:


All other assigned readings will be made available on NYU Classes. There are some excellent textbooks on consulting, teamwork and project management tools that you may wish to examine and consider purchasing.

CLASS SCHEDULE

The list of sessions, topics and dates 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 class time in a way that enables teams to produce the highest quality projects on a timely basis. **We will not meet as a full class each week but student teams should plan to meet as a team at least once weekly.** Some weeks will be used for faculty-team consultation.

**FALL TERM:**

**Fall 2016 full class meeting dates and topics:**

- September 5, 2017  Course overview; project presentations; team assignment process
- September 12, 2017  Team assignments; team processes/dynamics/charters; course overview continued
- September 19, 2017  Client relations: the initial client meeting; the Capstone experience
- September 26, 2017  Negotiating the contract
- October 3, 2017  Evidence-based management; framing the research question
- October 17, 2017  Organizing the project: developing a work plan; negotiating the contract
- October 24, 2017  Managing the literature review
- October 31, 2017  Gathering qualitative data
- December 5, 2017  Fall Semester summary; winter break task list; Spring Semester preparation

**Fall 2016 open team meeting dates***:

- October 10, 2017
- November 7, 2017
- November 14, 2017
- November 21, 2017
- November 28, 2017

* Teams should plan to meet at least once each week throughout the Fall and Spring semesters, and on a regular basis throughout the Winter Break. As the work of your project progresses you will likely find it necessary to meet more frequently, either in person or via conference call/virtual media. During the Fall and Spring semesters our classroom is available to you for team meetings every Tuesday evening from 4:55-6:35pm on the dates shown above. I will be in attendance on the dates of the full class meetings, and also available as necessary on the open team meeting dates. Teams should also
schedule a meeting with me during winter break to review/discuss group and individual progress during the first semester and goals for the second semester.
FALL 2017 FULL CLASS SESSIONS

Session 1 (September 5): Overview of the Course; Project Presentations and Team Selection Process
- Introductions
- Overview of syllabus and the capstone process
- Project Presentations
- Project selection & team assignment process

Readings:
- Course syllabus
- Review Capstone proposals posted on NYU Classes

Assignment: Complete & submit project preference worksheet by September 9

Session 2 (September 12): Team assignments, team dynamics; course overview continued
- Project & team assignments
- Team dynamics; team processes; team charters
- Course overview (continued)

Readings:
- Sample team charters ON NYU CLASSES

Assignment:
Team Charter due September 16
Schedule and conduct initial client meeting between September 20 and October 6 – Professor Donnellan must be present for this meeting
Session 3 (September 19): Team client relations; the initial client meeting; the Capstone experience

- Team-client relations
- Preparation for initial client meeting
  - What problem does the client want solved?
  - What are the client’s expectations?
  - What should you learn from the initial client meeting?
  - How can you help your client give you that information?
  - Is Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval necessary?
- Discussion of Capstone by former students

Session 4 (September 26): Negotiating the contract; discussion of Capstone by EMPA Nurse Leader Alumni

- Negotiating the contract

Readings:

Session 5 (October 3): Evidence-based management; framing the research question

- Steps of Evidence-Based Practice (EBM)
- Framing the research question – a problem and an intervention

Readings:
- Kahn CR. Picking a research problem – the critical decision. NEJM. 1994; 330(21): 1530-1533. ON NYU CLASSES

Assignment: submit preliminary research question(s) by October 13
Session 6 (October 17): The Contract and the Work Plan

- How do you go about helping your client define and systematically answer their specific question(s)?
  - 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?
  - Discussion of the elements of a successful contract and work plan -- project objectives, milestones, and resource requirements

- Team meetings:
  - Data gathering and work plan

Readings:
- Sample Contracts and Work Plans [ON NYU CLASSES]

Session 7 (October 24): Managing the Literature Review – Susan Jacobs

- Locating and filtering evidence
- Anatomy of a database
- Limiting search results
- Evaluating results/bias
- Critiquing tools/applicability and actionability
- Citing: Information literature and plagiarism

Readings:
- TBA

Session 8 (October 31): Gathering Data

- Quantitative v. Qualitative Data
- Market research – understanding the market
  - Gathering information
    - Primary data
    - Secondary data
  - Interviews
  - Focus Groups
  - Surveys

Readings:

Assignments:

*Prepare draft of Work Plan by November 7*
*Schedule meeting with client to discuss and finalize work plan by November 17*
*Submit signed contract by December 1*

**Session 9 (December 5): Semester Summary**

- Fall Semester summary
- Winter break task list
- Spring Semester preparation

Suggested readings during Winter Break:


**Reminder:** Teams should schedule a meeting/conference call with Professor Donnellan during winter break to review/discuss group and individual progress during the first semester and goals for the second semester.
SPRING TERM:

The second term is structured to allow for regularly scheduled check-ins and consultation among teams and between teams and faculty on progress in meeting project objectives and milestones defined by the work plans and assignments in this syllabus, particularly final products. Faculty are available by appointment to meet with teams throughout the term as well as during scheduled class time. 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. This will be an interactive session at which the team will be asked to explain or discuss findings, recommendations or methodology and to include/exclude, 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.

Spring 2017 full class meeting dates and topics:

- January 23, 2018  Deliverables: the final report and presentation
- March 5, 2018  Communication and presentation (Monday)
- April 3, 2018  Team presentation rehearsals
- April 24, 2018  Final class session; final report due
- May 8, 2018  NYU/Wagner Capstone Expo

Spring 2017 open team meeting dates*:

- January 30, 2018
- February 6, 2018
- February 13, 2018
- February 20, 2018
- February 27, 2018
- March 20, 2018
- March 27, 2018
- April 10, 2018
- April 17, 2018

* Teams should plan to meet one or more times each week. Our classroom is available to you for team meetings every Tuesday evening from 4:55-6:35pm on the dates shown above. I will be in attendance on the dates of the full class meetings, and also available as necessary on the open team meeting dates.
SPRING 2018 FULL CLASS SESSIONS

Session 10 (January 23): Project Deliverables: the final presentation & the final report

- Syllabus for spring semester
- Preparing the final report
- Preparing the final presentation

Readings:
- Damschroder LJ, Aron DC, Keith RE, et al. Fostering implementation of health services research findings into practice; a consolidated framework for advancing implementation science. *Implementation Science*. 2009; 4(50). ON NYU CLASSES

Session 11 (Monday – March 5): Communication and presentation

- Telling a compelling story
- Guest Speaker: Will Carlin

*Note: This session will be held at the Kimmel Center for University Life, 60 Washington Square South, NYC, 4th Floor – Eisner & Lubin Auditorium*

Readings:
  - Organize your thoughts 47-50
  - Apply storytelling principles 63-64
  - Craft the beginning 67-70
  - Make the ending powerful 73-4
  - Storyboard one idea per slide 123-126
  - Rehearse your material well 155-158
  - Get the most out of your Q & A 187-190

Assignments:
Submit current version of slides for final presentation by March 18
Schedule Final Client Presentation: April 4 - April 20 – Professor Donnellan must attend
Session 12 (April 3): Client Presentation Rehearsals (continued)

- Rehearsal of client presentation by teams

Readings:
  - Audience 1-26
  - Impact 205-222

Assignments:
Present findings and recommendations to the client by April 20
Submit draft of final report by April 8
Submit final report for faculty review by April 22; to client by May 1

Session 13 (April 24): Course Summary

- Turn in final report
- Summation
- Celebration

Session 14 (May 8): Capstone Expo

- Location TBA
COURSE MILESTONES

Various activities and products at specific milestones are required to be completed by teams. 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:

Sept 12       Selection of Teams  
Sept 19       Team Charter Finalized  
Oct 6         Initial Client Meeting – by Oct 6 – Prof. Donnellan must attend  
Nov 7         Draft Work Plan  
Nov 17        Work Plan Presented to/Discussed with Client  
Dec 1         Signed Work Plan/Contract Executed with Client  
Apr 3         In Class presentation rehearsals  
Apr 4 - 20    Presentation to the Client – Prof. Donnellan must attend  
Apr 22        Final Report Due for Faculty Review  
May 1         Final Report Due to Client

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.
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."
- All references must be appropriately cited.

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