

SENIOR CAPSTONE FACULTY HANDBOOK

A resource guide for PSU University Studies Capstone Faculty



Developed by the Office of University Studies



Portland State
UNIVERSITY

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WHAT IS THE SENIOR CAPSTONE?

The Senior Capstone is a six-credit, community-based learning course. It is the senior-level component of the University Studies general education program at Portland State University. Capstones are interdisciplinary. Students from a variety of majors, under the supervision of a faculty member, work together in collaboration with community partners to address a real community issue. Each Capstone results in a final product that brings closure to the students' experience. Capstone students work in teams to create this product. In addition to the final product, many Capstones require a weekly service-learning commitment to the community partner agency.

Every Capstone addresses the four University Studies' goals. Throughout the Capstone experience, the four goals shape both the course and community project.

The goals are as follows:

- Inquiry and Critical Thinking
- Communication
- Diversity, Equity and Social Justice
- Ethics and Social Responsibility

For more information about the Senior Capstone and University Studies, see: <http://www.pdx.edu/unst>.

COMBINING SERVICE AND LEARNING: ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

The following principles guide our development of effective Capstone courses. Adapted from *The Wingspread Report: Ten Principles of Good Practice* (1993). Howard, J (Ed.) and *Praxis I: A faculty casebook on community service learning* (pp. 3-12). Ann Arbor: OCSL Press.

Community Voice

Capstone courses are developed to allow individuals or communities with needs to define those needs.

Orientation

A thorough orientation to the community partner site is vital to successful community partnerships.

Reciprocity

The partnership must be worthwhile and valuable for both the student and the community. There must be reciprocity between all partners involved in the community-based experience.

Reflection

Intentional, systematic reflection must take place in order for students to situate prior knowledge within new ideas and information generated by the community-based experience.

Development

Community-based learning occurs in different stages. For example, the learning experience often begins with pre-field preparation and moves to engagement in partnership with the community. It is important to remain aware of potential challenges participants may face at various stages in the process.

Meaningful service

Community-based learning tasks need to be worthwhile and challenging in order to encourage community involvement and to strengthen students' critical thinking skills.

Diversity

A priority is placed on involving a broad cross-section of students working in a variety of settings and with diverse populations in the community.

Evaluation

There are a variety of methods for evaluating student learning in the community-based context and for assessing how well the Capstone projects have met the needs defined by the community partner.

THE INSTRUCTOR'S ROLE IN THE CAPSTONE

Capstone courses use community service as a vehicle for students to reach their academic goals by integrating course objectives with community needs. To facilitate this connection, faculty should provide structured opportunities for students to reflect critically on their service experience through writing, reading, group discussion, and classroom activities. The following policies are in place to ensure a successful Capstone experience for the students, community partner, and the instructor:

- All instructors are required to receive a Capstone orientation from the faculty development coordinator before teaching

his/her first course. In addition, Capstone instructors are encouraged to request assistance from the faculty development coordinator whenever issues of teaching and learning arise in the course (including but not limited to issues of classroom management, assessment, class discussions, use of class time, legal/liability issues, and issues of student conduct).

- Faculty will provide students with a course syllabus at the initial meeting of the course. This syllabus shall outline course learning outcomes, a course schedule, information regarding the community partnership (partner contact info, project expectations, approximate hours students





should expect to serve in the community, etc.) Grading criteria shall be explicitly stated.

- Every Capstone syllabus should include specific objectives for improvement in students' abilities to (1) communicate effectively, (2) inquire and think critically, (3) respect the diversity of human experiences, and (4) act in socially and ethically responsible ways. These are the four University Studies' Goals.
- All Capstone courses will have established meeting times (meeting frequency and length vary between Capstones) so that students may build community, explore course content, and address any challenges, questions,

or concerns related to the community project.

- Capstone faculty are expected to be in attendance at each scheduled class meeting. In the event that a faculty member needs to miss a class, she or he should make arrangements for a suitable substitute instructor for the missed class. In the event of an unforeseen circumstance where a faculty member must miss a class, he or she is required to contact the front desk person in the Office of University Studies at (503) 725-5890.
- Faculty will guide students in applying their disciplinary expertise to the community project, to understand how other disciplinary perspectives relate to the project, and to

create a final product that reflects the contributions of various disciplinary perspectives.

- Faculty will provide feedback to Capstone students on all course assignments and a periodic assessment of student progress throughout the course.
- Faculty will award grades at the end of each quarter that the Capstone course is in session. In the case of a multi-term Capstone, an “IP” (In-Progress) can be awarded until the final grade is submitted. Grades are entered online. For more information on PSU grading policies and instructions on how to use online grading and online grade change go to: http://www.pdx.edu/registration/online_grading.html
- In order to provide the best advising material for students Capstone faculty are required to update their Capstone course e-portfolio site located at <http://capstone.unst.pdx.edu>. For more information on how to update sites please contact Brooke Steward at steward4@pdx.edu. The site also informs external constituencies about our program.
- Capstone faculty are required to participate in UNST assessment processes. Capstone courses are evaluated on an ongoing basis. This includes distributing and returning course evaluations at the end

of each term, participating in Small Group Instructional Diagnostic Assessments as requested, and participating in work samples assessments as requested (typically every other year). The work sample assessment does require a short essay written by the faculty explaining how s/he addressed one of the UNST goals being assessed that year.

- Small Group Instructional Diagnostic (SGID) will be scheduled for each new instructor during the first offering of his/her capstone. The SGID is a mid-term qualitative feedback session that invites students to reflect on what has been helping them to learn and to perform their community work, and what could be changed about the course to improve learning. The SGID takes place during week 4 or 5 of the term and is facilitated by a seasoned Capstone instructor. Twenty percent of ongoing Capstone courses will be randomly selected each term for a mid-quarter assessment as part of a program-wide assessment effort.
- Course evaluations and SGID summaries are reviewed by the faculty member, Capstone Program Director, the Director of University Studies, and the University Studies Research Analyst as a way to support

faculty in the improvement of teaching and learning. The data is also considered when making decisions about future offerings of the course.

THE COMMUNITY PARTNER'S ROLE IN CAPSTONE

Development of the Community Partnership

Faculty and community partners should meet prior to the course to discuss their objectives and expectations for the Capstone. These objectives and expectations should be put in writing and can be modified throughout the Capstone if the need arises. Important areas for clarification include:

- The faculty member's goals and objectives.
- The community partner's goals and objectives.
- The type of skills students need to complete the final project.
- The level and kind of input faculty will provide to students about their community work.
- The level of supervision and input the community partner agrees to provide.
- The level and type of responsibility community partners can expect from Capstone students.
- Specific expectations regarding the project timeline and the final product the community partner expects to receive.

Community Partner Responsibilities

Once the course begins, community partners are expected to:

- Orient students and University representatives to the community partner and Capstone project, and provide information regarding community partner's administrative and operating policies, procedures, rules, and regulations.
- Specify what duties and responsibilities students are expected to perform.
- Provide students with on-going supervision and support as appropriate to the Capstone project and the students' needs.
- Offer feedback to faculty and students regarding the students' performance and effectiveness in meeting the needs of the community partner.
- Ensure that the work is conducted in accordance with required safety precautions and procedures.
- Ensure that students have adequate supervision, feedback, and a safe, harassment-free working environment. Harassment comes in many forms, but it is typically the use of power or authority by one person to pressure or intimidate another person, using verbal, physical, or sexual conduct. Community partners should

take reasonable steps to ensure that students have a productive working environment.

- Make appropriate written arrangements with students and the University, signed by the parties involved, for use of work products resulting for the Capstone project, with regard to acknowledgment of authorship, rights to ownership, and use and sharing of proceeds, in particular if the work results in patentable or similar products.

THE STUDENT'S ROLE IN CAPSTONE

About PSU Students

Nearly 30,000 students are enrolled at Portland State, including approximately 7,100 graduate

students. Approximately 64 percent of undergraduates are full-time students enrolled in 12 or more credits, while 36 percent are classified as part-time students. The average age of all PSU undergraduate students is 26.

Approximately 81 percent of the University's students are Oregon residents. PSU also enrolls approximately 3,700 students from other states and over 1,800 international students.

As an urban campus, PSU serves students in a large metropolitan community. Although some students live in residence halls, the vast majority of students commute from off-campus. A large percentage of PSU students hold either on- or off-campus jobs while attending





classes. In addition, PSU has a fairly large number of returning students (students returning to school after an extended absence and/or students returning to further their education) and students who have children and other family responsibilities.

When planning for student involvement in your Capstone, anticipate a wide range of background and experience. For example, some students will be “traditional” college age (18 to 24); however, many others will be older and/or returning students. Some students will have little community, work, or volunteer experience; others will be active community professionals who juggle work and family responsibilities. Planning for the Capstone with an awareness of the diverse characteristics of the

PSU student population improves experiences for everyone involved:

Student responsibility in community-based learning
Due to the intensive nature of Capstones, students who miss the first day of class may be dropped from the Capstone. Students must receive permission from the course instructor prior to the first day of class if they are going to miss the first class session. For on-line Capstones, students must demonstrate active participation during the first week of the term, or they may be dropped.

To initiate an administrative drop, Capstone instructors must contact the student on the first day of class to inform them they may be dropped from the course. Dropping

a student is at the discretion of the instructor. If you choose to proceed with an administrative drop after contacting the student, please contact Katherine Barich at (503) 725-5895 to complete the appropriate paperwork.

PSU provides Capstone students the following information to enhance their learning experience and protect them from harm. Students are expected to adhere to the PSU Student Code of Conduct during all Capstone activities. <http://www.pdx.edu/dos/codeofconduct#GeneralPolicy>

I. Students should clearly understand the requirements of their community project:

- I have a clear understanding of both my instructor's and my community partner's expectations of me.
- I understand my parameters (I have thought of the consequences of performing actions beyond my agreed responsibilities).
- I have identified the skills needed to carry out this project, and I feel comfortable with those skills.
- I have identified the skills needed to carry out this project, and I have devised specific plans for strengthening skills with which I am not comfortable or familiar.

- I know my client population (I am making every attempt to understand their needs from their perspective).
- I know what to do in case of an emergency.

II. Students will have necessary legal documents to participate in the community-based learning:

- If I will be driving, I have a valid license and liability insurance.
- If required by the host site, I will complete a security background check for this Capstone. If I am unable to pass this background check, the instructor will work with me to arrange for an alternate service placement.

III. Students should take responsibility for their behavior throughout the community-based project:

- I understand that I am responsible for my own personal health and safety.
- I have insurance (if agency requires specific coverage for volunteers).
- I understand the waivers I sign.
- I have thought of risks involved in this community-based project. For example:
 - *What are clients' special needs?*
 - *What can I do to reduce risks by my own behavior, clothing, and preparation?*
 - *What behaviors fall outside of*

*my job description? (Example:
Is it OK to transport clients?)*

IV. Students will be aware of the legal issues associated with the service-learning experience.

- Negligence involves a mistake, lack of attention, reckless behavior, or indifference to the duty of care of another person. A reasonable person should have been able to foresee the possibility of injury. (Example: wet spot on floor, child climbing on balance beam, etc.)
- Intentional misconduct or criminal misconduct involves potential harm caused by a volunteer. A volunteer is responsible for any harm caused to an organization or individual if the harm resulted from intentional or criminal misconduct on the part of the volunteer. (A crime is a crime even if you are a volunteer.)
- Invasion of privacy involves confidentiality. Follow the confidentiality policies of the agency. If they do not clearly inform you of the policy ask them for their policy guidelines regarding this. (Example: client histories and personal records are confidential.)

POLICIES GOVERNING CAPSTONE STUDENT SAFETY AT THE COMMUNITY PARTNER SITE

The following policies are in place to ensure the safety of Capstone students at their service learning sites:

Capstone policy on students in private residences
Students are not allowed to enter a community member's private residence unless special arrangements have been made with PSU. To arrange permission for home visits, the instructor should contact Don Johansen, Assistant Director for Risk Management at johansed@pdx.edu

Capstone policy on harassment
Students have the right to adequate supervision, feedback from supervisors, and a reasonably safe, harassment-free working environment. Harassment comes in many forms, but it is typically the use of power or authority by one person to pressure or intimidate another person using verbal, physical, or sexual conduct. Community partners should take reasonable steps to ensure that students have a productive working environment.

Capstone policy on requests directed toward students
Requests made of students should be limited to actions that directly pertain to students' agreed-to service

and academic responsibilities. Examples of inappropriate requests (outside of agreed-to responsibilities) include, but are not limited to: requests for personal favors, requests for loan of an automobile or other personal property items, invitations to social events not related to Capstone responsibilities, and requests for additional work or service hours above those that are required to complete the service portion of Capstone.

Capstone policy on use of community partner agency vehicles

Vehicles belonging to community partner agencies can be lent to Capstone student volunteers only if the following conditions are met: (1) the community partner agency possesses insurance covering

volunteer drivers; (2) the student driver has signed community partner agency paperwork certifying that they are a volunteer; and (3) the student possesses the minimum automobile insurance required by the state of Oregon.

Capstone policy on transportation and liability
The state of Oregon and Portland State University, together with their agents, officers, employees, and volunteers, are not liable for personal injury or property damage resulting from group or individual travel to or from activities related to participation in Senior Capstone. Students who are driving should possess a valid driver's license and driver's insurance for the duration of their Capstone.





DEALING WITH DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR AT THE COMMUNITY PARTNER SITE

If a Capstone student engages in unacceptable behavior it is recommended that you respond to the situation as soon as possible and document everything in writing. Successful interventions frequently are initiated at the first signs of distress and/or disruption. The Dean of Students Office welcomes the opportunity to advise faculty on dealing with distressed and/or disruptive students. To access these services, please call the PSU C.A.R.E. Team at (503) 725-5341, www.pdx.edu/dos/care-team. You are encouraged to contact the C.A.R.E. Team at the first sign of disruptive or distressed behavior. In the event of threatening behavior in the

classroom, please call the Campus Public Safety at (503) 725-4404. We recommend that you program this number into your cell phone so it is easy to access in case of an emergency.

In general, please do not hesitate to contact Seanna Kerrigan at (503) 725-8392 at the first sign of a challenging situation in your capstone. We are here to support you.

Unacceptable behavior at the community partner site
Admittance into a community partner site in the role of a PSU Capstone student is considered a conditional right of PSU students. There are many factors which can impact students' rights to participate directly at a community partner site:

- A Student Code of Conduct complaint filed involving a Capstone student based on inappropriate behavior in a PSU classroom which allegedly interfered with student learning, health, or safety.
- A Student Code of Conduct complaint based on attendance in a PSU Capstone in which a student is allegedly under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- A “pending” hearing of a Student Code of Conduct complaint against a student enrolled in a Capstone course where the complaint involves inappropriate interpersonal conduct with faculty, staff, or students at PSU.
- A refusal to complete a background check as required by a community partner.
- A community partner complaint about a student’s behavior on site or in a PSU classroom.
- A failed background check conducted by a community partner.

In the case of any of the above situations, the faculty member is allowed to use his/her discretion to decide if the student will gain access to the placement site in the role of a PSU Capstone student. The student has the right to an alternative assignment in order to complete the required Senior Capstone.

Therefore any of the above situations will not prevent the student from completing the Senior Capstone, but may require that students complete an alternative assignment created by the faculty of record for the course. For example, if a student fails a background check which prevents him or her from entering a K-12 school, the faculty member can assign the student an equivalent assignment to create curriculum that would be used in the school rather than have direct contact in the schools.

In situations where a Student Code of Conduct case is pending in the Dean of Students Office, the student is not entitled to enter the community partner site. An alternative assignment must be issued until the case is resolved. Faculty are required to inform both the student and the community partner site in writing when any of the above situations have compromised the students rights to enter the community partner site. The faculty member is required to copy the Capstone Office on any communications which terminate the rights of PSU students to enter the community partner sites.

Unacceptable behavior in the classroom

1. Make sure you have reviewed the PSU Student Code of Conduct with all of the students in your

Capstone course. Ideally, the Student Code of Conduct should be listed in your syllabus as well.

2. If you ever have fear for your safety or the safety of your students call the PSU Public Safety Office immediately at (503) 725-4404. If you have general questions about safety at PSU call (503) 725-4407. Some faculty choose to have the emergency number (5-4404) entered into their cell phones in case of conflict in the classroom.
3. If a student engages in unacceptable behavior, meet with the distressed and disruptive student privately to discuss the specific behaviors that raised concerns about the student's ability to be successful in your course and at the community site. When meeting with the student, be sure that he or she is aware of:
 - The specific classroom behaviors you have observed.
 - The PSU Student Code of Conduct, found at: <http://www.pdx.edu/dos/codeofconduct>.
 - The Capstone program policy regarding student access to community partner sites.

If you are not prepared to make a decision at the time of your meeting, inform the student when he or she can expect to be notified

of the decision and next steps.

4. If you do not feel comfortable meeting with the student one-on-one, the following campus professionals/offices can be helpful in determining how to proceed:
 - a. Center for Student Health and Counseling (SHAC), (503) 725-2800
 - b. Office of the Dean of Students, (503) 725-4422.

LEGAL ISSUES IN CAPSTONE COURSES

Human Subjects Review
The Human Subjects Review Committee is responsible for ensuring that adequate protection is provided for individuals involved as study participants in research or classroom-directed projects. Capstone course activities do not require human subjects review *if* the following criteria are met:

- Projects are identified “classroom directed exercises” and supervised by a faculty member.
- Projects will not place subjects at greater than minimal risk.
- All data collected by students is recorded anonymously, i.e., without names, Social Security numbers, or other identifiers.

Faculty and students still have an ethical responsibility to inform community participants of the

purpose of the project, the scope and duration of each activity in which they are expected to take part, and the expected outcomes—in essence, to obtain informed consent. In this case, the Human Subjects Review Committee is available for consultation in drawing up informed consents or cover letters.

For more information, please contact the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Office of Research & Strategic Partnerships, 1600 SW Fourth Ave, Suite 620. Phone: (503) 725-4288.

Copyrights on Capstone final products

Faculty who wish to include a copyright statement on final products are advised to confer with community partners as early as

possible so that all parties involved are aware of the copyright decisions and ramifications. For more information please contact the Research & Strategic Partnerships Office at (503) 725-8182, or: <http://www.pdx.edu/research/innovation-intellectual-property>.

Faculty liability

The following policy applies to all Capstone faculty (full and part time):

Faculty are considered agents of the University. State employees are covered by the state insurance fund as long as they are acting within the scope and performance of state duties while under the direction and control of the state. Scope and performance duties are matters of fact in light of related circumstances, including:



- The duties actually assigned to faculty.
- Whether faculty actions were under faculty or employer's direction and control.
- Whether faculty actions were consistent with or contrary to any state directives.

Faculty are not covered by the state insurance fund for claims arising from their private acts and omissions.

Legal and Liability questions

Please contact Don Johansen, Assistant Director for Risk Management, at johansed@pdx.edu with any legal questions that arise throughout your Capstone course.

COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE CAPSTONE

Each student is assessed a \$12 course fee upon registering for a Capstone. These fees generate a services and supplies fund from which each Capstone instructor may draw up to \$150 for her/his course. This fund is directed to and administered by University Studies. For an overview of what costs may be covered by this fund and how to receive reimbursement for those covered expenses, consult the Capstone website at:

<http://www.pdx.edu/unst/guidelines-for-spending-fring-andor-capstone-course-fee>.

If you have any questions, please contact Yusuf Surucu, (503) 725-9215, yusuf.surucu@pdx.edu.

THE CAPSTONE WEBSITE

The Capstone website provides an overview of each Capstone course, information about community partners, and helpful resources for Capstone instructors. The website can be found at:

<http://capstone.unst.pdx.edu>.

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

Several books and resources related to teaching Capstones are available for checkout at the University Studies lending library in Cramer Hall 117, or the Center for Academic Excellence lending library in Cramer Hall 349.

CAPSTONE SUPPORT STAFF: WHO'S WHO

University Studies Office
Cramer Hall 117
(503) 725-5890

University Studies provides clerical support for the Capstone program and provides an ongoing communication link between community partners and PSU. If you have an immediate need please

call the main office number listed above. For specific questions related to your course, please contact the following individuals:

Brooke Steward
Office Specialist

(503) 725-5890

Brooke provides general support for the University Studies Program. He is the best person to call if you need to cancel a class session, if you have a general question, and/or if you need assistance in identifying the right person to speak with about a particular concern.

Seanna Kerrigan
Capstone Program Director

(503) 725-8392

Seanna's role includes working with community organizations to identify appropriate Capstone projects and working with University faculty to conceptualize, propose, and revise Capstone course proposals.

Maurice Hamington
Director, University Studies

(503) 725-5959

Maurice oversees the University Studies Program, including Freshman Inquiry, Sophomore Inquiry, Upper Division Cluster courses, and Senior Capstone. His role is similar to that of a department chair, including overseeing program coordination, authorizing the hiring of faculty,

and guiding the continued development of the program.

Katherine Barich
Enrollment Coordinator &
Scheduling

(503) 725-5895

Katherine manages the course scheduling process for Capstone courses. She can help you confirm the days, times, and location for your Capstone course. She also manages course descriptions online. You can also contact Katherine to obtain information about the Capstone Fair.

Krys Roth
Executive Assistant

(503) 725-4949

Krys is the executive assistant to Maurice Hamington. She also coordinates room scheduling for special events.

Yusuf Surucu
Accountant

(503) 725-9215



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