Capstone Overview
Department of Health Behavior
UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health

The Health Behavior Master of Public Health Program
A Master of Public Health (MPH) in Health Behavior (HB) prepares individuals for leadership positions in public health practice. HB MPH students are trained to use social and behavioral science to study, develop, and evaluate interventions to promote health, prevent disease and injury, and reduce health inequalities at the individual, interpersonal, organizational, community, and policy levels. The HB MPH curriculum integrates theory, research, and practice through our core courses and community-based fieldwork.

The Health Behavior Capstone Course
Capstone (HBEH 746/992) is a year-long, group-based, mentored service-learning course that is the culminating experience of the HB MPH curriculum. Service-learning is defined as “a credit-bearing, educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility.” As a service-learning course, Capstone strives for balanced benefit to both the community partners and the Capstone students. Similarly, there is a balanced focus on the service and the learning aspects of the experience.

Capstone Project Work
The scope of the Capstone project work is defined by our partner organizations. This approach prioritizes their specific needs and gives our students an opportunity to do applied public health work on a range of topics in a variety of settings with diverse populations. Over the course of two semesters, each team of four to six MPH students works with a partner organization and its stakeholders to produce a set of deliverables (i.e., tangible products) that serve one overarching goal and enhance the partner organization’s mission. A preceptor at the partner organization plans, designs, and supervises the Capstone project work. Each team is assigned a HB faculty adviser who provides technical expertise and support. The Capstone Teaching Team (i.e., course instructor and teaching assistants) provides structures, guidance, and support to increase the effectiveness of the Capstone project work for all teams.

Capstone Class Sessions
Capstone class sessions are opportunities for students to prepare for, reflect upon, cross-share about, and present their Capstone project experiences.

We expect the Capstone Course to strengthen campus-community partnerships; result in new or improved public health programs, services, and resources; build students’ and organizations’ capacity to address public health problems; and enhance students’ marketability. Overall, Capstone is intended to improve public health practice (Figure 1).
Frequently Asked Questions

What types of organizations can host a Capstone team?

Any organization within a one-hour drive of Chapel Hill, North Carolina that is working to address public health issue can host a Capstone team. The following organizations have hosted Capstone teams:

- American Social Health Association
- Amigas Latinas Motivando el Alma
- Art Therapy Institute
- Boys on Track
- Carolina Campus Community Garden
- Center for Community Self-Help and Self-Help Credit Union
- Cervical Cancer-Free NC
- Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools
- Chatham Habitat for Humanity
- Community Backyard
- Community Transformation Grant
- Counter Tobacco
- Duke University Substance Abuse & Health Promotion Center
- Durham County Department of Public Health
- El Pueblo, Inc.
- Interfaith Food Shuttle
- IntraHealth, Inc.
- NC BEAUTY Research Project
- NC Cancer Hospital Comprehensive Cancer Support Program
- NC Division of Public Health, Injury and Violence Prevention Branch
- NC Division of Public Health, Tobacco Prevention and Control Branch
- NC Falls Prevention Coalition
- NC Latina BEAUTY
- North Carolina Central University Women’s Center
- North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- North Carolina Comprehensive Cancer Program
- North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition
- Orange County Department on Aging
- Orange County Health Department
- Orange County Rape Crisis Center
- Planned Parenthood of Central North Carolina
- PORCH, Inc.
What are the elements of an effective Capstone partnership?

Effective Capstone partnerships meet the following criteria:

1. The Capstone partnership balances service to the partner organization and learning opportunities for the students.
2. The Capstone partnership agrees upon goals, measurable outcomes, and roles and responsibilities.
3. Principles and processes for the Capstone partnership are established with the input and agreement from all partners, especially for decision-making and conflict resolution.
4. Capstone partners make clear and open communication an ongoing priority by striving to understand each other's needs and self-interests, and developing a common language.
5. The Capstone partnership values multiple kinds of knowledge and life experiences.
6. The relationship between participants in the Capstone partnership is characterized by mutual trust, respect, genuineness, and commitment.
7. The Capstone partnership builds upon identified strengths and assets, but also works to address needs and increase capacity of all partners.
8. Capstone partnerships consider the nature of the environment within which they exist as a principle of their design, evaluation, and sustainability.
9. There is feedback among all stakeholders in the Capstone partnership, with the goal of continuously improving the partnership and its outcomes.
10. The Capstone partnership balances power among partners and enables resources among partners to be shared.
11. Participants share the benefits of the Capstone partnership's accomplishments.
12. There is a clear plan for ending or sustaining the Capstone partnership and project work at the end of the academic year.

What conditions promote Capstone project success?

Capstone projects are most successful when:

- There is a clearly defined goal for the project work;
- The project work is informed by and is responsive to project stakeholders, including the project's priority population;
- Leadership at the Capstone partner organization fully supports the Capstone project and will provide the resources necessary to carry out the project work;
- Deliverables have clear purposes, are interrelated, and serve the overall project goal;
- The timeline for the project work allows for a period of formative research;
- Students have an opportunity to interact with the priority population associated with the project work;
- The project work allows students to apply and develop a wide range of skills that will increase their marketability as public health practitioners; and
- The preceptor has dedicated time, expertise, and interest to mentor graduate students.
What can Capstone partner organizations expect from a Capstone team?
Each Capstone student is expected to spend approximately nine hours per week working on Capstone, including both class and project work. Students are responsible for:

- Following the steps and producing the work outlined in the Capstone project work plan;
- Keeping all mentors informed of project progress;
- Applying the knowledge and skills gained through their HB MPH training to the Capstone project work;
- Incorporating mentor feedback and taking a participatory approach to the development of the deliverables;
- Producing high-quality work that is useful to the Capstone partner organization and its stakeholders; and
- Maintaining professional and ethical behavior.

Preceptors should NOT expect students to be “extra” or replacement staff or research assistants, nor are they to provide purely administrative support.

What types of deliverables do Capstone teams produce?
Each Capstone team typically produces four to six major deliverables. Below is a list of the types of deliverables that have been produced by past Capstone teams:

- Assessment Tools
- Community Assessment Reports
- Curricula
- Dissemination Plans
- Evaluation Plans
- Evaluation Tools
- Evidence Tables
- Focus Group Guides
- Formative Research Findings Reports
- Funding Guides
- Grant Proposals
- Health Communication Campaign Materials
- Health Communication Plans
- Intervention Materials
- Interview Guides
- IRB Applications
- Literature Reviews
- Manuscripts
- Message Testing Reports
- Photovoice Projects
- Policies and Procedures Manuals
- Policy Briefs
- Policy Recommendations
- Presentation Materials
- Program Plans
- Sustainability Plans
- Training Workshop Materials
- Video Storyboards

Can a Capstone team do international work?
Capstone teams can work with agencies that do international public health work; however, HB does not have the resources to support student travel as part of their Capstone project work. Moreover, our academic structure does not lend itself well to extended international travel that results in absence from classes.

Is there a fee associated with engaging a Capstone team?
No. HB does not charge for the services its students, faculty, and staff provide during this mentored field experience. Annually, our Capstone students provide approximately $255,000 of in-kind service to our partner organizations.
What are the roles and responsibilities of a preceptor?

Preceptors plan, design, and supervise the Capstone project work. They should expect to spend two to three hours per week, on average, guiding the Capstone project work. Preceptor responsibilities include:

- Establishing an appropriate and feasible scope of work that is directly aligned with the partner organization’s needs and provides a valuable learning experience for students;
- Facilitating the work of the team by orienting students to the people, resources, and norms that influence project work;
- Meeting and communicating with students on a regular basis;
- Providing specific, timely feedback to students about their quality of work and professionalism;
- Helping the team to problem-solve;
- Modeling professional, ethical behavior; and
- Identifying a suitable replacement if unable to continue in the role of a preceptor.

How can my organization apply for a Capstone team?

To apply for a Capstone team, please follow this three-step process:

1. Read this overview and frequently asked questions document in full.
2. Schedule a phone call with Liz Chen (lizchen@live.unc.edu; 781.888.0093), Capstone teaching assistant, by January 18, 2016 to discuss your ideas for a Capstone project. This step is required regardless of previous Capstone experience.
3. Email your completed proposal form and a letter of support from your organization’s leadership to Liz Chen (lizchen@live.unc.edu) and Meg Landfried (landfried@unc.edu) by February 1, 2016. Please save your completed proposal form as a Microsoft Word document using the following naming convention: Organization Name_HB Capstone Proposal 2016-2017. The letter of support should explain how the Capstone project goal will enhance your organization’s mission and demonstrate commitment to the resources and support (including staff time) needed to carry out the project work.

How are the Capstone projects selected?

Submitted proposals are reviewed by a committee of faculty and current Capstone students. Proposals are scored based on the following criteria:

- **Project Feasibility:** The project work will occur within an hour’s drive of Chapel Hill, North Carolina. The proposed timeline for the project work is appropriate and fits within the academic calendar. There is adequate time for students to familiarize themselves with the subject matter through formative research.
- **Deliverables:** Proposed deliverables have clear purposes and steps, are interrelated, and connect to overall project goal. The breadth and depth of deliverables is appropriate for four to six students over two academic semesters. Deliverables allow for acquisition knowledge and skills that will enhance students’ marketability as public health practitioners.
- **Mentorship and Organizational Capacity:** The preceptor is known to have, or demonstrates they have time, expertise, and interest in mentoring MPH students. The partner organization is known to have, or demonstrates, capacity to support and provide necessary resources for a team of four to six students.
- **Engagement:** Project work is informed by and responsive to project stakeholders. Students will have an opportunity to interact with the priority population(s) associated with the project work.

Organizations whose proposals receive the highest scores are invited to present their proposals to students at Capstone Pitch Day, an annual event in March when potential preceptors have the opportunity to let students know about their proposed projects through brief presentations followed by a question and answer session. After
Capstone Pitch Day, students rank their top five choices for Capstone projects. The Capstone Teaching Team and MPH program director then conduct a matching process among the projects, students, and faculty advisers. Prospective organizations will be notified whether their projects have been selected to receive a Capstone Team in early April.

If my organization applies for a Capstone team, are we certain to get one?
Given the varied interests and expertise of our students, there is no guarantee that a proposal will be selected in any given year. If your project is not selected, either at the proposal review stage or though student rankings, you may be encouraged to apply in a future year or to reconsider the scope of your project proposal to take advantage of other field training opportunities in HB (e.g., the practicum).

What is the timeline for the 2016-2017 Capstone projects?
The Capstone solicitation, selection, and matching process will occur between December 2015 and April 2016. Capstone teams are expected to meet once before the 2016 summer break to outline a work plan. Capstone project work will officially begin in September 2016 and will continue while classes are in session until April 2017. The Capstone project work will culminate with Capstone Celebration Day in late April 2017.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Who’s Responsible</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 2015-January 2016</td>
<td>Solicit potential Capstone projects</td>
<td>Capstone Teaching Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January – February 2016</td>
<td>Collect Capstone project proposals</td>
<td>Capstone Teaching Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January – February 2016</td>
<td>Review and rank Capstone project proposals</td>
<td>Capstone Project Selection Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2016</td>
<td>Select projects to be “pitched” to students in March</td>
<td>Capstone Project Selection Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 7, 2016</td>
<td>Capstone Pitch Day</td>
<td>Preceptors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2016</td>
<td>Rank top 5 choices for Capstone projects</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2016</td>
<td>Facilitate matching process between students, Capstone projects, and</td>
<td>Capstone Teaching Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>faculty advisers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1, 2016</td>
<td>Announce 2016-2017 Capstone projects, preceptors, student teams, and</td>
<td>Capstone Teaching Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>faculty advisers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2016</td>
<td>Initial Capstone team meetings</td>
<td>Students, Preceptors, Faculty Advisers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 1, 2016</td>
<td>Submit signed draft work plan</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late August or early Sept</td>
<td>Capstone Orientation</td>
<td>Students, Preceptors, Faculty Advisers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td></td>
<td>Capstone Teaching Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2016</td>
<td>Conduct formative research and finalize fall work plan</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2017</td>
<td>Update work plan</td>
<td>Students, Preceptors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2017</td>
<td>Turn in completed deliverables, Capstone Celebration Day</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Whom should I contact if I have any other questions?
The contacts for Capstone are:

**Meg Landfried**, Course Instructor  
landfried@unc.edu  
(919) 966-0057  
Meg is expecting her second child in mid-February and will be on parental leave most of the spring.

**Liz Chen**, Capstone Teaching Assistant  
lizcchen@live.unc.edu  
(781) 888-0093  
Liz will be assisting with the Capstone project solicitation, selection, and matching process, especially while Meg is on parental leave.

**Beth Moracco**, MPH Program Director  
moracco@email.unc.edu  
(919) 966-5542  
Beth helps to oversee the Capstone project solicitation, selection, and matching process.

---

1 Robert Bringle and Julie Hatcher, A Service Learning Curriculum for Faculty. The Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning, Fall 1995, pp.112-122.  
2 Calculation based on: 45 students/year x 9 hours of Capstone work/week/student x 30 weeks/year x $20.96 (graduate assistant hourly rate) = $254,664.