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. We expect this critical learning experience to increase students’ and organizations’ capacity to address public health problems; result in new or improved public health programs, services, and resources; enhance student marketability; and strengthen campus-community partnerships. The Capstone course has two components: project work and class sessions.

Capstone Project Work

Our partner organizations define the scope of the Capstone project work. 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 an academic year (August-April), 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) oversees all of the project work and provides structures, guidance, and support to increase the effectiveness of the Capstone project work. The visual below illustrates the planned project work and its intended results.

Capstone Class Sessions

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

What types of organizations can host a Capstone team?

In order to be eligible to host a Capstone team, organizations must:

1. Be doing work that addresses a public health issue.
2. Have the time (two-four hours per week), expertise, and interest to mentor a team of four to six students.

Governmental, non-governmental, non-profit, industrial, for-profit settings, and university-affiliated settings are all appropriate. University-affiliated settings must focus on community engagement, typically with external partners. We prioritize organizations whose work occurs within a one-hour drive of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, and allows for meaningful engagement with intended beneficiaries. The following organizations have hosted Capstone teams:

Alexander YMCA
American Social Health Association
Amigas Latinas Motivando el Alma
The Art Therapy Institute
Boys on Track
Campus & Community Coalition to Reduce the Negative Impacts of High Risk Drinking, Chapel Hill Downtown Partnership
Carolina Campus Community Garden
Center for Community Self-Help and Self-Help Credit Union
Cervical Cancer-Free NC
Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools
Chatham County Council on Aging
Chatham County Public Health Department
Chatham Habitat for Humanity
Children’s Home Society of North Carolina
Community Backyard
Community Transformation Grant
Counter Tobacco
Duke University Substance Abuse & Health Promotion Center
Durham County Department of Public Health
El Pueblo, Inc.
Frank Porter Graham Bilingüe
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 Emergency Medicine Services
Orange County Health Department
Orange County Rape Crisis Center
Orange County Solid Waste Management
Planned Parenthood of Central North Carolina
PORCH, Inc.
PREVENT Research Project
Project IFE Research Project
Project ImPACT Research Project
SpiritHouse, Inc.
State Trauma Advisory Council
Toxic Free, NC
UCLA Art and Global Health Center
UNC Center for Environmental Health and Susceptibility
UNC Community Campus Partnership
UNC Counseling and Wellness Services
UNC Department of Surgery
UNC Division of General Internal Medicine
UNC Family Medicine
UNC Worksite Wellness
United Way of NC
What are the elements of an effective Capstone partnership?

Effective Capstone partnerships meet the following criteria:

1. The Capstone partnership serves a specific purpose.
2. The Capstone partnership balances service to the partner organization and learning opportunities for the students.
3. The Capstone partnership agrees upon goals, measurable outcomes, and roles and responsibilities.
4. All members of the partnership provide input on, and agree to, the principles and processes for the Capstone partnership, especially for decision-making and conflict resolution.
5. 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.
6. The Capstone partnership values multiple kinds of knowledge and life experiences.
7. Mutual trust, respect, genuineness, and commitment characterize the relationship between participants in the Capstone partnership.
8. The Capstone partnership builds upon identified strengths and assets, but also works to address needs and increase capacity of all partners.
9. Capstone partnerships consider the nature of the environment within which they exist as a principle of their design, evaluation, and sustainability.
10. There is feedback among all stakeholders in the Capstone partnership, with the goal of continuously improving the partnership and its outcomes.
11. The Capstone partnership balances power and shares resources among partners.
12. Participants share the benefits of the Capstone partnership’s accomplishments.
13. 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;
- Deliverables have clear purposes, are interrelated, and serve the overall project goal;
- The timeline for the project work includes time for students to get oriented to the content area and the partner organization and its stakeholders;
- The project work is informed by and is responsive to project stakeholders, including the project’s intended beneficiaries;
- Students have an opportunity to interact with the intended beneficiaries of 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;
- The preceptor has dedicated time, expertise, and interest to mentor graduate students; and
- Leadership at the Capstone partner organization fully supports the Capstone project and provides the resources necessary to carry out the project work.

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.

Students should not be expected 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 service1 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 four 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;

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1 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.
• 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 process:

1. Review this document in full.
2. Have a phone call or meeting with Meg Landfried (landfried@unc.edu; 919-966-0057), Capstone course instructor, by January 29, 2018 to discuss your ideas for a Capstone project.
4. Collect a letter of support from your organization’s leadership. 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.
5. Email your completed proposal form and a letter of support to Meg Landfried (landfried@unc.edu) by February 5, 2018.

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:** Key stakeholders are located 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. Students have adequate time to familiarize themselves with the subject matter through formative research.

• **Deliverables:** Proposed deliverables have clear purposes and steps, are interrelated, and connect to the overall project goal. The breadth and depth of deliverables is appropriate for four to six students over two academic semesters. Deliverables allow for acquisition of knowledge and skills that will enhance students’ marketability as public health practitioners.

• **Mentorship and Organizational Capacity:** The preceptor is known to have (or demonstrate he/she/they has) the time (approximately four hours per week), expertise, and interest needed to mentor MPH students. The partner organization is known to have (or demonstrates capacity to) support 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.

We invite organizations whose proposals receive the highest scores present their proposals to students at Capstone Pitch Day, an annual event (March 5, 2018) 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 through 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 2018-2019 Capstone projects?
The Capstone solicitation, selection, and matching process will occur between December 2017 and April 2018. Capstone teams are expected to meet once before the 2018 summer break to outline a work plan. Capstone project work will officially begin in September 2018 and will continue while classes are in session until April 2019. The Capstone project work will culminate with Capstone Celebration Day in early May 2019.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Who’s Responsible</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 2017-January 2018</td>
<td>Solicit potential Capstone projects</td>
<td>Capstone Teaching Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>January – February 2018</td>
<td>Collect Capstone project proposals</td>
<td>Capstone Teaching Team</td>
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<td>January – February 2018</td>
<td>Review and rank Capstone project proposals</td>
<td>Capstone Project Selection Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 2018</td>
<td>Select projects to be “pitched” to students in March</td>
<td>Capstone Project Selection Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 5, 2018 from 12:30-3:30 p.m.</td>
<td>Present project proposal at Capstone Pitch Day</td>
<td>Selected Preceptors</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2018</td>
<td>Rank top 5 choices for Capstone projects</td>
<td>Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2018</td>
<td>Facilitate matching process between students, Capstone projects, and faculty advisers</td>
<td>Capstone Teaching Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By April 2, 2018</td>
<td>Announce 2018-2019 Capstone projects, preceptors, student teams, and faculty advisers</td>
<td>Capstone Teaching Team</td>
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<td>May 2018</td>
<td>Initial Capstone team meetings</td>
<td>Students, Preceptors, Faculty Advisers</td>
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<td>June 1, 2018</td>
<td>Submit signed draft work plan</td>
<td>Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>Late August or early September 2018</td>
<td>Attend Capstone Orientation</td>
<td>Students, Preceptors, Faculty Advisers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Late August or early September 2018</td>
<td>Orient students to Capstone partner organization</td>
<td>Preceptors</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 2018</td>
<td>Finalize fall work plan</td>
<td>Students, Preceptors, Faculty Advisers</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 2019</td>
<td>Update work plan</td>
<td>Students, Preceptors, Faculty Advisers</td>
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<td>April 2019</td>
<td>Turn in completed deliverables</td>
<td>Students</td>
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<tr>
<td>May 2019</td>
<td>Present results and impact of Capstone work at Capstone Celebration Day</td>
<td>Students</td>
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Whom should I contact if I have any other questions?
The contacts for Capstone are:

Meg Landfried, Course Instructor
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Liz Chen, Capstone Teaching Assistant
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Beth Moracco, MPH Program Director
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