

# Capstone Overview

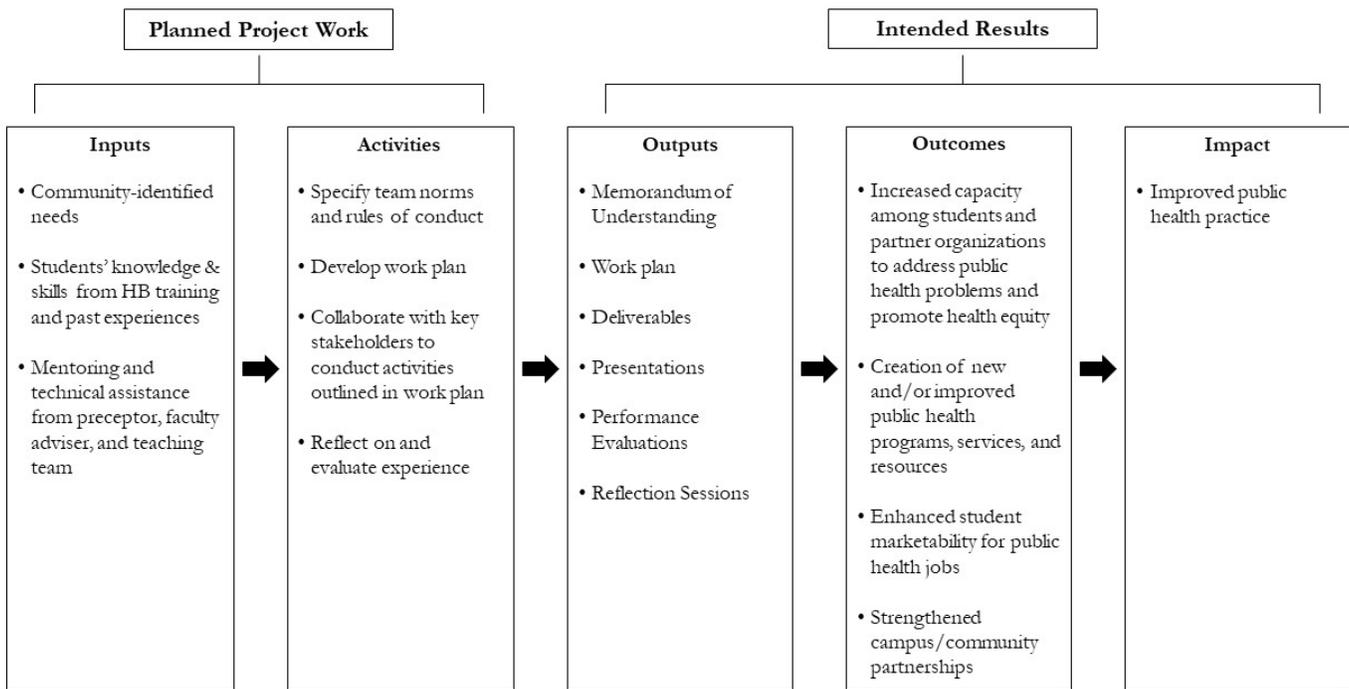
Department of Health Behavior  
UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health

## The Health Behavior Capstone Course

Capstone (HBEH 746/992) is a year-long, community-led, group-based, mentored service-learning course that gives students an opportunity to apply Health Behavior (HB) MPH knowledge and skills to community-identified public health projects in partnership with local organizations. As the culminating experience of the HB MPH program, the products produced for this course serve as a substitute for The Graduate School's master's thesis requirement. We expect this critical learning experience to increase students' and our partner organizations' capacity to address public health problems and promote health equity; result in new or improved public health programs, services, and resources; enhance student marketability; and strengthen campus-community partnerships. Overall, Capstone strives to improve public health practice.

## 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 entire 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 address one overarching goal and enhance the partner organization's mission. A preceptor (i.e., on-site mentor) outlines and supervises the project work. Each team is assigned a HB faculty adviser who provides technical expertise. The Capstone teaching team (i.e., course instructor and teaching assistants) oversees all Capstone projects and provides structures, guidance, and support to increase the effectiveness of the Capstone experience. The figure below illustrates the planned project work and its intended results.



## Capstone Class Sessions

Capstone class sessions are an opportunity for students to work on, reflect on, receive feedback about, and present their Capstone projects. Most class sessions are protected time for teams to work on their projects and receive support from the teaching team. Once a month, all Capstone students, the teaching team, and various guests gather during class to discuss the means by which structural bias, social inequities, and racism undermine health and create challenges to achieving health equity at organizational, community, and societal levels including within Capstone; cross-share about the Capstone project work; disseminate best practices; and problem solve across teams.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## What types of organizations can host a Capstone team?

Governmental, non-governmental, non-profit, industrial, for-profit, and university-affiliated organizations are all appropriate. University-affiliated organizations must focus on community engagement, typically with external partners. In order to be eligible to host a Capstone team, organizations must:

1. Be doing work that addresses a public health issue.
2. Have staff with the time (two-four hours per week), expertise, and interest to mentor a team of four to six students.
3. Have organizational capacity and resources to sustain support for a Capstone project over the 2019-2020 academic year.

We prioritize organizations whose work promotes health equity, allows for meaningful engagement with intended beneficiaries, and occurs within a one-hour drive of Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Over the past ten years, we've worked with fifty-nine Capstone partner organizations including:

Alexander YMCA	Food Insight Group
American Social Health Association	Frank Porter Graham Bilingüe
Amigas Latinas Motivando el Alma	InterFaith Food Shuttle
The Art Therapy Institute	IntraHealth, Inc.
Birth Partners UNC Medical Center Volunteer	Mountain Area Health Education Center
Doula Service	NC BEAUTY Research Project
Boys on Track	NC Cancer Hospital Comprehensive Cancer
Campus & Community Coalition to Reduce the	Support Program
Negative Impacts of High Risk Drinking, Chapel	NC Division of Public Health, Injury and Violence
Hill Downtown Partnership	Prevention Branch
Carolina Campus Community Garden	NC Division of Public Health, Tobacco Prevention
Center for Community Self-Help and Self-Help	and Control Branch
Credit Union	NC Falls Prevention Coalition
Cervical Cancer-Free NC	NC Latina BEAUTY
Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools	North Carolina Central University Women's Center
Chatham County Council on Aging	North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic
Chatham County Public Health Department	Violence
Chatham Habitat for Humanity	North Carolina Comprehensive Cancer Program
Children's Home Society of North Carolina	North Carolina Harm Reduction Coalition
Community Backyard	Orange County Department on Aging
Community Transformation Grant	Orange County Emergency Medicine Services
Counter Tobacco	Orange County Health Department
Duke University Substance Abuse & Health	Orange County Rape Crisis Center
Promotion Center	Orange County Solid Waste Management
Durham County Department of Public Health	Planned Parenthood of Central North Carolina
El Pueblo, Inc.	PORCH, Inc.

PREVENT Research Project  
Project IFE Research Project  
Project ImPACT Research Project  
Rural Opportunity Institute  
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 roles and responsibilities of a preceptor?

Preceptors outline 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
- Orienting students to the health topic(s), people, policies, procedures, and norms related to the Capstone project work
- Maintaining regular contact with the student team through meetings (typically every other week) and email
- Providing continuous direction and specific, timely feedback on the Capstone project work based on the objectives of the project and needs of the organization
- Helping the team to problem-solve
- Modeling professional, ethical behavior
- Attending an orientation (late August), a spring check-in meeting (January), and their team's final presentation (early May)
- Identifying a suitable replacement if unable to continue in the role of a preceptor

## What are the roles and responsibilities of the student 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:

- Applying the knowledge and skills gained through their HB MPH training to the Capstone project work
- Following the steps and taking a participatory approach to producing the work outlined in the Capstone project work plan
- Managing all internal processes associated with the Capstone project work including equitable distribution of work, decision making, conflict management, etc.
- Keeping all mentors informed of support needed, decisions, and progress on the Capstone project work
- Responding to mentor feedback
- Producing high-quality work that is useful to the Capstone partner organization and its stakeholders
- Maintaining professional and ethical behavior
- Being familiar with Capstone policies and procedures

Students should not be expected to be “extra” or replacement staff or research assistants, nor are they to provide purely administrative support.

## What are the roles and responsibilities of the faculty adviser?

Each team receives support from a faculty adviser whose responsibilities are to:

- Ensure that students' work meets the level of quality expected for a master's thesis substitute
- Provide technical expertise
- Respond to student inquiries and direct students to resources
- Provide specific, timely feedback to students about their quality of work and professionalism
- Attend an orientation (late August), a spring check-in meeting (January), and their team's final presentation (early May)

## What are the roles and responsibilities of the teaching team?

A course instructor and two teaching assistants oversee the Capstone program. The teaching team's responsibilities are to:

- Communicate expectations for the Capstone program
- Provide guidance on Capstone processes and project work
- Manage student, preceptor, and faculty adviser interests and priorities
- Facilitate feedback and problem solve among Capstone parties
- Promote consistency across the Capstone projects' depth, scope, and quality

## What conditions promote Capstone project success?

Capstone projects are most successful for **organizations** when:

- There is an immediate need and use for the deliverables produced
- The work is informed by and is responsive to project stakeholders, including the project's intended beneficiaries
- Leadership at the Capstone partner organization fully supports the Capstone project and provides the resources necessary to carry out the project work

Capstone projects are most successful for **students** when:

- The project work allows students to apply and develop a wide range of skills that will enhance their growth as public health practitioners
- Deliverables have clear purposes, are interrelated, and serve the overall project goal
- The preceptor is invested in the benefits to the organization and the students and has dedicated time, expertise, and interest to mentor graduate students
- There is ample time and attention given to orienting students to the project work, partner organization, and key stakeholders, including the project's intended beneficiaries
- Students have an opportunity to interact with the intended beneficiaries of the project work

## What types of deliverables can Capstone teams produce?

Each Capstone team typically produces four to six major deliverables. Examples include:

- 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 global work?

Capstone teams can work with agencies that do global public health work; however, HB does not have the resources to support international 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<sup>1</sup> to our partner organizations.

## 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](#)).

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

# Logistics

## How to Apply

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

1. Review this document.
2. Schedule a phone call or face-to-face meeting with Meg Landfried ([landfried@unc.edu](mailto:landfried@unc.edu); 919-966-0057), Capstone course instructor, that will **take place by January 28, 2019** to discuss your ideas for a Capstone project.
3. Fill out a Health Behavior Capstone Project Proposal form (available [here](#)). Please save your completed proposal as a **Microsoft Word** document using the following naming convention: Organization Name\_HB Capstone Proposal 2019-2020.
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; demonstrate commitment to the resources and support (including staff time) needed to carry out the project work; and outline a contingency plan if the preceptor is no longer able to carry out the roles and responsibilities of that position.
5. Email your completed proposal form and a letter of support to Meg Landfried ([landfried@unc.edu](mailto:landfried@unc.edu)) by 11:59 p.m. on **February 4, 2019**.

## Project Selection

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

- **Project Clarity:** The proposed deliverables have clear purposes and steps, are interrelated, and connect to the overall project goal.
- **Project Feasibility:** The breadth and depth of deliverables and proposed timeline is appropriate for four to six students to produce over two academic semesters (August-April while classes are in session). The proposal accounts for the time and effort needed to onboard students. Key stakeholders are located within an hour's drive of Chapel Hill, North Carolina.
- **Learning Opportunities:** The project will facilitate acquisition of knowledge and skills that will enhance students' growth as public health practitioners.
- **Mentorship:** The preceptor has the time (approximately four hours per week), expertise, and interest needed to mentor MPH students.
- **Organizational Capacity:** The partner organization has capacity and funding to sustain support for a Capstone project over the 2019-2020 academic year. Leadership at the Capstone partner organization demonstrates full support of the Capstone project. Sustainability and contingency plans are clear and feasible.
- **Approach:** The Capstone partner organization demonstrates values of equity, inclusivity, and diversity in their approach to addressing public health problems. The project work is designed to be equitable and sustainable.
- **Engagement:** The project work is informed by and responsive to project stakeholders including its intended beneficiaries. Students will have an opportunity to interact with the intended beneficiaries of the project work.
- **Public Health Impact:** The project has strong potential to make a meaningful difference in the health of the beneficiary population(s).

We will invite preceptors whose proposals receive the highest scores to give a brief (~5 minute) presentation about their project ideas to students at Capstone Pitch Day (12:30-3:30 p.m. on March 1, 2019). After Capstone Pitch Day, students rank their top five choices for Capstone projects. The Capstone teaching team then conducts 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.

## Timeline

The Capstone solicitation, selection, and matching process will occur between December 2018 and April 2019. Capstone teams (students, preceptor, faculty adviser) are expected to meet with the teaching team once before the 2019 summer break to outline a work plan. Capstone project work will officially begin in September 2019 and will continue while classes are in session until April 2020. The Capstone project work will culminate with final presentations in early May 2020.

Date	Task	Who's Responsible
December 2018- January 2019	Solicit potential Capstone projects	Capstone Teaching Team
January-early February 2019	Collect Capstone project proposals	Capstone Teaching Team
January-February 2019	Review and rank Capstone project proposals	Capstone Project Selection Committee
February 2019	Select projects to be “pitched” to students in March	Capstone Project Selection Committee
March 1, 2019 from 12:30-3:30 p.m.	Present project proposal at Capstone Pitch Day	Selected Preceptors
March 2019	Rank top 5 choices for Capstone projects	Students
March 2019	Facilitate matching process between students, Capstone projects, and faculty advisers	Capstone Teaching Team
By April 1, 2019	Announce 2019-2020 Capstone projects, preceptors, student teams, and faculty advisers	Capstone Teaching Team
May 2019	Initial Capstone team meetings	Students, Preceptors, Faculty Advisers
June 3, 2019	Submit signed draft work plan	Students
Late August 2019	Attend Capstone Orientation	Students, Preceptors, Faculty Advisers
Late August/early September 2019	Orient students to Capstone partner organization	Preceptors
September 2019	Finalize fall work plan	Students, Preceptors, Faculty Advisers
January 2020	Update work plan	Students, Preceptors, Faculty Advisers
Late April 2020	Turn in completed deliverables	Students
Early May 2020	Present results and impact of Capstone work	Students, Preceptors, Faculty Advisers

## Contact Us

For more information, please contact Meg Landfried ([landfried@unc.edu](mailto:landfried@unc.edu); 919-966-0057).