

Capstone Overview

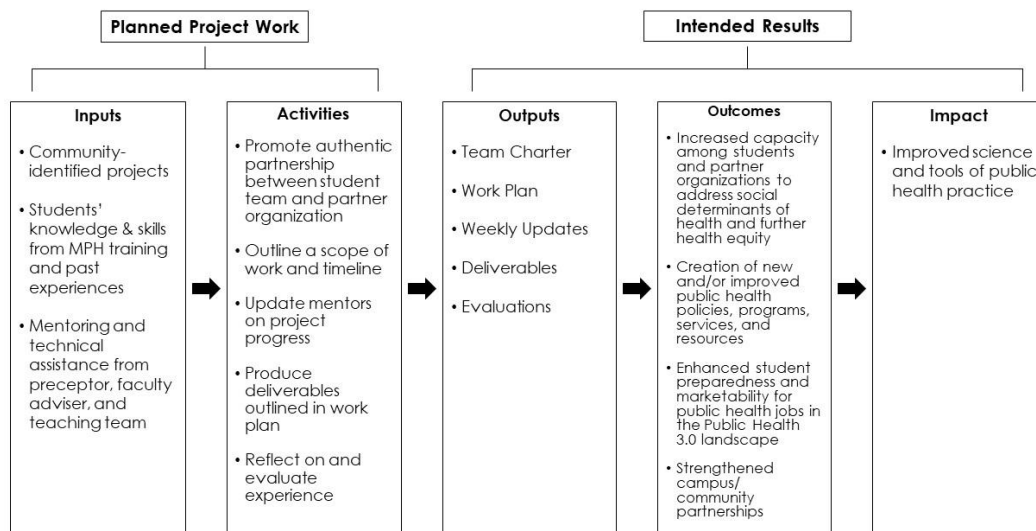
UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health

Capstone Course

Capstone (HBEH 746/992) is a year-long, community-led, group-based, mentored service-learning course that gives students in the Health Behavior (HB) and Health Equity, Social Justice, and Human Rights (EQUITY) Gillings MPH concentrations an opportunity to apply their training to public health projects in partnership with community-based organizations. As the culminating experience for the HB and EQUITY MPH concentrations, the products produced for this course serve as a substitute for The Graduate School's master's thesis requirement. Capstone class sessions (Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m. EST) are an opportunity for students to work on, meet about, reflect on, and present their Capstone projects.

Capstone Project Work

Our partner organizations define the scope of work for the Capstone projects. 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 4-6 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., organizational contact, supervisor, and mentor to the student team) outlines and supervises the project work. Each team is supported by a **faculty adviser** who provides technical expertise. The Capstone **teaching team** (i.e., course instructor(s) and teaching assistants) oversees all Capstone projects and provides structures, guidance, and supports to increase the effectiveness of the Capstone experience. As illustrated in the logic model below, we expect this service-learning experience to improve the science and tools of public health practice.



Frequently Asked Questions

What types of organizations can host a Capstone team?

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 (**2-4 hours per week**), expertise, and interest to mentor a team of 4-6 students.
3. Have organizational capacity and resources to sustain support for a Capstone project over the 2023-2024 academic year.

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. **Organizations do not have to be located within North Carolina; however, preceptors must be regularly available during Capstone class time (Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:00 a.m.-12:15 p.m. EST) to meet with their student teams.**

We prioritize organizations with demonstrated commitment to equity, inclusion, and social justice whose work allows for meaningful engagement with intended beneficiaries. Over the past 14 years, we have worked with 94 Capstone partner organizations including:

ACHIEVE Project
Alexander YMCA*
American Social Health Association
Amigas Latinas Motivando el Alma
The Art Therapy Institute*
Birth Partners UNC Medical Center
Volunteer Doula Service
Boys on Track
Campus & Community Coalition to
Reduce the Negative Impacts of
High Risk Drinking, Chapel Hill
Downtown Partnership*
Carolina Across 100
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
Comprehensively Lessening Opioid
Use Disorder Impact
Counter Tobacco
Danville Regional Foundation
Duke Child and Adolescent Gender
Care Clinic
Duke University Substance Abuse &
Health Promotion Center
Durham County Department of
Public Health
Durham County Community Safety
Department
El Pueblo, Inc.*
Food Insight Group*
Frank Porter Graham Bilingüe
Granville Vance Public Health

Green Rural Redevelopment
Organization
Healthy Alamance
InterFaith Food Shuttle
IntraHealth, Inc.*
Juntos*
LGBT Center of Raleigh
Marian Cheek Jackson Center for
Saving and Making History*
Mountain Area Health Education
Center
National Implementation Research
Network
National Survivor Network
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
NC Poverty Research Fund
North Carolina Central University
Women's Center
North Carolina Coalition Against
Domestic Violence*
North Carolina Comprehensive
Cancer Program
North Carolina Division of Public
Health
Orange County Department on
Aging*
Orange County Emergency Medicine
Services
North Carolina Harm Reduction
Coalition
North Carolina Justice Center
Orange County Health Department*
Orange County Justice United
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
Research Triangle Institute Center for
Communication Science
Rural Opportunity Institute*
Sexual Health Initiatives for Teens
(SHIFT) NC
Southeast Raleigh YMCA*
Southern Coalition for Social Justice*
Southern Oral History Program
SpiritHouse, Inc.
State Trauma Advisory Council*
TABLE
TABLE-PORCH-IFC
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 Emergency
Medicine
UNC Department of Surgery
UNC Division of General Internal
Medicine
UNC Family Medicine
UNC Highway Safety Research
Center
UNC Injury Prevention Research
Center
UNC Lineberger Comprehensive
Cancer Center*
UNC Patient and Caregiver Centered
Initiative
UNC School of Social Work
UNC Student Wellness
UNC Trauma Program
UNC Worksite Wellness
United Way of NC
Vaping Prevention Resource

**Hosted multiple teams*

What is the timeline for the 2023-2024 Capstone projects?

The Capstone solicitation, selection, and matching process will occur between December 2022 and April 2023. Capstone teams (students, preceptor, faculty adviser) are expected to meet with the teaching team once before the 2023 summer break to review roles and responsibilities and outline a plan for onboarding the student team to the project work and partner organization. Capstone project work will officially begin in August 2023 and will continue while classes are in session until April 2024. The Capstone project work will culminate with final presentations in late April 2024.

Date	Task	Who's Responsible
December 2022-January 2023	Solicit potential Capstone projects	Capstone Teaching Team
January-early February 2023	Collect Capstone project proposals	Capstone Teaching Team
January-February 2023	Review and rank Capstone project proposals	Capstone Project Selection Committee
February 2023	Select projects to be "pitched" to students in March	Capstone Project Selection Committee
TBD March 2023	Present project proposal at Capstone Pitch Day	Selected Preceptors
March 2023	Rank top 5 choices for Capstone projects	Students
March 2023	Facilitate matching process between students, Capstone projects, and faculty advisers	Capstone Teaching Team
By April 3, 2023	Announce 2023-2024 Capstone projects, preceptors, student teams, and faculty advisers	Capstone Teaching Team
April/May 2023	Conduct initial Capstone team meetings	Students, Preceptors, Faculty Advisers, Capstone Teaching Team
Late August 2023	Attend Capstone Orientation	Students, Preceptors, Faculty Advisers
Late August/early September 2023	Orient students to Capstone partner organization	Preceptors
September 2023	Finalize fall work plan	Students, Preceptors, Faculty Advisers
January 2024	Attend spring check-in meetings	Students, Preceptors, Faculty Advisers, Capstone Teaching Team
January 2024	Update work plan	Students, Preceptors, Faculty Advisers
Late April 2024	Turn in completed deliverables	Students

Date	Task	Who's Responsible
Early May 2024	Present results and impact of Capstone work	Students, Preceptors, Faculty Advisers

What are the roles and responsibilities of a preceptor?

A preceptor is the organizational contact, supervisor, and mentor to the student team. They provide a vision for, outline, and supervise the Capstone project work. They should expect to spend **2-4 hours per week**, on average, guiding the Capstone project work. Preceptors are responsible for:

- Establishing a clear vision for the project and 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 public health issues, people, policies, procedures, and norms related to the Capstone project work. This includes providing a guided tour of community(ies) the Capstone partner organization works with and introducing students to key informants and potential stakeholders
- Maintaining regular contact with the student team through meetings (typically every other week during Capstone class time) 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 initial team meeting (April/May 2023) orientation (August/September 2023), a spring check-in meeting (January 2024), and their team's final presentation (April/May 2024)
- 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 **9 hours per week** working on Capstone, including both class and project work. Students are responsible for:

- Applying the knowledge and skills gained through their 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 particularly through weekly emailed updates to preceptor(s), faculty adviser, and the teaching team
- 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 technical assistance from a faculty adviser who is responsible for:

- Maintaining regular contact and communication with the Capstone team by at a minimum responding as needed to weekly updates and meeting with team ~3 times per semester
- Providing specific, timely feedback to students about their quality of work and performance
- Ensuring that students’ work meets the level of quality expected for a master’s thesis substitute
- Grading Capstone deliverables and assessing students’ demonstration of competency attainment
- Attending an initial team meeting (April/May 2023) orientation (August/September 2023), a spring check-in meeting (January 2024), and their team’s final presentation (April/May 2024)

What are the roles and responsibilities of the teaching team?

The teaching team oversees the Capstone program. They are responsible for:

- Communicating expectations for the Capstone program
- Providing guidance on Capstone processes and project work
- Managing students’, preceptors’, faculty advisers’, and accreditors’ interests and priorities
- Facilitating feedback and problem solving among Capstone parties
- Promoting consistency across the Capstone projects’ depth, scope, and quality

What conditions promote Capstone project success?

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

- The preceptor has a clear vision for the project work
- There is an immediate need and use for the deliverables produced
- The work is informed by and is responsive to project stakeholders, including those most impacted by the project topic
- Leadership at the Capstone partner organization fully supports the Capstone project and provides the resources (including staff time) necessary to carry out the project work

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

- The preceptor provides clear direction for the project work
- 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 one overarching project goal
- The preceptor 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
- They have an opportunity to interact with the populations most impacted by the project work

What types of deliverables do Capstone teams produce?

Each Capstone team typically produces 4-6 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 work remotely?

Yes. Capstone teams do not have to work onsite at an organization. However, Capstone students must have opportunities to ethically engage with the people most directly impacted by their work. We have a limited budget to support local travel as a part of Capstone activities.

Is there a fee associated with having a Capstone team?

No. There is no charge for the services Gillings 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.

How do I apply for a Capstone team?

To apply for a Capstone team, please follow these steps:

1. Review the Capstone Overview document in full.
2. Contact mphcapstone@unc.edu to schedule a meeting with a member of the Capstone teaching team to discuss your project ideas and receive tips on the Capstone project proposal process. **Meetings with the teaching team should take place by January 30, 2023.**
3. Fill out the 2023-2024 Capstone Project Proposal Form, available [here](#). Please save your completed proposal as a **Microsoft Word** document using the following naming convention: Organization Name_Capstone Proposal 2023-2024.
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 mphcapstone@unc.edu by 11:59 p.m. on **February 6, 2023**.

If my organization applies for a Capstone team, are we certain to get one?

No. Given the varied interests and expertise of our students, there is no guarantee that a proposal will be selected. 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 such as the [practicum](#)).

How are Capstone projects selected?

Submitted proposals are reviewed by a committee of faculty and current 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.

¹ Calculation based on: average of 45 students/year x 9 hours of Capstone work/week/student x 30 weeks/year x \$20.96 (graduate assistant hourly rate) = \$254,664.

- **Project Feasibility:** The breadth and depth of deliverables and proposed timeline is appropriate for 4-6 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.
- **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 (2-4 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 2023-2024 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 commitment to equity, inclusion, and social justice 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 those most directly impacted by the issue. 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 communities and population(s).

We will invite preceptors whose proposals receive the highest scores to submit a brief (~5 minute) recorded project overview presentation that will be shared with students. After reviewing the submitted presentations, students will rank their top five choices for Capstone projects. The Capstone teaching team will 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.

Whom should I contact if I have questions?

Please contact mphcapstone@unc.edu.