Capstone Overview
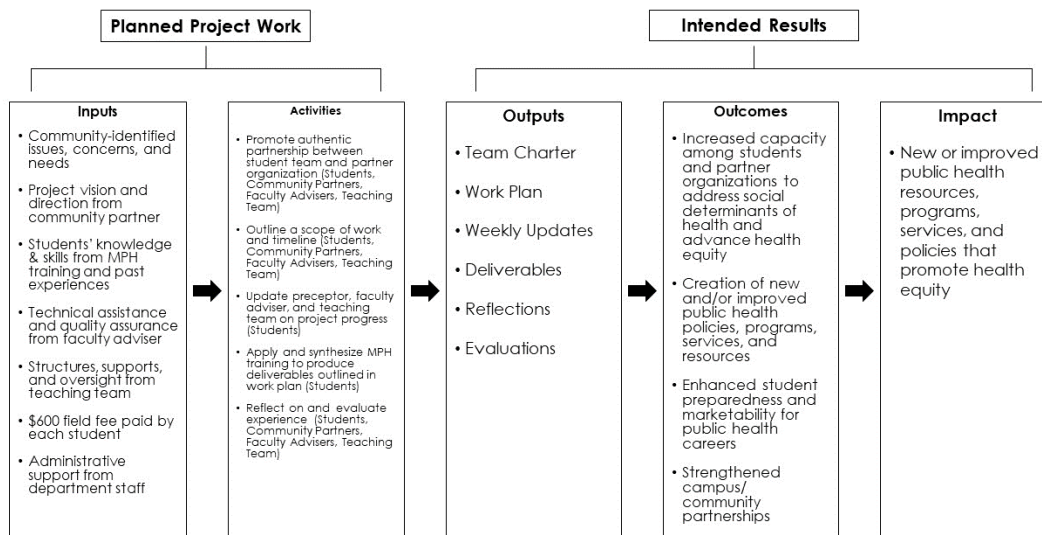## UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health

Capstone Course

Capstone (HBEH 746/992) is a year-long, community-led, group-based, mentored, critical (i.e., explicitly focused on social justice) 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 synthesize and apply their MPH training to community-designed public health projects. Capstone serves as a substitute for The Graduate School's master's thesis requirement and satisfies the Council on Education for Public Health's (CEPH) Integrative Learning Experience (ILE) requirements. 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 community-led approach prioritizes our partners' interests and gives students an opportunity to do applied public health work on a range of topics with a variety of organization types. Over an entire academic year (August-April), each team of 4-6 MPH students works with a partner organization and its constituents 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 and quality assurance. The Capstone **teaching team** (i.e., course instructor and teaching fellows) oversees all Capstone projects and provides structures, guidance, and supports to facilitate mutually beneficial experiences. As is illustrated in the logic model below, we expect this service-learning experience to improve the science and tools of public health practice.

Planned Project Work		Intended Results		
Inputs	**Activities**	**Outputs**	**Outcomes**	**Impact**
• Community-identified issues, concerns, and needs • Project vision and direction from community partner • Students' knowledge & skills from MPH training and past experiences • Technical assistance and quality assurance from faculty adviser • Structures, supports, and oversight from teaching team • $600 field fee paid by each student • Administrative support from department staff	• Promote authentic partnership between student team and partner organization (Students, Community Partners, Faculty Advisers, Teaching Team) • Outline a scope of work and timeline (Students, Community Partners, Faculty Advisers, Teaching Team) • Update preceptor, faculty adviser, and teaching team on project progress (Students) • Apply and synthesize MPH training to produce deliverables outlined in work plan (Students) • Reflect on and evaluate experience (Students, Community Partners, Faculty Advisers, Teaching Team)	• Team Charter • Work Plan • Weekly Updates • Deliverables • Reflections • Evaluations	• Increased capacity among students and partner organizations to address social determinants of health and advance health equity • Creation of new and/or improved public health policies, programs, services, and resources • Enhanced student preparedness and marketability for public health careers • Strengthened campus/ community partnerships	• New or improved public health resources, programs, services, and policies that promote health equity

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 2024-2025 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 15 years, we have worked with 104 Capstone partner organizations including:

ACHIEVE Project
Alexander YMCA*
American Social Health Association
Amigas Latinas Motivando el Alma
Birth Partners UNC Medical Center
    Volunteer Doula Service
Boys on Track
Breastfeed Orange NC (BONC)
Campus & Community Coalition to
    Reduce the Negative Impacts of
    High Risk Drinking, Chapel Hill
    Downtown Partnership*
Cape Fear Collective (CFC)
Carolina Across 100
Carolina Campus Community Garden
Carolina Community Academy (CCA)
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 Community Safety
    Department
Durham County Department of
    Public Health
El Pueblo, Inc.*
Food Insight Group*

Frank Porter Graham Bilingüe
GRACED, Inc.
Granville Vance Public Health
Green Rural Redevelopment
    Organization
Green Rural Redevelopment Organization
    (GRRO)
Healthy Alamance
InterFaith Food Shuttle
IntraHealth, Inc.*
Ipas
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 DHHS Office of Health Equity (OHE)
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
North Carolina Harm Reduction
    Coalition
North Carolina Justice Center
Orange County Department on
    Aging*
Orange County Emergency Medicine
    Services

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
The Art Therapy Institute*
The Fenway Institute (Fenway)
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 Violence Prevention & Advocacy
   Services (VPAS)

UNC Worksite Wellness

United Way of NC

Vaping Prevention Resource

WakeMed

WHOLE Schools

Hosted multiple teams

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 constituents
- Maintaining regular contact with the student team through meetings (typically every other week during Capstone class time), email, and other agreed upon forms of communication
- 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 2024), orientation (August/September 2024), and mentor check-ins (twice a semester)
- Identifying a suitable replacement if unable to continue in the role of a preceptor

What are the roles and responsibilities of the student team?

Student teams are responsible for managing and producing the Capstone project work. Each Capstone student is expected to spend approximately **6-9 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 and quality assurance 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 2024), orientation (August/September 2024), and mentor check-ins (twice a semester)

What are the roles and responsibilities of the teaching team?

The teaching team oversees all Capstone projects and provides structures, guidance, and supports to facilitate mutually beneficial experiences. 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 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

What is the timeline for the 2024-2025 Capstone projects?

The Capstone solicitation, selection, and matching process will occur between December 2023 and April 2024. Capstone teams (students, preceptor, faculty adviser) are expected to meet with the teaching team once before the 2024 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 2024 and will continue while classes are in session until April 2025.

Date	Task	Who's Responsible
December 2023-January 2024	Solicit potential Capstone projects	Capstone Teaching Team
January-early February 2024	Collect Capstone project proposals	Capstone Teaching Team
January-February 2024	Review and rank Capstone project proposals	Capstone Project Selection Committee
February 2024	Select projects to be "pitched" to students in March	Capstone Project Selection Committee
TBD March 2024	Present selected projects to students	Capstone Teaching Team
March 2024	Rank top 5 choices for Capstone projects	Students
March 2024	Facilitate matching process between students, Capstone projects, and faculty advisers	Capstone Teaching Team
Early April 2024	Announce 2024-2025 Capstone projects, preceptors, student teams, and faculty advisers	Capstone Teaching Team
April/May 2024	Conduct initial Capstone team meetings	Students, Preceptors, Faculty Advisers, Capstone Teaching Team
Late August 2024	Attend Capstone Orientation	Students, Preceptors, Faculty Advisers
Late August/early September 2024	Orient students to Capstone partner organization	Preceptors

Date	Task	Who's Responsible
September 2024-April 2025	Produce work outlined in work plan	Students
Late April 2024	Turn in completed deliverables	Students

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 $226,800 of in-kind service[1] to our partner organizations.

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 community needs, 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 for the full academic year
- There is ample time and attention given to orienting students to the project work, partner organization, and key constituents, including the project's intended beneficiaries
- Students have an opportunity to interact with the populations most impacted by the project work

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[1] Calculation based on: average of 45 students/year x 6 hours of Capstone work/week/student x 30 weeks/year x $28 (graduate assistant hourly rate) = $226,800.

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 31, 2024**.
3. Fill out the 2024-2025 Capstone Project Proposal Form, available here, by replacing the highlighted text with unhighlighted text tailored to your project. Please save your completed proposal as a **Microsoft Word** document using the following naming convention: Organization Name_Capstone Proposal 2024-2025.
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 using "Organization Name_Capstone Proposal 2024-2025" as the subject heading by 11:59 p.m. on **February 5, 2024**.

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 community-engaged learning 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.
- **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 2024-2025 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 constituents 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.