

Capstone Inception:

An examination of the purposes, benefits, and different institutional practices

Author Note

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MAPC 700: Capstone

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Abstract

A standard method of evaluating Master's seeking graduate students is to have them complete an independent research project with assistance from an academic advisor. These independent research projects can be a thesis or a capstone. Capstone projects are typical for students studying public administration, liberal arts, professional communication, etc. Unlike a thesis, capstone projects are more practical for students who are going into careers that utilize real-world experiences while also applying concepts and theories learned within their master's program. This project will discuss the purposes and benefits of a capstone project academically and professionally, the different practices universities use when assigning a capstone project to students, and suggest a website for the Master of Arts in Professional Communication at the University of Tampa to use to assist future and current students.

Keywords: Capstone, graduate school, education, portfolio

Introduction

End-of-the-year assignments are common for courses or degree programs to have students wrap up their academic experience. Depending on a student's college level and the degree they are seeking, their end-of-program assignment can vary based on those two variables. Undergraduates are typically required to create a research project relating to their degree and sometimes are asked to create a thesis. Typically graduate students are required to complete a thesis that will eventually lead to their dissertation if they continue to pursue their PH.D. and in some cases can be required to complete a capstone project. A capstone project is much different than a thesis or research paper. Capstone projects are more flexible than thesis research papers. Capstone projects are multilayered projects that can be presented in various forms such as a presentation, a handbook, a performance, etc. Students are still able to design their projects in a way that aligns with their specific interests or career goals. Different institutions implement different practices when assigning a capstone project to students. Whether this is creating a curriculum that is tailored to the result of the capstone or having a guide in place to assist students with the process of creating their final capstone.

At the University of Tampa, the Master of Professional Communication program or MAPC requires its students to complete a capstone project. Students in the Master of Arts in Professional Communication or MAPC program are encouraged to complete their capstone that best suits what they are interested in as mentioned before capstone projects are flexible projects that can be presented in different formats and allow students more control than a thesis paper. This flexibility can be overwhelming to students. Some institutions have their curriculum tailored to the capstone or even have a guide for students to use when they face challenges

during the process. The MAPC program at the University of Tampa provides very little information to its students about what is expected from them or information overall on the different possibilities they can take when considering the final product of their capstone. This project will look at the academic purpose capstones have and the professional and student benefits of capstones and will review capstone practices across universities in Australia, Europe, and Hong Kong. The author will suggest best practices for assisting students with completing their capstone project in addition to informing those on why a capstone may be assigned to students.

Review of Literature

The Purpose of Capstone Projects

Capstone projects are assigned for numerous reasons, one of the main reasons is it is a way for students to present or demonstrate knowledge and skills they have learned in their major. Another is it is a way to prepare students for professional projects a future job may require them to complete. Both are great purposes for assigning capstone projects but one does not outweigh the other.

Research explains the purpose of capstone projects. While most have argued knowledge is the main purpose, McNamara et al. (2011) argue academic closure is a strong purpose for capstones. Academic closure is a way for students to use the knowledge they gained throughout their academic career and wrap it up into a final capstone project. Lee and Loton (2016) conducted a study to investigate the rating of purposes from students. In this study, they found students agreed past knowledge was important when conducting capstone projects (Lee and Loton, 2016). When thinking about knowledge being a purpose, it is much more than recent

knowledge. Knowledge has to be viewed as a way of combining past knowledge with the new information a student has gained.

Another purpose of capstones is to reflect how a student develops throughout their academic career. Student development can be viewed in a few different ways, such as a student's independence, level of responsibility, and confidence. These three components should improve as students move through their academics (Dunlap, 2005; Camenga, 2013). This expresses the student's ability to handle difficult tasks at the appropriate level and expected of them. In addition to showing how a student can perform at a college level, it also shows their ability to perform on a professional level post-graduation. It teaches students how to work in high-pressure situations individually without relying on sole help from others.

Benefits of Capstone Projects

In addition to the proposed purposes of capstone projects, there are benefits they have to students while completing their project and post-graduation benefits. Some of the benefits are the benefits to the professional work setting (working with a client or company) and how it is beneficial to the audience that is trying to be reached (the specific field or topic). Benefits in a professional setting can be looked at in a few ways, such as how it benefits the career field itself and how it is beneficial to the student's future career goals.

When considering what to do for a capstone project, some students may think about doing it in their career field. This allows students to get hands-on experience that can help them in the future. For students who chose to work directly with a specific company, that company can give the student access to mentors and a good support system. (Goldberg et al., 2014). Encouraging students to work in the career field of their interest, sets the student up for professional success in the future which is a major benefit. The main way for capstones to be

beneficial is there must be a combination of practical real-world scenarios with the theoretical and conceptual methods used in classroom settings (Fisher-Borne et al., 2014). Furthermore, a capstone project can give a firsthand experience while opening students up to more fast-paced subjects that will help them in the long run (Martonosi and Talithia., 2016).

Returning to how capstone projects are beneficial to professional fields when companies use students conducting capstones they can use additional help to solve a functional problem they may be facing (Goldberg et al., 2014). Not only do students benefit from this but the company as well because they receive an outside perspective and they can use this resource at a much lower cost than usual. This benefit is a way of accomplishing two things at once, students will gain beneficial experience while companies will accomplish a goal or create a new component to their company.

Different Institutional Practices

Not every institution has the same capstone guidelines. Some require students to complete a capstone course, while others have strict guidelines for how they want students to deliver their projects, work individually or in a group, etc. Universities in Australia and Europe were studied to understand the different approaches and practices they were taking for their capstone experience (Ku & Goh, 2010).

Ku and Goh (2010) researched several different universities in Australia but this section will focus on Swinburne University of Technology, Victoria University, the University of Newcastle, and the University of Adelaide. These four universities had slight differences among each of these universities. Research students are assigned project proposals, a written report, and a presentation to turn in for their final project (Swinburne University of Technology). Victoria University, the University of Newcastle, and the University of Adelaide allow their students to

work in groups or individually. This shows how well students can work in a team to meet a goal or show their level of responsibility when working individually. Going back to benefits, Swinburne University and the University of Adelaide encourage their students to have their projects have the involvement with a company that helps students post-graduation when they start their professional careers. Swinburne University, Victoria University, and the University of Newcastle shared similar purposes for a capstone. These purposes are, a way to showcase the knowledge and skills they have gained so far, demonstrate the ability to present a professional project, and the ability to work in under a strict time frame with good time management skills.

In Europe, Ku & Goh (2010) found similar differences among the three universities they researched. At these three universities, students can create a presentation or a written report. Students present their capstone either via a public defense or an oral presentation. Unlike Australia, they were unable to provide how long students are given to work on their capstone but two out of three of the universities require students to do their capstone individually. Based on Ku & Goh's (2010) findings, they found capstone projects allow students to use past skills learned and apply them to a specific case. This is an important experience to gain knowledge from because students can use the skills they used for their project and apply them to future cases they may encounter in their career whether or not it is the same case or not. At de Montfort University in the United Kingdom follows a similar method to the capstone project. Students first formulate a problem, then they conduct a literature review for the topic, think of possible solutions, review and evaluate the information they have gathered, collect data if needed, and finally present their findings in a way they choose that is appropriate.

Aside from finding differences in how students are expected to turn in their capstone project and other factors mentioned before, the author found some universities have a curriculum

in place that helps students when it comes time to work on their final project. In Hong Kong, universities have changed their curriculum for four-year undergraduate programs. Thomas et al. (2014) conducted a research study to investigate how the curriculum has made an impact on the student's experience. Universities in Hong Kong have made this change to prepare students for the workplace. Students can take what they learn from their capstone experience and apply it to future situations. In this new structure for undergraduate programs in Hong Kong, four components are meant to be gained from it.

These four components are increased exposure to non-academic learning experiences; expanded whole-person capacity; a closer link to the workplace; and preparation for a knowledge-based society (Thomas et al., 2014). Some programs fail to fully prepare students for the working world. If more universities had this in place more students would be better prepared for life post-graduation. In Hong Kong, it is required for students to complete a capstone. This is their way of bridging the gap between academics and the workplace. Hong Kong is working towards creating a connection of what future employers are looking for so they know what to teach the students to prepare them. To do this they have been developing courses like the capstone course to make this connection possible. This course works to do four things for students: integration, transition, reflection, and closure. Integration is meant to get students to make connections with what they are learning and apply it on a more complex level. This is an important thing to be implemented in programs assigning capstone projects because it gets students to think outside the box about a problem or situation.

Transition works to prepare students for what is to come after their academic career is over. Not only does transition prepare students it allows students to be aware of how they have developed within their undergraduate career and how it can help with the transition to their

career. Reflection is not only for students to look back on all they have learned throughout the last four years but also to reflect on how what they have learned affects them in their careers and as well as personally. The last component is closure, a close to the student's academic career. The closure allows students to look back on all they have learned, all they were able to accomplish through obstacles they may have encountered, and the ability to think abstractly about different concepts from different courses they have taken. When universities are considering incorporating a capstone project at the end of a program they should follow the method that Hong Kong is implementing.

A similar study was done by Holdsworth et al. (2009) investigating how the University of Melbourne in Australia has developed its capstone experience. The University of Melbourne, they have a model in a place called the “Melbourne Model” which is similar to the curriculum Hong Kong has in place. The Melbourne Model is meant to increase student's ability to think on a more theoretical level and apply this to situations they will encounter in the real world (Holdsworth et al., 2009). The Melbourne Model has the same motivation to bridge the gap between academics and post-graduation. In this model, there are two components involved in the development of the capstone experience. These components are knowledge transfer and graduate attributes.

Knowledge transfer takes university engagement and combines it with outside engagement which can be from jobs, internships, or other communities outside of the university (Holdsworth et al., 2009). This allows students to use practical skills, use school experiences and apply them to the given situation, and engage in specific situations. The second component, graduate attributes, allows students the ability to transfer skills learned and apply them to different work environments. In addition, graduate attributes are meant to help students be

involved in their communities based on where they will be working and where they will live. This will also allow the students to use what they have learned and make changes needed within their communities when it calls for it. All in all The Melbourne Model works to help students be active global citizens after graduation, strong leaders within their different communities, be aware of the diversity within their culture, be knowledgeable in more than one discipline, and excel academically. Just like the method Hong Kong used, The University of Melbourne's Melbourne Model should be implemented into degree programs that have a capstone required during the final year or semester. Students will gain a better learning experience from this because they will be better prepared for life post-graduation.

Problems and Opportunities: SWOT Analysis

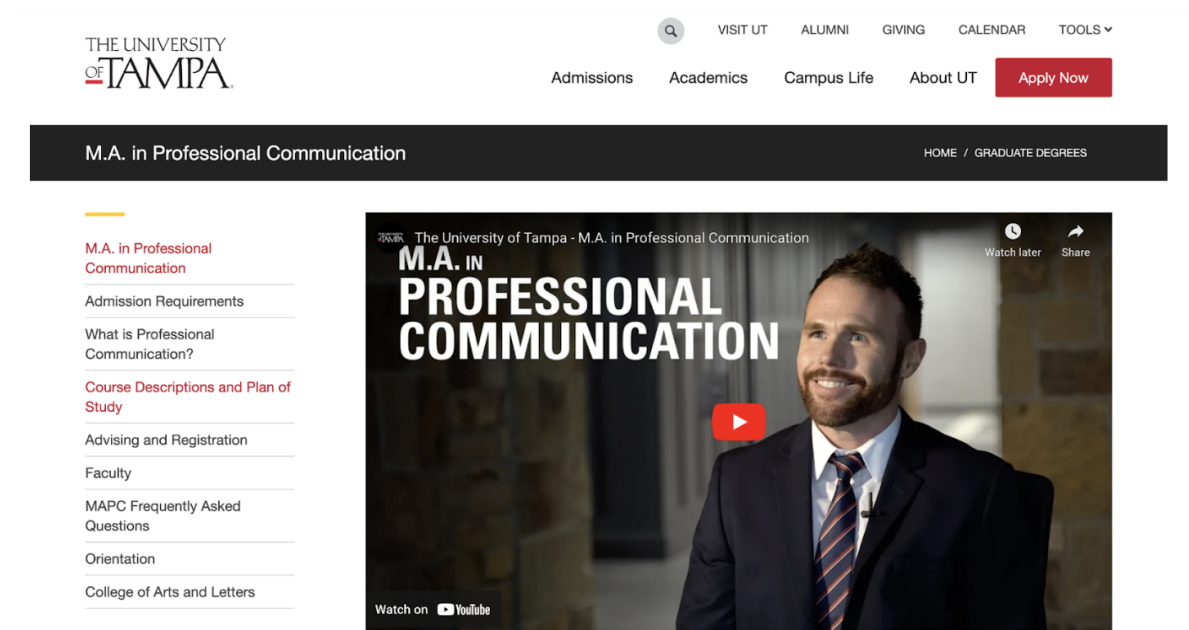
The MAPC section on ut.edu, under the course description, provides an overview of what the capstone is. This is a good starting point for giving a general overview of what the capstone is and who to contact with any questions students may be having regarding it. While this is a good start it does have its weaknesses. The description of the capstone is too vague for students who are looking at applying for the program and for students who are currently enrolled and are looking for guidance. Another weakness is there is no clear understanding of what is expected of students and no info about the process of picking a topic or what format to create it in (presentation, thesis or research paper, art piece or performance, etc.), and there are no examples of previous student work to base ideas on when trying to decide a topic and how to create their project.

Something to consider as opportunities for growth for the MAPC section on ut.edu, the MAPC could have an easy way to access all the information students need to help them succeed with creating their capstone. Create something that is there to be a guide for students and assist

them when they get lost. Something that is a resource for them to look back to. This helps take away any confusion students may be having regarding their capstone. A major threat to keeping the site as is with very little information leads students to feel unprepared and lost overall about the capstone project. Below is a screenshot of what the current capstone section looks like on [ut.edu/mapc](https://www.ut.edu/mapc) under course descriptions.

Figure 1

Current site description



M.A. in Professional Communication

Admission Requirements

What is Professional Communication?

Course Descriptions and Plan of Study

Advising and Registration

Faculty

MAPC Frequently Asked Questions

Orientation

College of Arts and Letters

M.A. IN PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

Watch on YouTube

Final Capstone Project (completed by all students in fulfillment of the MAPC)

A thesis option may be substituted. Consult the program director ASAP.

MAPC 700 Capstone Project

The capstone experience is designed as the conclusive experience in the Master of Arts in Professional Communication. The project is largely independent and students will choose a faculty advisor with whom to formulate a process and complete a project. This person may come from any field at UT. Consult the course syllabus and/or the program director for the highlights and procedures, objectives, outcomes and guidelines for the MAPC 700 capstone in professional communication.

<https://www.ut.edu/graduate-degrees/ma-in-professional-communication/course-descriptions-and-plan-of-study>

Primary Research and Findings

Participants and Materials

There were thirteen participants who participated in this survey. The participants in this survey are all current MAPC students from a mixture of different cohorts, which are the fall start of 2021 to 2022 and the spring start of 2022. This study used a Qualtrics survey for students to complete online on their devices.

Procedure

To get a better understanding of the need for a website or resource for students to use to assist them with the capstone, the author surveyed MAPC students. These students were sent an anonymous link to complete it. This survey asked students how challenging they felt the capstone experience was for them, if they have utilized the MAPC blackboard page and how useful they found it to be towards their capstone project, their overall knowledge of the capstone timeline, and the process for picking an advisor, and any other comments they wanted the author to know.

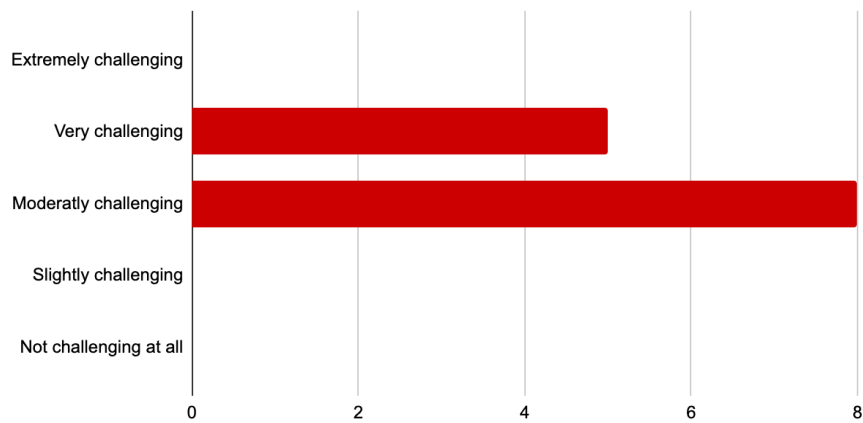
Results

The survey's final results showed students agreed the capstone project process could be very challenging to navigate and they felt slightly prepared for their capstone. This can be seen in the figures below showing where students scored for preparedness and how challenging the capstone project process is. (See figure 2 and 3)

Figure 2

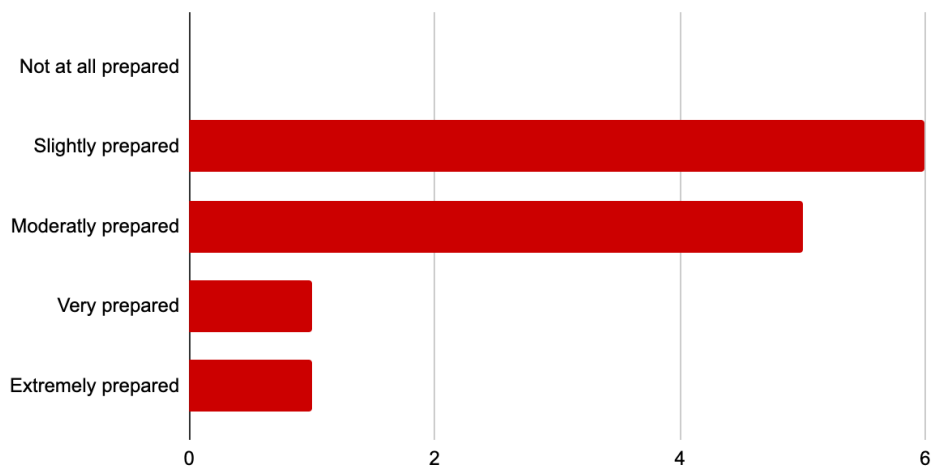
Challenge level of MAPC capstone process

How challenging would you say the MAPC capstone process is?

**Figure 3**

Level of student preparedness

How prepared have you felt about the MAPC capstone?



Results showed most did use the blackboard as a resource and the few that did found it to be moderately useful. These results only apply to current students who have access to the MAPC blackboard and not non-students. (See figure 4 and 5)

Figure 4

MAPC Blackboard use

Have you used the MAPC Blackboard page as a resource?

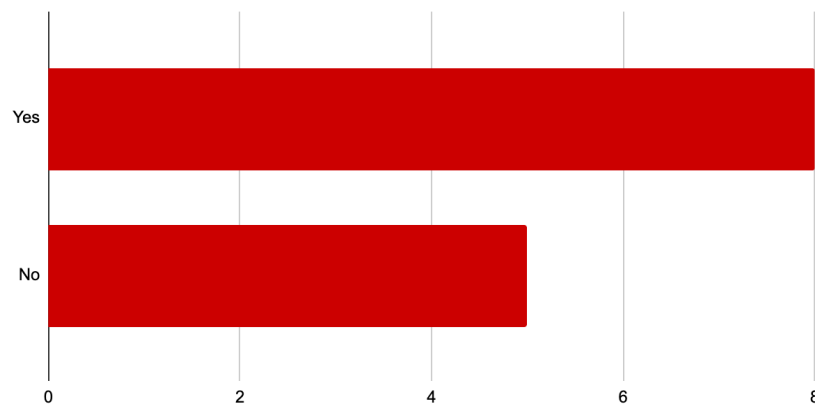
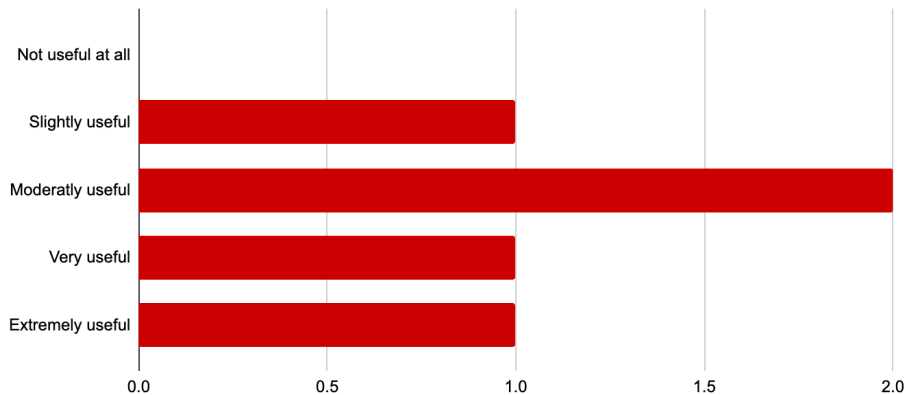


Figure 5

Level of the usefulness of the MAPC Blackboard

If you have used the MAPC Blackboard, how useful would you say it is?

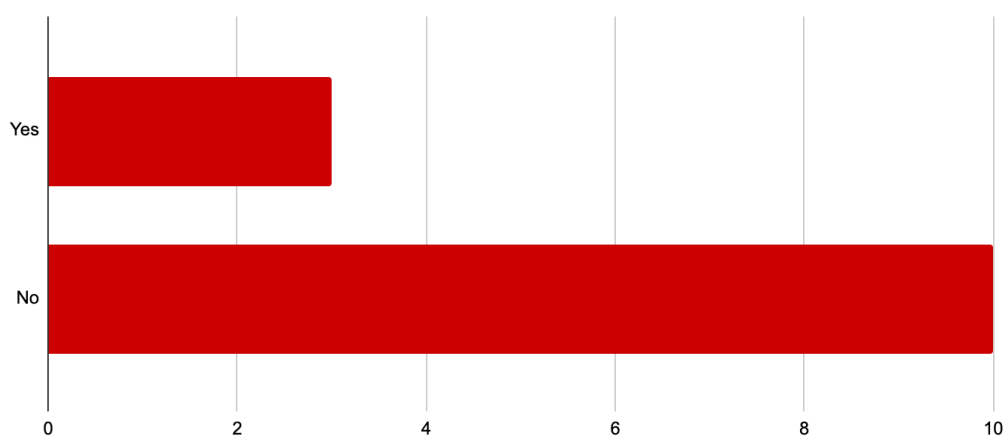


A majority of students stated they did not know how to access the MAPC capstones through the University of Tampa (UT) library online. This is a major concern as students should know how to access past capstone submissions to get ideas for their own projects. (See figure 6)

Figure 6

How to access capstone submissions through UT's library

Do you know how to access the MAPC capstones through UT's library



For the open-ended question that asked students if they would like to leave any other comments, students had similar views on the capstone project process for the MAPC. They stated most felt unprepared, and had difficulty deciding on a project because of the broadness and generalizes of the project, and most students won't get started on their capstone until the very end of their program because of this.

Recommendations

After looking at what other institutions implement for their capstone project experience, how does this apply to the MAPC and other institutions that lack information relating to the capstone experience? It is not recommended to change the entire curriculum as other institutions

have adapted such as the universities in Hong Kong (Thomas et al., 2014) or Australia (Holdsworth et al., 2009). The MAPC can adapt different aspects of what other institutions implement such as having courses that strongly focus on relating assignments to the capstone. Having this strong focus on assignments helps students get a better idea of what they want to create and have some assignments to help them with their end product of the capstone project. This takes away any confusion or unpreparedness students currently feel when going through the capstone project experience.

Based on the results of the survey the author sent to current MAPC students, the author also recommends creating a guidebook, specifically a website for students to use as a resource that is always available to them in addition to a presentation MAPC 601 professors will facilitate at the start of the program. The presentation will cover an overview of the capstone project, suggest when students should have an idea for their capstone, the process for picking a faculty advisor, and how each course applies to the capstone project as the student moves through the program.

The MAPC has a blackboard page that provides information for current students to access to assist them with the process. While this is a good resource one of the important links that has a video going over the capstone project no longer works. (See figure 7). The MAPC blackboard is mainly utilized to assist students who are currently enrolled but it does not reach outside audiences such as those who are interested in applying for the MAPC. The proposed site created allows the MAPC to reach a larger audience who are not currently in the program.

Creating a website that has information for both current and prospective students is more useful than a blackboard page. The MAPC Capstone website should have several different

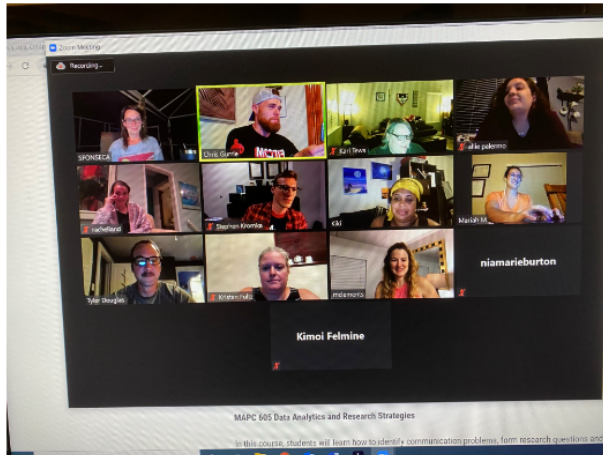
resources for students to view at any given moment when there is confusion. When students visit the site it should have a welcome page with all the different sections they can access.

The sections on the MAPC capstone site should include a capstone overview, academic purposes, professional and student benefits, faculty advisors, capstone submissions, and student resources. The capstone overview will discuss the basics of what a capstone project is, how it differs from a thesis paper, and different ideas to consider as a capstone project. The academic purposes section will go into detail about the academic purposes of capstones on students. The professional and student benefits section will go into detail about how both students and the professional setting can benefit from a student's final capstone. The faculty advisors section will give students a better look at the core faculty advisors for the MAPC that will provide their contact information and areas of interest to assist with the advisor selection process. The capstone submission section will have a selection of past MAPC capstones for students to view.

Each capstone in this section is an example of the different ideas a student can choose as their capstone. This will take students right to the University of Tampa's library website to view them. Finally, the student resources section provides an additional resource for students. Below are examples of each section from a mock website created by the author and the link to view its entirety. (See figures 8 through 11 for the mock website)

Figure 7*Capstone Overview Zoom broken link*

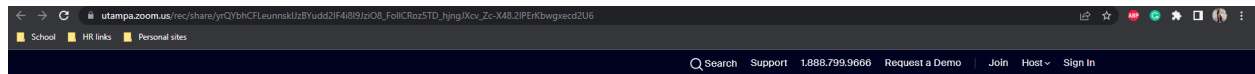
Zoom Link from Q/A Happy Hour 11/5/2020 about Capstone



Share recording with viewers:

https://utampa.zoom.us/rec/share/yrQYbhCFLeunnskiJzBYudd2IF4i8l9JziO8_FollCRoz5TD_hjngJXcv_Zc-X48.2lPErKbwgxcd2U6

Passcode: gW2.3yt%



This recording does not exist. (3,301)

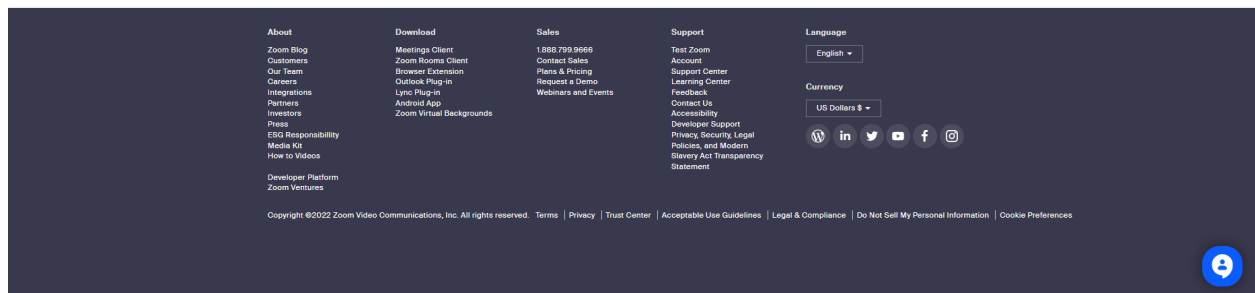



Figure 8*Capstone Overview*

What to expect from this page




Capstone Overview

Here is where you can get a better understanding of what the capstone project is. [Learn more here.](#)

[Learn More](#)

What is a Capstone Project ?

A capstone project is a multilayered project that allows students to work hands-on in a specific topic or career field. They are flexible projects that can be created in many different forms and directions based on a student's interest.



Capstone project vs Thesis

Capstone

Capstone projects are multilayered projects that are much more than a thesis. Capstone projects are a way to wrap up a student's academic experience.

Students at any level can be assigned capstone projects. They aren't assigned to just undergraduate or graduate students. Capstones can be assigned in any area of study.

Unlike a thesis, capstones can be presented in any form, not just a paper. It can be a website, short film, PowerPoint presentation, etc.

Capstones target real-world situations while getting hands-on experience in a specific topic. Students can work hands-on in the field of their interest and help them start their career in that field if they choose.

Capstone projects take much less time to complete than a thesis paper. Capstone projects target individuals looking to complete a project in a shorter time frame. They are typically completed in one semester depending on the institution.

Overall capstone projects analyze a student's ability to create an academic project that tests a student's research skills, critical thinking skills, ability to solve real-world problems and give solutions, and gives students a hands-on experience with their topic you would not typically gain from a thesis paper.

Thesis

Thesis papers are meant to be a starting point for a dissertation when a student is looking to pursue a PH.D. after earning a master's degree. Thesis papers are targeted towards undergraduate and graduate students.

Thesis papers are turned in a single format a formal paper and students later present an oral presentation as their defense for the paper.

Students who are required to complete a thesis paper for their degree are required to complete them individually and only collaborate with a faculty advisor. They do not have the option of working in groups.

Thesis papers require students to investigate a problem and utilize the scientific method to address specific solutions to that problem or topic. Thesis projects are targeted toward creating new knowledge on a specific topic.

Thesis papers can be completed over several semesters as opposed to a capstone which is typically assigned over the course of one semester at most universities.

Different ideas for a Capstone

- **Strategic Communication Plan**
- **Autoethnography**
- **Handbook or Training Manual**
- **Social Media Campaign**
- **Thesis**
- **Performance or Art piece**

Figure 9*Academic Purposes*

Academic Purposes

Capstone projects have many different academic purposes for students. Some of the common benefits would be a way for students to display knowledge they have learned throughout their academic career or to prepare students for their future post-graduation but this is not the only purpose a capstone project serves. Two of the main purposes are it serves as a closure to a student's academics and a way to display a student's development throughout their academics.



Closure To Academics

Capstone projects are a way for students to utilize past knowledge learned and wrap it up into a final project. Students utilize both past knowledge learned and current knowledge gained to help them complete their capstone. Utilizing different skills, theories, and concepts helps strengthen a student's capstone rather than just using what they have recently learned. Capstone projects are a clear way for a student to show the skills, concepts, and theories they have learned over the course of their degree.



Student Development

As a student goes through their academic career they gain skills from each course that adds to their development as a student. This development can be viewed as the knowledge they have gained thus far but can also be viewed as how they have developed as an individual. As a student, you should become more independent and responsible for your studies and deadlines.

Capstone projects show how a student is able to work under strict deadlines to complete an academic project. They also show how a student has the ability to take on challenging tasks by utilizing critical thinking skills and time management to complete them at the level expected.

These students who have completed a capstone project are able to show they know how to work on their own or collaborate with others such as working with a faculty advisor, company, or client. This sets them up to be well-rounded individuals post-graduation.



Figure 10*Professional and Student Benefits*

Professional and Student Benefits

Capstone projects are not just beneficial to a student academically but also professionally. Students are able to utilize their project as support when apply for a career in the field it may relate to. This section will go in-depth about these different benefits capstones have on students both academically and professionally.



Academic Benefits

Capstone projects allow students to wrap up their academics in a professional project that gives them a hands-on experience in a specific topic or career field.

Students who choose to work directly with a company as their client, the student has the opportunity of building a relationship and work with them in the future.

Students who choose to work with a client or company, they can serve as a mentor and an overall support system to the student they are collaborating with.

Students also benefit by integrating real-world situations with theoretical and conceptual methods they have learned in classroom settings.

Professional Benefits

When a student chooses a company or client they gain many different benefits. The topic or field a student chooses also benefits from the capstone project a student creates.

Students provide an outside perspective to solving problems the company or client may be facing and provide additional help to solve these problems.

The company or client is able to use the student as a resource for their company at a much lower cost than other options available to them.

A student's capstone has the ability to contribute to a specific topic or career field by adding new information from difference concepts they have learned and apply it to real-world situations.

Figure 11*Faculty Advisors***Faculty Advisors**

MAPC's Core Faculty Members

**Chris Gurrie**

Director, Master of Arts in Professional Communication/Associate Professor, Speech

Phone: (813) 257-1711

Email: cgurrie@ut.edu

Address: 401 W. Kennedy Blvd. Tampa, FL 33606

Mailbox: 128F

Building: ECA Room: 231

Thinking about Dr. Gurrie as an advisor?

Consider a strategic communication plan or fitness communication.

**Lacey Corey Brown**

Director, Center for Public Speaking/Assistant Teaching Professor, Speech

Phone: (813) 257-3551

Email: lbrown@ut.edu

Address: 401 W. Kennedy Blvd. Tampa, FL 33606

Mailbox: 128F

Building: ECA Room: 234

Thinking about Dr. Corey Brown as an advisor?

Consider topics in cultural communication or social justice.

**Kristen Foltz**

Director, Communication and Speech Studies/Assistant Professor, Speech

Phone: (813) 257-3499

Email: kafoltz@ut.edu

Address: 401 W. Kennedy Blvd. Tampa, FL 33606

Mailbox: 128F

Building: ECA Room: 232

Thinking about Professor Foltz as an advisor?

Consider topics in global strategic communication, topics relating to law, or conflict resolution.

**Stephen M. Kromka**

Assistant Professor, Communication

Phone: (813) 257-3954

Email: skromka@ut.edu

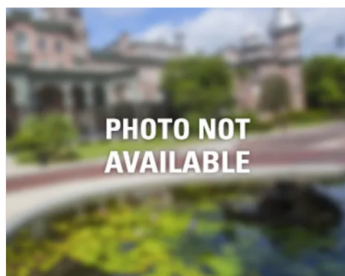
Address: 401 W. Kennedy Blvd. Tampa, FL 33606

Mailbox: 128 F

Building: ECA Room: 233

Thinking about Dr. Kromka as an advisor?

Consider topics in conflict resolution, quantitative or qualitative studies.

**Sean Sawicki**

Assistant Professor, Advertising and Public Relations

Phone: (813) 257-3513

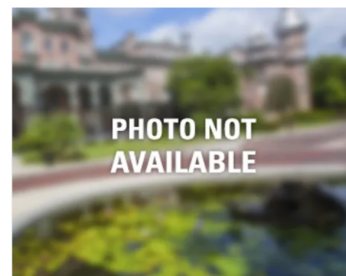
Email: ssawicki@ut.edu

Address: 401 W. Kennedy Blvd. Tampa, FL 33606

Building: TECH Room: 456D

Thinking about Dr. Sawicki as an advisor?

Consider topics in advertising, quantitative studies, or public relations.

**Patrick Seick**

Lecturer I, Communication

Phone: (813) 257-4010

Email: pseick@ut.edu

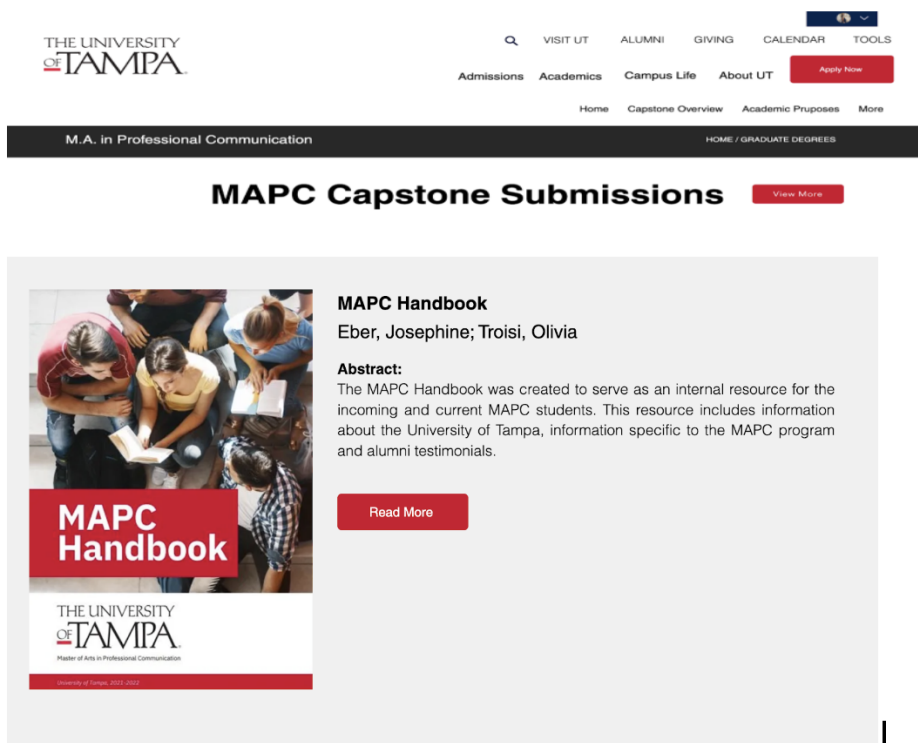
Address: 401 W. Kennedy Blvd. Tampa, FL 33606

Mailbox: 128F

Building: ECA Room: 226

Thinking about Professor Seick as an advisor?

Consider topics in disability studies or intercultural communication.

Figure 12*Capstone Submissions*

Mock Website <https://alyssara107.wixsite.com/mapc-capstone-2022>

Limitations

While this study has made some hard valuable points about capstones, it does come with its limitations. The first being it is primarily focused on the University of Tampa Master of Professional Communication program. It is focused on one population and can't be applied to a number of different populations. Another limitation would be some of the outdated research used to support some points that were made. Using newer research makes the study more relevant to current events in addition to using some past research. The survey used to support student views on the capstone is another limitation as only a small group of students were surveyed to help support the author. In the future, to help support the need for a capstone

resource, a larger group of MAPC students can be studied, including alumni and current students.

Conclusion

It was interesting to learn how much research has been done and can continue to be done on the topic of capstones. When thinking about what the purposes and benefits of capstones can be it goes beyond student knowledge and how students benefit from the project outcome. One finding that was unexpected for possible purposes was evaluating different components students should improve in throughout their academic careers. It is assumed students are evaluated for their capstone but not in the way Dunlap (2005) and Camenga (2013) viewed it. These different purposes and benefits can be applied to any graduate program that is assigning capstones to its students. The whole purpose of the capstone is to be a tool for students to showcase their knowledge and how they have progressed in their program in a well-planned and executed project. In addition, we can see how capstones are used in different ways and how other institutions have different guidelines for the capstone. Not every institution uses the same practice and we can look at what works best for them and apply these different practices to the MAPC.

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