

A photograph of a stone archway, likely made of limestone or a similar material, showing signs of weathering and lichen. The arch is set against a white background that fades into a grey gradient at the bottom. The text is centered within the white area.

# **CAPSTONE ASSIGNMENTS**

A Guide for Faculty

# What is a capstone course?

- A culminating experience in course form.
- Designed “to cap off the integration of educational experiences, and foster transition to work or further education beyond the bachelor’s degree experience.” (Kinzie, 2013).
- “Mastery experiences, the final opportunity to instill the values, knowledge, and skills expected of graduates” (Kinzie, 2013).
- A high-impact practice

# WCU's approach to capstone courses

- Each program must identify a course that includes a capstone assignment to “reflect on the integration of their major and Gen Ed courses as well as their own progress on meeting the goals of the Gen Ed program.”
- No new course is required.
- No course redesign is required, apart from adding an assignment if it does not already exist.

# The Seven Gen Ed Goals

- Goal 1: Communicate effectively
- Goal 2: Think critically and analytically
- Goal 3: Employ quantitative concepts and mathematical methods
- Goal 4: Demonstrate the ability to think across and about disciplinary boundaries
- Goal 5: Respond thoughtfully to diversity
- Goal 6: Understand varied historical, cultural, and philosophical traditions
- Goal 7: Make informed decisions and ethical choices

# The Capstone Assignment

- Based on a review of the ePortfolio.
- Reflective essay (or presentation, video, etc.) focusing on major coursework, General Education coursework, and co-curricular activities.
- Does not need to be a standalone assignment.
- A flexible format that can be used across departments and tailored to individual faculty needs.

# FAQs

- Do faculty need to teach any Gen Ed goals in the capstone course?
  - No
- Do faculty need to grade the capstone assignment?
  - No. It is required, but need not be graded; e.g. a participation grade or submitted/not submitted grade.
  - It will be used to assess General Education goals, part of reporting to Middle States.
    - Course faculty only need to share examples of completed assignments with the assessment team.

# Ways to implement the Capstone Assignment

- Standalone assignment
- In conjunction with a culminating experience project (internship, senior seminar, etc.)
  - Prior to a culminating experience project
    - E.g., “After reflecting on your growth in the major, general education course, and extracurricular activities, describe the skills you bring to the following case study...”
  - After a culminating experience project
    - E.g., “Answer these questions based on your internship project, general education courses, major courses, and extracurricular activities.”

# Guidance in developing Capstone Assignments

- Multiple examples on the Capstone course site
- Free to edit and mix and match parts as desired
- Use any instructional strategies; e.g., scaffolding, peer or instructor review, or simply a summative assignment
- Contact Sharon DeJoy General Education Council Capstone Chair at [sdejoy@wcupa.edu](mailto:sdejoy@wcupa.edu)
  - Available for one-on-one, small group, and program consultation from January 2021 onward.

# References

- Kinzie, J. (2013). Taking Stock of Capstones and Integrative Learning. *Peer Review*, 15:4. Available: <https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/periodicals/taking-stock-capstones-and-integrative-learning>
- Kuh, G. (2008). *High-Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter*. Washington, D.C: Association of American Colleges and Universities.
- Schermer, T., & Gray, S.. (2012). *The Senior Capstone: Transformative Experiences in the Liberal Arts. Final Report to the Teagle Foundation*. Available: <http://teaglefoundation.org/teagle/media/library/documents/resources/Augustana-final-report.pdf?ext=.pdf>.