

Capstone Planning PUBA 695

Instructor: Susan Chandler
Email: chandler@hawaii.edu

Course Description

The capstone is a nine-month, two-semester project designed to be the culminating experience of your MPA degree. In *Capstone Planning* students in a group of 3-4 choose a topic and conduct research to learn what may have already been written or discussed about the issue(s) chosen, and to develop a proposal that outlines the work that will be completed in the following semester in *Capstone*.

The purpose of the capstone is to have you make a contribution to a public issue in Hawaii or the region. The work should display what you have learned while in the program. It is also a way of giving back to our communities.

The capstone has three primary goals (1) to demonstrate that you have learned, and can make use of, what is taught in the program; (2) to make use of that knowledge on behalf of an issue in Hawaii or the region; and (3) to demonstrate the ability to work effectively in groups.

Student Learning Outcomes

- Frame research questions, identify and gather appropriate information, and recognize applicable statistical techniques for systematically analyzing evidence, in order to answer the research questions
- Develop a proposal for the capstone project to be conducted next semester
- Practice inter-personal, collaborative theories and best practices, and work successfully in teams through conflict resolution and negotiation skills;
- Communicate effectively orally and in written forms
- Demonstrate knowledge, skills and values that you have learned in your previous courses

Group Interaction

One of the most rewarding and challenging aspects of the capstone is that it is a group project. This can be rewarding because you get to work with other bright people with different ideas, perspectives, and styles. The challenging part is to coordinate these differences, along with time constraints, to complete the capstone project.

The capstone may address a wide range of issues, ranging from an organizational analysis, to a broader policy study, to a community issue. Finding a topic can be a difficult part of the process, since there is a huge set of potential topics. Students need to find a project that interests and group and also is possible to complete in the two semester time frame.

Expectations:

Attendance: It is expected that you show up on time to all class meetings. Failure to

attend and participate in group meetings (where the instructor is or is not present) will result in a lower grade and may result in you being asked to leave the capstone planning group. If you cannot attend mandatory class meetings (ones in which the instructor is present) you must notify the instructor and the group immediately so that accommodations may be made.

Late policy: It is expected that all assignments will be turned in on time.

Participation: It is expected that all students will participate in and contribute to the group fully and regularly. Failure to do so will result in a lower grade and may result in you being asked to leave the capstone planning group. The instructor understands that “life happens” and that some times may be busier than others. Please inform the group and the instructor of these times as soon as you are aware of them so that accommodations may be made.

Timeline for the Capstone Planning Seminar: The following is meant to give you some idea of the milestones your group should have met by specific dates:

Settle on a topic—and some possible research questions—within that topic—on which the group will focus.

Email a 1 page write up to the instructor

Submit an outline of the proposal, including a literature review

Submit a first complete draft of the proposal

Submit a revised second draft of the proposal, incorporating faculty comments

If necessary, as determined by the project’s needs and with feedback from faculty, submit an application for exemption from review by the Committee on Human Studies, in accordance with University policy.

Submit a final draft of capstone proposal

Proposals submitted after this date will receive an incomplete.

Submit the self and peer evaluations

Selecting a Topic: If your group has more than one idea for a project, then you will need to fashion a process for choosing one of them. You may wish to utilize these questions:

- Why is the topic an important public issue?
- What impact can we reasonably expect the work to have?
- What work has already been done in the area and what will our research add?
- How might we focus the work, and how can the work address the issue within the

group's capabilities?

Group Process: Self-aware development and maintenance of effective group processes forms an integral part of the Capstone, and you should attend to these in every Capstone phase. As a starting point, try to become aware of each other's styles and strengths, and look for ways to talk openly about process issues. We will discuss ways to assess your collective strengths and potential pitfalls throughout the semester.

Grading: The Capstone Planning grade will depend upon three items:

<u>Quality</u> of the Capstone Project Proposal:	80%
<u>Instructor's assessment</u> of how well each individual worked with the other group members (this includes attendance and showing up on time, participating in an open and flexible way, making substantial contributions to your group's work):	10%
<u>Self and Peer Evaluations:</u>	10%

It is possible that group members may receive different grades.

Grading rubric and suggested outline for the proposal:

- 5% Introduction
Introduce the topic (including defining or describing unfamiliar terms)
Why is it important (i.e. why should we care)?
Statement of your research question
Brief summary of what you are going to do in the proposal (i.e. outline your proposal)
- 30% Information/Literature Review
Provide more information about your topic (stats, numbers, etc.) if needed
What does the literature say about your research question?
 What are the general findings?
 How did they study it?
What doesn't the literature say about your research question (i.e. what's missing)?
Restate the research question
- 25% Statement of the Issues
Why is this missing piece important to study?
What are some important questions and concerns that arise with your research question and topic?
- 30% Proposed Research Approach
How are you going to attempt to answer your research question?
Why will you be using that method?
Sample interview/survey questions if needed.
Who will you talk to? Where will you get data?
How will you analyze the data?
- 10% Conclusion
What you hope to find.
To whom will the information be important to and what could they do with it.
What will this add to or inform your understanding of what you learned in PUBA