



The STP Capstone Project

Roundtable Discussion Presented at the Midwestern Psychological Association 2012 Meeting
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OVERVIEW

- **What is a Capstone?**
 - Integrative Experience and Demonstration of Learning
 - APA assessment cyber guide: a capstone is a class in which senior psychology majors are required to pull together what they have learned in their previous classes and demonstrate they are capable of doing what they should be able to do as they graduate from the program
 - Palomba and Banta: Provides an opportunity to demonstrate comprehensive learning in the major through some type of product or performance.
 - Preparation for the future
 - Can assist in preparing for job searches and/or graduate school
 - Tool for Program and Student Assessment:
 - Can also provide psychology departments an opportunity to assess whether or not they have been successful in producing competent majors as well as use results to improve the curriculum.
- **Our Project**
 - Formed a team to investigate capstones and portfolios in undergraduate psychology programs.
 - 15 schools
 - Sought funding:
 - Research grant from Governors State University (Johnson)
 - STP Small Partnership Grant (Close)
 - Outcomes:
 - Compare capstones and portfolio use across a variety of undergraduate psychology programs.
 - Compare capstone and portfolio effectiveness at:
 - Providing an Integrative Experience
 - Preparation for the Future
 - Use in Program and Student Assessment
 - Develop a resource page for STP about capstones and portfolios

PHASE ONE RESULTS

- **69 Schools responded to the online survey.**
 - 31 Public four year universities
 - 29 Private non-profit institutions
 - 5 Private for profit institutions
 - 2 Community colleges

- 2 Public upper division institutions
- **Does your program have something that meets the APA definition of a capstone?**
 - Yes: 79% (54)
 - No: 21% (14)
- **Capstone Components (with frequency counts across our sample)**
 - Oral presentation (40), Major project (38), Final (exit) exam (21), Thesis (19), Explicit consideration of graduate school (18), Group Project (17), Portfolio development (14), Use of career center (13), Internship (12), Service learning/community service (7), Alumni involvement and networking (4), Employment (3), Work shadowing (2), Leadership training (2)
- **Barriers to Capstones?**
 - Most frequently cited include cost, too demanding of faculty time and resources, not required by institution, difficulty in assessing that integrative learning has taken place, and difficulty in developing specific expectations for a capstone

PHASE TWO: RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

What did we ask?

We asked if whether or not information was available and the degree to which they had collected and used capstone course data to assess:

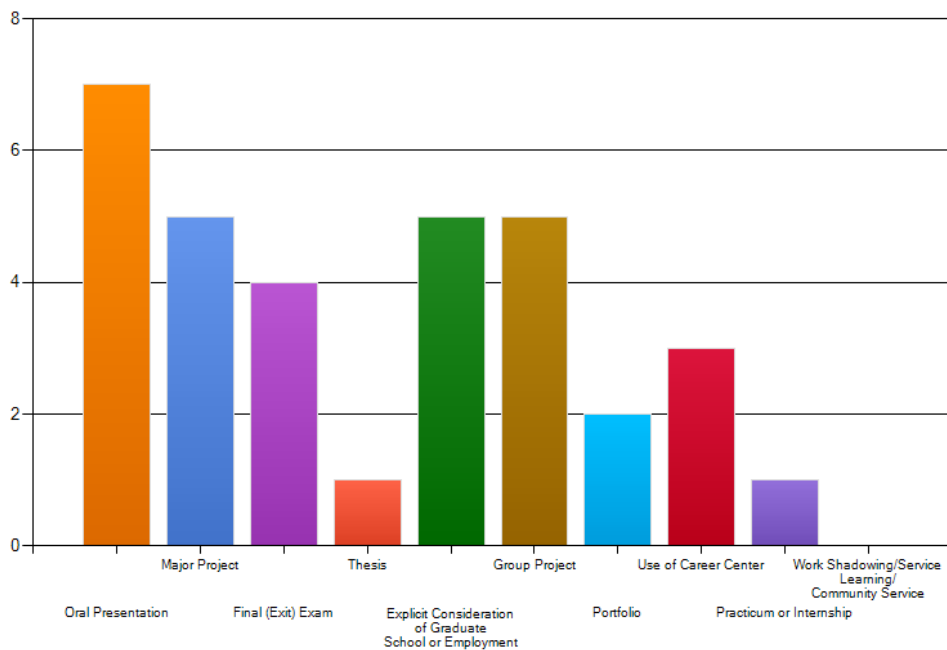
- Reviewing and integrating learned material
- Extending and applying learned material
- Meeting program/department learning outcomes and goals
- Meeting college/university learning outcomes and goals

Degree of effectiveness or usefulness of capstone outcome data for assessment purposes

Indicate from a list types of assignments they require and grade.

What are students doing in capstones?

Do you require and grade any of the following assignments in your capstone? (Check all that apply)



Other: Classroom debates

Capstones as a Data Source?

Conclusion: Faculty tend to view capstones as a rich source of data.

Data Used?

Conclusion: Except in the case of program outcomes, capstone data is NOT utilized very well.

Why is the data not used?

When asked the overall degree of effectiveness or usefulness of capstone outcome data for assessment purposes, respondents indicated an average of 3.64 on a 4 point scale.

When asked about participating in supplying some outcome data for the national project, of the 5 responding, 2 said no, 2 said perhaps, and 1 said yes.

EXAMPLE OF ONE CAPSTONE ASSESSMENT

Capstone Course: Psychological Issues and Social Values

Focus on diversity, cultural, and social/psychological issues

Learning outcomes include

- Apply psychological theory/research to analysis of cultural & social issues
- Create program portfolio with writing samples, self-assessment of program goal attainment, & preparation for grad school/employment

Learning activities emphasize discussions, debates, written position papers.

Assessment Methods

Student self-ratings on program learning goals (e.g., knowledge base, research methods, critical thinking, writing, etc.)

Instructor ratings of student writing skills

Student satisfaction/efficacy survey

Including self-ratings on course goal attainment & usefulness of creating portfolio

Assessment Results

Student self-ratings on program learning goals (1 – 6 scale): avg. 4.7-5.0; correlated w/ course grades & senior status (vs. non-senior)

Writing skills: Higher for seniors (vs. non-seniors)

Student satisfaction/efficacy (1- 4 scale): avg. 3.3-3.5; except portfolio avg. 2.9-3.0

Assessment Results: Interpretation

Program & course learning goals are being achieved

Higher goal attainment by seniors supports course as capstone/culminating experience

Student satisfaction/efficacy good; portfolio useful but may need tweaking

Thank you for coming to our roundtable! Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or ideas!

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