Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey
School of Public Affairs and Administration

Capstone 20:834:563 (01) (02)
Fall 2013
5:30pm – 8:10pm Thursdays
Location – SPAA (CPS) 309

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Recommended Readings


Course Overview

This course will focus on applying the core and electives courses with a focus on the analytical methods and research design skills of MPA candidates to real-time, place-based situations/problems in the nonprofit, public, or private sector. Students will work either individually on a research topic of interest or in small consulting teams focusing on an organizational problem proposed by a nonprofit, public, or private sector institution. The applied research (individual) or consulting engagement (team) assignment will challenge students to clearly articulate the research problem (research question) and identify best practices in the field (literature review). This will be followed by the development of a research design (logic model) including: (1) identification of a theoretical model through which to view the problem/issue, and (2) the selection of an appropriate data collection method(s). Students will then (3) collect the data, (4) interpret the data, and (5) issue a report including findings and recommendations. At the conclusion of the Capstone successful students will have demonstrated effective research skills, outstanding written and verbal communication skills, and will have displayed the level of knowledge for effectively managing a nonprofit or public organization necessary to enter the public service profession as a competent leader.
Course Objectives

At the conclusion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify and articulate an organizational issue
2. Lead the process for studying the issue, collecting data, and analyzing the data
3. Develop and present (in writing and in-person) the findings related to the organizational issue and recommended action plans
4. Demonstrate advanced skills in organizational problem solving
5. Display competencies in critical thinking, social science research and analysis, writing, oral presentation, and the core principles of public and nonprofit management.

Student Learning Outcomes:

- To be able to lead and manage in public governance.
- To participate in and contribute to the public policy process.
- To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions.
- To articulate and apply a public service perspective.
- To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenship.

Expectations

- Arrive on time
- Attend all classes
- Be prepared for class
- Contribute in class and in group learning
- Actively listen
- Critically think
- Ask questions
- Complete all assignments
- Be respectful – Adhere to University Ethics and Academic Integrity Policies and Guidelines [http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity](http://studentconduct.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity)
- Keep cell phones off or on a quiet vibrate

Assignments and Grading

- Class Preparation and Participation – 10%
- Interim Reports (2 @ 10% each) – 20%
- Final Paper – 30%
- Presentation – 30%
- Peer Evaluations – 10%
Class Schedule

Class 1

**Topic:** Introductions and Syllabus Review

*Students will be asked to identify whether they will participate on a Consulting Team or in an Individual Research. Options for individual and consulting projects will be reviewed and tentative assignments made.*

*Peer evaluation metrics will be identified.*

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Class 2

**Topic:** Organizing a Research Project

*Students will come prepared to confirm Capstone project.*

*An overview of the research design method will be presented and discussed.*

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Class 3

**Topic:** The Research Question

*Status on the initial investigation and/or contact with the client organization will be discussed.*

*Students will articulate the key research questions and propositions/hypothesis.*
Class 4

**Topic:** The Logic Model

*An introduction to designing a research logic model will be presented and discussed relative to the research question.*

*Logic models will be designed by each student/team specific to area of research.*

Class 5

**Topic:** The Literature Review and Theoretical Model

*Sourcing best practices and identifying portals for research will be presented and discussed. In addition, models for assessing the research question/problem will also be discussed.*

*Key question: How can we apply the literature review and theoretical model approach to our specific organizational issue?*

Class 6

**Topic:** Interim Reports #1

*Students will come prepared to present the status of their work to date.*

*As a group we will refine research plans.*
Class 7

**Topic:** Data Collection Process

Identification and discussion of various data collection methods and approaches relative to the research question will be addressed.

Class 8

**Topic:** Analyzing Operating Results

In analyzing results we will focus on how to interpret results, identifying and understanding key indicators, and looking at related reports and ratios.

Class 9

**Topic:** The Use of Diagrams

Presentation and discussion of the use of diagraming as a research tool will be our focus.

Class 10

**Topic:** Writing a Case Study

The key components for writing an effective case study will be presented and discussed.
Class 11

Topic: Preparing Your Report – The Written Presentation

Organizing your written report – the key components.

Class 12

Topic: Interim Reports #2

Students will come prepared to present the status of their work to date.

Class 13

Topic: Preparing Your Report: The Oral Presentation

The art and science of the PowerPoint presentation will be discussed as well as the key ingredients for an effective oral presentation.

Class 14

Topic: Using Your Research to Publish and to Promote Yourself

How can your work be utilized to promote yourself and to publish?

FINAL CLASS - Presentations

Each student will be allowed twenty minutes to present with ten minutes for questions.
Assignments

I. Class Preparation and Participation

Students will come prepared to discuss the topic. This includes identifying resources appropriate to the topic and applying the topic to their research project.

II. Interim Reports

Students will provide updates on the status of their research project: work completed to date, future outlook on tasks to be completed, and any issues/questions they may have. A one-page written summary of the above to be distributed to all class colleagues.

III. Peer Evaluations

Each member of the class will evaluate individual presentations relative to the metrics identified and agreed.

IV. Project Paper

The final paper will include the following components and be a length that fully demonstrates effective address of the research question. The paper will provide sufficient data presentation, analysis, and recommendations that effectively display comprehension of the best practices in the field of inquiry. APA format is to be adhered to.

Paper Inclusions:

Introduction (an overview of the project, the organization and/or the issue and how it will be presented in the paper – why it is important)

Research Question/Propositions (what is the issue to be addressed)

Literature Review (best practices)

Theoretical Model (the lens through which the research question was explored)

Research Design and Methods (the logic model and data collection methodology)

Data Collection Results and Analysis (presentation of the data collected and its analysis)

Recommendations (the action plan)

Conclusions (a summary of the project and the logic model utilized)
V. Project Presentation

This will be a twenty-minute oral presentation with ten minutes for questions (total 30mins). Class colleagues and organization representatives (if appropriate) will provide feedback and evaluate the presentations.
Resources

Newspapers/Directories

The Chronicle of Philanthropy (bi-weekly, 24 issues a year, also on the web at: http://philanthropy.com)
The NonProfit Times (also on the web at: www.nptimes.com)
New Jersey Attorney General, Division of Consumer Affairs, Directory of Registered Charities. www.state.nj.us/lps/ca/charity/chardir.htm

Academic Journals

Nonprofit Management and Leadership (Jossey-Bass)
Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly (ARNOVA/Sage Publications).

General nonprofit periodicals

Nonprofit Quarterly
New Directions for Philanthropic Fundraising
Stanford Social Innovation Review
Nonprofit World
Association Management
Foundation News & Commentary
Board Member
Contributions
Advancing Philanthropy (published by AFP, the Association of Fundraising Professionals)
Grassroots Fundraising Journal
Journal of Nonprofit and Public Sector Marketing
Voluntas (UK/international).

Selected periodicals in closely related fields (likely to include relevant articles)

Public Performance and Management Review
Review of Public Personnel Administration
Journal of Volunteer Administration
Human Resource Development Quarterly
Human Resource Management Review
Personnel Management
Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management
Public Administration Review
Harvard Business Review
Administration in Social Work
Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society
University Business
Health Care Management Review

Web Sites

Guidestar: www.guidestar.org. Information on the finances and activities of the vast majority of charities of size in this country.

Internet Nonprofit Center: www.nonprofits.org. Much information, especially "The Nonprofit FAQ " (frequently asked questions).

Nonprofit Genie: www.genie.org. From California.

Foundation Center: http://foundationcenter.org, including its Philanthropy News Digest. Key to information on foundations and their grants.


National Center on Nonprofit Enterprise: www.nationalcne.org. Focuses on the application of analytical thinking to nonprofit issues.

Dorothy A. Johnson Center for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership,

Grand Valley State University: www.npgoodpractice.org. Their "Nonprofit Good Practice Guide."


National Center for Charitable Statistics: http://nccs.urban.org/database/

Watchdogs


International Nonprofit Organizations

- InterAction: www.interaction.org. The largest, U.S.-based alliance of international development and humanitarian nonprofits; headquarters in Washington; 165 organizational members.
- CIVICUS: www.civicus.org. Self-described "world alliance for citizen participation."
- Allavida: www.allavida.org. UK-based international development organization with interesting publications, including Alliance magazine.
- Imagine Canada: www.imaginecanada.ca. Introduces the Canadian nonprofit sector.
- OneWorld: www.oneworld.net. News of anti-poverty NGOs throughout the world.