

# CAPSTONE PROGRAM

## Mutual Expectations

### CAPSTONE OVERVIEW

The CUSP capstone project is a two-semester practicum in which graduate students pursue applied or professional research and practical application of skills on a given project. The Capstone project is, above all, a professional development opportunity. It is designed to be an experiential project in which students take what they are learning through the course of the master's program and apply it to examine a specific topic and dataset. Broadly speaking, the projects involve looking at a real-world problem and designing a way to analyze or solve the given event or problem. The Capstone provides students the opportunity to actively integrate and apply what they have learned to the development, implementation, and analysis of a practical, hands-on project.

Starting in February and ending in August, students work in groups of three to five and are expected to be the owners of their projects and manage their relationships with the sponsor and faculty.

### OWNERSHIP

The results of the project will be displayed publicly on the CUSP website. Data and results can be cleaned if there is a need for protecting identities or specific findings. Students retain ownership of their intellectual property. Except for proprietary information that may be provided under an NDA, students shall be free to publish and communicate information about their projects without restrictions. If there are exceptions to be made, there must be an understanding in advance with the students, faculty, and staff.

### GROUP ASSIGNMENTS

Capstone project group selection methods will be based on several criteria including students' ranked preferences. Demographics and competencies will also be considered in order to ensure group heterogeneity. Any potential conflicts of interest must be disclosed by project sponsors in advance.

## STAKEHOLDER RESPONSIBILITIES

There are four key stakeholders with regards to the Capstone process:

### **Students**

- Provide engagement, time, and commitment to the project at the direction and supervision of the project sponsors.
- Leverage professional and academic experience and expertise to address the assigned project.
- Revise the project as necessary in consultation with the project sponsors.
- Communicate with mentors and liaisons.
- Provide a high-quality finished project that advances the mission of the sponsoring organization.

### **Mentors/Faculty**

- Oversee all grading and academic administration.
- Advise the student teams as necessary.
- Consult with students regularly to help keep the project on track, guide the project to meet objectives, and offer remediation in the event a student is struggling with the project or team member.
- Support the project sponsor as necessary to ensure the project is moving forward towards a successful conclusion.

### **Sponsors** (in some instances, the project mentor and sponsor may be the same)

- Provide a concrete, feasible project, access to datasets, and access to local sites, as necessary.
- Work directly with the student group assigned to their project in order to assure that the communication of their mutual needs is clear and the proposed project and scope are appropriate.
- Provide timely and productive feedback to students throughout the project process.
- Ensure that students have access to organizational resources necessary to be successful in the project.

### **Staff**

- Oversee the project group assignment process.
- Provide logistical support as necessary.
- Manage the capstone presentation day at the end of the project cycle.