20 Years of Institutionalized Capstone at California State University, Monterey Bay

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The “21st [CSU] Campus for the 21st Century”

- Comprehensive 4-year public university
- Founded in 1994
- 21st of what is now a 23-campus system
- Fall 2015: 7000 students (6700 FTES)
- Project growth for 2024: 12,000 students
- Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)
  - 38% Latino
  - 34% White
  - 55% First generation
  - 72% Receive financial aid
- Institutionalized High Impact Practices (HIPs)
  - First-Year Seminar
  - Service Learning (2 courses)
  - Writing Intensive Courses
  - Capstone
Capstone at CSUMB
Culture of Experimentation & Self-Study

● 1994: Major-based capstone experience required for all students
● 1994 - 2002: Minimal institutional-level control or requirements; experimentation encouraged
● 2002: First institutional-level capstone self-study
● 2010: Second institutional-level capstone self-study
● 2010 - 2015: Capstone development in the College of Business
2002 Capstone Self-Study Goals
Based on Review of Syllabi & Capstone Faculty Interviews

• Describe & compare all capstone programs
• Identify and share best practices
• Identify common challenges & solutions
• Develop capstone as a tool for program- and institutional-level assessment
2002 Capstone Self-Study
Key Findings & Recommendations

- Capstone highly valued
- Capstone models varied significantly
- Sustainability a concern
- Study student experience of capstone
- Promote connections between service-learning and capstone
- Improve use of capstone for program- and institutional-level assessment
2010 Capstone Self-Study Goals
Understanding the Capstone Experience at CSUMB

• Expectations of capstone students and capstone faculty
• Preparation of students to complete capstone
• Experience of completing capstone
• Sustainability of capstone
• Future outlook for capstone
2010 Capstone Self-Study Methods

- Syllabi review
- Capstone faculty focus groups
- Capstone student focus groups
- Online student surveys
- WASC Alumni Survey (2009), Educational Effectiveness Study & CSUMB Student Experience survey (2009)
- Interviews: capstone faculty, Department Chairs, and College Deans
2010 Capstone Self-Study
Key Findings

- Capstone still perceived as valuable by faculty & students
- Sustainability still a major issue
- Degree of preparation important influence on quality of experience for students and capstone faculty
- Students want more structure & guidance
- Faculty roles & responsibilities need to be clearer
- Majors that engage in continuous renewal of their capstone models gain significant benefits in terms of student satisfaction.
2010 Capstone Self-Study
Key Findings From Extended Analysis

Recognized gap in the literature related to what we can learn from students, themselves, to
- Increase knowledge and understanding of the student capstone experience
- Increase knowledge and understanding of how to make the experience more effective

2010 Capstone Self-Study
Key Findings From Extended Analysis

Increase knowledge and understanding of the student capstone experience

Students
• Learned how to apply what learned in other courses
• Appreciated high-stakes projects with real-world clients
• Mastered skills they would apply in the workforce or graduate school
• Valued the significance of the accomplishment
• Valued the future benefit of what achieved
2010 Capstone Self-Study
Key Findings From Extended Analysis

Increase knowledge and understanding of how to make the experience more effective
• Better prepare students for the capstone experience
• Communicate clearly and consistently
• Provide structure
• Provide support
Observation 1
Findings suggest value in taking a closer look at teaching and learning in capstone at the program level.

Observation 2
Simply engaging students in high-impact educational practices does not necessarily result in students achieving the desired learning outcomes.

Observation 3
Through the structure, processes, and emphases in the CSUMB College of Business capstone program, students are achieving desired learning outcomes and their views of themselves are changing—they are experiencing transformative learning.
What are the essential elements of the CSUMB School of Business capstone model that contribute to the transformative learning observed in and proclaimed by students?

CSUMB College of Business Capstone Research

How did students’ views of themselves and their place in the world/workplace change based on their experiences in the College of Business capstone?

• “As odd as this may sound, my capstone project was the first time I realized that I was smart.”

• “Every thing about the way in which I viewed my academic capabilities changed during that semester.”

• “I learned perfection may not be totally possible, but excellence most definitely is . . .”
Motivation
• Instill **purpose**
  – Team experience
  – Community client
  – Instructor expectations
• Provide **autonomy**
  – Course design
• Emphasize **mastery**
  – Skill development
  – Instructor expectations

Process
• Support **development**
  – Iterative feedback
  – Team process
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Thank You!

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