DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

GRADUATE PROGRAM

NON-THESIS CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE

Successful completion of a Graduate Capstone Experience is the culminating graduation requirement for the Master of Arts in Communication. The non-thesis capstone experience allows students to demonstrate their ability to organize and synthesize knowledge as developed throughout their academic program by exploring communication theory and applying it meaningfully to real-world problems. Through this project, students will further refine their written and presentation skills to share or disseminate effectively the knowledge they have gained to the appropriate audience. The non-thesis capstone project consists of a position paper, case synopsis, and presentation as described below.

Capstone Committee

During the semester prior to planned graduation, it is the responsibility of each student to consult with the director of graduate studies to make plans for the capstone activity. Each student will select a theory from three Communication courses taught by three different members of the Department of Communication faculty. The professor for each class will serve as a member of the student's capstone committee. The student will ask one of these professors to serve as the chairperson for the committee and will inform the Director of Graduate Studies so that the Director will be aware of the progress that the student has made toward completing the process. When the proposed chairperson and committee members have agreed to serve, the student will notify the Director of the final arrangements for the capstone activity.

Capstone Position Paper

Students will write a 10-13 page paper which reviews, analyzes, and synthesizes their coursework in the Communication discipline. This paper will demonstrate the academic writing skills students have acquired through the coursework as well as demonstrate their understanding of the role communication plays in people's lives (e.g., work, relationships, etc.). This paper will be divided into three sections. In the opening section (1-2 pages), students offer and defend their definition of communication and define and discuss the importance of theory. In the second section (8-9 pages), students demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of three communication theories or theoretical frameworks (from three different content communication courses). In this section, students should explain, analyze, and identify significant findings, and provide examples to illustrate their working knowledge of the theories. In the final section (1-2 pages), students synthesize the three selected theories, by elaborating on their similarities and differences and exploring ways they link together to describe, predict, explain, or understand communication in specific contexts.

Guidelines

All written materials must follow the current APA guidelines and be presented to the Chair and Committee in typewritten form using a 12-point font, double-spaced, and using 1-inch margins. All written documents must be free of grammatical, typographical, and spelling errors and cite a minimum of six sources (sources can come from class readings). The paper must be submitted to the Chair for approval and then to the other committee members for their approval before the student begins work on the Capstone Presentation.
Case Synopsis

Along with the Capstone Position Paper students should also submit a one-page, single-spaced synopsis of the scenario/case to which they plan to apply their selected theories and a one-page, outline/overview of how they plan to organize the Capstone Presentation (see description below). This approval must take place before mid-term of the semester in which the student plans to graduate.

Capstone Presentation

Using the three communication theories or theoretical frameworks the student selected for the Capstone Position Paper, students will develop and deliver a 20-25 minute presentation for their Capstone Committee applying the theories or theoretical frameworks to a real-life experience/problem, case study, or approved hypothetical scenario. The application of the theory may take the form of a solution or method of addressing the issue. In addition, in the final portion of the presentation students should delineate how they envision using the knowledge they have learned about communication in their lives and work.

Guidelines

The Capstone Presentation should be approximately 20-25 minutes with PowerPoint slides, used sparingly, allowing approximately thirty minutes for a question/answer session with the committee. Prior to scheduling the presentation, students should provide the committee chairperson copies of the slides for review. Once the committee chairperson approves, students will schedule a presentation date with the full committee. The Capstone Presentation must take place on or before the 12th week of the semester. Capstone Presentations scheduled during the summer sessions will follow a similar timetable as during fall and spring.

Deadlines (Fall 2011)

The Communication Department will use the following deadlines for the Capstone Experience during the Fall 2011 semester. Students who do not follow these guidelines should not expect to complete the degree requirements in time for December 2011 graduation.

- Students should submit the first draft of their Capstone paper and Case to their committee chair by October 14, 2011 (8th week of semester).
- Students should submit the approved draft of their Capstone paper and Case to their full committee by November 4, 2011 (10th week of semester).

Once the full committee has approved the Capstone paper and the proposed Case Study, students should schedule the Capstone presentation before December 9, 2011. Capstone presentations will not be scheduled during Final Exams week.