

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NJCU GENERAL EDUCATION CAPSTONE COURSE

The General Education (GE) proposal passed by the University Senate and the Senate Administration Coordinating Committee in May 2014 includes a three-credit capstone course as the culminating experience of the GE program. The capstone gives students the opportunity to reflect and build on the skills, methodologies, and knowledge they have developed throughout the GE program as they propose, prepare, and present a significant critical or creative project.

The GE proposal addresses students in its statement about the Tier 3 capstone course. The following recommendations are consistent with the terms of the proposal's description of the capstone highlighted below.

TIER 3: SYNTHESIZING, CREATING AND EVALUATING

The culmination of your General Education is a single capstone course. As part of the capstone experience, you will have the chance, **working individually or in collaboration with your colleagues, to develop, design, and present research or creative projects** (depending on the capstone course you choose). The capstone courses provide **a hands-on experience** in which you will **showcase your command of the skills you have been honing and the knowledge you have acquired during your course of study at the university**. Because this course provides an **opportunity to integrate your General Education studies with your major**, consult with your advisor to select the capstone that will best **supplement your major course of study**.

The GE proposal does not attach the capstone to the modes of inquiry or require the capstone to address specific University-wide student learning goals. The proposal does, however, foreground the importance of the capstone project as a culminating experience.

We expect to offer a small number of Tier 3 capstone courses for the first time in Spring 2017.

Recommendations:

1. The themes of each Tier 3 capstone course are sufficiently expansive to permit a range of possible capstone projects; their themes are approachable from more than one disciplinary perspective. Capstone courses are designed to attract students from a variety of major fields of interest. They provide students with an opportunity to reflect on and synthesize the methodologies and perspectives encountered in Tiers 1 and 2.
2. Students design their own capstone projects with the guidance of faculty who are responsible for approving student project proposals early in the semester.
3. Capstone projects focus on research or creative work. Where relevant, they may also include service-learning and/or other off-campus learning experiences.
4. When a capstone course includes service-learning and/or other off-campus requirements, that fact is included in the course description.
5. In some capstones, students collaborate with other students on projects that explore issues from a variety of perspectives. In such cases, each student's project makes a specific contribution to the collective effort.

6. Faculty may require all students in a given section to demonstrate command of the same two learning goals in their capstone projects; however, they need not do so. They may, instead, require all students to demonstrate command of one particular learning goal and to choose the second learning goal; or they may allow them total flexibility in the selection of both learning goals.
7. The capstone project is evaluated by the instructor and comprises a significant portion of the course grade.
8. The capstone project also serves as the signature assignment for the course. Projects are collected by a University assessment committee and reviewed according to the criteria defined by appropriate GE rubrics for two of the six University-wide student learning goals. The GE rubrics used by the assessment committee for each student's project correspond to the learning goals chosen by the student and approved by the instructor.
9. Faculty may teach the capstone course independently or collaboratively with colleagues. For example, several faculty may teach concurrently scheduled capstone sections on shared or related themes. While each instructor would take responsibility for his or her students' capstone projects, the classes could be brought together periodically for lectures and other learning experiences related to the theme(s) in the faculty members' respective areas of expertise.
10. Capstone courses may be interdisciplinary in nature.
11. Enrollment in capstone courses shall not exceed fifteen students.
12. Students become eligible to take the Tier 3 capstone course during or after the semester in which they complete their final Tier 2 course.
13. In the initial phase of Tier 3 course development, each department is encouraged to propose two capstone courses; these might be developed in collaboration with one or more other departments.
14. Major advisors should discuss a number of possible capstone courses with their advisees, keeping in mind each student's particular range of interests.

MOTION: The GEEC moves that the Senate approve this proposal regarding Tier 3 capstone courses in General Education. [This motion was approved by the University Senate on April 6, 2015.]