

**CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE:  
DISCIPLINARY QUESTIONS AND VOCATIONAL CHALLENGES**

July 1, 2016

**I. Short Description**

The Core Curriculum Capstone Experience allows students to pursue deep integration of their major and the concepts they have explored throughout the entire Christ at the Core curriculum. The Capstone Experience also considers how the First Year Seminar, the Advanced Integrative Seminar, and course work in their major prepares them for their vocations after Wheaton.

**II. Capstone Experience Learning Outcomes and Interpretation**

**A. Students will be able to....**

1. integrate their major's discipline with their Christ at the Core learning
2. articulate how their understanding of vocation as it concerns God's general calling on all Christians, their calling as students, and their distinctive vocational callings has developed while at Wheaton College
3. discuss how studying the Christian liberal arts has shaped their growth in knowledge, wisdom, and Christian character during their time at Wheaton College.

**B. Expansion and interpretation of the outcome statements**

1. Outcome #1: Students will be able to integrate their major's discipline with their Christ at the Core learning

It is the intention of the Capstone Experience that students will meet the learning outcomes through the creation of a significant project. This project may be completed within a disciplinary capstone course (2 or 4 credits) or as an element of a credit-bearing package. See III.D, "Designing the Capstone Experience" for more details. The term "integrate" in this outcome requires students to relate three areas of knowledge and experience – the major, the Christ at the Core program, and Christian faith. The nature of the project is intentionally left open in order to give departments as much flexibility as possible to come up with a discipline specific approach. This project may be exploratory, involving artistic production or scientific exploration for example, or experiential (e.g., an internship) but if so it should also include a disciplined reflection and demonstrate the connection of the experience to the learning outcomes (e.g., a summative paper or presentation, exit interview, or supervisor evaluation). Examples of an appropriate project may be a paper, performance, portfolio, internship, creative project (performance, film, blog, website, short story, poem, or other media artifact), lab or field work, or another project of some type that integrates and applies their major and Christ at the Core learning and conforms to the production style of their discipline.

Students will meet this outcome by creating a significant project that integrates and applies their major and general education learning. It is crucial that student projects demonstrate deep, critical thinking that integrates their Christ at the Core learning with that of their major. Faculty are encouraged to remind students of this often during the project's development and to include several check-in points at which thorough feedback is provided. The Capstone Experience project should demonstrate students' ability to think integratively through the use of the tools and knowledge of their major, their liberal arts learning in Christ at the Core, and, ideally, their informed, committed Christian perspective. While the project does not have to be a traditional academic paper, it should include a supporting commentary of a style and format appropriate for the discipline.

2. Outcome #2: Students will be able to articulate how their understanding of vocation as it concerns God's general calling on all Christians, their calling as students, and their distinctive vocational callings has developed while at Wheaton College

The cumulative experience of Shared Core in the First Year Seminar and the Capstone Experience should guide students into greater awareness of multiple vocations in life, not one vocation only. Vocations involve particular callings as followers of Jesus and as human persons, in addition to more specific callings relating to life in the workplace, family, social setting, and church settings. Use of the plural term "vocations" is encouraged throughout the course.

Students should take time to consider life after Wheaton College as they revisit their earlier work in the Shared Core sequence. After reading their First Year Seminar "Learning in Wartime"/vocation essay assignment, students will be able to write an essay specific to their Capstone Experience that considers: 1.) their current vocation as student, 2.) their possible/actual future vocational callings, and 3.) the relationship between the move from 1 to 2 through the learning accrued through the First Year Seminar and Capstone Experience.

The goal is not for students to communicate certainty about the future, but to reflect on their growth while studying the liberal arts. Students will reflect on their undergraduate experiences, both general education and major-specific study, and identify specific way(s) in which these experiences have prepared them for or are likely to influence them in their future activities.

3. Outcome #3: Students will be able to discuss how studying the Christian liberal arts has shaped their growth in knowledge, wisdom, and Christian character during their time at Wheaton College

Students will reflect on their undergraduate experiences, including both general education and major-specific study, and identify specific ways in which these experiences have prepared them for or are likely to influence them in their future activities. This reflection should include interaction with assignments they completed earlier in the First Year Seminar (especially FYS assignments for learning outcomes #1, 2, 3, and 5) and the Advanced Integrative Seminar.

The Capstone Experience should prompt students to stop and assess their overall growth and maturity while in college, even their spiritual growth and development of Christian character or ongoing struggles and doubts. Student reflections may include bumps in the road, missed opportunities, or crises in the journey of faith; but overall, the goal is for students consider their growth and maturation in intellectual and spiritual character over the four years of their Wheaton experience, and ultimately express if and how and why they valued the liberal arts education they received.

### **III. Guidelines**

#### **A. Expanded description**

The Capstone Experience is designed to connect the Shared Core curriculum—in which students developed their capacity to think in an interdisciplinary fashion, to integrate faith with learning, and to pursue liberal arts study—with their understanding of the disciplinary practices of their major. It also allows students an opportunity to reflect on the ways that the Shared Core curriculum and their other class work has changed their understanding of this fundamental question as well as prepared them for their future vocations both in and out of the workplace.

Departments may choose to seek approval for one of two options to meet the outcomes for the Capstone Experience: either through the offering of a 2 or 4-hour 494 Senior Capstone seminar course that meets these objectives, or through an approved group of educational elements in the major, including 2 and 4-hour courses, internships, and/or portfolios.

Students will synthesize what they have learned from their major with their liberal arts learning in the Core Competencies, Thematic Core, and Shared Core. The student's integration must demonstrate more than simply good academic work in their major course of study; it must equally reveal a distinctly Christian approach to these considerations which may affect morals, temperament, attitude, and disposition, as well as the ways these considerations can affect everything from self to family, to community, to church, and to the world at large. It is crucial that students' projects also demonstrate deep, critical thinking that integrates their Christ at the Core learning with that of their major.

The Capstone Experience will build on the information literacy skills and concepts introduced in the First Year and Advanced Integrative Seminars, to help move students beyond passive consumption of information to creation and contribution. The instructor will assign online modules, prepared by the library, to be completed outside of class time. Ideally, these skills and concepts will be applied to a project that meets other course outcomes. Library faculty members are available to support instructors as needed or desired.

#### **B. Connection between area outcomes (Part I above) and the 12 overall program goals of Christ at the Core (see p. 8-9 of the Proposal).**

1. Learning Outcome #1 connects with Christ at the Core Holistic Learning Goal 2 and Wisdom Learning Goal 3.
2. Learning Outcome #2 connects with Christ at the Core, Christian Character Learning Goals 1, 2.
3. Learning Outcome #3 connects with Christ at the Core, Christian Character 3, 4.

#### **C. Explanation, with examples, of what types of data will count as evidence for achievement of the stated outcomes**

<p style="text-align: center;">SENIOR CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE OUTCOMES</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Students will be able to...</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">MEASUREMENT</p> <p style="text-align: center;">As evidenced by...</p>
<p>1. integrate their major's discipline with their Christ at the Core learning</p>	<p>a. The completion of a significant project. The nature of this project is intentionally left open to interpretation in order to give departments as much flexibility as possible to come up with a discipline specific approach. This project may be exploratory, involving artistic production or scientific exploration, for example, but if so it should also include a summary document of a style and format appropriate to the discipline that explains the connection between their exploration and their Christ at the Core experience</p> <p>Examples of an appropriate project may be a paper, performance, portfolio, internship, creative project (performance, film, blog, website, short story, poem, or other media artifact), lab or field work, or another project of some type that integrates and applies their major and general education learning and conforms to the production style of their discipline.</p> <p>Student work in this area is met by successful completion of the project, as measured by a score of C or better on the rubric.</p> <p>b. Students must also successfully complete the information literacy online modules as a requirement of this course. Understanding is assessed within the modules on a pass/fail basis. If applicable, understanding is also demonstrated on a course project, as evidenced by an item on the grading rubric. Suggested wording for grading rubric: Demonstrates ability to respectfully contribute to the scholarly conversation in ways that are appropriate to the scope and purpose of the project.</p>

<p>2. articulate how their understanding of vocation as it concerns God’s general calling on all Christians, their calling as students, and their distinctive vocational callings has developed while at Wheaton College</p>	<p>a. Students may also meet this outcome through completion of the Capstone significant project (see Outcome #1) if their project contains reflection on their understanding of vocation. Or, the department may design an assignment. The significant project or department’s assignment must include students’ deliberate reflection on how studying the liberal arts contributed to their preparation for life after college including multiple callings and vocations. Students should revisit their FYS “Learning in Wartime”/vocation essay as part of their reflection and preparation for this assignment.</p> <p>b. Or, students will revisit the “Learning in Wartime”/vocation essay composed in their First Year Seminar. Students will reflect upon this artifact from FYS and respond to it with a new essay that considers their growth as a college student and relates ways in which their experience confirms or contradicts some of the expectations and thinking they expressed in their FYS document.</p>
<p>3. discuss how studying the Christian liberal arts has shaped their growth in knowledge, wisdom, and Christian character during their time at Wheaton College.</p>	<p>See above, Outcome #2.b assignment. Students will revisit their “Learning in Wartime”/vocation essay and consider how their study of the Christian liberal arts has shaped their intellectual, spiritual, and moral growth while at Wheaton College. This may include bumps in the road, missed opportunities, or crises in the journey of faith; but overall, it needs to demonstrate the maturation of students’ intellectual and spiritual character over the four years of their Wheaton experience, and ultimately express if and how and why they valued the liberal arts education they received.</p>

**D. General Advice**

**1. Designing the Capstone Experience**

Departments and programs may design their Capstone Experience in a variety of ways to most effectively meet the Capstone Experience outcomes while complementing their major requirements. The Capstone Experience may or may not be embedded in a disciplinary capstone course or may be a for-credit experience. While many departments may choose to meet the Capstone Experience outcomes within an existing capstone course, or through the design of a new capstone course, some departments may decide to keep the Capstone Experience separate.

Department proposals for the combination course/experience fulfillment of the Capstone Experience may propose to meet the Capstone Experience outcomes through either (1) requiring a 2 or 4-credit experience or course that explicitly addresses these outcomes or (2) putting together a package that requires experience(s) (0 credit or for-credit) alongside a 2 or 4-credit course. Proposals for the Capstone Experiences that consist only of 0-credit experiences will not be approved.

Examples of acceptable formats might include Capstone Experience requirements being met by:

- stand-alone 2 or 4-credit course to meet the Capstone Experience outcomes
- 4-credit senior major capstone course integrated with Capstone Experience outcomes
- work spread over a required two-course sequence for majors in the senior year
- carefully crafted work done to complete a 4-credit Internship experience required for the major that also meets the Capstone Experience outcomes
- carefully monitored and documented 0-credit internship placements or other experiential learning opportunities in combination with a 2- or 4-credit Senior Seminar or other course. This combined package of experience and course should meet the Capstone Experience outcomes.

Departments and programs will have wide latitude in selecting readings, assignments, course activities, and experiences for the Capstone Experience with the understanding that, as the culminating experience in the Shared Core sequence, the Capstone Experience has a significant role to play in assessing the knowledge, skills, and dispositions cultivated through the entire Christ at the Core program. Specifically, the Capstone Experience will play a role in assessing the overarching program goals of the Christ at the Core curriculum as articulated in the Christ at the Core Learning Goals.

Departments also have wide latitude in how they choose to measure student achievement of Capstone Experience outcomes. They may decide to use traditional artifact-based assignments (e.g., papers, presentations, performances, or portfolios), but may also choose to meet the Capstone outcomes through experiences (e.g., an internship or undergraduate research) that conclude with disciplined reflection and include demonstration of the learning that resulted from the experience (e.g., a summative paper or presentation, exit interviews, or supervisor evaluations). All students must complete their Capstone Experience at Wheaton, and transfer credit will not be eligible for this requirement.

Some departments or programs may choose to seek approval for a 4-hour Capstone course to be “tagged” with up to two themes from the Thematic Core. However, “tagging” is not appropriate for individualized experiences such as internships, performances, or research.