

The Capstone Catalog: Student Legacies

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Hello Fellow Honors Students!

Welcome to the Capstone Catalog, a resource that will hopefully help relieve some of the stress associated with the long-anticipated Capstone project. Whether you have just entered the program or you're in your final semester, this book will offer you insight in how to maximize your Capstone experience.

As I began to approach my final two semesters at West Chester, I realized I had to get my Capstone gears turning. I spent nearly the entire summer prior to the fall of my senior year wracking my brain for an idea. Every possibility I explored seemed to have been done before, and I became frustrated because I couldn't pinpoint a unique idea that fit my passions. Eventually I realized I was projecting my ideas onto communities as needs I thought they had, rather than asking the community how I could best serve them. But even after this epiphany, I turned up with nothing---I could not find a place where my ideas were needed.

When summer ended, I felt distraught. The daunting task of creating a Capstone had seemingly defeated me. In that moment, I reflected on why the process proved so difficult, and it dawned on me that Capstone does not receive much mention until suddenly senior year hits and you're supposed to get started. As you navigate your first three years in the Honors program, the Capstone is sometimes spoken of nebulously, as a vague concept of a project you complete before graduation. You're unaware of the gravity or timing of the endeavor until you're in the trenches. Thus, I decided to create the Capstone catalog.

The Capstone Catalog is designed to give you a glimpse into the Capstone undertaking and guide you to the most success and meaningful project outcomes possible. Inside you will find a word from the Capstone professors explaining the purpose and legacy of Capstone, a list of basic information and starting tips, project testimonials from alumni interviews, as well as project descriptions collected from Honors resources, advice from current Honors students on how to avoid Capstone pitfalls, and a categorical index to help you explore projects relating to different topics/areas of passion.

Read through this catalog and learn from the amazing legacy of Honors students before you---they truly are the Capstone experts. Find people with similar interests to yourself and witness how their passions played out in their work. Perhaps you will discover a project you wish to revive, or inspiration will spark from a concept you may have never considered until flipping through these pages. You are not alone. All the people in this book are cheering you on and serve as excellent future mentors. Peruse, learn, and realize the remarkable change you can make. ~Becca Shoemaker <3



A Word from Capstone Professors

"Capstone is the single culminating experience on the academic face of the Honors College. In all the Honors core courses, students learn skills in ethics, diversity, interdisciplinarity, quantitative reasoning, leadership, and sustainability, which help shape their Capstone experiences. Students must design their own plan, build their own working team, research a need in the community, and fulfill the need with a meaningful, sustainable response. The Service-Learning involved in the Capstone project does not merely address a surface need, but rather addresses the depth of the problem, so the problem ceases to exist. From food recovery systems to drafting legislation, the topics of Capstone projects are as eclectic as the majors students have within the Honors College. Students have the opportunity to form a project within their major subject or branch out into other interests. Students reflect over the course of their work, helping them to realize their stress and cope with the needs of their community. The desire of the capstone faculty is to promote a life-long commitment to leadership, sustainability, service-learning, and community social change. The legacy of student capstones is far reaching, and the possibilities of helping our community are endless. Through the thoughtful work of students, faculty, staff, and organizations around and beyond campus, Honors College students are changing the world one Capstone project at a time."

~Dr. Gerardina Martin



Project Basics

- It's never too early to start brainstorming ideas!
- Plan to schedule your Capstone class either the spring of your junior year or the fall of your senior year.
- Meet with your Capstone professor before the start of the semester when you take the Capstone class to receive approval for your project idea.
- Read the syllabus!! Everything you need to know and do is there!!
- You have a full academic year to complete your Capstone project.
- In total, you must complete/log 150 hours (minimum) towards your project—this includes 15 hours you will receive from taking the Capstone class.
- Make sure your idea is meeting a NEED in the community—you may need to complete survey research to determine the necessity of your project.
- Document EVERYTHING you do related to your project!!! Keep an excel sheet or Google sheets with the *date, type of work you did*, and the *amount of time you spent doing it*. Add to the sheet every time you do any amount of Capstone work---every minute counts when it comes to getting to 150 hours.
- You can complete the project with another student or form a group of three, but keep in mind you all need to accumulate your own 150 hours!
- You can build off a Capstone project done in the past, BUT you must alter in some way to make it different enough to be your own.
- You will be completing weekly journals as part of the Capstone class. Do these well and you will remember your project process better when it's time to write the paper.
- At the end of your project and before you graduate, you must write a paper reflecting on your Capstone process and project.
- Work on something you're passionate about! This project will be something you have to write about repeatedly—make it an endeavor you're proud of and interested in!

>> 2002 <<

After-School Leadership Program for At-Risk Middle School Students

Name: Michelle Filling-Brown

Major/Minors: English, BSED - WCU, English, MA - University of Delaware, English, PhD - University of Delaware

Current Employment: Acting Dean, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Associate Professor of English, Cabrini University

Please describe the premise of you Capstone:

This capstone project aimed to serve at-risk middle school students (defined by being in danger of failing in 2 or more classes). I researched pedagogical strategies for positively impacting students who are academically underprepared or lacking motivation for academic success. I developed a curriculum plan for leadership development that included a focus on strengthening core skills like critical thinking, creativity, and communication. I identified Peirce Middle School as the location for implementing my project. I worked with teachers to identify the students, distribute permission slips, and arrange for late parent pick-up. I also recruited a group of pre-service teachers at WCU and trained them on the lessons that I wanted to implement. Each week, we spent time providing 1-on-1 tutoring and homework assistance for the students and ended the after-school program with the planned leadership-strengthening activities. I implemented pre- and post- qualitative assessments that documented students' self-reflection on their confidence and attitudes towards school. The assessment data also captured changes in grades. Ultimately, the majority of students improved their grades during the course of the after-school program.



What community were you seeking to serve? How? Were you successful?

Academically at-risk middle school students. Yes, as mentioned above, most students were no longer in danger of failing 2 or more classes at the end of the after-school program.

What (if anything) do you wish you could have changed about your Capstone/process?

I wish I would have developed a more sustainable after-school program. When we work with the community, we need to make sure that our projects aren't a "one and done"

impact. I definitely acknowledged this during my capstone project and developed a method for the after-school project to continue for the rest of the academic year, but I don't believe it continued beyond that. I wished I would have passed my project off to a "younger" honors student studying education in order to continue to serve the Peirce Middle School.

How did your Capstone impact you? Does it affect the work you do now?

I am still a teacher today (although at the college level, not middle school). I work specifically with academically at-risk students in their first-year experience, which I believe is an extension of the work that I started in my Honors Senior Capstone. While I also enjoy working with Honors students, there is something gratifying about helping a student who has always struggled or who has always doubted themselves and see real progress and improvement. I also teach the Senior Capstone course for the English Department at Cabrini, so I often share about my experience with Capstone when students are brainstorming.

What advice would you give to students beginning the Capstone process?

Find something about which you are truly passionate. Senior capstone should be the "thing on your plate" that you most look forward to working on. Pick something that will impact the community -- it will give your project purpose and meaning. Start early! Don't procrastinate. The sooner you identify your topic and research, the more time you'll have to actually implement and work on your project. Seek advice and feedback from your faculty (and if appropriate, community partners).



>> 2004 <<

Latino Literature

Name: Carmen Mills Brent

Major/Minors: B.S. Ed. English with a Dance minor

Current Employment: High school English teacher at East Pennsboro Area high School, Zumba fitness instructor

Please describe the premise of you Capstone:

My project involved reviewing and compiling a recommended list of young adult literature from Latino authors, often focusing on Latino experiences.

What community were you seeking to serve? How? Were you successful?

My project focused on the educational sector, specifically English or Language Arts classes. I was able to distribute my research to nearby schools in the hopes that they might incorporate some of the literature into their curricula.

What (if anything) do you wish you could have changed about your Capstone/process?

It would have been nice to have a wider network of schools to present my project to. It also would have been nice to have a way to keep track of how the information was used.

How did your Capstone impact you? Does it affect the work you do now?

It helped me acquaint myself with a number of young adult books. I have some of those books in my classroom library and incorporate ideas from these texts into my teaching of literary concepts.

What advice would you give to students beginning the Capstone process?

Pick something you want to spend a lot of time researching, planning, and discussing.



>> 2006 <<

Bringing Kennett Symphony Children's Chorus in residence at WCU

Name: Emily MacLean Scarola

Major/Minors: Masters in Educational Leadership- Villanova University

Current Employment: Grants Coordinator, Catholic Leadership Institute

Please describe the premise of you Capstone:

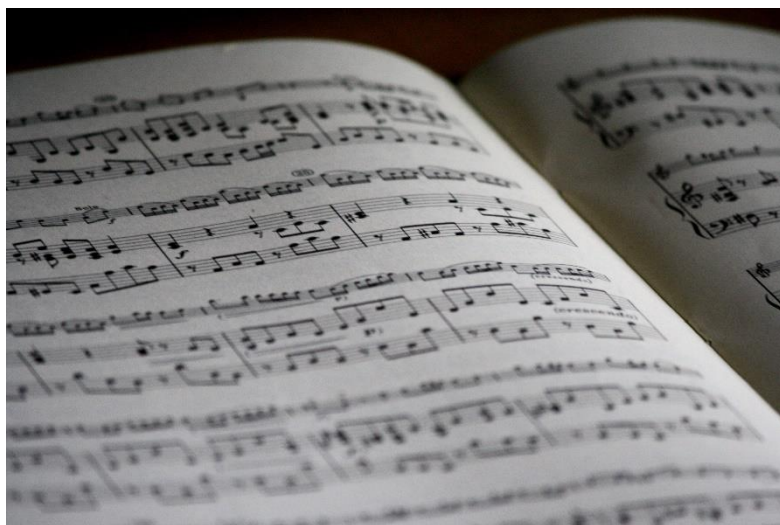
The Kennett Symphony Children's Chorus was at a leadership crossroads and looking for long term sustainability. WCU was entertaining the prospect of a developing a training choir that would allow Music Education students a chance to do hands-on work conducting and managing a children's choir. My project was to work with both stakeholders at the KSCC and WCU to develop a plan to bring the KSCC in residence at WCU for a win-win opportunity for both.

What community were you seeking to serve? How? Were you successful?

The WCU Music Education Community and the local community of Chester County by providing continued outlets for music participation, appreciation and continued learning. Please see <http://ksccmusic.org/history> for more specifics on impact since the transition in 2006.

What (if anything) do you wish you could have changed about your Capstone/process?

I felt proud of the results and love hearing about the fruits of these efforts years later. While in some ways I wish I could have continued to be more involved after the completion of the Capstone Project, I also believe it is a measure of success that the plan was and continues to be fulfilled even beyond my direct involvement.



How did your Capstone impact you? Does it affect the work you do now?

The specific project does not currently impact the work I do now, but I believe at the time it gave me leadership skills and the confidence to know that I am capable of

helping to make big change. I am currently in several leadership positions in which I'm needing to look for opportunities to build alliances and develop thoughtful and strategic plans for the success of the organizations. The seeds for this kind of work were definitely planted through my time in the Honors Program and through the Capstone Project process.

What advice would you give to students beginning the Capstone process?

Find something you are passionate in, and something that can really make a difference! Don't be held back by your assumed constraints. Be thoughtful and invest the time you need into making an actionable plan. Ask for and accept help and have confidence in yourself!

Aid to 8 Music Director

Name: Daniel Beal

Major/Minors: WCU: Music Education Major, Music History Minor, and
WESTMINSTER CHOIR COLLEGE: Master's in Music Education: Choral Emphasis

Current Employment: Music Teacher

Please describe the premise of you Capstone:

In 2006, the first AID TO 8 (Aid to South Africa) was created and hosted at West Chester University. Several WCU Honors Students were in charge of the event, and I was in charge of coordinating all of the musical entertainment for the day.

I contacted and recruited several musical performers from all over the southeast Pennsylvania area. Solo performers were recruited, full bands, and even instrumental ensembles. In addition to this, I also had to work with many employees of WCU. Facilities manager, equipment managers, stadium employees are all people that were involved, and I had to coordinate with them to make sure microphones, chairs, stage, extension cords, power supplies, and all sorts of other items were set up.

Many emails, phone calls and correspondence took place over the course of many months, and by the end of it, we had a full schedule of musical performances set up from 10/11am to about 6pm. Sadly, the weather did NOT cooperate, and only some of the musicians were able to perform (the event was OUTDOORS at the WCU football stadium). I learned that day how important it is to have a rain date or have an alternative location figured out!



What community were you seeking to serve? How? Were you successful?

The community of West Chester and anyone in the surrounding area that wanted to come and support a wonderful cause! The actual event was set up as a "walk-a-thon" or sorts, and all participants raised money by walking around the stadium track all day long and getting donations via people sponsoring them.

What (if anything) do you wish you could have changed about your Capstone/process?

Rain date! Having a back-up plan. That was the most challenging problem I faced!

How did your Capstone impact you? Does it affect the work you do now?

It gave me great experience in planning a huge event and working on my "people skills". I had to speak with and email SO many people when planning this event, and it was quite an experience! I am a music teacher, so the planning of this huge music event certainly helped me in my future endeavors planning events at my own school and place of employment.

What advice would you give to students beginning the Capstone process?

Don't be afraid to think big! Be prepared to talk to a lot of people, and be prepared to delegate work to people you trust.

>> 2008 <<

Up Close & Personal: Phone Interview

Aid to South Africa

Name: Russ Moll & Brendan Johnson

Major/Minors: International Relations, minor in Music Education (West Chester); Master's in Public/International Affairs with a concentration in Security (University of Pittsburgh)

Current Employment: work at The Economist in the intelligence unit/think tank with a focus on public policy, financial inclusion, and internet access

Project Premise:

Russ was deeply impacted by the South Africa trip with the Honors College. He described how behind the South African elementary schools there are peace gardens used to combat gang fighting. At the time of the Honors College visit, the schools were seeking a grant to pay for the water bill to upkeep the garden. Once they returned to the United States, Russ and his close friend and roommate, Brendan Johnson, got right to work brainstorming how to raise funds. They landed on the idea of a 5K fundraiser, and they quickly obtained materials, (many were donated, including a sign printed by the Pepsi company), scheduled bands to play, set up games for entertainment, and asked the Friars on campus to volunteer at the event. The 5K was held on April 8th in the South Campus stadium, and rain poured heavily until the very end of the day. However, the two managed to still raise about 2-3,000 dollars through their efforts. As Russ puts it, the event was a “patchwork of ideas and trying things out.”

That first year the event was called “Aid from Eight,” derived from the “Aid to Eight” concert in the 1980s which sought to combat the AIDS epidemic. The second year Russ and Brendan held the event, they changed the name to ‘Aid to South Africa’ and revamped their endeavor with much more organization. Brendan designed the committee structure we know today, mostly occupied by Honors College leaders. The event moved to Hollinger Field House, had more carnival games with a lesser emphasis on the 5K element, and included the makeshift hut to tie in the reality of poverty in South Africa. That second year, the students raised over \$8,000. Community



involvement, help from the student government, and pure man power made all the difference. Building the South African hut *brought the experience back into the program*. As Russ continued to describe the contributions he explained: *A lot of people were able to take ownership of ideas and push concepts forward to improve what was out there. The idea has taken so many different forms from so many people---it's so cool that the concept is still going on.*

Community Served:

The main aim of Russ and Brendan's project was to send money to pay the water bill, as well as help Cecil's Kitchen, another philanthropy supported by the Honors College. Places in the town of West Chester benefitted by donating to the cause and thus bringing more business to themselves. The event also helped the borough by providing a day of recreation for residents and their families. Finally, and sort of unintentionally, Aid to South Africa provided a great deal of leadership positions for people within the Honors College, and these solid relationships helped ensure the event's longevity.

What Russ Would Have Done Differently:

Russ was not sure whether he would change anything about their process, because with real-world logistics there has to be a great deal learned by trial and error. He chuckled that checking the weather more frequently may have been a good call that first year. *Dr. Dean was always there to serve as a mentor*, and Dr. Tischio did them a service by letting the guys "sorta just do their thing", which was very freeing. Russ explained how having freedom to try and fail and have a mentor to go back to proves crucial to the learning process.

Capstone Impact on/Connection to Current Life

Proof that you can build something, apply structure, and work in teams--Russ and Brendan both leverage these in their careers. According to Russ, *being able to have something tangible that you put together, executed, and planned are incredibly valuable skills; I leveraged that program to get into grad school and at least my first two jobs.*

Advice to Students Starting Up:

Don't just write this off as another assignment--take advantage of it. The capstone is a nice bridge--if you put work and effort into it, it will help you substantially down the road. If it's even a small idea geared towards helping somebody or highlighting a certain issue, just put a little more thought into it; it's worth putting in some extra time to figure out what you want to do. It's cool to partner up on stuff--there are a lot of lessons to pull out in that!! Group work if you can do it and you're trying to tackle a big issue, brings two different skills sets toward a common goal, and that makes it all the better in the end and can have a really big impact. If you think about it earlier and tie it into your interests, it's not such a burden.

Director's Start-Up Guide to Running Camp Abilities

Name: Donna (Dollard) DeGiacomo

Major/Minors: Kinesiology: Teacher Certification with minor degree in Health. Certificate in Leadership. Master's Degree in School Health Programs also from West Chester University.

Current Employment: Florida Virtual School



Please describe the premise of your Capstone:

I created a start-up guide to assist interested individuals in starting a Camp Abilities program. Camp Abilities is a sports camp for children and young adults who are blind or have low vision. The start-up guide was shared with Dr. Lauren Lieberman who started the Camp Abilities program over 20 years ago and she has shared portions of the guide with individuals around the world.

What community were you seeking to serve? How? Were you successful?

I was seeking to serve children and young adults who are blind or have low vision experience sports and lifetime fitness exercises. I believe I was successful in helping people who were already highly motivated start their own programs without having to re-invent the wheel each time.



What (if anything) do you wish you could have changed about your Capstone/process?

It would have been ideal to have finished the rough copy of the manual between Sophomore and Junior year so that I could have received feedback and edited the document before final submission and it being shared with Dr. Lieberman and shared on a bigger scale.

How did your Capstone impact you? Does it affect the work you do now?

Camp Abilities was a big part of my life for many, many years and I am very thankful that I had the opportunity to serve a population that taught me so much. I still keep in contact with Dr. Lieberman as well as Stacey Gibbins who uses portions of the guide with her programs out in the Pacific Northeast. While I stopped working at Camp Abilities after having my son, the impact of those years of experience will stay with me for the rest of my life.



What advice would you give to students beginning the Capstone process?

Find your passion and follow it. If you are truly invested in the Capstone project, you will not only have a better experience, but you'll also create a much stronger project that has a lasting impact on the community.

>> 2009 <<

Up Close & Personal: Phone Interview

That Happy Medium: One Day Without Text

Name: Nicole Fortuna

Major/Minors: English major with concentration in romance languages (Spanish/Italian/Latin); Graduate school: attended University of Penn, obtained Master's in Liberal Arts with a concentration in cultural studies (hegemony in wedding culture and consumerism)

Current Employment: creates certification exams for physicians on the National Board of Medical Examiners at University City in Philadelphia

Project Premise:

'That Happy Medium' was a day Nicole created to challenge the West Chester community to refrain from texting communication. At the time, texting included AOL instant messenger, Facebook, phone texting, and email, all for a period of 24 hours. The project aimed to bring attention to the impending endangerment of face-to-face contact and to emphasize the importance of personal communication.

Nicole had a goal of obtaining 300 signatures to take the pledge. She held true to the values of the project by not using any electronic-text mediums to advertise. Instead, she hung up flyers with a phone number to *call* to make the pledge, had a table at Aid to South Africa, handed out information at a Habitat for Humanity spaghetti dinner in the area, etc. Nicole held firm that the process was as, if not more, important than the product of the project. She did meet her goal for signatures, and the night before the



day of no text, she and her team of six fellow students, called every person on the list to remind them of their pledge for the next day. She administered a post-survey, leaving them in a pile on the main desks at Sykes, and received 44 responses. The answers she got were truly fascinating with a good mix of opinions, but the low number of replies spoke to the message of the experiment--it's much easier to get someone's commitment and develop a relationship with them when you speak to them face to face.

Community Served:

I mainly wanted to serve the West Chester community, meaning the students, professors, and staff on campus. But I was able to extend my reach to the community of the borough when I attended the Habitat for Humanity spaghetti dinner. Success is relative--- I believe I was successful in terms of reaching people, but the success was amplified by the team I had. These people would have never otherwise collaborated or worked together. The students Nicole worked with were younger than she was, people she vaguely knew from Honors; by the end they had a much deeper friendship. She also served her communities well, because even if people didn't participate in the pledge, her project caused them to contemplate their behavior, raising social awareness of our habits as people.

What Nicole Would Have Done Differently:

There was a time when Nicole felt pretty desperate for signatures, but as she put it *desperation can light a fire under you*. She was able to find certain audiences who were very receptive, and she recruited all of her friends to participate. She also got in touch with several faculty who provided her with testimonies from their lives before the proliferation of social media and even resources like email. However, Nicole still needed more to reach her goal of 300 people, so she found herself going to organizations that were big that she didn't know well. It turned out that the large amount of signatures she received from these organizations were bogus phone numbers. She thus explained: *I would advise someone ---when you're putting yourself out there like that and you're speaking in front of 200 people, choose your audiences carefully, and don't buy into the pressure and desperation of meeting a deadline*. Despite that letdown, Nicole exceeded her 300 pledges and she affirmed that *ultimately you will find great people who will take the risk right along with you*.

Capstone Impact on/Connection to Current Life:

Would I be able to do it again today? No, I think social media is too pervasive. It's interesting to think of my project in terms of how much technology has advanced. I have social media accounts, Facebook, and I text message and all that fun stuff---but I'm the kind of person, especially in my work, where if I want to explain something to someone or give them feedback, I talk to them face-to-face or pick up the phone. Because ultimately a lot of our messaging can be shielded and reworded and misconstrued. Whereas if you're face-to-face with a person or if you're on the phone you can really hear the sincerity in someone's voice. Nicole reflected on how when she was the editor for *The Quad* during her time on campus, she realized giving people feedback over email seemed to kill their confidence; those writers were less inclined to submit pieces. Thus, she began instead to conference with people face-to-face; morale boosted and staff stabilized.

On another level, when Nicole began working with her current company, she was a part of a project to revamp the culture of the staff; everyone seemed to have lost touch with one another. Nicole is on the communications council, so every other month she creates a human-interest newsletter--something people physically pick up and talk

about. Nicole describes how *seeing this print publication makes you stop and engage. I feel like as a person and as a professional I'm still that individual that wants people to contemplate how they interact with others.*

Advice to Students Starting Up:

- Nicole was so passionate about her project, she could talk about 'A Day without Text' at any point in the day. So, she pointed out that *if it's a project you're embarrassed to talk about, and if you don't actually believe in what you're doing, you won't be successful. Try to find something that really lights a fire inside of you.*
- *Read as much literature as you can about your project. I was reading different articles and all the Capstone course curriculum, so my paper basically wrote itself and I knew exactly what I wanted to talk about.*
- *Talk about your project, but listen to feedback from other people, it will help you rework it and find holes in it.* Nicole explained how she originally planned to just call her project 'Happy Medium' and her friend was very confused, so Nicole decided to expand the name. She mentioned that you shouldn't be afraid to have unexpected conversations or ones you fear may challenge your project, these instances will only enrich what you do.

Fun Facts:

- *US Today* wrote an article about Nicole's project--you'll most likely read about it in your Capstone class.
- The project came to Nicole because she had been experiencing some guy trouble at the time, and she couldn't read his feelings based on the way he was texting her. Nicole felt like we all need a break from such absorbing communication.

Senior Music Program

Name: Renee Fabian

Major/Minors: West Chester University, B.M. Saxophone performance; University of Southern California, M.A. Specialized Journalism (The Arts); Antioch University of Los Angeles, M.A. Clinical Psychology (in progress)

Current Employment: Associate Editor, News & Lifestyle, The Mighty

Please describe the premise of your Capstone:

The details aren't very solid in my mind, unfortunately, now that we're about 10 years out. However, I worked with a senior center in West Chester to develop a sort of activities program, which largely contained a music program. I attempted to work with the SAI music sorority at West Chester University to continue the music program after I graduated.

What community were you seeking to serve? How? Were you successful?

The senior population, and I think I was marginally successful. I learned through the course of the project that it's quite a challenge to build a new program from the ground up and find the resources to sustain it. The times I visited the senior center and conducted programs, however, I do believe were enjoyable for the seniors.



What (if anything) do you wish you could have changed about your Capstone/process?

If I had to do it differently, I think I would have been more intentional, assertive and organized from the beginning. I wasn't very good at the time of my project of really embodying a leadership position -- I was still in an in-between stage of building my skills while still being used to taking direction from others. I think my capstone project would have been more successful had I been more directive and confident about taking charge to really bring a meaningful, lasting program to life.

How did your Capstone impact you? Does it affect the work you do now?

My capstone has impacted me in a few ways, right up until now. First, as a music professional after I graduated from West Chester University, I ended up in a position where I designed and built a music program for an after-school program across 10 schools that, in its own way, required many of the same skills I needed for my capstone

project. In addition, as a professional performing musician, I spent a lot of time giving performances at senior centers, a population I learned to cherish and appreciate in large part due to my capstone project. Today, I am working on a master's degree in clinical psychology with a path toward licensure, which includes a clinical training component. I started researching clinical training placements this week, and top of my list is training at a clinic that serves the older adult population. It's a population I remain committed to throughout my career, and in that way, I have managed to give life to my capstone long after I have graduated from West Chester.

What advice would you give to students beginning the Capstone process?

Don't be afraid to be assertive and take charge. The honors program trains you to be a leader, and the capstone can allow you to take the big step outside of the classroom and into the role in the real world. The skills you learn during the capstone project follow you through life in one way or another -- it's that impactful -- even if at times it feels like "just" a degree requirement and causes a lot of stress. It's a great opportunity to put something into action and build on the academic leadership skills you learn in class, which I have found invaluable as my career has unfolded.

>> 2010 <<

Up Close & Personal: Phone Interview

Honors Recruitment Video

Name: Steve Savage

Major/Minors: Finance, with Accounting minor; attended WCU for MBA

Current Employment: Voya Financial

Project Premise:

Steve's project involved developing a video to be sent out to high schools in the West Chester area that weren't represented in the Honors students the program was recruiting at the time. Without any Honors students from these high schools, there wasn't anyone to go back and visit these schools to advocate for our program and its benefits. The film was entirely student narrated and filmed, with participation from students in every class; faculty approval in terms of language used. Steve edited the four-minute video to a semi-professional level and sent it to guidance counselors at the local high schools who then played the video for students applying to college. Student faces in the video showed how passionate Honors students are about the program and gave high school seniors some familiar faces to talk to if they come to visit.



Community Served:

Steve's project sought to serve two communities. His video benefitted the Honors College by helping diversify the pool of the program's applicants. His project also helped provide accurate and timely information about the Honors College so students could make a more informed decision when considering West Chester.

What Steve Would Have Done Differently:

I wish I took the time to be more organized with everything. A lot of times I had items that I needed in every which direction. Take the time once a week to reset and catalog

what you have so far; make it easy to flip through your resources and figure out what you need next.

Capstone Impact on/Connection to Current Life:

Steve described how the number one thing people wanted to talk about in his job interviews post-graduation was his Capstone. Employers were impressed by his ability to motivate and work with over 50 other peers; businesses saw him as an ideal project manager, and he is still working at the same company that hired him out of college. In Steven's words: *Your Capstone is a huge undertaking if you do it right, and it should be something you highlight.*

Advice to Students Starting Up:

Start early---you don't want finals creeping up and you're worried about your Capstone project. Don't be afraid to ask for help. The Capstones are designed to be projects you need help with. It's all about delegation, it's all about using your honors community and having them help you in some way. That also lends itself to you helping someone else--in fact before you start your own I would recommend helping someone else with theirs.

****Up Close & Personal: Phone Interview****

The Wish Tree Project

Name: Anna Sechrist (maiden name: Karas)

Major/Minors: Elementary Ed (K-6) major with a minor in Dance; continued at WCU graduate degree in Literacy (Master's)--reading specialist; got academic coaching certificate also through WCU

Current Employment: 2nd grade teacher, Owen J. Roberts School District, East Vincent Elementary

Project Premise:

Anna's project was inspired by the work of Yoko Ono, Japanese artist/singer/activist and wife of John Lennon. Yoko had a certain wish-tree project, based in Japanese tradition, in which people write their wishes on trees during the Tanabata festivals. Anna's goal was to recreate Yoko's concept at West Chester and to get one tree donated to complete the endeavor; she ended up getting two! So, she temporarily placed one in Schmucker and the other at Sykes Student Union. For two to three weeks, people were invited to come and write their wishes on small tags that they could then hang on the trees; Anna even reached out to three local elementary schools and invited them to participate. Following that time frame, Anna collected all 656 wish tags and sent them to Yoko Ono, who takes any sent wishes and buries them in capstones at a Peace Tower in Iceland. The trees were then permanently planted---one in the garden behind Schmucker Science Center, and the other down in the Gordon Natural Area on South Campus. As Anna puts it, she felt like: *I just threw this random idea out there to see if they would take it, and they did, and it was a really rewarding experience.*

Faculty Nature Walk and
Wish Tree Planting



Community Served:

Anna explained that ultimately, she was seeking to serve the campus community. She wanted people to take the time to stop and reflect on their lives, to take stock of the most important thing in their lives at that moment. The wishes Anna collected spanned the continuum of seriousness, and Anna believes people's time spent at the wish trees served as a *positive reflection point that day*. In a roundabout way, Anna also served the earth by planting two more trees to reduce the impacts of carbon dioxide. Her

project was sustainable in two aspects: one that the wishes would be sustained at Yoko Ono's Peace Tower, and also that the trees would remain on campus.

What Anna Would Have Done Differently:

In some ways, Anna thinks she could have made the movement bigger, perhaps even expanded it to the borough, but in terms of what she could do in the moment she didn't have the right network or connections. Anna truly wouldn't change very much, as she had the chance to meet many new people and connect with local nurseries---all she might have done differently perhaps was expand her reach. She did have a run-in with the campus fire department over where she was allowed to have the trees in the buildings of Schmucker and Sykes, but her connections to Dr. Paul Morgan and Dr. Gerry Hertel helped her with that issue; she was thankful for their role in her project.

Capstone Impact on/Connection to Current Life:

As a teacher, Anna has taken the concept of her capstone and continued it in her classroom. She has her students write down their wishes and she then hangs them all over the walls and ceiling. Because Anna lives right in the West Chester borough, she comes by campus and visits her trees often to see how they're doing. She also created a great and long-lasting mentorship relationships with Dr. Paul Morgan and Dr. Gerry Hertel--both she still talks to on an annual basis; the two men are *still resources* [Anna] knows [she] can reach out to beyond just a professor [she] had one time. Like her project, Anna continues to be connected to the environment, and the environment continues to play a big part in who she is.

Advice to Students Starting Up:

- Choose a project that speaks to your passions and interests.
- Don't feel pegged by the projects that are most often spoken about.

Wish Trees!



Visit the Wish Tree installations at West Chester University! Wish Trees found at Sykes Student Union and First Floor Schmucker North.



INSTALLATIONS ARE UP APRIL 6-20

• This is your opportunity to reflect and decide what you wish for most. Write your wish down and hang it on a Wish Tree.

• Wish Trees are inspired by renowned artist Yoko Ono and based on the Japanese tradition called Tanizaki.



FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT ANNA AT (412) 760-3132. The Wish Tree is the capstone project of Anna Karas. All students are encouraged take part in this installation. There is no cost to take part.

Wish Trees

- *Choose something you feel displays you.*
- *Sustainable can mean many things, consider that when choosing your project.*
- *Make interesting goals for yourself---make them realistic, but push yourself beyond typical projects. I don't think the capstone is the one to play it safe on.*
 - *If you accomplish your own goals, then you've been successful--no matter whether your project is small scale, large scale compared to other people.*

Samples of Wishes:

- "I wish kids came with instruction manuals."
- "I wish gummy bears were a form of currency."
- "I wish I would find my person..."
- "I wish I could say she is a survivor."
- "I wish people would stop surviving and start living."
- "I wish to become a person I like."

Up Close & Personal: Phone Interview

Wellbeings.com (Health-based Social Media)

Name: Allie Mazza (maiden name: Harris)

Major/Minors: Psychology major, focus on industrial organizational; Master's in Communications (from WCU)

Current Employment: work at a Senior Living Community called LCB Senior Living--opening a new senior living community across from the Wegman's in Glen Mills. She acts as the Sales & Marketing Director.

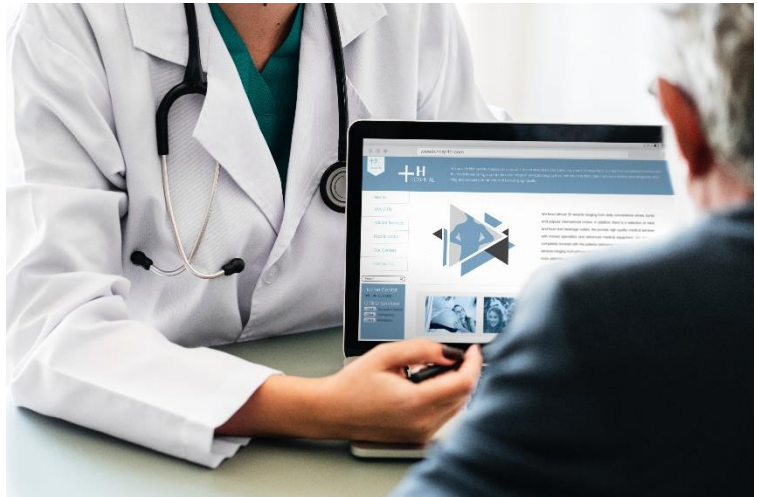
Project Premise:

Allie used a social networking platform called Ning to create a social media space completely based around health and wellness, designed for the university and the surrounding borough. The point was to have a Facebook-like space where people would specifically share posts

related to health, fitness, nutrition, and holistic living. Facebook was more social--this was supposed to be more physical with nearby fitness classes or recipes to try.

One of Allie's BHAGS (Big Hairy Audacious Goals--a term coined by her Capstone professor) was to have a certain number of active users, and to get people to actually make an account and use it actively. To do so, she went to different departments in the college of Health Sciences,

pitched the project, and had professors and students make their own accounts. To advertise, Allie called university and community health personnel, and had a lot of her friends post on social media about the platform to bolster interest. She wanted the site to serve as a *hub of information for people with a health goal*.



Community Served:

Mostly, Allie was seeking to serve students/faculty/borough residents who wanted more information about leading a healthy lifestyle, a place where all the information is brought together and where they can learn something new. Allie personally wasn't involved with the College of Health Sciences, but wellness was something she had a great deal of interest in, and she figured there were other people out there just like her; she wanted a fun, easy way for these people to explore health and wellness information. Allie felt like she was successful in serving this community from a networking perspective. However, in terms of sustainability, because of the way technology changes, she couldn't keep

paying for a URL. However, Allie still keeps in touch with people she connected with on the site.

What Allie Would Have Done Differently:

I wish looking back I would have had some insight that I could have done something more sustainable. Allie admits that she couldn't even pay attention to her classmates' projects because she was so deep into hers. But she explained how being so invested in a project is like when you hang out with your friends outside of work and you forget that most of their time is spent at their job, that most of their day is spent on something you have no concept of. Allie wishes she had received more support from professors but recognizes that *sometimes the people who aren't supportive are the ones who push you to do things you couldn't have done otherwise.* In the moment, it was hard to have people think she wouldn't be successful, but now she's thankful because it caused her to grow some skills she didn't know she needed. As Allie puts it, if her dream had come true, she would have continued Wellbeings.com as something she used and managed, but she didn't have the interest to keep up with relevant technology.

Capstone Impact on/Connection to Current Life:

Allie considers herself an introvert--she gets her energy from focused alone time. She loves speaking to people and networking, however, and was great to speak with on the phone. It's taken her time to realize that recharging from alone time doesn't make her bad at networking. Her capstone was good for her because it pushed her again and again out of her comfort zone, as she had to throw herself into scenarios where she didn't know how her idea would be perceived by people. Allie explained: *the more you do that, the more you get comfortable with it, and I use that in my work all the time now.* Also, Allie explained how she is a very non-confrontational person, and that she had to really struggle when her one professor blatantly told her she was going to fail; Allie then found herself second-guessing everything she did. But that experience led to growth and she reflected: *those things you don't expect to get from the capstone are the things you hold onto the longest.* Allie also feels she learned a great deal about marketing during the project. In fact, Allie was asked to come into the school where her mother taught, because the school administrators wanted her to talk about how social media space can help people get engaged in physical activities, etc. As a side note, Allie uses Wix regularly in her work, and she thinks some of her skills from Ning have helped her in that.

Allie explained how her capstone affected her getting a career in senior living. *I got a phone call from a company who wanted me to be their Vibrant Living Director at their senior living center--basically an Activities Director--and a big part of what sold them on me was the capstone I talked about and my desire to talk with people about holistic living. They saw I had an interesting viewpoint as well as the grit to reach out to people and get things going.*

Advice to Students Starting Up:

- *When you're out in the real world, the person with the most initiative is the person who gets the job, gets the bonus...and that's what makes a good capstone usually, is a person who is willing to build something that they really care about.*
- *If you know what you want to do when you're out of school, do something that will set you apart from everyone else in your field in the future.*
 - *If you don't know what you want to do in the future, just do something you're really interested in and passionate about, because it's a waste of time to use this much energy on something you don't care about.*
 - *This is one thing you have to 'show-up' for, and it might as well be for something you care about.*
- *It's so open for interpretation, so why waste your time on something you don't love?*
- *It's a great opportunity to find where you're comfortable and where you could push yourself a little more.*
- *If you're getting pushback, it means that you're challenging something, and that's good. If you get tension, that's just a door that needs to be opened--don't stop pushing.*
- *Have a sense of humor about everything.*

>> 2011 <<

Up Close & Personal: Phone Interview

Moments from the Ages: Stories and Lessons from the Creative Minds of WCASC (West Chester Area Senior Center)

Name: Stacey (Snyder) Hirsch

Major/Minors: English Education (West Chester); Law School (Drexel University)

Current Employment: Attorney, employed by US Air Force: Dover Air Force Base, currently in Alabama for training; represents victims of sexual assault

Project Premise:

Stacey spent a great deal of time volunteering with the West Chester Area Senior Center and felt inspired by the knowledge the elderly had to share. So, she created a 35-page document comprised of projects from three creative writing sessions she did with residents at WCASC. The first section was 'Stories Inspired by our Hands' in which Stacey took pictures of residents' hands, and the seniors wrote about raising children, holding their spouse's hand throughout the years, etc. The second



My hands have seen and touched lots of history at my age.
My hands have held three beautiful daughters and watched them grow into young women.

My hands have held flowers at their weddings.

My hands have taught others to cook, to sew, to throw and catch a ball.

My hands have raised and trained dogs for nursing homes, so others (the older hands) can touch and hold them (the dogs).

These hands have raised abandoned bunnies, squirrels, and a tiny snake—only because I was forced to!

My hands have helped a homeless Veteran find a room, get a job, and find his way in life.

My hands learned to knit and sew, to use a computer, drive a car, all the important things in life.

section was 'If We Knew What We Know Now' in which there were no parameters, and the seniors simply shared pieces of their life stories or wrote to their younger selves; some entries were full narratives and other just a few simple sentences. The third section was 'Recipes' which weren't for meals, but rather recipes for how to live a good life, how to live happier, etc. Stacey then took all these entries, compiled them into a book and printed a copy for the Honors House and many for the residents at the WCASC. She expressed, *I wanted to do it to give seniors the chance to exercise their minds. On a personal level, I was very close with my grandparents, and I enjoy hanging out with elderly populations; the project fit all my interests.*

Community Served:

As Stacey put it, she served the WCASC community, allowing them to be creative, use their minds, and reflect back on their lives. She also mentioned that many of the seniors' families were asking for copies, so Stacey also served those younger populations by giving them a memento from their loved one.

What Stacey Would Have Done Differently:

Stacey expressed how she struggled with the layout of the project because she did not consider herself to be a 'techy' person. She ended up having a first-year English student help her with the overall layout of the book.

Capstone Impact on/Connection to Current Life

Broadly, Stacey expressed that her project connected to what she does now because in all she does she seeks to serve and be helpful. Funny enough, her brother is a geriatric doctor in the navy! Stacey's project was in line with something she enjoyed doing---just helping other people.

Advice to Students Starting Up:

I think the Capstone can be a daunting task, but I don't think [students] need to figure out what they want to do right away---early senior year I figured out what I wanted to do. Don't get bogged down, take time formulating your interests, and find what you're passionate about. I think I came up with the idea because the woman at Barclay I visited every week became like an adopted grandmother for me--she wrote for the Barclay newsletter and I would type it up for her---these people liked to write and they just needed an outlet to do so. People are always going to tell you 'do it now' and stress you out because it will make them feel better about themselves; don't focus on that noise, do you, follow you.

Recipe for My [Seventy Five](#) Years

All ingredients should be fresh, from the heart, and real!

S—Sincere

E—Enthusiastic

V—Visionary, look forward—not back

E—Energetic

N—Nurturing

T—Trust in yourself—you didn't get this age without it

Y—Young at heart

F—Faith, family, and fun

I—Interesting and inventive

V—Versatile

E—Esteem—self-esteem—always keep it alive; you can give some away, but never all of it.

Cool Story:

One woman was a handwriting analyst, and from a few sentences she analyzed Stacey's personality. 15 out of the 17 things she gleaned from Stacey's handwriting were spot on in regards to Stacey's personality!!

****Up Close & Personal: Phone Interview****

Young Adult Cancer Survivorship

Name: Diane Smith

Major/Minors: Secondary English Ed (B.S.ed) major; went on to Drexel for a Master's in Global/International Education

Current Employment: 8th Grade Teacher at Ridley Middle School, has experience teaching internationally in Uganda (2012-2013)

Project Premise:

Diane had a mentor, someone she had admired and been extremely close to, who passed away from cancer during her college years. Diane's mentor, Thomas J. Wilson, was her martial arts instructor in school, and she trained there with him for over ten years. During that time, she transformed from scared student, to teacher, to secretary of the business, to taking it over when Tom became sick with cancer. He had been Diane's rescuer when her brother was killed by a drunk driver when she was just 17; being able to help him when he suffered felt like a spiderweb process. Her grief and heartbreak led her to an interest in how young adults process through cancer--both as survivors and as caretakers for their loved ones. After attending the LiveStrong summit in Ohio and meeting with an organization called 'Stupid Cancer,' Diane decided to collect stories and photographs of cancer survivorship from young adults who either had cancer themselves or were caregivers for their loved ones--all to bring awareness to what such young adults face. As Diane put

it, her capstone was *a layout for a collection of survivorship stories of young adult cancer survivors and their loved ones*. Diane met with the social media coordinator at the summit, and together they began reaching out to young adults who were at the summit and sharing their testimonies on social media.



Community Served:

Diane sought to serve young adult cancer survivors and caregivers. By collecting the survivorship stories she did, Diane feels she gave those survivors an outlet to celebrate what they had conquered. However, due to some major personal health problems and the lack of self-publishing resources at the time, Diane did not have a chance to publish her work. She wanted so badly to reach people in the same hardship she was, and to that end she wishes she could have better served young adult caregivers. Diane feels like our society hasn't gotten to a point where it

knows how to speak to young adult caregivers. As she put it: *How do you ask the 19-year-old to realize that their parents could die? I don't think we've gotten there yet.* Diane went on to say how her heart pleads for young adults because *middle school years and 18-20 are the most developmental years as far as long-term character phases, and there's nothing built into the public school system or the collegiate system to support these young people who are watching their loved ones experience long-term, excruciating pain.*

What Diane Would Have Done Differently:

The simple answer is that I wish I had focused more on mental health. The more complicated answer is I wish I had done more research on the mental health situation of survivors and caregivers beforehand and then done more to change it afterwards. I realized there was a problem and then realized there was nothing I could do about it. Diane explained how just to receive mental support in the event of a loved one suffering through cancer, a young adult would have to pay totally out of pocket to see a counselor---insurance doesn't cover things like that and *coping with the illness of your parents shouldn't be that hard.*

Capstone Impact on/Connection to Current Life:

Diane's father was diagnosed with bladder cancer very soon after she graduated--she was teaching in Africa and would have gotten on a plane in a heartbeat if his condition had been more of an emergency. She realized West Chester wouldn't have offered her any sort of support, and her father was faculty at the university---they wouldn't have done anything just like they didn't when her mentor died. Diane at the time hurt most for her younger brother, who had to deal with his older brother dying and then his father being diagnosed with cancer during those crucial developmental years, and there wasn't any support for him. Diane then mentioned that she had a co-worker who that day was getting an abnormal growth scanned, and her co-worker has a young adult daughter; Diane questioned: *Where's the support for that young woman?*

If I was being egotistical, I would say that I was always empathetic. I don't know if that's true, but the capstone definitely enhanced what I see people bringing to the table in their lives. I just have had a realization that nobody gets off scot-free. Everybody has something on their back. Even if you don't understand it, you need to try. And that has been my biggest strength since 2011 in working with special needs students--knowing that they've got something going on and trying to relate to that in my own way instead of brushing it off. It's not just an excuse, it's not just a drama, it is their lives. I look at people and say, 'your inferiority complexes are so inferior to you.' I think the capstone helped me see that what a person is dealing with is the ground under what I'm asking them to deal with, as a teacher, as a professional, as a whatever. It's your little mound on top of their mountain. You can't assume anything.

Advice to Students Starting Up:

- *Go with your passions. If you don't care about it, it's not going to go anywhere.*

- Diane referenced that in the stewardship and civic engagement class, spending so much time on a topic she didn't care about taught her *how to be locked down and pissed off and get the work done*, but she said her group's lack of passion for the issue meant *that that grant was going nowhere*.
- *As your capstone, you have to care. Even if it's never going to get published, even if it's never going to get received by the world---if you learn something that you care about, it will help you in the future.*
- *I think that the Honors Program, if it does anything masterfully, it makes you slow down and process your undergraduate experience, so that you learn about other human beings and not just the steps you are trying to take toward your own future.*

>> 2012 <<

Up Close & Personal: Phone Interview

West Chester Food Cupboard 5K

Name: Morgan Cali

Major/Minors: Business Management major with minors in Spanish and International Business

Current Employment:

Senior Catering Sales Executive at the Washington D.C. Marriott at Metro Center; organize galas and any other event where you laugh, cry, and dance.

Project Premise:

Morgan was introduced to the West Chester Food Cupboard when she began volunteering there for Spanish class. She decided to host a 5K with admittance charged by a small fee or by bringing a canned food item, to raise money and resources for the Food Cupboard. Morgan worked with the Rec Center and Student Affairs to obtain a map layout of the campus/surrounding area. The Rec Center also provided a tent and water bottles, and she got t-shirts from a place where she worked during the summers. The West Chester Food Cupboard 5K took place on March 25th, 2012, with about 80 participants and many volunteers from the Food Cupboard.

Community Served:

Largely, Morgan served the people who benefit from the Food Cupboard, especially the folks she saw on a regular basis during her volunteering. According to Morgan, *it was nice to feel like I was doing something for a cause and to put faces with people that I would ultimately be helping.* During her volunteerism over the year, Morgan realized how many people volunteer during the holidays but not other times, leading to a great lacking in support. Thus, she wanted to bring more awareness to the food cupboard and hopefully gather a more consistent support system of volunteers.

What Morgan Would Have Done Differently:

Morgan did not note anything in particular, other than she wishes the event was still going on, kept alive by honors students. She feels she did everything to the best of her ability at the time.

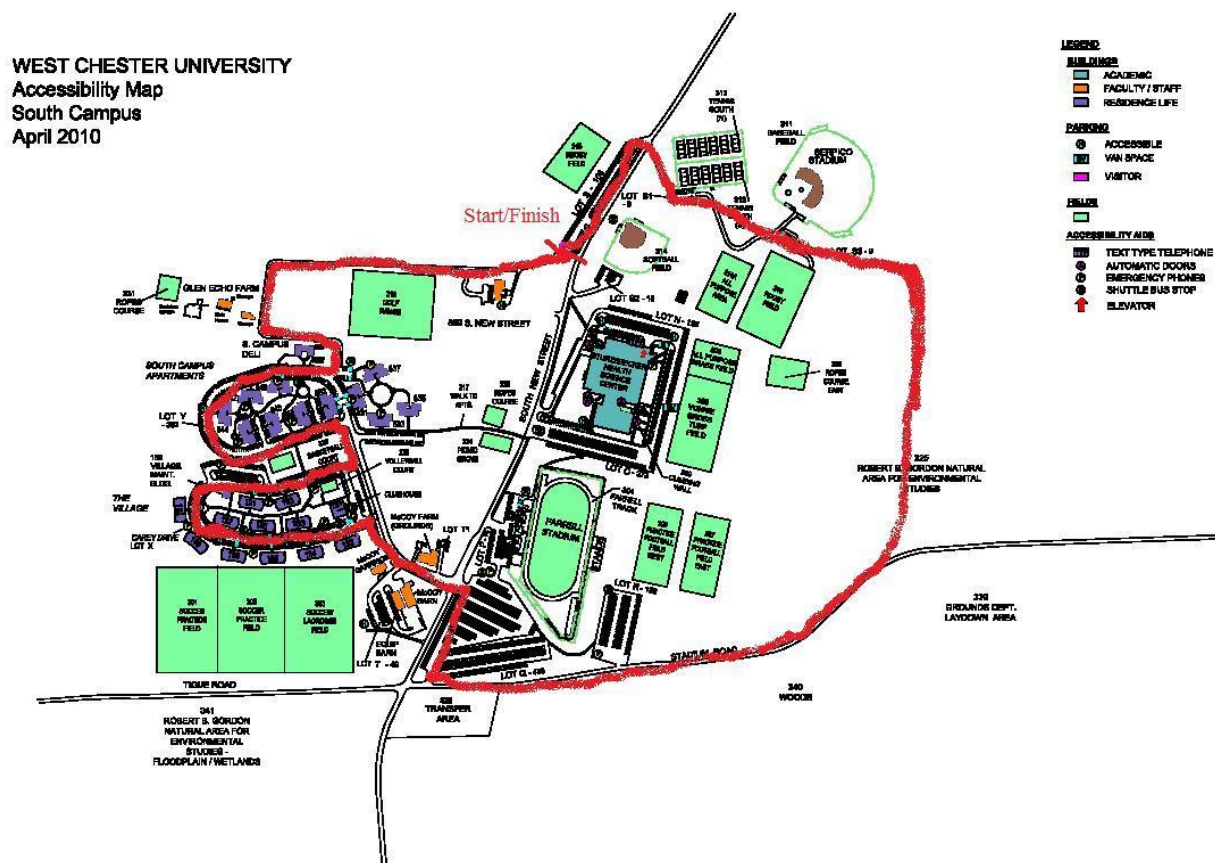
Capstone Impact on/Connection to Current Life:

After Morgan completed her Capstone, she really wanted to get into events because *it wasn't the same thing every day* and she *liked coordinating stuff and being a point*

person. So, she got a job with hotels right out of college planning events, and she has since moved to sales to have a better life-work balance. But she credits all her work in her early hotel years to the experience she had running her Capstone event.

Advice to Students Starting Up:

- Stay on track with the timeline that the professors give you--they're not doing it to be mean or annoying or micromanage you...senior year is overwhelming and they're doing it to help you.
- You came to honors for a reason. It's a diverse program that you get at West Chester and not in a lot of honors programs, so enjoy it, have fun.
- It's very rare that you have so much dedicated time to do something like this.



Music for the Ages

Name: Andrew Szypula

Major/Minors: BM Music Education, BM Music Performance WCU. MM Percussion Performance Temple University

Current Employment: Assistant Director of Bands, Tulane University

Please describe the premise of you Capstone:

Both my grandfathers were career musicians who influenced my development. They both saw a large decline in their ability to enjoy live music in their old age. Conversely, many musicians studying at West a Chester rarely got the opportunity to perform live outside of the school of music. I wanted to create an avenue for musicians to play live locally and for senior citizens to easily experience live music. I partnered with the West Chester Area Senior Center to program live concerts for their members.

What community were you seeking to serve? How? Where you successful?

My capstone served both the local student musician community and the elderly population of West Chester.

What (if anything) do you wish you could have changed about your Capstone/process?

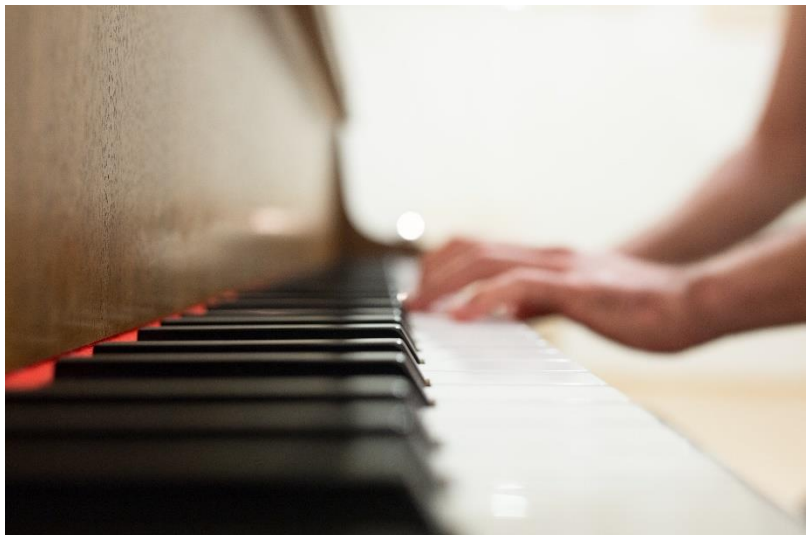
I wish I would have continued the project after graduation. As a double music major in the honors college who was taking 23 credit hours while also student teaching and preparing for graduate school auditions, I feel if I had more time to devote to my capstone it could have turned into a perennial project and a strong connection between the school of music and the Senior Center.

How did your Capstone impact you? Does it affect the work you do now?

My career is still in music and although I do not spend a lot of time playing for seniors, I live in a city in which many of the Senior musicians are heralded for their craft and still play actively.

What advice would you give to students beginning the Capstone process?

Plan thoroughly and follow through! The capstone project may just seem like another project before graduation, but many of the connections made and experiences gained can provide a huge stepping stone into your career.



>> 2013 <<

Up Close & Personal: Phone Interview

West Chester's Got Talent

Name: Justin Caiazzo & Jessica Sawin (maiden name: Rossana)

Major/Minors: Communication Studies major, Theatre minor

Current Employment: Theatre coordinator at The Music Training Center in Conshohocken--a place where every student can have a lead role, helps with their confidence and performance self-improvement. Justin also works as a Social Media Point Person for a murder mystery company--'Without a Que,' manages Fb/insta/twitter, creates mini mysteries online. He works with Jess--his Capstone partner!

Project Premise:

Justin's project was based on 'America's Got Talent,' and was essentially a talent show for West Chester students. Tickets were sold, a small entry fee was charged, and people came with a varying array of talents---dances, vocal performance, monologues, magic tricks and more. All proceeds went to Acting Antics, a non-profit organization geared toward teaching kids with Autism about the world of acting while improving upon their social skills.

Community Served:

Justin's goals were two-fold. Firstly, he wanted to provide financial and emotional support for Acting Antics to move forward in their mission to help children improve their speaking and social skills. On the other hand, he strove to provide a creative outlet for the arts community in West Chester, especially those who want to be involved in art but don't have the time to devote to a longer-term commitment like the plays, dance team, art club, etc. *It was to give an outlet for West Chester's more creative and busy people.*



What Justin Would Have Done Differently:

In reflection, Justin explained how he *would have made sustainability [his] number one focus*. Justin worked with his classmate, Jess, and he believes that if they had just focused on finding people to take it over when they were gone, it would still be happening today. *It had the potential to take off and become a major event if it had been continued.* Some honors students were helping them out, but the topic of continuing it

on didn't really come up until the event had happened, and by then those students were either too busy or had their own capstones to manage. He expressed that if they had *focused on sustainability and said this is something we want to make sure continues after we graduate, West Chester would still be doing it, and we would still be supporting Acting Antics and it would be more beneficial to both the groups they were hoping to serve.*

Capstone Impact on/Connection to Current Life:

When I was at West Chester I was flip flopping with what I wanted to do, as you should, you should use that time to explore what you want to do. I started as a theatre major and ended up switching it six times, but when I started I was convinced I would be working with the arts community. When they began work on West Chester's Got Talent, Jess introduced Justin to Acting Antics, and he saw how useful theatre can be to the younger generation and to a student that may otherwise struggle in class or with peers. He then took on children's theatre as the focus of what he wanted to do. Justin affirmed: five years later after I graduated I'm still doing children's theatre, so absolutely my Capstone impacted the trajectory of my life. I always had that passion for theatre, but being able to use it in a way that actually helped the community is even more rewarding, and that's what Honors is all about, that's what Dr. Dean's whole vision was with the Honors program--it's not just here's a bunch of smart kids, but rather here's a bunch of smart kids who are actually making a difference in the community.

Advice to Students Starting Up:

- *You're going to get out of it what you put into it. If you're really do put into it the time, and the energy and the love and devotion that you give any other project that you find passionate, it can really impact you and it can impact other people too.*
- *SUSTAINABILITY: you have got to make sure this isn't just a one-time thing. This is not just a project that you need to finish to get to the end of school, it's a lot more than that. If you look at it as a project you just need to finish, then that's what it's going to be. But if you look at it as this is something I want to start and not see end, something that's going to continue after I leave West Chester, something that's going to impact people for years to come, then you need to make sure that there are people that will still be there when you're gone that will take this over.*
 - Justin points to his friend Tyler Hoover as an excellent sustainability expert--he created the LaunchPad trip!! His focus was on starting something, and it showed.

Up Close & Personal: Phone Interview

Community Well

Name: Rachel Donley

Major/Minors: Professional Studies, concentration in Health science and fine art
---Just started a Master's program in games and interactive media--University of Central Florida

Current Employment: Worked in the Escape Room industry for 3 years after college; Now working at University of Central Florida in a graduate teaching assistantship

Project Premise:

Rachel designed Community Well as a one-day wellness event, with an intention to promote overall well-being for people in the local community through classes in yoga, meditation, and Qigong. The event included different participants and local resources such as local businesses, yoga studio booths, and the 'slow-food' organization that was just starting up at West Chester. Rachel had the event at the Church of the Loving Shepherd near campus, which has a barn space the event used. Community Well ran on a schedule spanning from noon to four, with classes going in order, but people could come and go as they pleased. The donation-based day raised a little bit over \$300, and all the money went to Community Volunteers in Medicine (CVIM), a local nonprofit that gives health care to families and individuals living below the poverty line.



Community Served:

The goal of the project was to serve the local community, as attendees would walk away having learned different wellness methods. Specifically, Rachel wanted to teach people things they could do on their own time frame. The event also served the class teachers because they had a low-stress environment with relatively unskilled participants in which to practice. Most notably too, the event served Community Volunteers in Medicine through the donation which would go to more material and supplies for their work.

What Rachel Would Have Done Differently:

Rachel explained that she had never really run an event before, which led to her feeling pretty timid about getting started. She realizes that she put a lot more time into planning rather than doing and wishes instead that she started earlier and asked for

more help. As Rachel said, *if you want to do a big project, you need to ask for help--- you can't do everything by yourself, even though that sounds nice.*

Capstone Impact on/Connection to Current Life:

Rachel explained that running the event and having it actually succeed gave her a great deal more confidence in herself. She also very truthfully admitted: *I used to hate the phrase- 'fake it till ya make it,' but after doing this was the first time I realized that that's a legitimate thing, and sometimes you really don't know what you're doing and you just have to do it and you'll figure it out as you go.* When Rachel entered the Escape Room business, she hardly knew anything about it except that it was cool and a pretty new industry, and as she puts it *that was the definition of fake it till you make, because everyone was learning together. Some things you just have to learn by doing. You can't learn everything in advance.*

Advice to Students Starting Up: (Rachel had so many good nuggets of wisdom)

- *Life is unpredictable, so if all your time is spent preparing, then you're really not prepared for things to change.*
- *In college and after, don't be afraid to try new things and go outside of your comfort zone...even if you go back to your original plan, your exploration will influence it.*
- *It's a good idea to figure out when you need to stop planning everything and start doing it.*
- *Under promise and over-deliver.*
- Come up with a timeline and major deadlines you need to meet so you have a better sense of when you're ahead and behind
- Get advice and figure out if your project is big enough that you need to delegate some tasks
- Stay in touch with people so they know what's going on so they're less likely to flake.
- Don't be a flake--show support for your fellow honor students...show up when you say you will.
- Sometimes it's good to under-sell your plans or timeline so that when you end up working things out the way you want people are more impressed that you went above and beyond what they were expecting.
- Figure out what narratives you need to persuade the right people to help you get things done---angles of communication are key.

~~~Advice specifically on running events~~~

- Start reaching out to people as soon as possible.
 - Even if you don't know exactly what you're doing yet.
- Contingency plans: things will go wrong, even if you have a really thorough plan for the day.
 - Have a solid timeline, have a clear hierarchy of the staffing- so people know what they're doing and who to report to...have a meeting prior to event.
- Put effort into marketing and do so as early as possible.

- Good to have a target in mind for how many people you want to show up.
- Want to plan for the right number of tables/chairs/supplies.
 - Consider what the lowest number of attendees is and how you would accommodate...what needs to change if there are less people so they don't feel like they're attending an event that's failing...want to come across looking put together.
 - Just keep going, don't apologize...for the most part people aren't going to know what's going wrong.
- How are you checking attendance? Facebook event? Paying for tickets? If there's no commitment on their part, it's easier for people to flake.
 - If they're going to lose something by not showing up they will be more inclined to come.
- Just because you did something one time, don't think it's going to go that way again.
 - Learning is not a bad thing.
- Logging what you do helps you reflect, keep accurate records, and gives you a starting point for future endeavors.

****Up Close & Personal: Phone Interview****

Coatesville Education Connection

Name: Jonathan Heintz

Major/Minors: B.S.ed. in Math, Master's (at West Chester) in Applied Statistics, (currently): PhD. (at Temple) in Education

Current Employment: West Chester area School District, teaches AP Statistics, High Level Pre-Calculus, and Geometry at Henderson High School

Project Premise:

Jonathan developed a tutoring service for Coatesville area Senior High School. Twice a week, five students from West Chester went to Coatesville and were dispersed in different math classes, essentially functioning as aides. The WCU students did whatever the teachers believed was best for the students---walking around full-class settings, pulling students out in small groups, breaking the class into small groups with a WCU student at each one, etc. The setup caused some friction within the realm of Jonathan's project, as Coatesville at the time did not necessarily view itself as a high-needs district, despite educational research done in the area. Jonathan handed the program off to a fellow student upon graduation, and the tutoring continued up until about four years ago; the program completely stopped when Coatesville experienced a financial issue and cut any non-central programs.



Community Served:

Overall, Jonathan was seeking to serve high needs districts, and Coatesville was the most accessible; so, that larger, relevant community became very narrow and focused. At first, the Coatesville teachers weren't sure how to handle the tutors, as they were more used to basic student observers, but according to Jonathan *as they became more accustomed to the idea, [the tutors] became much more successful implementing [their] vision*. Jonathan explained that as years in the program went by, the role of the tutors progressed to being very much incorporated in the classroom and integral to the lesson plans.

What Jonathan Would Have Done Differently:

Very candidly, Jonathan stated that he *would never have tackled this project as [his] capstone*. Jonathan explained that he would have done something totally different, even though looking back the project itself was extremely successful. His Capstone philosophy has become: *Don't try to save the world in one project*. Jonathan's difficulty came from the fact that he was receiving a lot of animosity from Coatesville because of the project, and he should have backed out, but he couldn't because it was his Capstone. Jonathan affirmed: *I still would have wanted to do the project, I just wish it had been ancillary to Honors and not internal to it*.

Capstone Impact on/Connection to Current Life:

I learned a lot about education, because that was really my first exposure to teaching. Jonathan explained how he felt his years in undergrad didn't leave him with enough time in classrooms actually working with students. *Before my project began I had been a tutor, and I was very comfortable in that role, but as I was working with the students in Coatesville that was a different dynamic where I was looking closer to a teacher working with students than I was when I was a tutor. The role was a little bit more sophisticated in the development of their knowledge rather than just reinforcing it.*

In terms of helping my career, it was an amazing line on my resume and an amazing thing to be able to talk about as I was trying to get hired in a very saturated field. I definitely credit being able to say that I was the founder of this program kind of gave me experience where I really didn't have any--I had more experience than most of my graduating peers. I was in charge of about 15 tutors, so I was responsible for myself as a tutor, but I was also responsible for them. Jonathan explained how he had to prepare the tutors to handle high school students and get them comfortable enough with mathematics, (as many of them were not math majors), in order to help the students, and that aspect absolutely helped prepare him to be a teacher.

Advice to Students Starting Up:

Don't try to save the world.

Don't create a project that is so big that it's going to consume your life.

The hours will go quicker than you think.

Dance for a Chance

Name: Alexis Stinson

Major/Minors: Pharmaceutical Product Development (major), Biology (minor),
Doctorate of Pharmacy from Thomas Jefferson College of Pharmacy

Current Employment: US Immuno-Oncology Marketing Post-Doctoral Fellow at
Rutgers University and AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals

Please describe the premise of your Capstone:

Dance for a Chance (D4AC) was a 16-hour dance marathon that took place on campus at Sykes Student Union. D4AC included pairs of people competing in a dance-till-you-drop contest and intermittent challenges to win money for a charity of their choice. D4AC ran from 2011-2014 and raised thousands of dollars for charities domestic and abroad.

What community were you seeking to serve? How? Were you successful?

The purpose was to encourage college students to find their passion and identify a community in need to help. We were very successful in encouraging students to get excited about supporting charities and raising money to do so.



What (if anything) do you wish you could have changed about your Capstone/process?

D4AC was a huge success during the years that I was involved, the only thing I would have changed is to ensure the sustainability of the program beyond my leadership.

How did your Capstone impact you? Does it affect the work you do now?

Dance for a Chance taught me many lessons. This was the first major project/fundraiser that I had ever led. I learned how to effectively raise funds, how to recruit participants, how to manage university leadership and logistics, how to organize a large number of people, and how to motivate others. The most important lessons I learned, were really along the lines of how to lead effectively. I was able to identify and refine my leadership style to make the overall event a success.

What advice would you give to students beginning the Capstone process?

Choose something you are excited and passion about, plan for sustainability, and enlist the help of those that are smarter than you (have strengths in areas that you do not). :)

>> 2015 <<

Up Close & Personal: Phone Interview

Geek Out Day

Name: Ross Leiser

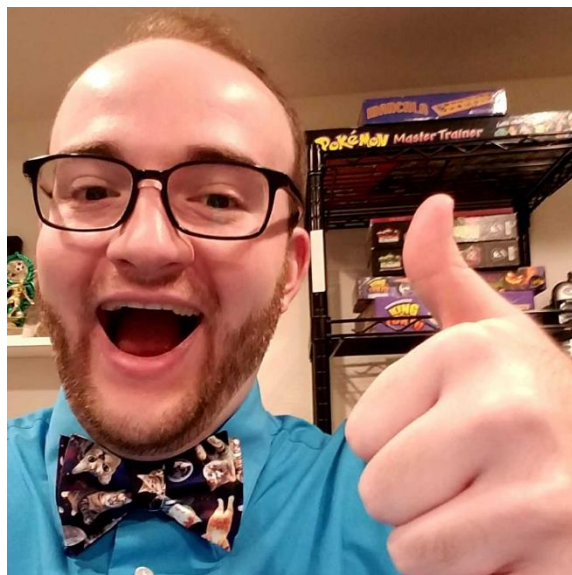
Major/Minors: Math Education

Current Employment: (day job)- Wegman's Supervisor, (passion project)- Founder & Director of a small internet company called Outlandish Adventure Productions: theory/craft/design/play/test content for 'Dungeons & Dragons'

Project Premise:

The goal was to recreate Aid to South Africa but for nerds. I knew there were a bunch of nerd and geek organizations on campus and that they weren't really being tapped into or recognized by much of the university activities. Ross decided to rally together all his friends in those geek and nerd organizations to hold an event that raised money for Child's Play. Child's Play is a charity that accepts petitions from families of children who are going to be in the hospital for long periods of time and purchases video games and consoles for them; Child's Play also takes donations of money and video games/consoles which they then install in hospital game rooms. According to Ross and Child's Play, research shows *that a more positive outlook leads to better and faster recovery times*; these games give children something to do/look forward to, which leads to a more positive outlook and ultimately greater recovery.

Ross began planning Geek Out Day the fall of his junior year, and the event itself took place in November of his senior year--9 months of planning. He struck luck when after he booked the ballrooms for the event, as the Student Activities Coordinator at the time caught wind of his project and wanted to make it as big as possible, being quite the nerd himself. From there, Ross reached out to the leadership of all the nerd and geek clubs he knew, including: The Gamer Symphony Orchestra, the Video Game Club, the League of Legends Club, the Tabletop Gaming Club, the Anime Club, and performance groups like High Street Harmonix. Geek Out Day had a plethora of stations with each organization highlighting themselves through different board games, a SmashBrother's Tournament, a cosplay contest, Pokémon championship, etc. with tip jars for people to



put money in if they liked playing the game. Ross's team of nerds even made connections with people in the greater West Chester and Philadelphia area, bringing in Supernatural and Dr. Who experts who handed out prizes for show-related knowledge and translated people's names in different languages from the programs. Other specialized activities involved having your favorite game characters knitted by professional stencilers, having yourself photoshopped into your favorite video game background, and more.

The event ran for 12 hours, and at the end of the day, they collected \$1,221.24 for Child's Play.

Community Served:

Ross wanted to serve the underrepresented nerd and geek population of West Chester. He felt he got a huge response from them through the excitement to volunteer and the turnout throughout the day.

What Ross Would Have Done Differently:

Ross estimated that in total the day received about 500-600 people in foot traffic, but if the day chosen for the event hadn't brought a tremendous snow storm, he believed there would have been even more. So perhaps a different choice in date would have been helpful!

Also, Ross had carefully constructed a team to help him with the event (the Nerd Squadron), which met once a week and over the summer and had selected a successor to ensure sustainability. However, the person he chose ended up dropping out of school and failed to secure any new person to take his place. Looking back, Ross wishes he had instead tied his event to HSA and cites his choice to *rely on an individual rather than a very strong, very reliable organization* as his biggest mistake.

Capstone Impact on/Connection to Current Life:

I was very convinced that it had to be something that was very focused on things going on with honors...[a]nd I was very tunnel-visioned on that. But [Dr. Pierlott] asked me, 'What are you passionate about? What is something that you could sustain interest, energy, and love for throughout the entirety of the 100 hours you have to do for this?' When I really examined what my true, true passions were, it was something that had been part of me literally my entire life, which was these geeky activities. Ross explained how these interests had been with him since he was a child, and that being a nerd was indeed a core part of himself.

Ross went on after graduation to pursue a job in math education. At the high school where he subbed long-term, Ross created a Dungeons & Dragons (DnD) club. Incidentally, many students with special needs became involved with the club, and Ross enjoyed playing with them, as there is research that DnD has an enormous effect on confidence and social skills. Ross described how several of the students he worked with went from barely speaking a word to peers/teachers/friends, to speaking in full sentences, yelling, and carrying on by the conclusion of the game at the end of the school year. After some time in the education system, Ross realized that he could impact a great deal of people through DnD and its surrounding community, and once

again he set off to pursue his passions---leading him to his job now writing and selling books/content about DnD.

Advice to Students Starting Up:

Find the intersection between your passion and an underserved community on campus. Find that thing that your love of which will sustain you through all those 150 and beyond hours, because that's really what's going to make a successful Capstone---something you care about enough to go the extra mile for. Don't be afraid to let your Capstone grow beyond the original plants. If I hadn't said yes to all the seemingly outlandish ideas that people came up with, then there's no way the day would have been as special and awesome as it was.

Ross's Reasons for Embracing Geek Culture: Wil Wheaton

"Being a nerd or a geek is not about what you love, it's about how you love it."

"It's about that excitement, that jumping up and down feeling at your very core of your soul."

"We're all geeks about something."

Fun Fact About Ross:

The Geek Out Day logo is still the backdrop on his computer, and he uses his Geek Out Day throw pillow regularly!



WCU Dress Drive: "Once Upon a Prom"

Name: Kimberly Bydlon

Major/Minors: Communication Studies

Current Employment: Events Associate

Please describe the premise of you Capstone:

The WCU Dress Drive was an (intended) biennial event that I founded as my Honors Capstone Project at WCU. It was organized for female students, faculty and staff as well as community members with semi-formal and formal dresses in their closet(s) that they outgrew or would never wear again to have both an outlet and worthy cause to donate them to. The drive took place in the ballrooms of Sykes Student Union in the format of a special events expo during which donors could benefit from sponsoring vendors. Not only was the event free, but the sponsoring businesses and companies offered networking opportunities, giveaways and complimentary services for all donors. New Street Catering donated goodies and refreshments, the Wired 96.5 provided entertainment, and was endorsed by special guests such as Miss WCU 2014 and Miss Pennsylvania United States 2014. All donations were provided to WGIRLS-Inc.'s Project G.L.A.M. to benefit underprivileged female youth all around the world who cannot afford attire for prom and other special occasions. New jewelry and make-up as well as other accessories, excluding shoes, were also included in accepted donations.



What community were you seeking to serve? How? Were you successful?

I was seeking to serve mostly the Greater Philadelphia and tri-state youth communities, but also reached a global level through the beneficiary organization.

What (if anything) do you wish you could have changed about your Capstone/process?

Since this was the first event of its kind in the history of WCU, there were a few major logistical challenges that impacted the event somewhat negatively, such as layout of the room (in regards to sponsors/exhibitors) and length of the donation window. For example, if I did the project again, I would probably setup a week-long, monitored collection with a more celebration-based event at the conclusion of the week. However, this did not prevent the project from being successful overall.

How did your Capstone impact you? Does it affect the work you do now?

At the time, my project positively impacted my perception of community at WCU and its surrounding areas. It also gave me confidence in my future career success. It certainly also prepared me for large-scale event management, which is now a part of my career and current position.



What advice would you give to students beginning the Capstone process?

I would advise Capstone students never to underestimate the power of good planning, but also be adaptable, and that our instructor was right in telling us to aim very high in terms of scale and effort of our project, so that if and when things fell apart, the project would land in a place that still exceeded people's expectations. Also, the more opportunities you can present to the WCU community to get involved through your project, even in abstract or indirect ways, the greater the overall impact will be.



Up Close & Personal: Phone Interview

HSA Dance Team

Name: Dana Fillman

Major/Minors: Bachelor's Degree in Science in Nursing---RN

Current Employment: Oncology nurse in an infusion center (Cancer Care Associates of York); administers chemotherapy supportive medicine, assesses patients on how they're feeling (telephone triage)

Project Premise:

Dana had been a dancer since the age of five, and she's now a competitive ballroom dancer. During her years at West Chester, she tried out for the dance company and the dance team and missed the cut for both. Dana realized there were a lot of people on campus who loved to dance but didn't have an outlet, and so the HSA Dance Team was born. The team performed at events like the Autism Speaks Christmas fundraiser, Aid to South Africa, and days at the Barclay Nursing Home. Dana filled the group with both girls and guys and recruited many freshmen the seventh floor, as she had built a great deal of rapport having lived in Allegheny until her senior year. Dana had a girl on the team take the team over when she graduated, and it has since survived.



Community Served:

Dana sought to reach people who had an interest in art who wanted to be involved but may not necessarily have had experience. The HSA Dance Team served as an opportunity to explore arts with people outside of the dance or artistic majors, making it less intimidating.

What Dana Would Have Done Differently:

Dana explained that she wishes she had done a little bit more advertising; with the group being so new she kept it limited to HSA. Looking back, she would have tried to be a little more confident in her efforts and look to reign in non-Honors people.

Capstone Impact on/Connection to Current Life:

Starting the HSA Dance Team overall gave Dana more confidence in herself. She had always talked about herself loving dance, but really didn't pursue it in college because she didn't want to come across as showing off. The project gave her an outlet for using her skill in a way she was proud of, but not boasting in. This confidence helps her be a

better nurse. Founding the HSA Dance Team also helped Dana with her ability to collaborate. She had been teaching younger dancers since her freshman year of high school, so she was very used to teaching girls much younger than herself. Dana had to learn how to work with people closer to her in age; the collaboration methods she learned also help her now in her nursing profession.

Advice to Students Starting Up:

- *Don't feel like you have to be boxed in based on what your major is.*
- If you can help it, start working on your project before your senior year, so you're not struggling when the time comes.
- Start getting ideas together early---things you'd be passionate about doing.
- *Be open to ideas.*

Emergency Preparedness Program

Name: Tony Lafratte

Major/Minors: Accounting & Finance

Current Employment: Certified Public Accountant

Please describe the premise of you Capstone:

My capstone involved the creation and dissemination of an emergency preparedness program and useful tools to families of medically-fragile children. This included the development of an emergency-preparedness education booklet and assembly of basic emergency preparedness kits containing medical adhesives, ointments, flashlights/batteries, non-perishable food items, and other tools. Several dozen families were provided with these Emergency Preparedness Programs and Tool Kits leading into the holiday season, where home hazards and natural disasters tend to be more prevalent in the region where the participating families reside.

What community were you seeking to serve? How? Were you successful?

My capstone served lower-income families with young, medically-fragile children (ages 0-8) attending a healthcare facility in Northeastern Pennsylvania. Based on feedback received, many of the families were not aware of the basic emergency-preparedness concepts included in the programs assembled within my project. Moreover, the basic kits I provided to participating families were also perceived as both helpful and useful.

What (if anything) do you wish you could have changed about your Capstone/process?

I would have spent more time trying to fund raise on the front-end to both reduce my out-of-pocket expenses and be able to provide more useful tools to participating families.



How did your Capstone impact you? Does it affect the work you do now?

Yes. The capstone project forced me to understand the needs of the demographic being served and enabled me to tailor your communication and content, accordingly. In my opinion, this was the most valuable takeaway, aside from providing service to a community in need.

What advice would you give to students beginning the Capstone process?

Do something that you intrinsically find value in and play to your strengths while doing it. It's always advantageous to reach outside of your comfort zone by tackling new and unfamiliar challenges, but the Capstone provides an opportunity to showcase your skills and talents in an environment that's familiar to you. It will be a much more fulfilling experience than merely "going through the motions", where just as much time should be spent up-front trying to find a good fit for a project as it takes to actually execute.

Alumni Relations

Name: Chris Whittall

Major/Minors: Accounting and Finance

Current Employment: Healthcare Consulting at KPMG

Please describe the premise of you Capstone:

The premise of my project was to improve alumni relations within the Honors community through the implementation of senior exit-style interviews and information gathering, and subsequently utilizing the information gathered to provide desired programming, improve communications, and plan and execute alumni events. The Honors program has over time had difficulty with keeping current with contact information for alumni, and this has caused difficulty at times in getting alumni to participate in programming and to come back to campus. My project was an attempt to improve the information gathering process, provide relevant programming, and identify the needs and desires of alumni as it relates to sustaining involvement with Honors.

What community were you seeking to serve? How? Were you successful?

Honors Alumni and current students. The stream of outcomes I was seeking was to work with current Senior students to identify their goals and desires as alumni, to gather contact information and preferred methods of communication, and to plan programming that involved current Senior students and alumni to begin the transition from student to alumni life. I believe I was successful in a few ways, including gathering detailed information on graduating seniors at a level that did not exist in the past, identifying the needs and wants of our students once they graduated, and executing 2 alumni/senior student events that were well attended.

What (if anything) do you wish you could have changed about your Capstone/process?

I think I could have done a better job at making my project sustainable. I intended to remain involved with the project beyond graduation, including potentially attending Launchpad the following year to help facilitate the process of identifying the person to conduct the project for their class. I did not end up executing that portion of the project and I believe that is the biggest shortcoming.



How did your Capstone impact you? Does it affect the work you do now?

My Capstone helped me develop much closer relationships with my Honors class, as I interviewed each person for about an hour total. I also gained a deeper appreciation for our program and better understood how Honors had positively impacted my peers. This

gave me a greater inspiration for being involved as an alumnus and has kept me attending events since graduation. This does impact me in my job currently, as I value extra-curricular involvement and look to get involved with social and service events at my work, while also building close relationships with peers.

What advice would you give to students beginning the Capstone process?

Document your project in detail along the way. This will make the process of writing your paper much smoother and it will also help you to understand the challenges you encounter and to leverage your experiences throughout the duration of your project. Additionally, do not be afraid to ask your classmates, friends, family, etc. for help on the project. It is a big undertaking and your project will benefit from the input of others.

Creating An Official Student Section for WCU Home Football Games

Name: Jonathan Ruths

Major/Minors: Bachelor of Music in Music Education, Minor in Communications

Current Employment: Marple Newtown School District

Please describe the premise of you Capstone:

The goal of my senior capstone was to create an official student section for WCU home football games. Growing up a big Penn State Football fan left me a little disappointed with the lack of a student section at football games. My goal was to develop an atmosphere at football games that was fun and energetic and kept students engaged in the game.

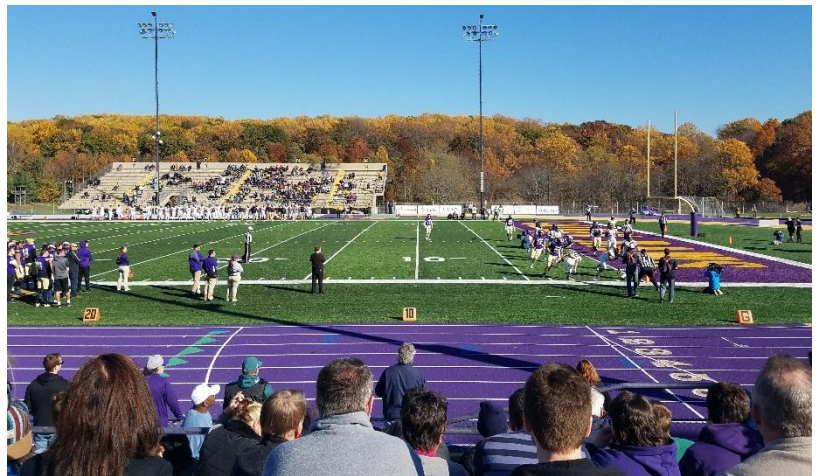
What community were you seeking to serve? How? Were you successful?

My goal was to serve the whole WCU community. I felt there was just a lot of negative talk about the university when I was in school and I wanted to create something that students could look back and have a fun lasting positive memory of. Unfortunately, I did not feel very successful for several reasons - there were 2 games my senior year where it rained, and one where I was unable to attend, leaving me only 4 solid chances to build momentum in creating something that people wanted to come back to next week.

What (if anything) do you wish you could have changed about your Capstone/process?

I wish I had started it earlier.

There are only 5-6 home football games per season, so it didn't leave much time to build any sort of momentum in creating something that outlasted my own tenure at the university.



How did your Capstone impact you? Does it affect the work you do now?

Being a music major allowed me to pursue something in college that I was already good at, so I didn't feel like I had to work extremely hard at it. The Capstone project forced me to plan in advance. I couldn't just show up at a football game and improvise, I had to work with the WCU foundation, had to post flyers and advertise, had to spend a lot of time on the front end of the project, and learn how to deal with the "failure" when things didn't go as planned.

What advice would you give to students beginning the Capstone process?

Start as early as you can so you have enough time to create something that lasts longer than you do.

[Blurbs taken from student descriptions prior to graduation]

Actuarial Science Academy Program

Actuarial science tends to be an unfamiliar field to many individuals, particularly students in high school. Additionally, the field would like to achieve a higher level of diversity among working actuaries. To combat both of these problems, the Actuarial Science Academy Program attempts to attract underrepresented students to study Actuarial Science at West Chester University. The program is designed for high school seniors who are strong in math or science. The program is two-fold and involves a three-day summer orientation, where students stay on campus and attend activities designed to introduce students to the university as well as to the actuarial science field (i.e. shadowing current actuaries, attending informational sessions about applying for college, etc.). The program continues in the fall, with the high school students returning to campus to shadow current Actuarial Science students and attend a reception with students, alumni, faculty, and a keynote speaker.

Name: Sara Stull

Major: Actuarial Science

Minor: Finance

Annual Washington D.C. Field Trip Program for the Volunteer English Program

The Volunteer English Program (VEP) is a Chester County non-profit organization that works to provide tutoring to adults who strive to improve their English language skills, cultural understanding, and participation in the communities we share. Over the past three years, I have had the pleasure of tutoring my student in weekly one-on-one sessions. To further VEP's goals of community involvement and promoting citizenship, I established a field trip program to bring students and tutors together for an authentic learning experience in our nation's capital, Washington D.C. I coordinated the trip with VEP and West Goshen's Parks and Recreation Department for our first trip last March for the National Cherry Blossom Festival. We embarked on a scavenger hunt of the Smithsonian National Museum of American History, searching for items like the Star Spangled Banner. We are returning this Spring to check out a new Smithsonian exhibit called "One Nation, Many Voices."

Name: Kristen Waltz

Major: Social Studies Education

Minor: Spanish

Literacy in the Early Grades Special Interest Group

The Literacy in the Early Grades Special Interest Group was formed in order to give under-classmen education majors an opportunity to explore their passion for teaching reading and writing to young learners. Under the organization of the Student Pennsylvania State Education Association (S-PSEA), the members of this group participated in several community outreach experiences, including giving weekly read alouds and reading/writing lessons at a local pre-school, volunteering at children's programs held by the West Chester Public Library, and hosting a Read Across America Celebration for S-PSEA members. The overall goal of the Literacy in the Early Grades Special Interest Group is to promote reading and writing for youngsters in the local community. The group continues to thrive three semesters later, participating in numerous community events geared towards children and their literacy development.

Name: Jenn Matuza

Major: Early Grades Preparation

Minor: Literacy

Safety in Schools Conference

The Safety in Schools Conference informed mostly education majors on the changing circumstances of schools and what can be done to keep them safe. In order for students to thrive in school, they must feel safe. It is important for educators to understand the current issues and how they can learn from other mistakes or tragedies. Teachers are responsible for so many precious lives and this conference could make a difference in how alertness of educators. Speakers from all over the state shared information including a special agent, professors, teachers, and other experts. About 125 students attended and chose among 14 breakout sessions including school shootings and active response situations, mandated sexual/abuse reporting, students in distress, play safety, classroom environments, multicultural awareness and safe social media.

Name: Amanda Nestler

Major: Secondary Education for Mathematics

Grant Proposal for Cuddle My Kids

I am currently working on writing a grant proposal to award funds to an organization I have worked closely with the last two years. I am helping Cuddle My Kids to secure more funding for the backpacks they currently supply to children whose parents suffer from cancer. These backpacks have a large range of items to foster creativity in the children and give them a break from the harsh realities they face. The funding will offset the costs that Cuddle My Kids normally incurs with their Cuddle Cares program. Each

Cuddle Cares initiative usually costs around \$200; each initiative occurs at least once a month.

Name: Shannon Alvarez
Major: Early Grades Prep Pk-4

Learning Assistance and Resource Center Community Service Program

Brandon has developed and designed a new community service program at the Learning Assistance and Resource Center. A new Community Service Coordinator position will be initiated for the upcoming Fall semester and onwards. This person will be in charge of ensuring the participation of tutors in community service events throughout the year in order to aid in their professional development. In addition, Brandon has created a new CRLA Level II Tutor training program focused on community service and has secured the funds from the LARC director so that this new program can be started in the Fall and each semester thereafter. This was created once the need for more tutors to participate in community service was realized.

Name: Brandon H. Messick
Major: Cellular and Molecular Biology
Minor: Chemistry

The Careers in Public Service Panel

I planned the panel along with Amanda Mitchell the Assistant Director of WCU's Career Development Center and Jodi Roth the Director of Service-Learning and Volunteer Programs who are both committed to seeing the panel continued annually. There were 6 panelists from a range of backgrounds in public service with representatives from La comunidad hispana, Habitat for Humanity Chester county, the Peace Corps, Horse Power for Life, The ARC of Chester County, and a Law Guardian for the Public Defender's Office of New Jersey. The goal of the event was to provide students the opportunity to interact and to make meaningful service-learning, internship, and career connections with speakers from a range of careers in public service and as a model to be continued annually. The representatives almost all had multiple volunteer and or internship opportunities available at their organizations. The event is great for students looking for service learning and volunteer opportunities, as well as anyone unsure of their career path after graduation. I picked Public Service because I wanted to celebrate the broad variety of careers in service that help people and that make the world a better place.

Name: Noelle Lemon
Major: Professional Studies

Minor: Spanish and Professional Education

Chem Craze Improvement

For my capstone I decided that I would augment an existing event that is done by the Alchemists' Club (Chemistry Club). For this event, we perform and explain experiments to local Girl Scout Troops and have them also do experiments with them. In order to improve this project, I planned originally to add a new take-home aspect of the event, provide more input for the Troop, and to create easier to understand descriptions of the experiments. The take home portion will have to be remodeled since the experiments we have done are timely and slightly dangerous and this needs further research. In future years, the Troop will provide us a question and we will answer it in an experiment. Finally, I made descriptions for the experiments that would be easy to understand and convey to the Girl Scouts.

Name: Leif McGoldrick

Major: Forensic and Toxicological Chemistry

The Global Classroom Experience

The Global Classroom Experience is a program designed for the Topics in World Affairs course at Abington Junior High School. This program connects students to the culturally rich country of South Africa and its leaders striving for social change. After participating in lessons about current South African social issues, students read and respond to online travel blog posts from my time in South Africa. Then they take action by writing to one of the social leaders in South Africa about the lessons in leadership they gained from hearing their stories. The students were thrilled to get responses to their letters, making a connection with someone halfway around the world. When reflecting on his experience, one student wrote, "Seeing the poverty and harsh conditions that these people live in, we only feel lucky and so fortunate that we have what we have. We know that we too have the responsibility to better the world around us, starting with our community."

Name: Brianna Plaxe

Major: Middle Grades Preparation

Minor: Elementary Mathematics

PartneR with Care

PartneR with Care is a semesterly initiative which answers the demand and need for public relations at a nonprofit organization with the work of Public Relations Student Society of America (PRSSA) students. The mission of PartneR with Care is to provide strategic communications services to an organization, building a mutually beneficial partnership in which PRSSA members gain hands-on experience while supporting the

public relations needs of the organization in order to further their mission. Through PartnerR with Care, in the fall of 2014, PRSSA members participated in the planning, creation and execution of real-world public relations duties and materials for Meals on Wheels of Chester County (MOWCC). The team planned a fundraiser event, managed social media pages, wrote and published newsletters, designed webpages and provided general promotional support to the organization. The partnership brought MOWCC an enhanced public relations plan and a larger presence in the community while students walked away with published portfolio items, interview talking points and real-world experience in their field of interest.

Name: Brooke Hillman

Major: Communication Studies

Minor: International Business

>> 2016 <<

Surviving Life After College

Name: Brian Schwabenland

Major/Minors: Kinesiology

Current Employment: Penn Medicine Development

Please describe the premise of your Capstone:

Conference-style resource for upper class interested in gathering advice from recent college grads and young professionals.

What community were you seeking to serve? How? Were you successful?

All students, and employers seeking prospective employees.

What (if anything) do you wish you could have changed about your Capstone/process?

Continued the follow-up with the program for sustainability.

How did your Capstone impact you? Does it affect the work you do now?

I felt comfortable and confident with my transition into the young professional world thanks to the research put into SLAC.

What advice would you give to students beginning the Capstone process?

Have a planning document that tracks the details of your project. Budget, contact list, planning timeline and anything else so you are fully aware of what efforts will go into championing the final product.



>> 2017 <<

[Blurbs taken from student descriptions prior to graduation]

Food Guide: Helpful Resources for Low Income Residents of Chester County, Pennsylvania

“My Capstone project is a food security resource booklet entitled, "Food Guide: Helpful Resources for Low Income Residents of Chester County, Pennsylvania," that I have developed for Chester County residents who struggle with food insecurity and hunger. The project began with focus group research in Coatesville, PA to identify the true barriers low income residents face when it comes to healthy eating and acquiring enough food. Based upon the findings, the booklet includes locations of all the food cupboards and hot meal sites throughout the county, simple and healthful recipes with inexpensive and commonly donated food items, tips for grocery shopping on a budget, information on proper food storage and shelf-life, as well as information tailored towards families with children and senior citizens. All the information is presented in an appealing and readable format. The booklet will help members of the community access the food assistance they need while learning how to become more self-sufficient and skilled with food and cooking. To promote nutrition, the booklet promotes eating produce in season when it is least expensive, and breaks the stigma that healthy eating cannot be done on a tight budget. The booklet will be distributed at multiple community aid organizations throughout the county, as well as available for download on the Chester County Food Bank's website.”

Stephanie Binder

College Stress Workshop and Adult Coloring Session

“For my project, I held a Stress workshop for the college students on campus. I discussed what stress was and how it affected students throughout college. I then discussed different preventative techniques one could take to combat the stress they feel. At the end of the event, I held an Adult Coloring session, which the attendees participated in. I also gave them coloring pages to take home with them. I received positive feedback on my event, and one attendee informed me that the coloring helped him calm down before an exam.”

Rachel Brown

PASSHE Mindfulness Conference

“For my senior capstone project, I turned my focus towards mental health within the West Chester University community. I partnered up with the Center for Contemplative Studies here at WCU, and together with the director, Don McCown and one of his interns, we planned a PASSHE Mindfulness Conference. This conference brought together faculty from many schools within the Pennsylvania State System, and allowed for discussion of the importance of mindfulness and mental health throughout college campuses. The conference was a two day event that really allowed for thorough idea sharing and brainstorming to better the future of our state's education system. Along with the conference, my team and I put together a research paper filled with information from almost each PASSHE school about what they are doing on their campus relating to mindfulness. It is my hope that this conference will become a yearly occurrence, and travel from school to school in the years to come.”

Amy Cander

Love Week Human Trafficking Awareness Initiative

“For my capstone project, I along with another senior in the Honors College, Hannah Clark, established West Chester's first annual Love Week. Love Week is a weeklong initiative to fight for social justice on a global scale. This year specifically, Love Week brought awareness to the big issue of human trafficking. There were several events throughout the week, ending on Thursday night with the biggest event, Justice Night. By partnering with the House of Light Safehouse in India, forty-two care packages were adopted and filled for girls who have recently been rescued from trafficking and over \$1,600 was raised.”

Hannah Clark and Melissa Madain

Education Program Website and Protocol for Hockey Related Concussions

“My capstone centered around concussions sustained while playing hockey. My project created an education program for players, coaches, and parents at the ice rink that I played at in high school. In addition to the education program, I created a website so parents can have constant access to the most up to date information on concussions and the first concussion protocol for youth hockey in Maryland. The protocol is already being used on the bench after a player sustains a blow to the head to remove players with a possible concussion. The program was such a success that it has been renewed for next year.”

Cameron Cooper

WCU Loves John Project

“John Berberich, a worker at West Chester Einstein's bagel, was diagnosed with a brain aneurysm over winter break. In order to remove it, he must undergo a high-risk surgery. Currently, John is being treated by the Department of Neurosurgery at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania. However, he needs to work until his surgery date in the summer in order to pay for the expenses incurred. With this said, myself and two others students on campus created the WCULovesJohnProject. Basically we created a medium to collaborate between various campus organizations as well as driven individuals that just want to help out. We advertised various campus events, sold T shirts, promoted organization fundraisers, and pulled resources together to create the WCULovesJohnBenefit concert in Asplundh Hall on May 1st. To date (4/17/17) over \$21,000 dollars have been raised. This man truly has impacted any student that he has come in contact with and we wanted to do something to give back. This project was a great opportunity for me to leverage my networks on campus and finally put the skills I've been working on for the past 4 years to the test.”

Joshua Dandridge

Increasing Voter Registration and Civic Engagement through Education

“The goal of my project is to increase civic engagement through education. Students (particularly first-years) will be presented with instructions upon arrival teaching them how to register, how to change their location to their new address, and how to utilize an absentee ballot. I hope to also provide students with information about upcoming local elections.”

Daniel DeBrakeleer

Schoolhouse Group Senior Fitness Classes

“I taught weekly group exercise classes to senior citizens at the Schoolhouse Senior Center. Throughout the semester we did workouts ranging from yoga to chair dancing. I really enjoyed my time getting to know the ladies at the senior center, and was glad to teach them about improving their health and wellness.”

Kelly Dennin

LARC Research on Benefits for Tutors of Peer Tutoring

“The Learning Assistance and Resource Center (LARC) offers free tutoring services to students of West Chester University for most entry level classes. Though the peer tutoring service at the LARC is very successful, annually it experiences growing

pains due to increased student interest in tutoring sessions, and the LARC struggles to meet the need in high demand courses such as biology and chemistry. The goal of this capstone project is to implement a research project that shows the professional, academic, and personal benefits for tutors of peer tutoring, which will then be advertised across various university departments as a way to attract more tutors to fill this growing need. Though the results of this project will directly benefit the LARC and students registering for tutoring, they can also be generalized and the research questions be made available to other institutions to advocate for their own peer tutoring programs.”

Matthew Dummeldinger

Work with Honors Faculty to Review Core Honors Course Data with CCC

“I am working with faculty members of the Honors College to help review Core Honors courses by utilizing data collected by the CCC arm of HSA. This is in order to improve the curriculum in various courses for future Honors classes.”

Derek Harris

CaptChats Capstone Video Series

“I worked on CapChats, a video series dedicated to sharing the incredible projects Honors students have worked on. Inspired by TED Talks, CapChats creates a community of shared ideas.”

Sarah Henry

Chester County Art Association Film Advocating for the Arts

“I interviewed and video recorded twelve local artist to create a film advocating for the arts. The movie will be played at the Chester County Art Association on May 11th, at 4:00, followed by a reception where viewers can meet the artist involved. My goal is to inspire viewers to support the arts, either through the purchasing, volunteering, or donating towards art. I am working with Richard Fontanet to create a website to house this video and include bios of the artists after the viewing to create a lasting effect.”

Emily Herman

Demonstrating of Aquatic Macroinvertebrate Sampling at the Gordon Natural Area

“I partnered with HON 314 and led students through a demonstration of aquatic macroinvertebrate sampling at Plum Run at the Gordon Natural Area. I demonstrated methods used for a biomonitoring project I worked on at the Stroud Water Research

Center that used stream insect data to assess the water quality of streams within the Delaware River Watershed. I displayed the samples collected by students at the Earth Fair later that week, where students could get a closer look at the insects they collected under the microscope. Students learned about the major stressors to streams, the ecology of riparian habitats, the value of freshwater environments, and a widely accepted freshwater biomonitoring tool.”

Garrett Hoover

Educational Materials to Help College Students be Better Pet Owners

“I used to be a surgical volunteer at the Brandywine Valley SPCA and the techs would always tell me that they don't think college students make good pet owners. In my personal experience, college students can greatly benefit by having pets. So I wanted my capstone project to help prepare college students to be better pet owners. With help from various nearby animal shelters and rescues, I developed a variety of education materials to help inform college students and make them better pet owners.”

Rosilyn Issac

Increasing West Chester University Student Professional Marketability:

“The overarching goal of the capstone project is to enhance the marketability of West Chester University students, synthesized in two different efforts. The first effort was the enhancement of the University's Graduate School Fair, an annual event that brings representatives from outside graduate schools to meet with West Chester students. This year, the graduate school fair increased exponentially in size in regards to both the number of schools attended, as well as the number of current students entering the fair. The sustainability of the project lies in the efforts made to digitize the entire effort, from moving all workings to a Google Drive to creating a contact database for future events. At the conclusion of this year's event, over 20 schools attending responded positively to an optional survey in regards to attending the fair next year, which has already been scheduled and planned.

The second effort of the project was to create a comprehensive database of Honors Societies active on West Chester University's campus to be published on the university website. There is no centralized location of Honor Societies available to our students, and many students are eligible for various Honor Societies, but are unaware of deadlines. Through the creation of this centralized database, students can clearly see any and all societies for which they meet the eligibility, as well as the deadlines to apply for membership. Honor Society membership carries with individuals past their completion of an undergraduate degree, and often can be used as a networking method when entering graduate, professional, or the job market.”

Financial Management Committee for Nonprofits

“My capstone project intertwines my passion for Accounting/Finance and my desire to help non-profit organizations. After volunteering and researching, I have learned that small non-profits may lack proper financial management skills, as they often do not have the available resources to procure high level financial and accounting personnel. My capstone project will involve the creation of a committee to provide voluntary, high quality financial and accounting assistance to one local non-profit, who may be going into an audit. The committee will include consultants and advisors (Certified Public Accountants (CPAs), professors) providing guidance to volunteers (two or three Junior or Senior Accounting and/or Finance majors), who will work together to perform the service. The goals are to strengthen the relationship between the university and a non-profit, provide students with valuable real-world experience related to their profession, and help a non-profit through a financial challenge.”

Lauren Lawlor

Supplying Items to Homeless Families in Chester County with Henderson High School

“My Capstone Project focused on supplying house items to homeless families in Chester County, while also educating the donors on homelessness. Working with West Chester Henderson High School's Helping Hands extra-curricular club, we were able to collect hundreds of donated items to the Friends Association, which is a non-profit supporting Chester County homeless families specifically. Additionally, the Volunteer Coordinator and Director of Development both came to Henderson to educate students on the issue of homelessness better. Some students came up to me after the presentation and spoke of how shocking it was to learn that there were 11 students within the high school suffering from this very social issue.”

Evan Marabella

Interfaith Housing Program Graduate Relations

“I am working with Interfaith Housing Assistance Corporation of Chester County to establish relationships with the program's graduates. The goal of the project is to receive feedback from alumni on their time with Interfaith, to learn how they are doing now, and to involve their thoughts and opinions into the future of Interfaith's programming and work.”

Carrie Morton

Coping with Laryngomalacia Hat and Blanket Donations

"I supported an organization called Coping with Laryngomalacia, Inc. Laryngomalacia is a condition in which the voice box is softened and causes breathing issues. The organization serves as a support group, as well as sends out care packages all over the world to families coping with the condition. I held a drive to collect handmade hats and blankets to send to children undergoing a surgery called "supraglottoplasty" to help remedy their situation. I am happy to say that we met our goal of 20 hats and 20 blankets!"

Morgan McMurtrie

Founding American Red Cross Chapter, Fundraising Events

"I founded a chapter of the American Red Cross on campus last year, and we have hosted fundraising events in support of the Measles and Rubella Initiative. This is a global partnership to help stop the spread of measles and rubella in over 80 nations. The money raised will cover measles, rubella, and other vaccines. It will fund, plan, implement and monitor supplementary campaigns, investigate and respond to outbreaks, and support a global laboratory network for measles and rubella."

Esin Namoglu

Panel Presentation on Anxiety Management Techniques

"My capstone was an interactive panel/presentation on anxiety management techniques that can be utilized by college students. Throughout my time at West Chester I have found that all students have had experiences regarding stress due to some factor in their busy lives and I thought the panel would offer a sustainable way to reach out to the population of students struggling with anxiety and give them the best tools for management."

Woodbine Ostagne

Falling Grace One Act Play

"For my capstone project I wrote a one act play, called Falling Grace, based on the life story and original writings of a local woman suffering from homelessness. Together, we pieced together the story of her rape, recovery, and eventually path to homelessness. I produced a one-night staged reading of the play, followed by a talk back. Students from both the Honors College and the Theatre and Dance Department volunteered as actors for the evening. The reading was well attended by students of WCUPA and members of the community."

Janice Rabian

Chester County Youth Center Mural

“Myself and volunteers from the Criminal Justice Student Association are working on a mural with the youth at Chester County Youth Center. The goal is to foster a relationship between the center and the university.”

Amanda Schulkowski

5 Week Financial Literacy Curriculum for Chester County Futures “Passport to College Program”

“For my capstone project I wrote a 5 week financial literacy curriculum for Chester County Futures 'Passport to College Program.' Chester County Futures, a non-profit after school program in West Chester High Schools, provides programs and opportunities for underprivileged students to enhance their academic and career goals. Lesson topics include spending and saving, investing, risk management, employment income, credit, and financial decision making, and are based on the JumpStart National Standards in Personal Finance Education. Each lesson plan is geared towards preparing the high school students to be successful first generation college students. The curriculum includes a step-by-step lesson plan and supplemental materials such as handouts, worksheets, PowerPoints, and pre and post tests for each topic.”

Danielle Sherman

First Aid Kits to South Africa

“We are fundraising to purchase kits to send over to some elementary schools in South Africa that are affiliated with the West Chester University Honors College. After going to South Africa this past summer, I realized how much I wanted to continue to give back to the communities we spent time in over there. Upon my return to the U.S. I discussed this with Emily and we decided that my desire to give back to those I met in South Africa, combined with her passion for healthcare would be a great starting point for our capstone project. After reaching out to some of our contacts over there we decided on basic, 35 piece first aid kits to get started. Our hope is to send these kits over along with instructions on how to properly use them. By educating the younger generation we can encourage healthy habits early on, and they can then pass the knowledge on to their parents/other members of the older generations. Although the numbers are not as high as they once were, HIV/AIDS continues to be a problem in South Africa. The use of simple first aid kits can help prevent the spread of this deadly disease as well as other less-serious illnesses. Thank you so much for taking the time to read our story!”

Shannon Shiring and Emily Stockmal

Thrive: Cooking and Learning for the Soul with Westside

“I collaborated with two junior Honors College students, Rachel Dodson and Taylor McCahan, to capitalize on each of our own unique strengths and create a healthy snack cooking program at the Westside Community Center called "Thrive: Cooking and Learning for the Soul." We planned and executed cooking lessons throughout the semester for middle school students at the Westside's after-school program, which showed them how to make easy and delicious but healthy alternatives to their favorite snacks (i.e. flavored and roasted chickpeas instead of chips). We are in the process of confirming sustainable financial community support from local grocery stores, like Shoprite, who hope to become involved with this project and continue improving it next year after our semester evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses.”

Samantha Stalford

Sports Medicine Workshop and Mentoring Program

“For my capstone project, I developed a sports medicine workshop and mentorship program for a local high school sports medicine class. The purpose of this capstone was to allow the opportunity for hands on learning with real world application to enhance their learning experience, develop a relationship between the high school and West Chester University, to educate students and teachers about the West Chester University Athletic Training Program, as well as act as a recruiting tool. Sports medicine classes are starting to pop up in many high schools, however the clinical application piece is lacking. To me, the clinical application is what drives the desire to get involved. I wanted to provide an opportunity for students to learn practical knowledge and experience what life is like as an athletic trainer through the workshop and mentorship program. As the athletic training profession continues to grow, there is a need in our community to understand the importance of this profession as well as a need to cultivate desire to want to enter the profession.”

Devon Stroup

Women in Computer Science Mentorship Program

“The computer science field is a male-dominated field, that seeks women's perspectives and innovative ideas. As a future computer science teacher, I saw the need for representation of women in computer science and technology. I partnered with West Chester University's Women in Computer Science Club to apply for funding from Google's igniteCS program to jumpstart a mentorship program at a local high school. Google granted us the funding and we started the mentorship program at Henderson High School, to come alongside all students, but targeting and encouraging women to become more involved in computer science. With a team of five mentors from the

Women in Computer Science Club, we held sessions about once a month from January 2017 to May 2017.”

Annelise Stull

WCU Trans and Nonbinary Resource Guide

“I am creating, along with my friend Brayden Goyne, a WCU Trans and Nonbinary Resource Guide. It is my goal to have this small booklet or pamphlet available at the SAGA/LGBTQA Services Office (and hopefully one day the LGBTQA center!), the Admissions office, and on the LGBTQA Services webpage in digital format for free. This pamphlet will inform and aid trans- and nonbinary-identified students in accessing the resources available to them on our campus that they may need. Though our university has made tremendous strides in the past several years when it comes to trans inclusion, very few people know how to access those resources and upon arriving very few students know that those amenities are even available to them. Some of the things I hope to include are: a map of campus showing the locations of all gender-inclusive restrooms across campus, information about name change on email & student ID, and about our various options for gender-inclusive housing on campus.”

Deni Tobin

Trash2Treasure Item Sale, Donations, and Swapping

“Eric Herrmann, Frank Hosking, and I curated an event where members of the community can sell, donate, and swap items. The event is titled Trash2Treasure. The aim of the project is to reduce waste in West Chester, as many people simply throw out their perfectly usable items upon moving out. Moreover, this gives a chance to those of lower income in the community to purchase these perfectly usable items at a discounted rate compared to a retail store. Hopefully this can become an annual event in West Chester as well as an event at all college campuses so that we can further reduce our waste.”

Rameez Zaman

>> 2018 <<

Up Close & Personal: Phone Interview

Rise Against Hunger (meal-packaging event)

Name: Angelique Geronimo

Major/Minors: Nursing major; Psychology minor

Current Employment: Barista at Pete's Coffee; also a school nurse where she works one-on-one with a child in kindergarten who has cystic fibrosis (in California!!)

Project Premise:

In high school, Angelique was a part of Interact-- basically a high school level rotary club of people who fundraise for different things; there are certain organizations that help out on a consistent basis. At a rotary youth weekend event she packaged food with Rise Against Hunger, and the fun had that day stuck with Angelique. Rise Against Hunger (according to their website), is "an international hunger relief organization that distributes food and life-changing aid to the world's most vulnerable, mobilizing the necessary resources to end hunger by 2030."

Angelique explained how all the food packaged is vegan and can last two years, with all the nutrition and vitamins people need to be healthy. At the rotary youth weekend, they packaged about 10,000 meals in an hour and a half. Rise Against Hunger also brings aid for disaster relief, provides medical services, and even produces some educational materials; 85% of all incoming money goes to the cause. Angelique continued to help at this conference even after she graduated from high school, and that's when she decided to bring the initiative to West Chester and make it her capstone.



Canning till 2 at high/gay and high/market!
Come help support Rise Against Hunger.

To bring Rise Against Hunger as an event to West Chester, Angelique had to raise \$3,000, and she did! To fundraise they canned downtown West Chester, had a pizza fundraiser, and a grilled cheese night. A few organizations on campus even donated money--like the Student Activities Council (SAC), LEAD, and many more! Additionally, Angelique's A Capella group (Under a Rest) had an invitational and raised \$900 towards the cause. They packaged the meals sometime in April, and there were about

50 students there from a variety of organizations across campus--PSP, Friars, Honors, Cru, etc. They were able to package 10,000 meals in an hour and a half!

Community Served:

The main goal was to help people that don't have enough resources for food, but I also wanted to get people together and have fun! Service needs to be fun! Angelique explained how one of the reasons she chose Rise Against Hunger was because you see a tangible result of your service--*you get to physically see the impact you're making, knowing the next person to touch the package will be the person eating the meal.* So, in a sense she also served the volunteers by creating a dynamic and fun event that allows them to enjoy the difference they're making. The event also brought a lot of people together who wouldn't usually be working in the same space, and *that's a huge part of service, making connections with other people, joining together to help people who really need it.* Angelique believes she served the community successfully because she *raised the money, got the meals, and got the people.*

What Angelique Would Have Done Differently:

I wish I would have had a team to rely on rather than beg for volunteers for things. I also wish I had started a little bit earlier, because you can raise more than \$3,000 and because I always knew that's what I wanted to do, and I just wish I had started sooner. Angelique had received incorrect information that she wasn't really supposed to start her capstone until she took the class, and so she just wishes communication had been better so she could have begun raising money before taking the capstone class. Especially the last month, Angelique had been scrambling for the last portion of the money, which added a lot of stress to the process.

Capstone Impact on/Connection to Current Life:

It showed that if you set your mind to something you can definitely achieve it, it was a little dream of mine I had for a long time that came true. Angelique was so thankful for her connections at the time to the Office of Student Leadership and resources on campus that helped her get through the process. *It was proving to myself that if I want to do something, I know I can get it done.* Angelique explained how this notion is part of what drove her to move to California. She always knew she had wanted to move somewhere but felt insecure whether she could actually take the leap. However, with the confidence of accomplishment from her capstone, she felt self-assured that she could make a new life for herself.

Angelique remembers getting the email from Zimbabwe showing her where the meals went, to students in after-school programs. She forwarded the email to everyone involved in the event, in hopes of creating a personal impact for them. Maybe in the future Angelique is thinking she'd like to work for a non-profit or the Peace Corps. She wishes she could volunteer more where she is now, and she plans to once she's more settled. In her new circumstances in California, Angelique is enjoying seeing the impact you can make on an individual person--she's now meeting people through what she does and impacting them through her kindness and friendship.

Advice to Students Starting Up:

- *Start out as early as you can and have a general game plan for fundraising money that's going to be a part of your project.*
- *If you are fundraising somewhere, go there months in advance.*
- *'Dine and donates' don't do that well---try canning, or do a sale of grilled cheese, pizza, or Insomnia Cookies.*
- *If you can, be careful not to overlap with THON students---I got some flak from them on the street.*
- *Get a few people to commit themselves to helping in some way (close friends especially).*
- *Talk to all Capstone professors if you need help, they all want you to succeed.*
- *Talk to a leadership consultant to know how to get things advertised, they're super helpful with putting up a good flyer, etc.---ask them what your next steps should be.*

A Small Note:

If people are interested in Rise Against Hunger, there are always events happening in the area---it's so much fun and very tangible!



Rain Garden Restoration Project

Name: Jason Miller (collaborated with Jessica Gallo)

Major/Minors: Integrative Biology

Current Employment: Accelerated Graduate Student at West Chester University

Please describe the premise of your Capstone:

I joined the Capstone of another student, Jessica Gallo, who allowed me to join her Capstone project a couple weeks into the Spring semester after I approached her during class. We sat down and talked about the project which she explained was a rain garden construction project. A rain garden is a garden with the purpose of absorbing rainwater runoff to prevent flooding in a given area. We had originally planned to create a rain garden from scratch, but we ended up restoring one on campus instead due to cost, time and resource limitations. To speak in Honors College terms, this project was completely in line with my multiple passions as an ecologist: the promotion of good health, sustainability, and the protection and restoration of the environment.

What community were you seeking to serve? How? Were you successful?

We were interested in serving the general West Chester University campus as we wanted to limit flooding on campus. We believe we were mostly successful in restoring our rain garden as most of our plants grew which should have increased the water absorption potential of the garden overall. However, we cannot be sure that we decreased flooding unless we run a quantitative study.



What (if anything) do you wish you could have changed about your Capstone/process?

I would have focused on the actual project more and less on the class. I was so caught up in the class of Capstone that I let my project suffer a bit. I wish we did not meet for Capstone class every time (maybe meet once per month instead) and were given that time to focus on our project instead.

How did your Capstone impact you? Does it affect the work you do now?

Jess and I's Capstone were in line with our passions, but it did not really affect what we do now career-wise. Instead, it helped me personally get more organized when I work and made me more responsible as a worker and team member. I am happy with what I learned from doing this project.

What advice would you give to students beginning the Capstone process?

Stay organized! Make timelines of when you're going to do things (even if you don't meet those deadlines, you still have a general guide), hold yourself responsible to do some work for your project each day even if it's just an email, and also remember that everything may not go your way and that's okay.

Smart Girls, Smart World

Name: Rebeka Yocum

Major/Minors: At WCU: major- physics, minor- mathematics, communication studies, civil & professional leadership

After WCU: Ph.D. In Transportation Engineering at Penn State University

Current Employment: Graduate Student

Please describe the premise of you Capstone:

Designed curriculum that took heat and thermodynamics concepts to an elementary school level of understanding. Created an educational video with a target audience of girls grades 5 through 8. The educational video represented the heat and thermodynamics concepts in a fun and clearly understandable way. The overall goal of the project was to bring physics education to young girls in a fun and accessible way.

What community were you seeking to serve? How? Were you successful?

Girls in grades 5-8. Offering accessible and fun physics education to a community that is usually overlooked by creating an online video with clear. I was moderately successful. I wanted to make more than one video but unfortunately ran out of time to do so.

What (if anything) do you wish you could have changed about your Capstone/process?

I wish I would have started earlier. You can plan all you want but should start taking action as soon as possible.

How did your Capstone impact you? Does it affect the work you do now?

My capstone was focused on education, which I'm very passionate about. I am working towards a position in academia to continue educating and encouraging women in STEM.

What advice would you give to students beginning the Capstone process?

START NOW. You probably think you can take your time. Don't. It's not worth it. Take the time required to end up with a final result you truly love.



[Blurbs taken from student descriptions prior to graduation]

Silent Disco Fundraiser

Each year, Dr. Helion takes a group of students to North Carolina to work with the United Methodist Committee on Relief, or UMCOR, to help rebuild homes destroyed by hurricanes. After volunteering her first year, Sierra felt inspired to do more for the organization by raising money through her Capstone Project to donate to the cause. Feeling overwhelmed by the number of bake sales on campus every day, Sierra came up with the idea of a dance party featuring student DJs. Sierra teamed up with Rams After Hours and produced a Silent Disco, where students rocked out to three DJs playing different genres of music broadcast into headphones. While the event was free to the students, Rams After Hours donated \$100 to UMCOR in Sierra's name and plans to host similar events in the future.

Sierra Annand

Student March and Rally for Public Education

Organized the Student March and Rally for Public Education at West Chester University, defending the institution of public education, protesting the appointment of Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, and highlighting the voices of students. The demonstration developed into a movement with Public Education Pride Week taking place months later. Public Education Pride Week was a platform for students to share, why they are proud of their public education at the various levels (elementary, middle, high, college). The week ended with the Student Symposium in which five student speakers shared original presentations on their creative insights on the strengths of public education: Diversity, Accessibility, Extracurricular Activities & the Arts, Classroom Quality, Teacher Quality.

Sigfried Aragona

Science News Column

As I was trying to decide what to do for my capstone project, I realized that the stories of the scientific community at WCU were very seldom told, and this was a detriment to both the scientific community and the WCU community at large. So, being a journalist and storyteller, I decided to do something about it. The heart of my capstone project was establishing and writing a weekly science news column in WCU's student newspaper, The Quad. The primary goal of my project was to increase awareness of scientific research and events on WCU's campus and beyond within the WCU community. I also trained two new writers who plan to continue the column in the upcoming year.

Abbey Bigler

Steminist Event

I didn't have any strong women in STEM to look up to growing up, so I had to forge my own path. Early on in my college experience I was discouraged by a seemingly prominent, male professor who envisioned a different journey for me. He pushed me to take on a leadership position I didn't have time for because I wished to focus on my academics. He went so far as to agree with another student who suggested I switch my

major to something "easier" just so I would have time to take on this role. Inspired by the frustration he instilled in me, I organized and executed an interactive event to inspire young girls to pursue education in STEM. I invited my colleagues from the DOW chemical company as well as other female STEM major to participate in an afternoon of fun experiments and education aimed to encourage and inspire the next generation of Stemminists.

Kaitlyn Blair

Science Tea Talks

Braving the elements to discuss different scientific topics (and not to satisfy the requirements of a course) is not uncommon for students whose curiosity cannot even be staunch by the all-knowing internet. On West Chester's campus, groups of students meet to intelligently, thoughtfully, and informally discuss novel topics in science. From the astronomy of the night's sky to information and data security, students are motivated by the need to understand the world around them.

To address this need, I created a series of tea talks to provide students with the unique opportunity to pursue their intellectual passions through a conversation that is both structured and informal – a meeting of minds that is both serious and spirited. This is not presentation where somebody lectures while the audience simply listens. Instead, it is a presentation in which the audience participates actively in the discussion of questions they feel are important. Central to the tea talk is the idea of intellectual freedom – the freedom to pick a topic that mirrors your interest and to pursue questions that fire your imagination.

Haley Buckner

Student vs. Faculty Soccer

I organized a Student vs. Faculty Soccer game during the Fall of 2017. The goal was to build a more candid relationship between West Chester Students and their professors. The event was a huge success, with over 20 Faculty, 20 Students, and a number of spectators coming out for the event. Students won 4-2. The after-party was held at Kildare's Irish Pub.

Pablo Delis

Active Voices: Mental Health Speak-Outs

For my senior Capstone Project, I decided to address a need that I saw on campus: a lack of conversation about mental health. Through the "Active Minds" club on campus, I began a Speak-Out advocacy group called "Active Voices." Many of the Speak-Out panelists for Active Voices were also members of Active Minds. The goal was to put a face to mental health challenges, and to open thoughtful conversation on campus. Following the SAGA program's Speak-Out model, I recruited brave and dedicated speakers to share their personal trials and triumphs in living with a mental illness. The development of the program began in the semester of Spring 2017, the implementation of the Speak-Outs took place over the entirety of the fall semester of 2017, and the sustainability portion of my program was completely developed and passed on by April 5th, 2018.

Diane Desmond

THRIVE: Cooking and Learning for the Soul

Sami Stalford and I created "THRIVE- cooking and learning for the soul" a nutrition education program held bi-weekly at the Westside Community Center. During Thrive, we create fun recipes and activities for the middle school and high school kids to participate in, so they can learn how nutritious cooking can be fun, affordable, and accessible.

Rachel Dodson

Cambodian Genocide Oral History

It took decades for members of the Jewish population to speak in numbers about the genocide instigated by the Nazi Regime. In the last twenty-five years, scholars and interested parties have interviewed tens of thousands of Nazi genocide survivors and have created an oral history of the era and event. Forty years ago, Cambodians were struggling to survive genocide in their country. When the genocide ended, many remained in refugee camps before migrating to America. They became American citizens but did not necessarily integrate and assimilate into American culture. Many Cambodians continue to live in tight-knit communities. The four largest Cambodian populations lie in California (three times as large as second largest), Massachusetts, Washington, and Pennsylvania respectively. Founded in 1979, the Cambodian Association of Greater Philadelphia (CAGP) has as one of its values "heritage," noting, "We will continue to make every effort to preserve and share our unique Khmer culture." Those who experienced the genocide firsthand have yet to speak in large numbers about their experiences and life in Cambodia. My professor, a graduate student and I have interviewed members of the Cambodian community within the CAGP to create an oral history collection for academic research and for the community, which will add to the community's heritage.

Gabrielle Flamm

Chester County Art Showcase

Worked with friend and fellow Honors College member Emily Herman to assist the Chester County Arts Association in putting on a documentary and reception showcase of local artists and their work, in order to promote arts advocacy and appreciate of local art culture. Personally responsible for building the website to host the documentary and information on the project, coordinating the event itself, and assisting Emily with video editing. The project features numerous local artists, including WCU Honors College student Olivia Harris, and WCU Honors College professor Donna Usher.

Richard Fontanet Jr.

Well Wish Note/Cradles to Crayons

Cradles to Crayons focuses on alleviating the stresses of homelessness for youth in Philadelphia. One of the organization's main aspects is their Giving Factory where they

collect donations and create various care packages which are donated to families and children in need. My capstone involved an item drive at numerous locations as well as a Well Wish Note project. The well wish notes are put into the care packages for the kids in an effort to brighten the day of the kids. This capstone enabled me to connect many different communities I am involved with a community that needs out help. Cradles to Crayon's main idea of being able to "engage communities that have, connecting them with communities that need". This line is what drew me to this organization and I was excited to be able to assist a great cause.

Micaela Forsyth

Rain Garden Restoration

My capstone project was a joint affair with Jason Miller in which we worked to restore the campus' Poetry Center rain garden. Throughout this project my driving passion was to make a long term change to West Chester University (WCU) and its environmental impact. A university this big is bound to have some negative impact on the environment and after learning about the initiatives in place at WCU to combat this, I knew I wanted to do my part and help. This led me to the idea of working on a rain garden. I wanted the project to be beautiful, functional, and sustainable both in terms of maintenance and environmental preservation. Jason and I worked together to rid the garden of invasive species like garlic mustard and pests like aphids, which were both killing the native plant species in the garden. We also worked to bring the garden back to life by adding new plants and giving the garden a much needed overhaul, including removing and reworking the drainage rock bed leading to the garden and creating a new pamphlet for the garden. Despite hitting some roadblocks regarding communication with the university we were able to revive a rain garden that has been apart of our campus for nearly 10 years.

Jessica Gallo

Trash 2 Treasure

Trash 2 Treasure is a sustainability Capstone at West Chester University. Trash 2 Treasure aimed to provide an outlet for students of West Chester University and surrounding community members to sell, trade, or buy various items ranging from furniture and appliances to clothes and books. The event aimed to be inclusive to both on-campus and off-campus students as well as the residents of the borough. This event would be set up in a "flea market" manner where prospective buyers were able to peruse the available items at the set-up tables.

Frank Hosking III

Phillips Autograph Library Blog

My final capstone project is a modified version of my originally intended project. I have created a blog dedicated to the Philips Autograph Library on campus. The Philips Memorial Library brings a great deal of unique history to this university. The blog will bring to light some of this fascinating history about George M. Philips and his autographed collection to the West Chester University community.

Sarah Joyce

Global Natural Medicine Guide

In 2016, I volunteered in a clinic in Livingstone, Zambia amidst a devastating trachoma outbreak. Health agencies in the US sent over mass quantities of antibiotics, and I was instructed to provide each patient a full course of antibiotic in one administration, whether they had the disease or not. This experience was incredibly eye opening to the reality of pharmaceutical misuse and abuse, and illuminated for me the scope of antibiotic over prescription. For my capstone, I reviewed and compiled a pool of information regarding practical natural remedies for common ailments local to Zambia, in hopes of shedding some light on alternative options to be utilized when possible. This information, complete with herbal harvesting and treatment instructions, was organized as a guide and distributed to six clinics across the country.

Julianna Mann

THRIVE: Cooking and Learning for the Soul

THRIVE is an after-school nutrition program for middle & high school students at Westside Community Center. The mission was to expose students to healthy snack alternatives and promote a sustained, healthy lifestyle through hands-on demonstrations. As Community Outreach Officer, my job was sustaining funding for the program and engage potential community partners.

Taylor McCahan

Professional Development for Teachers

Throughout my four years at West Chester University, I learned and applied various educational theories, effective pedagogy, and appropriate practice. Although all important concepts, one in particular inspired me to center my teaching around it. I strive for all students to have a "growth mindset" where they believe that their successes are the result of their hard work and effort rather than their talents. When they experience failure, they do not cower from the challenge but take it as a lesson they needed to learn in order to reach the goal. However, students do not develop a "growth mindset" on their own. Teachers must help them develop and nurture this mindset but it is not something done in a short period of time. This combined with the fact that many future teachers are unaware of this concept led me to create my capstone project. I solicited the help of my professional colleagues to organize an informational lecture to provide professional development to teacher candidates about the research behind and methods to developing growth mindset in students throughout the school year. My aim was to give our audience a concrete image of how "growth mindset" looks in the classroom and how it benefits students in the long run.

Katalina Nguyen

Research on Childhood Play

For my capstone project of the West Chester University Honors College, I have integrated my passions, background knowledge, vocational interests, and skills to

conduct an inductive qualitative research project to develop a descriptive study. I presented the research study at the 2017 Conference of The Association for the Study of Play Conference at the Strong National Museum of Play in Rochester, New York.

Children engage in imaginative play throughout childhood. When one spends time with children in preschool and kindergarten, they experience the complexities of listening to children narrate their imaginative play. This research project describes children's play and language through construction activities, storytelling, and imaginative play in the context of constructing a fairy house. Play materials that augment children's routine play experiences provided opportunities for children to narrate their imaginative play as well as the practical aspects of construction play. Through the process, children engaging in imaginative play were observed with particular attention to emerging vocabulary, language complexity, and depth of imagination.

This project intends to describe the effect of augmented natural, play materials to their outdoor learning environment. Construction play with unique tools and natural materials were assessed for their value in promoting the language and play of young children, as well as complimenting the forest that was their natural play environment. The study was conducted through the construction play experiences of building fairy houses. The researcher compiled and transcribed each subject's verbal statements during free play activities. I sought to examine the question, "What would children do during play activities if we offered augmented materials to their play?"

Sara Nyholm

Legislation for the Pennsylvania Innocence Project

To complete the Capstone project requirement, I partnered with the Pennsylvania Innocence Project to work towards the goal of eventually passing legislation in Pennsylvania which guarantees compensation to those who have been wrongfully convicted and wrongfully incarcerated. Pennsylvania currently does not have any such statute. Research supports the fact that this is an injustice to those within the population, and incorporating a legislation statute into Pennsylvania law would be beneficial to our state's judicial system. The way I went about doing this was by conducting an extensive, peer-reviewed policy analysis regarding legislation on this topic. Then I drafted an ideal piece of legislation that the Pennsylvania Innocence Project can propose to congress members in the 2019 congressional term. I lastly created an action plan for introducing the legislation and gaining public support for the statute. This included creating an informational video which can be used to spread awareness via social media.

Emily Powers

3 v. 3 Basketball Tournament

I organized a 3 on 3 Basketball Tournament with all of the proceeds going to support Aid to South Africa and its three beneficiaries.

Jonathan Schumacher

Free Health Fair

I organized a Free Health Fair in Wilmington, Delaware. I planned, hosted, and arranged an event where physicians, nurses, and other healthcare professionals in the area provided healthcare advice and basic tests/screenings to the homeless and low-income community. I personally reached out to AIDS Delaware, WestSide Family Health, Walgreens, Novo Nordisk, DSS Community Partner Support Unit, and St. Francis Hospital to attend as representatives. Before the event, I had an interview with the Delaware Online News Journal. An article was posted about the event and I had many people reach out to me to provide donations and support. The event was a huge success and we helped provide healthcare information and testing to 50 homeless and low-income individuals. I had 11 physicians attend the event; the physicians along with the nurses from St. Francis Hospital provided free HIV testing, blood pressure check, blood sugar check, ultrasounds, and urine analysis. By organizing this event, I have discovered my true passion in medicine. Hopefully once I become a physician, I plan on organizing even more Free Health Fairs and partaking in them myself.

Kiran Smith

Fundraising for Domestic Violence Center

I completed a fundraising event for the Domestic Violence Center of Chester County and was able to raise about \$250 worth of monetary donations and needed supplies. The event was held all day at Mas Mexicali Cantina in West Chester and allowed for multiple means to donate. For example, for every customer who bought a specific margarita, Mas would donate a portion of the sales. Also, customers who brought in supplies such as diapers, paper towels, or gift cards received 10% off their order. Overall the event was successful in gathering a decent donation towards a local organization that does great work in the community.

Bryan Ursillo

Minorities in Medicine

My capstone project focused on Minorities in Medicine, the organization I co-founded in 2015. The organization was created in order to provide students of color interested, in pursuing careers within the healthcare field, with a community. Our organization also sought to provide members with guidance, and the necessary resources to achieve academic success and personal growth. The organization began with three people and has grown to an organization of over fifty students. Over the past three years we have assisted students in receiving scholarships, applying for competitive summer internships, receiving MCAT prep, and attending conferences. Within the coming years we hope to see the organization continue to grow.

LeShell Washington

>> 2019 <<

WCU Golden Gamers

Name: Max James (collaborated with Alexander Schmidt)

Major/Minors: Communication Studies major, Creative Writing and French minors

Future Employment (what do you want to do with your degree?):

Great question! Currently looking into law schools but might take a gap year and work with a Philly-based non-profit.

Please describe the premise of your Capstone:

I collaborated with fellow classmate and friend, Alexander Schmidt, to further develop a campus-based Extra Life charity fundraiser to benefit the Children's Miracle Network Hospitals (CMNH). Extra Life is a 24-hour gaming marathon which has been hosted since 2008, and has raised millions for the CMNH. Alex and I wanted to transform this marathon into a sustainable, college-student-focused fundraiser for pediatric patients in need. In the end, rather than doing Extra Life as a one-time event, we ended up creating the Golden Gamers service organization, gaining approval from SGA. The current exec board (Alex and I serve as student advisors) created and completed an itinerary for both fall and spring fundraisers.



What community were you seeking to serve with your Capstone? How? Were you successful?

We were looking to serve two communities simultaneously:

- 1.) Pediatric patients in need--as a pediatric lymphoma survivor myself, I wanted to be able to give back to the medical community which, with no understatement, helped save my life. Extra Life was an extremely accessible and as-of-yet unexplored route to do this in WCU.
- 2.) College students--Extra Life served as a great way to unite a multitude of campus communities in a fun, social, service-focused event which lasted over the entirety of a day. Extra Life served as a bonding

What (if anything) do you wish you could have changed about your Capstone/your process?

Our project was a bit unorthodox, in that we scheduled almost the entirety of the event before the semester we took the course. As such, our way of recording hours became a bit non-traditional, and we were obligated to think of "what's next?" from the beginning. With this in mind, the constant question of "what's next?" impacted our final product positively, as rather than just focusing on the event, we focused on creating a lasting and sustainable student organization. Alex and I were quite ambitious at first, wanting to collaborate with the executives of the entire Extra Life charity. I would change this, starting with a more focused, WCU-based approach, rather than ending there.

How did your Capstone impact you? Do you think it will affect the work you'll do in the future?

Every week, the Golden Gamers host either exec board or public meetings, and attending these fills my heart with joy and pride. Watching students take the mantle of service and knowing WCU students will continue to help CMNH makes me unreasonably happy. I think this partially affected my decision to want to take a gap year and work with a non-profit.

What advice would you give to students beginning the Capstone process?

Brainstorming and improvisation are not mutually exclusive. You're going to have to make some last-minute decisions, and don't be afraid of changing your goal when you have to. Sudden change can foster positive outcomes.



Singing for the Seniors

Name: Rob Clark

Major/Minors: Math Education, Spanish Minor

Future Employment (what do you want to do with your degree?):

Teach mathematics somewhere in the 7-12 grade range!

Please describe the premise of your Capstone:

My project was created with the intention to bridge the West Chester University (WCU) campus and elderly community of West Chester through music. I arranged a monthly rotational system between three a cappella groups from WCU and three senior living communities/senior centers in the West Chester area such that the a cappella groups bring their talents and performance to those senior populations. In doing so, the groups would also chat with the senior citizens about their experiences with music, and build strong connections in doing so. I should note that we tried to vary the music such that all people could connect to what was performed, whether it was a modern song or oldies hit.



What community were you seeking to serve with your Capstone? How? Were you successful?

The elderly community of West Chester, as well as the WCU students! I would say minimally!

What (if anything) do you wish you could have changed about your Capstone/your process?

To be honest, I wouldn't have done the project at all. I only say that because I carried out a benefit concert with my a cappella group, High Street Harmonix, this semester and I put in just as much work and time, if not more, into said concert, and I was way more proud of the outcome. We raised over \$1,200, and the group worked on the event for only about a month. I put in so much work, and the final outcome far outweighs that of my actual Capstone. We only ended up doing like, one performance for my Capstone because the other groups cancelled on me. High Street is looking forward to other performances in the future, but it was kind of embarrassing for me!

How did your Capstone impact you? Do you think it will affect the work you'll do in the future?

It helped me develop my ability to coordinate a big time event. I was really scared about the event going into it, and I couldn't find much of what I wanted to do, but I worked on a project that helped me connect to a group, the elderly, that I had wanted to work with for

quite some time. I definitely think it will affect because I know how to best use my time and effort. Most importantly, I'm way better at delegating now!

What advice would you give to students beginning the Capstone process?

Ask questions to those who have completed it! They can provide so much insight. Also, pick a target community to serve BEFORE picking your project—you can ask around in that community for what they need, instead of just making something up and going for it. It's like donating to a resource pantry; make sure they actually need what you donate before you donate it.

Food Recovery Network

Name: Amanda Seshier [via questionnaire] & Claire McCreavy [via phone interview] & Kathleen Calvin

Major/Minors:

Amanda--EGP, Literacy minor

Claire--Public Health, Contemplative Studies minor

Future Employment (what do you want to do with your degree?):

Amanda--Elementary School Teacher

Claire--Headed to graduate school for a Master's in Public Health, with a focus in infectious disease public health and control; more broadly will work in the field of public health and eventually CDC

Please describe the premise of your Capstone:

Amanda--I worked with Claire McCreavy and Kathleen Calvin to bring a chapter of the national organization, Food Recovery Network, to West Chester's campus. Food Recovery Network is a country-wide effort that works to recover food which would otherwise be thrown away and redirect it to individuals in need. Our Food Recovery Network chapter, established in May of 2018, has recovered food from WCU facilities each Friday during the school year since establishment, resulting in an impressive total pounds of food recovered. The food has been donated to Safe Harbor of Chester County, where it is served as a part of the community lunch program, serving individuals experiencing hunger week after week. ***WCU Food Recovery Network has collected over 927.15 lbs. of food from April 6, 2018 to the printing of this book!!***

What community were you seeking to serve with your Capstone? How? Were you successful?

Amanda--Our capstone aimed to serve two communities. First, we wanted to serve the population of individuals in West Chester who are experiencing hunger or homelessness. Poverty is a prevalent issue in Chester County, and we wanted to aid those in need by providing food from the university. Second, we aimed to serve the West Chester University community by identifying a better outlet for the food waste from food facilities on campus. As individuals who feel strongly about environmental sustainability, we could not sit by while perfectly good food--food which we have spent resources to produce and transport--went to waste. Therefore, we aimed to improve WCU's environmental impact while serving the greater West Chester community.



What (if anything) do you wish you could have changed about your Capstone/your process?

Amanda--If we were to make a change to our capstone, I would include more advertising about the organization for students on campus to learn more about the program. Not only might students get more involved with the recovery initiative, but students experiencing hunger or food insecurity might benefit from knowing more about the recoveries. Ultimately, reaching as many people as possible to inform them of your project is always a challenge individuals implementing capstone projects face, and we were no exception.

Claire-- Claire did not feel as though she would have made any changes to their process. The group felt like the whole endeavor went way smoother than expected, especially in terms of receiving recognition from student government. Due to Claire's connections to the Office of Student Leadership and Involvement as a Leadership Consultant, Claire felt like they had a good handle on how to get the organization established on campus. Claire was also thankful for the Honors community, as they had good access to younger, motivated students who had so much interest in their project. Claire and her colleagues are excited to have found such trustworthy ladies to leave their organization to.



How did your Capstone impact you? Do you think it will affect the work you'll do in the future?

Amanda--The Food Recovery Network project impacted my life by allowing me to see the difference I can make in my community. Before executing the project, I was just a student who felt strongly about human impact on the planet, as well as helping others. Our project helped me realize I could not only help others in my community but also use my passions to help me do so. I believe I will take the lessons I have learned from my capstone experience into my future classroom, where I will empower my own students with my past successes and belief that they, too, will change their communities some day.

Claire-- Claire explained that the project matched the passions of all three of them. She affirmed that food waste is something the world needs to improve on. Claire and her colleagues felt at peace knowing they could actually make this good deed happen, giving food to hungry people in need, and the whole process was so simple--all they had to do was pick the food up at Lawrence Dining Hall and drive it to Safe Harbor in town! Claire also detailed how other organizations are involved--including the Abbés who work to collect extra food from the PODS on campus. Claire described how she felt she was leaving a legacy at West Chester that she will be able to look back on and feel

pride. In terms of Claire's future in public health, she stated *You need good food and good nutrition to have good health*, so the concepts from the Food Recovery Network will stick with her. She also has a desire to set up a program like this wherever she goes next for graduate school!

What advice would you give to students beginning the Capstone process?

Amanda--To students entering the honors program, I advise you to keep a mental note about the passions you discover while you are at WCU. The inspiration for our capstone came not when we were asked to submit project proposals, but rather when we were sitting in Dr. Morgan's HON314 class a full year earlier. Find what you are passionate about and run with it. To students beginning the capstone process, I advise you to not get caught up in the details of the capstone course. Meeting the hours requirement and writing a paper will come, but don't let those components of the project determine your drive for your capstone. Instead, focus on the impact you are making with your project. That is the most important thing.

Claire--

- *Talk to upperclassmen and hear what they did with their projects--pay attention to what they would have improved.*
- *Nothing is impossible with God.*
- *The process will be more streamlined the more passion you have.*
- *Use your Honors coursework and directly apply it to your Capstone. Dr. Dean set it up like this for a reason!*



Legacy Lecture Series

Name: Matt Leinhauser

Major/Minors: Computer Science Major, Exercise Science, Civic and Professional Leadership, and Communication Studies Minor, N.S.A. Computer Security Certificate

Future Employment (what do you want to do with your degree?):

I am hoping to enter a Computer Science PhD program starting next fall. Simultaneously, I will continue working as a Software Developer for Vanguard.

Please describe the premise of your Capstone:

Inspired by Randy Pausch's *The Last Lecture* and Mitch Albom's *Tuesdays with Morrie*, the Legacy Lecture Series offered retiring professors a chance to give a lecture on the lessons they've learned throughout their lives to date. As they began to leave the place they called "home" for a number of years, this lecture added a "stamp" to the final pages of the West Chester University chapter in their lives.

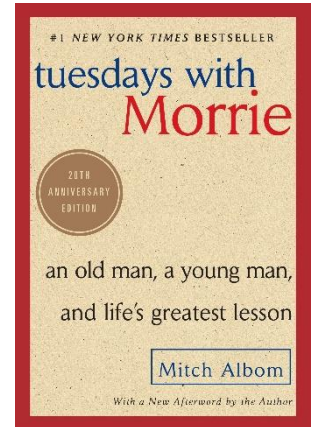


Photo taken from Amazon.com

What community were you seeking to serve with your Capstone? How? Were you successful?

I was seeking to serve the retiring professors by giving them a chance to reflect and be together with the community they impacted for so many years; the student body (both current and alumni) as they could hear from a mentor who inspired them one last time in a non-traditional academic setting; and other faculty members, who could see one of their peers lecture for possibly the first time.

What (if anything) do you wish you could have changed about your Capstone/your process?

I would have changed the sustainability aspect. My project is currently being "sustained" through the Dean's Council, however to my knowledge the project is not happening this semester.

How did your Capstone impact you? Do you think it will affect the work you'll do in the future?

My capstone allowed me to listen to two great professors talk about their lives and the lessons they learned. That in itself is a huge gift. Applying the lessons and tips they shared into my future work and life will certainly help me develop and progress as an employee, dad, husband, uncle, grandfather, etc.



What advice would you give to students beginning the Capstone process?

My best advice for students beginning the Capstone process is to just trust it. If you have a crazy idea, run with it. You will always be supported by the Honors community.

Reach out for help if you need it, it's smart to do so. Share your project with whomever you encounter, they may be interested in supporting you in some capacity. Finally, remember to breathe. The Capstone, while certainly seeming like a marathon during the first two years of college, quickly shifts to a sprint when you're in the thick of it. Reflect often and you'll be fine.

Other projects that were just completed this year!!

LGBTQ Parent Education Workshop

Hannah Laboski

This program is an invitation to families from local communities to learn how to be better support systems and allies to their LGBTQ children. Hannah held several classes on Wednesday nights and had over 50 people attend each one.

Skin Cancer Awareness Day

Megan Horsell & Kari Wood

A day set up to educate students on how to protect themselves from the sun--soon to be a part of Exercise as Medicine Day.



Rams Songwriting Program

Spencer Camacho

The local YMCA lost its music program a few years ago, so Spencer wanted to create a songwriting program that would provide kids and teens with a creative outlet. The curriculum was based around writing lyrics with emphasis on self-expression and emotions. With the help of fellow WCU students, by the end the 10-week program, the kids from the YMCA had each written a song and performed for their friends and family at a recital.



Video Game Mashup

Enrique Mentado Sosa

A video game mashup tournament designed to foster relationships, raise interest in e-sports on campus, and raise money for charity.

Ban Body Bashing

Riley Orr

A movement intended to change the way people talk about their body and other people's bodies. The pledge included a commitment online and in-person, as Riley also designed a social media campaign to bring more awareness to the issue.

Technology Across Generations

Taylor Koenigsberg

This project brought together the Traveling Across Generations (TAG) of HSA and the West Chester Senior Center. Essentially, WCU students would come and teach the seniors how to use their smart devices or fix simple technological problems.

Language Partners Program

Domenica Castro

Recognizing that students studying Spanish at WCU struggle to practice their oral fluency, Domenica connected with a university in Costa Rica to connect students there with WCU students. These paired students would then Skype, text, email, or call each other to practice their English and Spanish speaking skills. Students could record their conversations for extra credit in their Spanish classes.

Campus Sustainability

Elena Navarro

Elena did work to write a grant proposal to make Sykes more sustainable, which the Office of Sustainability took to use for material. She then made a sustainability video with the Digital Media Center on campus which was played at new student orientation.

General Words of Wisdom from these Students:

- “Your project is only a priority to you until you show other people why it should be a priority to them.” ~Taylor K.
- “Delegating and stepping back is terrifying--there needs to be a level of trust to pass something down...you need to let it go to help it grow.” ~Max J.
- *Find groups on campus to partner with--especially those with a faculty advisor that will outlive the students.*
- *Find motivated people who are younger than you to be part of the process.*
- *Consider opportunities for transparency---especially with money.*
- *Find out your audience and what they really need.*
- *Document what you do, give your efforts legitimacy.*
- *You can never assume an organization is going to do something for you after you're gone.*
- *Think about sustainability up front.*
- *Communication: make sure you have an audience and make sure you are in touch with people face-to-face.*

Projects in Process:

Mental and Physical Health Day:

Jovan Clark

A day where athletes will talk to middle and high school athletes about having self-confidence and self-love.

Camp Hill

Kimmie Konz

Increasing socialization for students at Camp Hill with intellectual and physical disabilities.

Values Vigil

Marissa DeLoria

A vigil revolving around organizational values in honor of a friend who passed away at Penn State in February 2017 because of hazing. "If everyone lived out their values every day, then no one would have to die from hazing."

App: 'Ramily'

Mikaila Barba

An app designed to connect student parents with student sitters on campus.

STEM Summer Camp

Sarah Goncharoff

Curriculum for STEM summer camp at Milton Center (K-9th grade).

Alpha Eta Honors Society

Cassie Caraballo & Courtney Brennan

Alpha Eta will be an Honors Society for students in the College of Health Sciences--reward and recognition.

Toys for Trots

Anna Landis

Quest Therapeutic Services has a horseback riding clinic which works with students who have physical and mental disabilities. This initiative is collecting toys from different schools and daycare centers for therapists at Quest to put together care boxes of toys to use with clients and their horses.

ELL Student Strategy Book

Kathleen Shultz

A book of strategies for teachers in different content areas to use with English Language Learning (ELL) students.

Cooking Resource for College Students

Alexander Dwyer

A cooking resource (internet web source) for college students moving into dorms/ just beginning to live independently that will help them be healthier and manage their lives better.

Hands-On Science

Jenny Dam

Creating more hands-on science experiments for middle school students.

Women Go Golden

Anna Dyska & Lindsey Anna

For the past two years, this has been a celebration for International Women's Day. Each year they hang posters on the academic quad with quotes from female professors. This year they plan to do a speaking series the week before spring break focusing on different issues women face in the workplace, body positivity, etc.

Mental Health & Diversity

Archana Chungapally

Forming support groups consisting of 10-15 people, based on different socio-economic/racial/sexual orientations to talk about personal issues & mental health.

Operation Eco

Sequoyah Walters

Taking old pallets and turning them into gardens for people without access to healthy food; working with West Chester Food Cupboard to get clients.

Officer Training & Transition Program

Rodney Kaplan

The Student government and the Office of Student Leadership & Development are working together to create a club officer training and transition program. Set to happen in spring---all SGA recognized organizations' newly elected officers will be walked through how to be an officer and utilize campus resources.

Art Conservation & Chemistry

Erica Knorr

In her work with the Art Conservation Center, Erica found their chemistry knowledge was lacking. She designed a series of mini-chemistry lessons to refresh their background and directly connect it to their work in the field.

Tips from Current Students

- *Use your resources on campus and pair with offices on campus--then your project has more validity and sustainability.*
- *Keep an open mind about what your project is until it's underway--things change.*
 - ~Marissa DeLoria
- *Don't choose a project that you don't know how to do.*
- *There's always someone on campus with the same passion/intersecting interests.*
 - ~Mikaila Barba
- *Don't be afraid to be a little bold---sometimes I had to say, "let's meet now!!"*
- *Find the balance of being assertive.*
- *Set a definite time to work, and every week it will add up.*
- *I wasted a lot of time waiting to hear back because I didn't want to be a burden.*
 - ~Anna Landis
- *A timeline is important--figure out what works for you...will you do a certain number of hours per week? Or religiously log as you go?*
- *You will get to 150 hours, somehow...just make sure that you have a plan that is good for yourself--you know how to manage time in your best way.*
- *Don't waste the first semester!*
 - ~Archana Chungapally

"Do not wait for that magical half a day. Work with the time you have." ---Dr. Tischio

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