



What is the Purpose of the Stritch Capstone Requirement?

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Introduction

I have been asked more than once by my students as to why they have to take the Capstone? The reasoning students tend to use focuses on their perception of the quality of their professional experiences at work or their program completion. For some, the capstone is just “busy work”! In essence, matriculation through the program of study should be sufficient to award the degree.

However, this rationale is flawed. The capstone requirement partially rests with the need for the College to know if its course of study produces business professionals. Finally, and more importantly for you, the student, the capstone confirms a “terminal outcome”: belief that because of your education, you are fully capable of competently managing/leading a modern business organization.

Purpose

By definition, the capstone paper is a culminating experience designed to gauge if a student can demonstrate the following outcomes:

1. Defining a subject for the capstone of interest to the student
2. Demonstrating the capability to articulate a viable research question
3. Developing a paper of publishable quality that adheres to the form of the American Psychological Association (APA) style
4. Applying existing knowledge of relevant theory and applied management science to adequately frame the complexity underlying the research question

5. Demonstrating the ability to apply previous course work, existing data, and the collection of new information sufficient to provide the analysis required for answering that research question
6. Demonstrating the ability to interpret acquired knowledge from the capstone process to assess and recommend solutions to problems defined as a result of their study

Comparison to Traditional Programs

It is important to note that the Stritch Capstone requirement is “accelerated” (compressed). The traditional (non-compressed) capstone for a Master’s Degree may take up to two years to complete. Stritch is requiring completion of the same process in 11-12 weeks. Other differences include:

- ✓ Stritch providing a single instructor to guide the process coupled with extensive support from student services. A traditional program has a committee overseeing student work.
- ✓ Stritch providing a comprehensive text and detailed syllabus designed to guide inquiry within a cohort based supportive environment. Traditional programs expect the student to complete requirements independently.

Interestingly, traditional colleges also have options for program completion that include:

1. The student taking a comprehensive multi-hour exam that covers the entire range of knowledge acquired in their program of study
2. The student electing to take extra courses (an example might be 8 hours) on “professional practices” but still requiring testing.

Summary

It is important for you to understand that the capstone design provides a vehicle for you to ascertain your competence. It is my opinion that competence, analytical thinking, and writing go hand in hand. That is the purpose of the Capstone.