2014-15 Evans School Capstone Project Requirement

All MPA students must complete a capstone project (CP) that integrates knowledge and skills gained at the Evans School. The majority of students enroll in Capstone Project Seminars and either participate in the Public Service Clinics or bring their own topic.

There are five ways to complete the capstone project requirement:

Public Service Clinics (in a Capstone Project Seminar)
- Apply for public and nonprofit agency-generated topics (deadline: October 29, 2014)
- Get matched with a project and student teammates
- Conduct a 3-way meeting with client and CP instructor
- Enroll in a 4-credit Capstone Project Seminar in both Winter and Spring Quarters (8 credits total)

Independent Capstone Project (in a Capstone Project Seminar)
- Generate your own topic (with or without a client), either individually or as a student team
- Enroll in a 4-credit Capstone Project Seminar in both Winter and Spring Quarters (8 credits total)

Deep Dives (Capstone Seminar Classes)
- Take a “deep-dive” class on a particular policy and/or management topic in which a faculty member has expertise (topic descriptions appear in subsequent pages). In the 2014-15 academic year, two "deep-dive" classes will be offered, each in Winter Quarter 2015, one led by Professor Mark Long and one led by Professor Justin Marlowe.
- Students apply for one or both Deep Dives via an online form available to students from October 17-22, 2014. Based on students’ preferred Deep Dives, 15 students are randomly selected for each Deep Dive.

Case-Writing Seminar
- This seminar is now closed
- Students select their own case topics or choose from a catalog of cases in development
- Enroll in a 3-credit seminar Autumn, Winter, and Spring Quarters (9 credits total)

Certificate Programs
- Complete the International Development and Management Certificate (IDCP), Nonprofit Management Certificate (NMCP), or Environmental Management Certificate, including its capstone component
- Schedules and credit requirements vary by certificate

SPECIAL SITUATIONS

PCMI students can complete one of the options above or an independent study capstone project (outside of the Capstone Project Seminars) with a faculty member on a self-generated topic.

Concurrent degree students can count their master’s thesis in lieu of a capstone project when the thesis has a substantial policy/management component and an Evans School faculty member is on the thesis committee.
RESOURCES

Student Handbook: http://evans.uw.edu/myevans/students/student-handbooks
Public Service Clinics: http://evans.uw.edu/myevans/students/public-service-clinics
Certificate Programs: https://evans.uw.edu/degree-programs/non-degree-and-certificate-programs
Capstone Project Archive: http://evans.uw.edu/myevans/students/capstone-project-archive
Electronic Version of this Handout: http://evans.uw.edu/myevans/students/degree-and-capstone-project-options

KEY DATES

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday, Oct. 13</td>
<td>Public Service Clinic projects available in MyEvans (check back for additional projects)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, Oct. 17</td>
<td>Deep Dive application available</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tuesday, Oct. 21</td>
<td>Public Service Clinics Topics Fair, 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, Oct. 22</td>
<td>Deep Dive application deadline, 11:59 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friday, Oct. 24</td>
<td>Students notified about Deep Dive status</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monday, Oct. 27</td>
<td>Deep Dive confirmation deadline, 11:59 p.m.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wednesday, Oct. 29</td>
<td>Public Service Clinics application deadline, 11:59 p.m.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday, Nov. 5</td>
<td>Students notified about Public Service Clinics matches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, Nov. 14</td>
<td>Public Service Clinics confirmation deadline, 11:59 p.m.</td>
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PROFESSOR JUSTIN MARLOWE’S DEEP DIVE (CAPSTONE SEMINAR CLASS)

In this inaugural “deep dive” MPA capstone seminar class, Evans School students will prepare research and recommendations for the Governmental Accounting Standards Board (GASB).

Students will work on two topics that GASB stakeholders have asked the Board to consider for future standard-setting. The students’ research will inform if and how the GASB moves these topics from its “pre-research agenda” to the formal standard-setting process.

**Emissions Trading.** Many states and regional governments now administer emissions trading credit programs. Under these programs, utilities, industrial companies, and other “emitters” purchase government-issued credits to emit a given amount of carbon over a given time period. Emitters purchase these credits in advance, sometimes several years ahead, and use the credit when their business plan demands it or when the market price of the credits becomes attractive enough to sell. For governments that administer these programs the central question is: how to measure and recognize the value of the credits they issue. Other infrequently traded assets, like real estate and investments in hedge funds, present a similar challenge in a different context. For governments who purchase and hold these credits against their own future emissions, the question is: how to measure and recognize how these credits impact their overall financial condition? These credits are, in effect, an option. Most private entities value their emissions credits with well-accepted option valuation models. It’s not clear if that approach is the most appropriate or tractable method for governments. Students will explore these and related issues.

**Direct Borrowing.** In the past few years several state and local governments have borrowed money through “direct placement” loans with banks and other financial institutions. Many of these transactions are not subject to the same financial disclosure rules as traditional municipal bonds. Moreover, many of them have terms and conditions that introduce substantial new uncertainty into a government’s long-term debt portfolio. Several stakeholders have requested that the GASB consider new standards that will require more stringent disclosure of these direct placement loan liabilities. The GASB must consider the scope and extent of direct placement loans, how to measure loan liabilities, and what information about loans, if any, a government should disclose.

To address these questions the seminar will begin with a brief overview of several foundational topics in these areas. Students will prepare short, informative issue briefs that cover the relevant literature, analytical tools, and policy challenges related to these topics. Evans School faculty cover some of these topics in both the core and elective courses, but this seminar offers an opportunity to extend and integrate students’ comprehension. Those topics include, among others: accounting treatment of non-financial and non-market assets; endowments and trust funds; derivatives; structure, dynamics, and systemic risk in the public capital markets; and measurement frameworks for long-term government financial sustainability.

Once the background work is complete, students will conduct interviews, collect data, and complete any other relevant research needed for their analysis of these two issues. The class will then collectively prepare and present a final briefing for the GASB, including options and potentially a recommendation for standard setting in these areas. This seminar will afford students an opportunity to directly engage complex technical topics, as well as the policy trade-offs the GASB must attend to when considering new accounting standards.
The seminar integrates learning from the Evans School MPA program, and our final project is intended to demonstrate this integration of learning.

Students in this seminar will work as a team to answer the following question:

**What public policies should be recommended in order to reduce Seattle’s educational achievement and attainment gaps by race, ethnicity, and income?**

We will thoroughly analyze five possible candidate policies, chosen by students in the seminar, and we will present our findings to local stakeholders and policymakers.

As a starter, note that among Seattle residents age 25 or older, 66% of non-Hispanic whites have a bachelor’s degree or graduate degree, compared to 24% of blacks (based on data from the 2013 American Community Survey). And, 92% of white 10th grade students in Seattle Public Schools are meeting or exceeding proficiency standard for reading, compared to 54% of American Indians, 58% of blacks, and 72% of Hispanics (based on data from Seattle Public Schools).

Students in this seminar will work in one of the five teams (with roughly three persons per team):

- **Team 1: Literature Review: What Policies Have Been Suggested and Evaluated?**
  - Responsible for developing a reading list of existing academic research on our five possible policies, synthesizing the findings and evaluating their relevance for Seattle, writing the introduction and literature review sections of our classes’ report, and presenting these sections of the report to a meeting of stakeholders and policymakers.

- **Team 2: Quantitative Analysis: Impact of Potential Policies**
  - Responsible for conducting an original quantitative analysis of each of the five policies, communicating these “impact” estimates to Team 3, and writing the quantitative analysis section of our classes’ report, and presenting this section of the report to a meeting of stakeholders and policymakers.

- **Team 3: Benefit-Cost Analysis**
  - Responsible for conducting a benefit-cost analysis of each of the five policies, communicating these estimates to Team 5, and writing the benefit-cost analysis section of our classes’ report, and presenting this section of the report to a meeting of stakeholders and policymakers.

- **Team 4: Qualitative Analysis: Stakeholder Interviews**
  - Responsible for conducting a qualitative analysis based on interviews with stakeholders, assessing the political and administrative feasibility of our five policy options, communicating these findings to Team 5, and writing the qualitative analysis section of our classes’ report, and presenting this section of the report to a meeting of stakeholders and policymakers.

- **Team 5: Policy Analysis**
  - Responsible for conducting a policy analysis based on the findings from Teams 1-4, and writing the policy analysis and conclusion sections of our classes’ report, and presenting this section of the report to a meeting of stakeholders and policymakers. Responsible for coordinating presentation, format, materials, and slideshow/video.
Capstone Project (CP) Seminars

Public Service Clinics

- Review and apply for public and nonprofit agency-generated topics using online posting and selection system (must select three choices). Deadline: Oct. 29
- Receive match
- Accept match
- Enroll in a Capstone Project Seminar
- Capstone Project Next Steps Meeting
- Capstone Project Seminars
  - Meet weekly Winter and every other week Spring Quarter
  - Instructor is primary CP advisor and reader; agency, if there is one, is second reader
- Present projects (May/June)
- Instructor Sign-Off and Submit to CP Archive

Self-Generated Topic

- Define your own CP with or without a client agency
- Decline match and apply for an unmatched project or define your own CP
Alternative Options

PCMI

- Independent Study CP (PBAF 605). Completed during 1st quarter back at Evans. Work with a single faculty member on a self-generated topic

Deep Dives
(Capstone Seminar Classes)

- Apply via online form Oct. 17-22, 2014
- Receive notification of whether admitted
- If admitted: confirm intent to enroll and receive add code

- Meet at least weekly Winter Quarter
- Student teams evaluate a particular policy and/or management issue
- Class as a whole develops written report and presentation

Case-Writing Seminar

- Apply through Professor Page Spring Quarter of Year 1
- Select own case topics, or choose from catalogue of cases in development
- Meet twice a month Autumn, Winter, and Spring Quarters in Year 2
- Submit completed case to Electronic Hallway

Instructor Sign-Off and Completion

Present project (May/June)

Apply via online form Oct. 17-22, 2014
Receive notification of whether admitted
If admitted: confirm intent to enroll and receive add code
Meet at least weekly Winter Quarter
Student teams evaluate a particular policy and/or management issue
Class as a whole develops written report and presentation
Select own case topics, or choose from catalogue of cases in development
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