Nyack College School of Social Work

Capstone Project

Overview

Students complete an individual or group research project, a Capstone project, reflecting the students' interests and needs in working with urban families.

Capstone projects are more than just research reports, they represent the culmination of your graduate social work training. In these projects you'll integrate, show off the wonderful knowledge and experiences you've gained here at NYACK in a project report and poster presentation.

What is Capstone Project?

A Capstone project involves carrying out a small research project that the student conducts under the supervision of a faculty member. It is not a thesis. Rather, it is a graduate project that is intended to give you an opportunity to consolidate what you have learned in the social work program and apply it to social work practice in an urban family context.

Although students may pursue an independent research project with a social work faculty member of their choice for their capstone, SWK628 course offers the option of a practice/program evaluation project.

Evaluation Research:

Evaluation research is a form of applied research, using the scientific method to be more effective with clients. For example, we may focus on whether treatment interventions are successful, our ability to form therapeutic relationships, a unit's successfulness at improving discharge outcomes or a agency's impact on improving a condition in the community. There are two types of evaluation research: 1) Practice Evaluation explores the effectiveness of our individual practices and 2) Program Evaluation: examines the effectiveness of an entire program or social service agency

You are encouraged to use a variety of research methods to make the Capstone project meaningful based on your current interests and future social work plans. Although different models may be used, the most common design of the Capstone course is for students to write a short questionnaire and distribute it to the research participants that they have recruited for their study. Students may also consider using secondary data previously collected (e.g. agency charts, case notes, Census data, or other administrative data sets). Based on the data collected and analyzed, students write a report to document their research findings and demonstrate

the implications of the findings for the field of social work. In addition, students display their findings at a Social Work Colloquium poster session at the end of their final year in the MSW program.

Courses for Capstone Project

SWK 628 and SWK 699 are particularly designated to help you develop your capstone project.

In SWK 628, you will develop your capstone project proposal, and in SWK699 you carry out the proposal by collecting and analyzing data, and report the result in a project report and poster presentation.

Can I recruit research participants from my field internship site?

Nyack College cannot make this decision. Students are required to negotiate this with their field placement agency. DO NOT presume that you can recruit research subjects from your field placement agency. YOU MUST speak with your internship supervisor at the time when the placement is initiated. The field placement is not intended to be the site for the recruitment of research participants. On occasion, your field placement supervisor may grant you permission to recruit subjects, or may have an internal research project with which the agency needs help, but it is not the agency's responsibility to help facilitate the completion of your Capstone study. Given that you may be working as a clinician with service users there may be a conflict of interest in working with these same service users in a research capacity. Discuss your Capstone project and your desire to recruit participants from your placement site FIRST with your direct supervisor. Do not proceed to engage HR, or any other person or entity at your field placement site without receiving permission from your placement supervisor. If you are no longer in field placement, plan early! If you were given permission to recruit research participants from your field placement site, but will no longer be in your placement when the Capstone project is conducted; ask early! Ask your field supervisor if s/he may allow you to return to your former placement site to recruit research participants.

If I want to use secondary data instead of recruiting human subjects, how do I find it?

DO NOT presume that you can use secondary data from your field placement agency. If you wish to utilize secondary data from your field placement agency, YOU MUST speak with your internship supervisor at the time when the placement is initiated. Consider connecting with an agency that may need research assistance. Perhaps an agency where you previously worked

or volunteered would be eager to accept your help with an evaluation of their program. Alternatively, you might consider taking advantage of your student status and approaching an agency where you want to work someday and asking them if you could be of assistance to them as a volunteer researcher. Plan ahead, ask early, and expect issues and problems to crop up before you finish. If you choose to use publicly available secondary data (Census, child welfare data set), it is likely that you will need to formally apply in order to gain access to it. Most applications for publicly available secondary data require supervision by a doctoral level university professor. Applications for secondary data take time –it is critical that you plan ahead.