



MAYNOR HONORS COLLEGE

Capstone Project Handbook

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MAYNOR HONORS COLLEGE

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Dear Maynor Honors College Student,

The MHC is honored that you have decided to complete your undergraduate education with us. The curriculum is designed to challenge you academically and provide you with unique opportunities for interactive, self-directed learning. One such opportunity is the Capstone Project.

This handbook will provide you with all the information you need to get started on the Capstone Project. The handbook has four sections. The first section will answer general questions you may have about completing the Capstone Project. The second section will answer specific questions that you may have regarding what honors courses are related to the Capstone Project. The third section outlines requirements for the final completed project. And the fourth section includes all the forms that you will use as you move through the capstone project sequence.

While the Capstone Project might seem like a daunting task, every project milestone is incorporated into your honors coursework (HON 4000: Honors Project Proposal and HON 4500: Honors Thesis/Project). As the instructor of HON 4000 and HON 4500, I will be your capstone project coordinator and will act as an independent guide and facilitator. In addition, you will have the full support of your faculty mentor, who will help you guide the project to completion.

Thank you for your participation in the Maynor Honors College. I look forward to working with each of you on your Capstone Project!

Sincerely,

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Capstone Project Coordinator
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Section One: Overview of the Capstone Project

The Capstone Project is an exciting opportunity extended to members of the Maynor Honors College. A Capstone Project allows students to become active member of their discipline after completing much of their discipline's course work and therefore serves as a capstone experience. The Capstone Project always involves a written component and a presentation, but approaches to the project may take many forms, from traditional research to artistic creation to service-learning.

Possibilities for the Capstone Project

All Capstone Projects will be guided by the faculty mentor and MHC Capstone Project Coordinator. All will entail a written product as well as a poster presentation upon completion. The below descriptions are not meant to be exhaustive or restrictive. They are simply designed to serve as jumping off points for project planning.

Community and Civic Engagement Projects

These types of projects involve active (volunteer) participation and leadership in a focused project involving service to the community, an organization, or a business. The project should be appropriate to the student's field of study, and the student will work with a faculty member to research the project and plan the experience. The final written product may be an extended reflection paper, action plan, or research paper, depending on the project, and should include research as well as a description of the project. Community and civic engagement projects may be combined with creative or research work.

Creative Projects

These projects are appropriate for creative writers, visual artists, or performing artists. Students will work with a faculty mentor to develop the project. The student will display or perform the work and also provide a written description/interpretation of the work, which may take the form of a professional genre such as program notes or an extended artist statement. Creative work may be combined with research or community and civic engagement work.

Research Projects

Research projects may focus on primary research (experimental, archival) or secondary research (review and analysis of published work) and should be completed under the direction of a faculty mentor. Research projects tend to involve a substantial written product and a formal presentation of the results. Research projects may be combined with creative or community and civic engagement work.

Regardless of the type of project proposed, there should be a clear and obvious connection between the project proposed and the knowledge and experiences of the student. The capstone project is designed to be the culmination of a multi-year process of academic and professional formation and should be a natural extension of the curricular and co-curricular profile the student has already built in their time on campus.

Capstone Project Mentor and Capstone Project Coordinator

While technically there are no limits on who among UNCP faculty can and cannot serve as mentor to an honors capstone project, there are certainly some best practices. In my experience, students are best served when selecting a (1) full-time faculty member (2) in their major department who (3) they

already have a positive working relationship with from a previous class or lab experience and (4) who can speak to the discipline-specific expectations of the project proposed. Your mentor will be crucial in shaping and directing the project at every stage, so choosing a faculty mentor wisely is the first step towards a great capstone project. It is important for students to select a mentor who will meet with them regularly to provide feedback on project drafts, challenge them to do their best work, and provide the guidance and support they will need to bring the project to completion. The faculty mentor will also work with the Capstone Project Coordinator to approve the successful completion of the project.

Grading of the Capstone Project

Projects will be graded by the faculty mentor in conjunction with the MHC Capstone Project Coordinator. All capstone projects involve a presentation. This presentation will be made to the campus community at a poster symposium or oral presentation. Students will also complete a written component for the Capstone Project. Because there is so much variation from discipline to discipline and project to project, providing a simple word count or page count for a successful project is often difficult. Additionally, many projects will involve creative or service work that isn't easily represented on the page. However, remember that your honors capstone project is designed to meet the expectations for a 3-credit hour course. According to most standards, a student should expect to spend approximately 3 hours of work per week for each course hour taken. *By this metric, the capstone project (HON 4500) should require around 144 hours of total work time and the final product should reflect that level of engagement.*

Benefits of Completing the Capstone Project

The capstone project is a requirement for graduation from the Honors College, but it is also a culmination of the years of honors curriculum that precedes it. Taking on a large self-directed project like this allows students to work closely with faculty experts, to become active members of their chosen disciplines, and to create a material record that can serve as a springboard to whatever comes in post-graduation life: whether a professional career, graduate school, or something else entirely.

While members of the Honors College are welcome to complete the capstone at any point in their academic career, we often find that the junior year is an ideal time for this project. Students need to have an established understanding of their chosen field and a clear vision for what kind of project will most benefit them academically and professionally, but they often benefit from completing the project *before* the crunch of their senior year. Additionally, completing the project as a junior allows students to continue to expand the work into a conference presentation and/or publication during their final year on campus and allows them to include the completed project in their applications for jobs, internships, and graduate schools.

Planning the Capstone Project

To enroll in HON 4000 and begin working on the Capstone Project, students do not need to have an exact idea planned out. The MHC Capstone Project Coordinator can provide examples of Capstone Projects that students have completed in the past, help identify a faculty mentor, and answer any questions in the earliest stages. Once a particular avenue of inquiry or exploration has been identified, students will rely on their faculty mentor to guide the project in directions that are consistent with disciplinary expectations in terms of methodology and format.

Funding the Capstone Project

When submitting your capstone project proposal at the end of HON 4000, you will be asked to submit a funding request for any materials or services you might need to successfully complete your project. While we cannot guarantee that all funding requests will be processed in the full amount requested, we often have funds available to assist with capstone project costs and we're happy to coordinate with other offices on campus to provide as much support as we can.

Characteristics of a Good Capstone Project

Need for research: The topic for your capstone project should not be trivial and the project should be important and worthwhile.

Amenable to research methods: The topic needs to be feasible. Some projects are beyond the capabilities of students because of academic or technical requirements, cost or length of time for completion.

Achievable in a reasonable time: Typically, students should be able to complete the Capstone Project within a two-semester framework, including both prospectus development and project implementation.

Matches with student capabilities and interests: The research topic should match the student's interests and capabilities, furthering knowledge and experience in an area of discovery.

Section Two: Courses for the Capstone Project

HON 4000 and HON 4500 are designed to help students complete the project. HON 4000 is the Honors Project Proposal course and HON 4500 is the Honors Thesis/Project course. In HON 4000, students will work on planning the Capstone Project and in HON 4500 students will complete the Capstone Project.

HON 4000: Honors Project Proposal

HON 4000 is a one-hour course. Students often enroll in this course during the fall of their senior year. However, it is also possible to take this course one or two semesters earlier, depending on scheduling considerations. Students will receive either a pass or fail grade for the course.

In HON 4000, students will complete the following tasks:

- Consult with the MHC Capstone Project Coordinator regarding a faculty mentor
- Contact the faculty mentor and discuss the project
- Ask faculty mentor to complete Mentor Agreement Form (found in Section Four below)
- Plan the Capstone Project
- Prepare a proposal, describing the scope of the project and the methodology (using the form included in Section Four below)
- Obtain Institutional Review Board (IRB) Consent if the capstone project involves human subjects. Information on the IRB can be found at www.uncp.edu/IRB.
- Present the preliminary proposal to the MHC Capstone Project Coordinator and the faculty mentor for signature and approval

The Capstone Project Proposal should be at least three pages and should include:

- A working (draft) title for the project.
- An explanation of your interest in the subject.
- An explanation of the research question, creative challenge, or community/civic engagement goal for the project.
- A description of the methodological approach you will take to the project.
- A description of the major tasks that must be accomplished to complete the project.
- An explanation of your faculty mentor's current and future role in guiding your progress.
- A rough time line for completion of the project.
- A preliminary list of published resources (academically reputable books and journals) relevant to the project.
- A description of all supplies and equipment you may need (may not apply to all projects).
- An explanation of logistical needs (may not apply to all projects).
- If your project requires Institutional Review Board approval for human subjects research (which includes surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and other data collection), include your plan for obtaining approval.
- An explanation of how the work associated with the project will meet expectations for a 3-credit hour course.
- A description of the final written product (genre, length, citation style, quality and amount of research, etc.)
- A description of the final presentation (poster, performance, display, etc.). In most cases, the presentation should be suitable for a poster symposium.
- A discussion of your faculty mentor's role in developing, finalizing, and approving the final written product and presentation.

HON 4500: Honors Thesis/Project

HON 4500 is a three-hour course in which students will receive a letter grade based on the quality of work. Students can enroll in HON 4500 in any semester after completing HON 4000. During HON 4500, students will complete their Capstone Project and present their project at the Honors Symposium at the end of the semester. Both the faculty mentor and the MHC Capstone Project Coordinator will supervise this project. Therefore, students will remain in constant contact with both during the semester.

The initial assignment in HON 4500 will be to develop a Semester Plan with the faculty mentor. This plan will ensure that the student and the faculty mentor are clear on expectations for communication and progress throughout the semester. And for any of the capstone project possibilities, students will be expected to complete a presentation and a written component. Because capstone projects are different, there will be variations among students in how they present their work and how they provide a written or visual component. All completed capstone projects are cataloged by Mary Livermore Library and archived electronically via the university's institutional repository.

Section Three: Capstone Project Requirements

The Written Component

All Capstone Projects MUST involve a written product. Students should speak with their faculty mentor and the MHC Capstone Project Coordinator to develop their particular Capstone Project's written component requirements. Because there is so much variation from discipline to discipline and project to project, providing a simple word count or page count for a successful project is often difficult. Additionally, many projects will involve creative or service work that isn't easily represented on the page. However, remember that your honors capstone project is designed to meet the expectations for a 3-credit hour course and the final product should reflect that level of effort. Please use the *Capstone Project Template* (available on Canvas) for the final version of the project. The template is pre-formatted with correct margins, fonts, and section breaks. The template may be adapted to the project. A digital copy of the Capstone Project will be uploaded to the University's Institutional Repository, Brave Pubs, as detailed below.

The Presentation

Students will present Capstone Projects to the campus community through the Capstone Project Symposium at the end of the term. Typically, capstone project presentations take the form of a research poster, but based on their discipline or format, other projects may require more specialized forms of presentation or performance which can be arranged on a project-by-project basis. Students ARE NOT expected or required to perform an oral presentation as part of their project.

Additional Capstone Project Requirements

Standards of Conduct

All Capstone Projects, or any paper developed by a student, must comply with University regulations concerning fabrication, facilitating dishonesty, and plagiarism. Material developed by someone other than the author of a thesis should be clearly credited. Internet material must be treated as published material and must be fully credited. Purchased research materials must also be clearly identified as the work of others and not the original work of the author. In situations where material was developed through study groups or other formal or informal group interaction, the author is obligated to credit others for the ideas that were developed as part of a group process. Any work developed with the assistance of AI tools should also be appropriately identified and credited according to the student's disciplinary expectations.

Copyright Restrictions

The U.S. copyright law provides federal copyright protection for both published and unpublished works. Therefore, authors who may wish to include quotations, illustrations, charts, graphs, and musical arrangements and so forth in their thesis/professional paper should make every effort to be sure that reproduction of the copyrighted material does not exceed the doctrine of "fair use," which considers both the purpose and character of the use of copyrighted material. Unpublished works, as well as works published without valid copyright notice, are still eligible for protection. Permissions to reprint or adapt charts, tables, graphing tabular arrangements, and so forth must be sought from the copyright holder. When requesting permission to reproduce copyright material, be sure to specify that the request is for a one-time, non-profit, educational use.

Institutional Review Board

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) is required by federal law to review and approve ALL research proposals that involve human subjects. Special protections are accorded to minors, prisoners, pregnant women, and disadvantaged populations. All research conducted at UNC Pembroke or by UNC Pembroke faculty, staff and/or students at any location (including some research conducted as part of classroom exercises or course requirements) must undergo an IRB review and have a protocol application on file with the IRB Chair.

Some typical examples of human subject research that require IRB approval:

- Survey research for a thesis or dissertation
- Educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, or achievement)
- Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs, and behavior)
- Research employing survey(s), interview(s), focus group(s), program evaluation(s), human factors evaluation(s), or quality assurance methodologies
- Collection of data made from voice, video, digital or image recordings made for research purposes
- Collection of pathological or diagnostic specimens
- Research and demonstration projects designed to study or evaluate public benefit programs
- Test and food quality evaluation studies

Cataloging in Brave Pubs

Following the completion of your capstone project, your written document plus any supplementary materials will be catalogued by university librarians as part of the Brave Pubs database. Students will simply complete the short submission form and attach their document using this link (<https://uncp.libwizard.com/f/bravepubs>). This submission DOES NOT prevent you from publishing or expanding on any of your work and DOES NOT give the university any degree of ownership over what you produced. It simply allows the Brave Pubs database to host your document through the Mary Livermore Library.

Section Four: Forms

HON 4000 Forms

- Mentor Agreement Form
- Proposal for Capstone Project

HON 4500 Forms

- Semester Plan for Capstone Project

Mentor Agreement Form (HON 4000)

The success of the Maynor Honors college capstone project depends on mentorship. This document formalizes the commitments between the student, the faculty member, and the MHC Capstone Project Coordinator

Student Responsibilities:

- Explain the guidelines of the capstone project to the faculty member.
- Complete a capstone project proposal while enrolled in HON 4000.
- Complete the capstone project while enrolled in HON 4500.
- Adhere to the academic standards set forth by the faculty mentor and the MHC Capstone Project Coordinator.

Faculty Mentor Responsibilities:

- Commit to mentoring the student over the next two semesters.
- Ensure that the student's project meets high disciplinary standards.
- Agree to attend the Senior Luncheon and Medallion Ceremony as well as the Capstone Project Symposium at the completion of the project.

MHC Capstone Project Coordinator Responsibilities:

- Provide written documentation of university service to faculty mentor's dean and/or department chair.
- Recognize the faculty mentor at end-of-year MHC ceremonies.
- Assist in mentoring the student and serve as instructor of record and record-keeper for HON 4000 and HON 4500.

Student Scholar (Print AND Sign)

Date

Faculty Mentor (Print AND Sign)

Date

MHC Project Coordinator (Print AND Sign)

Date

Proposal for Capstone (HON 4000)

Attach your Capstone Project Proposal (typically three or four pages, double-spaced), being sure to include a detailed description of the project you're proposing, a clear plan for executing it in the time allotted, the role your faculty mentor will play, and a preliminary sense of your research as it stands right now (including all of the information enumerated under HON 4000 in Section Two of the Capstone Project Handbook).

In addition, please attach a SEPARATE DOCUMENT which details any resources that you may need to successfully complete your project as proposed, including but not limited to:

- ordering raw materials
- travelling to a research site or archive
- requesting additional library resources
- securing access to particular on- or off-campus services
- recruiting volunteers to assist in executing some stage of the project

While we cannot guarantee that all funding requests will be processed in the full amount requested, we often have funds available to assist with capstone project costs and we're happy to coordinate with other offices on campus to provide as much support as we can. This document should include (1) a written statement explaining your need for these resources and how they will enrich your capstone project AND (2) a specific budget consisting of the exact dollars and cents figure you're requesting. If possible, we would also advise you to even break the total number down into cost, tax (if applicable) and shipping as well as a final total.

Student Scholar (Print AND Sign)

Date

Faculty Mentor (Print AND Sign)

Date

MHC Project Coordinator (Print AND Sign)

Date

Semester Plan for Capstone (HON 4500)

In consultation with your faculty mentor, draft and attach a semester plan. This need not be lengthy, but should include the following information:

- A timeline for your project (may be imported from your proposal), including important due dates (available on Canvas).
- A plan for communicating with your mentor: how often, who will initiate, in what manner (face-to-face, email, etc.).
- A plan for receiving feedback from your mentor on the final paper and final presentation poster in accordance with due dates for each.
- A document detailing any resources you may need to successfully complete your project as proposed (may be imported from your proposal, though it should be updated).

Student Scholar (Print AND Sign)

Date

Faculty Mentor (Print AND Sign)

Date

MHC Project Coordinator (Print AND Sign)

Date