Senior Capstone Overview and Structure

The University Honors Senior Capstone is the final experience for students within the program. This requirement is facilitated directly through one-on-one work with a qualified faculty member, in students’ interest areas, and takes place over an entire semester (and in some cases may extend into an entire academic year).

The Senior Capstone should allow a student to explore a topic in-depth; and moreover, serve as a mechanism to enhance future professional success. The expectation is that the Honors Senior Capstone should approximate professional academic work, include routine meetings with the faculty member, and produce an outcome that matches the expected work from a regular three (3) credit University Honors course. This requirement can be completed through a variety of different experiences.

Examples of Senior Capstone work include:
- Perform research resulting in a manuscript submission and/or presentation and a regional, national, or international forum
- Construct an evidence based manual to improve quality of life, performance, social functioning, etc. for a specific segment of the population
- Collect an oral history of an event, person, etc. with a formal analysis
- Create a performance or exhibition with a formal analysis
- Form a company or non-profit and evaluate its social impact
- Complete a specific component of a design project with a formal analysis of impact to larger project and group
- Generate a report of pedagogical techniques, financial trends, research advances in a specific domain

Non-Paper Based Capstone Projects
In the event a student selects a non-paper based project (e.g., video, poster, performance, artistic endeavor), a 500-1000-word summary is required in addition to the final output that discusses the project, the findings, and may include a reflection of the experience. This summary is to be submitted in conjunction with all capstone material by the due date.

A Senior Capstone is an opportunity for a student and faculty mentor to advance a student’s learning to new heights through personalized and unique approaches to their studies. We hope that both the student and faculty will benefit from this relationship.

Regardless of the mode of delivery for a Senior Capstone, sustained faculty interaction with students is a key element of the University Honors experience.
Senior Capstone Procedure

**Step 1. Workshop Attendance**
The University Honors Program offers regularly scheduled workshops on the logistics of completing a Senior Capstone. In the semester prior to enrollment, students **MUST** attend one of these workshops or schedule an individual advising appointment to learn important logistics.

**Step 2. Faculty Consultation**
In the semester prior to enrollment, the student is strongly encouraged to seek out a qualified faculty member with whom the student has a pre-existing relationship to discuss the possibility of supervising a Senior Capstone. Some topics during this initial meeting might include, but are not limited to:

- Topic(s) to explore during this experience
- The number of one-on-one meetings to be scheduled during the semester
- An overview of requirements/responsibilities of each individual
- Expectations/Evaluation of the student’s Senior Capstone output

**Step 3. Capstone Form Preparation and Submission (Due Friday of week #2 of the semester)**
By the aforementioned due date, the student must submit a completed application form to the University Honors Program along with a typed synopsis of the work to be done and evaluative criteria. This synopsis should clearly articulate:

1. The topic, purpose, and/or hypothesis of the project
2. A brief review of supporting literature articulating the importance of your project
3. The methodology of your project
4. A complete timeline demonstrating how the project will be completed
5. A reference page for any cited works listed in the proposal in a style appropriate to your discipline (e.g., APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.)

True synopses are professional documents and should be approximately 3-5 pages in length (not including a title page).

**Step 4. Final Approval from University Honors**
No later than the last class day of the 4th week of the semester the University Honors Program will let the student and faculty know of approval, request for more information, or denial of the Senior Capstone. If approval is granted, a student must complete the Senior Capstone by the Honors deadline, subsequently listed.

**Step 5. Completion and Evaluation**
The Senior Capstone is **due the Sunday before finals begin (by 11:59pm CT)** to the University Honors office. Students must submit a PDF of their capstone and faculty signed cover page to honors@niu.edu and upload a copy of their capstone to Huskie Commons. If a student successfully completes the Senior Capstone (as determined by the faculty supervisor) and meets all submission deadlines, University Honors credit for the experience will be received.