

NOVEMBER 1, 2024



COX COLLEGE OTD PROGRAM

THE CAPSTONE CURRENT



What do OTD students have to say about the 'Iterative Process' of Capstone?

"I have been very mindful to allow the literature to guide me allowing for the change in my capstone to take a natural progression." *Ashley Bailey*

"The morphing of my problem statement and topic has been very eye opening in the fact that there truly is nothing literature wise for many ideas that are considered emerging literature." *Blake Williams*

"Through this process, I have gained skills in how to pull information from literature and use it to scope in on a specific topic of interest and molding that interest and the findings into a project." *Britany Angleton*

"Reflecting on this capstone journey, my project has evolved significantly. Not in population or passion, but through deepened understanding." *Cryslan Daughtry*

"Reflecting on my capstone journey thus far there have been many bumps as my capstone has morphed quite a bit from the beginning with how literature has guided me, but I am loving where it is at and where it is going...trusting the process!" *Maddy Froeschle*

"My capstone has had a drastic change since we have started (this is a good thing)." *Dayjha Hill*

"Initially, I had a more narrow focus, but as I explored various articles related to my interest, I began to see the broader implications of my problem statement. This broader perspective has not only refined my purpose statement but has also deepened my commitment to the project." *Bailee Russell*

Image: OTD C1 - Escaping the Onsite Capstone Writers' Workshop Escape Room - September 2024

What's happening with the Capstone Currents?

- Students are concluding synthesis statements - 5 paragraph essay writing with the last being OT Role & Theoretical Framework
- Students have welcomed 'rowers' to their capstone raft with mentorship - (content expert) faculty capstone mentor meetings.
- Students are joining their essays into a compilation to represent their current understanding of the literature forming a project proposal.
- Students are preparing for defending their knowledge of the literature that has shaped their capstone. Meetings will occur Week 15.



Written By: Jamie Bergner, OTD, OTR/L, CHT, COMT

Capstone Coordinator Corner

Students pick their adventure, but it is helpful to have a few rowers in the raft that have navigated rivers before! Mentorship is a key component of the capstone project and experience. Students have extensive 1:1 mentorship to guide the *process* of capstone with the capstone coordinator, and are joined by content experts from a variety of backgrounds and locations: Cox College faculty and the surrounding community - as far reaching as several states away. While mentors ensure student success, the student is the leader of the capstone, pulling in resources as needed to keep their capstone “raft” moving down the river. Each project is different in the identified needed supports, however, every capstone student will have a content expert associated with their capstone experience site. Working with mentors is an incredible opportunity to build advanced skills to contribute to the advancement of the occupational therapy profession!



Rafting Reflections



Guest Editor:

Dayjha Hill, OTS

Faculty Editor:

Jamie Bergner,
OTD, OTR/L, CHT, COMT

Map of the Capstone River

Entry-level doctoral capstone

- Supported advanced skill development through an in-depth learning experience, linked to the curricular design of the program
- Refers to Capstone Project AND Capstone Experience

Capstone Project

- A comprehensive project that demonstrates a synthesis of knowledge in a student's area of concentration on the problem facing a population. The project concentrates on a problem an OT can address.

Capstone Experience

- 14 week learner-centered, mentored experience for an in-depth exposure with the population, aligned with the capstone project to address a problem.

Capstone Mentors

- Many! Faculty, Those that work at the Capstone Site, Content and Subject Matter Experts

Lead Rower Reflections: Passion is the Oar that Powers the Raft!

Written By: Dayjha Hill, OTS

Current Problem the Capstone Project is addressing:

Individuals who have experienced psychological abuse demonstrate occupational deprivation for social participation and have altered coping strategies - which results in decreased participation in valued social relationships.

Connecting your capstone with a passion keeps the capstone project intriguing and engaging, even through challenges. It has helped keep me determined to find a solution to the problem based on the literature. As future occupational therapists, we chose this career to help others in need, this experience helps keep the spark and provides a start to working with your passion.



DECEMBER / JANUARY
2024 - 2025

COX COLLEGE OTD PROGRAM

THE CAPSTONE CURRENT



Capstone Investigation Q & A!

What is the purpose of the Capstone Investigation Course?

Capstone Investigation is the second in series of capstone courses and is all about investigating the literature for a capstone project! Students select a population of interest and work through a series of searches to determine if there is enough recent literature to support a capstone project. Capstones broaden or narrow projects based on the amount of peer reviewed literature available. The goal is not too much, but not too little. The original idea is changed as the student reads more on their topic and is inspired by different opportunities in the occupational therapy profession. No capstone ends as it once began. "Iterative" is defined as a repetitive process. The term "an iterative process" is used to describe the refinement process of repeatedly being guided and informed by the literature.

Do students get to pick their project?

Students pick their population of interest, the literature guides the project based on what the occupational therapy profession and published experts in the field identify as a need. Students learn of current problems their population of interest faces and match a problem with one an OT can best solve or inform. The iterative process guides the student toward a problem statement and eventually a purpose statement. Project types are matched with what is best in alignment with the literature the student presents.

Is 'Capstone Investigation' a Research Class?

While capstone incorporates many skills ranging from critical appraisal and evidence based practice, it is not a research class. Capstone investigation resembles more of a 'scholarly writing class' to complete the project proposal in small essays throughout the semester that synthesize the literature. Students report experiencing significant growth in advanced scholarly analytical writing from semester beginning to end.

*Image: OTD C1 and faculty, November 2024
Send-off for C1 Level II Fieldwork
C1 Students will complete six months of fieldwork
and then return in Fall 2025 to prepare their
capstones!*

What is happening with Capstone Currents?

- C1 OTD Students have turned in their Capstone Investigation Project Proposals
- Students continue to consult their faculty capstone mentor
- During Week 15, students defend their understanding of the literature that has shaped their capstone projects
- Students are preparing their pitch and strategizing the best placements for their capstone experiences, aiming to implement their projects and gain in-depth experience with their populations of interest



Written By: Jamie Bergner, OTD, OTR/L, CHT, COMT

Capstone Coordinator Corner

The occupational therapy profession offers endless possibilities for capstones! "How do I decide on a capstone topic?" This is a common area of excitement but also concern for many students. After all, capstone spans across 2 and a half years! The most important student-driven decision is picking a population of interest (or a few to start). Sometimes students start out very passionate about their population, and other students fall in love slowly as they learn about their area of interest! It is important to know with capstone that the literature and the OT profession pick the project for you, and you make the decisions along the way that keep the project interesting and closely connected to your passion. Here are some tips to consider if you are just getting started:

Update Your Trello Board

- Anything interesting (topics, guest lectures, assignments, jot it down!)

Talk to OThers

- Passionate OTs? Committed Community Partners? Interview!

SELF-Direct your Learning

- Dig in deeper to your interests
- Pin articles, blogs to Trello Board



Rafting Reflections

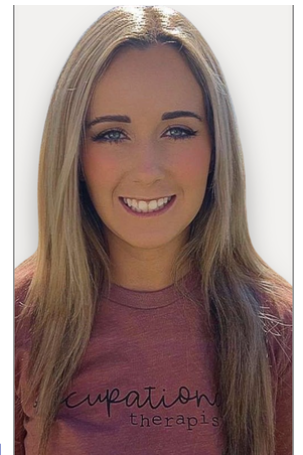
Lead Rower Reflections: Building Innovative and Impactful Capstones that Advance the OT Profession

Written By: Bailee Russell, OTS

Current Problem the Capstone Project is addressing:

Fathers of children with autism lack training and targeted skill development in modifying play-based activities and ability-focused interactions to support the successful co-occupation of play. This may result in an under-utilized resource to best support the child's development needs (Boyd, 2019; Meadan, 2016; Potter, 2016; Rankin, 2019).

The iterative process of a literature review shapes the capstone by uncovering gaps and refining the capstone focus to address pressing needs identified in research. Through continuous review and integration of findings, **the project evolves to target specific, evidence-based priorities**. This dynamic approach ensures the capstone is both innovative and impactful, delivering meaningful solutions that directly address gaps in current occupational therapy practices and in the literature.



Capstone Current, Volume 2

Guest Editor:

Bailee Russell, OTS

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Map of the Capstone River

Deliverables

- Something that 'delivers results' showing proof of meeting a learning objective for either the capstone project or capstone experience
- Refers to Capstone Project AND Capstone Experience
- Will look different for each project and is linked to objectives

Capstone Dissemination

- Completed at the end of capstone to share findings with a broader OT audience to advance the OT profession
- Dissemination will look different based on student preference, but will include dissemination to Cox College and include a presentation that will be made public

Learning Objectives

- Student-determined learning objectives or essentially specific goals set for the capstone project or experience
- Based on what the student wants to learn or needs to learn to complete all capstone activities

FEBRUARY 2025



COX COLLEGE OTD PROGRAM

THE CAPSTONE CURRENT



Leading Capstone with a Service Heart

How is Capstone linked to Community Service?

Capstone Experiences are often placed in community settings. Students gain an in-depth, immersive experience with their population of interest. After thoroughly investigating the problems people face, the student gains a deeper understanding with seeing real day-to-day challenges. Capstone students are placed where they can make the most impact with implementing their capstone project to generate REAL difference in the community.

How is Capstone linked to Professional Service?

By partnering with the community, OT students have an opportunity to demonstrate leadership and inject "occupational therapy essence" into solving everyday problems. Students align their personal and professional goals with capstone to let their strengths shine through during Capstone Experience. Gathering data and outcomes of the project is an integral part of determining the effectiveness of the capstone. Dissemination plans are also an important, planned initiative that often leads to greater dissemination opportunities to share with the OT profession and communities. While professional service is about giving to the profession, it is often rewarded with opportunities.

How does Capstone promote Occupational Therapy?

Many times Capstone Experience sites are not familiar with OT or students may have a Content Expert Mentor (Site Mentor) that is not an occupational therapist. Capstone Experiences and Projects help educate communities on the power and impact of occupational therapy. Capstone may even be used as a part of a plan to create a new job for an occupational therapist after graduation!

Did you know the majority of capstone experience placements do not occur in a traditional OT setting? Capstone is an opportunity to collaborate with community partners - with a service heart!

What is happening with Capstone Currents?

- C2 OTD Students are exploring different populations of interest in Capstone Seminar
- C2 OTD Students are learning about the problems their population of interest face and brainstorming solutions for groups and populations
- C1 OTD Students are gaining valuable experience on their Level 2A Fieldwork Placements and will be pitching their plans to Capstone Site Mentors in Spring - Summer



Written By: Jamie Bergner, OTD, OTR/L, CHT, COMT

Capstone Coordinator Corner

The occupational therapy profession strongly believes in the power of occupation - the purposeful, meaningful things we do that contribute to overall well-being, sense of identity, and participation in life. An OT Capstone is no different - it is the opportunity to pick a population that you LOVE so you can LOVE what you do in Capstone!

Combining 'loves' can lead to very interesting and unique capstones! Capstone is the marriage of capstone project and capstone experience. Capstone project is the what you design in response to the literature, based on a documented need AND in collaboration with your site guided by a needs assessment. You will be implementing this project in the context of your experience and measuring its effectiveness and outcomes.

The capstone experience is a placement carefully selected with maximum exposure to your population of interest and ability to implement your project. You will design unique learning opportunities from different perspectives and different contexts to gain in-depth knowledge and advanced skills with your population of interest. Capstone project and capstone experience are a perfect match for OT to lead with a service heart.

Rafting Reflections

Lead Rower Reflections: Capstone Opens Doors to Professional Service and Leadership

Written By: Cryslan Daughtry,
OTS

Current Problem the Capstone Project is addressing:

The scarcity of occupation-based educational support for families of children with Congenital Hand & Upper Limb Deficiency (CHULD) results in parental distress, diminished empowerment, and decreased or delayed guidance for adaptations to support the child.



My capstone has been a **catalyst for leadership and service** opportunities within American Society of Hand Therapist (ASHT), particularly through the Pediatric Hand Therapy Task Force. This volunteer experience allows me to collaborate with like-minded, yet experienced, pediatric hand therapists to **generate ideas, expand awareness, and advocate for the growth** of this distinct and essential area of practice. With the Task Force, I am able to contribute to the profession in small, but mighty ways.

My interest in both pediatrics and hand therapy has driven my exploration in intersecting these specialties - where the need for specialized support is often overlooked. Through professional service with leading organizations, like ASHT, opportunities to **elevate my capstone mission on a larger scale are possible**. This will not only help support bridging gaps, but also promote awareness, and foster empowerment to best serve patients and families of children with congenital hand and upper limb differences.



Capstone Current, Volume 3

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Map of the Capstone River

Content Expert/Site Mentor

- A formal mentor that signs a contract to collaborate with students through the capstone preparation and experience
- Signs a Written Agreement (Memorandum of Understanding) and helps to facilitate signing of a contract between the facility and Cox College
- Has specific expertise pertaining to the capstone

Faculty Mentor/Content Expert

- Has a doctorate degree (as of July 31, 2025)
- Understands the Capstone Process
- Mentors the Student, supports community connections, expands ideas, keeps the project reasonable but comprehensive
- Communicates with Doctoral Capstone Coordinator regularly to keep capstone work in compliance

Doctoral Capstone Coordinator

- Responsible for oversight of the capstone program and adheres to ACOTE Standards (D Standards)
- Serves as a mentor to all capstone students, faculty mentors, advisors, and content experts (may serve in additional roles as needed)
- Maintains records, agreements, monitors outcomes, and ensures rigorous, impactful, evidence-based, and occupation-based capstones that incorporate the curriculum design throughout the capstone continuum

MARCH / APRIL 2025



COX COLLEGE OTD PROGRAM

THE CAPSTONE CURRENT

Leading the OT
Profession Forward

ONE CAPSTONE
AT A TIME



April is Occupational Therapy Month!

How does Capstone Advance the OT profession?

Students are placed in capstone experience sites where they will have an in-depth exposure to their population of interest. These placements are carefully hand-picked to create innovative solutions to problems those populations face on a day-to-day basis. The combination of innovation, evidence-based practice, and meticulous capstone project design result in effective, impactful capstones that showcase the true value of occupational therapy.

How does Capstone educate those outside of the Occupational Therapy profession on the age old question, "What is OT?"

Site mentors are experts in content related to the population thus, are termed 'Capstone Content Experts', however, they may not be aware of the broad scope of occupational therapy. What better way to learn the value of OT than to see it in action for 14 weeks? Capstone sites may not have known the value of occupational therapy prior to the capstone student's influence....but the evidence supports that they do after! In a study surveying doctoral capstone coordinators, 64% of students were reportedly employed at their capstone site or in a similar setting after graduation (Kiraly-Alvarez, Clegg, Molitor, & Friberg, 2022).

How does Capstone build Leadership Skills?

The Cox College OT capstone curriculum encourages self-directed learning by gradually developing necessary skills for critical thinking and problem-solving. Strength's focus and growth mindset training occur throughout the capstone continuum. Guided through mentorship, students learn to break down steps of large projects and goals, building resiliency and capacity through the curriculum. As the coursework progresses, students approach and secure site mentors/content experts, and lead their team of mentors and experts with capstone development. This is training is vital for when they are working more autonomously under mentorship in the Capstone Experience.

Did you know....according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of occupational therapists is projected to grow 11% from 2023 to 2033? Capstones can create job opportunities for occupational therapists in places that may not have considered hiring an OT prior to the student's placement!

What is happening with Capstone Currents?

- C2 OTD students are volunteering to have "mini capstone experiences" with their population of interest and fueling their passion for service!
- C2 OTD Students are narrowing their populations of interest to begin the process of focusing the capstone.
- C1 OTD Students are practicing pitching their capstones to a potential site mentor and coordinating meetings with mentors to get ready.
- Faculty will be attending a training on the threading of capstone doctoral through the sequence and scope of content in the Cox College OTD curriculum design.



Written By: Jamie Bergner, OTD, OTR/L, CHT, COMT

Capstone Coordinator Corner

Imagine building an evidence-based, innovative capstone that solves problems for a population of interest. The program objectively demonstrates significant impact! The group of people served by the capstone student benefits greatly from the capstone. Now imagine the student leaving and, thus, the service ends for that population. Not so great, right?

Sustainability of capstone is carefully planned from the start of the capstone inception and design. Developing a program? Part of the program development is to embed measurement practices to evaluate the effectiveness of the program, and develop standard operating procedures (SOPs) for detailed step-by-step methods on sustained implementation by staff once the student is no longer in capstone experience. Conducting research? Capstones are designed to disseminate the findings with future implications for other researchers to pick up and investigate further. Every capstone project has a sustainability plan, by design. This is accomplished with integrating effective and efficient business practices into capstone to ensure future success. Capstone sustainability is about *Ethics* and serves as a layer of protection to the populations served by capstone students. This responsibility falls on the students, the faculty mentors, site mentors and an ethical standard upheld by the Doctoral Capstone Coordinator. Collectively, we all ensure that the populations impacted by capstone continue to sustain the benefits long after the capstone ends!

Map of the Capstone River

Capstone Project Type

- A designated category for the capstone project
- Defined by the Accreditation Counsel for Occupational Therapy Education (ACOTE) of an area of an in-depth exposure
- Determined by the evidence/literature to match an established need for a population of interest
- Matched with student passion, strengths, and interest for project direction

Self-directed Learning

- Student takes ownership for learning
- The emphasis is not on a grade or defined hours of instruction, but rather the results and/or time it takes to achieve established learning objectives
- Learning that is aligned with student strengths, values and passions to facilitate an intense desire to learn more or accomplish established goals.

Doctoral Capstone Team Collaboration - Preparation

- Capstone is designed through collaboration with the student, a faculty member in the OT program holding a doctoral degree, and an individual with documented expertise in the content area of the capstone.

Rafting Reflections

Lead Rower Reflections: Leading the OT Profession through Research Collaboration & Capstone Sustainability

Written By: Ashley Bailey, COTA, OTS

Current Problem the Capstone Project is addressing:

The purpose of this Research type capstone project is to investigate accessibility barriers for healthcare in older adults residing in rural communities. This capstone will result in an in-depth understanding of the lived experience of community dwelling older adults in managing their chronic conditions.



The occupational therapy profession has a significant opportunity to **advance the health** of clients in primary care settings, particularly in rural areas. This inspired my capstone. Through investigation of the literature, I focused on how environmental factors influence health management in older adults in rural communities. However, many questions remained. How does the environment affect the health of older adults in my rural community? If I better understood the challenges older adults face to manage chronic conditions, would OT be **better positioned to lead** in primary care? Would this information create an opportunity to lead? The power of mentorship led to connecting with DeShayla Vassell, a recent graduate of the OTD program at the University of St. Augustine who conducted a qualitative study in Florida to explore these same questions in rural Florida, and is now serving as a content expert and mentor for my project. Qualitative research cannot be generalized to other populations; it will be very interesting to compare research findings with a rural Nebraskan community! My research type project will **contribute to sustaining capstone work – across OT schools and across the country**. Ultimately, my capstone aims to contribute a deeper understanding of the challenges older adults face, highlighting both similarities and differences based on geographical location.

Capstone Current, Volume 4

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