

MAY 2025



COX COLLEGE OTD PROGRAM

THE CAPSTONE CURRENT

Nothing is Impossible!

PROMOTING HEALTH
AND WELLNESS
THROUGH CAPSTONE



Did you know....the number of adults over the age of 18 reporting symptoms of **anxiety or depressive disorder in 2023 for the state of Missouri was 34.3%**, slightly higher than the national average of 32.3%. Additionally the age-adjusted **suicide risk per 100,000 was 18.7, higher than the national average of 14.1** (www.kff.org/statedata, accessed April 20, 2025).

May is Mental Health Awareness Month!

How does Capstone Advance the OT profession to meet mental health needs in communities?

According to AOTA (2025), "the mental health and well-being of everyone is an important component of a healthy community." Cox Health and College's mission is to meet the educational needs of the healthcare community, with a core value that 'Nothing is Impossible.' Capstone projects and experiences are carefully developed to meet the needs of populations and groups specifically targeting the problems communities face on a daily basis to provide tangible solutions. Cox College capstone projects address health and well-being to promote occupational performance. Students collaborate with community partners to make a lasting impact on Southwest Missouri and beyond to build healthier communities. Nothing is impossible!

Cox College also values putting the 'Student First', how does capstone hybrid curriculum accomplish this?

Capstone students are self-directed learners leveraging their strengths, unique backgrounds, and experiences to build a capstone that meets their personal and professional goals. Students pick their population of interest and the evidence-based problem they are specifically addressing through capstone. Students work with several mentors through the capstone process developing skills for self-assessment, reflection on the experience of learning, and are guided through goal setting to break down large tasks into smaller, achievable goals. Feeling connected through online meetings is a challenge - but connection is a necessary part of the mentorship process. A social-emotional learning self-assessment tool was developed and is used to facilitate student self-assessment and inform collaborative mentor meetings as a part of the capstone process. This tool is just one of the ways Capstone aligns with the Cox College Mission & Vision by putting students learning needs first.

Clear evidence of a **prioritized need to address mental health** has been identified, coupled with scarcity of skilled professionals ready to address this need. OTD Capstone experiences working with populations with mental health conditions may increase comfort with accepting an OT job in mental health after graduation - **a demonstrated need for communities in both Springfield, Missouri and nationally!**

What is happening with Capstone Currents?

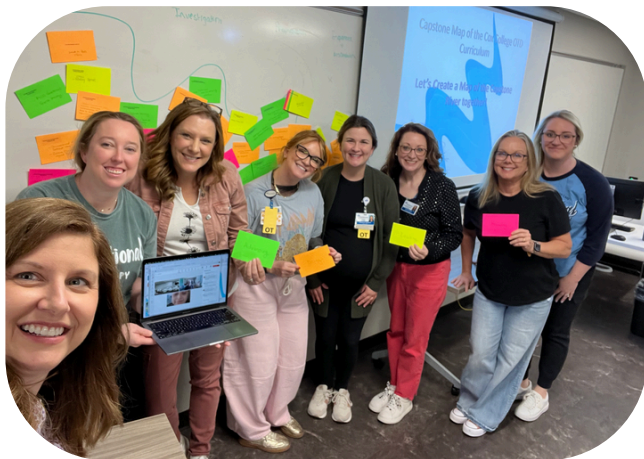
- C1 OTD Students are either pitching their capstones or preparing to pitch to a potential site mentor to get ready for fall preparations
- C2 is doing a 'mini investigation' on their population and the problems facing their population of interest by locating scientific literature on their topic.
- All C1 & C2 have had DCC Mentorship meetings to continue to work through individual pacing and process from April - May.
- All Cox College OTD faculty are getting ready to showcase the capstone program to ACOTE review team in June!



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

Capstone Coordinator Corner

Some say it takes a village... At Cox College, every member of the OTD faculty **plays a vital role in equipping our students** with the skills, behaviors, and competence needed for success. Together, we prepare students to assess needs, match them with evidence-based solutions, and **creatively develop impactful OT capstones**. By collaborating closely with faculty mentors and **community partners**, our students lead and advance the occupational therapy profession through innovative, sustainable projects that improve health in the communities they serve. **Go Team!**



4/11/25: Cox College OTD faculty attend training on the Capstone Program and how it relates to the OTD Curriculum Threads. Each card represents a course and assignments, color coded by **Knowing, Doing, Advancing, Leading** Curricular threads and are beautifully mapped along the capstone continuum.

Map of the Capstone River

Capstone Curriculum Map

- Reflects the Cox Health Mission & Vision
- Reflects the Cox College Mission & Vision
- Reflects the Cox College OT Department Mission & Vision
- Scaffolds learning from the overall curricular threads (Knowing, Doing, Leading, Advancing)
- Applies knowledge from previous courses in the curriculum sequence to scaffold advanced learning consistent with doctorate level work.
- Builds in gradual progression of self-directed learning to culminate in autonomous, meaningful learning experiences that meet the students learning objectives and produces tangible deliverables for professional advancement.
- Embeds processes to maintain rigor across all capstones.

Rafting Reflections

Lead Rower Reflections: Promoting Mental Health in Manual Laborers

Written By:
Britany Angleton, COTA, OTS

Current Problem the Capstone

Project is addressing:

Manual laborers have an increase in work-related stress, affecting their ability to fulfill their role as parents, resulting in decreased productivity and increased burnout (Hulsegge et al., 2020, Okereke et al., 2023, and Eklund & Backstrom 2022).

The purpose of this *Program Development and Evaluation* type capstone project is to increase job performance in manual laborers and develop positive coping strategies in response to work-related stress.

Through my capstone investigation, I have **discovered the importance of mental health** in the lives of workers within their everyday jobs and lives. The statistics are staggering. **Burn-out and shift work are both correlated with depressive symptoms**, poor sleep quality, and a poor workplace environment (Gu et al., 2023). Burnout is a risk factor for manual laborers, but they are not the only ones who are affected by the unhealthy behaviors associated **with burnout, families also experience imbalance**. I am developing programming to help my population understand risk factors, develop coping skills, and implement healthy living strategies **to improve mental stress and mitigate burnout**.

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References available upon request

