

Undergraduate Education Task Force Best Practices Capstone Summary

Assessment Used to Collect Data: I sent e-mail inquiry to provost's office of 18 AAU universities; received responses from 12 (67%) by time this summary was compiled

Summary of Findings Regarding Capstones

1. None of the universities require a university-wide capstone; however, some universities are moving in that direction, either by requiring it of entire colleges (e.g. Rutgers) or encouraging it of all programs (e.g. University of Wisconsin; Texas A&M -moving towards making the capstone an option for all students in all degree programs).
2. All universities had capstone experiences in at least some of their programs but the level of participation varied widely from the minority of programs (e.g. Penn State; University of Arizona) to the majority of programs (e.g. University of Washington, Iowa State).
3. Decisions to offer a capstone and management of the capstones was at either the college or program level in almost all instances. The exception was at Texas A&M where 2 research programs were offered at the university level - for student in the honors program and through the Undergraduate Research Office for students who didn't qualify for honors
4. The majority of universities decided upon and organized the capstone experience at the individual department or program level (e.g. University of Virginia, Ohio State) but a few had a hybrid model in which some colleges required it of all students and other colleges within the same university determined this by program (e.g. Iowa State, Penn State).
5. Only one university defined the nature of the capstone at the university level (Texas A&M –must be a course project, research experience or senior thesis) although these capstones were still typically administered at a departmental level.
6. The nature of the capstones cited included: integrative course or senior seminar, research project and/or a senior thesis, arts portfolio, and internships
7. At least one university noted some central funding was available to support capstone projects

Conclusions Regarding Best Practices

1. All programs should be encouraged (not required) to offer a capstone experience
2. The decision to offer a capstone will typically rest with the program although individual colleges should have the flexibility to require it of all students
3. The college and/or program should define and manage the capstone experience
4. Multiple options for the capstone experience could encourage participation

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