



**ELON**  
UNIVERSITY

CENTER FOR  
**Engaged**  
**Learning**

**Call for Applications**  
**Research Seminar on Capstone Experiences**  
**2018-2020**

**Applications Due November 13, 2017**

The [Center for Engaged Learning at Elon University](#) is pleased to announce the 2018-2020 Research Seminar on Capstone Experiences. This three-summer research seminar facilitates multi-institutional research on capstone experiences using a mixed-methods approach to conduct qualitative and quantitative research. We invite interested scholars and practitioners from all disciplines to apply to join a multi-institutional cohort of researchers collaborating to investigate capstone experiences as a high-impact practice.

**Overview of Current Research on Capstone Experiences**

Over the last 30 years, many undergraduate institutions have placed a greater emphasis on the development of the capstone experience as a high-impact practice. Although these experiences existed much earlier (Atchinson, 1993; Levine, 1975; Gardner, J., & Van der Veer, G. 1998; Wagenaar, 1993), a call by the Boyer Commission (1998) to reinforce the capstone experience as an integral component of a “new model of educating at the undergraduate research universities” was instrumental in clarifying the value and purpose of the capstone (p. 16). Since then, universities have committed to this culminating concept and developed unique opportunities for their students to demonstrate learning. The capstone experience has taken on many forms, including internships, senior-level courses, service learning projects, undergraduate research, and portfolios. The capstone has also grown beyond discipline-specific majors (usually in the form of a senior-level course or experience within the major), to university supported, multi-discipline experiences used as the final piece of the general education requirement (NSSE, 2014). The successful implementation of these experiences led the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) to label the capstone as one of several “high impact practices” that encourage transformative learning (Kuh, 2008).

With the increase in the integration of various types of capstone experiences, a broad range of research has developed. The emphasis of much of this research has concentrated on the role of the capstone in curriculum (Brooks, Benton-Kupper, Slayton, 2004; Brown & Benson, 2005); the unique characteristics of the capstone experience (Dunlap, 2005; Henscheid, 2000; Kerrigan & Jhaj, 2007; Rhodes & Agre-Kippenhan, 2004); and the impact of the capstone experience on student learning

(Bronwell, J. & Swaner, L., 2010; NSSE, 2007; Kuh, 2008). Although there is an ever-growing body of literature on the many successful strategies and outcomes of the capstone experience, valid concerns still remain (Kinzie, 2013).

Concerns about the capstone experience have focused on the ability to execute a high-impact design and to provide this experience to all students (NSSE, 2014). Capstone experiences tend to be criticized when they are poorly planned or reflect low academic standards. In addition, concerns have been raised regarding the support faculty are receiving from the institution to provide the necessary mentoring for high quality experiences (Kuh, 2008). Finally, challenges exist on assessing the experiences, in particular an in-depth evaluation of the capstone across institutions (Padgett & Kilgo, 2012; Tinsley McGill, 2012).

Appreciating that there are numerous facets to achieving a successful capstone experience, the CEL Research Seminar promotes multi-institutional collaborations to facilitate research approaches across institutions to address these ongoing concerns. The Center will support rigorous multi-institutional, multi-method investigations with the goals of enhancing the body of literature on, and providing best practices for the development of capstone experiences.

**The CEL Research Seminar on Capstone Experiences aims to add evidence-based research from a multi-institutional lens taking a deep dive into the following overarching questions and potential sub-questions:**

- 1) What is the landscape of contemporary capstone experiences (CEs) and what will be important to the future of effective CEs?
  - What are CEs aiming to accomplish/achieve (mission, goals)?
  - What are effective CEs missing?
  - What are the varying models of CEs?
  - How are CE outcomes assessed and integrated into dynamic climate of higher education?
  - What are institutional resources, structures, and policies that influence CEs?
  
- 2) What is the articulation between CEs and work, civic, and personal life for students, for faculty goals, for institutional missions?
  - How are CEs meeting student expectations and needs (e.g. transitions, transformation)?
  - How do CEs align with institutional missions?
  - Are CEs addressing societal expectations for higher education?
  - Is there effective curricular and co-curricular integration in CEs?
  - Are students prepared to effectively engage in CEs (e.g. knowledge development, responsibility for learning, ownership of outcomes)?
  
- 3) What are shared and varied structures and characteristics of CEs for different student groups?
  - Do CEs serve diverse students and student populations?

- Is access to high impact CEs equitable?
- What are the barriers to participation in CEs?
- Is there effective faculty development and critical pedagogy to effectively meet diverse student needs?
- What components of CEs are assessed, integrated, and lead to faculty training initiatives?

### **Research Cohorts and Seminar Logistics**

The Center for Engaged Learning Seminar will support multi-institutional research addressing and surrounding this theme over a two-year period, with three one-week summer meetings on the Elon University campus.

- **June 24 – 29, 2018:** Participants will meet on Elon’s campus to collaboratively develop and plan multi-institutional research projects to be conducted throughout the following year at the participants’ own institutions.
- **June 23 – 28, 2019:** Participants will meet to share their initial multi-institutional results and to plan a more sharply focused research agenda for the research cohort for year two. These research cohorts will afford inter-institutional collaborations that enable larger scale studies and explorations of the impact of different institutional contexts.
- **June 21 – 26, 2020:** Participants will reconvene to share their year two results, to plan continuations of their work, and/or to host a conference on the seminar theme.

Participants will produce significant, concrete outcomes. [Past Center for Engaged Learning research seminars](#) have generated edited volumes, journal articles and book chapters, white papers, and conference presentations – as well as local initiatives on participants’ home campuses. Participants will be well-positioned to use evidence-based assessments of student learning conducted as part of the research seminar to inform capstone experiences at their institutions.

Elon University will provide lodging and meals for seminar participants during the seminar’s 2018-2020 summer meetings. In addition, each participant will be reimbursed up to \$500/year (up to \$1000/year for international participants) for travel to the seminar’s summer meetings at Elon University. Full reimbursement policies will be distributed to accepted participants. Other participant expenses, including additional travel costs and any research costs, will be paid by the participants and/or their home institutions.

### **Seminar Leaders**

The 2018-2020 Center for Engaged Learning Seminar will be led by Caroline Ketcham, Tony Weaver, and Jillian Kinzie.

- **Dr. Caroline Ketcham** is Professor and Chair of Exercise Science at Elon University. Caroline's expertise is in the area of movement neuroscience and her current research focuses on understanding the control and coordination in the execution of movements foundational to development and functional participation for neurodiverse populations. In addition she is co-director of Elon BrainCARE Research Institute which has concussion advocacy and positive mental wellness as the primary goals for Elon students and student-athletes. Caroline has lead multiple disciplinary and interdisciplinary capstone experiences for students at Elon in both a course based and multi-year model. She was a previous participant in a CEL research seminar on mentoring undergraduate research and is a leader in defining, identifying challenges and benefits, and helping others develop a co-mentored model of undergraduate research. Caroline has a co-edited book, more than 40 peer-reviewed publications, and over 100 scholarly presentations. Many of her publications and presentations are co-authored with undergraduate research students who she mentored or co-mentor as part of their capstone experiences.
- **Dr. Jillian Kinzie** is Associate Director, Center for Postsecondary Research and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) Institute, Indiana University School of Education. She conducts research and leads project activities on effective use of student engagement data to improve educational quality, and serves as senior scholar with the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) project. She is co-author of *Assessment in Student Affairs* (2016), *Using Evidence of Student Learning to Improve Higher Education* (2015), *Student Success in College* (2005/2010), and *One Size Does Not Fit All: Traditional and Innovative Models of Student Affairs Practice* (2008/2014). She is co-editor of *New Directions in Higher Education* and serves on the boards of the Washington Internship Institute, and the Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education. She received the Robert J. Menges Honored Presentation by the Professional Organizational Development (POD) Network in 2005 and 2011. Kinzie earned her PhD from Indiana University in higher education with a minor in women's studies. Prior to this, she served on the faculty of Indiana University and coordinated the master's program in higher education and student affairs. She also worked in academic and student affairs at Miami University and Case Western Reserve University.
- **Dr. Tony Weaver** is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Sport Management at Elon University. Tony's expertise is in college athletic administration and organizational change in sport organizations. His research often examines the rationale behind why higher education administrators emphasize college athletics and the impact of those decisions. Dr. Weaver has been instrumental in the development of several capstone experiences at Elon, including the integration of these experiences into the sport management curriculum. Tony has also been a leader in high-impact practices for the student-athlete, including mentoring undergraduate research projects, coordinating and supervising internships, and developing leadership opportunities. Currently, he leads an interdisciplinary capstone course at Elon and is the Faculty Mentor for the 2019 Leadership Fellows.

## How to Apply

The review committee will select participants from a range of institution types (e.g., research-intensive universities, liberal arts colleges, teaching institutions, etc.) and geographic locations to ensure variety in the seminar's multi-institutional studies.

To apply, submit a completed application and abbreviated curriculum vita (CV, 4 pages maximum) by **November 13, 2017**. The application, available online at <http://www.centerforengagedlearning.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/CELseminar-CE-application-form.docx>, asks for the following information:

- Which research area above (on pages 2 and 3) are you *most* interested in examining, and why? You may highlight a sub-question or topic if appropriate.
- How does this topic fit with your existing scholarly work? Does it have a larger institutional context at your campus?
- What research methods do you anticipate employing to study this theme? Do you have experience using these methods?
- Are there unique demographic/background variables relevant to your research questions?
- What is the institutional context for your work?
- What kinds of expertise do you bring to the study of capstone experiences?

More than one person per institution may apply. Although CEL Seminar projects will be multi-institutional, applicants do not need to form these teams before they apply; CEL Seminar leaders will create initial teams based on applicants' information.

A review committee, including the seminar leaders, will review applications, make selections, and notify all applicants by December 18, 2017. Questions about the application and selection process should be directed to [centerforengagedlearning@elon.edu](mailto:centerforengagedlearning@elon.edu).

To learn more about the 2018-2020 CEL Seminar on Capstone Experience, visit: <http://www.centerforengagedlearning.org/cel-seminars/ce/>.

To learn more about the Center for Engaged Learning, visit: <http://www.centerforengagedlearning.org/>.

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