

# REPORT ON STUDENT INTERVIEWS MASON KOREA SPRING 2014

## Developing the Whole Person: Student Development In and Beyond the Classroom

### Mason Korea

This is a focused report for the inaugural semester of Mason Korea, located at the Incheon Global Campus in Songdo, South Korea. The branch campus opened in March 2014, with an initial enrollment of 39 students, including 6 students initiating from Mason's campus in Fairfax, Virginia. The assessment provides information about students' satisfaction with their experience at Mason Korea during the spring 2014 semester.

### Data Collection and Assessment Process

Semi-structured one-on-one interviews were conducted with seven students during the month of August 2014. These students were all between the ages of 19 and 24, matriculating at either the Fairfax or Incheon campuses. They represent a diversity of cultural backgrounds. Interviews were conducted by Stephanie Hazel from the Office of Institutional Assessment in person at the Fairfax campus, and via Skype, Facetime, or phone. Interviews took 40-60 minutes, and were audio recorded. Audio recordings were transcribed, and those transcriptions were used as the source of data for this report. Students were assured that their participation would be kept confidential, and that their responses would be reported in aggregate form without identifying information. The interview protocol is included in the Appendix.

### Limitations

The data for this report represent a snapshot of student experiences at the end of their first semester at Mason Korea. Although we approached all 39 students, only nine agreed to be interviewed, and seven followed through to complete the interviews. All of the students who agreed to be interviewed are returning students, either at the Incheon or Fairfax campuses. Students who have withdrawn from the institution did not respond to several requests to talk with us. While this is clearly a limitation in student perspective, it should be noted that the students who participated were able to provide thoughtful, knowledgeable, and reflective responses to questions about both their own and perceptions of others' experiences. Nevertheless, care should be taken in the use and interpretation of results as applicable to all students.

### Conceptual Framework

During the course of analyzing the data, it became clear that the most appropriate framework for understanding students' experience at Mason Korea this semester is Chickering and Reisser's Seven Vectors of Identity Development (1993). The Seven Vectors was developed by Art Chickering (1969) in the 1960s as a student development theory for traditional-age college students. The vectors resonate strongly today, and have been updated for the current student context. The vectors represent developmental tasks that are important for healthy student development. Briefly, the vectors are as follows:

1. Developing competence (intellectual, physical, and interpersonal)
2. Managing emotions
3. Moving through autonomy toward interdependence
4. Developing mature interpersonal relationships
5. Establishing identity
6. Developing purpose
7. Developing integrity

In 2009, Chickering and Braskamp proposed an "enhancement" of the theory to support the vital need to educate students for a global society. They focused on four of the vectors as essential to this development: moving through

autonomy toward interdependence; establishing identity; developing purpose; and managing emotions. These developmental tasks are interpreted through the lens of responsibility to a larger global community and the need for a more sophisticated ability to “understand, empathize, and communicate” with people from a greater variety of cultural contexts. Students should be guided to understand who they are in relation to others, and to do so with a capacity for complex cultural perspectives. These developmental tasks thus become more challenging, and more rewarding for students as they prepare for life after college. For the institution, this means that providing an experience on a global campus is only one step toward supporting student development as global citizens; we must also provide intentional educational programming and responses both in the classroom and beyond (2009). These ideas are further supported by Kuh’s (2008) work on high impact educational practices—intentional educational practices and programs that increase student retention and involvement (see Appendix for more information).

It is important to understand how the university’s policies, structures, and activities can influence student development in terms of the *whole person*, that is, the student in- and outside of the classroom. Environmental influences are particularly useful when trying to understand a complex phenomenon such as student experience of the inaugural semester at a new international branch campus. Chickering and Reisser (1993) identified the following environmental influences that will be used as constructs to analyze data for this report: institutional objectives such as programs and policies; institutional size; student-faculty relationships; curriculum; friendships and student communities; and student development programs and services.

## Results

Results are presented through the constructs of the environmental influences discussed in the previous section. The environments that we create for students can shape student development in powerful ways. Analyzing the Mason Korea student interviews through these constructs can provide useful data to inform how to proceed in the further growth of the programming for the Incheon campus.

### *Institutional Objectives*

Institutional objectives include clarity and consistency in policies, programs, and services. This is a primary area that students identified as problematic. This was the first semester that Mason operated at the new Incheon campus, and several aspects of the institutional infrastructure were underdeveloped. Students did not know who to go to for questions about campus services, such as academic advising and course selection, financial aid, immigration documents, or conflicts with Housing staff. They sometimes received differing and confusing information from Incheon campus staff, contacts from the Office of Global Strategy, and staff at the Fairfax campus. One student observed, “...our school just needs to let students know what they need...sometimes I feel like we’re asking for help, but we don’t know where...When we have problems, and we ask questions to Korea, they don’t know.” Students who had come from the Fairfax campus contacted their own advisors for questions, but did not know how to advise other students.

Students’ most frequent complaint involved the Housing office. The Housing office is run by the Songdo global university foundation, and is staffed (as reported by students) by English-speaking Koreans. Several students told the story of being expected to sign housing contracts that were written only in Korean. English-speaking students found this to be outrageous, and refused to sign anything that was not written in English. Upon the students’ insistence, and several weeks later, the contracts were translated to the students’ satisfaction. All students who were interviewed and who lived in campus housing continued to have conflicts with housing staff regarding housing rules about curfew, key card access, building issues and repairs, and the policy about separation of the sexes (although this complaint came only from the American students).

It should be noted that while students had a lot of questions in this area, it did not seem to stop them from moving forward. They used one another as resources, as well as the Mason website. When Mason Korea students did not have clear advising or tutoring, they looked to the peer advisors or the office staff for help. Students sought solutions to their problems, even asking for advice in the assessment interviews!

### *Institutional Size*

Institutional size represents the degree to which a student can participate in various student communities, and their overall satisfaction with the college experience. For Mason Korea in the first semester, having only 39 students on campus was a considerable issue. Not only were there not enough numbers to support diverse engagement opportunities such as clubs and organizations, there was a general discomfort with not having more bodies on campus. With a couple exceptions, Mason students did not generally interact with SUNY students, the only other student group at the Incheon campus this semester. Students reported something of a vague rivalry between the campuses—perhaps enhanced by the overwhelming SUNY presence in terms of signage and banners (Mason students were envious of the display). A few students expressed interest in Yonsei University, a private Korean University with a campus in sight of Songdo. They were curious about student culture and activities that seemed fun and well attended. There were even some comparisons with Yonsei’s food (Incheon’s is far better, according to students interviewed).

An issue that came up for several students is the perception that Mason Korea is not “real college,” at least not yet. Students accept that there will eventually be a whole building that belongs to Mason Korea, and more robust campus life. But as of the end of spring 2014, there were few classrooms, few students, no library, and limited course offerings. One student observed that having the same faculty for courses in the same five classrooms “feels like high school.” This may have contributed to the observation that initial enthusiasm about Mason waned after the first six or so weeks of the semester. Returning Korean students anticipate coming to the Fairfax campus in their fourth semester, and American students plan to reconnect with those students once they arrive. The excitement over coming to Fairfax is driven by knowing that they will have full access to campus facilities and a robust student life (“all those 32,000 students!”).

There is a particular Korean context that is relevant in regard to student numbers. Students explained in the interviews that age hierarchies are important social organizers. In the university, juniors and seniors are responsible for teaching and mentoring younger students, for socializing them into the expectations for university life. Although Mason Korea enrolled some students who were a few years older (having taken a few “gap years” before enrolling in college), there was not an existing hierarchy that could meet students’ needs for this kind of socialization. A student who was a bit older than the others astutely observed, “Because there were no students other than our freshmen...there was no one who could show them how important their grades are.” The American students tried to fill this role by providing informal academic advising, editing writing assignments, and planning social outings. Two peer advisors, American sophomores, were responsible for planning campus activities and helping to introduce and orient new students to Mason. While these peer advisors embraced this role, there was still perhaps a missing component of the social structure that did not allow for the kind of socialization that Korean students expected. This was especially pronounced in the expectation of the important role that older students play in teaching younger students about appropriate behavior in peer social settings.

### *Student-Faculty Relationships*

Positive relationships between students and faculty support intellectual and interpersonal competence. Student interaction with faculty in different roles and situations helps them to see faculty as “real people” who care about their education and well-being. This area was clearly Mason’s strongest, as described by students. Faculty were generally perceived as caring, helpful, and attentive to student learning. Students appreciated that their professors could greet them all by name, and would ask the students how they were doing. Faculty provided multiple opportunities to interact with students and support them academically. There was clearly a reverence for faculty and their expertise; in the interviews, students called each of their professors “Doctor” or “Professor.” A couple of students spoke highly of the opportunities to learn one-on-one from their professors. And when many students stopped attending class in mid-semester, it was the positive relationships with faculty that coaxed some of them back to class.

Of course, what is missing from this discussion is the voices of students who stopped attending class or meeting with their professors one-on-one. This was a particular problem that Mason Korea faced this semester; a significant number of students stopped coming to class, even to take exams. While faculty reached out to all of their students, the reasons why these students did not respond seem to be rooted in issues other than their faculty, according to students who were interviewed. This report offers more pieces to that puzzle.

### *Curriculum and Teaching*

Curriculum needs to be relevant, sensitive to difference, and help students make sense of what they are learning. Teaching needs to include active learning, timely feedback, high expectations, and respect for individuals. For the first semester, the course offerings were generally acceptable to students. New students took courses to satisfy the Mason Core, and there was a curricular emphasis on academic reading and writing in several courses. Korean students and a couple of the American students said that they had difficulty with the amount of writing that they were expected to do, but seemed to understand the importance and accept the workload. Some struggled with Calculus (“Math was hard because math is hard.”), while others reported being stronger in mathematics than in other academic areas. For both of these courses, students seemed to feel adequately supported in their learning. Economics was an especially challenging course for all of the interview participants who took the course, citing a mismatch between course content (which was more rote, according to these students) and what they were expected to do on tests (higher level application). The American students especially enjoyed their Korean language and culture courses, which they said gave them a broader and more complex understanding of the country’s politics and culture.

Several students expressed concern about the course and academic major offerings at Mason Korea. They definitely want more variety for both, and several students had questions (either for themselves or for their friends) about the pending Global Affairs major, whether there would be more majors added, whether they could change majors when they come to the Fairfax campus in the fourth semester, and how easy it would be to transfer to another Incheon Global Campus institution if they wanted a major that Mason does not offer. A few said that after taking the sociology and/or anthropology courses, they became interested in switching to a social science major—psychology, sociology, and global affairs were specifically mentioned. American students who are not returning to Songdo in the fall said that they might have stayed had their been enough courses that met their major requirements (none were Economics or Business majors).

### *Friendships and Student Communities*

Student development is influenced in many ways by meaningful relationships with peers. Positive relationships can contribute to the development of interpersonal competence, healthy emotions, identity, purpose, and integrity. In the context of developing global citizens, intentional opportunities for interaction with diverse others provides the most benefit. At Mason Korea, students spent quite a lot of their time and effort in this area, and the interviews provided a lot of rich information, though certainly not a full picture of the relationships that developed amongst students.

By all accounts, students got along well with each other at Mason Korea, and most made friends. There were even a few romantic as well as “best friends” couplings that happened during their time together. Those who attended class regularly said that they enjoyed their in-class interactions with their classmates. A small group of students composed primarily of Americans spent their weekends together exploring the nearby cities of Songdo or Seoul. Students talked less of studying together, but at least one American student helped some Korean students by reviewing and editing their papers. The residence and dining halls offered sites for interaction for everyone except for the commuter students, who said that they came only for class and returned home at the end of the school day. Mostly, Mason students seemed to keep to themselves, but a few ventured to make friends with SUNY students.

There was a serious attempt by Mason Korea staff and faculty to create student communities. Peer advisors planned regular fun and varied campus activities. A few students volunteered with a local community center to pick up trash during a community cleanup day, and two American students met a couple times a week with a Korean woman to help her improve her English. But very few students attended these events, which disappointed those who spent time planning them. A Korean student wished for more clubs and organizations, but acknowledged that there were not enough students to participate.

Although they all got along well on campus, the Korean and American students tended to separate themselves for social activities. This was a matter of some concern for the American students, a couple of whom felt particularly isolated by the Korean students’ insistence on speaking only Korean outside of the classroom. While the Americans were learning and improving their Korean language skills, several thought that everyone should speak English because they are being educated at an American university. When asked about the social separation between the

groups, the Korean students who were interviewed did not find this to be a problem. One Korean student said, “It’s about who feels more comfortable... We get along well. We hang out when we hang out. And like, during school or whatever, everything will go nice and well, but after school two groups is two groups.” It seems that American students were more likely to socialize with international students from the SUNY campus than with Mason Korea students. One American student suggested bluntly that it is normal for college students to become “sick of each other” after long school days and want to spend time with other people.

A complex issue for the institution surrounds the phenomenon of Membership Training, or “MT.” The MT is an informal initiation event that most Korean students expect in their first university semester, almost as a rite of passage. The MT serves as a site of bonding and friendship, and typically involves cooking and eating together, silly games and activities, and a lot of alcohol. The food and games part of Mason’s first MT was run by staff, and in the interviews, students wanted it to be very clear that the university did not purchase the alcohol that became the focus of the second (non-staffed) part of the event. Most of the students who participated (all but 3 of the total enrollment, according to one interview participant) seemed to have a good time, according to those interviewed. One student said, “That was amazing...I got to know a lot more people during that night. Before, we know who they are, we just don’t talk to them. We got a lot closer during the MT...I think it was really fun...it was great.” But fun was not had by all. Two of the American students who do not participate in drinking culture in the US also did not want to participate in Korea. They spent the weekend looking after students who were drinking, cleaning up messes, and enforcing the ground rules that the group had set before the event (such as no mixing of the sexes in the sleeping quarters). One of these students said, “I lived in a perpetual state of fear that entire weekend...not overwhelming fear. But it was kind of like, if something happens, how will I handle this.”

Aside from the MT, alcohol use became a problem for some—but certainly not for all—of the Mason Korea students. All of the students interviewed said that there was heavy drinking, believing this to be part of Korean social life in general, and for Korean youth in particular (“always expect lots of drinking when you are with Koreans”). This reportedly became such a problem for some students that they slept through classes and exams, stopped doing their schoolwork, and expressed apathy for their education. A few students were reportedly drinking every night of the week. There is no indication about how many students for whom this was a problem, so it is important to use caution about this finding. But the students who were interviewed perceived drinking culture as prevalent and personally destructive. When asked about why this was and how it compared to the Fairfax campus, American students believed that there were two cultural influences at play: one was that heavy alcohol use is part of Korean culture; and the second was that the campus lacked a sufficient social structure so that older students were not available to teach and mentor the younger students in how to manage their alcohol consumption.

#### *Student Development Programs and Services*

A collaborative environment for programs and services that focus on student development beyond the classroom is crucial to support students. American universities are characterized by attention to student development in all of the vectors described by Chickering and Reisser. Students typically have access to academic support services, leadership opportunities, athletics, student life, mental health services, career services, internships and experiential learning, research opportunities, and many other opportunities that support them as whole persons. For this first semester, Mason Korea students did not have access to many of these services on their own campus, and access to services in Fairfax are limited by the 12-hour time difference, challenges with technology, and the simple fact that physical presence is essential for many interactions. One example of this that a few students discussed was the lack of supervision in the residence halls, which they believed contributed to some of the unhealthy choices that some students made. Several Korean students opined that they had “too much freedom,” and should be supported in a more careful transition between the strictly controlled life of their adolescent years and the responsibilities of adulthood. Putting the supervision issue aside, without a residence hall staff, Mason Korea students did not have access to the rich and varied student development programming that happens at the Fairfax campus. These programs and the individual attention that students receive outside the classroom are not only important to student personal growth, but student affairs professionals act as early alert systems for students who are not attending to their studies or other aspects of their health and well-being. While interview participants said that some parents visited students on campus, many families lived far away and could not drop by to check on their children.

In terms of other kinds of programming, students generally enjoyed the visits to local corporations, and would like to see more of these kinds of outings. Internships and other experiential learning are not yet on their minds, but likely will be as time goes by. American students considered Mason Korea to be a study abroad experience, but astutely noted that the institution did not provide what they considered to be the usual elements of a study abroad experience. They would like to see more intentional programming to support their educational and experiential needs.

## **Discussion**

There has been concern by faculty and administrators about the poor academic performance of many promising students during the first semester at Mason Korea. Of course, there were many students who worked hard and earned good grades, but alarm bells are rung for students who do not live up to expectations. Student interviews revealed many possible pieces to this puzzling phenomenon. What happened, and what can the institution do to change course? The conceptual framework used in this report focuses on student developmental tasks and the effect of the institutional environment on that development. In this case, the environment that students experienced this semester is itself developing at a rapid rate. So, next semester's students will have a much different experience than the first, and ever so until the pace of growth slows. We can understand student experience at the Mason Korea campus this first semester as student development occurring within the contexts of both a new campus and the particularities of the Korean cultural environment. These contexts created both opportunity and challenge for students as they tried to navigate their education and social life at Mason.

Issues with starting a new campus have been discussed in this report from the student perspective, and naturally focus on student concerns about advising, housing, and relationships with peers. Their concerns and anxieties are consistent with the important developmental tasks of developing autonomy, establishing identity, and developing purpose. The struggle with developing and asserting autonomy is evident in the American students' complaints regarding the midnight curfew, and the subgroup of Korean students who refused to go to class when it was not required. So few students on campus likely had an effect on students' opportunities to explore identity—and perhaps gave greater weight to the alcohol culture. Certainly, experimentation with alcohol is common on American campuses, especially in the early years. The important issue for the institution is to understand the behavior, and respond appropriately to student needs. As Mason Korea grows, the increased opportunities for engagement and more student social groups will provide students with the chance to explore who they are and determine their futures.

It is crucial to understand the cultural environment of Koreans, Asian youth, and their expectations for university life. It is not within the purview of this report or the expertise of this author to delineate studied cultural information, but there are some interesting observations that can be made based on the interviews. The first is that the Asian students who participated in the interviews seem to be most comfortable in high context environments. There are a few instances of this, but most striking was identification of the library as the expected environment for study. Because there was no library for Mason students in the spring, Korean students reported being a bit out of sorts when it came to studying. One student said that in her past experiences, the number of serious students in her school library created a positive peer pressure that motivated her to hit the books. At Mason Korea, students tried to turn the lounge into a study hall, but found it impossible to study with the racket of video games and social chatter. Fortunately, the library has now been built, and is open for students beginning in the fall semester.

The Korean students also find comfort in numbers, in that they feel a sense of isolation with such a small student population. They also expressed disappointment that Songdo is such a new and undeveloped city that there is not enough cultural or nightlife for students, and this increases their sense of isolation. There was no specific discussion of homesickness, but it offers a possible additional explanation for some of these feelings of loneliness and empty space that are certainly not specific to Asian students. Students also said that the energy created by larger numbers in the classroom would affect them in positive ways, thus improving interest and motivation to engage in class.

And finally, when asked for their opinions about why some students stopped attending to their studies, four of the Asian (both Korean and Asian-American) students interviewed suggested that students had “too much freedom” on the Incheon campus. One student said, “...they had so much pressure in the high school, and when they come to the

university, they're in the dormitories, they don't have their parents around them. So, like, I don't know, maybe they have too much freedom." The fact that this phrase ("too much freedom") was said exactly in this way by all four students who gave this answer suggests that there may be a particular conception about this in Korea. These students described the typical adolescence as being tightly controlled and highly monitored, especially when it comes to their educations. While students expect to be less constricted in college, the "too much freedom" of an American university may be disconcerting. When asked what should be done in this regard, students suggested that class attendance be mandatory, and that there be more supervision in the residence halls. They would like to see students be supported in learning how to manage the new freedoms before they are fully set free.

## **Conclusion**

This was the first semester of operation at the Incheon campus, and as such, it is important to learn from students about their experiences, and to try to understand those experiences in context. As the institution strives to support student development in this new context, it is crucial that the institution recognize and address needs of the diverse students who are there. As evidenced from the interviews, students had multiple interests and concerns, many of which existed beyond the classroom. With the faculty and staff at Songdo, they were breaking new ground while negotiating normal developmental tasks. The institution provided strong support in some ways, like good faculty and a safe educational environment. But in other ways, the institution did not provide students with enough support this first semester: students needed study space, clear and consistent policies and procedures, academic advising, and some kind of supervision outside of class. Furthermore, the silence of the non-returning students leaves gaps in our understanding of the experiences of this particular group.

The good news is that at the beginning of fall 2014 semester, many of the issues that students identified about the campus have been addressed, and returning students will notice many changes. Mason Korea staff and faculty, as well as those who support the campus from the US, need to be mindful that student development is influenced by many factors. An American campus in Korea that mainly serves Korean students presents certain challenges, but also offers possibilities. We must understand what it all means for them, and how we should best support them in this particular environment.

## REFERENCES

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## APPENDIX

### Mason Korea Student Interviews, Summer 2014

#### Reminders:

- Confidentiality
- Frankness

#### Questions:

1. What were the reasons you decided to go to Songdo?
2. What were your expectations for this semester? How did the semester go?
3. How did you get along in Korea? How did you manage the language and culture?
4. What were some of your favorite things about your experience?
5. Tell me about your classes.
6. Tell me about student life.
7. What kind of experience do you think other students had?
8. Talk about Membership Training.
9. What did you learn that you might not have learned if you stayed in Fairfax?
10. What didn't go so well?
11. What could Mason do better?
12. What do you think is important for us to know that we can only learn from students?
13. How does this experience fit with your college plans?
14. Will you return in fall? Why or why not? Would you recommend Mason Korea to other students?
15. Anything else you would like to add?

# High-Impact Educational Practices



## First-Year Seminars and Experiences

Many schools now build into the curriculum first-year seminars or other programs that bring small groups of students together with faculty or staff on a regular basis. The highest-quality first-year experiences place a strong emphasis on critical inquiry, frequent writing, information literacy, collaborative learning, and other skills that develop students' intellectual and practical competencies. First-year seminars can also involve students with cutting-edge questions in scholarship and with faculty members' own research.

## Common Intellectual Experiences

The older idea of a “core” curriculum has evolved into a variety of modern forms, such as a set of required common courses or a vertically organized general education program that includes advanced integrative studies and/or required participation in a learning community (see below). These programs often combine broad themes—e.g., technology and society, global interdependence—with a variety of curricular and cocurricular options for students.

## Learning Communities

The key goals for learning communities are to encourage integration of learning across courses and to involve students with “big questions” that matter beyond the classroom. Students take two or more linked courses as a group and work closely with one another and with their professors. Many learning communities explore a common topic and/or common readings through the lenses of different disciplines. Some deliberately link “liberal arts” and “professional courses”; others feature service learning.

## Writing-Intensive Courses

These courses emphasize writing at all levels of instruction and across the curriculum, including final-year projects. Students are encouraged to produce and revise various forms of writing for different audiences in different disciplines. The effectiveness of this repeated practice “across the curriculum” has led to parallel efforts in such areas as quantitative reasoning, oral communication, information literacy, and, on some campuses, ethical inquiry.

## Collaborative Assignments and Projects

Collaborative learning combines two key goals: learning to work and solve problems in the company of others, and sharpening one's own understanding by listening seriously to the insights of others, especially those with different backgrounds and life experiences. Approaches range from study groups within a course, to team-based assignments and writing, to cooperative projects and research.

## Undergraduate Research

Many colleges and universities are now providing research experiences for students in all disciplines. Undergraduate research, however, has been most prominently used in science disciplines. With strong support from the National Science Foundation and the research community, scientists are reshaping their courses to connect key concepts and questions with students' early and active involvement in systematic investigation and research. The goal is to involve students with actively contested questions, empirical observation, cutting-edge technologies, and the sense of excitement that comes from working to answer important questions.

## Diversity/Global Learning

Many colleges and universities now emphasize courses and programs that help students explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own. These studies—which may address U.S. diversity, world cultures, or both—often explore “difficult differences” such as racial, ethnic, and gender inequality, or continuing struggles around the globe for human rights, freedom, and power. Frequently, intercultural studies are augmented by experiential learning in the community and/or by study abroad.

## Service Learning, Community-Based Learning

In these programs, field-based “experiential learning” with community partners is an instructional strategy—and often a required part of the course. The idea is to give students direct experience with issues they are studying in the curriculum and with ongoing efforts to analyze and solve problems in the community. A key element in these programs is the opportunity students have to both *apply* what they are learning in real-world settings and *reflect* in a classroom setting on their service experiences. These programs model the idea that giving something back to the community is an important college outcome, and that working with community partners is good preparation for citizenship, work, and life.

## Internships

Internships are another increasingly common form of experiential learning. The idea is to provide students with direct experience in a work setting—usually related to their career interests—and to give them the benefit of supervision and coaching from professionals in the field. If the internship is taken for course credit, students complete a project or paper that is approved by a faculty member.

## Capstone Courses and Projects

Whether they're called “senior capstones” or some other name, these culminating experiences require students nearing the end of their college years to create a project of some sort that integrates and applies what they've learned. The project might be a research paper, a performance, a portfolio of “best work,” or an exhibit of artwork. Capstones are offered both in departmental programs and, increasingly, in general education as well.

