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Linking a Business Capstone Course to Employer Needs in Central Florida

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LINKING A BUSINESS CAPSTONE COURSE TO EMPLOYER NEEDS IN CENTRAL FLORIDA

by

LAURYN A. DE GEORGE

B.S. Rowan University, 1988
M.B.A University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, Wales, 1994

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Major Professor: Carolyn Walker Hopp

ABSTRACT

Capstone courses are well embedded into the curriculum of undergraduate programs in Colleges of Business and are often used to assess program outcomes and curricular goals. Assessment of best practices of Capstone programs and skills within Capstone courses are examined as assurance of learning requirements under AACSB mandates. The conceptual framework of problem-based learning serves as the foundation for national Capstone course models with student-centered pedagogies that enhance learning about a subject through the experience of problem solving by using thinking strategies and domain knowledge. Rubrics assess student mastery of content, professionalism, organization, language structure and presentation skills.

The main purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies, as demonstrated through Capstone projects and presentations at a large metropolitan university in Central Florida, which were required to meet the needs of potential employers. Using focus group research, this study examined and interpreted Capstone student papers and presentations to determine to what extent the skill sets evidenced were sufficient for hiring entry-level positions in community business partners' respective organizations. This study served to contribute to an understanding of the factors that should be embedded in course design, linking assignments to course objectives, and overall curricular goals in order to fulfill assurance of learning requirements as established by AACSB mandates.

KEYWORDS: Capstone, Focus group, College of Business, AACSB, Problem-based learning

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Introduction

Capstone courses are well embedded into the curriculum of undergraduate universities and colleges of business. The term capstone is widely used to describe a course or experience that provides opportunities for a student to apply the knowledge gained throughout his/ her undergraduate degree and involves integrating graduate capabilities and employability skills (van Acker, 2011). Capstone programs serve the purpose of evaluating students' readiness to transition from undergraduate to graduate school or work and providing deeper investigation of the curriculum. Three major functions of capstone courses are identified: 1-capstone courses aim to consolidate, extend and apply previous learning (Bailey, Oliver, & Townsend, 2007); 2-capstone courses provide professional socialization and the development of professional identity to assist students' transition to employment ; and, more broadly, they may play a key role in ensuring graduates are 'agents of social good in an unknown future' and 3- capstone courses are used to confirm that students have mastered what are often called 'soft' or 'employability' skills by the business sector and graduate (or "generic") skills (or 'attributes') by academics (van Acker, 2011). The list of graduate skills is long and fluctuated; terminology is vague and differed between academic and employment contexts (Holmes, 2001).   The importance of assessing these outcomes becomes paramount in line with the Association to Advance Colleges and Schools of Business (AACSB) accreditation. The assurance of learning is ascertained through various examinations and objective assessment criteria, yet direct evidence of the identification

and fulfillment of the competency requirements of community business leaders remains inconclusive.

As this study examined related skills and competencies, it became necessary to provide definitions for these terms. A skill is "the learned ability to carry out a task with pre-determined results often within a given amount of time or energy" ("Skill Development," n.d.). The operational definition of a skill is any action that is a necessary component of a job description and is expected to be completed competently by employees. Skills can be domain-general and domain-specific skills. Domain-general work skills include: time management, teamwork and leadership, and self-motivation whereas domain-specific work skills are appropriate for a defined position such as architectural drawing for a general contractor. Skills are related to competencies. According to the Association for Operations Management (n.d.), a competency is the "capability to apply or use a set of related knowledge, skills, and abilities required to successfully perform critical work functions' or tasks in a defined work setting." Competencies are the measurable or observable knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors (KSABs) critical to successful job performance ("Competencies," n.d.). There are three primary types of competencies: knowledge, skill and ability, and behavioral. Knowledge competencies describe the practical understanding of subjects; skill and ability competencies describe the natural or learning capability to perform a task and behavioral competencies describe patterns of action or conduct. Knowledge, skill and behavioral competencies define the framework and specifications of job tasks.

The main purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies, as demonstrated through Capstone projects and presentations, required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida. To meet this purpose, this research examined if the current College of Business Capstone course fulfilled the requirements of best practices in course design by identifying the anticipated outcomes and skills set of the course, defined employer's skill requirements and determined the congruency between employers' skill requirements and evidenced skill sets.

In order to determine the skills achieved from the Capstone course, course design and implementation were examined. Capstone courses provide students an opportunity to refine their cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills by completing analytical, written and research assignments. The importance of these skills was evident in Baker's (1997) work for the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education in that students should be able to engage in critical theoretical professional debates and dialogue. Baker also suggested that an essential element is the opportunity to critically reflect on their disciplines as well as their experiences. In a business administration curriculum, Chew, McInnis-Bowers & Cleveland (1996) examined Capstone course design to determine that the purpose of the course was to help students develop their professional demeanor while integrating course concepts from previous courses. Additional purposes include an evaluation of the program, employing interdisciplinary learning opportunities and assessing individual students' capabilities. A regional study of the Capstone program for psychology and sociology courses found although most programs reported aims of increased interpersonal skills and confidence, increased familiarity with the discipline and

increased interest and admission to graduate programs, wide variances were found with the amount of individual student writing and research requirements (Chew et al, 1996).

A universal element of Capstone programs is the strong emphasis on authentic learning experiences, collaboration and integration of knowledge across the curriculum. Desmond & Stengle (1997) researched the Capstone experience for student teachers at Millersville University to find a focus on collaborative learning in order to develop self-confidence and increase their ability in problem solving. Fencl & Scheel (2005) indicated that collaborative learning environments and inquiry-based activities show a positive correlation with increased self-efficacy. Inherent to the creation of authentic learning experiences, collaborative learning opportunities and the integration of knowledge across the curriculum was the competency of applied problem solving and problem based learning.

Problem-Based Learning

The conceptual foundation of the Capstone course is built on the conceptual framework of problem based learning. "Problem-based learning is a student centered pedagogy that consists of carefully designed problems to challenge students by using problem solving techniques, self-directed learning strategies, team participation skills, and disciplinary knowledge" (University of Michigan, 2014). Its focus is on learning, not teaching. Problem-based learning is unique in that learning takes place within the contexts of authentic tasks, issues, and problems--that are aligned with real-world concerns; students and instructor become co-learners, co-planners, co-producers, and co-evaluators as they design, implement, and continually refine their curricula; problem-based learning is grounded in solid academic research on learning and on the best practices that

promote it; and it fosters collaboration among students, stresses the development of problem solving skills within the context of professional practice, promotes effective reasoning and self-directed learning, and aims at increasing motivation for life-long learning ("Problem-based learning," n.d.). As problem-based learning attempts to move to more authentic forms of learning, it uses real world problems to challenge students to think professionally, similar to what they would encounter in the workplace. As the students were placed in an active role as problem solvers, they use the power of authentic problem solving to become engaged, enhancing their learning and motivation. Most students found problem-based learning to be motivating and useful because it simulated a real world experience (Jones et al, 2013).

Scholarship affirmed the beneficial impact of Capstone courses. The National Survey of Student Engagement noted that high impact experiences (such as Capstone courses) made students more engaged, more likely to stay enrolled and graduate, and more likely to learn more. Dunlap (2005) examined the relationship between problem solving and self-efficacy in a sixteen week computer science Capstone course. Due to the authentic problems of practice, collaboration and reflection designed in the Capstone course, students were observed to increase their levels of self-efficacy, as evidenced by scores from a pre-test and post-test. In addition, the Capstone course was found to help students acquire the knowledge and skills required in the workplace.

A Capstone course is a final course or experience coming at the end of a sequence of courses with the specific objective(s) of integrating a body of knowledge and/or preparing students for future employment. Capstone courses are both a synthesis – reflection and integration- and a bridge- a real-world preparatory experience that focused on the post-graduation future (Fairchild & Taylor, 2000). Capstone courses look backwards, to a student's prior learning; and forwards,

to their future jobs and careers and for that reason, were an academic rite of passage. These courses are often the last step for university education to add value to students' learning (Gardner & Van der Veer, 1998).

The US News and World Report is a recognized leader in college and graduate school rankings. The 2009 U.S. News and World Report Edition of America's Best Colleges highlighted seven programs that were commonly linked to student success. Among their results were student-centered pedagogies, such as service learning, and the Capstone class was identified as a "program to look for" ("College Rankings and Lists," 2009). Common pedagogical approaches that support student-centered learning include discovery learning, learning by doing, learning through discussion and blended learning (Mascolo, 2009, p. 4). Discovery learning was highly self-directed, based on the theoretical construct of constructivism in that learners scaffold their own knowledge from multiple sources and perspectives. With discovery learning, the instructor influenced the process minimally by playing a coaching role only and assessment occurred via Web-based tests and communication with other students. Learning by doing provided a practical 'hands-on experience' as students practiced their skills and tested their knowledge. This was accomplished through computer simulation exercises in an online environment or in a traditional setting. Learning through discussion and debate involved student participation; its effectiveness was based on contextual factors such as group size and the role of the instructor. This form of learning was accomplished in a traditional setting with an instructor or using Web technology in educational settings. Blended learning featured the benefits of several teaching approaches based on learning types supplemented with Web-enabled technology. Capstone courses employed a variety of pedagogical approaches and included

traditional lectures based on textbook chapter assignments, written and oral discussions of business cases and computer simulations.

Bloomberg BusinessWeek National Model

Bloomberg BusinessWeek is a weekly business magazine providing information and interpretation on the global business and financial world by delivering data, news and analytics to over 315,000 subscribers in 174 countries throughout the world. *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* produced a yearly listing of the top Colleges and Schools of Business in its business schools section. This listing of top Colleges and Schools of Business is well respected and scholars deferred to its results. The business schools that continuously topped the list as the best business schools are: University of Notre Dame, University of Virginia, Emory University, University of Pennsylvania and Cornell University. These noted universities' syllabi detail the pedagogical approaches employed and serve as example of the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* national model for Capstone programs. A review of these top business schools reveals that the majority of their undergraduate programs do require students to successfully complete a Capstone course prior to graduation.

A primary example of the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* national model for Capstone programs is the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania. Computer simulations are utilized as a key pedagogical approach at the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania. Wharton's Capstone course, designated as WH 398, requires students to use their business knowledge—finance, management, marketing, leadership, and social responsibility—while formulating and executing business strategy integrating feedback from the consequences

of those decisions, and interacting with other teams to create shareholder and social value ("Capstone Program at the Wharton School," 2014). A review of the WH 398 Wharton Capstone syllabus in Appendix A defines its course as "an experiential, simulation based course that allows students to use their business knowledge to solve real-time business decisions. Participants formulate and execute business strategy within a complex business ecosystem comprised of eight firms" ("Capstone Program at the Wharton School," 2014). Further, by the end of the course students enrolled in the Wharton Capstone course have: "applied business knowledge in a densely intricate and complex environment; navigated the interwoven challenges of strategy development, business execution and team dynamics; and enhanced communication and teamwork skills through team-based decision making" (A. Legatt, personal communication, 2014). Through the simulation, the course incorporates a variety of fundamental business concepts including: strategy developing and execution, marketing strategy and tactics, creation of sustainable shareholder value, crisis management, merger and acquisition analysis, global coordination and perspectives, ethics and social responsibility and negotiation. The conceptual framework of problem-based learning is evidenced through the course's implementation of strategy development through computer simulation. Dr. Aviva Legatt administers the course at the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania.

A secondary example of the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* national model for Capstone programs is the Wise School of Business at the University of Virginia. At the University of Virginia's Wise School of Business, the Capstone course, designated as BUS 4990 Business Simulation, is a three credit course required for all business majors. In order to fulfil course and program outcomes, student teams compete against other teams worldwide using business simulation

software ("Departmental Capstone Requirement," 2014). "The course requires students to demonstrate an understanding of the basic concepts and the integration of competencies determined by the department to be crucial for all its graduates" (F. Frey, personal communication, 2014). Problem-based learning plays a key role in the implementation of skill development and competencies. These competencies involve students in developing business strategy, executing tactics, analyzing competitors, and responding to computer-generated problems, opportunities, and changes in the operating environment. Supplementary competencies are identified as: oral presentation skills, critical thinking skills using theories and approaches typical of the student's major discipline; problem solving and ethical decision making skills; team dynamics and micro computing skills. Primary and supplemental competencies are demonstrated through a written report and presentation based on the simulation experience by focusing on fundamental strategy and decision making as well as performance measures.

Competencies are established through an in-depth analysis of the nature and size of the institution, geographical location, skill needs of students and requirements of local employers. The Wise School of Business at the University of Virginia is a liberal arts focused, relatively geographically-concentrated institution with a student body consisting of three distinct populations: first generation semiskilled manufacturing workers, international students, and in-state residents. Exit surveys indicate that graduates enter the local workforce (F. Frey, personal communication, 2014). To meet employer requirements, course adaptations have focused on small business and entrepreneurial development as well as general business majors.

Assessment of a student's proficiency in these areas is determined by simulation round presentations, capstone simulation report, capstone simulation performance, peer evaluation,

attendance and participation as well as a comprehensive examination. The comprehensive capstone examination is worth 20% of a student's overall grade and includes material from all courses in the departmental core curriculum as well as courses from the major core curriculum. See Appendix B for course syllabus. Program outcomes for the Wise School of Business at the University of Virginia are to: know foundational and intermediate principles of their major discipline; be well prepared for entry level jobs in careers or jobs related to their major field; and be able to use knowledge of their major discipline to analyze contemporary issues in their major discipline and contribute to the success of the businesses and organizations of which they are a part (F. Frey, personal communication, 2014). There exists a clear link between the course competencies, assessment strategy and program outcomes. Dr. Francis Frey administers the course at the University of Virginia's College at Wise.

A tertiary example of the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* national model for capstone programs is the Goizueta School of Business at Emory University. See Appendix C for course syllabus. This institution also requires a Strategic Management or capstone-type course termed BUS 331 Strategic Management. At Emory University, BUS 331 Strategic Management is taught in a traditional format and focuses on students' ability to correctly diagnosis a situation despite incomplete and ambiguous information about the problems and opportunities that it faces ("Course Descriptions," 2014). Using problem-based learning techniques, students develop 'diagnostic reasoning' skills using exercises/simulations, case analysis/discussion and exams. As there are multiple correct answers, students use meta-learning to decide which conceptual tools and frameworks to apply for assessing the profit implications of both a company's external environment and its internal resources and capabilities. There is a forced grade distribution in the

course with no more than 40% receiving an A- and no less than 20% receiving a C- or lower ("Course Descriptions," 2014). Despite the rigor of the course, the majority of the Goizueta School of Business at Emory University graduates earn top positions in financial industries on Wall Street, management consulting firms and accounting firms. This dispersion appears to be appropriate as the student population originates from two regions: Georgia/Atlanta and New York and its environs (R. Lacey, personal communication, 2014).

In addition to the BUS 331 Strategic Management course, the Goizueta School of Business at Emory University has recently instituted a required course for all business students designated as a senior seminar or 'capstone experience.' The new 'Capstone experience' course was formed from AACSB re-accreditation mandates and recruiter input. The purpose of the 'Capstone experience' is to develop decision making in an ambiguous environment and team building skills through a cross-disciplinary approach of core and related concepts using a case competition format (R. Lacey, personal communication, 2014). Professionalism is also emphasized as the case competition is assessed by internal and external evaluators. Dr. Rodney Lacey administers the course at the Goizueta School of Business at Emory University.

Further investigation revealed that a minority of the top business schools did not offer a capstone course at the undergraduate level but did offer a capstone course at the graduate level. One such example is Cornell University, where its Charles H. Dyson School of Business does not require a capstone course at the undergraduate level. However, Cornell University recognizes the benefits of capstone courses and offers the course through its Johnson School of Business at the graduate level through its Entrepreneurship and Innovation Institute (EII). The Cornell graduate capstone project is designed to integrate the knowledge and experience gained during

the EII Fellows Program, enhance the availability and applicability of entrepreneurship or innovation education for future students, and have a positive impact on EII, Johnson, and Cornell ("Entrepreneurship and Innovation Institute," 2014). At the University of Notre Dame, many individual courses feature a comprehensive or capstone project although a unified capstone course is not required in its Mendoza College of Business ("Undergraduate Management Courses," 2014). The pedagogical approaches employed at each detailed institution comprise the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* national model for capstone programs.

Rubrics for Assessing Capstone Projects

Rubrics are often used to objectively quantify mastery of required course and curricular skills and competencies. A rubric is a scoring tool that explicitly sets performance expectations for an assignment. A rubric divides assigned work into component parts and provides clear descriptions of the characteristics of the work associated with each component, at varying levels of mastery. Work or performance samples that represent each performance level may be included. Levels of achievement are often given numerical scores with a summary score for the work being assessed being produced by adding the scores for each criterion. The rubric may also include space for the judge to describe the reasons for each judgment or to make suggestions for the author. Evaluations can be completed by the faculty member, teams of faculty members from outside the program, and even by outside representatives from the field. Rubrics can be used for a wide array of assignments: papers, projects, oral presentations, artistic performances, group projects, etc. Rubrics have formative and summative assessment purposes. Using a rubric in formative assessment, also referred to as 'educative assessment' can help students develop

understanding and skill, as well as make judgments about the quality of their own work. In a university setting, rubrics are commonly used forms of summative assessment. Using a rubric in summative assessment is typically used to assign students a course grade as summative assessments are evaluative. Most rubrics assess content, professionalism, organization, supporting materials and language structure and presentation skills. To accommodate the variance in student projects, rubrics need to be generic enough to apply to a wide variety of projects yet specific enough to obtain meaningful results.

In colleges and schools of business, rubrics can be utilized to assess various skill competencies in meeting program outcomes such as team-working skills, oral communication skills, professionalism, written communication and lifelong learning skills. Each of these competencies is broken down into related skills and further examined along dimensions of mastery, ranging from minimal proficiency to effective performance. The ability to work as an effective team member is often a program outcome in a business program. At Ohio State University, the rubric for the business capstone course examines team working skills by delineating team working into the following components: contribution to the team project, taking responsibility, and valuing other team members. Each of these components is identified on a four point scale ranging from ineffective to exemplary proficiency. A point value is assigned depending on the level of skills proficiency.

Table 1: Rubric for team working skills analyzing individual contribution to the team project

	1	2	3	4	Points assigned
Contribution to the team project	Does not collect any relevant information; no useful suggestions to address team's needs	Collects information when prodded; tries to offer some ideas, but not well developed and not clearly expressed to meet team's needs	Collects basic, useful information related to the project; occasionally offers useful ideas to meet the team's needs	Collects and presents to the team a great deal of relevant information; offers well developed and clearly expressed ideas directly related to the group's purpose	

Source: http://web.cse.ohio-state.edu/~neelam/abet/DIRASSMNT/teamworkRubric.html

An additional component to team-working skills is taking responsibility. The rubric for the business capstone course examines the component of taking responsibility by evaluating its proficiency as follows.

Table 2: Rubric for team working skills analyzing taking responsibility

	1	2	3	4	Points assigned
Taking responsibility	Does not perform assigned tasks; often misses meetings and when present, does not have anything constructive to say; relies on others to do the work	Performs assigned tasks but needs man reminders; attends meetings regularly but generally does not say anything constructive; sometimes expects others to do their work	Performs all assigned tasks; attends meetings regularly and usually participates effectively; generally reliable	Performs all tasks very effectively; attends all meetings and participates enthusiastically; very reliable	

Source: http://web.cse.ohio-state.edu/~neelam/abet/DIRASSMNT/rubrics.html

Team-working skills, specifically valuing other team members, are another factor assessed in the business capstone rubric at Ohio State University. The rubric for this component is detailed as follows:

Table 3: Rubric for team-working skills analyzing valuing other team members

	1	2	3	4	Points assigned
Valuing other team members	Often argues with team mates; doesn't let anyone else talk; occasional personal attacks and 'put-downs; wants to have things done their own way; does not listen to alternate approaches	Usually does much of the talking; does not pay much attention when others talk and often assumes their ideas will not work; no personal attacks but put downs can be patronizing	Generally listens to other's points of view; always uses appropriate and respectful language; ties to make a definite effort to understand other's ideas	Always listens to other's and their ideas; helps them develop their ideas while giving them full credit; always helps the team reach a fair decision	

Source: http://web.cse.ohio-state.edu/~neelam/abet/DIRASSMNT/rubrics.html

Points are assigned to each component of this competency and totaled to provide a summative score of the program outcome.

AACSB

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) is the premier accrediting agency for competency in specified business topics.   In 1916, AACSB was established as a membership organization for business schools and the first AACSB Accreditation Standards were adopted with the primary objective of improving collegiate business education. The goal of AACSB (2007) was to make business school education more responsive to the needs of the business community. Less than 5% of business school programs worldwide have earned this accreditation, which requires strict adherence to rigorous standards of excellence. Currently, the AACSB Accreditation Standards are used as the basis to evaluate a

business school's mission, operations, faculty qualification and contributions, programs and other critical areas.   AACSB Business and Accounting Accreditation Standards are continually revised to reflect the changing needs of business and its students. Six hundred and thirty-seven member institutions hold AACSB accreditation in 41 countries and territories. Of the accredited schools, 41 institutions have undergraduate programs only (6% of accredited members); 26 institutions have master's and doctoral programs only (4% of accredited members); and 176 institutions have AACSB's additional accounting accreditation (28% of accredited members). According to AACSB (2007), capstone courses should include collaborative learning to enhance student learning and meet assurance of learning standards. Payne, Flynn and Whitfield (2008) and Aurand and Wakefield (2006) indicate that capstone business courses serve to fulfill AACSB requirements.   The College of Business at the University of Central Florida is an AACSB Accredited institution ("College of Business," 2014).

In April 2002, the Management Education Task Force of the AACSB issued a report questioning the relevance of business school curricula in today's global marketplace. Among the AACSB's recommendations include: teach "basic management skills, such as communications, interpersonal skills, multicultural skills, negotiations, leadership development, and change management to prepare managers for global responsibility" (AACSB, 2002).   In alignment with AACSB standards, capstone courses provide a summative evaluation based on the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain of learning. Although the cognitive domain of learning is relatively uncomplicated to examine, it becomes more difficult to analyze the affective and psychomotor domains. The magnitude of the task magnifies as the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains link to AACSB mandates, graduate capabilities and employability skills.

In order to ascertain pertinent information on key employability skills, student projects in the capstone program in the college of Business were examined. These projects were reviewed by prominent community business leaders to determine the essential skills necessary for employment as well as suggest any underperforming or non-existing skills.

The College of Business

The College of Business under examination is an integral college of a large, metropolitan university. The college was established in 1968 and offers programs in accounting, economics, entrepreneurship, finance, general management, international business, marketing, and tax at the bachelor's, master's, doctoral, and executive levels ("College of Business," 2014). For the academic year 2013-2014, the Business Management and Administration discipline was the number one bachelor's degree conferred at the university.
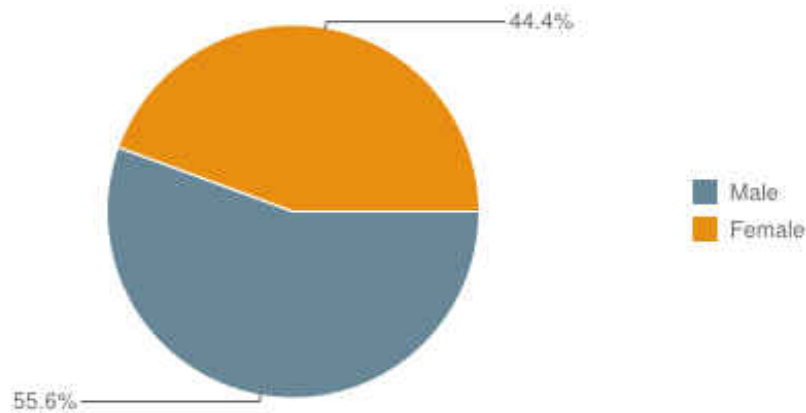
Figure 1: Gender Breakdown at the College of Business, 2013

Source: ucf.edu

The mission statement of the college states, "The College of Business Administration advances the university's mission and goals in providing intellectual leadership through research, teaching, and service. The college is striving to enhance graduate programs, while maintaining the strong undergraduate base. The college delivers research and quality business education programs at the undergraduate, masters, doctoral and executive levels to citizens of the State of Florida and to select clientele nationally and internationally" ("Mission Statement," 2014). The college was named one of the best undergraduate business programs by *Bloomberg BusinessWeek*, and in 2007 was ranked among the best 282 business schools by *The Princeton Review*. In the 2010 *Best 301 Business Schools* compilation, the *Princeton Review* ranked the

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College of Business Administration's MBA program among the nation's top 10 "best administered" programs ("OBJ Readers Say UCF Best Place to Get MBA," 2010). Also in 2010, *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* ranked the College of Business Administration as the number one public business school for return on investment in the nation and the college was named "Readers' Choice" for best business school to receive an MBA by *Orlando Business Journal* readers ("2010 Reader's Choice," 2010).

> The college's faculty of scholar-teachers is "committed to providing the academic community with high-quality contributions in disciplined-based scholarship and instructional development. The college delivers quality teaching in comprehensive academic programs that build on the university's foundation in the arts and sciences. These programs are designed to provide students with competencies, skills, and knowledge that serve the business community's national and international needs. Service to its community is an important extension of the teaching and research mission of the college. The college also engages in mutually enriching partnerships with the business community. The College of Business Administration is committed to and embraces academic and cultural diversity, the free expression of ideas, equality of all people, and the dignity of the individual. Furthermore, the college provides a creative and technologically advanced environment for the delivery of innovative and progressive programs" ("Our College," 2013).

The current dean of the College of Business Administration is Paul Jarley. His vision of the College of Business Administration focuses on quality learning and exploration and is

summarized as 'The College of Business Administration advances the University's mission and goals by providing intellectual leadership through teaching, research, and service" ("Our College," 2013). As of spring 2012, the college's enrollment was 7,660 undergraduate and 879 graduate students. At graduation, 48.4 percent of graduates of the full-time program are employed with an average base salary of $46,700 (US News and World Report, 2012). Over 70% of the College of Business graduates remain in the local metropolitan region after graduation (L. Butcher, personal communication, 2013).

The Capstone Course at the College of Business

At the College of Business, the Capstone course is officially designated as MAN 4720 Strategic Management. See Appendix D for course syllabi. The course description identifies its learning objective as students achieving a strategic view of organizations by integrating and applying material learned in their business courses to modern organizational problems and opportunities. MAN 4720 Strategic Management is four credit course required for all students within the College of Business Administration. The suggested plan of study requires students complete the capstone course in their graduating semester. The MAN 4720 Strategic Management course requires successful completion of the following prerequisites: FIN 3403 Business Finance, GEB 3031 Cornerstone: Professional Skills for Business, MAN 3025 Management of Operations and MAR 3023 Marketing. The course is purposefully scheduled at the conclusion of a student's undergraduate education to provide them the opportunity to integrate the knowledge and skills that they have learned in other classes. Knowledge, skills and abilities to be gained through participation in the capstone course include the formulation of

competitive analysis, realization of an industry's dominant economic features, understanding of Porter's Five Forces, understanding of the drivers of change and their impact in the broad environment and the key success factors for long term competitive success and profitability. Additional knowledge, skills and abilities include analysis of a company's mission and strategy, sustainable competitive advantage, recommendations and potential problems.

Porter's Five Forces was developed by Michael E. Porter and represents a model of the five competitive forces for analyzing an organization's industry structure in strategic processes. The model is based on the insight that a corporate strategy should meet the opportunities and threats in the organizations external environment. The five competitive forces that determine the profitability and attractiveness of an industry are the threat of new entrants, the bargaining power of customers, the bargaining power of suppliers, the threat of substitutes and the competitive rivalry within the industry ("Porter's Five Forces," 2014). The objective of corporate strategy should be to modify these competitive forces in a way that improves the position of the organization.

In the College of Business, MAN 4720 Strategic Management is taught using two distinct pedagogies: lecture and breakout labs. The lecture portion is delivered asynchronously via video stream or lecture captured means whereas, in contrast, the breakout labs require mandatory student attendance and occur once a week. The purpose of the lecture is to provide general frameworks and conceptual theories that constitute the strategic management process while the labs apply the theories to real world situations. Both team and individual assignments are employed for assessment purposes including industry analysis papers and presentations, strategic

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analysis papers and presentations, integration projects, case competitions and exams. Of these assessments, the capstone case competition is the culminating event by which student team's present strategic analysis to instructors, College of Business faculty, members of the Dean's Advisory Council and industry experts. Organizations that have participated in the capstone case competition in the past include Tesla, Target Corporation, Tupperware Brands Inc., CVS Caremark, Progressive Waste Management and Electronic Arts. The course goals are threefold: 1- to familiarize students with the strategic planning side of running a business unit; 2- to integrate the various areas of expertise required to operate a business unit successfully and 3- to provide an opportunity to practice using these tools in multiple settings (Schminke, 2014). The objective of the capstone course is for students to develop a strategic or long-term perspective of organizational effectiveness.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies, as demonstrated through capstone projects and presentations at a large metropolitan university in Central Florida, which were required to meet the needs of potential employers. To meet this purpose, this research examined if the current College of Business capstone course fulfilled the requirements of best practices in course design and determined the congruency between employers' skill requirements and evidenced skill sets by identifying the anticipated outcomes and skills set of the course in addition to employer's skill requirements.

Statement of the Problem

Although capstone courses are well embedded into the curriculum of undergraduate universities and colleges of business, there currently exists no definitive evidence as to the extent which capstone courses provide students the level of skills and competencies, as demonstrated through student projects and presentations, which are required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida.

Research Questions

The key research questions were:

1. To what extent does the design of the College of Business capstone course at a large, metropolitan university fulfill the best practices of capstone course design?

2. To what extent do characteristics of capstone student projects as means of best practices in the field of business provide evidence as identified by community business leaders that students successfully fulfill the requirements of the capstone course?

3. To what extent do characteristics of capstone student presentations as means of best practices in the field of business provide evidence as identified by community business leaders that students successfully fulfill the requirements of the capstone course?

These research questions were examined using focus group research to determine the cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills deemed important for business college graduates and the extent to which these skills were evidenced in student projects and presentations in the

capstone course. Based on a review of student written projects and recorded case presentations, community business leaders determined the extent that student projects and presentations demonstrated the necessary skills for employment at an entry level position in their respective organizations. In addition, the community business leaders provided indications in their professional opinions of lacking or poorly performing skills.

Conceptual Framework

As the main purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida, it was necessary to examine the conceptual frameworks upon which the capstone course in the College of Business at the university was based. Definition and examination of the theoretical foundations of the course included significant concepts, related processes, substantive underpinnings, and recommended means of authentic assessment.

The conceptual framework for the capstone course in the College of Business was founded on problem-based learning. Problem-based learning is a student-centered pedagogy in which students learn about a subject through the experience of problem solving by using thinking strategies and domain knowledge. Finkle and Torp (1995) define problem-based learning as a curriculum development and instructional system that simultaneously develops both problem solving strategies and disciplinary knowledge bases and skills by placing students in the active role of problem-solver confronted with an ill-structured problem that mirrors real-world problems. Problem-based learning aims to help students develop flexible knowledge, effective

problem solving skills, self-directed learning, effective collaboration skills and intrinsic motivation. Through problem-based learning, students can become actively involved in the learning process and the role of instructor is more of a facilitator of the learning process. "In problem-centered learning environments, students have opportunities to practice applying their content knowledge and workplace skills while working on authentic, contextualized problems and projects" (Dunlap, 2005, p 65). Problem-based learning often involves group work by which students identify what they already know, what they need to know, and how and where to access new information that may lead to resolution of the problem. The instructor plays the role of a tutor and helps students by supporting the learning process. The context for learning in problem-based learning is highly context-specific. It serves to teach content by presenting the students with a real-world challenge similar to one they might encounter were they a practitioner of the discipline. Teaching content through skills is one of the primary distinguishing features of problem-based learning.

Problem-based learning emerged originally in the field of medicine in an attempt to bring relevance to practitioners and stimulate the learners. The concept has now expanded to all fields of learning. According to Harold Barrows (1995), the leader in the field of problem-based learning, there are six primary characteristics in the problem-based learning model: 1- student centered learning; 2- learning is done in small groups; 3- facilitators or tutors guide students rather than teach; 4- a problem forms the basis for the organized focus of the group and stimulates learning; 5- the problem is a vehicle for the development of problem solving skills and stimulates the cognitive process; and 6- new knowledge is obtained through self-directed learning. Norman and Schmidt (1992) summarized problem-based learning into three main

principles: activation of prior learning via the problem; encoding specificity so that students will recall what they learned before and apply it to the problem; and elaboration of knowledge via discussion and reflection to consolidate learning experience. Each of these characteristics and principles is paramount to the successful implementation of problem-based learning.

Problem based learning uses an eight step process to evaluate and resolve problems as illustrated.
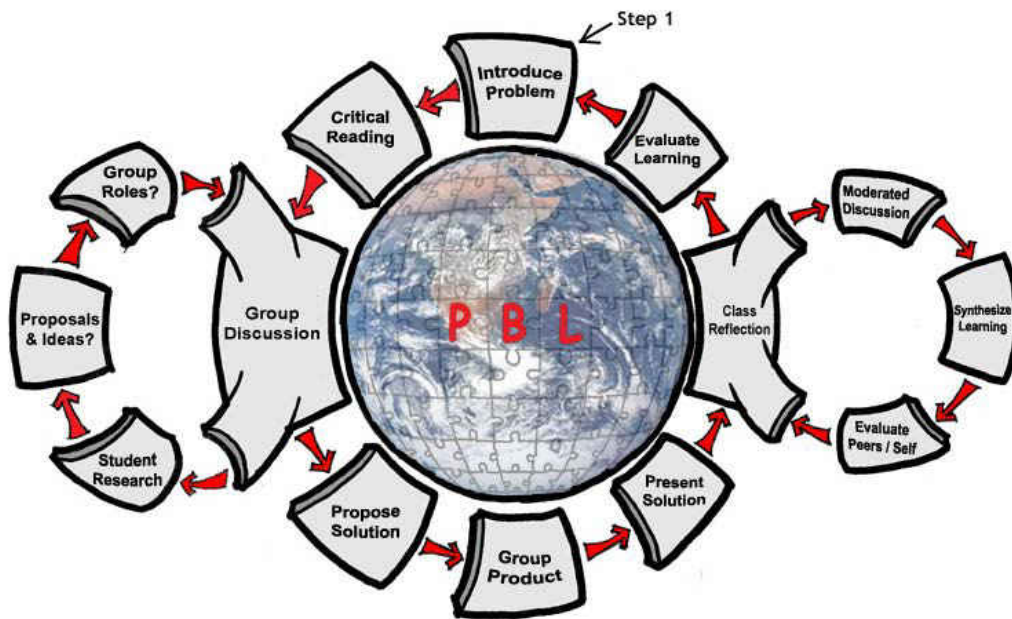
Figure 2: Eight step process of problem based learning

Source: Inglert, 2013

The first step of the problem-based learning process is to introduce the problem. The problem should use an interest activity to engage students so that they become actively involved with the problem. The second step is critical reading; in this step, students have skills of literacy and numeracy so that they can correctly interpret the problem. The third step is group discussion. At this step, students form groups to identify what information they currently have, what information they need and how to get that information. The fourth step is to propose a solution; preliminary hypotheses about problem solutions should be formed at this stage. The fifth step is group product. At this step, the student groups discuss what they have learned through analyzing and integrating information to construct new understandings of the problem and possible solution hypotheses. As new questions arise, the cycle of conducting research and discussing findings may be repeated (Inglert, 2013). The sixth step is to present a solution which includes demonstrating knowledge of the proposed solution after which, the class reflects on the mastery and thoroughness of the proposed solution. The eighth step of the problem-based learning process is to evaluate the learning. In this final step, students have an opportunity to reflect on their own content knowledge and the process of learning. Giving students the opportunity to evaluate and reflect on their own learning is a key element in problem-based learning.

Challenges of Problem-based Learning

The challenges of problem-based learning are primarily based on the levels of curriculum planning, course planning and implementation (Maurer & Neuhold, 2012). Problem-based learning is resource intensive as it requires curricular scheduling and organization as each course requires a skilled educator. Faculty may need additional training to adapt their roles as teacher to

one of facilitator. However, students present the greatest challenge for problem-based learning. The problem-based learning method requires more student involvement and self-discipline than a traditional course does. Due to this, students need to possess maturity and motivation. In addition, students need to have advanced study skills which allow them to participate in group meetings and complete goals. These requirements often cause dissention among group members. "Difficult group dynamics, tolerance of uncertainty and demanding studying skills caused problems that were too hard to overcome to some students" (Kinnunen & Malmi, 2005, p 193). Maurer, Reithler and Brunotte (2011) also found the difficulty of managing group dynamics and lacking skills of students to be one of the most challenging aspects of working with problem-based learning.

Assessment of Problem-based learning

There are several forms of assessment that can be utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of problem-based learning. The two primary forms of assessment are content and process assessment. Content assessment is used as a measuring tool to evaluate students' disciplinary knowledge, such as quantitative tests. Yet, typical quantitative tests, including multiple-choice, true/false, and short answer questions do not fit well with problem-based learning ("Problem-based learning," n.d.). Instead, it is recommended that projects related to problems which can be assessed by a rubric be used, such as student presentations of solutions to the problems. The second form of assessment in problem-based learning is process assessment. Process assessment allows students to review their own strengths and weaknesses. Tai and Yuen (2007) found that

self-reflection, peer evaluation and task completion reports were the most effective authentic assessments of problem-based learning as they allowed students to identify their own progress and deficiencies, making them independent learners. Peer evaluations are commonly employed as a summative reflection on group member contributions. Peer evaluations may provide additional incentives for students to be active participants in the collaborative problem-solving process. Portfolio assessment was also recommended to enable students to not only see the final learning outcome but to track their individual learning progress.

Student mastery of content and process knowledge using problem-based learning can be evaluated using rubrics. Levels of proficiency can range from insufficient to acceptable to excellent and will vary upon the criterion skill being evaluated. Rubrics can be general or detailed for a specific course project and help to establish satisfactory skill levels for students. Rubrics can also be linked to specific curriculum outcomes or institutional outcomes, for example, information literacy, applied technology, critical thinking, and writing proficiency, to connect performance with achievement of student learning goals. The total score on the rubric can be used for course or program exit assessment with the current passing score of 70%.

A number of important advantages have been associated with problem-based learning ranging from promoting a more engaging and meaningful learning experience and encouraging a deeper approach to learning to fostering desirable attitudes (such as autonomy, self-sufficiency, responsibility and self-confidence) and promoting critical thinking and other high level thinking processes (Carvalho, 2012). Other studies have evidenced the effectiveness of project-based learning with increased student engagement and self-efficacy, reduced absenteeism, and improved academic performance noted. The George Lucas Educational Foundation (2001)

identified the benefits of problem-based learning as a significant growth in student self-reliance, improved attitudes toward learning and the opportunity to develop complex skills, such as higher-order thinking, problem-solving, collaborating, and communicating. Further, students have found the authenticity of the experience in real-world workplace situations to offer the most benefit. Using problem-based learning enables students to develop skills and competencies

The goals of problem-based learning are directly in line with management curriculum in universities. "Both encompass the development of problem-solving skills and attitudes, the enhancement of communication, leadership and interpersonal competencies, the reinforcement of adaptability, self-reflection and personal development. The critical thinking potential of problem-based learning can also foster a global perspective and be conducive to ethical judgment and awareness in decision making" (Carvalho, 2012, p 5). The objectives of problem-based learning help to prepare managers for action. Raelin and Coghlan (2006) emphasize the real-world experience and social context of learning that encourages reflection and interpretation. Stinson and Miltner (1996) note that problem-based learning is "a format that places the learner in exactly the type of projects and work situation that he/she will face as a leader of the information age organizations of the 21st century" (p. 33).

Alternate theoretical foundations are project-based learning and constructivism. Project-based learning derives from the work of John Dewey and incorporates the use of a 'project' which can be in the form of designing a tangible product, performance or event; solving a real world problem; or investigating a topic or issue to develop an answer to an open ended question (Larmer, 2014).   Project-based learning is similar to problem-based learning in that both utilize to varying degrees essential elements including significant content, a need to know, a driving

question, student voice and choice, 21st century skills, inquiry and innovation, feedback and revision and a publicly presented product (Larmer, 2014). Constructivism is a theory about how students learn in that it attempts to explain how students construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through their experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. When students encounter something new, they have to reconcile it with their previous ideas and experience, maybe change what they believe, or discard the new information as irrelevant. In this way, students are active creators of their own knowledge and ask questions, explore, and assess what they know ("What is Constructivism?" 2004). Constructivism differs from a traditional didactic educational theory in that learning is an active process; students learn in different ways; learning is a contextual and social activity; one needs knowledge to learn; learning takes time and motivation is a key component in learning. Proponents of constructivism include well-known researchers David Elkind, Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky.

In the College of Business, the capstone course uses problem-based learning as a student-centered pedagogy through carefully designed problems to challenge students by using problem solving techniques, self-directed learning strategies, team participation skills, and disciplinary knowledge. In the capstone course, students form teams for collaborative learning to work on real-world business situations by integrating course concepts from previous courses, transferable skills and professional demeanor. The capstone course in the College of Business represents problem-based learning in that it utilizes techniques to develop students' undergraduate management skills that are required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida.

Methodology

This section briefly details the methodological overview of this research by providing a concise synopsis of the study's research design, population and sample of interest, research instrument, and procedures. Each of these elements is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three.

Research Design

Research design can be defined as a systematic plan to study a scientific problem. The types of research designs are descriptive, correlational, semi-experimental, experimental, review and meta-analytic. Descriptive studies can involve a one-time interaction with groups of people (cross-sectional study) or a study might follow individuals over time (longitudinal study). Descriptive studies also occur in which the researcher interacts with the participant by using surveys or interviews to collect information. Descriptive studies in which the researcher does not interact with the participant include observational studies of people in an environment and studies involving data collection using existing records (e.g., medical record review). Descriptive studies are usually employed to collect information that will demonstrate relationships and describe the world as it exists. Bickman and Rog (1998) suggest that descriptive studies can answer questions such as "what is" or "what was."

For the purpose of this study, a descriptive study was used in that information is collected to demonstrate an association or relationship between things. Focus group research, as a form of descriptive research, was utilized to investigate the relationship between the skills demonstrated

in the capstone course and employer needs in Central Florida. Focus group research is a form of inquiry that utilizes qualitative methods to ask questions and explore a concept. The purpose of a focus group is to explore feelings, attitudes and perceptions and learn thinking patterns of a target population. A focus group is a conversational meeting with a moderator and 6–10 participants. The participants' group discussion produces data and insights that would be less accessible without interaction found in a group setting—listening to others' verbalized experiences stimulates memories, ideas, and experiences in participants.

Focus group research method was the best choice for this study because it allowed the researcher to listen to the views of the participants, while considering the context in which participants express their views. Focus group methods permitted the researcher to approach the fieldwork without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis, and allowed the researcher to study the selected issue in-depth and detail, which contributed to the depth, openness and detail of the qualitative inquiry (Patton, 1990). Specifically, the focus group session concentrated on: gathering opinions, beliefs, and attitudes about issues of interest to an organization; testing assumptions; encouraging discussion about a particular topic; building excitement from spontaneous combination of participants' comments; and providing an opportunity to learn more about a topic or issue.

In this form of inquiry, the research was interpretive as the researcher made an interpretation of what was seen, heard and understood. This study directly followed an interpretive inquiry guideline in that the researcher listened to community business leaders' feedback on student projects, processed their multiple perspectives and understood the many factors involved in the situation to develop a holistic account.

Population and Sample

The purpose of this study was to investigate to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies, as demonstrated in capstone projects and presentations, required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida. Focus group research, a form of descriptive inquiry, had been determined to best examine this relationship. The next focus of this examination was the identification of the population and sample for the focus group.

A population is any entire collection of people, animals, plants or things from which a researcher may collect data. It is the whole or entire group that the researcher is interested in or wants to describe or draw conclusions about. For the purposes of this study, the population was all businesses in the Central Florida area. A brief summary of business listings notes that there are over 120,000 businesses in Central Florida. This population is too large and cumbersome to form a generalization; therefore, a representative of the population, known as a sample, should be used.   Samples are generally selected for a study because the population is too large. The sample should be representative of the general population. The study's research objectives and the characteristics of the study population determine which type of sample and how many people to sample.   The three most common types of sampling strategies are: purposive, quota, and snowball.   A purposive sample is one of the most common sampling strategies because participants are selected according to specific criteria such as knowledge of a population or the purpose of the study. The subjects are selected because of some characteristic. Quota sampling techniques are also common in that the number of participants is based on characteristics such as age, place of residence, gender, etc. and then recruitment of a certain number of participants that has these specific characteristics occurs. The third type of sampling is snowball sampling. In this

form of sampling, participants inform the researcher of others that have similar characteristics or knowledge. The sampling strategy utilized in this study was the purposive technique in that participants had knowledge of the university.

Instrumentation

An instrument is a term that describes measurement devices. Instruments are divided into two categories, researcher-completed and subject-completed. Examples of researcher completed instruments include rating scales, interview guides, tally sheets, flowcharts and performance checklists; examples of subject-completed instruments include questionnaires, self-checklists, attitude scales, personality inventories, and achievement/aptitude tests. As this inquiry utilized focus group research, a researcher-completed instrument was used to record the focus group participants' comments and opinions. The focus group was audio and video recorded, which was later transcribed for the researcher to analyze emergent themes.

Procedures

Procedures in educational research identify the series of steps taken to accomplish the research study. For the purposes of this study, two focus groups occurred. The purpose of the first focus group was to examine and comment on the capstone student papers. The purpose of the second focus group was to examine and comment on the capstone student presentations. For each focus group, invitations to participate were emailed to various community business leaders in the Central Florida area. Interested participants convened at the meeting location; amenities such as parking passes and maps were provided for convenience.

The moderator of the first focus group initiated the discussion and informed the participants that they were being audio and video taped. The purpose of the first focus group was to examine capstone student papers. The researcher provided examples of capstone student projects for the focus group to review. The audio and video taping of the focus group commenced.   The moderator of the focus group led the discussion and ensured the confidentiality of members' comments. At the conclusion of the first focus group, the moderator and researcher thanked the participants for their knowledge and time. The researcher transcribed the participants' comments and analyzed them for emergent themes.

The second focus group followed a similar procedure. The purpose of the second focus group was to examine the capstone student presentations. The researcher audio and video taped previous student capstone presentations and provided these examples to the participants of the second focus group to review. Supporting materials such as name placards, note paper, pens and refreshments were again provided. The second focus group was audio and video taped. At the conclusion of the second focus group, the moderator and researcher thanked the participants for their knowledge and time. The researcher transcribed the participants' comments and analyzed them for emergent themes.

Significance of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies, as demonstrated in capstone projects and presentations,

which were required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida. By comprehending and discerning the elements of the existing capstone program with national capstone models, this study contributed to an understanding of the factors that should be embedded in course design and assessment in order to fulfill assurance of learning requirements as established by AACSB mandates. A better understanding of these elements was beneficial in course design and provided guidance on linking assignments to course objectives and overall curricular goals. This benefit was emphasized with the faculty consensus and affirmation of the competencies that every business college graduate should have. A unified faculty is more effective in the universal achievement of curricular goals and program outcomes.

However, the most significant aspect of this research was the input from community business leaders. The community business leaders' contributions of their real world insight and experiences on the qualities they deem imperative for employment success in their respective organizations brought relevance to the existing Capstone curriculum. Further, the community business leaders' opinions toward the skills that potential employees may need to develop to offered significant benefit toward a potential reframing of curricular goals. The comparison of these characteristics to the Capstone course skills provided the most valuable information.

Limitations of the Study

This study aimed to determine if the design and anticipated outcomes of the capstone course in the College of Business Administration met the needs of employers in the Central Florida area. Although this information offered significant benefit in terms of course design,

assessment and input from community business leaders, it was recognized the key indicators of potential success were based solely on the student projects as a result of participation in the course and not from extraneous factors. As this study focused specifically on community business leaders in the Central Florida area, it was necessary to be cognizant that the feedback derived was from a relatively small group of localized community business people. Due to this, the results may not be generalized to other institutions or geographic locations. However, as a significant percentage of the community business leaders were representative of regional and national organizations, it may be feasible to generalize the results to other Capstone programs in colleges of business. Future plans include expansion of this research to other US areas based on the nationwide presence of selected community business leaders.

Operational Definitions

This section provides operational definitions of the terms that are used extensively throughout this study.

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB): AACSB is a highly respected accreditation agency for schools of business. The College of Business strives to maintain its AACSB accreditation at a large metropolitan university in Central Florida.

 Assessment: The College of Business at a large, metropolitan university in Central Florida uses assessment to determine if curricular goals are being met.

Capstone: All senior undergraduate students in the College of Business are required to successfully complete a Capstone course to assess their overall knowledge in foundational and specialized course work.

Community business leader: A community based leader, for the purposes of this dissertation, is an executive member of an organization that has experience hiring college of business graduates in the Central Florida region. Community business leaders are employed in Central Florida businesses and were asked to provide input on their organizational needs.

Central Florida region: The central Florida region is located in the middle central part of Florida and is comprised of Orange, Seminole and Volusia counties. The most popular tourist destination in the region is the city of Orlando. "Orlando had a population of 238,300 according to the 2010 census, making it the 77th largest city in the United States" ("Orlando at a Glance," 2014). The Greater Orlando metropolitan area has a population of 2,134,411, making it the 26th largest metro area in the United States, the sixth largest metro area in the Southeastern United States, and the third largest metro area in the state of Florida. The Central Florida region is the location that provided the community business leaders and is the location of a large, metropolitan university.

Problem-based learning: Problem-based learning is a conceptual framework in which student-centered pedagogies teach students learn both thinking strategies and domain knowledge. The goals of PBL are to help the students develop flexible knowledge, effective problem solving skills, self-directed learning, effective collaboration skills and intrinsic motivation. Problem-based learning is a style of active learning (Hmelo-Silver, 2004). Educators use problem-based learning to increase student learning in a course or curriculum.

Rubric: A rubric is an objective scoring instrument used to link criteria and standards to learning objectives. A scoring rubric is an attempt to communicate expectations of quality

around a task ("Rubric," 2014). A scoring rubric can also provide a basis for self-evaluation, reflection, and peer review.   Educators and administrators use rubrics to measure the effectiveness of programs, faculty and students.

Skill: A skill is the learned ability to carry out a task with pre-determined results. Skills can be divided into domain-general and domain-specific skills. Employees of organizations in the Central Florida region use skills to perform necessary job related tasks.

Summary

This chapter introduced the purpose of Capstone courses as a means of summative assessment of a core curriculum or program. The importance of assessing program outcomes was paramount in line with the Association to Advance Colleges and Schools of Business (AACSB) accreditation.   The main purpose of this study was to determine the extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies, as demonstrated through capstone student projects and presentations, required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida. The elements of course design and implementation were reviewed and the importance of the development of cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills was noted as a key benefit of a capstone course.

The conceptual foundation of the capstone course is built on the conceptual framework of problem-based learning. Problem-based learning is a student-centered pedagogy that consists of carefully designed problems to challenge students by using problem solving techniques, self-

directed learning strategies, team participation skills, and disciplinary knowledge. In colleges of business, capstone courses employ problem-based learning as students form teams for collaborative learning to work on real-world business situations by integrating course concepts from previous courses, transferable skills and professional demeanor.

Bloomberg BusinessWeek provided a national model for capstone courses and identified several universities with exemplary capstone courses; the composites of this model were examined for course design, implementation and assessment strategies. Among the primary assessment strategies were computer simulations, written reports, examinations, peer evaluations and attendance and participation.

This chapter also included a brief overview of the methodology of this research study and a concise synopsis of the study's research design, population and sample of interest, research instrument, and procedures. Focus group research, as a form of descriptive research, was utilized to investigate the relationship between the skills demonstrated in the capstone course and employer needs in Central Florida. The significance of the study was noted in that by comprehending and discerning the elements of an existing capstone program in a large metropolitan university in Central Florida with national capstone models, this study contributed to an understanding of the factors to embed in course design and assessment to fulfill assurance of learning requirements as established by AACSB mandates. However, as a potential limitation, it needed to be recognized that this research was limited in its geographical scope and that the key indicators of potential success were based solely on the student projects as a result of

participation in the course and not from extraneous factors. Lastly, the operationalized definition

of terms served to alleviate any misinterpretation of concepts or results.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RELATED RESEARCH

Introduction

The main purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida. The review of related literature of capstone projects includes three main topics which are discussed in this chapter: the best practices of capstone courses, an identification of skills within capstone courses and an identification of skills determined necessary by potential employers.

Best Practices of Capstone Courses

The best practices and effective assessment strategies of capstone courses vary depending on the identification of the level, purpose and object of assessment. Assessment is the systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development. The purpose of a capstone course is to be a culmination of a student's academic experience and should be in alignment with course and curricular goals.

Assessment can be performed at the individual or group level, can be for formative or summative purposes and can be based on four dimensions of outcomes: knowledge, skills, attitudes and values or behaviors. Terenzini's (1989) taxonomy of educational assessment

documents these four dimensions. At a formative level, assessment can be utilized at the individual level in terms of competency based instruction or placement or at the group level in terms of program enhancement. At the summative level, assessment at the individual level is relegated to a gate keeping function in terms of comprehensive or certification exams. At the group level, summative assessment is performed for accountability in terms of program evaluation through program reviews, retention studies, alumni studies and 'value-added' studies
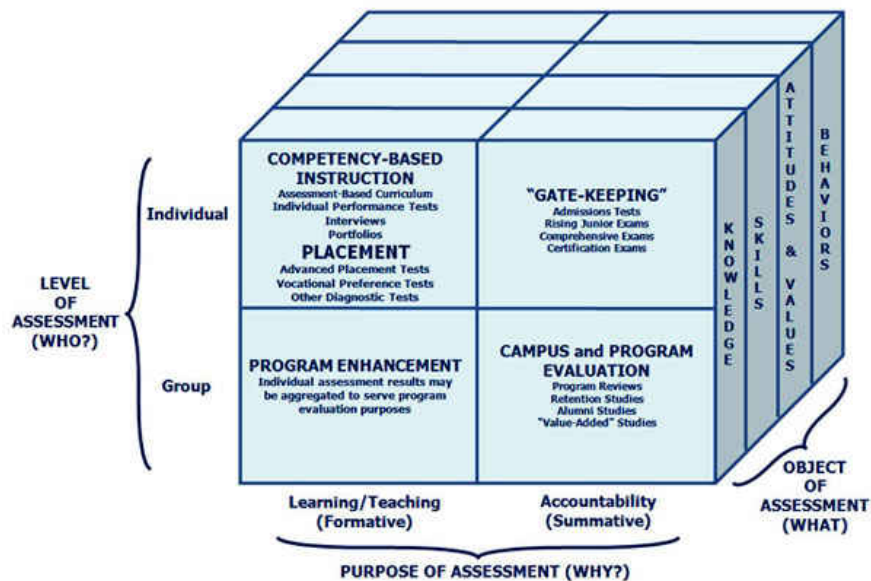
Figure 3: Taxonomy of Assessment

Source: Terenzini, P (1989). "Assessment with open eyes: Pitfalls in studying student outcomes." *Journal of Higher Education*, 60(6), pp. 644-664.

Capstone Assessment

Capstone courses are often the final course in a program and can provide an opportunity to identify whether students have acquired the central knowledge and skills that are the carefully selected outcomes expected of the program, assuming its content represents a cumulative experience. Capstone programs serve the purpose of evaluating students' readiness to transition from undergraduate to graduate school or work and providing deeper investigation of the curriculum. Three major functions of capstone courses are identified: 1-capstone courses aim to consolidate, extend and apply previous learning (Bailey, Oliver, & Townsend, 2007); 2- capstone courses provide professional socialization and the development of professional identity to assist students' transition to employment ; and, more broadly, they may play a key role in ensuring graduates are 'agents of social good in an unknown future' and 3- capstone courses can be used to confirm that students have mastered what are often called 'soft' or 'employability' skills by the business sector and graduate (or "generic") skills (or 'attributes') by academics (van Acker, 2011). Assessments in capstone courses can serve as a forum within standardized testing can occur. In reference to Terenzini's (1989) taxonomy of educational assessment, capstone programs can be assessed on both an individual and group level on a summative level for accountability in program evaluation of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values and behaviors. The most common strategies for effective assessment analysis of a capstone program are: simulations and team projects, case studies based on 'real-world' situations, portfolio evaluations, examinations, internships or clinical experiences and specific projects or assignments such as a feasibility study report on a proposed initiative addressing issues of

relevance to a particular professional or industry need or a plan for the development and implementation of a program of activities for an authentic professional or industry setting.

Assessment Strategies

An assessment strategy details the use of a specific measurement which measures a student's knowledge at a given time. The first step in using a capstone project for a Sociology program assessment at Skidmore College is to identify the program's goals and objectives prior to translating these goals into content and performance standards (Berheide, 2001). These standards set the benchmarks for the program and should be developed into rubrics for measuring how well students demonstrate that they have met the goals of the major. Berheide's (2001) work detailed best practices of capstone student assessment valuation of a research based paper. Selected faculty members were employed to systematically analyze the papers for patterns of strengths and weaknesses and evidence of program quality. Multiple evaluators from the Sociology department were then charged with making curricular improvements. The advantage of a research paper is that it required students to define a research problem, create and implement a research design, and analyze and interpret data. In addition, student papers were submitted at Sociology meetings, contests and presentations for validation. Valdosta State University and California State University at Sacramento employ similar methods in their Capstone program and use faculty to consider the conceptual depth, clarity, resource use and structure of their students' Sociology capstone papers as well as utilize a rubric to achieve a collective departmental portfolio.

Nassersharif and Rousseau (2010) enhanced the scholarship of assessment by commenting on the development, implementation and adoption of best practices of assessment for a mechanical engineering capstone course at the University of Rhode Island. Their research is based on representation of two of the three Rhode Island Universities offering ABET EAC accredited engineering programs, best practices found in the literature, survey of other engineering programs and their combined teaching and research experience in the Capstone design area. Nassersharif and Rousseau (2010) acknowledged the following essential components of a capstone course: team weekly progress reports, individual assignments to prepare the team for problem definition and concept generation, confidential peer evaluations, preliminary and final design reports, team meetings with professors and sponsors and an individual skills inventory at the beginning of the semester. Further, they developed a rubric that focused on the core requirements of each activity to communicate expectations to students and help ensure consistent evaluation of the design project.

To ensure that a capstone course serves as a summative assessment of a student's academic experience, the course design should be in alignment with course and curricular goals Ferris State University identifies that the key to capstone assessment is determining the strengths and weaknesses of students in achieving your outcome expectations so that it can be determined how to develop the program to enhance student performance (Berheide, 2001). For capstone courses, the primary means to assess student performance are derived from analyzing simulations and team projects, portfolio evaluation, tests, internships and clinical experience and specific projects and assignments. In a primarily online or non-traditional environment, best practices include collaborative development of exams, keeping test questions under 255

characters and utilizing a designated Blackboard Course shell for ease of transference among campuses and remote locations.

A professional portfolio is a systematic collection of documents and related material that that demonstrates a student's activities, accomplishments, and achievements and attests to the quality of a student's work, ability and experience (Boughton, n.d.). Process and product portfolios represent the two major types of portfolios. A process portfolio documents the stages of learning and provides a progressive record of student growth. A product portfolio demonstrates mastery of a learning task or a set of learning objectives and contains only the best work. As a form of assessment, portfolios offer a direct benefit as they help students identify learning goals, document progress over time, and demonstrate learning mastery. In addition, portfolios promote student self-evaluation, reflection and critical thinking, measure performance based on genuine samples of student work, give students input into the learning process, facilitate cooperative learning activities, and enable measurement of multiple dimensions of student progress by including different types of data and materials (Venn, 2000). Portfolios need to be organized and evaluated according to a pre-established rubric which identifies the key areas to assess and the criteria for evaluation that measures the key outcomes expected of graduates. They may be evaluated by faculty or by people in the field or a combination. Portfolios can be completed electronically or in a paper format.

Capstone students in the college of business at Minnesota State University are encouraged to create professional portfolios to illustrate their overall learning and to serve as an employment aid in their upcoming career search (Moore, n.d.). For college of business capstone students, a professional portfolio that emphasizes the capstone program could contain the following

elements: personal statement or autobiographical essay, demonstration of computer skills, information systems and personnel management competencies, oral communication, reflections on personal and professional ethics, an illustration of global and multicultural perspectives, and a resume or curriculum vitae. In addition, course grades, distinguished scholar awards and activities and the capstone senior project could be included to showcase a full range of skills (Wilkins and Noll, 2000). The benefit of portfolios is also highlighted in the College of Health and Public Affairs where a recent study indicated that over 80% of students that created a professional portfolio secured employment (Cook, personal communications, June 18, 2013).

Capstone Courses at a Large Metropolitan University

Communication Sciences and Disorders Majors

At a large metropolitan university in Central Florida, two particularly noteworthy capstone courses are housed in the College of Health and Public Affairs, specifically for Communication Sciences and Disorders and Legal Studies majors. The vision statement and mission statement as well as the goals of the College of Health and Public Affairs (COPA) are clearly stated on its web site. The vision statement of the COPA is "The College of Health and Public Affairs is a global leader in creating positive community change. We seek to improve people's lives through partnerships that transcend traditional boundaries in education, research, policy and program development" ("Vision, Mission and Goals," n.d.). The mission statement of the COPA is " The College of Health and Public Affairs educates leaders for a global and diverse society by conducting transformational research, creating partnerships, and advocating policy changes that improve the health and welfare of the community" ("Vision, Mission and Goals," n.d.).

The goals of the COPA are segmented into five main areas: "Community Partnerships - To improve the health and welfare of the community through mutually beneficial college-community partnerships; Research- To foster innovative research activities generating and/or applying knowledge that positively impacts the global community; Education - To promote and support the development and provision of state-of-the-art undergraduate, master's and doctoral education and professional continuing education; Diversity- To integrate diversity and globalization into all aspects of college life; Identity - To develop and promote a distinctive vision- and mission-driven identity for the college; and Organizational Success- To promote and nurture a vibrant and vital organization built on a foundation of responsible and strategic management of college resources" ("Vision, Mission and Goals," n.d.).

The Capstone course for Communication Sciences and Disorders is a three credit course designated as SPA 4870C and was designed by Dr. Charlotte Harvey to provide the conceptual background and foundation by which undergraduate students review anatomy and physiology, neural bases of communication, language and literacy development, and community internship prior to a comprehensive exam, clinical application and entrance to the graduate program (Harvey, personal communication, June 5, 2013). The objectives of SPA 4870C are for students to obtain twenty five hours of observation of speech, language and hearing management and diagnostic sessions, prepare students to successfully pass the Communication Sciences Disorder undergraduate exam through a comprehensive review of core undergraduate course work and complete a Capstone project showcasing student research conducted on a topic in communication disorder (Harvey, personal communication, June 5, 2013).

In order to fulfill the course objectives, the design and organization of SPA 4870C utilizes a traditional teaching pedagogy on both the main Orlando and regional campuses through the use of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning. The cognitive domain of learning is employed by the course curriculum which includes the essential speech and hearing foundations of language and literacy development, articulation and phonological development, applied speech, aural rehabilitation, audiology, and applied speech science among other topics. The cognitive domain of learning is also utilized as students are required to successfully complete a final comprehensive exam, which is directly linked to the Institutional Effectiveness requirements and the American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA) mandates (Harvey, personal communication, June 5, 2013). The affective component of learning is experienced as students study the developmental aspect of language and how it affects the hearing and non-hearing population. The psychomotor domain of learning is utilized as students are required to complete a Capstone project which contains both oral and written components, consisting of an independent research paper and oral presentation, both of which are assessed by rubrics. The project's content, organization, language structure, professional presentation skills and supporting materials are assessed by the course instructor and senior departmental members. A unique aspect of SPA 4870C Communication Sciences and Disorders course is that after completion of the undergraduate program, students do not gain immediate employment. Instead, employment occurs after students complete the Master's program and receive additional mandatory certifications. This is in contrast to most college of business capstone programs in which students are able to gain employment at the conclusion of their undergraduate careers.

Legal Studies Majors

The capstone course for the Legal Studies degree in the College of Health and Public Affairs is designated as PLA 4935. It is a required three credit course designed by Dr. Kathy Cook. Similar to the capstone program in Communication Sciences and Disorders, the course is positioned to be taken in a student's last undergraduate semester. The Legal Studies program is one of the largest legal studies programs in the country and has a 40 – 50% student matriculation rate into law school. (Cook, personal communication, June 18, 2013) Students enrolled in the capstone course must successfully pass the course with a C grade or better. There are no comprehensive exams or certification exams achieved at the end of the course as its purpose is to review legal research and writing skills as well as integrate career choices and ethical issues. The course is uniformly delivered using a traditional face-to-face pedagogy to fulfill a ten credit hour mandate of the American Bar Association. Course themes include regulation, global climate change, individual liberties, as well as political, environmental and ethical issues (Cook, personal communication, June 18, 2013). All forms of assessment are individual student based with the primary forms of assessment being intensive writing assignments and presentations. The objective of these assessments is to illustrate critical thinking skills and to demonstrate the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning. The capstone course in Legal Studies is modeled after leading capstone courses in the country with its focus on regulation and paralegal responsibilities and alternative fields of study but is further refined to fit the needs of the student population. Although there are no comprehensive exams in the course, a unique aspect of the legal studies capstone course is that it strongly encourages students to create a professional portfolio for employment search. The importance of this portfolio is illustrated as an

informal survey of Legal Studies students found that the portfolio was instrumental in their attempt to secure employment. The development of a portfolio is an essential element is many capstone programs, but is not evident in the college of business capstone.

Capstone Courses in Colleges of Business

As the main purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies required in meeting the needs of potential employers in Central Florida, the discussion now concentrates exclusively on capstone courses in Colleges of Business. In colleges and schools of business, capstone courses focus on strategic management and typically contain the instructional modalities of case study discussions, simulation experiences, written case analysis, oral case presentations, CEO interviews and various types of tests. There is a great deal of similarity among learning objectives and teaching pedagogy among capstone courses which are summarized in the following discussion.

The learning goals of the capstone course at in the College of Business at SUNY Geneseo emphasize students' use of critical reasoning, application of comprehensive knowledge and techniques, and intelligent conveyance and intelligent discourse of skills to informed audiences (Markulis, 2007). At the Robert J. Trulaske Sr. College of Business at the University of Missouri, the Capstone course is a three credit course designated as MAN 8970 ("Business Administration," n.d.). Its course curriculum is summarized as alternative goals of business enterprises relative to internal and external environment, development and implementation of policies and strategies to achieve objectives. Cases, computer simulations and field research are used to achieve the course objectives. At the Daniels College of Business at the University of

Denver, the Capstone course is a four credit course designated as INFO 4400. Its course objectives are to apply the knowledge and skills learned in the program to a real-world problem submitted by a partner business. Student teams will take a business problem from model construction and data collection through analysis and presentation of results to recommendations for specific business decisions ("Daniels Compass Courses," n.d.). At the Carl H. Lindner School of Business at the University of Cincinnati, the Capstone course is designated as BA 5080. Its course objectives are to provide a functional foundation of knowledge from courses throughout the undergraduate curriculum. The course is designed to challenge student's analytical and decision making skills by assessing the internal operations of a firm and the external and competitive environment of an industry. In addition, students will formulate effective competitive strategies for firms with domestic and international uncertainty through the use of case studies, readings and industry simulations ("Management Course Descriptions," n.d.). At Carthage College, the Capstone program is a four credit course designated as MGT 4900 Business Policies Senior Seminar. Its course objectives include the integration of knowledge from the business curriculum toward application and insight to profit and loss management of a business operation. Computer simulation is employed for a dynamic competitive interaction between several firms ("Courses," n.d.). At the College of Charleston, the capstone course is designated as MGMT 408 Business Policy. This course focuses on strategic management to develop the skills associated with creating and maintaining successful business operations, understand the importance of strategic decision making within the contexts of differing strategy implementation on local, national, international and global environments. The pedagogical approach is similar to other capstone courses and includes case analysis, simulation and

interactive discussion ("Management and Entrepreneurship," n.d.). The objectives of the Business Information Systems course at St. Norbert College include a student's ability to demonstrate: an understanding of the subject areas and fundamental concepts; self-management and team management; identification/integration/application of knowledge to design and build a system of reasonable complexity; and effective oral and written communication (McVey, 2007). At Georgia Tech in the Institute for Leadership and Entrepreneurship, the capstone course focuses on leadership competencies in an experiential project-based course where students work with local, government, non-profit, social enterprise or hybrid enterprises ("Capstone Projects," n.d.).

At the Warrington College of Business Administration at the University of Florida, all business students are required to successfully complete MAN 4723 Strategic Management at the undergraduate level and MAN 6637 Global Strategic Management at the graduate level. (Himes, 2014) At the undergraduate level, the syllabus of MAN 4723 focuses on a firm's strategic decisions from a general manager's perspective and assists students in learning about major issues in strategic management, learning about concepts, theories and analytical tools of strategic environment and applying the concepts, theories and analytical tools to develop strategies for firms. This is achieved through a series of exams, cases and class participation. At the graduate level, MAN 6637 Global Strategic Management focuses on enhancing students' critical abilities on strategic management topics by integrating knowledge from prior business courses, analyzing environments and identifying strategic issues and options, integrating financial, accounting, marketing and human resource decisions into a coherent business strategy and evaluating strategic plan outcomes and adjustments in response to environmental contingencies (Phalin,

2014). Assessment is achieved by exams, assurance of learning exam, written and oral cases and participation.

In most colleges and schools of business, assurance of learning has become an integral part of most business programs due to accreditation mandates at the regional and international levels, with the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) being the prominent accrediting institution. Since the purpose of assurance of learning is to insure continuous improvement, capstone programs can provide a summative assessment to evaluate levels of achievement at the program and functional levels. Capstone courses can be used as a mechanism for assessing student learning and 'closing the loop' to promote continuous improvement for providing quality business programs (Powers, n.d.).

Identification of Skills within Capstone Courses

As the main purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida, it was necessary to examine the learning expectations of the course through the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning identified in Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives.

Taxonomies of Educational Objectives

Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives segments educational goals into five levels of learning. The original taxonomy was developed by Benjamin Bloom in 1956 and served

as a key tool in structuring and understanding the learning process (Bloom, 1956). Although the taxonomy was primarily created for academic education, it has significant relevance to all types of learning. Bloom proposed that the learning process is composed of the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domain. The cognitive domain involves knowledge and the development of intellectual skills. This includes the recall or recognition of specific facts, procedural patterns, and concepts that serve in the development of intellectual abilities and skills. Skills in the cognitive domain revolve around knowledge, comprehension, and critical thinking of a particular topic (Bloom, 1956). Traditional education tends to emphasize the skills in this domain, particularly the lower-order objectives. The affective domain (Bloom, Krathwohl & Masia, 1973) includes the manner in which we deal with things emotionally, such as feelings, values, appreciation, enthusiasms, motivations, and attitudes. Skills in the affective domain describe the way people react emotionally and their ability to feel another living thing's pain or joy. Affective objectives typically target the awareness and growth in attitudes, emotion, and feelings. The psychomotor domain (Simpson, 1972) includes physical movement, coordination, and use of the motor-skill areas. Development of these skills requires practice and is measured in terms of speed, precision, distance, procedures, or techniques in execution. Skills in the psychomotor domain describe the ability to physically manipulate a tool or instrument like a hand or a hammer. Psychomotor skills may also be learned as part of the process of specializing in the performance of a particular task. Psychomotor objectives usually focus on change and/or development in behavior and/or skills.

Alternative Taxonomies of Educational Objectives

In Colleges of Business, the tasks and activities of the cognitive and affective domains of learning are readily apparent. However, the psychomotor domain of learning within a business context needs further definition. Although the psychomotor domain was originally was solely limited to manual and physical skills, it also covers contemporary business and social skills such as communication and operation Information technology equipment, for example telephone and keyboard skills and public speaking. This application of the psychomotor domain to a business context is based in part upon two alternative domain taxonomies; those of Elizabeth Simpson (1972) and AJ Harrow (1972). Both Simpson and Harrow's models can be used in adult development such as teaching adults to run a difficult meeting. However, Simpson's version is best used when adults are taken out of their comfort zones because it includes sensory, perception, attitudes and preparation. Elizabeth Simpson's interpretation of the psychomotor domain contains the two additional levels of perception, which is described as awareness, and set which is described as readiness (Simpson, 1972).

In contrast, Harrow's version is best used if the goal is to develop skills which are ultimately intended to express, convey or influence feelings. Harrow's highest level shows the effect of body movements such as communication and body language on others. There are six stages in Harrow's model. The category is reflex movement. An example would be to respond instinctively. Categories two and three are basic fundamental movements and perceptual abilities. These categories are relatively self-explanatory. Categories five and six are physical abilities and skilled movements. At the highest level is non-discursive communication. This level can be interpreted to include communicating effectively. An example of this in use would

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be public speaking, training and high level presentation skills (Harrow, 1972). Courses in the College of Business that are used to develop these skills in students include: GEB 3031 Cornerstone Professional Skills, MAN 4350 Training and Development, MAN 4720 Strategic Management, MAN 4600 International Management, MAN 3025 Principles of Management, MAR 3391 Professional Selling, etc. ("CBA Core Curriculum," n.d.). Harrow's model is most appropriate in this discussion of skill development as it includes the ability to develop and deliver oral presentations in informal and formal business settings.

In the 1956 original taxonomy, the levels progress in processing from knowledge, comprehension and application to analysis, synthesis and evaluation. Knowledge (recalling information) represents the lowest level in Bloom's taxonomy and provides the basis for all "higher" cognitive activity. Only after a learner is able to recall information is it possible to move on to comprehension (giving meaning to information). The third level is application, which refers to using knowledge or principles in new or real-life situations. The learner at this level solves practical problems by applying information comprehended at the previous level. The fourth level is analysis - breaking down complex information into simpler parts. Synthesis, the fifth level, consists of creating something that did not exist before by integrating information that had been learned at lower levels of the hierarchy. Evaluation is the highest level of Bloom's hierarchy; it consists of making judgments based on previous levels of learning to compare a product of some kind against a designated standard (Clark, 1999). Bloom's taxonomy depicted how learners progressed from lower order thinking skills to higher order thinking skills.

Bloom's taxonomy was highly respected and utilized for many years. It has provided a basis for the planning and design of schools, college and university education, adult and corporate training, learning and development and all aspects of education and industry. In 2001, Bloom's taxonomy was revised to reflect a rearrangement of the sequence within the taxonomy and the use of verbs rather than nouns for each of the categories (Churches, n.d.). Similar to the original 1956 taxonomy, the levels are arranged in increasing order from lower order thinking skills to higher order thinking skills progressing from remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating. Starting at the remembering stage, the key verbs associated with this level of learning include recognizing and locating and finding. While the recall of knowledge is the lowest level of learning, it is of key importance. The next stage progressing toward higher order thinking skills is understanding. Understanding builds importance and links knowledge.   At this stage, the key verbs associated with this level of learning include interpreting and summarizing. Students at this level should understand the concepts so they can form meaning. Next is the applying stage where the key verbs associated with this level of learning include: implementing, carrying out, using and executing. Applying could be using a process, skill or set of facts. At the analyzing level of learning, the key verbs associated with this level of learning include comparing and organizing.   Here students could break a concept into parts to determine how they interrelate to one another. At the evaluating level of learning, the key verbs are critiquing and detecting.   At the highest level of learning is creating. Creating involves all of the other levels of the taxonomy. In the creative process, a learner remembers, understands and applies knowledge, analyzes and evaluates outcomes, results, successes and failures as well as the processes in a full product. Some of the key verbs associated with this

level of learning include: designing, inventing and constructing. These elements cover many classroom activities and objectives (Churches, n.d.).

Bloom's Digital Taxonomy

Based on the emergence and integration of Information and Communication technologies in the classroom and the lives of learners, Bloom's taxonomy was revised again to reflect competence in problem and project based learning. Bloom's Digital Taxonomy notes the importance of collaboration as a 21st century essential and includes it as a separate element to assist higher order thinking and learning. Different modes of communication are mixed throughout the levels of learning.
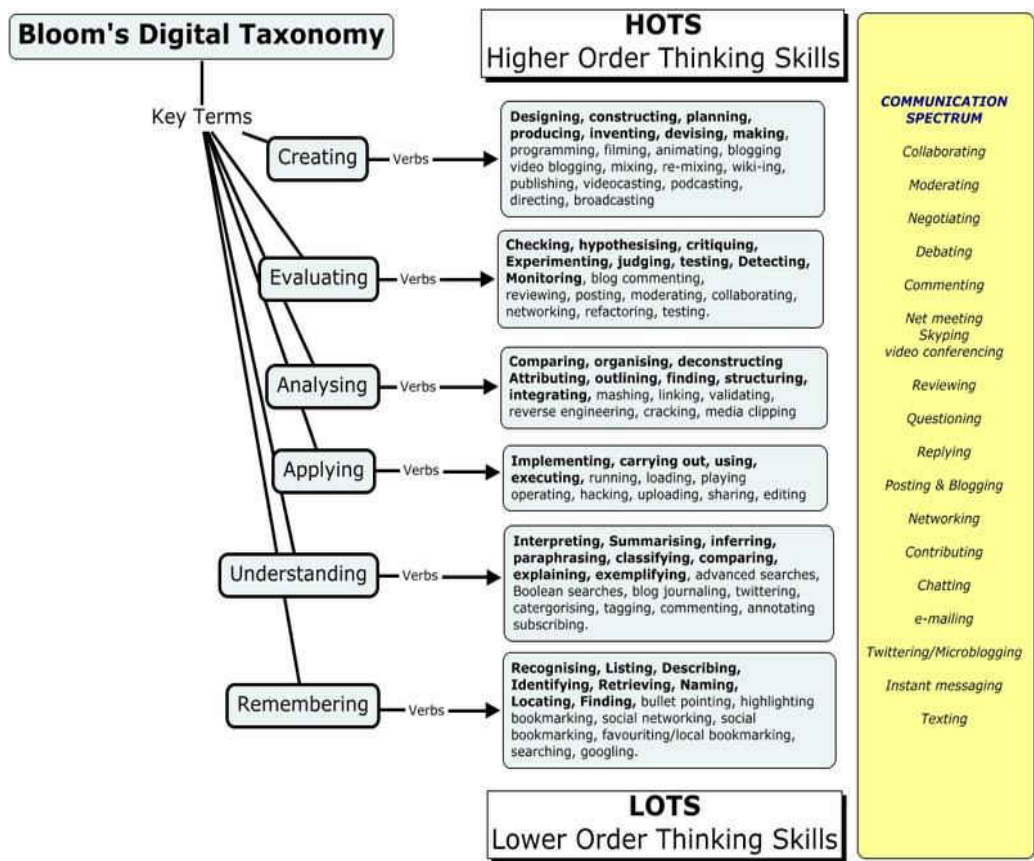
Figure 4: Bloom's Digital Taxonomy

Source: Churches, n.d.

Based on Bloom's Digital Taxonomy and the level of computer and information intelligence of learners, possible activities at the remembering level of learning include: quizzes and tests using online tools and Google documents, lists using Mind maps, basic searches using search engines such as yahoo and Google, etc. At the understanding level, Bloom's Digital taxonomy could be used to include the possible activities of keeping a journal using blogging and summarizing using webpage construction. At the applying stage, learners would benefit

from using illustration using Corel or Paint and performance using podcasts or power point shows. The next level of learning is analyzing. Here web based tools such as survey monkey could be used in a survey and process activity or charts using a spreadsheet or digitizer. At the evaluating level of learning, networking using social networking tools would benefit the learner. Collaborating could occur using discussion boards, forums, blogs and wikis. At the highest level of learning is creating. According to Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), creating is defined as putting the elements together to form a coherent or functional whole; reorganizing elements into a new pattern or structure through generating, planning or producing. Possible activities could include media production using Movie maker and presentations using Power point or Prezi (Churches, n.d.).

Capstone Learning Expectations and Modalities

The design of a Capstone course should also incorporate learning expectations from the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning. As a Capstone course is a summative assessment demonstrating the attainment of curricular goals and the entirety of a student's academic career, course objectives should focus on critical thinking and the higher levels of intellectual activity and learning. Table Four identifies the learning expectations in a Capstone course.

Table 4: Learning Expectations in a Capstone Course

Cognitive Learning	Course Expectations
Recall of Knowledge Comprehension Application Analysis Synthesis Evaluation	Students are presented with a problem and draw upon their knowledge and research to weigh and select various data leading to a solution of the problem which is workable and intellectually defensible.
Affective Learning	
Receiving Responding Valuing Organization Value Complex	The approach and decisions made reflect attitudes, values, feelings and beliefs characteristic of the discipline and the profession.
Psychomotor Learning	
Gross Bodily Movements Finely Coordinated Movements Non-verbal Communication Speech Behaviors	The production of a project, solution to a problem and the oral and visual presentation of it, reflects a degree of skill competency as a communicator.

Source: Moore, n.d.

The course expectations can be categorized into learning modalities. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching is an independent policy and research center focused on improving teaching and learning. The Carnegie Foundation recommends three instruments for measuring such outcomes in a Capstone course. These include a senior thesis, an oral presentation and a portfolio (Boyer, 1987). A senior thesis is a substantial paper of original work that draws on the historical, social, and ethical perspectives of a business problem.   Its purpose is to develop student skills in conducting research, analyzing and synthesizing information, and to communicate effectively about what they have learned. An oral presentation

is a lecture delivered in an organized, concise and effective manner to a live audience. There are three main purposes in giving oral presentations: to inform, to persuade and to build goodwill. The oral presentation should be peer critiqued and delivered in a public forum for professionalism.   A portfolio is a professional collection of student work for the purpose of demonstrating learning or showcasing best work.   As an innovative form of alternative assessment, portfolios provide students the opportunity to reflect on what they have learned and may be in paper, hybrid or electronic format (Boyer, 1987).   All three instruments should be included in assessment of the Capstone program.

As a form of summative assessment, Capstone reviews previous cognitive learning in the major and provides input on a student's overall collegiate learning experience. Achievement in the cognitive domain is usually represented by an ability to recall, understand and apply knowledge. However, a combination of assessment styles should be utilized to evaluate learning in the affective and psychomotor domain. "Evaluation of affective learning is characterized by expression of feelings, values and attitudes (especially regarding events, issues and topics related to, or impacting, the students' field of study.) Finally, psychomotor learning is evaluated by the application and performance of skills. A student should demonstrate successful competencies in all three learning modalities" (Churches, n.d.).

Skills Necessary for Employment

The Michigan Report

Generally, for all higher education students, the Michigan Professional Preparation Network Report identified ten potential professional outcomes as overall goals of learning. The ten outcomes are: *Communication competence* is the ability to read, write, speak, and listen and to use these processes effectively to acquire, develop, and convey ideas and information; *Critical thinking* is the ability to examine issues rationally, logically, and coherently; *Contextual competence* is an understanding of the societal context or environment in which one is living and working; *Aesthetic sensibility* is an enhanced aesthetic awareness of arts and human behavior for both personal enrichment and application in the enhancement of work; *Professional identity* is a concern for improving the knowledge, skills, and values of the profession; *Professional ethics* is an understanding of the ethics of a profession as standards that guide professional behavior; *Adaptive competence* is anticipating, adapting to, and promoting changes important to a profession's societal purpose and the professional's role; *Leadership capacity* is exhibiting the capacity to contribute as a productive member of the profession and assuming appropriate leadership roles; *Scholarly concern for improvement is* recognizing the need to increase knowledge and to advance the profession through both theoretical and applied research and *Motivation of continued learning* is exploring and expanding personal, civic, and professional knowledge and skills through a lifetime (Blanchard & Christ, 1993).

Determination and Importance of Specific Skill Sets

However, as the main purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida, this research focused on examining and defining skills specifically for College of Business graduates. A consortium of The Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills and the Society of Human Resource Management conducted an in-depth study of the corporate perspective on the readiness of new entrants into the US workforce. For four-year business college graduates, the five most frequently reported skills considered "very important' are:

Oral Communication 95.4%

Teamwork/ Collaboration 94.4%

Professionalism/ Work Ethic 93.8%

Written Communications 93.1%

Critical Thinking/ Problem Solving 92.1%
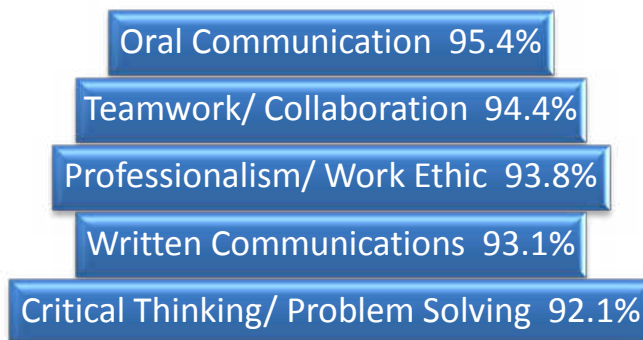
Figure 5: The Five Most Frequently Reported Skills Considered "Very Important"

Source: Consortium of The Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills and the Society of Human Resource Management, 2006

Additional skills considered important for four-year business college graduates are: information technology application, diversity, lifelong learning/self-direction, and creativity / innovation. The list of graduate skills is long and growing to meet the needs of the challenging workforce. Further, it is challenging that terminology is often ambiguous and inadequate and tends to differ in academic and employment contexts.

A review of the related literature on the skills considered necessary for employment from public and private sources revealed that over the past 10 to 15 years, dozens of studies indicated that employers desire employees with excellent communication abilities, strong critical thinking skills and sensitivity to gender and cross-cultural issues. Holtzman and Kraft (2010) analyzed the responses from 163 undergraduate business alumni of a target school and 45 New Jersey employers to questions to identify the writing, quantitative, and computer skills required at work. The respondents identified writing, computing and quantitative analysis skills as important. They further determined that writing skills are one of the most valued and frequently evaluated workplace skills, with the most frequently written documents in the workplace being memos, letters, email, proposals, training guides, and research reports.

A 2010 Association of American Colleges and Universities survey by Hart Research Associates examined employers' view on college learning. The respondents were over 300 executives from private sector and non-profit organizations with more than 25 employees and included owners, CEOs, presidents, C-suite level executives, and vice presidents. The key findings of this survey represent overall college learning and are not specific to any college. Overall, employers want their employees to have higher levels of learning and knowledge of

both a broad range of skills and knowledge and in-depth skills in a specific field or major (Hart Research Associates, 2010). The importance of intellectual and practical skills, personal and social responsibility and integrative learning were emphasized. In terms of intellectual and practical skills, the main areas that were considered important for employers were: the ability to communicate effectively, orally and in writing (89%), critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills (81%), the ability to analyze and solve complex problems (75%), teamwork skills and the ability to collaborate with others in diverse group settings (71%), the ability to innovate and be creative (70%), the ability to locate, organize, and evaluate information from multiple sources (68%) and the ability to work with numbers and understand statistics (63%) (Hart Research Associates, 2010). In terms of personal and social responsibility, the survey found that 75% of respondents noted the importance of the ability to connect choice and actions to ethical decisions and 52% identified civic knowledge, civic participation and community engagement. Lastly, in terms of integrative knowledge, 79% of respondents identified the importance of the ability to apply knowledge and skills to real-world settings through internships or other hands-on experiences (Hart Research Associates, 2010). Of further importance, 84% of respondents recommend that students complete a significant project before graduation that demonstrates their depth of knowledge in their major and their acquisition of analytical, problem-solving and communication skills. These findings were originally recognized in Kavanaugh and Drennan's (2008) work with accounting graduates in three Australian universities by which it was determined that students are becoming more aware of employers' expectation in terms of communication, analytical, professional and teamwork skills. This study also found that

employers are requiring basic accounting and analytical skills as well as business awareness and knowledge in terms of the 'real world.'

Professionalism

The aspect of professionalism was addressed in the 2013 Professionalism in the Workplace Study produced by the Polk-Lepson Research Group for York College. This nationwide study examined a random sample of 401 human resource professionals used an online survey on the state of professionalism in the workplace. The maximum margin of error associated with the samples was 4.9% at the 95% confidence level.   According to this study, a professional in the workplace should demonstrate the qualities of: working until a task is completed competently, interpersonal skills including civility, appropriate appearance, punctuality and regular attendance, communication skills, honesty and focused/attentive. Similarly, an unprofessional employee was characterized with the qualities of: inappropriate appearance, poor work ethic, unfocused, apathetic, sense of entitlement, disrespectful and rude, and a lack of time management (York College, 2013). According to Lonny Butcher, Director of the College of Business Career Services, "professionalism can be defined as adapting one's behavior, appearance and skills to the norms, values and culture of a given environment and its inhabitants so as to present the individual as a competent entity with a high probability of success." (Butcher, personal communications, May 12, 2013)

Further examination determined that the indicators of professionalism were described as the percentage of respondents feeling less than 50% of new employees exhibit professionalism in their first year, a decrease in the percent of new employees demonstrating professionalism, an

increase in the percent of new employees exhibiting a sense of entitlement, an increase in IT etiquette problems, an increase in the number of unfocused employees and a worsening of work ethic. The findings are summarized as: 52.9% reported an increase in the percentage of new employees exhibiting a sense of entitlement, 50.1% reported an increase in IT etiquette problems, 48.6% feeling less than 50% of new employees exhibiting professionalism in their first year, 44.6% reported a worsening of work ethic, 37.9% reported an increase in number of unfocused employees, and 35.9% reported a decrease in the number of new employees demonstrating professionalism (Polk-Lepson Research Group, 2013). A recurring theme in the research was the sense of entitlement which new hires demonstrate. The way parents raised their children was most often seen as the reason for new employees feeling entitled. Abuses of technology were evidenced in the workplace; the most common types were: text messaging at inappropriate times (74.3%), inappropriate use of the Internet (65.7%) and excessive twittering/use of Facebook (65.2%) (York College, 2013). Unfocused employees and poor work ethics were also common problems. Most respondents indicated that the reason for employees being unfocused is that they allowed technology to interrupt their focus while the most common reasons for a worsening work ethics were too casual of an attitude toward work, not being self-driven, lack of ownership, not understanding what hard work is and a willingness to do work that is less than professional quality.

The Importance of Innovation and Global Issues

A 2013 survey commissioned Hart Research Associates by the Association of American Colleges and Universities conducted an online survey of 318 employers whose organizations had

at least 25 employees. Respondents were executives from private sector and non-profit organizations and included owners, CEOs, presidents, C-suite level executives and vice presidents. Nearly all of the employers surveyed (95%) concluded that innovation is a top priority and essential to their organization's continued success. Further, the study noted that employers gave hiring preference to college graduates with skills that will enable them to contribute to innovation in the workplace (Hart Research Associates, 2013). In addition, 93% agreed that "a candidate's demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than their undergraduate major" (Hart Research Associates, 2013, p. 1). Other skills considered important for new hires were demonstrated ethical judgment and integrity, intercultural skills and the capacity for continued new learning.

Additional research on the importance of knowledge of global issues, including the role of the United States in the world and cultural diversity in America was mixed. The 2007 Association of American Colleges and Universities survey performed by Hart Research Associates interviewed 301 employers whose companies had at least 25 employees and reported that 25% or more of their new hires held at least a bachelor's degree from a four-year college. Respondents were executives at their organizations and included CEOs, presidents, C-suite level executives, and vice presidents. This study noted that 46% college graduates were not well prepared in global knowledge (Hart Research Associates, 2007). A follow up survey in 2010 of 302 employers indicated that 65% of respondents agreed that global issues and developments and their implications for their future were important (Hart Research Associates, 2010). But in 2013, the same research group interviewed 318 employees from an equivalent population using an online survey and recognized that less than 40% of respondents indicated that this knowledge

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was important. Further, 45% of respondents indicated that colleges should not place additional emphasis on this learning outcome (Hart Research Associates, 2013).

Performance Gaps

Research also revealed that deficiencies exist in skill attainment. In 2006, the Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) report was commissioned for the Association of American Colleges and Universities and studied a series of focus groups in different regions of the United States with college-bound high school students, advanced college students and private employers. This study affirmed deficiencies in skill attainment noting that 63% of business executives agree that college graduates do not have the skills to be successful in today's global economy (Hart Research Associates, 2006). An October 2009 survey by the Business Roundtable, an association of CEOs of leading U.S. companies, entrepreneurs, labor leaders, educators, governors, researchers, social networking experts and foundation leaders, analyzed data, consulted with experts and commissioned an opinion research organization to gain information about workers' and employers' current perceptions. This study focused on finding new approaches to address Americans' concerns about employability as today's jobs disappear or become obsolete and tomorrow's jobs require higher levels of skills and education.   Policy recommendations for a 21st century approach to equip Americans with the knowledge and skills needed for lifelong success in the U.S. workforce were proposed. According to the Business Roundtable, a growing need for workers with higher levels of skills was identified. Deficiencies were reported in written communications, followed by leadership and professionalism/work ethic with several respondents reporting unrealistic salary and promotional expectations (Business

Roundtable, 2009). The John William Pope Center for Higher Education Policy (2006) reviewed the relationship between median salaries and college degrees and determined that business respondents reported the greatest area of deficiency was communications (Leef, 2006).

Hodges and Burchell (2003) conducted a questionnaire survey via mail to 1,303 employers on graduate competency levels, what employers find important and what they experience. While these employers are generally satisfied with the performance of new graduates, there was a performance gap in graduate competency levels between what employers found important and what they experienced. Poor communication skills, especially written communication, were identified as an important issue by many employers. In 2011, the *Across the Great Divide* national study examined the perspectives of business and college leaders on the state of America's higher education, the skills gap and what is needed in today's challenging global economy. According to the study, "two-thirds of job openings in the next decade will require at least some post-secondary education, including programs that are two years or less" (Smith, 2011). A business professional commented "another issue she sees in newly graduated hires is an inability to connect with what they're doing and understanding how it fits in with the way the rest of the company functions. Teaching better strategic and conceptual skills would help grads relate to why and what they're doing and why that's important to the overall business" (Everson, 2014).

Despite the evidence of a skills gap between higher education and industry needs, contradictory research also exists. A 2013 study by Boston Consulting Group analyzed national wage and job data and found "of the fifty biggest manufacturing areas in the U.S., only five were

suffering serious skills shortages" (Murphy, 2014). Related studies opined that the skills gap is overblown with only "eight percent of executives surveyed said they were considering moving out to the U.S. because of issues related to skills" (Murphy, 2014). Everson (2014) concurred noting "there are generational gaps that tend to exaggerate what we think skills gaps are. Some of those Gen Y talents include a more entrepreneurial and creative spirit, the ability to collaborate and the desire to be part of a greater purpose than a paycheck" (Everson, 2014).

Soft Skills

Employers also saw a considerable deficit of soft skills among workers. 'Soft skills' refer to a group of personal qualities, habits and attitudes that make someone a good employee and compatible to work with (Top 10 Soft Skills for Job Hunters 2009) According to the US Department of Labor ("Soft Skills"), soft skills are increasingly important for workplace success and include six main competencies: communication; enthusiasm and attitude; teamwork; networking; problem solving and critical thinking; and professionalism.   Communication is the most common specification for job vacancies. "Skilled communicators get along well with colleagues, listen and understand instructions and put their point across without being aggressive. If you've got good communication skills, you should be able to develop constructive working relationships with colleagues and be able to learn from constructive criticism" (National Careers Service, 2012).

Comments on graduates' attitudes and commitment to the organization as well as unrealistic expectations suggested that the current generation of graduates have a different focus on what is important to them. The research findings indicated that employers want 'work-ready'

graduates with prior work. Specifically, employers said they were experiencing an under-trained workforce with a significant gap between their needs and employees' skills. Lilwall (2014) examined post-secondary schools and the demands of the business world and found "businesses are demanding more specialized skill from new employees and that while the new graduates were strong in technical terms, they were lacking in the 'soft skills' that have become a bigger part of the working world. They don't have the communication skills, the decision making, the critical thinking, or the ability to work in teams" (Lilwall, 2014).

Haselberger, Perez, Cinque & Capasso (n.d.) focused on identifying and mediating soft skills at higher education institutions. By examining best practices, Haselberger et al (n.d.) developed specific core modules to increase communication, conflict management and cultural adaptability. The module was designed to "develop basic communication skills such as active listening or empathic reflection which the learner will require in their field of study and as a professional" (Haselberger et al, n.d.). In addition to curricular changes to foster soft skills, Eggleston (2014) recommended organizational training programs. Lilwall (2014) noted six strategies to better train workers in soft skills: They include: "1- effective response to labor market information and analysis; 2- commitment to essential skills development; 3- enhancement and expansion of trades-and-careers-based education programs; 4- increased exposure to industry and access to workplace experiences; 5-responsive post-secondary education; and 6- investment in employee learning and development opportunities" (Lillwall, 2014).

Importance of Specific Skill Sets in Colleges of Business

The main purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida. Specifically for Colleges of Business, many authors including Raymond, McNabb and Matthaei (1993) identified the preferred skills and abilities for success in business by conducting a national survey of both students and employers on the business employability skills and competencies required by employers in the US. Their research found that both students and employers ranked business internships and team projects as the two most effective teaching methods as they gave students the ability to apply the knowledge gained in the classroom, to solve problems which are essential to employers, and exposed students to ethical issues and global dimensions sometimes not gained through class work. The importance of oral skills, dependability, interpersonal skills, written skills and self-starter motivation became evident as well as high levels of energy and enthusiasm and a quick learning style. Massooki, Rama & Raghunandan (1998) surveyed ninety-three chairpersons of finance departments at AACSB accredited institutions about the use of internships in undergraduate programs and found that internships and projects can make students more marketable by helping them develop desired skills, such as critical thinking and written and oral communication, and providing them with the practical experience that many employers seek from new graduates.

Doria, Rozanski and Cohen's (2003) research on 141 CEO's and senior executives identified that employers require business graduates with 'people' skills to effectively managing people and team driven organizations. Problem solving skills, grounded in theory and applying multiple

disciples were also found to be necessary. Hodges and Burchell (2003) conducted a questionnaire survey via mail with a follow up letter to 1,303 employers on the level of importance of business competencies and level of performance demonstrated for each competency. They found that found that a business graduate's ability and willingness to learn was the most important competency for new hires. Strebler (1997) evaluated the feedback of nearly two hundred employers by reviewing manager's performance reviews and determined that successful work performance requires both hard (cognitive) skills and soft (behavioral) skills.

In 1999, Tanyel, Mitchell and McAlum surveyed human resource professionals in South Carolina and Chamber of Commerce directories in a five-county region in the southeastern US. Their work most closely corresponds to the research questions posed in this dissertation. The authors compared the most important attribute to be possessed by newly hired business graduates by prospective employer respondents and university faculty respondents. According to the prospective employers, the most important attributes of business graduates are responsibility and accountability, ethical values, interpersonal skills, oral communications, time management and punctuality, the ability to work in teams and decision making and analytical ability. Interestingly, attributes considered to be less important to the prospective employers are global awareness, computer skills and presentation skills. Additional research on the importance of knowledge of global issues, including the role of the United States in the world and cultural diversity in America is mixed. In 2010, Hart Research Associates interviewed 302 employers whose organizations have at least 25 employees and report that 25% or more of their new hires hold either an associate's degree from a two-year college or a bachelor's degree from a four-year college. Their findings indicated that 65% of respondents agreed that global issues and

developments and their implications for their future were important. But in 2013, the same research group recognized that less than 40% of respondents indicated that this knowledge was important (Hart Research Associates, 2013).

In Colleges of Business, there was a direct correlation between innovation and the field of entrepreneurship. According to a 2011 online national survey of 2,141 Americans on entrepreneurism and education commissioned by Cogswell College, entrepreneurial skills were important for business students. 79% of respondents reported that having entrepreneurial skills were key for business graduates to land a job (Graduate Management Admission Council, 2013). According to this study, universities needed to focus on giving students start-up experience as college students are getting enough entrepreneurial skills.   Over the next five years, these skills were likely to continue to increase in importance due to global competitiveness.

Tanyel, Mitchell and McAlum (1999) also surveyed faculty from business and non-business disciplines at two regional state universities human resource professionals in South Carolina and Chamber of Commerce directories in a five-county region in the southeastern US. According to the university faculty respondents, the most important attributes are responsibility and accountability, oral communications, interpersonal skills, written communications, creativity and critical thinking, time management and punctuality and decision making and analytical ability. Faculty respondents also said that global awareness, project management and persuasive ability were less important attributes.

Relationship between Specific Skill Sets and Majority of College of Business Syllabi

Bloomberg BusinessWeek, founded in 1929, is a weekly business magazine provides information and interpretation on the global business and financial world by delivering data, news and analytics to over 315,000 subscribers in 174 countries throughout the world. *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* and its affiliates produce over 5,000 stories a day and are syndicated to more than 1,000 media outlets across 60+ countries ("Bloomberg Facts," n.d.). The publication focuses on delivering national and international issues that affect the business world. Daily topics focus on global economics, companies and industries, politics and policy, markets and finance, technology, innovation and design, lifestyle, business schools, small business and video and multimedia. In its business schools section, *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* produces a yearly listing of the top Colleges and Schools of Business; this listing of top Colleges and Schools of Business is well respected and scholars defer to its results.

Most Important Skills Employers Want in New Hires

Ghannadian (2013) conducted various focus groups with business employers in the Tampa, FL, region to identify the extent to which the academic community is meeting employers' skill requirements. The focus group identified the 25 most important skills that employers say they prize in new hires. Ghannadian's (2013) findings indicated that at the bachelor's level, the top ten skills identified by employers are:

Leadership — 80%
Business Writing — 76%
Business Speaking and Organizational Behavior — 72%
Business Ethics — 68%
Social Responsibility — 56%
Change Management — 48%
Decision Making — 44%
Career Planning — 36%
Problem Solving and Project Management — 32%
Teamwork — 28%
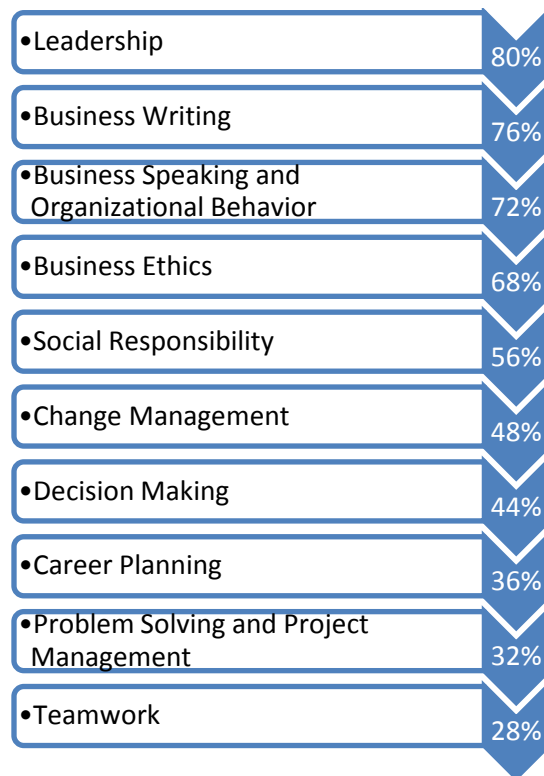
Figure 6: Employer Identified Most Important Skills

Source: Ghannadian, F. (2013). What Employers Want, What We Teach. Biz Ed. March/April (p 40-44)

Other skills identified as important in Ghannadian's (2013) study were: advanced communication, motivation, imagination and creativity. These responses were then compared with the course syllabi of the top Colleges and Schools of Business as identified by the 2011 *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* study for evidence of skills in the curriculum. The Business schools that continuously topped the list as the best Business schools are: University of Notre Dame, University of Virginia, Emory University, University of Pennsylvania and Cornell University.

At the bachelor's level, the top skills taught in the best Colleges of Business are:

- Leadership
- Business Writing
- Organizational Behavior
- Business Speech
- Business Ethics
- Social Responsibility
- Change Management
- Decision Making
- Career Planning
- Project Management

Figure 7: Common Top Skills Identified on College of Business Syllabi

Source: Ghannadian, F. (2013). What Employers Want, What We Teach. Biz Ed. March/April (p 40-44)

A review of employer skill needs and the skills taught in the top business schools indicated a relative similarity in serving employer requirements. Leadership was the most significant attribute desired by employers as well as the skill taught in the majority of the top business schools. Business writing, speech and organizational behavior were also deemed as important skills by employers and were evidenced in the majority of business school programs. There was also some congruency between employer skill requirements and the skills taught in business schools. Ghannadian (2013) found that business colleges have done a good job of responding to employers' needs in terms of business and leadership skills, but they haven't been

as successful in teaching softer skills such as self-awareness, long-term planning, time management, task prioritization, empathy, and persistence. Specific recommendations included internships, experiential classes and hiring faculty with more business experience. David and David (2010) collected 200 corporate job descriptions and identified 140 specific skills that employers said they are looking for. They then reviewed 200 resumes of business students who were near graduation and 100 business school syllabi. Ghannadian's (2013) findings were affirmed and areas of distinct shortcomings were identified, specifically in the areas of internships, experiential classes, simulated work situations, and the inclusion of licensing exams and certifications as part of the course curriculum.

The main purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida. The discussion will now focus exclusively on the College of Business. According to the Office of Undergraduate Student Services, there are no distinct competencies of a College of Business graduate. Further, according to Lonny Butcher, Director of College of Business Career Services, there are no set skill requirements by potential employers in the Central Florida region. However, recent on campus interviews and job postings by banking industry recruiters noted the following qualifications (Butcher, personal communications, September 18, 2012):

All applicants must have a strong work ethic and the desire to continuously learn, as well as:

- ✓ A BS/BA degree (Business, Finance & Accounting preferred; all majors considered)
- ✓ A cumulative GPA of 3.2+

- ✓ Superior analytical, quantitative, leadership, interpersonal and written/verbal communication skills
- ✓ A keen attention to detail and creative mindset
- ✓ The proven ability to multitask and meet deadlines in a fast-paced environment
- ✓ Permanent and/or unrestricted authorization to work in the U.S. (Career Services)

An additional job posting in the banking industry noted these skills and abilities required:

- ✓ College degree or equivalent combination of education and experience required.
- ✓ Some experience in a sales environment preferred. Financial industries experience a plus.
- ✓ Work involves cash handling, and ability to perform advanced math functions.
- ✓ Work involves contact with the public, necessitating the ability to present a professional image.
- ✓ Must have the ability to interact comfortably and confidently with the public and demonstrate the initiative to initiate dialogue.
- ✓ Work requires the ability to properly read and write well enough to communicate in both oral and written form.
- ✓ Position requires an in-depth knowledge of retail policies and procedures in order to utilize good judgment in making sound decisions.
- ✓ Work requires the ability to take initiative and diplomacy and tact in problem resolution.
- ✓ Work involves product knowledge for the level of selling and cross-selling performance expected with position.
- ✓ Must be able to work in a team environment with the ability to interact well, and in a positive manner, with co-workers and management.
- ✓ Work requires the ability to multitask and to be flexible. (Career Services)

Summary

This chapter provided a review of the related literature of Capstone courses by examining best practices of Capstone courses, an identification of skills within Capstone courses and an identification of skills determined as necessary by potential employers. The best practices of Capstone courses were linked to the major functions of Capstone courses as a summative assessment for program evaluation of students' knowledge, skills, attitudes and values and

behaviors. The most common strategies for effective assessment analysis of a Capstone program were identified as simulations and team projects, examinations, case studies, portfolio evaluations, and specific projects. The use of these assessment strategies was documented in large metropolitan universities and Colleges of Business. Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives was utilized to identify specific skills sets in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning. Bloom's Digital Taxonomy was used to reflect the importance of collaboration skills and Web applications in the 21st century.

The Michigan Professional Preparation Network Report initiated the discussion of top skills for employment by identifying ten potential professional outcomes as overall goals of learning. The Conference Board Research agency, Hart Research and professionalism in the workplace studies documented specific skill sets for college graduates. Oral communication, teamwork/collaboration, professionalism/work ethics, written communications and critical thinking/problem solving were considered to be 'very important' skills. Performance gaps were also identified. In Colleges of Business, a survey cited the most important attributes of business graduates as responsibility and accountability, ethical values, interpersonal skills, oral communications, time management and punctuality, the ability to work in teams and decision making and analytical ability. Ghannadian's (2013) work affirmed these findings and compared the skills noted as very important to the syllabi of the top business schools, as identified by *Bloomberg BusinessWeek*. Ghannadian found some congruency between employer skill requirements and the skills taught in business schools. The distinction and importance of both 'hard' and 'soft' skills was discussed. The necessity of both of these skills was confirmed by a Career Services job posting for a recent College of Business graduate.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter provides the methodology or procedures used in the research design and implementation of this study. Methodology is an important component of an effective research study as it identifies the why, who, how, when and where of a research study. The purpose or significance of the research study is inferred as the 'why' of the research and is found in the "Methodological Overview" Section. The population of sample to be studied is inferred as the 'who' to observe. This information is detailed in the "Population and Sample" section. This area is further broken down into the "Participant Selection" section and discusses the rationale and criteria for the selection of student projects and participants. The form of research used, for example, tests, interviews, or direct observation, can be inferred as the 'how' to observe. For this research study, it was determined that focus groups are the most effective form of analysis. The 'where' of the research study can be inferred as the setting or location of the research. Lastly, the 'when' of the research denotes a time or date to observe. This chapter also details the research questions upon which this study is founded, identifies instrumentation, and discusses data collection and analysis.

The main purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of the skills and competencies, as demonstrated through Capstone student papers and presentations, required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida. To accomplish this, focus group research investigated the relationship between the skills evidenced through student projects in the Capstone course and graduate capabilities and employability

skills. To this end, the study examined to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida. This chapter discusses how the purpose of this study is to be achieved. An overview of the methodology for this study, which includes the nature and characteristics of qualitative research, is provided in the "Methodological Overview" section. The second section is titled "Setting" which details the characteristics of the College of Business. A further subsection is titled "Project Selection and Participant Selection" and details the rationale and criteria for the selection of student projects as well as participants. The "Data Sources and Collection" section details the specific procedures that will be utilized for analyzing the data collected during the course of this study. Finally, the "Trustworthiness" section describes the strategies the researcher will utilize to ensure the trustworthiness of the research.

Methodological Overview

This section provides contextual information for the measurement of the capstone student papers and presentations by examining rubrics and focus group responses. The Capstone course, designated as MAN 4720 in a large, metropolitan university, is indicative of a student's cumulative undergraduate experience and is a required course for graduating College of Business students. To better assess the extent to which skills taught in the Capstone course, as demonstrated by Capstone student papers and presentations, fulfill employment needs of community business leaders in Central Florida, focus group research was selected as the strategy to investigate the relationship between the skills evidenced through student projects in the Capstone course and graduate capabilities and employability skills. The following section details

research design strategies, the use of focus group as means of exploratory research and focus group question types.

Research Design

Research design refers to the arrangement of details of how an investigation occurs. It includes how data is to be collected, what instruments will be employed, how the instruments will be used and the intended means for analyzing data collected. Two fundamental types of research questions exist: descriptive research questions and explanatory research questions. The purpose of descriptive research is to examine what is going on; the purpose of explanatory research is to uncover why it is going on. Descriptive research encompasses much government-sponsored research such as the population census whereas explanatory research focuses on why questions ("What is research design?" n.d.). The purpose of research design is to identify the conceptual structure within which research is conducted. It also constitutes a blue print for the collection, measurement and analysis of data.

The following sections detail the selection of focus groups as the chosen strategy of investigation, sample focus group questions, research questions, information needed, moderator, setting, project selection, population and sample, participant selection, timeline and procedures, as well as data collection and analysis techniques. Interviewing as an additional form of qualitative research is also explored.

Focus Groups

The chosen strategy of investigation was focus group research. As a form of inquiry, focus group research utilizes qualitative methods to ask questions to explore a concept. The purpose of a focus group is to explore feelings, attitudes and perceptions and learn thinking patterns of a target population. A focus group is a conversational meeting with a moderator and 6 – 10 participants. The participants' group discussion produces data and insights that would be less accessible without interaction found in a group setting—listening to others' verbalized experiences stimulates memories, ideas, and experiences in participants. This is also known as the group effect where group members engage in "a kind of 'chaining' or 'cascading' effect; talk links to, or tumbles out of, the topics and expressions preceding it" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 182). Group members discover a common language to describe similar experiences. This enables the capture of a form of "native language" or "vernacular speech" to understand the situation. Focus groups also provide an opportunity for disclosure among similar others in a setting where participants are validated.

Focus group research method was the best choice for this research because it allowed the researcher to listen to the views of the participants, while considering the context in which participants express their views. Focus group methods permitted the researcher to approach the fieldwork without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis, and allowed the researcher to study the selected issue in-depth and detail, which contributed to the depth, openness and detail of the qualitative inquiry (Patton, 1990). Specifically, the focus group session concentrated on: gathering opinions, beliefs, and attitudes about issues of interest to your

organization; testing your assumptions; encouraging discussion about a particular topic; building excitement from spontaneous combination of participants' comments; and providing an opportunity to learn more about a topic or issue. Several characteristics of focus group research include: natural setting, researcher as key instrument, multiple sources of data, inductive data analysis, participants' meanings, emergent design, theoretical lens, interpretive and holistic account (Creswell, 2009).

Focus group researchers tend to collect data at the site of investigation. In this study, focus group data was collected in the MAN 4720 Strategic Management (Capstone) Course in the College of Business. The researcher examined student projects and designed focus group protocol to obtain information from community business leaders. Multiple sources of data were used including student papers and student presentations, which were reviewed and organized into categories or themes.

The primary source of inquiry in this study was inductive data analysis to process the information. Inductive data analysis involved building patterns and collaborating with participants to establish themes. The research process for focus group research was emergent. In this form of inquiry, the research was interpretive as the researcher made an interpretation of what was seen, heard and understood. This study directly followed an interpretive inquiry guideline in that the researcher listened to community business leaders' feedback on student projects, processed their multiple perspectives revealing the many factors involved in the situation to develop a holistic account.

In the focus group, introductory questions were initially used to make the participants comfortable and begin thinking about the topic. As the main purpose of this study is to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida, several types of questions were asked during the focus groups. These types of questions included introductory questions, transition questions, key questions and end questions. Introductory questions served the purpose of introducing or meeting the focus group participants and led to transition questions. Transition questions asked participants to go into more depth and detail and were followed by key questions. Key questions focused on major areas of concern and comprised the majority of time in the focus group. Ending questions concluded the focus group. An example of an ending question is "Is there anything we should have talked about but didn't?" (Rennekamp & Nell, n.d.) The focus group questions flowed in a logical sequence, had limited "why" questions and used 'think-back' questions as needed.

Table 5: Sample Focus Group Questions

Focus Group Questions	Question Type
Can you please state your name, organization, and years of experience?	Introductory
What level and types of employees do you hire?	Transition
What skills are the most important in entry level positions in your organization?	Transition
Why are these skills important?	Transition
By reviewing Capstone student papers, what skills are evident?	Key
Are these the same skills that you indicated as important in your organization?	Key
To what extent are the skills you indicated as important demonstrated in the Capstone papers?	Key
By reviewing Capstone student presentations, what skills are evident?	Key
Are these the same skills that you indicated as important in your organization?	Key
To what extent are the skills you indicated as important demonstrated in the Capstone papers?	Key
From your review of Capstone student papers and presentations, what skills are lacking?	Key
Is there anything we haven't covered?	Ending

As the main purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies, as demonstrated through capstone student papers and presentations, required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida, focus group methods were used to explore the association between the characteristics of student capstone projects and the evidence they provided for potential workplace employment by community business leaders. Therefore, the focus group participants were selected from potential employers in the Central Florida business community. The focus group participants were representative of a selection of large and small organizations. In addition, they represented non-profit organizations as well as for-profit organizations that were well recognized in the business

community.   These organizations also ranged in their number of locations; some only had one location in the Central Florida area while others possessed a nationwide presence. The participants had significant expertise in their industries, with a range of ten to forty years of experience. Demographics of the participants ranged with 41% female / 59% male and 25% Hispanic / 75% non-Hispanic ethnicity. In addition, the participants held executive level positions in their organizations, leading from ten to one hundred employees. Examples of organizations that were invited to attend the focus group included: New Hope for Kids, Boys Town of Central Florida, McLane Company Inc., Signature Flight Support, and Tijuana Flats Restaurants.

This research was undertaken in a series of stages as it involved two distinct audiences. The first audience of the research was community business leaders; the second audience was the College of Business faculty. In the first stage, a preliminary focus group was held with the community business leaders as they represented potential employers of capstone graduates. The preliminary focus group supported and maintained the rigor of this investigation. Its purpose was for community business leaders to deliberate on their interpretation of the five skills identified as very important by the consortium of The Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills and the Society of Human Resource Management. As reference, the five most frequently reported skills considered very important for four-year Business College graduates were: oral communication (95.4%), teamwork/collaboration (94.4%), professionalism/ work ethic (93.8), written communications (93.1%) and critical thinking/ problem solving (92.1%) (Consortium, 2006). It was necessary for the potential employers to have a similar interpretation to the findings of the consortium of The

Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills and the Society of Human Resource Management so that an effective investigation can result. In the second stage, a focus group composed of College of Business faculty concurred on the top skills and competencies for capstone graduates. At the third stage, the focus group of community leaders reviewed capstone student papers and presentations for evidence of the top five skills and competencies that they interpreted as very important in conjunction with the Conference Board consortium.   In order for there to be consistency in procedure, the community business leaders were instructed on how to use the grading rubrics. Community business leaders also commented on evidence of significant skill deficiencies as an employer requirement in capstone student papers and presentations. Lastly, the final stage of this research concluded with the College of Business faculty commenting on observable skills and competencies in capstone student papers and presentations and evident skill deficiencies.

Interviews

An additional form of inquiry that utilizes qualitative methods to ask questions to explore a concept is interviews. Glaser and Strauss (1967) pioneered the qualitative research movement for interviews. Patton (1990) identified three basic types of qualitative interviewing for research or evaluation: the informal conversational interview, the interview guide approach, and the standardized open-ended interview. In an informal conversational interview, the interview may occur spontaneously with questions emerging from the immediate context, so the wording of questions and topics may not be predetermined. An informal conversational interview is individualized so it is likely to produce information or insights that the interviewer could not

have anticipated. Less structured interviews are more appropriate for early stages of research because they allow interviewees to focus on what they think is most relevant to the question, providing the broadest set of perspectives. This approach is best in contexts where little is known about the topic.

The second form of interview is the interview guide approach. This is the most widely used form of qualitative interviewing and occurs when the interviewer has an outline of topics or issues to be covered, but can vary the wording and order of the questions. An interview guide approach is more systematic than an informal conversational interview, while still being fairly conversational and informal. The third type of interview is the standardized open-ended interview. In this format, the interviewers adhere to a strict script. Although there is no flexibility in the wording or order of questions, the responses are still open-ended. This is the most structured and efficient of the qualitative interviewing techniques and is useful for reducing bias when several interviewers are involved (Gill, Stewart & Chadwick, 2008). More structured interviews ensure that all interviewees address the same questions and that the interviewees' responses can be compared. More structured interviews increase the likelihood that the findings of the research will be generalizable and can be used to test a specific hypothesis. Clifford (n.d.) recommends careful planning and structuring of interview questions by avoiding questions that can be answered with a 'yes' or 'no' and biased responses or emotional language. The researcher also needs to recognize that interviewees may not be able to answer all of the research questions.

The advantages of using interviewing in qualitative research are documented. Scruggs (n.d.) and Opdenakker (2006) note that primary benefits of using qualitative interviewing

include: the flexibility of the researcher to probe for more details and ensure that participants are interpreting questions the way they were intended, the participant can describe what is meaningful or important to them in a relaxed and candid setting, and high credibility and face validity. The advantages of using qualitative interviewing are enhanced when interviewers utilize their own knowledge, expertise and interpersonal skills to explore interesting or unexpected ideas raised by participants. Whorton (2009) suggests that interviewers prepare a discussion guide in advance, guarantee confidentiality, and allow the interview to speak at their convenience to increase the candor and quality of the conversation.

Disadvantages of using qualitative interviewing are its intrusiveness and reactiveness to personalities, moods and interpersonal dynamics between the interviewer and interviewee (Gill, Stewart & Chadwick, 2008). Interviewer bias can be a problem. The non-standardization of questions means that it is difficult to generalize the findings on a larger scale. The technique also relies on the respondent being willing and able to give accurate and complete answers (Oatley, 1999). They may often lie due to feelings of embarrassment, inadequacy, lack of knowledge on the topic, nervousness, memory loss or confusion. However, the most significant drawback to using qualitative interviewing is the time and labor intensive job of analyzing and interpreting the qualitative interview.

Research Questions

The main purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies, as demonstrated through capstone student papers and presentations, required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida. Based on

this identified purpose, the focus group questions evolved from the research questions. As reference, the research questions guiding this inquiry were:

1. To what extent does the design of the College of Business capstone course fulfill the best practices of capstone courses?
2. To what extent do characteristics of capstone student projects as means of best practices in the field of business as identified by community business leaders successfully fulfill the requirements of the capstone course?
3. To what extent do characteristics of capstone student presentations as means of best practices in the field of business as identified by community business leaders successfully fulfill the requirements of the capstone course?

Information Needed

The research questions were built upon the information needed to determine the extent to which the skills evidenced in the capstone course, as demonstrated through capstone student papers and presentations, fulfilled the needs of potential employers in the Central Florida area. Based on this, there was a direct relationship between the research questions and the information needed to accomplish the objectives of this investigation. The following list highlights the information needed to answer the research questions and successfully realize the main purpose of this study.

1. What are the best practices of capstone course design?

2. What is the national model of capstone courses in colleges of business?

3. What skills do business faculty deem important for capstone graduates?

4. What skills do community business leaders deem important for entry level employees?

5. How do community business leaders define the most important skills for four year business college graduates?

6. After the community business leaders review capstone student papers, to what extent are skills deemed important demonstrated?

7. After the community business leaders review capstone student presentations, to what extent are skills deemed important demonstrated?

8. After the community business leaders review capstone student papers and presentations, what skills that were considered important lacking?

Moderator

Focus groups, as a form of qualitative research, provided an interactive and effective means to ask participants about their perceptions, opinions, beliefs and attitudes toward a product, service or concept. However, the accuracy of the focus group is directly dependent on the skills of its moderator. This discussion now focuses on the role of the moderator. An effective moderator was a key component in obtaining quality information during a focus group session. The role of the moderator was to facilitate discussion, keep time, deliver the script and establish a trusting relationship with focus group participants. The key skills of a moderator are to know when to prompt and probe, manage the energy level of each participant drawing out the quieter ones, quickly establish a rapport with the group and to eliminate leading questions that may sway perceptions. Focus group moderators are experts in group process, not content.

As the main purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida, the moderator was familiar with the College of Business and the Central Florida area. The moderator chosen for the focus groups in this study was Ms. Mari Rains, an entrepreneur, Chief Learning Office for From Knowing to Doing and a prominent faculty member for the College of Business. Ms. Rains has extensive experience in diverse industries developing people and organizations as a change agent. She is an organization development consultant, corporate trainer, leadership coach, leader and speaker. She also served as the Faculty Advisor for the Society for Human Resources (SHRM) student chapter.

Setting

The research setting was the College of Business at a large, metropolitan university located in Central Florida. As the second largest university in the nation, it is noted as a "School to Watch" and a "Top Tier National University" by *U.S. News & World Report (*US News and World Report, 2014). In addition, it has the second highest number of National Merit Scholars in the state of Florida and is recognized by the Carnegie Foundation for community engagement and research activity as well as being noted as a "Best Value" by Kiplinger's *Personal Finance*. Most recently, *Money* magazine released its Best Colleges rankings list which identifies the best 665 schools in the nation. The university was ranked as one of the best value schools in the nation with a 46% acceptance rate and a 3.78 average high school GPA. With $101,267 as the net price of a degree and $41,000 as the average annual salary earned by graduates after five years, the university was given a value grade of 2.97. (Glenn, 2014)

The College of Business Administration offers degrees in accounting, finance, economics, marketing and management at the bachelor's, master's and doctoral level. There are also several minor and certificate programs. The Entrepreneurship Program is one of the fastest growing programs. All of the College of Business' programs, as well as the Kenneth G. Dixon School of Accounting are accredited by AACSB International—the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business. Less than one percent of all business schools worldwide have achieved both business and accounting accreditation. The college has several distinguished institutes and centers such as the Center for Entrepreneurship and Innovation, the Executive Development Center, the Institute for Economic Competitiveness and the Small Business Development Center.

Project Selection

One of the required courses in the College of Business is MAN 4720 Strategic Management ("CBA Core Curriculum," 2014). It is commonly referred to as the Capstone Course, as it is a culmination of a student's academic experience. This course is delivered in various instructional modalities across sections and campuses, with instructors of various content and pedagogical knowledge and abilities.

The main purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies, as demonstrated through capstone student papers and presentations, required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida. For the purpose of this study, the student projects and presentations from one specific lab section from the

main campus were selected for inclusion in the investigation. Although there are multiple lab sections of this course offered during a semester, one specific lab section was selected for this investigation. The reason for choosing one specific section of the course was due to high student enrollment and number of sections available across campuses. A section from the main Orlando campus was chosen as opposed to a regional campus location due to the nature of the student population. The main campus was selected as student populations on the main campus tended to have more of a traditional student base whereas on the regional campuses, the course tended to have a higher concentration of non-traditional students. As a specific section of the course was selected for analysis, the researcher employed the entirety of the student projects and presentations from that section. Due to this, the selection of the setting and participants was purposive sampling. Purposive sampling was aimed at ensuring that key constituencies are presented so that the issue can be explored in the specified context (Creswell, 2009).

Population and Sample

This study investigated the extent to which capstone student projects evidenced skills necessary to meet the needs of Central Florida employers. In order to fully document this research statement, it was necessary to determine and identify the study's population and sample. A population is a group of individuals who comprise the same characteristics whereas a sample is a subgroup of the target population (Creswell, 2009). The population for this study was the community business leaders in the Central Florida region. The Central Florida region has both large and small businesses. The top five companies employ 140,084 Central Floridians in industries ranging from government to resorts, entertainment, restaurants, travel, health care and more. The top five companies are: Disney, Universal, Florida Hospital, Orlando International

Airport and Orange County Public Schools ("Orlando's Top 10," 2014). Other top Central Florida companies include: Publix Supermarkets, Fairwinds Credit Union, Harris Melbourne Communications, Orlando Magic, JetBlue, Ryland Homes, Siemens AG, Tupperware, United Parcel Service, Lockheed Martin, and Darden Restaurants. Florida has 1,633,574 small businesses, according to the most current federal data available. Of those 1,633,574 small businesses in Florida, 444,066 have employees. The remaining 1,189,508 are Florida small businesses that have no employees ("Number of Florida Small Businesses," 2013).

The population of Central Florida community business leaders was too large to participate in this research study. Due to this, it was determined that a sample, or subset of the target population, be selected. The targeted sample was representative of the entire population but was much smaller in scale so that the study could be managed effectively. The targeted sample was a select group of community business leaders in Central Florida.

Participant Selection

In order to obtain high quality participants for inclusion in the focus group, an invitation to participate was created and distributed to local community business leaders requesting their participation and informing them of the purpose of the study. The ideal number of participants was between 6 – 10 community business leaders. The participants were selected for their views of the characteristics of graduate skills and employability capabilities and were comprised of community business leaders from various industries throughout the Central Florida region. The main purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida; therefore,

the focus group participants were selected from potential employers in the Central Florida business community. Further, the participants represented a selection of large and small organizations. In addition, they represented non-profit as well as for-profit organizations that are well-recognized and respected in the business community. These organizations also ranged in their number of locations; some only have one location in the Central Florida area while others possess a nationwide presence. The participants had significant expertise in their industries, with a range of ten to forty years of experience. In addition, the participants held executive level positions in their organizations, leading from ten to one hundred employees.

Two focus groups were held. The purpose of the first focus group was to provide information on the skills evidenced in Capstone student papers and on the skills required for employment in their respective member organizations. The purpose of the second focus group was to provide evidence of the skills evidenced in Capstone student presentations. The demographics of the first focus group were similar to the demographics of the second focus group, although the actual participants varied. A discussion of the composition of the focus group members follows.

First Focus Group

The purpose of the first focus group was to provide information on the skills evidenced in capstone student papers and on the skills required for employment in their respective member organizations

Participant Description

Organizations that participated in the first focus group included: New Hope for Kids, Boys Town of Central Florida, Signature Flight Support, McLane Company Inc. and Tijuana Flats restaurants. The participants had significant expertise in their industries, with a range of ten to forty years of experience. Demographics of the participants ranged with 41% female / 59% male and 25% Hispanic / 75% non-Hispanic ethnicity. A full description of the each of the participants is found in the Appendix E.

New Hope for Kids

New Hope for Kids is a registered non-profit organization that supports children and families grieving the death of a loved one and grants wishes to children with life-threatening illnesses in Central Florida (New Hope for Kids, 2014). Its mission is to bring hope, healing and happiness suffering from grief, loss or life-threatening illness.

Boys Town of Central Florida

Boys Town of Central Florida is a registered non-profit organization that provides abused, abandoned, and neglected children the family, support and care they need to overcome their circumstances and realize their potential. Its mission is "Changing the way America cares for children, families and communities by providing and promoting an Integrated Continuum of

Care that instills Boys Town values to strengthen body, mind and spirit" (Boys Town Central Florida, 2014).

Signature Flight Support

Signature Flight Support provides aviation support and services to clients in the Central Florida area. The mission of Signature Flight Support is to provide a 'magical experience' to its customers based on a stand and deliver promise, the highest level of quality service and competitive pricing with every visit. Its facility offers 11 acres of aircraft parking and a modern terminal building to meet the demands of its customers (Signature Flight Support, 2013).

Tijuana Flats

Tijuana Flats is a Tex-Mex style restaurant with franchises in the Central Florida area. Based on an 'anything goes' mentality, Tijuana Flats offers competitively priced Mexican food in a casual and unique atmosphere (Tijuana Flats, 2014).

McLane Company Inc.

McLane Company Inc. is a $42 billion supply chain services leader, providing grocery and foodservice supply chain solutions for convenience stores, mass merchants, drug stores and chain restaurants through the United States (McLane Company Inc., 2014).

Second Focus Group

The purpose of the second focus group was to provide evidence of the skills evidenced in Capstone student presentations.

Organizations that participated in the second focus group included: Creative Realty, Inc., Boys Town of Central Florida, NASA, City of Oviedo, Orlando Magic, M. Paul General Contractors, University of Central Florida Administration and Finance, Water Restoration Services, Seminole County Public Schools, Gaylord Palms Resort and Conference Center, Peckettt's Hydroponics Nurseries Inc., Holland Pools, and the American Automobile Association. A full description of the each of the participants is found in the Appendix F.

Creative Realty Group LLC

Creative Realty Group LLC operates offices in Miami, FL and Cleveland, OH to provide residential and commercial real estate services (Creative Realty Group, 2013).

The American Automobile Association

The American Automobile Association (AAA) is a federation of motor clubs throughout North America and the world. AAA is a not-for-profit member service organization with 51 million members as of 2011 (AAA, 2014).

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is the agency of the United States government that is responsible for the nation's civilian space program and for aeronautics and aerospace research (NASA, 2013).

Orlando Regional Medical Center (ORMC)

As part of the Orlando Health System, the Orlando Regional Medical Center (ORMC) is a 808-bed tertiary hospital located in downtown Orlando, Florida. ORMC is one of six teaching hospitals in the state and Central Florida's only Level One Trauma center (Orlando Regional Medical Center, 2014).

Seminole County Public Schools

Seminole County Public Schools is a public school district located in Central Florida and comprises elementary, middle and high schools (Seminole County Public Schools, 2014).

Gaylord Palms Resort and Spa

Gaylord Palms Resort and Spa in Orlando is a total destination resort offering exceptional service, family entertainment, a Relâche spa and recreation (Gaylord Palms Resort and Convention Center, 2014).

Holland Pools

Holland Pools is a Central Florida organization whose mission is to provide every client with an experience of honesty, quality, integrity, excellence, attention to detail, on time scheduling and guaranteed workmanship all at an affordable price (Holland Pools, n.d.).

City of Oviedo

The City Council is the five member elected legislative and governing body of the city responsible for establishing policies, managing growth and land use, adopting an annual budget and tax rate, setting water rates, wastewater rates and other fees and charges for city services, adopting local laws and ordinances and hiring and overseeing the City Manager (City of Oviedo, n.d.).

The Orlando Magic

The Orlando Magic are an American professional basketball team based in Orlando, Florida. They are part of the Southeast Division of the Eastern Conference in the National Basketball Association (National Basketball Association, 2014).

M Paul General Contractors

M Paul General Contractors provide general contracting, pre-construction, construction and construction management services from a simple remodel to ground-up construction (M Paul General Contractors, 2014).

University of Central Florida – Division of Administration and Finance

The University is a metropolitan public research university located in Orlando, Florida, United States. It is a member institution of the State University System of Florida, and it is the second-largest university in the United States by enrollment (UCF Administration and Finance, 2014).

[Peckett's Plantastics Inc](#)

Peckett's Plantastics Inc. is a wholesale foliage growing operation with 750,000 square feet of greenhouses on 50 acres of land in Apopka, Florida, in Central Florida (Peckett's Plantastics Inc., n.d.).

[Emergency Services & Reconstruction](#)

Emergency Services and Reconstruction (ESR) offers disaster restoration, remediation and reconstruction for water, smoke, fire, mold, painting & waterproofing, as well as a licensed General Contractor (Emergency Services and Restoration, 2012).

Institutional Review Board

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) compliance on recruiting focus group participants has been considered by the researcher. In terms of documentation, the IRB's compliance with regulatory requirements and various human subject protection standards, including membership representation, is outlined in the IRB Assurance and Membership Representation. It has completed assurance agreements with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Human Research Protection, to describe the institutions' human subjects program and assure compliance with federal regulations for human subject protection (Institutional Review Board, 2008).

Data Sources and Collection

Data sources refer to the origination of information. There are two forms of data: primary data and secondary data. Primary data refers to the collecting of data by a researcher himself/herself. This is data that has never been gathered before or is unavailable from outside sources. Primary data allows the researcher to tailor data questions and collection to fit the need of research questions. Secondary data is data that has already been collected by another other institution or organization. Secondary data sources include Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research, The Institute for Quantitative Social Science and the U.S. Census Bureau.

As the main purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida, capstone student papers and presentations were examined by community business leaders. Therefore, as this information had never been gathered before, it was necessary to utilize primary research to fulfill the research objectives. Primary research allowed the researcher to tailor focus group questions to specifically gather information needed to meet the research objective.

The researcher coordinated with the Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership (CEL) to provide audio and videotaped documentation of the focus group which was later made available to the researcher in an MP4 format for ease of accessibility and convenience. The focus group was later transcribed and analyzed for emergent themes.

Research Questions

The main purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida. The research questions guiding this inquiry are:

1. To what extent does the design of the College of Business capstone course fulfill the best practices of capstone courses?
2. To what extent do characteristics of capstone student projects as means of best practices in the field of business as identified by community business leaders successfully fulfill the requirements of the capstone course?
3. To what extent do characteristics of capstone student presentations as means of best practices in the field of business as identified by community business leaders successfully fulfill the requirements of the capstone course

As the research questions are the driving impetus for data collection, two primary data sources exist. The first is the actual collection of data to be examined; this is the student's papers and presentations. The second is the input from the community business leaders and faculty members on the student's projects and presentations. In terms of the actual collection of physical evidence of the students' projects, this will include the following items: 1- collecting the students' papers; 2- videotaping the students' presentations; and 3-videotaping the community business leaders' analysis on the evidence of skill sets and competencies in students papers and presentations. Once the items had been assembled, the community business leaders and faculty

members were invited to participate and express their views on the observable skill sets and competencies of the students' papers and presentations. This method proved to be an economical and effective means to attain information that was used in the study.

Timelines, Procedures and Responsibilities

Table 6: Timelines Procedures and Responsibilities

Date Occurred	Description of Activity	Responsibility
May 2012	Collect Capstone student papers from instructors of MAN 4720 Strategic Management course.	Researcher
May 2012	Obtain approval from IRB for collection of student data.	Researcher
June 2012	Develop invitations to participate. Mail out invitations to participate to focus group participants. Obtain location of focus group.	Researcher
July 2012	Collect and coordinate responses of invitations to participate. Send focus group participants parking passes, map, directions.	Researcher
August 2012	Arrange for moderator. Perform first focus group of Capstone student papers. Have focus group participants complete audio/visual release form. Provide light refreshments. Arrange for videotaping of focus groups.	Researcher
September 2012 – March 2013	Perform analysis of focus group session. Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership to convert videotape to MP4 format. Transcribe focus group and analyze for themes.	Researcher
April 2013	Obtain for release of audio/video release. Collect Capstone student presentations.	Researcher
May 2013	Perform second focus group of Capstone student presentations.	Researcher
June 2013 – December 2013	Perform analysis of second focus group session.	Researcher

Data Analysis

As the purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida,

data analysis was used to examine the rubrics used in evaluating the capstone student papers and presentations. Data analysis was also used to evaluate the focus group responses. The first source of data that was analyzed came from rubrics from capstone student papers and presentations.

Rubrics are often used in summative assessment, such as capstone courses, to objectively quantify mastery of required course and curricular skills and competencies. A rubric is a scoring tool that explicitly sets performance expectations for an assignment by dividing assigned work into components and providing clear descriptions for levels of mastery. Levels of achievement are given numerical scores with a summary score for the work being assessed being produced by adding the scores for each criterion. Rubrics may be completed by faculty members, teams of faculty members from outside the program, or outside industry representatives.

Rubrics were utilized to evaluate capstone student performance for both a paper and presentation assignment. The capstone student paper and presentation rubric were designed by the lead lecturer for the course. The current lead lecturer is Dr. Robert Porter. In order to maintain consistency between the main Orlando campus and regional location, paper and presentation rubrics cannot be independently altered by lab instructors. The paper assignment description stated its purpose as to "analyze your client's current operations and provide strategic recommendations to the board of directors of your client in order to answer how to protect and strengthen a current competitive advantage, or to create a new competitive advantage and then protect and strengthen it. The recommendations should be creative, should leverage your client's current strengths and/or address your client's significant weakness, and should be supported with sound financial analysis and justification" (Connell, 2013, p. 1). The specific components of this

assignment were included on a rubric and included the following categories: executive summary, company mission and strategy; smart SWOT, Porter's five forces and strategic group map; sustainable competitive advantage; issues and problems; strategic recommendations; financial analysis; and fallout.

On the capstone paper rubric, levels of achievement were given numerical scores for each category identified depending on the level of mastery required. Of a total assignment value of 150 points, the executive summary, company mission and strategy category was given a maximum point value of 5 points; smart SWOT, Porter's five forces and strategic group map a maximum point value of 30 points; sustainable competitive advantage a maximum point value of 15 points; issues and problems a maximum point value of 30 points; strategic recommendations a maximum point value of 30 points; financial analysis a maximum point value of 30 points; and fallout a maximum point value of 10 points. A summary score for the work being assessed was produced by adding the scores together for each criterion. Figure Eight represents the grading rubric for the capstone student papers.

Section	Minimum Questions to Answer – you may have additional questions that you find important	Possible Points	Your Points
Executive Summary	Summarize the main points of your report.	5	
1. Company Mission, Vision, Strategy	Identify the current corporate mission. What is the relative size of the company? What does the company do? Where does the company operate? What is the strategic posture of the company (e.g., where do they lie on the growth, differentiation/cost, and breadth/focus continua)? What are the things that make your company unique?	5	
2. Smart SWOT, Porter's Five Forces, & Strategic Group Map (use other tools as needed)	Analysis - use a combination appropriate tools Identify the most important elements of Smart SWOT and list them in order of importance. Relate Porter's Five Forces and a Strategic Group Map as appropriate to complete the analysis.	30	
3a Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA)	Identify specifically the firm's SCA What does the company do better than every other company? Confirm and verify your findings using the VRIO framework. What does the company have that no other company has? If the company does not have an SCA, say so.	15	
3b. Issues and Problems	Identify the most important issues to be dealt with. Identify the company's three biggest issues or problems and rank them in order of importance.	20	
4a. Strategic Recommendation(s) – you may choose more than one	Identify the appropriate strategy(s) to be undertaken. What do you want to do with the company? Pick a strategic move that you think the company should make and describe in detail how they should do it (e.g., how much will it cost, where will the money come from, where will it go, how profitable will it be, etc.).	30	
4b. Financial Analysis	Support your recommendation with financial analysis You must include a clear and definitive financial analysis as part of your recommendations	30	
5. Fallout	Identify what could go wrong. What are the problems your solutions will cause?	10	

Figure 8: Grading Rubric for Capstone Papers

Source: ucf.edu

On the capstone student presentations, the assignment description stated its purpose as "to summarize the firm's situation for the benefit of the judge(s), move directly into what you

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learned from the analysis, and what strategic initiative(s) you recommend to the top management team at the company" (Connell, 2013, p 1). Similar to the capstone student paper rubric, the components of the assignment were identified as: introduction/agenda, corporate mission, analysis, sustainable competitive advantage, issues and problems, strategic recommendations, financial analysis, fallout, conclusion/question and answer.

The capstone student presentation rubrics detailed levels of achievement which were given numerical scores for each category identified depending on the level of mastery required. Of a total assignment value of 150 points, the introduction/agenda was given a maximum point value of 5 points; corporate mission was given a maximum point value of 5 points; analysis was given a maximum point value of 30 points; sustainable competitive advantage a maximum point value of 15 points; issues and problems a maximum point value of 20 points; strategic recommendations a maximum point value of 30 points; financial analysis a maximum point value of 30 points; fallout a maximum point value of 10 points; and conclusion/question and answer a maximum point value of 5 points. A summary score for the work being assessed was produced by adding the scores together for each criterion. Figure Nine represents the grading rubric for the capstone student presentations. Figure Ten represents the grading rubric for student presentations for College of Business students at a large metropolitan university. Figure Eleven represents the grading rubric for student case studies for College of Business students at a large metropolitan university.

Section	Minimum Questions to Answer – you may have additional questions that you find important	Possible Points	Your Points
Introduction/Agenda	What is the purpose of this presentation? What will you tell us?	5	
Corporate Mission	Identify the current corporate mission. What does the company do? How does it make money? What are the things that make it unique? Identify the company's current strategy?	5	
Analysis	Analysis - use a combination appropriate tools Required: SWOT and Strategic Group Map. Identify the most important elements of Smart SWOT and list them in order of importance. Relate Porter's Five Forces and a Strategic Group Map as appropriate to complete the analysis.	30	
Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA)	Identify specifically the firm's SCA What does the company do better than every other company? Confirm and verify your findings using the VRIO framework. What does the company have that no other company has? If the company does not have an SCA, say so.	15	
Issues and Problems	Identify the most important issues to be dealt with. Identify the company's three biggest issues or problems and rank them in order of importance.	20	
Strategic Recommendation(s) – you may choose more than one	Identify the appropriate strategy(s) to be undertaken. What do you want to do with the company? Pick a strategic move that you think the company should make and describe in detail how they should do it (e.g., how much will it cost, where will the money come from, where will it go, how profitable will it be, etc.).	30	
Financial Analysis	Support your recommendation with financial analysis You must include a clear and definitive financial analysis as part of your recommendations	30	
Fallout	Identify what could go wrong. What are the problems your solutions will cause? Why should I not be concerned with those problems?	10	
Conclusion/ Q&A		5	
Reductions	Errors in grammar, format, writing clarity, other		
	TOTAL	150	

Figure 9: Grading Rubric for Capstone Student Presentations

Source: ucf.edu

Figure 10: Grading Rubric for Student Presentations for College of Business students at a large metropolitan university

Source: ucf.edu

Figure 11: Grading Rubric for Student Written Assignments College of Business students at a large metropolitan university

Source: ucf.edu

In this study, focus group research was used to determine if the design and anticipated outcomes of the capstone course in the College of Business Administration meet the needs of employers in the Central Florida area. To fulfill the purpose of this study, two focus groups were held in the College of Business at the University of Central Florida, with each focus group being

composed of community business leaders in the Central Florida area. One focus group concentrated specifically on identifying the needs of Central Florida employers and analyzing the capstone student papers for evidence of skill sets. This focus group was audio and video taped with assistance from the Center of Entrepreneurial Learning. The second focus group concentrated on analyzing audio and videotaped Capstone student presentations for evidence of skill sets. Each focus group was independently assembled and conducted with any discussions within one focus group not divulged to the other. Each focus group possessed diversity in age, gender, size and type of organization, range of location and years of experience. The focus group that examined the capstone student papers for evidence of skills possessed the following descriptive statistics as seen in Table Seven.

Table 7: Demographic Descriptors for First Focus Group

Gender	Ethnicity	Type of Organization	Years of Experience	Number of Employees	Range of Location
Male	White, Non-Hispanic	Transportation	20	50 in Orlando, 10,000 National	National, Branch Location
Male	White, Non-Hispanic	Restaurant/Hospitality	35	50	Regional
Male	White, Hispanic	Non-Profit Child Welfare	35	70	National, Branch Location
Female	White, Non-Hispanic	Aviation	15	60	Regional
Female	White, Non-Hispanic	Non-Profit Child Welfare	35	15	Regional
Male	White, Non-Hispanic	Automotive	12	30	National, Branch Location

The second focus group was held in May 2013. The second focus group also possessed diversity in age, gender, size and type of organization, range of location and years of experience. The focus group that examined the capstone student presentations for evidence of skills possessed the following descriptive statistics as seen in Table Eight.

Table 8: Demographic Descriptors for Second Focus Group

Gender	Ethnicity	Type of Organization	Years of Experience	Number of Employees	Range of Location
Female	White, Non-Hispanic	Education	36	130	Regional
Female	White, Non-Hispanic	Real Estate	35	1	Regional
Male	White, Non-Hispanic	Non-Profit, Child Welfare	20	75	National, Branch Location
Male	White, Hispanic	Business Development	25	65	National
Female	White, Non-Hispanic	Business Development	20	35	Regional
Male	White, Non-Hispanic	Aerospace	25	15	Worldwide
Male	White, Non-Hispanic	Law Enforcement	39	70	Regional
Female	White, Non-Hispanic	Non-Profit, Child Welfare	9	2	National, Branch Location
Male	White, Hispanic	Sports/Entertainment	20	35	Regional
Male	White, Non-Hispanic	Non-Profit, Child Welfare	25	65	National, Branch Location
Male	White, Hispanic	Medical	30	5	Regional
Female	White, Non-Hispanic	Administration, Finance	25	600	Regional

Once the focus groups were completed, procedures were established for analyzing the data collected. The first procedure for analyzing data was open coding. The aim of open coding of focus groups transcripts is to discover, name and categorize phenomena according to general

or specific characteristics or attributes of a category and to construct the range along which the general properties of a category vary, as well as to define the dimensions of the category (Williams, Bonnell and Stoeffel, 2009). In this stage, data is examined line by line to compare it for similarities and differences. Sensitizing concepts, which are the background ideas that offer ways of seeing, organizing and understanding experiences will be utilized and action codes will be developed (Charmaz, 2000). Next, selective coding was used to process, integrate and refine categories. Selective coding allows for the organization of central concepts that represent the main themes that have emerged from the research. To integrate the coding process, the researcher may use writing participants' stories to reveal central elements or use visual elements to represent relationships between data themes. In addition, the researcher may create a comparison table, develop a hierarchal tree diagram, present figures, draw a map and develop a demographic table (Creswell, 2008). The researcher further refined the analysis to complete poorly developed issues and integrate and combine categories to diverge from, validate, or extend the conceptual framework by comparing it to raw data collected during the research and also be presenting the individual summaries to participants for their reactions and input in the process of member-checking (Williams, 2006).

The focus groups, as well as the capstone student presentations, were audio and video recorded, with assistance from the Center of Entrepreneurial Learning. The researcher coordinated the transferring and manipulation of videotaped information. The Center for Entrepreneurial Learning provided the taped presentations to the researcher in an MP4 format for ease of accessibility. These MP4 tapes were uploaded to a private youtube.com site for transferability and referencing.

Trustworthiness

Throughout the process of data collection and analysis, it was necessary to ensure that the research findings and interpretations were accurate. Creswell & Miller (2000) and Lincoln & Guba (1985) have addressed the idea of validating findings based on strategies such as member checking or triangulation.   Triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, types of data or methods of data collection in descriptions and themes in qualitative research (Creswell, 2008).   In the triangulation process, the researcher finds evidence that supports a theme to ensure its credibility. Member checking can also be employed. Member checking occurs when the researcher asks an inside person, usually one or more participants in the study, to check the accuracy of the account.   The researcher may consider the use of an external auditor to check and report on the accuracy of the study.

To insure the credibility of the research findings and minimize any potential distortions, the researcher employed a reflexive journal or memoing to record thoughts, decisions, questions and insights about the research. Memoing served to assist the researcher in making conceptual leaps from raw data to those abstractions that explain research phenomena in the context in which it is examined. Memos were effectively employed throughout the research process to enhance data exploration, enable concept continuation and facilitate communication. Memoing was a flexible strategy wherein the process of construction and nature of content is determined by the preferences and abilities of the researcher and the aims and focus of the specific research study (Birks, Chapman & Francis, 2008).

In addition, the researcher gathered a small group of participants from the focus group to read the narrative of the themes generated. By doing this, the group openly discussed if the themes reflected their experiences. Based on discussion, the researcher adjusted or changed the thematic discussion to report accurately and credibly. As the assurance of trustworthiness was of pivotal concern to the success of this research, it was given significant consideration.

Conclusion

This chapter provided the methodology for examining capstone student papers and presentations for evidence of skills deemed necessary by community business leaders in the Central Florida region. The discussion included an analysis of the research design, moderator, population and sample, project and participant selection, data collection and analysis, research questions, focus group demographic profiles, grading rubrics, and setting.

Focus group research was selected as the chosen method of investigation. As a primary form of research, focus group research allowed the researcher to tailor focus group questions to best fulfill the research objectives. Sample focus group questions and question types were identified. The setting was determined to be a large, metropolitan university in Central Florida. The population consisted of all community business leaders in Central Florida. As the top five Central Florida businesses employ more than 140,000 employees and was too numerous to examine, a targeted sample was selected for investigation. The projects consisted of capstone student papers and presentations that were chosen from one lab section on the main Orlando campus. Purposive sampling was used to select focus group participants in the Central Florida region. The timeline of events, description of activity and responsibility section detailed the

events and periods that occurred and included the development of invitations to participate, selection of moderator and coordination with the Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership for taping.

Two focus groups were held; one focus group examined the skills demonstrated in capstone student papers. The second focus group examined the skills demonstrated in capstone student presentations. The demographic profiles of each focus group indicated diversity in gender, ethnicity, age, years of experience and type of industry. Data collection techniques included the audio and video taping of focus groups, with the tapes converted into a MP4 format for transferability and ease of transcription. Various grading rubrics were examined during data analysis and provided the researcher objective grading criteria to examine best practices in course design. Lastly, the issue of trustworthiness was considered as a significant factor in research accuracy and validity.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF DATA AND RESULTS

Introduction

Data analysis is the process of evaluating data using analytical and logical reasoning to examine each component of the data provided. As a form of analysis, it is crucial for the effectiveness of the research study. In data analysis, data from various sources is gathered, reviewed, and then analyzed to form a finding or conclusion. Data analysis is necessary in order to process the information received in the research study and produce a decision or result of the research investigation.

The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies, as demonstrated through capstone student papers and presentations, required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida. Focus group research was the chosen strategy of investigation. Focus group research allowed the researcher to probe community business leaders in the Central Florida region of the skills they deem important for employment in their respective organizations and determine the extent to which those skills were demonstrated in capstone student papers and presentations.

This dissertation has reviewed the research problem and its clarifying components. The research problem was described as the lack of documented evidence that the capstone program at a large, metropolitan university in Central Florida sufficiently developed college of business students' skills and competencies for employment in community business leaders' respective organizations. As capstone courses are commonly employed as a summative assessment tool to measure a student's cumulative academic experience, capstone student projects and presentation

were used as a demonstration of skill proficiency. The review of literature and related research found that the best practices of capstone courses identified skill sets in the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains of learning. Focus group research was selected as the chosen strategy of investigation for its flexibility in adjusting questions to best suit the needs of the participants. The focus groups examined capstone student papers and presentations for demonstration of skills.

This chapter discusses the researcher's analysis of the data obtained by the community business leaders in the focus groups. This analysis was used to summarize the results of the focus groups and produce recommendations for capstone programs as means of summative assessment. The analysis also offered remarks on potential considerations for improvement.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies, as demonstrated through capstone student papers and presentations, required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida. Data analysis was used to examine the research questions for this study which are:

1. To what extent does the design of the college of business capstone course fulfill the best practices of capstone courses?

2. To what extent do characteristics of capstone student projects as means of best practices in the field of business as identified by community business leaders successfully fulfill the requirements of the capstone course?

3. To what extent do characteristics of capstone student presentations as means of best practices in the field of business as identified by community business leaders successfully fulfill the requirements of the capstone course?

Population and Sample

A population is a group of individuals who comprise the same characteristics whereas a sample is a subgroup of the target population (Creswell, 2009).   This study investigated the extent to which Capstone student projects evidenced skills necessary to meet the needs of Central Florida employers. In order to fully document this research statement, it was necessary to determine and identify the study's population and sample. The population for this study was the community business leaders in the Central Florida region. The Central Florida region has both large and small businesses. The top five companies employ 140,084 Central Floridians in industries ranging from government to resorts, entertainment, restaurants, travel, health care and more. The top five companies are: Disney, Universal, Florida Hospital, Orlando International Airport and Orange County Public Schools. Other top Central Florida companies include: Publix Supermarkets, Fairwinds Credit Union, Harris Melbourne Communications, Orlando Magic, JetBlue, Ryland Homes, Siemens AG, Tupperware, United Parcel Service, Lockheed Martin, and Darden Restaurants ("Orlando's Top Ten," 2014). Florida has 1,633,574 small businesses, according to current federal data. Of those 1,633,574 small businesses in Florida, 444,066 have employees. The remaining 1,189,508 are Florida small businesses that have no employees ("Orlando at a Glance," 2014).

Based on the number of businesses operating in Central Florida, the entire population of community business leaders was too numerous to participate in this research study. Therefore, it was determined that a sample, or subset of the target population, be selected. The targeted sample was representative of the entire population but was much smaller in scale so that the study could be managed effectively. The targeted sample was a select group of community business leaders in Central Florida. The following section details the demographic description of the respondents.

Demographic Description of Participants

Demographics are terms that describe a population or target market. They represent quantifiable statistics of a group and are used to identify the quantifiable subsets that characterize a population at a specific point in time. Demographic information provides data regarding research participants and is necessary for the determination of whether the individuals in a particular study are a representative sample of the target population for generalization purposes (Lee & Schuele, 2010). Demographic profiling involves making generalizations about groups of people. Researchers typically have two objectives in this regard: first to determine what segments or subgroups exist in the overall population; and secondly to create a clear and complete picture of the characteristics of a typical member of each of segments. Most demographic information is also culturally based. Five common types of demographics are age, gender, income level, race and ethnicity.

Focus Groups

Focus group research was selected as the strategy of investigation. As a form of inquiry, focus group research utilizes qualitative methods to ask questions to explore a concept. The purpose of a focus group is to explore feelings, attitudes and percepitons and learn thinking patterns of a target population. Focus group methods permit the researcher to approach the fieldwork without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis, and allowed the researcher to study the selected issue in-depth and detail, which contributed to the depth, openness and detail of the qualitative inquiry (Patton, 1990). Several characteristics of focus group research include: natural setting, researcher as key instrument, multiple sources of data, inductive data analysis, participants' meanings, emergent design, theoretical lens, interpretive and holistic account (Creswell, 2009).

Potential focus group participants were identified as community business leaders in Central Florida that hired college of business graduates at entry level positons in their respective organizations. In order to inform the potential participants of the focus group, the researcher created an invitation to participate in the focus group; this invitation explained the purpose of the focus group and provided the potential participant with the time date and location. The invitation to participate was e-mailed to the potential focus group participants. Approximately 30 Central Florida community business leaders were emailed invitations with a request to respond acceptance. The researcher compiled the acceptances of the focus group participants and mailed them campus maps and parking passes for their convenience.

In this research study, two focus groups occurred. The purpose of the first focus group was for community business leaders to examine capstone student papers for demonstration of skills deemed important for potential employment in their respective organization. Demographics of the participants ranged with 33% female / 66% male and 16% Hispanic / 75% non-Hispanic ethnicity. 33% of the participants were employed in non-profit organizations and 66% were employed in for-profit organization. 33% of the respondents were involved in similar industries while 66% of respondents were in different industries. Years of experience varied from 12 – 35 years with the mean years of experience at 25.3 years. Number of employees varied from 15 – 70 employees with the mean number of employees at 46 employees. Location ranged from regional to national with 50% being regional and 50% being national. The focus group that examined the capstone student papers for evidence of skills possessed the following descriptive statistics as evidenced in the following table.

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics for First Focus Group

Gender	Ethnicity	Type of Organization	Years of Experience	Number of Employees	Range of Location
Male	White, Non-Hispanic	Transportation	20	50 in Orlando, 10,000 National	National, Branch Location
Male	White, Non-Hispanic	Restaurant/Hospitality	35	50	Regional
Male	White, Hispanic	Non-Profit Child Welfare	35	70	National, Branch Location
Female	White, Non-Hispanic	Aviation	15	60	Regional
Female	White, Non-Hispanic	Non-Profit Child Welfare	35	15	Regional
Male	White, Non-Hispanic	Automotive	12	30	National, Branch Location

As earlier noted, two focus groups occurred. The purpose of the second focus group was for community business leaders to examine capstone student presentations for demonstration of skills deemed important for potential employment in their respective organization. The demographics for the respondents in focus group one and focus group two possessed similar characteristics. Demographics of the participants in the second focus group ranged with 41% female / 59% male and 25% Hispanic / 75% non-Hispanic ethnicity. 25% of the participants were employed in non-profit organizations and 75% were employed in for-profit organization. 25% of the participants were involved in similar industries while 75% of participants were in different industries. Years of experience varied from 9 – 39 years with the mean years of experience at 25.75 years. Number of employees varied from 1 – 600 employees with the mean number of employees at 92 employees. Location varied from regional to worldwide with 58.3%

being regional, 33% being national and 8.3% being worldwide. The focus group that examined the capstone student presentations for evidence of skills possessed the following descriptive statistics as seen in the following table.

Table 10: Descriptive Statistics for Second Focus Group

Gender	Ethnicity	Type of Organization	Years of Experience	Number of Employees	Range of Location
Female	White, Non-Hispanic	Education	36	130	Regional
Female	White, Non-Hispanic	Real Estate	35	1	Regional
Male	White, Non-Hispanic	Non-Profit, Child Welfare	20	75	National, Branch Location
Male	White, Hispanic	Business Development	25	65	National
Female	White, Non-Hispanic	Business Development	20	35	Regional
Male	White, Non-Hispanic	Aerospace	25	15	Worldwide
Male	White, Non-Hispanic	Law Enforcement	39	70	Regional
Female	White, Non-Hispanic	Non-Profit, Child Welfare	9	2	National, Branch Location
Male	White, Hispanic	Sports/Entertainment	20	35	Regional
Male	White, Non-Hispanic	Non-Profit, Child Welfare	25	65	National, Branch Location
Male	White, Hispanic	Medical	30	5	Regional
Female	White, Non-Hispanic	Administration, Finance	25	600	Regional

Analysis of Data

The purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies, as demonstrated through capstone student papers and presentations,

required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida. In order to achieve this research objective, the researcher conducted two focus groups. The purpose of the first focus group was to examine capstone student papers. The purpose of the second focus group was to examine capstone student presentations. The focus groups were comprised of community business partners in the Central Florida area. The community business partners were executive members of both for-profit and not-for-profit organizations and had expertise in hiring college of business graduates for entry level positions in their respective organizations. The first focus group was moderated by Mari Rains, a professionally trained moderator, entrepreneur and College of Business faculty member. The moderator asked questions of the focus group participants, managed the discussion and focused the participants on issues of key importance to the success of this research study. The focus group participants' responses were accumulated, transcribed and analyzed for emergent themes. The researcher coordinated with the Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership (CEL) to provide audio and videotaped documentation of the focus group which was later made available to the researcher in an MP4 format for ease of accessibility and convenience.

There were two primary sources of data: the capstone student papers and the capstone student presentations. The researcher contacted the instructors of the capstone course to obtain the capstone student papers and student presentations. The capstone student papers were readily collected from the instructors of the capstone course and compiled by the researcher. In order to obtain the capstone student presentations, the researcher requested permission from the instructors to attend the capstone course and had the student's complete audio and visual releases

of information. Then, the researcher coordinated with the Center for Entrepreneurial Leadership to assist with the audio and video taping of the capstone student presentations.

Two focus groups were held. The capstone student papers were analyzed in the first focus group and the capstone student presentations were analyzed in the second focus group. In the first focus group, the researcher collected the data by gathering the poster paper tablets and sheets the participants used; in addition, the first focus group was audio and video taped. To analyze the capstone student presentations, the researcher audio and video taped capstone student presentations. The focus group then met to review the capstone student presentations that the researcher taped. The second focus group itself was also audio and video taped.

Rubrics are used in summative assessment, such as capstone courses, to objectively quantify mastery of required course and curricular skills and competencies. A rubric is a scoring tool that explicitly sets performance expectations for an assignment by dividing assigned work into components and providing clear descriptions for levels of mastery. Levels of achievement are given numerical scores with a summary score for the work being assessed being produced by adding the scores for each criterion. Rubrics were utilized to evaluate capstone student mastery of a paper and presentation assignment. The focus group participants were instructed on the purpose and proper use of rubrics.

The timeline for data analysis occurred in two distinct stages, in coordination with its respective focus group. The first focus group occurred in September 2012. Based on the date of this occurrence, the data analysis from the first focus group occurred from September 2012 through March 2013. The second focus group occurred in May 2013. Based on the date of the

occurrence of the second focus group, the data analysis from this focus group occurred from June 2013 through December 2013.

The discussion for data analysis for this research investigation was examined according to its corresponding research question.

Research Question One

To what extent does the design of the college of business capstone course fulfill the best practices of capstone courses?

To investigate this research question, the data analysis included an examination by the researcher of the syllabi that comprise the national model of capstone courses of colleges of business and the syllabus of a capstone course in the college of business at a large, metropolitan university in Central Florida. In order to examine this research question, the researcher first reviewed the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses.

Bloomberg BusinessWeek National Model

Bloomberg BusinessWeek is a weekly business magazine providing information and interpretation on the global business and financial world by delivering data, news and analytics to over 315,000 subscribers in 174 countries throughout the world. *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* produced a yearly listing of the top Colleges and Schools of Business in its business schools section. This listing of top Colleges and Schools of Business is well respected and scholars deferred to its results. The business schools that continuously topped the list as the best business

schools are: University of Notre Dame, University of Virginia, Emory University, University of Pennsylvania and Cornell University. These noted universities' syllabi detail the pedagogical approaches employed and serve as example of the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* national model for capstone programs.

The researcher contacted each of these universities that comprise the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses and interviewed by phone the primary administrator or lecturer of the program. It was determined that three universities in particular had exemplary capstone courses at the undergraduate level.   These institutions include: the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, the Wise School of Business at the University of Virginia and Goizueta School of Business at Emory University.

At the Wharton School of Business, the researcher interviewed Dr. Aviva Legatt, administrator of the capstone course. Dr. Legatt is the Senior Associate Director of Special Programs and Admissions for the Undergraduate Division at the Wharton School of Business. The researcher spoke with Dr. Legatt at length about the course goals and objectives, assessment strategies and skills and competencies. Rubin and Rubin (1995) noted the relevance and importance of interviews in research in obtaining an impression from a subject. Woods (2011) confirmed that an interview supplements and extends knowledge about individual's thoughts, feelings and behaviors, meanings, interpretations, etc. Dr. Legatt readily provided the course syllabus and related materials to the researcher for review. See Appendix A for syllabus.

Dr. Legatt informed the researcher that the Wharton undergraduate Capstone course is primarily an experiential, simulation based course that allows students to use their business knowledge to solve real-time business decisions. The researcher asked Dr. Legatt if and how the

course utilized problem based learning. The researcher was apprised that problem based learning was evidenced through the course's implementation of strategy development and computer simulation. The researcher also questioned Dr. Legatt on the course's core skills and competencies and was informed that the Wharton capstone course teaches applied business knowledge in a densely intricate and complex environment; navigates the interwoven challenges of strategy development, business execution and team dynamics; and enhances communication and teamwork skills through team-based decision making. Dr. Legatt stated "The focus of the course is on team dynamics as the process is as important as performance. Each team in the simulation is provided a coaching expert for guidance and peer critique to challenge students in the manufacturing, selling, financing and organizing of a fictitious product and company. Although the course is labor intensive from an administrative standpoint, students clearly see the value of it as the course is regularly wait-listed and students use the course as an opportunity to build their community of professional networks" (Legatt, personal communication, 2014). The researcher found Dr. Legatt to be very forthcoming and knowledgeable.

The researcher also contacted Dr. Francis Frey at the University of Virginia's College at Wise. Dr. Frey is Associate Professor of Business Administration and is Director of the Napoleon Hill Scholars Program at Wise College at the University of Virginia. The researcher interviewed Dr. Frey on the capstone course goals and objectives, assessment strategies and skills and competencies. Dr. Frey readily provided the course syllabus and related materials to the researcher for review. See Appendix B for syllabus. The researcher was informed that, similar to the Wharton School of Business, computer simulation also played a key role in its capstone course. The purpose of the Wise capstone course was for students to understand basic

concepts and integrate competencies determined by the department to be crucial for all its graduates. This led the researcher to ask the question what competencies were considered crucial. To this question, Dr. Frey informed the researcher that the primary competencies were to develop business strategy and analyze competitors, but that supplementary competencies were to develop oral presentation and critical thinking skills.

The researcher also asked Dr. Frey about the use of problem based learning in the course and was advised that problem based learning played a key role in the implementation of skill development and competencies. Dr. Frey assured the researcher that there existed a clear link between the course competencies, assessment strategy and program outcomes as the course specifically concentrated on the university's geographical location, skill needs of students and requirements of local employers. Dr. Frey stated "The course was formed based on a survey of the surrounding community needs and the department strives to fulfill those needs. The mission of the department is founded on commitment to teaching excellence and continuous quality improvement. The department guides and mentors its students to build the knowledge and skills they will need to become the next generation of entrepreneurs and community leaders of economic prosperity" (Frey, personal communication, 2014). He continued "The program objectives are for students to: 1- know foundational and intermediate principles of their major discipline; 2- be well prepared for entry level jobs in careers related to their major field; and 3- be able to use knowledge of their major discipline to analyze contemporary issues in their major discipline and contribute to the success of the businesses and organization of which they are a part" (Frey, personal communication, 2014). Similar to Dr. Legatt, the researcher found Dr. Frey to be very forthcoming and knowledgeable.

The researcher next contacted Dr. Rodney Lacey of the Goizueta School of Business at Emory University. Dr. Rodney Lacey is an Assistant Professor in the Practice of Organization & Management. The researcher interviewed Dr. Lacey on the capstone course goals and objectives, assessment strategies and skills and competencies. Dr. Lacey provided the course syllabus and related materials to the researcher for review. See Appendix C for syllabus. The researcher asked Dr. Lacey on the course goals and pedagogy and was informed that the Emory capstone course was delivered in a traditional face-to-face format and focused on students' ability to correctly diagnosis a situation despite incomplete and ambiguous information about problems and opportunities. The researcher also asked Dr. Lacey about the use of problem based learning in the course and was advised that one of the course objectives was for students to develop their 'diagnostic reasoning' skills. The researcher probed Dr. Lacey to discuss the course's assessment strategies and was informed that the key assessment strategies were exercises/simulations, case analysis/discussion and exams. Dr. Lacey explained that there was a forced grade distribution in the course with no more than 40% receiving an A- and no less than 20% receiving a C- or lower. Dr. Lacey also educated the researcher that the Emory capstone course was in the process of being redesigned to better suit AACSB re-accreditation. The updated capstone course would include a cross disciplinary approach of core and related concepts using a case competition format. Dr. Lacey stated "The Emory capstone experience is taught by multiple cross disciplinary faculty members to enable students to decide what tools to apply in ambiguous situations where they first have to decide what kind of problem they are dealing with. Students need to take a holistic approach as there are multiple correct answers" (Lacey, personal communication, 2014).

In addition to the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, the Wise School of Business at the University of Virginia and the Goizueta School of Business at Emory University, the Charles H. Dyson School of Business at Cornell University and the Mendoza College of Business at the University of Notre Dame also comprise the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* national model for capstone programs.   Although the researcher contacted all of these universities and interviewed administrators from all of the programs, it was determined that the Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management at Cornell University does not require a capstone course at the undergraduate level. However Cornell recognizes the benefits of capstone courses and offers a graduate capstone course at its Johnson School of Business through its Entrepreneurship and Innovation Institute. Also, the researcher found that the Mendoza College of Business at the University of Notre Dame does not require an undergraduate capstone course although many individual courses feature a comprehensive or capstone project. Due to the fact that neither Cornell University nor the University of Notre Dame had undergraduate programs in their college of business, the researcher opted not to include their course syllabi in the investigation of this research question.

The syllabi of the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses iterated the course goals, skill sets and competencies and assessment strategies. Syllabi that comprise the Bloomberg National Model of capstone courses are referenced in the appendix. The extent of the correlation between the college of business capstone courses and the syllabi of the best practices of capstone courses was determined.

Syllabi from Bloomberg BusinessWeek National Model of Capstone Courses

The *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses was comprised of the college of business capstone syllabi from top universities. Thus, these syllabi represented the best practices of capstone courses in colleges of business. These noted universities' syllabi detailed the pedagogical approaches and assessment techniques employed. In order to determine the extent to which the design of the college of business capstone course fulfilled the best practices of capstone courses, the researcher collected and examined the syllabi of the Bloomberg BusinessWeek National Model of capstone courses and found common course goals, skill sets and competencies and assessment elements.

The common capstone course goals included in the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses of colleges of business that the researcher found were:

- That students use their business knowledge—finance, management, marketing, leadership, and social responsibility—while formulating and executing business strategy. That students apply business knowledge in a densely intricate and complex environment; navigate the interwoven challenges of strategy development, business execution and team-dynamics; and enhance communication and teamwork skills through team-based decision making.

- That students demonstrate an understanding of the basic concepts and the integration of competencies determined by the department to be crucial for all its graduates.

- That students develop diagnostic reasoning skills in situations despite incomplete and ambiguous information about the problems and opportunities that it faces.

After the researcher identified the common course goals of the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses, the researcher proceeded to examine the common skill sets and competencies. The common skill sets and competencies included in the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses of colleges of business were:

- Strategy development and execution
- Team dynamics and teamwork skills
- Enhanced communication
- Critical thinking skills
- Oral presentation skills
- Problem solving and decision making
- Micro computing skills

After the researcher identified the common course goals and the common skill sets and competencies of the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses, the researcher proceeded to examine the common assessment techniques. The common assessment elements for capstone programs included in the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses of colleges of business were:

- Computer simulations
- Peer evaluations
- Comprehensive evaluations
- Case analysis/ discussions
- Exercises

Due to the examination of the course syllabi of the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses of colleges of business, the researcher determined that the syllabi contained common elements in course goals, skill sets and competencies and assessment techniques. The researcher then proceeded to examine these common elements of the *Bloomberg*

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BusinessWeek National Model of capstone courses with the college of business capstone course at a large, metropolitan university in Central Florida.

College of Business Capstone Course at a Large Metropolitan University in Central Florida

The syllabus of a college of business capstone course at a large, metropolitan university in Central Florida referenced the course goals, skill sets, competencies, and assessment strategies. The researcher obtained the course syllabus of the capstone course and examined it for course goals, skill sets and competencies and assessment techniques. Upon review, the researcher determined that the course goals of the syllabus on the capstone course of the college of business at a large metropolitan university in Central Florida were:

- That students achieve a strategic view of organizations by integrating and applying material learned in their business courses to modern organizational problems and opportunities.

In addition, the researcher examined the syllabus on the capstone course of the college of business for skill sets and competencies. Upon review, the researcher determined that the skill sets and competencies indicated on the syllabus of the capstone course of the college of business at a large metropolitan university in Central Florida were:

- Formulation of competitive analysis
- Realization of an industry's dominant economic features
- Understanding of Porter's Five Forces which analyze an organization's strategic functions (See Appendix G for additional detail on Porter's Five Forces)
- Analysis of a company's mission and strategy, sustainable competitive advantage, recommendations and potential problems

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Lastly, the researcher examined the syllabus of the capstone course of the college of business for assessment strategies. Upon review, the researcher determined that the assessment strategies on of the syllabus of the capstone course of the college of business at a large metropolitan university in Central Florida were:

- Industry analysis papers and presentations
- Strategic analysis papers and presentations
- Integration projects
- Case competitions
- Exams

Based on the examination of the syllabi both the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses and the syllabus of college of business capstone course at a large, metropolitan university in Central Florida, the researcher continued the investigation by comparing the similarities of elements of the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses and the syllabus of college of business capstone course.

Common Elements of Both Bloomberg BusinessWeek National Model and Capstone course at College of Business at Large Metropolitan University in Central Florida

The researcher investigated the similarities of elements of the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses and the syllabus of college of business capstone course by performing an analysis of the course syllabi. Based on this analysis, the researcher examined the course syllabi and determined that common elements of course goals, skill sets and competencies

and assessment strategies were evident between the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses and the capstone course in the college of business at a large, metropolitan university in Central Florida.

Course Goals

The researcher began this investigation by reviewing the course syllabus between the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses and the capstone course in the college of business for common course goals. See Appendix A for syllabi from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, the Wise School of Business at the University of Virginia, the Goizueta School of Business at Emory University, and the capstone course at the college of business.

The common course goals of *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses and the capstone course at the college of business are noted in the following table. Similar and comparable terms between the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses and the capstone course at the college of business are italicized for ease of reference.

Table 11: Common Course Goals of *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of Capstone courses and the Capstone course at the College of Business

Bloomberg BusinessWeek National Model of Capstone courses	Capstone course at the College of Business
Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania – "Requires students to use *their business knowledge—finance, management, marketing, leadership, and social responsibility—*while formulating and executing business *strategy integrating* feedback from the consequences of those decisions, and interacting with other teams to create shareholder and social value."	
University of Virginia's Wise School of Business – "Requires students to demonstrate an understanding of the *basic concepts and the integration of competencies* determined by the Department to be crucial for all graduates."	"Students achieving a *strategic* view of organizations by *integrating* and applying *material learned in their business courses* to modern *organizational problems and opportunities."*
Goizueta School of Business at Emory University – "Focuses on students' ability to correctly diagnosis a situation despite incomplete and ambiguous information about the *problems and opportunities* that it faces."	

Examination of the syllabi that detailed the course goals revealed analogous or comparable course goals evidenced on the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses syllabi and the syllabus of the capstone course at the college of business. Among those analogous or comparable course goals were terminology including but not limited to: business strategy, understanding of concepts/ business courses, integrate competencies, apply material to

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organizational problems and opportunities, etc. Based on the comparable terminology of course goals, the researcher determined the course goals of the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of Capstone courses syllabi and the syllabus of the capstone course at the college of business was positively related.

Skill Sets and Competencies

The researcher next examined the skills sets and competencies identified on the Bloomberg *BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses and the capstone course at the college of business. See Appendix A for syllabi from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, the Wise School of Business at the University of Virginia, the Goizueta School of Business at Emory University, and the capstone course at the College of business.

The common skills sets and competencies of *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses and the capstone course at the college of business are noted in the following table. Similar and comparable terms between the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses and the capstone course at the college of business are italicized for ease of reference.

Table 12: Common Skill Sets and Competencies of *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of Capstone courses and the Capstone course at the College of Business

Bloomberg BusinessWeek **National Model of Capstone courses**	**Capstone course at the College of Business**
Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania – *"The course incorporates a variety of fundamental business concepts including: strategy developing and execution, marketing strategy and tactics, creation of sustainable shareholder value, crisis management, merger and acquisition analysis, global coordination and perspectives, ethics and social responsibility and negotiation."*	
University of Virginia's Wise School of Business – *"These competencies involve students in developing business strategy, executing tactics, analyzing competitors, and responding to computer-generated problems, opportunities, and changes in the operating environment. Supplementary competencies are identified as: oral presentation skills, critical thinking skills using theories and approaches typical of the student's major discipline; problem solving and ethical decision making skills; team dynamics and micro computing skills."*	"Knowledge, skills and abilities to be gained through participation in the Capstone course include the formulation of *competitive analysis*, realization of an industry's dominant economic features, understanding of *Porter's Five Forces,* understanding of the drivers of change and their impact in the broad *environment* and the key success factors for long term *competitive success* and *profitability.* Additional knowledge, skills and abilities include analysis of a company's mission and *strategy,* sustainable *competitive* advantage, recommendations and potential *problems.*"
Goizueta School of Business at Emory University – *"Using problem-based learning techniques, students develop 'diagnostic reasoning' skills. As there are multiple correct answers, students use meta-learning to decide which conceptual tools and frameworks to apply for assessing the profit implications of both a company's external environment and its internal resources and capabilities."*	

Examination of the syllabi that detailed the skill sets and competencies revealed analogous or comparable skill sets and competencies evidenced on the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses syllabi and the syllabus of the capstone course at the college of business. Among those analogous or comparable skill sets and competencies were terminology including but not limited to: critical thinking skills, problem solving, business strategy, analysis, profitability, change management, competition and decision making   Based on the comparable terminology of skill sets and competencies, the researcher determined the skill sets and competencies of the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses syllabi and the syllabus of the capstone course at the college of business was positively related.

Assessment strategies

The researcher also analyzed the assessment strategies identified on the Bloomberg *BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses and the capstone course at the college of business. See Appendices A, B and C for syllabi from the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, the Wise School of Business at the University of Virginia, the Goizueta School of Business at Emory University, and the capstone course at the college of business.

The common skills sets and competencies of *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses and the Capstone course at the College of Business are noted in the following table.   Similar and comparable terms between the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses and the Capstone course at the College of Business are italicized for ease of reference.

Table 13: Common Assessment Strategies of *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of Capstone courses and the Capstone course at the College of Business

Bloomberg BusinessWeek **National Model of Capstone courses**	**Capstone course at the College of Business**
Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania – *"Computer simulation"*	Both team and individual assignments are employed for assessment purposes including industry *analysis papers* and *presentations*, *strategic analysis papers* and *presentations*, integration projects, case competitions and *exams*. Of these assessments, the Capstone case competition is the culminating event by which student team's present *strategic analysis* to instructors, College of Business faculty, members of the Dean's Advisory Council and industry experts.
University of Virginia's Wise School of Business – "Primary and supplemental competencies are demonstrated through a *written report* and *presentation* based on the *simulation* experience by focusing on fundamental *strategy* and decision making as well as performance measures."	
Goizueta School of Business at Emory University – "Exercises /*simulations,* case *analysis*/discussion and *exams*."	

Examination of the syllabi that detailed the assessment strategies revealed analogous or comparable skill assessment strategies evidenced on the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses syllabi and the syllabus of the capstone course at the college of business. Among those analogous or comparable assessment strategies were terminology including but not limited to: written reports, presentations, analysis, exams, cases and exercises. Based on the comparable terminology of assessment strategies, the researcher determined the assessment strategies of the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses syllabi and the syllabus of the capstone course at the college of business was positively related.

Based on the researcher's examination of the course goals, skill sets and competencies detailed on the course syllabi of the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses and the syllabus of the capstone course at the college of business, it was determined that comparable and analogous terminology were evident. That is, common language that described course goals, skill sets, competencies and assessment strategies existed in both Bloomberg *BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses and the syllabus of the capstone course at the college of business. Due to the presence of common language, a positive relationship existed between course goals, skill sets, competencies and assessment strategies between *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses and the syllabus of the capstone course at the college of business.

Research Question Two

To what extent do characteristics of capstone student projects as means of best practices in the field of business successfully fulfill the requirements of the capstone course?

To investigate this research question, a focus group of community business leaders in Central Florida was held to review capstone student projects. The researcher created an invitation to participate which was emailed to community business leaders in Central Florida. The invitation to participate stated:

"Lauryn DeGeorge would like to invite you to participate in a confidential focus group for her dissertation aimed at examining students' projects in the capstone course in the college of business to understand if the skills evidenced in those projects are significant

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and relevant for potential employment. The skills evidenced by students' projects in capstone courses have been generally characterized as the culmination of students' academic careers. The purpose of the research is review students' projects from the capstone course and evaluate if the students' projects demonstrate skills necessary for employment."

See Appendix H for Informed Consent to Participate in Interview.

The community business leaders that were interested in participating in the focus group emailed their positive responses to the researcher. The researcher then compiled the positive responses and contacted the focus group members. Upon acceptance, the focus group members met in a convenient and accessible location at the large metropolitan university. The moderator introduced herself as Mari Rains, professor moderator, entrepreneur and College of Business faculty member. The moderator opened the focus group by having the focus group participants introduce themselves. The focus group members were asked to identify their name, organization, years of experience, type of industry and range of organization's location. The moderator informed the focus group that audio and visual releases were necessary and assured them that their names and personal information would be kept confidential. The moderator then transitioned the focus group participants to identify the level and types of employees hired, the skills they felt important for candidates applying for entry level positions in their respective organizations and an indication of why these skills were important. The moderator encouraged the focus group participants to be specific in their choice and definition of skills as it related to hiring entry level positions in their respective organizations. Each of the focus group members

wrote their top skills on a large white sheet of paper which was made visible for all and attached to the wall. The moderator called upon each focus group member to cite their important skills and indicate why they were important in their organizations. After each of the focus group participants noted their key skills, the moderator combined comparable and analogous skills and wrote these skills on a sheet of large white paper.   This paper was also attached to the wall so it was visible to all. The moderator led a group discussion on the importance of skills in varied organizations.

As the purpose of this focus group was to determine the extent to which characteristics of capstone student projects as means of best practices in the field of business successfully fulfill the requirements of the capstone course, the sole responsibility of focus group participants was to examine the capstone student projects. This focus group did not have access to nor examine any extraneous assessments. Due to this, this group of participants has been identified as focus group one.

<div align="center">**Identification of Focus Group Skills**</div>

The focus group participants directly identified the following skills as necessary for hiring entry level positions in their respective organizations:

- Teamwork
- Written communication
- Oral communication
- Critical thinking
- Professionalism
- Initiative
- Decision making
- Customer service
- Leadership
- Flexibility
- Cooperation
- Customer Service

To affirm the validity of this research, the moderator asked that the community business leaders confirm the operational definition of terms that had selected so that there was consistent terminology within the focus group research. Certain skills, such as initiative, decision making, flexibility and cooperation, were incorporated into a broader skill category. For example, initiative and decision making were included with professionalism; flexibility was included with critical thinking and cooperation was included with teamwork. The importance of writing well and presenting well were repeatedly stressed and were denoted as written and oral communication. The focus group also recognized the importance of 'hard skills' and 'soft skills.' Hard skills were interpreted as the technical or industry specific skills needed for success while soft skills related more to people skills or the ability to act appropriately around and with people. Both hard skills and soft skills were necessary for employment at an entry level position in the community business leaders' respective organizations.

Table 14: Operational Definitions of Key Skills as Determined by Focus Group One

Skills	Operational Definition
Teamwork	Teamwork was defined by the community business leaders as the ability to come up with a needed outcome, create alliances with others to garner resources and accomplish goals.
Written Communication	Written communication was defined as the ability to successfully articulate an idea on paper with few grammatical errors.
Oral Communication	Oral communication was defined as the ability of an employee to convey their thoughts and ideas succinctly and correctly so that people understand and use body language effectively.
Critical Thinking	Critical thinking was defined as having a similar function and capacity as problem solving, and was interpreted as the ability to look at a challenge from many perspectives and devise a unique solution.
Professionalism	Professionalism was defined as adapting one's appearance, behavior and skills to the norms, values and culture of a given environment.
Leadership	Leadership was defined as the person who organizes a group of people to achieve a common goal.
Customer Service	Customer service was defined as the compilation of many soft skills such as patience, empathy, attention to detail, etc.

Identification of Best Practices of Capstone Courses

This research question aimed to determine the extent of which characteristics of capstone student projects as means of best practices in the field of business successfully fulfill the requirements of the capstone course. To investigate this research question, a focus group of community business leaders in Central Florida was held to review capstone student projects. The

moderator led the first focus group to identify important skills necessary for hiring in their respective organization and had the focus group members confirm operational definitions of terms so that there was consistent terminology within the focus group research.

As this initial task had been accomplished, the researcher initiated a comparison between the focus group's identification of key skills and the best practices of key skills in college of business capstone courses. A review of the best practices of college of business capstone courses revealed two significant investigations. The first study was conducted by Ghannadian (2013) and used focus group research with business employers in the Tampa, FL, region to identify the extent to which the academic community met employers' skill requirements. This research held paramount importance to the researcher as it was directly relevant to the research inquiry and occurred in relative close proximity to the metropolitan university with a geographically similar area.

The Ghannadian (2013) study found that employers in the Tampa, FL region identified the top skills in the college of business as:

- Leadership
- Business writing
- Business speaking and organizational behavior
- Business ethics
- Social responsibility
- Change management
- Decision making
- Career planning
- Problem solving and project management
- Team work.

These characteristics are representative of the best practices of capstone courses and form the source of comparison to determine the skills used for comparison to analyze this research question.

To further accentuate the importance of these skills in colleges of business, the review of related literature highlighted research by the consortium of The Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills and the Society of Human Resource Management for four-year business college graduates. This study found the key skills to be: oral communication, teamwork/collaboration, professionalism/work ethic, written communication, and critical thinking/problem solving (2006). Additional scholarship evidenced that prospective employers and university faculty respondents found the most important skills of business graduates to be: responsibility and accountability, ethical values, interpersonal skills, oral communications, time management and punctuality, the ability to work in teams and decision making and analytical ability.

Comparison of Focus Group Skills to Best Practices Skills

The comparison between the focus group's identification and definition of key skills and the best practices of capstone key skills according to the Ghannadian (2013) study is illustrated in the following table.

Table 15: Comparison of Focus Group One Skills to Best Practices Skills as Identified by Ghannadian (2013)

	Focus Group Key Skills	Best Practices of Capstone Courses Key Skills of Ghannadian (2013)	Comparable/ Analogous Skill
1	Teamwork	Teamwork	Yes
2	Written Communication	Business Writing	Yes
3	Oral Communication	Business Speaking and Organizational Behavior	Yes
4	Critical Thinking	Problem Solving	Yes
5	Professionalism	Social Responsibility Decision Making	Yes
6	Leadership	Leadership, Project Management	Yes
7	Customer Service	Change Management	Yes
8		Career Planning	No
9		Business Ethics	No

The researcher was tasked with comparing the key skills identified and defined by the first focus group to the key skills and best practices of capstone key skills according to the Ghannadian (2013) study to determine if comparable or analogous skills were evidenced. The researcher selected, numbered and listed the key skills identified from the first focus group and Ghannadian (2013) study.

The first item was teamwork. The focus group's identification of teamwork was identical to Ghannadian's study. The second item the focus group identified was written communication while the Ghannadian (2013) study identified business writing. The researcher concluded that

written communication and business writing were comparable and analogous skills. The third item the focus group identified was oral communication while the Ghannadian (2013) study identified business speaking and organizational behavior. The researcher concluded that oral communication and business speaking were comparable and analogous skills. The fourth item the focus group identified was critical thinking while the Ghannadian (2013) study identified problem solving. The fifth item the focus group identified was professionalism while the Ghannadian (2013) study identified social responsibility and decision making. The researcher concluded that professionalism and social responsibility and decision making were comparable and analogous skills. The sixth item the focus group identified was leadership; the Ghannadian (2013) study identically identified leadership and project management. The seventh item the focus group identified was customer service while the Ghannadian (2013) study identified change management. The researcher concluded that customer service and change management were comparable and analogous skills.   Although the focus group only identified seven key skill items, the Ghannadian (2013) study identified items nine and ten as career planning and business ethics, respectively. There were no comparable or analogous items identified by the first focus group.

Based on the comparison of the key skills identified by the first focus group and the skills identified in the Ghannadian (2013) study of best practices of capstone courses, the researcher concluded that there were comparable and analogous skills in the identified skills. Specifically, items one through seven were comparable and analogous while items nine and ten were not. The researcher performed the calculation of seven out of nine by dividing the seven by the nine. This equated to a 77.8 % evidenced relationship between the skills identified by the focus group and

the skills identified as best practices of capstone courses by Ghannadian (2013) and The Conference Board study four-year business college graduates. These skills formed the basis for investigation of this research question to determine the extent these skills are demonstrated in capstone student papers.

Identification of Skills in College of Business Capstone Student Papers

The data analysis also included the focus group one to examine college of business capstone student papers to determine if the skills identified as important were evidenced in the capstone student papers. In order to accurately assess the capstone student papers, the researcher instructed the focus group participants on the learning objectives of the assignment and the grading rubric.

The learning objective of the capstone student paper assignment was "to achieve a strategic view of organizations by integrating and applying material learned in their business courses to modern organizational problems and opportunities" (Capstone Syllabus, 2014). See Appendix for Capstone Syllabus. The capstone student papers were assessed on two primary themes: topic and writing style. The topic of the capstone student papers was strategy formulation and recommendation.

The grading rubric for written assignments and papers identified the main elements of concept integration, content/organization, research and documentation, language and sentence structure, grammar and mechanics. The grading rubric delineated concept integration as the ability to accurately integrate course information from the text and notes into the papers, as well as use examples to demonstrate a mastery of key management concepts. Content/Organization

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was identified as topic thesis, order and focus of ideas, integrated and documented support, and acknowledgement of other perspectives. The level of depth that students performed effective research and were able to document their work was identified. Language was identified as using words appropriate to the audience and purpose and the choice of words for deliberate effect. Sentence structure, grammar and mechanics was identified as the positioning, varied sentence length and rhythm to create a deliberate effect as well as fragments, spelling, word usage, grammar, punctuation and the ability to proofread.

CBA Management Department
Written Assignment/Paper Grading Rubric

Score	Concept Integration — Refers to ability to accurately integrate course information from the text and notes into the paper, as well as using examples to demonstrate a mastery of key management concepts.	Content/Organization — Refers to topic; thesis; order and focus of ideas; integrated and documented support; acknowledges other perspectives.	Research and Documentation — Refers to the synthesis and integration of varied and credible research; uses current citation style; avoids plagiarism.	Language — Refers to using words appropriate to the audience and purpose; choosing words for deliberate effect.	Sentence Structure, Grammar, & Mechanics — Refers to positioning, varying sentence length, and rhythm to create a deliberate effect. Also, fragments, spelling, word usage, grammar, punctuation, and ability to proofread.
Outstanding	Thorough and complete integration of key management concepts. Frequent use of examples to clearly illustrate course information.	Well-defined, persuasive thesis; insightful development of ideas and support; consistent focus and well integrated transitions.	Meaningful integration of varied and credible research; master of paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting from sources; Appropriate and correct documentation style using required style guide.	Word choice reflects mastery of language, language and level tailored to audience; demonstrating insightful use of figurative language.	Sentences are carefully formed and positioned with attention to emphasis, rhythm and pace to engage the reader. Demonstrates mastery of grammar, creating compelling prose; no errors.
Very Good	Clear integration of key concepts. Many examples utilized to enhance understanding and illustrate course information.	Clear argument and focus on topic; strong use of related support; logical progression of ideas; smooth transitions.	Clear integration of varied research perspectives. Correct documentation of resources.	Specific word choice appropriate for audience; use of metaphor and analogy to illustrate points.	Sentences show variety in length, pattern, and rhythm. Demonstrates understanding of most grammar; few spelling errors.
Good	Attempt to integrate and apply some course concepts is evident. Some key concepts not integrated. Not all concepts supported by higher quality examples.	Conventional argument and related support; unbalanced perspective and uneven progression of ideas; adequate transitions.	Integrates conventional arguments as support; some paraphrasing of ideas; documentation has few minor errors.	Conventional word choice appropriate for audience. Some use of figurative language	Sentences show some variation in pattern and are linked with appropriate transitions. Occasional minor errors in sentence structure, verb agreement, pronoun reference, spelling and punctuation.
Below Expectations	Minor course concepts were integrated and applied, with few or simple examples. Significant concepts were inaccurately or awkwardly integrated.	Main arguments or thesis unclear or lacking insight; inconsistent organization; transitions do not connect ideas.	Minimal integration of research; no or little attention to other perspectives; use of direct quotes rather than well-integrated paraphrasing; multiple errors in documentation.	Vague, ordinary and generic word choice with some reliance on clichés and jargon.	Simple sentences are frequent with occasional fused sentences and fragments. Frequent errors in sentence structure, verb agreement, pronoun reference, spelling and punctuation.
Poor	Very few, if any, concepts from the course were integrated (or integrated accurately) into the paper. No useful examples for concept illustration were utilized.	No identifiable argument; no meaningful discussion of topic; no control of organization and/or transitions.	Poor use of documentation; no integration of outside research; questionable plagiarism.	Word choice doesn't fit audience or purpose. No use of figurative language	Awkward and unclear sentences; little variety; frequent run-ons and fragments. Continuous errors in sentence structure, verb agreement, pronoun reference, spelling and punctuation.

Figure 12: College of Business Administration Written Assignment Grading Rubric
Source: ucf.edu

The scoring range on the capstone student papers rubric varied from outstanding, exceeds expectation, meets minimum expectation, below expectations to poor.

Table 16: Scoring Range on Capstone Student Papers

Scoring Range	Description
Outstanding	The student's work is unusually excellent and superior to the work of others and represents the high range of class performance. In addition to meeting all requirements for the assignment, the work contains innovative and creative ideas not found in other students' papers or presentations. The work demonstrates that the student has done extensive research, included numerous concepts from the text or course, and has invested a tremendous amount of time and effort into the work. There are no structural or grammatical errors; the writing skills are exemplary.
Exceeds Expectations	The work is very good and represents or is above the class average. In addition to meeting all requirements for the assignment, the work contains well thought out ideas and the student has applied many concepts from the text or course. The work clearly demonstrates the student has done obvious research and has invested thought and effort in the paper. The content is nicely structured and grammatically well presented.
Meets Minimum Requirements	The work is good. It meets all the requirements for the assignment and has applied a few concepts from the text and course. Performance is consistent with the class average range. The student has probably done basic research even though it is not very obvious. There appears to be a minimum amount of effort extended to produce the work. The work may have some structural and grammar problems but it is still possible to follow the content without difficulty.
Below Expectations	The work is below expectations. Performance is below the class average. While it may or may not meet all the basic requirements for the assignment, there is no obvious evidence of any research or effort. Concepts from the text or course are either not obvious or are used incorrectly. Grammar mistakes are so prevalent that it is difficult to follow the content.
Poor	Performance is deficient. The work does not meet the basic requirements for the assignment, or was not turned in on time; did not meet assignment criteria or sometimes never submitted at all.

Focus Group Identification of Skills in Capstone Student Papers

The focus group resumed its task of identifying key skills in the capstone student papers. Ms. Mari Rains, professor moderator, entrepreneur and College of Business faculty member, continued the focus group's analysis of the capstone student papers by asking the focus group

participants the key questions in the research study. The moderator handed out samples of capstone student papers. Each of the focus group participants received the same sample paper to insure consistency. All identifying information was removed from the paper. The moderator asked the focus group participants to take a few minutes to review the skills individually as they identified as important in their respective organizations and look for evidence of those skills in the capstone student papers. The focus group members were quiet as they were reviewing the capstone student papers.

The moderator then led the group discussion and questioned the focus group members on what skills were evident in capstone student projects based on their examination and to what level were those skills demonstrated. The moderator asked the key questions: "By reviewing capstone student papers, what skills are evident;" "Are these the same skills you that indicated as important in your organization;" and "To what extent are the skills you indicated as important demonstrated in the capstone papers?" Further, the moderator explored if the skills demonstrated in the capstone student papers were comparable and analogous to the skills the focus group participants had previously identified as important in their organization. The moderator also probed the focus group participants on the level of proficiency of skills demonstrated in the capstone student papers and had the focus group participants cite evidence of the skill in the assignment. The moderator compiled the focus group's discussion on a white poster paper that was attached to the wall visible to all. The skills demonstrated in the capstone student paper were:

- Research
- Attention to Detail

- Problem Solving
- Understanding the Market
- Teamwork
- Analysis and Synthesis
- Innovation and Creativity

These skills were operationally defined by the focus group.

Table 17: Operational Definitions of Key Skills In Capstone Papers As Determined by Focus Group One

Skill Identified in Capstone Paper	Operational Definition
Research	Research was defined as the ability to apply technological skills to compile information and present in a logical and coherent way.
Attention to Detail	Attention to detail was defined as making sure that all of the information is correct and current.
Problem Solving	Problem solving was defined as being able to identify and find a solution to a problem.
Understanding the Market	Understanding the market was defined as having effective knowledge of your topic.
Teamwork	Teamwork was defined as being able to work with others in organizational settings.
Analysis and Synthesis	Analysis and synthesis was defined as being able to combine related facts and see the big picture.
Innovation and Creativity	Innovation and creativity was defined as thinking outside the box.

Proficiency of Skill Demonstrated

After the focus group had identified and defined the skills demonstrated in the capstone student papers, the moderator then questioned the participants on the level of skill demonstrated. Further, the moderator reminded the focus group participants to consider the hiring needs of their respective organizations in determining the level of proficiency of skills. The moderator referred the participants to the scoring rubric. The scoring range on the capstone student papers rubric

varied from outstanding, exceeds expectation, meets minimum expectation, below expectations to poor. A full description of the scoring range items is found in the Scoring Range of Capstone Student Papers Table.

The moderator prompted the focus group participants to identify the proficiency for each skill that they had previously identified in the capstone student papers. Their findings are presented in the following table.

Table 18: Skill Demonstration and Proficiency on Capstone Student Papers

Skill Demonstrated	Proficiency of Skill Demonstrated
Research	Exceeds Expectations
Attention to Detail	Meets Minimum Expectations
Problem Solving	Exceeds Expectations
Understanding the Market	Exceeds Expectations
Teamwork	Outstanding
Analysis and Synthesis	Exceeds Expectations Level
Innovation and Creativity	Meets Minimum Expectation

Evidence of Skill Proficiency Demonstrated

Upon further examination of the capstone student papers, the focus group participants commented on specific sections of the paper that confirmed their selected skill level. The focus group participants unanimously agreed that the proficiency of research demonstrated in the

capstone student papers exceeded their expectations. They cited the quality and number of sources as well as proper documentation to affirm their analysis. One focus group member commented that the "depth and detail of strategy formulation and implementation was much higher than an entry level position in his organization would be expected to complete."

The moderator next prompted the focus group participants to identify specific areas that illustrated attention to detail in the capstone student papers. The focus group participants noted that attention to detail in the capstone student papers was demonstrated at a 'meets minimum expectations' level. Although they agreed that this was acceptable for hiring an entry level position, they were disappointed with the grammatical, punctuation and spelling errors. Another focus group member commented that "he had concerns with the professional image of his company if an email or letter was sent out with a basic grammatical error."

The focus group participants agreed that problem solving exceeded their expectations for entry level positions. They commented on the organization of the capstone student papers and recognized the steps involved in decision making and accurately defining complex problems. One focus group member stated that her boss's mantra is "Don't bring me a problem; bring me a solution."

Understanding the market was the next skill identified by the focus group in the capstone student papers. The focus group decided that the capstone student papers possessed an exceed expectations level of proficiency. They cited the depth and breadth of information reported as well as the detail on the market factors. The skill that the focus group members considered the most strongly about teamwork, which they indicated at an outstanding level of proficiency.

Teamwork was the only skill that the focus group identified as outstanding. Multiple focus group members commented with satisfaction on the coordinated effort needed to complete the capstone student papers. One focus group member in the airline industry stated that her organization could not function effectively without teamwork; another added that his organization spends a lot of time developing teamwork. The focus group agreed that analysis and synthesis were demonstrated at a level that exceeded their expectations for entry level positions in their organizations. Lastly, in terms of innovation and creativity, the focus group members dissented with one member in the restaurant industry stating "the creativity shown here is not enough for us" while another member in a non-profit industry stated "creativity is important to us but we need to focus on higher goals first." As a compromise, the focus group members agreed to evaluate level of innovation and creativity demonstrated in the capstone student papers as meeting their minimum expectation level

Scoring

The focus group discussed the number of times they scored outstanding, the number of times they scored exceeds expectations, the number of times they scored meets minimum expectations, the number of times they scored below expectations and poor. The data tools selected to analyze the focus group responses were the use of Microsoft Excel to table, sum, average, and generate frequency and distribution of responses. Microsoft Excel was selected for its ease of computation. Summation was used to add up the number of times the focus group scored a particular response. An average refers to the sum of the numbers divided by n. It is also referred to as the mean or central tendency (Russell, n.d.). A frequency distribution is a

summary of how often different scores occur within a sample of scores. It is commonly used to categorize information so that it can be interpreted quickly in a visual way (Cherry, n.d.). Frequency statistics count the number of times an event has occurred in a study. A frequency percentage is an alternative means of describing the number of times an event has occurred.

The researcher tabulated each of the scores and determined the frequency distribution and percentage of each category response. The frequency distribution was calculated by adding up the number of responses for the category of proficiency of skills demonstrated. The frequency percentage was calculated by the number of responses for the category of proficiency or frequency distribution divided by the total number of responses.   As there were a total of seven skills demonstrated, the frequency of skills demonstrated was divided by seven.

The proficiency of skills demonstrated in the capstone student papers with their frequency of distribution and percentage are presented in the following table.

Table 19: Proficiency of Skills Demonstrated with Frequency Distribution and Percentage

Proficiency of Skill Demonstrated	Frequency Distribution	Frequency Percentage
Outstanding	1	14%
Exceeds Expectations	4	57%
Meets Minimum Expectations	2	29%
Below Expectations	0	0%
Poor	0	0%

This research question investigated to what extent the characteristics of capstone student projects as means of best practices in the field of business successfully fulfill the requirements of the capstone course. Focus group research was used to examine, identify and define the top skills of community business leaders in Central Florida, compare those skills to the skills identified as best practices in capstone courses, identify the top skills in capstone student papers, understand and utilize the grading rubric, identify the level of skill proficiency, and frequency of skill levels. The best practices of capstone courses and the demonstration of skills in capstone student projects revealed a number of comparable or analogous skill sets.

Examination of the proficiency of skill demonstrated determined that 14% of the skills demonstrated in the capstone student papers were outstanding, 57% exceeded expectations and 29% met minimum expectations. There were no scores for below expectations or poor levels of

proficiency.   Based on this, there was a positive relationship between the best practices of capstone courses and the skills demonstrated in the capstone student projects. As a result, it was found that the characteristics of capstone student projects as a means of best practices in the field of business met the requirements of the capstone course and demonstrated a positive skill level for employment in entry level positions in community business leaders' respective organizations.

Research Question Three

3. To what extent do characteristics of capstone student presentations as means of best practices in the field of business successfully fulfill the requirements of the capstone course?

To investigate this research question, an additional focus group was held with community business leaders in Central Florida to review the capstone student presentations. As the purpose of this focus group was solely to determine the extent to which characteristics of capstone student presentations as means of best practices in the field of business successfully fulfill the requirements of the capstone course, the focus group participants were solely interested in the capstone student presentations. Due to this, this group of participants has been identified as focus group two.

Identification of Focus Group Skills

The second focus group was held at the conclusion of an earlier scheduled meeting of community business leaders at a convenient and accessible office park location in Lake Mary, FL. The members of the second focus group had prior knowledge or business relationships with

each other so introductions were unnecessary and omitted. The researcher acted as moderator and introduced herself, informing the focus group that audio releases were necessary, assuring them that their names and personal information would be kept confidential and documenting their organization, years of experience, type of industry and range of organizational location. The moderator transitioned the second focus group to identify the oral presentation skills they felt important for candidates applying for entry level positions in their respective organizations and an indication of why these skills were important. The moderator encouraged the focus group participants to be specific in their choice and definition of skills as it related to hiring entry level positions in their respective organizations. The focus group participants readily identified the skills of:

- Oral communication
- Professionalism

The moderator engaged the focus group participants to further develop and operationalize their identified skills. The moderator probed the focus group participants to identify the specific characteristics of both oral communication and professionalism. The focus group further delineated the underlying skills of eye contact, gestures, voice, dress, organization, technology skills, confidence, knowledge, teamwork and preparedness.

The focus group participants were provided original definitions of communication and professionalism to revise. The original and revised operational definitions are noted in the following table.

Table 20: Original and Revised Operational Definitions of Focus Group Two

Skill	Original Operational Definition	Revised Operational Definition
Oral communication	Ability of an employee to convey their thoughts and ideas succinctly and correctly so that people understand and use body language effectively.	The ability to articulate ideas with success and the ability to represent an organization with language skills and talk to customers in a professional manner to convey our quality product to that customer.
Professionalism	Adapting one's appearance, behavior and skills to the norms, values and culture of a given environment	The attitude and attire appropriate to office requirements that gets the job done in a timely manner and to come across as a competent entity with a high probability of success.

Identification of Best Practices Skills of Capstone Courses

This research question aimed to determine the extent of which characteristics of capstone student presentations as means of best practices in the field of business successfully fulfill the requirements of the capstone course. To investigate this research question, a second focus group of community business leaders in Central Florida was held to review capstone student presentations. The moderator led the second focus group to identify important presentation skills necessary for hiring in their respective organization and had the focus group members confirm operational definitions of terms so that there was consistent terminology within the focus group research. The sole responsibility of focus group participants was to examine the capstone student presentations. This focus group did not have access to nor examine any extraneous assessments.

The researcher initiated a comparison between the focus group's identification of key skills for presentations and the best practices of key skills in college of business capstone courses for presentations. A review of the best practices of college of business capstone courses revealed significant investigations. The most notable study was conducted by Ghannadian (2013) and used focus group research with business employers in the Tampa, FL, region to identify the extent to which the academic community met employers' skill requirements. This research held paramount importance to the researcher as it was directly relevant to the research inquiry and occurred in relative close proximity to the metropolitan university with a geographically similar area.

The researcher obtained the contact information for Dr. Ghannadian and personally interviewed him by phone. Dr. Ghannadian is the dean of the John H. Sykes College of Business and professor of Finance at the University of Tampa. Dr. Ghannadian informed the researcher that this study was originally completed for the 2011 Dean's Conference hosted by AACSB International. The researcher asked Dr. Ghannadian "How important is oral communication to employers?" Dr. Ghannadian emphasized to the researcher that business speaking was the third overall most important skill, according to his research on academic and employers' skill requirements of employers in the Tampa, FL region (Ghannadian, personal communication, 2013). Ghannadian's (2013) research highlights the importance of oral communication and identified the top skills in the college of business for presentations as:

- Teamwork
- Business speaking and organizational behavior
- Social responsibility and decision making

These characteristics are representative of the best practices of capstone courses for presentations and form the source of comparison to determine the skills used for comparison to analyze this research question.

The importance of oral communication was reinforced though the review of related literature which revealed that oral communication was considered a critical skill for business school graduates by numerous researchers. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (2010) research found the ability to communicate effectively; orally and in writing important. The Professionalism in the Workplace (2013) study produced by the Polk-Lepson Research Group for York College also found communication skills important. These studies confirmed the Tanyel, Mitchell and McAlum (1999) study of prospective employers on the importance of oral communication to a business school graduate.

Comparison of Focus Group Skills to Best Practices Skills

The researcher was tasked with comparing the key presentation skills identified and defined by the second focus group to the key skills and best practices of capstone presentations according to the Ghannadian (2013) study to determine if comparable or analogous skills were evidenced. The researcher selected, numbered and listed the key skills identified from the second focus group and the Ghannadian (2013) study. The comparison between the second focus group's identification and definition of key skills and the best practices of capstone key skills for presentations according to the Ghannadian (2013) study is illustrated in the following table.

	Focus Group Key Skills	Best Practices of Capstone Presentation as Identified by Ghannadian (2013)	Comparable/ Analogous Skill
1	Teamwork	Teamwork	Yes
2	Oral Communication	Business Speaking and Organizational Behavior	Yes
3	Professionalism	Social Responsibility and Decision Making	Yes

The first item was teamwork. The focus group's identification of teamwork was identical to Ghannadian's study. The second item the focus group identified was oral communication which was also identical to the Ghannadian study. The third item the focus group identified was professionalism while the Ghannadian (2013) study identified social responsibility and decision making. The researcher concluded that professionalism and social responsibility and decision making were comparable and analogous skills as they both employed change management strategies to function as a competent entity with a high probability of success.

Based on the comparison of the key skills identified by the second focus group and the skills identified in the Ghannadian (2013) study of best practices of capstone presentations, the researcher concluded that there were comparable and analogous skills in the identified skills. Specifically, items one and two were identical and item three was comparable and analogous. There were no additional skills that were not comparable or analogous items identified by the second focus group. The researcher easily performed the calculation of three out of three

presentation skills to realize a 100 % evidenced relationship between the skills identified by the second focus group and the best practices of presentation skills for capstone courses by Ghannadian (2013). These skills formed the basis for investigation of this research question to determine the extent these skills are demonstrated in capstone presentations.

Identification of Skills in College of Business Capstone Student Presentations

The data analysis also included the focus group two to examine college of business capstone student presentations to determine if the skills identified as important were evidenced in the capstone student presentations. In order to accurately assess the capstone student presentations, the researcher instructed the focus group participants on the learning objectives of the assignment and the grading rubric.

The learning objective of the capstone student presentation assignment was "to analyze your client's current operations and provide strategic recommendations to the board of directors of your client in order to answer how to protect and strengthen a current competitive advantage, or to create a new competitive advantage and then protect and strengthen it. The recommendations should be creative, should leverage your client's current strengths and/or address your client's significant weakness, and should be supported with sound financial analysis and justification" (Capstone Syllabus, 2014).

See Appendix for Capstone Syllabus. The topic of the capstone student presentations was strategy formulation and recommendation.

The grading rubric for the capstone presentations identified the two assessment items: topic and presentation style. Presentation style was composed of the major areas of content, organization, body language, vocal presentation, use of visual aids and professionalism. The grading rubric for presentation assignments identified the main elements of content, organization, body language, vocal presentation, use of visual aids, and professionalism. The grading rubric delineated content as the mastery of key concepts including supporting evidence, detail, citations and correct use of terminology. Organization was defined as the logic, order and use of presentation format. Body language was defined as the use of posture, facial expressions, eye contact and gestures. Vocal presentation was defined as the delivery of the presentation including tone, volume, pace, articulation, pronunciation and word choice. The use of visual aids was defined as the ability to use visual aids to enhance the presentation through quality and integration. Lastly, professionalism was defined as a professional appearance, attitude and attire.

CBA Management Department
Presentation Grading Rubric

Score	Content — Refers to mastery of key concepts (e.g. detail, supporting evidence, citations, and correct use of terminology.	Organization — Refers to the logic, order, and use of presentation format.	Body Language — Refers to use of posture, facial expressions, eye contact, and gestures.	Vocal Presentation — Refers to delivery including tone, volume, pace, articulation, pronunciation, and word choice.	Use of Visual Aids — Refers to ability of visual aids to enhance presentation through quality and integration.	Professionalism — Refers to professional appearance, attitude, and attire.
Outstanding	Mastery of key management concepts. Detailed content reflecting significant research. Multiple forms of evidence support key points. Well-integrated citations.	Information is clearly organized & logically developed. Highly effective introduction, conclusion, and flow.	Poised and comfortable. Appears in control, and confident. Body language enhances the presentation. Appropriate hand gestures emphasize points. Consistently maintains eye contact of entire audience.	Enthusiastic and assertive vocal tone. Volume and pace were varied and well-suited to content. Clear articulation and pronunciation. Word choice enhances presentation.	Visual aids are clear, attractive, informative, error free, well-integrated, and greatly enhance presentation.	Appropriate/creative attire and attitude enhance presentation.
Exceeds Expectations	Demonstrated understanding of key management concepts. Content reflects detail supported by appropriate amount of sources. Citations used as appropriate.	Information is presented in an organized manner. Introduction, conclusion, and flow made material easier to follow.	Appears comfortable. Gestures and body language enhanced presentation. Minimal reliance on notes or looking at visual aids. Eye contact generally includes entire audience.	Tone volume and pace reflect energy & interest in topic. Articulation, word choice, and pronunciation reflected careful preparation.	Visual aids with acceptable integration and supported presentation. Professional appearance.	Appropriate attire. Professional attitude was adequate.
Meets Minimum Expectations	Key content supported by specific evidence from key sources. All sources cited appropriately.	Main points organized and presented to support flow. Minor problems with topic transitions or logical flow. Introduction and conclusion are clear, but not used effectively.	Occasional use of meaningful hand gestures. Body language used appropriately with minimal distract from the presentation. Infrequent reference to notes or visual aids in a distracting way. Sometimes fails to make eye contact with audience.	Articulation and pronunciation were clear. Volume and pace had some variation and minimal monotone. Tone was acceptable but lacked enthusiasm or assertiveness. No bias or inappropriate language.	Visual aids provided outline of presentation and some integration. Easy to read and informative with no significant errors.	Attire and attitude were respectful and not distracting.
Below Expectations	Content is general or provides anecdotal support. Insufficient use of evidence to support key points. Lacks appropriate source citations.	Information flow is disorganized. Abrupt transitions from one topic to another with no clear transition or logic. Lacks clear introduction and conclusion.	Nervous or distracted. Paces, fidgets, or sways. Distracting use of hands (e.g., jiggles taps or plays with something) or other body language. Reads directly from notes or visual aids with only minimal eye contact.	Uneven or inappropriate pace. Giggling or other distracting vocal behaviors. Monotone & unenthusiastic. Uses clichés, slang, jargon, bias, and racist or sexist language. Disrespectful toward the audience.	Visual aids missing, inappropriate, have errors, are difficult to read, are poorly designed, and/or are not properly integrated into presentation.	Attire and/or attitude are inappropriate and distracts from the quality of presentation.
Poor	Lacks significant detail. No objective evidence supports key points. Few, if any, citations are used and/or are not used correctly.	No logical organization. Information seems random, arbitrary, and has no transitions. No introduction and conclusion.	Body language closed, restricted, and it blocks the communication. No eye contact with audience. Over-reliance on notes or visual aids or reads entire presentation.	Inconsistent pace. Poor articulation. Tone and volume were inappropriate. Froze, stopped, or refused to speak. Word choice was offensive.	Few or no visual aids were present. Did not attempt to meet visual aids requirements.	Attire indecent, offensive or no attempt made to dress or act professionally.

Figure 13: College of Business Administration Presentation Assignment Grading Rubric

Source: ucf.edu

The scoring range on the capstone student presentations rubric varied from outstanding, exceeds expectation, meets minimum expectation, below expectations to poor.

Table 22: Scoring Range on Capstone Presentations

Scoring Range	Description
Outstanding	The student's work is unusually excellent and superior to the work of others and represents the high range of class performance. In addition to meeting all requirements for the assignment, the work contains innovative and creative ideas not found in other students' papers or presentations. The work demonstrates that the student has done extensive research, included numerous concepts from the text or course, and has invested a tremendous amount of time and effort into the work. There are no structural or grammatical errors; the writing skills are exemplary.
Exceeds Expectations	The work is very good and represents or is above the class average. In addition to meeting all requirements for the assignment, the work contains well thought out ideas and the student has applied many concepts from the text or course. The work clearly demonstrates the student has done obvious research and has invested thought and effort in the paper. The content is nicely structured and grammatically well presented.
Meets Minimum Requirements	The work is good. It meets all the requirements for the assignment and has applied a few concepts from the text and course. Performance is consistent with the class average range. The student has probably done basic research even though it is not very obvious. There appears to be a minimum amount of effort extended to produce the work. The work may have some structural and grammar problems but it is still possible to follow the content without difficulty.
Below Expectations	The work is below expectations. Performance is below the class average. While it may or may not meet all the basic requirements for the assignment, there is no obvious evidence of any research or effort. Concepts from the text or course are either not obvious or are used incorrectly. Grammar mistakes are so prevalent that it is difficult to follow the content.
Poor	Performance is deficient. The work does not meet the basic requirements for the assignment, or was not turned in on time; did not meet assignment criteria or sometimes never submitted at all.

The second focus group resumed its task of identifying key skills in the capstone student presentations to determine the extent the capstone student presentations as a means of best practices successfully fulfilled the requirements of the capstone course.   The researcher continued her role as moderator by informing the participants that they would be watching a series of capstone student videos and their task was to identify the skills represented in the videos. The moderator coordinated the projection of the videos with the technological resources at the office location.

 The moderator then led the group discussion and questioned the focus group members on what skills were evident in capstone student presentations and to what level were those skills demonstrated.   The moderator asked the key questions: "By reviewing capstone student presentations, what skills are evident?" and "How would you define and operationalize these skills?"

The moderator also probed the focus group participants on the level of proficiency of skills demonstrated in the capstone student presentations and had the focus group participants recognize examples of the demonstrated skill in the presentation. According to the second focus group, the skills demonstrated in the capstone student presentations were:

- Teamwork
- Organization
- Preparedness
- Body Language

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- Professionalism
- Technological Skills
- Innovation and Creativity

These skills were operationally defined by the focus group.

Table 23: Operations Definitions of Key Skills Identified in Capstone Presentations

Skill Identified in Capstone Presentation	Operational Definition
Teamwork	Teamwork was defined as the ability for multiple members to come together to complete a finished product successfully.
Organization	Organization was defined as the ability to have the presentation flow logically and make sense.
Preparedness	Preparedness was defined as team members knowing the presentation, which team member is to speak next, etc.
Body Language	Body language was defined as the gestures, facial expressions and overall posture of the speaker. Also includes voice and volume.
Professionalism	Professionalism was defined as the way the speaker carried themselves, spoke, had confidence, etc.
Technological Skills	Technological skills were defined as the skills necessary to develop and use multimedia for presentations.
Innovation and Creativity	Innovation and creativity was defined thinking outside the box and creating new and interesting ideas.

Proficiency of Skill Demonstrated

After the second focus group had identified and defined the skills demonstrated in the capstone student presentations, the moderator then questioned the participants to confirm the level of skill by asking "To what extent are the skills you indicated as important demonstrated in the capstone presentations?" The moderator referred the participants to the scoring rubric. The scoring range on the capstone student presentations rubric varied from outstanding, exceeds expectation, meets minimum expectation, below expectations to poor. A full description of the scoring range items is found in the Scoring Range of Capstone Student Presentations Table.

The moderator prompted the focus group participants to identify the proficiency for each skill that they had previously identified in the capstone student presentations. Their findings are presented in the following table of skill demonstration, proficiency and evidence on capstone student presentations.

Table 24: Skill Demonstration, Proficiency on Capstone Student Presentations

Skill Demonstrated	Proficiency of Skill Demonstrated
Teamwork	Meets minimum expectations
Organization	Exceeds expectations
Preparedness	Meets minimum expectations
Body Language	Outstanding
Professionalism	Outstanding
Technological Skills	Outstanding
Innovation and Creativity	Meets minimum expectations

Evidence of Skill Proficiency Demonstrated

The second focus group participants were quite animated in their responses of evidence of skills in the capstone student presentations. Although all of the focus group members agreed that teamwork was a critical skill for hiring in their organizations and was evidenced in the capstone presentation, there was dissention among the members as to the level of skill demonstrated. Some team members noted that the level of teamwork exceeded their expectations due to the necessary collaboration of various team members as well as the depth and detail necessary to complete the assignment. One focus group member in their aeronautics industry expressed "This presentation is very professional and required input from the other team members to make it successful." Other team members cited that the level of teamwork met their minimum expectations, but did not exceed their expectations, due to various errors in content and

presentation style. This was evidenced when one focus group member commented "This is what I expect but it wasn't unified in its delivery or perfect." After a lengthy discussion, the consensus reached was that the teamwork demonstrated in the capstone presentation 'met minimum expectations.'

The next skill that was demonstrated was organization. The second focus group agreed that organization of the presentation exceeds their expectations. They further commented that organization was present throughout the presentation. In particular, one focus group member from the automotive industry noted that "The presentation made sense in how it flowed and was organized." Preparedness was the next skill examined. The focus group members agreed that the level of preparedness met their minimum expectations but did not exceed them. A member from the criminal justice industry stated "It was good but some team members didn't know who was going to speak next or what they were going to say." A member from the real estate industry recommended that "The team needed to practice together more before presenting." Another member from the healthcare industry at Orlando Regional Medical Center also commented "the team needs to be sure that their presentation slides are projected with the right speaker."

Body language was the next skill identified by the second focus group in the capstone student presentations. The focus group decided that the skill proficiency of the body language demonstrated was outstanding.   One focus group member from the automotive industry suggested that "the presentation had better body language than her own when she presents at conferences." Overall, the group mentioned that the body language noted the volume and pace of the speakers.

The moderator next prompted the second focus group participants to identify specific areas that illustrated professionalism. The focus group members readily supplied examples of professionalism and commented that this was the easiest skill to recognize in the capstone student presentations. A real estate focus group member noted the confidence projected throughout the presentation and noted that "Some of the speakers would do well in real estate." All of the focus group members commented on the professional dress code. One focus group member from the sports entertainment industry said that "his first impression of the team presenting was very positive solely based on their dress code." A pool manufacturer and installer focus group member agreed stating "The first impression was a good one." A further focus group member from a Central Florida city government said "the team's professionalism showed from their knowledge and how they explained their presentation." A member from the finance and administration department of the education industry stressed "One has to know what they are talking about more than how they look. They have to be knowledgeable and be able to convey that knowledge to other people so they can understand." The focus group members unanimously agreed with these comments.

The last two skills the moderator asked the focus group participants to illustrate evidence from the capstone student presentations were technological skills and innovation and creativity. The focus group members easily agreed that the level of technological skills demonstrated was outstanding, especially for teams that delivered their presentation in a Prezi as opposed to a Power Point presentation style. One focus group member in business development joked that "the team had more technological skills than she did currently." This caused a focus group member from the education industry to discuss the level of technology they are currently

teaching in school today as opposed to when they were in school. A member from the agriculture industry was especially impressed with the level of technological skills demonstrated in the capstone student presentations and said that "her organization would benefit from increased technological skills." A member from the emergency services and restoration industry wholeheartedly agreed.

Innovation and creativity were the last skills the moderator focused on. There was some dissention among the focus group members as to the proficiency of innovation and creativity demonstrated in the capstone student presentations. Some of the members commented that the level of innovation and creativity met their minimum expectations while others cited that they were generally disappointed with the level of innovation and creativity. None of the focus group members said that the proficiency of innovation and creativity was outstanding. This led to a lengthy discussion on expectations. Focus group members in business development from the hotel and resort industry was disappointed with the level of innovation and creativity stating "This presentation was just average -nothing especially creative. If you're not creative in hotels and resorts, your customers are going to go somewhere else." A focus group member in the sports entertainment industry said "The presentation was what I would expect. I wasn't wowed. In sports, we've got to keep people wanting to come see games." In contrast, a member from the non-profit child welfare industry did feel that the capstone presentation did exceed her expectations. A member from the law enforcement industry agreed with her stating "This is exactly what my people want to see." As a compromise, the focus group members agreed that the proficiency of innovation and creativity demonstrated in the capstone student presentations met their minimum expectations.

The focus group discussed the number of times they scored outstanding, the number of times they scored exceeds expectations, the number of times they scored meets minimum expectations, the number of times they scored below expectations and poor. The researcher tabulated each of the scores and determined the frequency distribution and percentage of each category response. The frequency distribution was calculated by adding up the number of responses for the category of proficiency of skills demonstrated. The frequency percentage was calculated by the number of responses for the category of proficiency or frequency distribution divided by the total number of responses. As there were a total of seven skills demonstrated, the frequency of skills demonstrated was divided by seven.

The proficiency of skills demonstrated in the capstone student presentations with their frequency of distribution and percentage are presented in the following table.

Table 25: Proficiency of Skills Demonstrated with Frequency Distribution and Percentage

Proficiency of Skill Demonstrated	Frequency Distribution	Frequency Percentage
Outstanding	3	43%
Exceeds Expectations	1	14%
Meets Minimum Expectations	3	43%
Below Expectations	0	0%
Poor	0	0%

This research question investigated to what extent the characteristics of capstone student presentations as means of best practices in the field of business successfully fulfill the requirements of the capstone course. Focus group research was used to examine, identify and define the top skills of community business leaders in Central Florida, compare those skills to the skills identified as best practices in capstone courses, identify the top skills in capstone student presentations, understand and utilize the grading rubric, identify the level of skill proficiency, and frequency of skill levels. The best practices of capstone courses and the demonstration of skills in capstone student presentations revealed a number of identical, comparable or analogous skill sets.

Examination of the proficiency of skill demonstrated determined that 43% of the skills demonstrated in the capstone student presentations were outstanding, 14% exceeded expectations and 43% met minimum expectations. There were no scores for below expectations or poor levels of proficiency. Based on this, there was a positive relationship between the best practices of capstone courses and the skills demonstrated in the capstone student presentations. As a result, it was found that the characteristics of capstone student presentations as a means of best practices in the field of business met the requirements of the capstone course and demonstrated a positive skill level for employment in entry level positions.

Additional Skills Needed for Employment

In addition to analyzing the capstone student papers and presentations for demonstrated of skills, the focus group also discussed complementary skills needed for entry level positons in their respective organizations. These skills included diversity, work ethic and professionalism

and workplace norms and culture. These complementary skills are generally referred to as soft skills.

Diversity

The community business leaders conflicted on the influence and acceptance of diversity in their organizations. In a focus group of community business leaders, a community business leader in the transportation industry stated "accepting diversity was a challenge in their organization as employees of similar backgrounds virtually shut down by bonding together and avoiding others, especially in terms of race and gender." Further discussion on diversity revealed that the transportation industry was composed primarily of men of a specific ethnic background in the southeastern US. In contrast, in a focus group of community business leaders, a community business leader in the aviation industry stated "I have a completely different viewpoint; this is the most diverse group I've ever seen" indicating that accepting diversity did not pose any challenges in their organization. Further discussion revealed that although the field work in this industry does tend to be dominated by men, there were women employed in other areas of the organization and diverse ethnicities were not a challenge.

The importance of diversity was reinforced by community business leaders in the law enforcement and sports entertainment industries. Diversity was paramount in law enforcement. From a focus group of community business leaders, a community business leader in law enforcement noted "diversity played a key role in their organization as it deals with people, how they react in a crisis situation and how they interact with adolescents or people of different ages, races and gender." In the sports/entertainment industry, the community business leader noted

that "managing and developing people and valuing diversity are most important skills in our organization and to our fan base." The law enforcement leader readily identified the importance of diversity in communication skills. From the focus group of community business leaders, the law enforcement community business leader stated "you are always speaking and presenting yourself to people at all levels and cultural differences, understanding them and being understood by them." It is interesting to note that both of these organizations have formal diversity statements.

Work Ethic and Professionalism

Work ethic and professionalism were soft skills considered important by the focus group members. From a focus group of community business leaders, a member from the transportation industry noted that work ethic and professionalism included "not talking about colleagues behind their backs and recognizing that when an employee is on the job, they should be doing the work of the organization, not surfing the web and send out 'cute' pictures and jokes." A member from a non-profit industry indicated that "if an employee runs out of work, they should find out what else needs to be done to accomplish the goals of the organization and work on those items."

The community business members agreed that respect for and recognition of the best interests of the company for whom you're working and the commitment of a professional were important. From a focus group of community business leaders, work ethic was interpreted by a community business leader as "not only doing whatever it takes to get the job done within reason." This was furthered by a community business leader in the focus group stating "the days

of the typical 9 to 5 position aren't as prevalent any more. Employees need to get work done properly the first time and not take short cuts."

The topic of professionalism generated discussion. It was generally agreed that professionalism included how a person acts, their demeanor towards other people and how they handle situations. From a focus group of community business leaders, a community business leader in the transportation industry identified professionalism as "employees need to keep a safe separation of personal and work conversations. Employees need to remember that everything they say and do is a representation of their employer."   Interestingly, from the focus group of community business leaders, a community business leader in the restaurant industry addressed dress code as one of his employees came to work in a very revealing outfit and "didn't have a clue that their attire was distracting." He actually had to take this person aside and speak to them directly about what was appropriate and not appropriate to wear to work.

The importance of soft skills was iterated by several community business leaders. From the focus group of community business leaders, a community business leader from the aviation industry noted "technical skills they seem to grasp as they grew up with technology, it's the soft skills we're lacking. Our turnover tends to be over the softer skills like attitude."

Workplace Norms and Culture

Workplace norms and culture varied among organizations. In a focus group of community business leaders, a community business leader in the automotive industry commented that "the norms at a Mercedes dealership were very different from the norms at a

Ford dealership simply due to the customer base." Workplace norms included a positive attitude and work ethic. "I want someone who's ready to learn," iterated the child welfare professional while a restaurant professional stated "without a positive attitude and people skills, I'm not going to hire you. I can teach you the rest." From a focus group of community business leaders, maturity was a concern as employees "need to abandon the 8 to 5 mentality, be self-motivated and ready to work." From a focus group of community business leaders, empathy was important to the child welfare professional in the focus group stating "when employees were let go, it was due to their people skills and not their technical skills."

Supplementary Assessments

The main purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies, as demonstrated through capstone projects and presentations, required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida. As capstone courses provide a summative assessment of a curriculum or program, the capstone student projects and presentations were considered the culmination of student's academic experience.

However, the community business leaders indicated that the capstone student papers and presentations did not provide an effective assessment of a student's skills and competencies and did not adequately reflect the College of Business curriculum as a summation of a student's academic experience. There was some contradiction among the community business leaders on the effectiveness of the course. From a focus group of community business leaders, a

community business leader from the aviation industry opined that the course "was redundant. I think that once you've completed all the hard work, you need an actual skills class which is not demonstrated by a paper." Other community business leaders expressed appreciation of the course but recognized that "the Capstone paper and presentation does not serve the purpose of judging how much a student had learned as much as I think it would have liked or hoped for."

There was general consensus among the community business leaders on proposing alternative forms of assessment for a Capstone program in a College of Business. From a focus group of community business leaders, a community business leader in a non-profit child welfare industry recommended a reflective assignment stating "why aren't they writing a summary about themselves? That would be excellent feedback on the curriculum." Further, a community business leader from the transportation industry added "I understand that Capstone is supposed to wrap up everything, here's what I learned and here's what I've become. But if that could be done with a soft skills course and a presentation and maybe a mock job interview, it would be so much more valuable."

The inclusion of a skills course into the College of Business curriculum was recommended as it would provide students with behavioral coaching and leadership competencies. From a focus group of community business leaders, a community business leader from the aviation industry added "coaching and leadership is the class that's lacking. Training and development is great and I utilize that but there's no coaching and leadership course. There is no fundamental behavioral class in leadership."

Conclusion

This chapter provided the data analysis for examining capstone student papers and presentations. The data analysis began by reviewing the research questions of this study, restating the population and sample and providing the demographic descriptions of the focus group participants. In this research study, two focus groups occurred. The purpose of the first focus group was for community business leaders to examine capstone student papers for demonstration of skills deemed important for potential employment in their respective organization. The first focus group was moderated by Mari Rains, a professionally trained moderator, entrepreneur and College of Business faculty member. The purpose of the second focus group was for community business leaders to examine capstone student presentations for demonstration of skills deemed important for potential employment in their respective organization. The researcher acted as moderator for the second focus group. The demographics for the respondents in focus group one and focus group two possessed similar characteristics.

The data analysis included an examination by the researcher of the syllabi that comprise the national model of capstone courses of colleges of business and the syllabus of a capstone course in the college of business at a large, metropolitan university. The researcher reviewed the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses and examined the syllabi of the Wharton School of Business at the University of Pennsylvania, the Wise School of Business at the University of Virginia and Goizueta School of Business at Emory University. The researcher investigated the similarities of elements of the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses and the syllabus of college of business capstone course by performing

an analysis of the course syllabi. Based on the researcher's examination of the course goals, skill sets and competencies detailed on the course syllabi of the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses and the syllabus of the capstone course at the College of Business, it was determined that comparable and analogous terminology were evident. Due to the presence of common language, a positive relationship existed between course goals, skill sets, competencies and assessment strategies between *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* National Model of capstone courses and the syllabus of the capstone course at the College of Business. As a result, it was found that the characteristics of capstone student projects as a means of best practices in the field of business met the requirements of the capstone course and demonstrated a positive skill level for employment in entry level positions in community business leaders' respective organizations.

The data analysis also included an examination of the best practices of capstone presentations. Ghannadian's (2013) study was used as a basis for determining best practices as this study used focus group research with business employers in the Tampa, FL, region to identify the extent to which the academic community met employers' skill requirements. Focus group research was used to examine, identify and define the top skills of community business leaders in Central Florida, compare those skills to the skills identified as best practices in capstone courses, identify the top skills in capstone student presentations, understand and utilize the grading rubric, identify the level of skill proficiency, and frequency of skill levels. The best practices of capstone courses and the demonstration of skills in capstone student presentations revealed a number of identical, comparable or analogous skill sets. Based on this, there was a positive relationship between the best practices of capstone courses and the skills demonstrated in the capstone student presentations. As a result, it was found that the characteristics of

capstone student presentations as a means of best practices in the field of business met the

requirements of the capstone course and demonstrated a positive skill level for employment in

entry.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The main purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies, as demonstrated through capstone student papers and presentations, required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida. Focus group research was used to investigate community business leaders in the Central Florida region of the skills they deem important for employment in their respective organizations and determine the extent to which those skills were demonstrated in capstone student papers and presentations.

The Research Problem and Its Clarifying Components

This dissertation identified the research problem and its clarifying components. The research problem was described as the lack of documented evidence that the capstone program at a large, metropolitan university in Central Florida sufficiently developed college of business students' skills and competencies for employment in community business leaders' respective organizations. Capstone courses serve as a form of summative assessment as they review previous cognitive learning in the major and provide input on a student's overall collegiate learning experience, with capstone papers and presentations demonstrating skill proficiency. Capstone programs also serve the purpose of evaluating students' readiness to transition from undergraduate to graduate school or work and provide deeper investigation of the curriculum.

The *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* national model of capstone courses served as the model of best practices of capstone courses.

Review of Related Literature

The review of literature and related research examined the best practices of capstone courses and the skills necessary for employment. Capstone skill sets ranged from the cognitive to the affective and psychomotor domains of learning. The Carnegie Foundation recommends three instruments for measuring such outcomes in a capstone course. These include a senior thesis, an oral presentation and a portfolio. Common capstone course goals were identified as the use of critical reasoning, the application of comprehensive knowledge and techniques to a real-world problem submitted by a partner business, and the higher levels of intellectual activity and learning.   For capstone courses, the primary means to assess student performance came from simulations, team projects, portfolio evaluation, tests, internships and clinical experience and specific projects and assignments. In colleges and schools of business, capstone courses focused on strategic management and typically contained the instructional modalities of case study discussions, simulation experiences, written case analysis, oral case presentations, CEO interviews and various types of tests. Strategic management was often cited as the principal course goal. Strategic management was demonstrated through analytical and decision making skills, internal firm assessment and external and competitive industry environment. To ensure that a capstone course was an effective summative assessment of a student's academic experience, the course design needed to align with course and curricular goals.

Methodology

This study used focus group and interview research as its chosen strategies of investigation. Focus group and interview research utilized qualitative methods to ask questions to explore a concept and allowed the researcher to be flexible in adjusting questions. Two focus groups were held as well as numerous interviews. The purpose of the first focus group was to provide information on the skills evidenced in capstone student papers and on the skills required for employment in their respective member organizations. The purpose of the second focus group was to provide evidence of the skills evidenced in capstone student presentations. The demographics of the first focus group were similar to the demographics of the second focus group, although the actual participants varied.   .

Data Analysis

Data analysis was performed by examining the best practices of Bloomberg BusinessWeek national model of capstone courses and the syllabus of the capstone course at the College of Business. Correlations between the syllabi of the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* national model of capstone courses and the syllabus of the College of Business capstone course were determined. Additional data analysis involved the capstone student papers and presentations. Community business leaders served as participants in two focus groups and offered their expert opinions on the definition of important skills. They also examined the capstone student papers and presentations for the presence and application of those skills. Correlations between the focus

group identification of important skills and the skills evidenced in capstone student papers and presentations were determined.

Findings

Findings represent the conclusion of an examination or investigation. As the main purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies, as demonstrated through capstone student papers and presentations, required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida, the findings are clarified by the corresponding research questions. As reference, the research questions that guided this study were:

1. To what extent does the design of the college of business capstone course fulfill the best practices of capstone courses?

2. To what extent do characteristics of capstone student projects as means of best practices in the field of business as identified by community business leaders successfully fulfill the requirements of the capstone course?

3. To what extent do characteristics of capstone student presentations as means of best practices in the field of business as identified by community business leaders successfully fulfill the requirements of the capstone course?

Research Question One

1. To what extent does the design of the college of business capstone course fulfill the best practices of capstone courses?

This investigation involved an examination of the syllabi of the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* national model of capstone courses and the syllabi of the capstone course in the College of Business. It was found that the syllabi of the Bloomberg BusinessWeek national model of capstone courses and the syllabi of the capstone course in the College of Business had analogous or comparable course goals, skill sets, competencies and assessment strategies. Analogous or comparable course goals had language related to: business strategy, understanding of concepts/ business courses, integrate competencies, apply material to organizational problems and opportunities, etc. Similarly, analogous or comparable skill sets and competencies had language related to: critical thinking skills, problem solving, business strategy, analysis, profitability, change management, competition and decision making. Lastly, analogous or comparable assessment strategies had language related to: written reports, presentations, analysis, exams, cases and exercises. Therefore, common language that described course goals, skill sets, competencies and assessment strategies existed in both Bloomberg *BusinessWeek* national model of capstone courses and the syllabus of the capstone course at the College of Business.

Finding to Research Question One

A positive relationship existed between college of business capstone courses and the best practices of capstone courses. The positive relationship was demonstrated by comparable and analogous language in the college of business capstone courses and the best practices of capstone courses.   Due to the positive relationship demonstrated by the common language in course goals, skill sets, competencies and assessment strategies, the design of the college of business capstone course fulfilled the best practices of capstone courses.

Course Goals

The course goals documented on the syllabi of the Bloomberg BusinessWeek national model of capstone courses and the syllabus of the College of Business capstone course evidenced a positive relationship. The importance of the clear link between course goals and performance measures were noted in Berheide (2010) and van Acker (2011). Capstone course goals emphasize students' use of critical reasoning, application of comprehensive knowledge and techniques, and intelligent conveyance and intelligent discourse of skills to informed audiences (Markulis, 2007). These course goals were evidenced in the College of Business capstone course. The course design of the course goals of the capstone course of the College of Business fulfilled the best practices in capstone courses in colleges of business.

Skill Sets and Competencies

The skill sets and competencies of the Bloomberg BusinessWeek national model of capstone courses and the syllabus of the College of Business capstone course also evidenced a positive relationship. Skill sets were further defined into cognitive, affective and psychomotor skills. This was affirmed by Bloom (1956) and later by Harrow (1972). Cognitive skills are

demonstrated in the capstone course by students "learning about a problem and drawing upon their knowledge and research to weigh and select various data leading to a solution of the problem which is workable and intellectually defensible" (Churches, n.d.). Cognitive skills were most readily identifiable in the capstone papers. Further, in addition to cognitive skills, Terenzini (1989) indicated that capstone programs could evaluate affective skills such as attitudes and values and behaviors. Capstone programs could also evaluate psychomotor skills such as the application or performance of a task (Churches, n.d.). Wilkins and Noll (2000) affirmed Terenzini's (1989) work by stating that a senior project could showcase a full range of skills. These skills were evidenced in the College of Business capstone course. The course design of the skill sets and competencies of the capstone course of the College of Business fulfilled the best practices in capstone courses in colleges of business.

Assessment Strategies

The assessment strategies documented on the syllabi of the Bloomberg BusinessWeek national model of capstone courses and the syllabus of the College of Business capstone course evidenced a positive relationship. The Carnegie Foundation recommended three instruments for measuring such outcomes in a capstone course. These include a senior thesis, an oral presentation and a portfolio (Boyer, 1987). For capstone courses, the primary means to assess student performance are derived from analyzing simulations and team projects, portfolio evaluation, tests, internships and clinical experience and specific projects and assignments. Berheide (2001) identified the use of a thesis research paper and Phalin (2014) identified a series of exams, cases and class participation as the most appropriate assessment strategies for capstone courses. The College of Business capstone course utilized a thesis research paper as one of its

assessment strategies. Based on this, the course design of the assessment strategies of the capstone course of the College of Business fulfilled the best practices in capstone courses in colleges of business.

Research Question Two

2. To what extent do characteristics of capstone student projects as means of best practices in the field of business as identified by community business leaders successfully fulfill the requirements of the capstone course?

This investigation involved a comparison of the characteristics of the capstone student papers in the capstone course in the College of Business to best practices of capstone courses in the field of business. In order to facilitate this comparison, a focus group of community business leaders was held to establish the skills necessary for hiring entry level positions in their respective organizations. Once these skills were finalized and operationalized, the best practices of capstone student projects in capstone courses were determined.

The focus group iterated that written communication was an important skill, in addition to teamwork, oral communication, professionalism, decision making and initiative. Written communication was defined by the focus group as the ability to successfully articulate an idea on paper with few grammatical errors. According to the Michigan Professional Preparation Network, "communication competence is the ability to read, write, speak, and listen and to use these processes effectively to acquire, develop, and convey ideas and information" (Blanchard & Christ, 1993). Communication competence represents a psychomotor skill as it requires the

application or performance of a task (Churches, n.d.). The importance of effective business writing was highlighted by Tanyel, Mitchell and McAlum (1999) and Holtzman and Kraft (2010). The Hart Research Group (2010) noted that the ability to communicate effectively, in orally and in writing, was considered important for 89% of employers.

The Ghannadian (2013) study determined the best practices of capstone courses in colleges of business and investigated the extent to which the academic community met employers' skill requirements. This research held paramount importance to the researcher as it was directly relevant to the research inquiry and occurred in relative close proximity to the metropolitan university within a geographically similar area. Ghannadian (2013) found at the bachelor's level the top skills identified by employers were: leadership, business writing, business speaking and organizational behavior, business ethics, social responsibility, change management, decision making, career planning, problem solving and team work. 76% of respondents in the Ghannadian (2013) study noted business writing important for college of business graduates. Other skills identified as important in Ghannadian's (2013) study were: advanced communication, motivation, imagination and creativity. By comparing these skills to the syllabi of the top business schools, Ghannadian (2013) found that business colleges have done a good job of responding to employers' needs in terms of business and leadership skills, but they haven't been as successful in teaching softer skills such as self-awareness, long-term planning, time management, task prioritization, empathy, and persistence.

As written communication is comprised of varied skills, the foundational skills of written communication were determined. Grading rubrics identified the foundational skills as concept

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integration, content/organization, research and documentation, language and sentence structure, grammar and mechanics. The scoring range indicating levels of proficiency of the foundational skills ranged from outstanding, exceeds expectation, meets minimum expectation, below expectations to poor.

Finding to Research Question Two

A positive skill level for employment in entry level positions in community business leaders' respective organizations existed between the College of Business capstone student papers and best practices of capstone courses. The positive skill level was demonstrated by levels of skill proficiency in the College of Business capstone student papers and the best practices of capstone courses. Due to this, it was found that the characteristics of capstone student projects as a means of best practices in the field of business met the requirements of the capstone course and demonstrated a positive skill level for employment in entry level positions in community business leaders' respective organizations.

The focus group found that the written communication skills they defined as important for hiring entry level positions in their respective organizations and the skills defined by Ghannadian (2013) as best practices of capstone courses were demonstrated in the capstone student papers. The skills identified by the focus group in the capstone student papers were research, attention to detail, problem solving, understanding the market, team work, analysis and synthesis and innovation and creativity. The focus group members confirmed that research was demonstrated at an outstanding level of proficiency in the capstone student papers stating the "depth and detail of strategy formulation and implementation was much higher than an entry

level position in his organization would be expected to complete." Attention to detail was the next skill demonstrated in the capstone student papers. The focus group members stated that attention to detail was demonstrated at a meets minimum expectations level due to the number of grammatical, punctuation and spelling errors in the capstone student paper. Problem solving and understanding the market were demonstrated at an exceeds expectations level of proficiency. Team work was demonstrated at an outstanding level of proficiency in the capstone student papers with multiple focus group members citing the importance of team work in their respective organizations. Analysis and synthesis was demonstrated at a level of proficiency that exceeded their expectations for entry level positions. The skills of innovation and creativity voiced some disagreement among the focus group members on the level of proficiency demonstrated in the capstone student papers. One focus group member in the restaurant industry stated "the creativity shown here is not enough for us" while another member in a non-profit industry stated "creativity is important to us but we need to focus on higher goals first." The disagreement on the level of proficiency on innovation and creativity demonstrated in the capstone student papers was resolved with a decision on a meeting minimum expectations level of proficiency.

The tabulation of levels of proficiency of skills demonstrated in the capstone student papers as illustrations of best practices of best practices of capstone courses found a 14% level of proficiency at an outstanding level, a 57% level of proficiency at an exceeds expectations level, and a 29% level of proficiency at meeting minimum expectations level. The focus group determined that there were no skills identified as best practices of capstone courses at the below expectations or poor levels of proficiency. This indicated that the characteristics of capstone

student papers held uniformly positive levels of proficiency with the best practices of capstone courses.

Due to this, written communication as a characteristic of best practices of capstone courses was demonstrated at a positive skill level in the capstone student papers in the College of Business for entry level employment in community business leaders' respective organizations.

Research Question Three

3. To what extent do characteristics of capstone student presentations as means of best practices in the field of business as identified by community business leaders successfully fulfill the requirements of the capstone course?

This investigation involved a comparison of the characteristics of the capstone presentations in the capstone course in the College of Business to best practices of capstone courses in the field of business. In order to facilitate this comparison, a focus group of community business leaders was held to establish the skills necessary for hiring entry level positions in their respective organizations. Once these skills were finalized and operationalized, the best practices of presentations in capstone courses were determined.

The focus group iterated that oral communication and professionalism were important skills. Oral communication was defined as the ability to articulate ideas with success and the ability to represent an organization with language skills and talk to customers in a professional manner to convey a quality product to customers. Professionalism was defined as the attitude

and attire appropriate to office requirements that gets the job done in a timely manner and to come across as a competent entity with a high probability of success.

Oral communication was noted as important by 95.4% of respondent by the Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families (2006) study and by 89% of respondents in a Hart Research Associates (2010) study. In 2013, Hart Research Associates confirmed their earlier findings on the importance of oral communication with 93% of respondents stating "a candidate's demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is more important than their undergraduate major" (p. 1). Tanyel, Mitchell and McAlum (1999) surveyed human resource professionals in South Carolina and found oral communication to be one of the most important attributes of business graduates.

Professionalism was noted as important by 93.8% of respondents by the Conference Board, Corporate Voices for Working Families (2006) study. The Professionalism in the Workplace Study (Polk-Lepson Research Group, 2013) identified a professional in the workplace as demonstrating the qualities of: working until a task is completed competently, interpersonal skills including civility, appropriate appearance, punctuality and regular attendance, communication skills, honesty and focused/attentive.

As skill sets, oral communication and professionalism are identified as elements of the psychomotor domain of learning. Psychomotor learning is best defined in AJ Harrow's (1972) taxonomy of educational objectives as "including the ability to develop and deliver oral presentations in informal and formal business settings" and is evaluated by the application and performance of skills (Churches, n.d.). Capstone presentations served to demonstrate oral

communication in a formal business setting, using Power point or Prezi presentations. According to Anderson and Krathwohl (2001), creating is defined as putting the elements together to form a coherent or functional whole; reorganizing elements into a new pattern or structure through generating, planning or producing. Possible activities could include media production using Movie maker and presentations using Power point or Prezi (Churches, n.d.).

The Ghannadian (2013) study determined the best practices of capstone courses in colleges of business and investigated the extent to which the academic community met employers' skill requirements. In addition to business writing, Ghannadian (2013) found at the bachelor's level the top skills identified by employers were: leadership, business speaking and organizational behavior, business ethics, social responsibility, change management, decision making, career planning, problem solving and team work. 72% of respondents in the Ghannadian (2013) study noted business speaking important for college of business graduates.

As oral communication is comprised of varied skills, the foundational skills of oral communication were determined. Grading rubrics identified the foundational skills as content, organization, body language, vocal presentation, use of visual aids and professionalism. The scoring range indicating levels of proficiency of the foundational skills ranged from outstanding, exceeds expectation, meets minimum expectation, below expectations to poor.

Finding to Research Question Three

A positive skill level for employment in entry level positions in community business leaders' respective organizations existed between college of business capstone presentations and

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best practices of capstone courses. The positive skill level was demonstrated by levels of skill proficiency in the college of business capstone presentations and the best practices of capstone courses. Due to this, it was found that the characteristics of capstone student projects as a means of best practices in the field of business met the requirements of the capstone course and demonstrated a positive skill level for employment in entry level positions in community business leaders' respective organizations.

The focus group found that the oral communication skills they defined as important for hiring entry level positions in their respective organizations and the skills defined by Ghannadian (2013) as best practices of capstone courses were demonstrated in the capstone presentations. The skills identified by the focus group in the capstone presentations were team work, organization, preparedness, body language, professionalism, technological skills and innovation and creativity. Team work was demonstrated at a meets minimum expectations level of proficiency in the capstone presentations with focus group members stating "this presentation was very professional and required input from the other team members to make it successful" and "This is what I expect but it wasn't unified in its delivery or perfect." Organization was demonstrated in the capstone presentations at an exceeding expectations level with focus group members stating "The presentation made sense in how it flowed and was organized." Preparedness was demonstrated at a met minimum expectations level. Body language, professionalism and technological skills were demonstrated at an outstanding level of proficiency with focus group members stating "the team's professionalism showed from their knowledge and how they explained their presentation" and "they have to be knowledgeable and

be able to convey that knowledge to other people so they can understand." Innovation and creativity was demonstrated on a meets minimum expectations level of proficiency.

The tabulation of levels of proficiency of skills demonstrated in the capstone student papers as illustrations of best practices of best practices of capstone courses found a 43% level of proficiency at an outstanding level, a 14% level of proficiency at an exceeds expectations level, and a 43% level of proficiency at meeting minimum expectations level. The focus group determined that there were no skills identified as best practices of capstone courses at the below expectations or poor levels of proficiency. This indicated that the characteristics of capstone presentations held positive levels of proficiency with the best practices of capstone courses.

Due to this, oral communication as a characteristic of best practices of capstone courses was demonstrated at a positive skill level in the capstone presentations in the college of business for entry level employment in community business leaders' respective organizations.

Implications of Findings

The main purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies, as demonstrated through capstone projects and presentations, required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida. To meet this purpose, this research examined if the current College of Business capstone course fulfilled the requirements of best practices in course design by identifying the anticipated outcomes and skills set of the course, defined employer's skill requirements and determined the congruency between employers' skill requirements and evidenced skill sets.

Although the most important parts of a research study are the findings of the data collected, it is equally important that the implications of the findings be examined. The research needs to identify why and how the findings were made and the way key concepts in the analysis developed. In addition, the research study needs to "inform the reader of any unexpected findings or patterns that emerged from the data and report a range of evidence to support assertions or interpretation presented" (Conclusions and Implications, 2014). Implications indicate the meanings that are constructed from the data. The implications of the research findings are presented with its corresponding research question.

Research Question One

1. To what extent does the design of the college of business capstone course fulfill the best practices of capstone courses?

According to the research findings, a positive relationship existed between college of business capstone courses and the best practices of capstone courses. The positive relationship was demonstrated by comparable and analogous language in the college of business capstone courses and the best practices of capstone courses. Due to the positive relationship demonstrated by the common language in course goals, skill sets, competencies and assessment strategies, the design of the college of business capstone course fulfilled the best practices of capstone courses.

Implications to Research Question One

The implications of this finding relate to effective course design and implementation. "Effective course design is the intentional planning of a course to help students achieve significant learning. It begins with creating essential learning goals around which the course is built, followed by designing assessments that can demonstrate student achievement of those goals" (Fink, n.d.).   Effective course design can play a pivotal role in facilitating student learning and assessing organizational and curricular goals.

Changes in course design may necessitate structural changes to the curriculum, so that they remain current with student and organizational needs. This may cause trepidation for administrators, faculty and students. Administrators may need to adjust their overall assessment policies and procedures to ensure curricular goals are being met. Faculty may need to rethink their traditional views of course goals, skill sets, competencies and assessment strategies. The adjustment in course design has in part resulted in "an unfolding paradigm shift in higher education, from focusing on teaching to focusing on learning" (Whetton, 2007, p. 340). This can be evidenced in the changing teacher's role as one who delivers instruction and transfers knowledge to students to one that elicits student discovery and construction of knowledge (Whetton, 2007). This would require a change in focus to higher level learning objectives. Course activities need to selected that foster active and engaged learning. Students may need to

rethink their current skills and competencies in order to be competitive in their workplace or industry.

In addition to the inherent structural curricular changes, technology plays a role in course design. Faculty may not have the proficiency to implement technology effectively. In addition, course design needs to take into account distance learners. As online courses increase in popularity and enrollment, faculty may need to participate in online instructional design workshops in order to successfully use technology to increase student engagement in their classes. "In class technologies-such as podium-based computers, wireless, real-time response systems, and web based tools (e.g. blogs, online forums, wikis, podcasts, etc.)–continue to change rapidly. These tools have a high potential for supporting student learning in creative and innovative ways when properly aligned with the instructor's learning objectives and course content" ("Teaching with Technology," 2014).

The following discussion examines the implications of the design of the college of business capstone course as it relates to course goals, skill sets and competencies and assessment strategies.

Course Goals

Course goals are an important factor in course design. In order to ensure that the college of business capstone course fulfills the best practices of capstone courses, the implications of course design are that college of business capstone courses should be knowledgeable of the course goals of the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* national model of capstone courses. The common

capstone course goals included in the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* national model of capstone courses of colleges of business that the researcher found were:

- That students use their business knowledge—finance, management, marketing, leadership, and social responsibility—while formulating and executing business strategy. That students apply business knowledge in a densely intricate and complex environment; navigate the interwoven challenges of strategy development, business execution and team-dynamics; and enhance communication and teamwork skills through team-based decision making.

- That students demonstrate an understanding of the basic concepts and the integration of competencies determined by the department to be crucial for all its graduates.

- That students develop diagnostic reasoning skills in situations despite incomplete and ambiguous information about the problems and opportunities that it faces.

Capstone courses need to ensure that comparable and analogous language of course goals from the Bloomberg BusinessWeek national model of capstone courses is evidenced in the course goals of their institution's capstone course.

Skill Sets and Competencies

In order to ensure that college of business capstone courses fulfill the best practices of capstone courses, the implications of course design are that colleges of business should be knowledgeable of the skill sets and competencies of the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* national model of capstone courses. Administrators and faculty should ensure that the skill sets and

competencies instructed in their courses should contain key elements of: critical thinking skills, problem solving, business strategy, analysis, profitability, change management, competition and decision making. As faculty members review their learning objectives for skills and competencies, they might want to ensure that new readings, classroom discussions and activities are included that fulfill these key skills. It may involve new technology skills for students and faculty. Faculty may want to include skills like discussion boards so that learning can be transferred to everyday practices and offer real life experiences.

Assessment Strategies

In order to ensure that college of business capstone courses fulfill the best practices of capstone courses, the implications of course design are that colleges of business should be knowledgeable of the assessment strategies of the *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* national model of capstone courses. Administrators and faculty should ensure that the assessment strategies utilized in their courses are written reports, presentations, analysis, exams, cases and exercises. The tests should be aligned to course goals and be related to the material in order to be valid. A further implication is that a grading rubric should be used and that it be valid. "The value of the rubric is enhanced as a learning tool if it is distributed and discussed before the test. Even better, it can be used to guide formative learning activities leading up to the exam" (Whetton, 2007, p. 349). Lastly, new assessment strategies may be needed for traditional and online learning. Faculty may need assistance in developing these new assessment strategies. Vasser (2010) recommends diagnostic surveys and experience logs to increase student engagement in online learning.

Research Question Two

2. To what extent do characteristics of capstone student projects as means of best practices in the field of business as identified by community business leaders successfully fulfill the requirements of the capstone course?

According to the research findings, a positive skill level for employment in entry level positions in community business leaders' respective organizations existed between college of business capstone student papers and best practices of capstone courses. The positive skill level was demonstrated by levels of skill proficiency in the College of Business capstone student papers and the best practices of capstone courses. Due to this, it was found that the characteristics of capstone student projects as a means of best practices in the field of business met the requirements of the capstone course and demonstrated a positive skill level for employment in entry level positions in community business leaders' respective organizations.

Implications to Research Question Two

The implications to the positive skill level for employment for employment in entry level positions in community business leaders' respective organizations between college of business capstone student papers and best practices of capstone courses indicate that course assessments should include a written report. "Students identify the courses that had the most profound impact on them as courses in which they were required to write papers, not just for the professor,

as usual, but for their fellow students as well" (Vasser, 2010, p. 64). The written report should contain the elements of best practices of capstone courses as identified by Ghannadian (2013). Rubrics should be utilized. Vasser (2010) noted "The relationship between the amount of writing for a course and students' level of engagement—whether engagement is measured by time spent on the course, or the intellectual challenge it presents, or students' interest in it—is stronger than any other course characteristic" (p. 55).

Additionally, the inclusion of a written report in a new or existing course may prove difficult for faculty members due to time and high enrollment constraints. This difficulty may be amplified in online learning environments.

Additional implications result from the nature of problem-based learning. "Problem-based learning is a student centered pedagogy that consists of carefully designed problems to challenge students by using problem solving techniques, self-directed learning strategies, team participation skills, and disciplinary knowledge" (University of Michigan, 2014). However, challenges to problem-based learning exist due to group dynamics, uncertainty and student studying skills. The problem-based learning method requires more student involvement and self-discipline than a traditional course does. Due to this, students need to possess maturity and motivation. In addition, students need to have advanced study skills which allow them to participate in group meetings and complete goals. These requirements often cause dissention among group members. "Difficult group dynamics, tolerance of uncertainty and demanding studying skills caused problems that were too hard to overcome to some students" (Kinnunen & Malmi, 2005, p 193). Maurer, Reithler and Brunotte (2011) also found the difficulty of

managing group dynamics and lacking skills of students to be one of the most challenging aspects of working with problem-based learning.

Research Question Three

3. To what extent do characteristics of capstone student presentations as means of best practices in the field of business successfully fulfill the requirements of the capstone course?

According to the research findings, a positive skill level for employment in entry level positions in community business leaders' respective organizations existed between college of business capstone presentations and best practices of capstone courses. The positive skill level was demonstrated by levels of skill proficiency in the College of Business capstone presentations and the best practices of capstone courses. Due to this, it was found that the characteristics of capstone presentations as a means of best practices in the field of business met the requirements of the capstone course and demonstrated a positive skill level for employment in entry level positions in community business leaders' respective organizations.

Implications to Research Question Three

The implications to the positive skill level for employment in entry level positions in community business leaders' respective organizations between college of business capstone student papers and best practices of capstone courses indicate that course assessments should include a presentation. The presentation should contain the elements of best practices of capstone

courses as identified by Ghannadian (2013). Immerwahr (2010) posits that presentation skills are an important skill that students need in the workplace and can help students condense and present their ideas (Teach 101). Vasel (2014) stresses that "younger employment candidates need to demonstrate that they can hold a conversation, send professional emails and interact with the other staff and clients in a professional manner (The Skills Employer Wish College Grads Had).

However, the implication remains that faculty may be limited to offering presentations in their courses due to time, enrollment and online learning environments. Faculty also may have difficulty adding another activity or assessment to a course. Faculty may also be constrained in designing the presentation so that it offers real world experiences to students. Lastly, the issue of whether the presentation should be graded individually or by a team may be an obstruction.

Additional Implications

Additional implications of this research study include individual expectations of performance and forms of inquiry.

Individual Expectations of Performance

The participants that composed the focus group members were professionals from varied industries in Central Florida including transportation, sports entertainment, aviation, restaurant, child welfare, etc. Based on the diverse range of industries and levels of performance within those industries, the community business leaders experienced different individual expectations of performance on both the capstone student paper and presentation. For example, individual

community business leaders may have interpreted or referenced differing viewpoints on what outstanding or meets expectations means for their respective organizations.

Varying levels of skill expectations were illustrated as the second focus group examined the capstone presentation for evidence of innovation and creativity. Some of the members commented that the level of innovation and creativity met their minimum expectations while others cited that they were generally disappointed with the level of innovation and creativity. This led to a lengthy discussion on expectations. Focus group members in business development from the hotel and resort industry were disappointed with the level of innovation and creativity stating "This presentation was just average -nothing especially creative. If you're not creative in hotels and resorts, your customers are going to go somewhere else." A focus group member in the sports entertainment industry agreed "the presentation was what I would expect. I wasn't wowed. In sports, we've got to keep people wanting to come see games." In contrast, a member from the non-profit child welfare industry felt that the capstone presentation exceeded her expectations. A member from the law enforcement industry concurred stating "This is exactly what my people want to see."

Forms of Inquiry

Focus groups and interviews were the forms of descriptive inquiry selected for this research study. The purpose of a focus group is to explore feelings, attitudes and perceptions and learn thinking patterns of a target population whereas a qualitative research interview seeks to describe. "The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say" (Kvale, 1996). Interviews are best when you are interested in individual experience,

perceptions, and feelings, regarding several topics of interest that can only be attained through an informal conversation alone with a participant. In contrast, focus groups are best when you want to consider not only one person's own account, but how they interact with others (London School of Economics, n.d.).   Social interaction is key within focus groups.

The first focus group was composed of six community business leaders. The second focus group was composed of twelve community business leaders. Although the focus groups differed in size, they were similar in descriptive statistics. There was much greater social interaction and discussion between the members of the first focus group than the members of the second focus group. This greater interaction may be attributed to the smaller size of the focus group. This first focus group also exhibited greater dissension among topics, especially as it related to diversity. This may also be attributed to the fact that none of the members of the first focus group knew each other and may have felt uninhibited to express their opinions. The larger size of the second focus may have negatively affected the social interaction among the group which may have restricted contrasting viewpoints.

Further, the individual interviews produced a higher quality and depth of information than the focus groups. If more individual interviews had been conducted, the additional information generated may have varied the findings.

Future Recommendations

Future recommendations of this research study include the expansion of research, the inclusion of diversity initiatives and an integrated continuum of capstone skills throughout the college of business.

Expansion of Research

It was recognized early in the design of this research study that although this investigation offered significant benefit to college of business capstone courses in terms of course design and assessment as a result from the input of community business leaders, the key indicators of potential success were based solely on the student projects as a result of participation in the course and not from extraneous factors. This study focused specifically on community business leaders in the Central Florida area; it was necessary to be cognizant that the feedback from the community business leaders which represent a relatively small group of localized business people. Based on this, the results may not be generalized to other institutions or geographic locations, even though a significant percentage of the community business leaders were representative of regional and national organizations. So that it is feasible to generalize the results to other capstone programs in colleges of business, future plans include expansion of this research to other US areas based on the nationwide presence of selected community business leaders. It is recommended that future research studies be implemented to be used as a cross country comparison for more detailed results.

Additional areas of expansion of this research include the extension into specific employer groups or industry selections. This research study was comprised of a heterogeneous sampling of organizations including restaurants, child welfare, aviation, transportation, real estate, education, etc. To further define and extend this research using specific employer groups or industry segments would provide beneficial data from the community business leaders and would address the needs particular to their industry. Lastly, a further area of expansion of this research would be to segment profit and non-profit industries. Segmenting profit from non-profit organizations would specifically define and identify the needs particular to those industries. Expansion and extension of this research would assist in determining the needs of potential employers in Central Florida, defining the employer's skill requirements and determining the congruency between employers' skill requirements and evidenced skill sets.

Diversity Initiatives

Diversity was a significant factor in the review of related literature and in the focus groups. The 1998 National Survey of Voters found that 69% of respondents indicated it a priority for people to function in a more diverse work force (National Survey of Voters, 1998). The 2010 Hart Research Associated study indicated that 65% of respondents agreed that global issues and developments and their implications for their future were important (Hart Research Associates, 2010). Kuh (2008) identified diversity as a high impact educational practice as "many colleges and universities 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" (Kuh, 2008). Hyman and Jacobs (2009) in *US News and World Report* noted eight reasons why diversity is important on college campuses: "1- Diversity expands worldliness; 2- Diversity enhances social development; 3- Diversity prepares students for future career success; 4- Diversity prepares students for work in a global society; 5- Interactions with people different from ourselves increase our knowledge base; 6- Diversity promotes creative thinking; 7- Diversity enhances self-awareness; and 8- Diversity enriches the multiple perspectives" (Hyman and Jacobs, 2009, para. 2).

The focus group iterated on the importance and challenges associated with a diverse workforce and community. Although the focus group agreed on the importance of diversity, highlighted by statements such as "managing and developing people and valuing diversity are most important skills in our organization and to our fan base," there was dissension as to the challenges of diversity. This was evidenced by one focus group member stating that diversity "virtually shut down" his organization while another focus group member stated "this is the most diverse group I've ever seen."

At a large metropolitan university, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion "works to make diversity and inclusion visible and active elements that indelibly permeate the life and values of the UCF community" (Office of Diversity and Inclusion, 2014). Further, the mission of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion supports the university's five goals: "1- Offer the best undergraduate education available in Florida; 2- Achieve international prominence in key programs of graduate study and research; 3- Provide international focus to our curricula and

research programs; 4- Become more inclusive and diverse; 5- Be America's leading partnership university" (Office of the President, 2014).

Diversity Statements

A cursory review of the diversity statements of the focus group members' organizations found an inconsistent number of clearly defined diversity statements. The diversity statements of the focus group members' organizations are found in Appendix J. McLane Inc., the Orlando Magic, the city of Oviedo, Orlando Regional Medical Center, NASA, Seminole County Public Schools, and the University of Central Florida evidenced unambiguous diversity statements. The diversity statement for Seminole County Public School states "it is the policy of the school board of Seminole county, Florida, that no employee, student, or applicant shall- on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, marital status, age, religion, or any other basis prohibited by law- be excluded from participating I, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination and harassment under any education programs, activities, or in any employment conditions, policies or practices conducted by the District" (Seminole County School Board, 2014). The city of Oviedo states "It is the policy of the city of Oviedo to consider applications for all positons without regard to race, color, religion, creed, national origin, age, disability (unless the disability precludes performance of the essential functions of the positon, marital/family or veteran's status or any other legally protected status" (City of Oviedo, 2014). NASA and UCF have designated Offices of Diversity and Inclusion. In contrast, Boys Town of Central Florida, Signature Flight Support, New Hope for Kids, Holland Pools and M Paul General Contractors did not.. This may be attributed to the size of the organization as the larger

organizations had explicit diversity statements whereas the smaller organizations did not. However, some of the smaller organizations have vague references to diversity in their mission statements or hiring practices. Boys Town of Central Florida code states "Boys Town maintains a policy which abides by federal law with regard to equal opportunity for youth and families accessing services" (Boys Town, 2014). Similarly, Tijuana Flats' core values refer to respect, quality, opportunity, integrity, fun and community. There was no evidence indicating a difference in diversity statements between profit and non-profit organizations.

Diversity Courses in Colleges of Business

An investigation of diversity courses specifically in colleges of business yielded few results. Although many universities had diversity-enhanced or diversity-designated courses in their liberal arts or undergraduate programs, there were few diversity courses in colleges of businesses. Further, diversity was not a core concept in capstone courses in colleges of business. Nor was diversity evidenced as a core concept on the syllabi of the Bloomberg BusinessWeek national model of capstone courses. One of the few colleges of business that highlights diversity in the workplace is Rutgers Business School which offers elective courses "Managing U.S. Workforce Diversity, Multi-National Cross-Cultural Management, Women in Business Leadership, Multicultural Markets & Urban Developments and Social Entrepreneurship" (Rutgers Business School, 2014). However, capstone courses in colleges of business do not address diversity.

This presents a strategic opportunity for the college of business in a large, metropolitan university to develop and include diversity initiatives in its capstone course. The restructured

capstone curriculum should emphasize hard and soft skills students need to become successful professionals and grasp diversity in their workplace. Case studies and class discussions could focus on managing diverse teams and leading multicultural teams in organizations. Role playing situations could facilitate diverse work situations and how to effectively manage diversity in terms of employee ethnicity, expectations, motivations and communication strategies. Written projects could include diversity in negotiation strategies and oral presentations could include a multilingual component.

This is also an opportune time to restructure the college of business capstone course as according to the 2010 national census, Florida is on track to break the 20 million mark by the end of 2015 with Hispanics representing about 22.5% of Florida's population and are forecast to represent over 26% of Florida's population by 2030 (Office of Economic and Demographic Research, 2011). Orlando has the largest population of Puerto Ricans in Florida and has fastest growing Puerto Rican community in the country. "Orlando also has a large and growing Caribbean population, with a large West Indian community (particularly Jamaicans and the Trinidadian and Tobagonian population), and an established Haitian community. As of 2000, 75.43% of all residents speak English as their first language, while 16.60% speak Spanish, 1.93% speak Haitian Creole, 1.33% speak French, 0.99% speak Portuguese, and 0.54% of the population speak Arabic as their mother language. In total, 24.56% of the population 5 years and older speak a language other than English at home" (Wikipedia, 2014).

Based on these factors, it is recommended that the capstone course in the college of business in a large, metropolitan university implement diversity initiatives to provide needed skills to its students and effectively represent the local community.

Integrated Continuum of Capstone Skills

A further recommendation for the capstone course in the college of business at a large metropolitan university is in alignment with the proposed Integrated Business curriculum initiated by Dean Paul Jarley. According to Lonny Butcher, director of Professional Development, the "Integrated Business (IB) major is a program within the Bachelor of Science in Business Administration (BSBA) degree. It is designed to provide students with a diverse tool set and integrative skills so that they can successfully navigate the volatile and challenging marketplace facing graduates. Instead of focusing on one business discipline, the IB program provides students with a generalist skill set that integrates Finance, Marketing, Human Resources, and other topics into a single body of knowledge" (Lonny Butcher, personal communication, November 12, 2014). The restructured capstone course should be based on an interdisciplinary foundation and give students the ability to practice and perfect their business skills.

Interdisciplinary Foundation

As the proposed Integrated Business curriculum in the college of business focuses on varied generalist skills instead of one business discipline, it is recommended that the restructured capstone course integrate a wide variety of skills from finance, marketing, human resources and

other topics into the curriculum. The broad range of skills can be integrated throughout the entire program. This can be ensured by identifying the key learning objectives for the curriculum and then selecting a course in the undergraduate program that would focus on developing the specific skill set that is required in the capstone course. Each course would teach an individual capstone skill. For example, the integrated business communication course could focus developing student's proficiency with written and oral business communication and a different course could focus on developing student's proficiency with creating effective presentations. As the capstone course can be used as a summative assessment of a student's academic experience, this interdisciplinary foundation would ensure that all undergraduate students have the broad range of skills necessary to demonstrate a high level of skill proficiency in the capstone course.

Deliberate Repetition

The review of related literature indicated performance gaps in skill sets. Hart Research Associates (2006) noted that 63% of business executives agreed that college graduates do not have the skllls to be successful in today's global economy (Hart Research Associates, 2006). In 2009, employers also saw a considerable deficit of soft skills among workers (Top 10 Soft Skills for Job Hunters, 2009). According to the US Department of Labor ("Soft Skills"), soft skills include six main competencies: communication; enthusiasm and attitude; teamwork; networking; problem solving and critical thinking; and professionalism.

It is recognized that the art of 'practice makes perfect' or deliberate repetition is recommended for learning new behaviors. Coker (2013) noted that practice makes a mental activity automatic. Barizo (2009) found that practice is designed to specifically improve

performance. There are numerous examples in which students can benefit from a deliberate repetition. Written and oral communication skills would likely improve if students performed them on a regular basis. Training and development skills would also likely improve with repetition. Specific workplace skills that students could practice include job interviews, employee performance appraisals, presentations, sales calls, doctor patient sessions, dispute resolution sessions and student teacher sessions (Coker, 2013). Lemov (2012) posits that "thousands of other tasks that are done 'live'- from delivering employee performance reviews from hearing a customer complaint would benefit from practice beforehand" (Lemov, 2012).

Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to determine to what extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies, as demonstrated through capstone student papers and presentations, required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida. It was found that a positive relationship existed between college of business capstone courses and the best practices of capstone courses. This was demonstrated by comparable and analogous language in the College of Business capstone courses and the best practices of capstone courses.

This study also found that positive skill levels for employment in entry level positions in community business leaders' respective organizations existed between college of business capstone student papers and capstone presentations and best practices of capstone courses. The positive skill levels were demonstrated by levels of skill proficiency in the college of business capstone student papers and capstone presentations and the best practices of capstone courses.

Implications of this research study indicate that changes in course design may necessitate structural changes to the curriculum, so that they remain current with student and organizational needs. This may cause trepidation for administrators, faculty and students. Faculty need to select course activities that foster active and engaged learning. Students may need to rethink their current skills and competencies in order to be competitive in their workplace or industry. Further, the implication of technology is essential. Faculty may be limited due to their own technological proficiency, as well as time constraints, high student enrollment and online learning environments.

The inclusion of written reports and presentations to a course may be too problematic for faculty. This difficulty may be amplified in online learning environments. Creating effective grading rubrics and real-world situations that increase student engagement may also be demanding for faculty. The issue of whether the presentation should be graded individually or by a team may be a hindrance. Lastly, group dynamics pose challenges within problem-based learning. Recommendations include expansion of this research, the inclusion of diversity initiates and an integrated continuum of capstone skills to further develop student skills and meet employer skill requirements.

The main purpose of this study was to determine the extent students provided evidence of skills and competencies, as demonstrated through capstone student papers and presentations, required to meet the needs of potential employers in Central Florida. As capstone courses are well embedded into the curriculum of undergraduate programs in colleges of business, they are often used to assess program outcomes and curricular goals. Based on this examination, there is

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now evidence that the skills and competencies, as demonstrated through capstone student papers

and presentations, met the needs of potential employers in Central Florida.

APPENDIX A: WHARTON SCHOOL OF BUSINES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA CAPSTONE SYLLABUS

Undergraduate Division
The Wharton School
University of Pennsylvania

WH 398: WHARTON SENIOR CAPSTONE

January, 2014
Academic Director: Peter Fader
Simulation Expert: Todd Norris
High-Performance Teams Expert: Mario Moussa

OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

The Wharton Senior Capstone is an experiential, simulation-based course that allows students to use their business knowledge to solve real-time business decisions. Participants formulate and execute business strategy within a complex business ecosystem comprised of eight student teams ("firms"). By the end of the course, students will have:

☐☐ Applied business knowledge in a densely intricate and complex simulation environment
☐☐ Navigated the interwoven challenges of strategy development, business execution and team dynamics
☐☐ Enhanced communication and teamwork skills through team-based decision making

This course consists of five rounds of simulation over four days, with a closing session on the fourth day. Following the course introduction, each round is introduced with a recap of the previous round and concluded with a team-dynamics discussion. At the closing session, final team results are revealed and a class discussion takes place regarding the state of the business ecosystem at the end of the four days.

Through multiple rounds of simulation, WH 398 incorporates a range of fundamental business concepts including, but not limited to:

☐☐ Strategy development and execution
☐☐ Marketing strategy and tactics
☐☐ Supply chain management
☐☐ Merger and acquisition analysis
☐☐ Risk-based decision making
☐☐ Financial statement analysis
☐☐ Creation of sustainable shareholder value
☐☐ Crisis management
☐☐ Negotiation and mediation
☐☐ Ethics and social responsibility

☐☐ Sustainability and societal value
☐☐ Global coordination and perspectives

COURSE WEBSITE

Use your Wharton ID and password in order to access Canvas, the portal where all course-related documents are stored. If you would like to print materials, Wharton print credits will need to be used. Real-time messages about the course will be conveyed over the simulation messaging interface, which can be accessed while the simulation is in play.

COURSE PREPARATION AND ASSIGNMENTS

Prior to the first meeting of the Capstone, you will be expected to review the following course materials on the Canvas website for WH 398. *Allow 3 hours of preparatory time to read through all documents thoroughly:*

☐*Base Financial Reports*—financial reports for each service provider and manufacturer

☐*Decision System Manual*—instructions on how to use the simulation decision system to analyze industry data and make business decisions

☐*Why Teams Don't Work*—an article about team dynamics by J.R. Hackman

☐*MEDs Industry Briefing*—an overview of the simulation world that includes information about firms, customers, and key characteristics of the global marketplace

☐*Role of Government*—what the regional governments can do and how your team can work with them

☐*Selling Ideas: How Woo Works*—a chapter about negotiation skills by R. Shell and M. Moussa from their book, *Art of Woo*

☐*Simulation Demo Videos*—short videos on how to use the simulation decision system

☐*Introductory PowerPoint*—an overview of the simulation

☐*Team Organization and Strategy Guide*—sample strategies and tips for organizing your team, making decisions, and managing time

Round-specific assignments will be unlocked in Canvas throughout the simulation. Furthermore, you are required to write the following two essays (2-3 pages each):

☐**Essay 1***: Based on your prior experience working in teams, what attributes or characteristics of a team do you identify as having a positive influence on the efficacy of the team? Conversely, what attributes or characteristics of a team do you identify as having a negative influence on the efficacy of the team? Why? (Individual assignment;* **due Tuesday, January 7 at 5:00PM EST***)*

☐**Essay 2***: Based on your team experience during the Senior Capstone, what assumptions did you have about teams that were confirmed? Conversely, what assumptions did you change, and what did you learn from the experience? (Individual assignment;* **due Tuesday, January 14 at 5:00PM EST***)*
SIMULATION DECISION SYSTEM & TECHNOLOGY ASSISTANCE

Teams will be assigned to rooms with desktop computers on which the online simulation decision system is accessible. ***Although we recommend that participants bring a laptop, only one (1) computer should be used to enter simulation round decisions.*** Detailed instructions for entering decisions are included in the "Decision System Manual" document on Canvas.

Please review the Troubleshooting FAQ in the Decision System Manual before contacting a simulation facilitator via the Messages tab in the simulation decision system.

HIGH-PERFORMANCE TEAMS (HPT)

High-performance teams (HPT) are groups of individuals who work together in a manner that maximizes their performance potential. A group of trained "HPT observers" will shadow student teams in action, and capture the nuances of team dynamics through qualitative data gathering. This data serves as the basis for facilitated debriefs where observers work with their teams to identify areas of improvement and create strategies for fostering teamwork success. Observers will take a collaborative rather than directive approach in order to help students elicit insights about their team development. Each team will be assigned one observer. Also supporting the HPT effort is an observer assigned to shadow government and two data analysts. This effort is led by Mario Moussa.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Attendance is REQUIRED at all specified course times, including out-of-class activities.
To receive a PASSING (P) grade for this course, you must:
☐ Attend all class sessions and out-of-class activities
☐ Participate in team discussions
☐ Submit all assignments on Canvas

Student attendance and team discussions will be observed and monitored by a high-performance-teams (HPT) observer, who will lead debriefs after each round.

NOTE: Because the formation of teams is critical to the integrity of the simulation, *any student who drops this course after November 15, 2013 will receive a withdrawal ("W") notation on his/her transcript.*

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

During the Senior Capstone, you will be representing yourself, your team, the Wharton School, and the University of Pennsylvania. As a representative of these groups, your behavior, business ethics, and conduct must be exemplary. We anticipate no problems in this regard, but want to be sure that there is no uncertainty about our high standards and expectations. 4

In accordance with the University's code on academic conduct, prohibited activities include: cheating, misrepresentation, facilitating academic dishonesty, and creating/taking unfair advantage relative to other teams. If you are unsure if an action might constitute a violation, please refer to the code: www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/ or consult with the course staff.

Activities (within or across teams in the simulation) that would violate U.S. laws, for example those that govern competition/cooperation, are not permitted.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to ask the course staff.

COURSE SCHEDULE

DAY 1 – Wednesday, January 8, 2014
Casual Attire Recommended
9:30AM – 10:45AM Registration and Brunch Welcome Plaza Café
10:50AM – 12:40PM Introduction and Team Strategy Session JMHH F85
12:40PM - 4:40PM Simulation – Round 1 (R1) Team rooms
Service Providers
1 – Green F36 2 – Orange F45
3 – Red F94
4 – Yellow F86
Manufacturers
1 – Blue F38
2 – Purple F50
3 – Black F96
4 – Brown F88
4:40PM - 5:40PM R1 HPT Debrief Team rooms
6:00PM - 8:00PM Simulation Kick-Off City Tap House 5

DAY 2 – Thursday, January 9, 2014
Casual Attire Recommended
9:00AM - 9:45AM R1 Recap JMHH F85
9:45AM - 1:15PM Simulation – Round 2 (R2) Team rooms
1:15PM - 2:15PM R2 HPT Debrief Team rooms
2:15PM - 2:30PM Break
2:30PM - 3:15PM R2 Recap JMHH F85
3:15PM - 6:45PM Simulation – Round 3 (R3) Team rooms
6:45PM - 7:45PM R3 HPT Debrief Team rooms

DAY 3 – Friday, January 10, 2014
Business Casual Attire Recommended
9:00AM - 10:15AM Board Meeting Introduction JMHH F85 / Team Rooms
10:15AM - 10:45AM R3 Recap JMHH F85
10:45AM - 1:00PM Board Meeting Preparation Team rooms
Board Meetings (Schedule TBA)
Service Providers
Green & Orange JMHH G86 Red & Yellow JMHH 418

Manufacturers
Blue & Purple JMHH G94
Black & Brown JMHH 304
Board Meeting Debrief Team rooms
1:00PM - 2:00PM Lunch with Board Members JMHH 8th Floor
2:00PM - 5:00PM Simulation – Round 4 (R4) Team rooms
5:00PM - 6:30PM R4 HPT Debrief Team rooms
7:00PM - 8:30PM Closing Dinner Event Location (TBA) 6

DAY 4 – Saturday, January 11, 2014
Casual Attire Recommended
9:00AM - 9:45AM R4 Recap JMHH F85   9:45AM - 12:00PM Simulation – Round 5 (R5) Team rooms   12:00PM - 1:00PM Guided Discussion in Teams Team rooms
1:00PM - 2:30PM Closing Lunch Hoover Lounge   3:00PM - 6:00PM Final Debrief JMHH F85

APPENDIX B: THE COLLEGE OF WISE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINA CAPSTONE SYLLABUS

Department of Business & Economics
BUS 4990 -- Abingdon
Business Simulation

Course Plan

Spring Semester 2013

Instructor: Dr. Francis M. Frey
Office: Smiddy 257
Phone: 376-1080
E-mail: ffrey@virginia.edu
Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday: 11 am - Noon; 1 - 2 pm
                  Tuesdays: 11 - Noon; 1 – 4 pm
                  * Other hours by appointment
Class Meets: Tuesdays: 6 - 8:45pm; VAHEC
Required Text: Management Simulations, Inc.: *Capstone Business Simulation: Student Guide 2012* *** (Included free of charge)
Recommended Reading: Wall Street Journal (regularly); Barron's Online; Business Week

Course Description

BUS 4990 (The Business Simulation) is a senior capstone course required for all Accounting, Business Administration and Economics majors. This course requires students to demonstrate an understanding of basic concepts and the integration of competencies determined by the Department to be crucial for all its graduates.

In order to assess these outcomes, each student must complete a group project that will require demonstration of competencies in (a) oral presentation skills, (b) critical thinking using theories and approaches typical of the student's major discipline, (c) problem solving and ethical decision-making, (d) team dynamics, (e) micro computing skills in word processing, spreadsheet analysis, and data management, and (f) a comprehensive examination of knowledge in their major discipline.

Group Project: The Business Simulation

In this project, students will be assigned to teams (companies) of 3-5 students that will participate in a computerized business simulation. Each team will run their own company, requiring strategic planning, tactical decision-making, environmental scanning and competitor analysis. Functional decisions will have to be made with respect to R&D, Marketing, Production, and Finance. Each team will compete with other teams in the class and around the nation at other participating colleges.

All students will be given a student guide that explains how to register on-line for the CAPSTONE BUSINESS SIMULATION (Management Simulations, Inc). Then students will view the introductory lesson, and individually complete the rehearsal simulation. At that point, you will be assigned to a team, complete a situation analysis, pick a strategy, and then complete 3 practice rounds. At that point you should be ready to compete. All the teams will then complete 8 real, tournament rounds on the simulator (time permitting). After round two, teams will be expected to prepare report presentations to the class explaining their decisions and performance.

Reports will also be delivered for rounds 3-4, and rounds 5-6. At the end of the simulation, all teams will prepare a written report and class presentation on their experience using the capstone simulation.

Round Presentations

Beginning in the third round, teams will take turns presenting to the rest of the class. The presentation should outline the team's decisions in all the major categories and the explanation or rationale behind each decision at the time. I will be evaluating your presentation on several criteria including whether you have an explicit strategy in mind, whether your decisions were well supported by the available data and whether you presented your information well. Don't worry as much about your current state as what you have learned and how you plan to improve. Your team will be expected to make several round presentations at predetermined dates. The professor's evaluations of the round presentations will count 15% of the total grade for BUS 4990.

Capstone Simulation Report

Teams will develop a written report and class presentation based on their experience using the "Capstone Simulation". This report should not attempt to cover every single decision made throughout every round. Rather, it should present the company (including its vision and mission); long term goals; the fundamental strategy driving decision-making; key decisions made in each round in the various functional areas, and the results; identify key turning points in the game that may have caused a rethinking of the fundamental strategy or decision-making; and what your team learned from the game. Additional information regarding this report will be provided later in the term.

The written report should be professionally packaged (much like a corporation's annual report). It should describe the elements mentioned above for all eight rounds. Data and charts should be included. The class presentation should be between 20-25 minutes; and all team members should participate with a speaking role. Presentation software (e.g., PowerPoint) should be used. The team members will receive the same score based on how well their written report and presentation covers the material. The oral presentation should incorporate visual aids using "PowerPoint". This report (written report plus presentation) will be worth 15% of the final grade.

Capstone Performance

Team members will also receive another score based on the team's actual performance in the simulation game. The simulator will note how each team performed across several measures (e.g., star rating, weighted ranking, analysts report score, stock price, and balanced scorecard). An overall ranking across these measures will be generated for each team. This ranking will then be converted to a percentage score for grading purposes. This performance score will be worth 30% of the final grade.

Peer Evaluations

The business simulation software maintains a feature for assessing peer performance after each round. Each student will be required to evaluate team members twice during the semester at predetermined dates. These two evaluations will be combined to form a peer evaluation score; and it is worth 10% of your total grade.

Attendance / Participation Requirements

As a class we will meet regularly, but not every week. It is highly recommended that you attend all classes, as you will be responsible for the material presented, and for presenting on your team's own performance. It is very important that you also come to class prepared to ask other teams insightful questions following their presentations. Therefore, I will track attendance and participation in class. This component is worth 10% of your final grade in BUS 4990.

Comprehensive Examination

The comprehensive exam covers material from your departmental core requirements and major core requirements. This test will be a timed exam taken on-line. Currently, the only courses from these two sections that are not included in the exam are Speech and Introduction to Business Computing I & II. Preparation for this exam is strictly the student's responsibility; however, an on-line practice exam will be made available during the semester (located on the Business & Economics Department Moodle site). This exam is worth 20% of your final grade in BUS 4990.

The date for taking the comprehensive exam will be announced in class.

Component Weightings for the Final Grade in BUS 4990
The actual weighting of each component for BUS 4990 is summarized below:

BUS 4990 Components	*Weight*
Round Presentations	15%
Capstone Simulation Report	15%

Capstone Performance	30%
Peer evaluations	10%
Attendance / Participation	10%
Comprehensive Exam	20%
Total:	100%

Tentative Schedule for BUS 4990

The dates below pertain to both class dates and student responsibilities to be completed
on or before that date. There will be occasions when we do not meet as a class, but you are still
required to meet and work as a team.

Date	Project Assignment
January 15	First class meeting
	Discussion of the syllabus and course requirements
	Introduction to the game
January 22	Before this class meets, you should log into the capstone web site and register for the simulation. There will be a fee between $52-$55 (you may need a credit card to pay this on-line). In class we will review the fundamentals of a mission & vision statement, Business Strategy, and Results, Assessment and Analysis. In class, teams will be formed, and the student guides will be distributed.
January 29	All students should be registered for the simulator at this point. Individual rehearsals must be complete and submitted by 5pm. Problems encountered during the rehearsals will be discussed in class. Teams will work together to write a vision and mission statement for their team.
February 5	No class. All teams should have completed Practice Rounds 1 - 3 of the business simulator by this date (choices must be posted by 11pm).
February 12	Team Results (and problems) from the practice rounds will be discussed in class. Afterward, teams will complete Competition Round 1 (choices must be made by 11pm).
February 19	No class. Teams should meet to complete Competition Round 2. (choices must be made by 11pm)
February 26	Each group must present a formal report to the class covering the first two competition rounds (visual aids such as PowerPoint and/or graphs from the web site should be used).
March 5	No class. Competition Round 3 must be completed by this date (choices must be made by 11pm).

March 9 - 17   Spring Break

March 19   No class. Competition Round 4 must be completed by this date (decisions
                      must be submitted by 11pm)

March 26   Each group must present a formal report to the class covering competition
                      rounds 3 and 4 (visual aids such as PowerPoint and/or graphs from
                      the web site should be used).

April 2   No class. Teams should use this time to work on Competition Round 5
                      (must be completed and submitted by 11pm)

April 9   No class. Teams should use this time to work on Competition Round 6
                      (must be completed and submitted by 11pm).

April 16   Each group must be prepared to present a formal report to the class
                      covering rounds 5 & 6 (visual aids such as PowerPoint and/or graphs from
                      the web site should be used).

April 19   *** Friday ***No class. Competition Round 7 must be completed by this
                      date (submitted by 11pm).

April 23   Class will meet briefly to discuss the final report and the Capstone Exam.
                      Competition Round 8 must be completed by 11pm.

April 30   Teams present their Capstone Simulation Performance Report to the class
                      covering all 8 rounds. Teams must use visual aids such as PowerPoint,
                      and/or charts and tables from the simulator web site.

May 7 Date for the on-line Capstone Comprehensive Exam (subject to change)

APPENDIX C: THE GOIZUETA SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AT EMORY UNIVERSITY

BUS 331: Strategic Management
Goizueta Business School
Emory University
Spring 2012

Professor Chris Rider   **Office 557**   **crider@emory.edu**

Class: Monday/Wednesday @ 10:00-11:15am (000), 2:30-3:45pm (001), or 4:00-5:15pm (002)

Office Hours: Monday/Wednesday @ 9:00-9:50am *or by appointment*

This entire syllabus is required reading for this course.

INTRODUCTION

This course is focused on how to create and sustain advantages in highly competitive business environments. We will focus on analytical frameworks and techniques for evaluating business situations and for developing strategies to improve organizational chances of success. Specifically, we will consider the internal and external factors that determine firms' chances of success; firms' offerings and costs relative to competitors; the scope of firm activities; the markets and niches a firm serves; the resources and capabilities that firms leverage; and market expectations of corporate social responsibility. All of these factors inform our understanding of the relationship between strategy and competitive advantage.

Students will adopt the perspective of a general manager (e.g., of a business unit, a plant, a region, a division, a product line, an entire company) focused on long-term profitability. We will answer questions typically addressed by senior corporate executives. There are at least two common reactions to this challenge: (1) "It will be years before I'm a senior executive. Why do I need this course now?" or (2) "This course will accelerate my time-to-senior executive!" You are encouraged to respond to the challenge in a manner consistent with #2. By considering business situations from the perspective of those who will be supervising your work and/or leading your employers, you will be prepared to deliver high quality work products. The reason is that this course will prepare you to anticipate the most likely concerns and questions of senior executives making important business decisions. You will formulate answers before they even formulate their questions; the Goizueta Business School will gladly accept your gratitude in the form of alumni donations. BUS 331, Spring 2012 2 C. Rider

COURSE FORMAT

This course will consist of lectures, case discussions and group presentations. As a rule, case discussions start with a "cold call." On occasion, I also cold call students during the discussion so it is in your best interest to prepare for *every* class and to pay close attention during class. This course will be most valuable (and enjoyable) if all students are engaged and participating in a productive manner. To contribute to a productive learning environment, you must do the following:

SPECIFIC EXPECTATIONS OF STUDENTS

1. Think. Regularly and clearly.
2. Attend all classes for the section in which you are enrolled.
3. Notify the instructor, via email, of an absence before the absence occurs.
4. Prepare, prepare, prepare. For *every* class.
5. Listen. Pay attention. Seek to understand and then to contribute.
6. Participate regularly throughout the semester (more details below).
7. Treat all classmates and their opinions with respect.
8. Carefully consider your position and state it clearly.
9. Apply course concepts to frame and support your position.
10. Display your name card in each class.
11. Do not use laptops for *anything* other than taking notes during class.
12. Switch cell phones to silent mode during class.
13. Complete all assignments and exams.
14. Work hard.

As for participation, quality is much better than quantity. You need not speak often; you need speak thoughtfully. Carefully considered arguments based on case facts that support your position are good; even better is specific identification of what it would take to change your position (e.g., alternative assumptions, changes in facts). Structured comments that move discussions forward are preferred to repeating previous points, stating the obvious, and rambling mindlessly. What is and is not "quality" will become clear as the semester progresses.

COURSE MATERIALS

The course reader is required reading; it may be purchased from Study.net. Anything not posted on Study.net will be distributed via FirstClass or via the Emory library eReserves. There will not be a textbook. Additional materials will be distributed in class on an as-needed basis. Lecture slides will be distributed in class and via FirstClass after class; case discussion slides will not be distributed.

EXAMS

There will be two in-class exams on **Wednesday, February 15th** and **Monday, April 16th**. Exams will be discussed in more detail during class. BUS 331, Spring 2012 3 C. Rider

GROUP ASSIGNMENTS

Business success requires good communication and teamwork skills. This course will prepare students for a successful business career by providing an opportunity to work on course assignments with a group for 2 case analyses and 1 final course project.
You will form your own groups. There may be no fewer than 6 students and no more than 7 students per group without the explicit permission of the instructor. All groups must be composed of students in the same section; there will be no exceptions. Group composition will remain the same for the duration of the course.

You must email the instructor with the names of all group members by Wednesday, February 1st.

Case Analyses

All groups will complete two case analyses. Due dates and guidelines below; more details in class.

Case Analysis #1:
RyanAir   **due Monday, March 5th**

Case Analysis #2:
NHL Enterprises Canada   **due Wednesday, March 28th**

Case analyses must be emailed by one group member to the instructor by 10am on the due date. Analyses submitted after 10am will receive ZERO credit on the assignment. Additionally, groups must submit a hard copy at the BEGINNING of class on the due date.

All case analyses must directly answer the assigned questions (see course schedule).
All case analyses must be SOLELY the work of group members. Only course materials (e.g., lecture notes, readings, and cases) may be used to analyze the case. The use of any outside analysis or un-cited sources will be severely penalized (refer to BBA Honor Code).
Case analyses must be 5 pages long, double-spaced, in 12-pt Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins on all sides. You may print double-sided but have no more than 5 pages of text.
Include a cover page identifying all group members (does *not* count as 1 of 5 pages).
Up to 3 additional pages for appendices are permitted if additional analysis (e.g., spreadsheets, tables, summary charts) is absolutely necessary to support the argument presented in the case. Appendices MUST be discussed in the text and MUST directly support the analysis. Do not include unnecessary appendices.

Group Project

In lieu of a final exam, groups will complete a final project. We will discuss group dynamics and performance on Wednesday, January 25th. Basic project details follow; more during class time. Students are strongly encouraged to utilize the Goizueta Business Library's resources, including their BUS 331 final group project guide and Business Essentials class.

1. The job

Each group will be assigned a publicly-traded company (i.e., your client). As consultants, you must thoroughly evaluate your client's competitive situation and prepare (a) a 3-page summary report for the client's senior executive team and (b) a presentation outlining your analysis and strategic recommendations. Both the report and the presentation must address the following:

INDUSTRY ANALYSIS
o How is the client's industry defined? How has the industry evolved?
o What are the critical drivers of success in this industry?

COMPETITOR ANALYSIS
o Identify the client's two primary competitors and evaluate their strengths and weaknesses.

CLIENT ANALYSIS
o What are your client's competitive advantages and/or disadvantages? How have they evolved over time?

STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS
o Deliver 2-3 concrete strategic recommendations for improving the client's competitive position.
o Must be plausibly implemented within a reasonable timeframe.
o Include a timeline for implementation and specific criteria for defining "success."
o Clearly identify key assumptions and potential obstacles.

2. The logistics

There will be 10-12 groups and 5-6 clients in each section; 2 groups will be assigned as consultants to each of the clients. Both groups will prepare strategic recommendations and a presentation for the client. On presentation day, one group will be randomly selected to present for each client and the other group will assume the role of the client's senior executive team. The presentation, including Q & A, will last 30 minutes total (½ for presentation, ½ for Q & A). Presentation dates and clients will be assigned by Spring Break.

3. The deliverables

Each group will deliver (a) a 3-page executive summary report, (b) electronic *and* paper copies of all presentation materials and (c) a comprehensive reference list of all sources, including but not limited to books, databases, articles, websites, individual interviews and correspondence, television programs, etc. All deliverables must be emailed by 1 group member to the instructor by 10am on the scheduled presentation date.

GRADING

Final course grades will follow the Goizueta-recommended grade distribution for BBA courses. This is intended to produce an equitable distribution that ensures academic rigor and offers accurate feedback to students regarding their academic performance. Your course grade will consist of both individual *and* group components.

1. Individual
o 15% class participation (*CP*)
o 15% exam #1 (*EX1*)
o 15% exam #2 (*EX2*)
o 15% individual contribution to the group, as rated by group members (*IC*)

☐ Group members will rate each other on their contributions to the group analyses, the project, and the presentation.
☐ More details on this process will be discussed in class.

2. Group
o 10% group's score on case analysis #1 (*CA1*)
o 10% group's score on case analysis #2 (*CA2*)
o 20% group's score on final project

Each component (e.g., CP, EX1, CA1) will be normalized by the class average (across both sections) on each component. For example, if the average exam #1 grade is 11 out of 15 then a student that received a score of 14 would receive an EX1 score of 1.27 (14/11). Each normalized component score will then be weighted to produce a Final Grade Score. The calculation is as follows:

Final Grade = 0.15*(CP) + 0.15*(EX1) + 0.15*(EX2) + 0.15*(IC) + 0.10*(CA1) + 0.10*(CA2) + 0.20*(GP)

The Final Grade scores serve only to rank students in BUS 331-000, 331-001, and 331-002; there is no predetermined relationship between absolute numeric scores and letter grades.

PROJECTED GRADE DISTRIBUTION

Numeric final grades will be converted to letter grades by combining all sections of BUS

% of Students in 331-000, 331-001, and 331-002

331, ranking all Final Grade scores, and assigning letter grades according to the recommended grade distribution for BBA core classes. The approximate distribution will be as follows:

Letter Grade

A	15-20%
A-	15-20% (no more than 35% will receive A or A-)
B+	15-20%
B	15-20%
B-	10-15% (no more than 45% will receive B+, B or B-)
C+ or below	20%

APPENDIX D: COURSE SYLLABUS FROM COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AT A LARGE, METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT – MAN 4720

Dr. Marshall Schminke   University of ucf

Office	CBA1, Room 310; Phone: (407) 823-2932
E-Mail	mschminke@bus.ucf.edu
Canvas	You will use two Canvas locations. Lectures and exams are administered via the <u>lecture</u> Canvas site. Lab activities are organized via your <u>lab</u> Canvas site.
Twitter	Follow the course on Twitter at [TBA]
Office Hours	Monday, 12:30-1:15 p.m. and 2:45-3:45 p.m. or by appointment
Lecture Location and Time	BAI – Room 107; Monday 1:30-2:45 p.m. Open attendance. Lecture streaming video available through <u>lecture</u> section of Canvas.

Required text: *Strategic Management: Value Creation, Sustainability and Performance* by G. Page West III (Nov. 25, 2013)   *$19.99 Kindle Edition*
(NOT the old Charles E. Bamford and G. Page West (2009) edition!!!)

Objectives   Welcome to MAN 4720, Strategic Management. This is your capstone course, which integrates what you learned during your time here in the College of Business. If you like business, you will really enjoy this class. It provides the opportunity for you to showcase a broad range of skills, culminating with the Great Capstone Case Competition. Our intent is to provide one of the most practical, hands-on classes you've had here at ucf.

The course has four goals: 1) to familiarize you with the strategic planning side of running a business unit, 2) to integrate the various areas of expertise required to operate a business unit successfully, 3) to provide an opportunity to practice using these tools in multiple settings, and 4) to apply these tools to your personal career strategy. The course is deliberately placed near the conclusion of your program to provide you an opportunity to integrate the

knowledge and skills that you have learned in your other classes.

Of special note is that the strategic management tools and concepts you'll learn in this class are applicable to all organizations: large and small, public and private, for-profit and not-for-profit, and domestic and international.

As such, you should find the content and skills developed in this class to be immediately useful to you, irrespective of what the next step is on your career path, or what type of organization you'll be joining. Again, welcome to the class. You're going to enjoy it!

Special Note

We run this course like a company, which we call Applied Strategy Incorporated, or ASI. To do this, we have redefined a few terms. Instead of classes, we have business training meetings. You are not just a student, but an ASI employee. We study and discuss techniques for achieving our business/learning goals. Assignments are not homework; they are projects for ASI clients. I will serve as CEO and strategy guide. Your lab instructors serve as managers of the strategic business unit (SBU) you work for (your lab section), and you work directly for them. We set high learning goals for the company and all employees, and reward performance accordingly.

TRAINING MEETINGS

There are three ways you will be trained as employees of ASI. The first way is through the training discussions I present each week from our corporate headquarters (BA1, room 107). I will hold these training meetings (aka, the main lectures) on Mondays from 1:30-2:45 pm. I will feature a new training topic each meeting. In addition to applying this training to business applications, I will also apply it to your personal career strategy. You are encouraged to come to 'headquarters' as often as you can during your employment at ASI.

The second way you will receive training is by attending your weekly strategic business unit (lab) meetings with your manager (lab instructor). These meetings are very interactive, hands-on, and conversational. Each week we will tackle work given to us by a client of ASI.

The third way you will receive training is through our company's supplemental activities. Supplemental activities are designed to make the best use of the fourth hour of this course. Activities will include watching online videos on a wide variety of business topics, attending special workshops and events, and reading important articles aimed at enhancing your career development. These activities will be announced as the semester progresses.

CEO ACCESS

Yes, I'm available to all students. My office hours and contact information appears above, and I'm available other times by appointment. If you have questions, please first check: 1) the syllabus (your SBU may have one as well), 2) information and updates on Canvas, and 3) your buddies and your SBU manager. If those sources don't provide an answer, I'm happy to help. But please check all of those first, as questions from 700-800 students can really add up quickly.

TEXT-Required

We are <u>very</u> fortunate to have access to a terrific text this semester in Kindle-only format. By using this platform, we are able to buy this book for under $20 per copy (rather than the more common $125+ price tag we normally see), collectively saving Capstone students about $75,000 this semester alone. So go to amazon.com and buy (in Kindle edition):

Strategic Management: Value Creation, Sustainability and Performance by G. Page West III (Nov 25, 2013). This book is available in Kindle Edition (only) for just $19.99. Link:

http://www.amazon.com/Strategic-Management-Creation-Sustainability-Performance-ebook/dp/B00EA6SCHI/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1388954061&sr=8-2&keywords=Strategic+Management%3A+Value+Creation%2C+Sustainability+and+Performance

(**Do NOT** purchase the older Charles E. Bamford and G. Page West (2009) hard copy edition!) If you don't use a Kindle, you can download free Kindle readers for your laptop, tablet, phone, or most any device with a screen: http://www.amazon.com/gp/feature.html?docId=1000493771

TEXTS-Supplemental (not required; I will pull material from them at times)

Competitive Strategy by Michael Porter and *On Competition* by Michael Porter

What Color is Your Parachute? by R. Bolles (2013 or 2014 edition)

Other periodicals: *The Wall Street Journal* (free via Canvas), *Business Week, Fortune, Fast Company, Wired, etc.* We will discuss current business issues from these during our meetings.

THE FAILURE COMPETITION

A failure competition? Really? Yes. Details to be announced later in the semester.

EARNING YOUR SALARY (GRADES) FOR MAN 4720/APPLIED STRATEGY INC.

Your 'grade income' is based on both individual and team performance.

I. Points you earn on your own: up to 500

Weekly Interviews (quizzes)	100
10-K Integration Project	100
Midterm Assessment (Exam)	150
Final Assessment (Exam)	150
Mid-term Peer Evaluation for teamwork*	no pay
End-of-semester Peer Evaluation for teamwork*	-100 to 0
Subtotal of individual points	up to 500

II. Points you earn with your team: up to 500

Industry Analysis Report	100
Industry Analysis Presentation	100
Strategic Analysis Report	150
Strategic Analysis Presentation	150
Subtotal of team points	500
Grand total	**1,000**

Bonus income (extra credit) – several opportunities will be presented that may allow you to earn up to 25 points in bonus income. Bonus income opportunities will be determined by your SBU (lab) manager and are at the discretion of your manager.

*You complete two evaluations for teamwork, one around midterm and the other at the end of the term. These peer evaluations will be completed by all team members anonymously. If your team members report that you did your fair share of all team projects, you will receive your normal pay. Note that the midterm evaluation will be used to provide preliminary feedback to each team member and no pay changes will be made for the first evaluation. However, be aware that if your team members state that you did not do your fair share of the team projects for the majority of the semester you may lose up to 100 points at the end of the semester. Details will be provided in your SBUs, later in the semester. The evaluations will be based on factors such as (but not necessarily limited to) attendance at SBU meetings and team meetings, performance on assigned team tasks, leadership in team activities, ability to work well with team members, and so on. Peer evaluations provide a guide for your SBU manager's assessment of your team performance and in most cases represent the major input. But the final assessment of your team performance lies with your SBU manager who may, under special circumstances, override those evaluations.

SALARY (GRADING) SCALE

We use +/- grading on the following scale:

A	930+	C	730+
A-	900+	C-	700+
B+	870+	D+	670+
B	830+	D	630+
B-	800+	D-	600+
C+	770+	F	fewer than 600

ASSESSMENT

Knowledge Interviews/Assessments on Strategy (Quizzes)

During the semester, you will be given weekly interviews (quizzes) to test your developing knowledge as a strategy analyst. These interviews will be based on the material presented in my training meetings. They will be administered in your SBU meetings and there will be no makeup options for missed interviews.

Two Training Major Assessments (Midterm Exam and Final Exam)

Major assessments (exams) will be administered in the testing lab in BAII to determine your progress in mastering analyst language, tools, and applications. Each assessment is worth 150 points. Each will cover material from training meetings (lectures), the book, and supplemental materials like the "Capstone off the Books" videos. All items are multiple-choice. However, they are not all simply exercises in memorization. Some move beyond simple recall to tap your deeper understanding of the material and your ability to apply it.

Check the weekly schedule for the dates of the assessments. Be sure to take advantage of the COBA Pass system! http://www.bus.ucf.edu/testinglab/COBAPass/cobapass.htm

NOTE: Assessments will not be administered early. Makeup assessments will be allowed only under exceptional circumstances, will be entirely in essay format, and will be personally administered by the CEO or his assistant. Employees are expected to consult with their SBU manager and the CEO as soon possible if a planned assessment cannot be met.

REGIONAL CAMPUS EMPLOYEES NOTE: The testing lab times on the regional campuses do not always align with the main campus times. Check with your SBU Manager (lab instructor) and/or your testing lab for assessment times at your campus! This is your responsibility.

CAPSTONE "OFF THE BOOKS"

The Capstone course is a four credit hour course. Part of the fourth hour of credit allows us to delve into a variety of interesting aspects of business that would not normally fit within a more traditional 3-hour Strategic Management course structure. We will refer to these supplemental training opportunities as "Capstone off the Books." They will not require separate written reports, but the mid-term and final assessments will include questions on each to assess your understanding of the material covered in them.

PROJECTS & CASE ANALYSES

In addition to regular meeting activities, you will have the opportunity to participate in three larger projects during the semester. The first, the 10-K Integration Project, is an individual-level project, based on your analysis of a firm's 10-K document. (A 10-K is an annual report filed by a firm with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). You'll learn more about it later on.) The second is a team-based project involving an industry analysis, an in-depth investigation of several companies competing in the same industry. The third is a team-based project involving a strategic analysis and strategic recommendation for a specific firm. The second and third projects will be presented in both paper and presentation formats, with the strategic analysis presentation being the foundation for the Great Capstone Case Competition.

The 10-K Integration Project (an individual project)

You will have the chance to showcase your individual research, analysis, and writing skills in the 10-K Integration Project. Details will be presented in a separate document. This project involves selecting a publicly traded firm in the industry you are assigned to study, digging into the business analysis section of its 10-K, and then applying what you discover there to the industry analysis and strategic analysis frameworks developed in our training meetings.

This project is not a full-blown industry or strategic analysis. Rather, it's an opportunity to take a first look at some real-world information and see how it maps onto the industry analysis and firm analysis tools we will be using in the course. Thus, the project allows you to learn more about a company you're interested in, and gives you a chance to use some of the tools that will be critical in the subsequent case analyses. A guideline will be provided to aid you in your project.

Industry Analysis (a team project)

Your team represents a consulting firm that has been asked to provide an analysis of a specific industry, with respect to its current, real-world situation. You will use the results of your individual 10-K research as primary sources of information for your industry analysis. A significant portion of our training material and activities will be oriented toward learning how to perform quality industry analyses. This effort will culminate with a 10-15 page summary using the worksheet outline, and a presentation to your SBU manager.

The Industry Analysis Report (more specifics to follow)

The goal of this project is to conduct a competitive analysis of an industry. The worksheet contains several sections. It begins with an executive summary and introduction, followed by sections titled: 1) The Industry's Dominant Economic Features, 2) Porter's Five Forces, 3) The Drivers of Change in the Broad Environment & Impact They Will Have, 4) Companies in the Strongest/Weakest Positions, 5) Key Success Factors for Competitive Success, and 6) Analysis and Summary: Industry's Attractiveness and Prospects for Long-Term Profitability. A more detailed description of the process and format for this worksheet will be presented separately.

Your team will self-manage the process by which the various research, writing, and analysis tasks are handled. It is not likely that everyone on the team will have an equal hand in each section. However, it is expected that by the end of the project, all team members will have contributed fairly equally to the overall output.

The Industry Analysis Presentation (more specifics to follow)

Your team will use the results from the industry analysis worksheet that you develop to prepare a 10 minute presentation for your SBU manager. This research and presentation will serve as the foundation for your strategic analysis report later in the semester. This report will focus on one company in the industry that you analyzed.

Strategic Analysis (of a specific company - a team project)

Your consulting team will also prepare a strategic analysis of a specific firm. This analysis will result in both a paper and a presentation. All teams will examine the same firm, and will address the same general strategic issue (which will be announced later). This effort will culminate with

a 15-20 page paper (maximum, excluding appendices & references) and a 12 minute (maximum) presentation of your team's analysis of the firm and your strategic recommendations for it.

Strategic Analysis Report

At a later date, I will announce the company to be analyzed by all teams, and the particular strategic issue of concern. Your team will conduct a strategic analysis of that company, using current data and assessing their current situation and strategic needs.

The paper contains several sections. In addition to information that you gathered for your industry analysis, it will include an executive summary and introduction, followed by sections titled:

1) Current company Mission and Strategy, 2) Analysis, 3) Sustainable Competitive Advantage and Major Problems, 4) Strategic Recommendations, and 5) Fallout and Summary. A more detailed description of the process and format for this paper will be provided later.

Strategic Analysis Presentation

Your team will have the opportunity to present your core findings of the industry and your strategic analysis as part of The Great Capstone Case Competition (see below). This consists of a 12 minute presentation and follow-up Q&A session with the judges. Your goal in this competition is not simply to present your paper. (Nobody wants to sit through a series of consecutive SWOT analyses of the same firm.) As with the industry analysis, your SBU manager will see all the details of what you did in the paper and its appendices. Your manager will evaluate all of that via the paper. Therefore, you don't need to try to convey all of that during the 12 minute presentation.

Rather, your goal will be to quickly (i.e., less than a minute) summarize the firm's situation and then move directly into what you learned from the analysis, and what strategic initiative(s) you recommend to the top management team at the company. For example, which aspects of the SWOT analysis present the greatest challenges? What sustainable competitive advantage will we build (or build upon)? What is the most opportune strategic initiative available to us right now? Do we have the capacity to execute on it? How will we make it happen? And so on. Again, the goal is not to <u>recite</u> your paper but to provide <u>insights</u> about the firm and its strategic options.

The Strategic Case Competition presentations start during the last few weeks of the semester. Finalists chosen from each SBU (lab) will advance to the semi-finals (and possibly to the finals as well) on the last Friday of the semester. If your team is selected to advance to the semi-finals AND you participate in that semi-final round (and in the finals as well, if your team qualifies), you are exempt from the final exam and will be awarded 150 points in lieu of taking the final exam.

The Great Capstone Case Competition

The Great Capstone Case Competition is the culminating event for this class, and for most of you, for your experience at the UCF College of Business. After hearing each team in the SBU present their strategic analysis, each SBU manager will choose one team from his/her SBU to advance to the semi-finals of the Great Capstone Case Competition. The SBU managers will be looking for teams that cannot only think strategically but also work well together as a consulting team, and deliver a rigorous, competent presentation of those ideas. All teams will have the opportunity to complete their case portfolio by preparing and presenting a strategic analysis of a company in real time. Of these, the best will be invited to participate in:

The Great Capstone Case Competition Semi-Finals and Finals: Friday, April 25.

The top teams from across Capstone SBUs will advance to the semi-final round of the competition. The teams will be seeded into several semi-final groups, and each team in each semi-final group will deliver their presentation to a panel of judges, comprised of experts including members of the UCF Executive MBA program, UCF Business faculty, and/or executives from the firm that is the target of the analysis. The judges will pick a winner from each semifinalist group to advance to the finals. The semi-finals will begin at 2:00 p.m. and will extend until 3:45. The winners of the semi-final competition will be announced at approximately 4:00 p.m.

All students participating in the Semi-Finals will be invited to a Pizza Party following the presentation sessions. Teams that advance through the Semi-Finals will go onto the Finals later that evening and will receive awards for their efforts. The finals will begin at 4:15 pm. They will be judged by a panel comprised not only of faculty experts, industry experts representing the Dean's Advisory Council, members of the UCF College of Business Hall of Fame, *The Wall Street Journal*, and/or the focal firm. This is your opportunity to present your skills to some absolutely top-shelf business leaders.

TEAMS

We will form teams of four to five employees in your SBUs. Team leaders will 'hire/draft' employees at your first or second SBU meeting. If you are interested in being a team leader you will have the opportunity to apply with your SBU manager. Each employee will complete a short survey during your first SBU meeting that allows you to share your expectations and goals for the semester. You will also indicate your schedule preferences for 'after hours' meetings (time outside of class). Team leaders will use your expectations/goals and schedule preferences to hire their team members. This system has proven to work very well for our applications at ASI.

PEER EVALUATIONS

Group work is often either the highlight or the nightmare of your semester. Developing the skills to work in a group is a key part of being able to successfully implement strategy – whether it's your own company, or you are working for someone else. Therefore, we will actively work on

forming effective teams, and will provide mechanisms for deal with weak performers. Two peer evaluations will be collected, at midterm and endterm.

The midterm evaluation will be used to provide feedback to all team members. The first evaluation will not be used to award or deduct pay – it will strictly be used to encourage open and effective communication and to provide clear feedback regarding performance expectations and execution.

Note that at the end of the semester, you will complete a for-credit peer evaluation which will allow you to assess the relative contribution you and your teammates have made on the team projects. Employees who contribute as expected will earn their full pay. Employees who average a lower-than-expected rating by their peers may lose points and thereby receive lower pay and a lower final grade. Up to 100 points may be deducted.

PROBLEMS WITH TEAM MEMBERS

Non-performing team members may be fired from their teams. This may occur up to three weeks before the end of the semester. All teams will complete a team performance contract during your first two weeks – this will be your guide for dealing with non-performance. If a team member's lack of contribution is hurting the team's progress, the team should carefully document relevant issues, and meet with their SBU manager. If the issues cannot be resolved, the team member may be fired by unanimous vote of all team members and approval of the SBU manager. If this happens, the fired team member will be expected to complete all remaining team assignments on his/her own, as directed by the SBU manager. The group presentations will be replaced with individual written analyses. These assignments are due the same date that groups make their presentations. The same late penalties apply.

CAREER AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

I have found that many employees of Applied Strategy, Inc. want to learn more about how they can develop a personal career strategy for themselves. To that end, as the semester unfolds I will provide additional materials in multiple formats to help interested employees with their career development.

A QUICK NOTE ON FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

If you don't remember the basics from finance, accounting (how to do NPV and ROI analysis, read balance sheets, read income statements, etc.) and marketing fundamentals, you'll want to update or refresh your skills in these areas. Your SBU manager and I will make several suggestions on ways you can update your skills.

Relationship to the Cornerstone Experience

Teamwork   You will use your teamwork skills as you work with other class
                  members on Strategic Applications and the development of Strategic

	Analyses and Plans.
Communication	You will have the opportunity to build stronger business communication skills through participation in oral presentations and written assignments.
Creative Thinking	The development of solutions to real world problems facing the companies you will study requires a high level of creative thinking. In particular, you will have the opportunity to develop a specific set of Strategic Recommendations for a firm.
Adapting to Change	Furthermore, the course will teach you how organizations can anticipate and adapt to changes over which the organization has little control. You will analyze firms and evaluate their ability to adapt to changes facing them, as well as make a recommendation for how a firm might best adapt to their competitive environment.

EMPLOYEE HONESTY

Employee honesty (academic integrity) is a very serious topic at ASI. Any employee who cheats or behaves in a materially dishonest fashion will be appropriately disciplined, and typically this means being fired (you fail the course) or worse (university-level discipline). Make certain that you have read the policy on integrity (UCF's Golden Rule and handbook). This is a zero tolerance policy.

The Golden Rule

Academic dishonesty in any form will be dealt with strictly in accordance with UCF Academic Behavior Standards in *The Golden Rule: A Handbook for Students* and the *UCF Undergraduate Catalog*. Please review the Golden Rule to learn your rights, obligations, and responsibilities. The Golden Rule is available at http://www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/. The following is a verbatim excerpt from The Golden Rule, defining academic misconduct:

Rules of Conduct

The following defined and described actions include, but are not limited to, conduct for which disciplinary action may be taken at the University of Central Florida. Individual students are expected to abide by these Rules of Conduct, and administrators are expected to enforce them. These Rules of Conduct should be read broadly and are not designed to define prohibited conduct in exhaustive terms. Additional rules and regulations may be revised during the year; announcements will be made on adoption of the changes or additions.

Academic Misconduct

a. Unauthorized assistance: Using or attempting to use unauthorized materials, information or study aids in any academic exercise unless specifically authorized by the instructor of record. The unauthorized possession of examination or course-related material also constitutes cheating.

b. Communication to another through written, visual, electronic or oral means. The presentation of material which has not been studied or learned, but rather was obtained through someone else's efforts and used as part of an examination, course assignment or project.

c. Commercial use of academic material: Selling notes, handouts, etc., without authorization or using them for any commercial purpose without the express written permission of the University and the instructor is a violation of this rule.

d. Falsifying or misrepresenting your academic work.

e. Plagiarism: Whereby another's work is used or appropriated without any indication of the source, thereby attempting to convey the impression that such work is the student's own.

f. Any student who knowingly helps another violate academic behavior standards is also in violation of the standards.

Cheating, Plagiarism, and Academic Dishonesty

The SBU Managers (lab instructors) and I have a strict "Zero Tolerance" policy toward cheating, plagiarism, and academic dishonesty as they relate to all aspects of the course, its assignments, exams, and all other activities. Any employee (student) caught violating any policy in the Golden Rule Handbook will receive an "F" for the semester and will be immediately dismissed from the company (class). The employee (student) will also be referred to Student Judicial Affairs for further potential sanctions.

A Note on the Use of Study Aids:

Employees (students) often spend considerable time and effort seeking various study aids such as notes, guides, and "quiz-lets" created by others (for-profit or otherwise). Several points are germane here.

1. Anyone wishing to share notes, quiz-lets, or any other study aid MUST email these materials to me, the CEO, to obtain my written approval. I'll likely approve items after a quick review. Nevertheless, this process is CRITICALLY IMPORTANT to safeguarding academic integrity in a manner consistent with UCF's Golden Rule. If requested, I will create a discussion board where approved study aids can be shared openly and legitimately. Posting unapproved study aids will be interpreted as an act of academic dishonesty under UCF's Golden Rule.

2. Similarly, it is also EACH EMPLOYEE'S (STUDENT'S) RESPONSIBILITY to notify me of alternative study aids discovered that are not posted on the Capstone Webcourses/Canvas page. Possessing unapproved study aids will be interpreted as an act of academic dishonesty under UCF's Golden Rule. The presumption will be that employees (students) who are not transparent (open) about the resources they possess are likely doing something wrong.

3. These processes will allow study aids to be shared in a manner consistent with UCF's ethical standards. But as a closing point, let me discourage you from using them, especially those generated by external entities. We see those. Some are okay (at best). But more often they are poorly executed and commonly contain errors. If you want to waste your dollars, that's your business. But if you have the extra time available for preparation, I'd suggest sticking to the legitimate course materials.

	Weekly Schedule	**MAN 4720**	**Spring 2014**
Date	**Lecture Topic(s)**	**Textbook Readings Due** and **"Capstone Off the Books"** videos available.	**Lab events** (Quiz dates are <u>estimates</u>. Actual dates selected by lab instructors. Class exercises/activities subject to modification.)
Jan 6	Course introduction <u>The Need for Strategy</u>	Ch. 1 Strategic Management: Introduction/Preface.	Introduction to the course. Syllabus/assignments in depth. Select team leaders.
Jan 13	<u>Industry & Competitive Analysis</u>	Ch. 4	Quiz 1 (*all quizzes based on lecture material from same week*; *Quiz 1 includes <u>syllabus material</u>)* Form teams In-SBU exercise: Strategic Group Maps Assign: 10-K Integration Project Assign: Case 1 - Industry Analysis (Rubrics to follow for both)
Jan 20	<u>No lecture</u> (MLK day) (Note: All labs (except Mon.) **DO** meet this week!)	Review 10-K Guidelines	Quiz 2 In-SBU exercise: Tale of Three Tales

Jan 27	Strategy & Performance	Ch. 2	Quiz 3 In-SBU exercise : Robin Hood Due: 10-K Integration Project.
Feb 3	Strategic Direction: Vision & Mission	Ch. 3	Quiz 4 *Review all external tools* In-SBU exercise: Mission Statement
Feb 10	Value Chain Analysis	Ch. 5	Quiz 5 In-SBU exercise: Starbucks *Review all internal tools* Help sessions (cases, assignments). (10-K projects returned)
Feb 17	Resource Based Competitive Advantage Midterm 1 week Q&A midterm review	Ch. 6 *Midterm exam opens Monday, 6:00 p.m., closes Friday, 8:00 p.m.*	Quiz 6 Due: Industry Analysis reports, all teams Due: Industry Analysis presentations, 1st set of teams
Feb 24	Business Level Strategy	Ch. 7	Due: Industry Analysis presentations, 2nd set of teams Assign: Case 2 - Strategic Analysis
Mar 3	Spring break.	No new readings due	None.
Mar 10	Strategy Issues & Life Cycle Stages *Case Competition Kickoff & Tips from Target (tent.)*	Ch. 8	Quiz 7 In-SBU exercise: Panera Bread
Mar 17	Competitive Dynamics	Ch. 9	Quiz 8

			In-SBU exercise: TBA
Mar 24	Corporate Strategy	Ch. 10	Quiz 9
			In-SBU exercise: Lego
Mar 31	Strategy and Structure	Ch. 11	Quiz 10
			In-SBU exercise: TBA
Apr 7	Strategy Implementation; Internal Control & Performance	Ch. 12	Due: Strategic Analysis reports, all teams Due: Strategic Analysis presentations, 1st set of teams
Apr 14	TBA	TBA.	Due: Strategic Analysis presentations, 2nd set of teams
Apr 21	Final exam week Final lecture Q&A review for final exam.	*Final exam opens Wednesday, 10:00 a.m., closes Tuesday, 8:00 p.m.*	Quiz 11 **Final lab meetings: Mandatory attendance.** Course wrap-up
Apr 25	The Great Capstone Case Competition!	No new readings due	Semi-finals: 2:00-3:45 Finals: 4:15 PM

APPENDIX E: DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS OF FOCUS GROUP ONE

New Hope for Kids

New Hope for Kids is a registered non-profit organization that supports children and families grieving the death of a loved one and grants wishes to children with life-threatening illnesses in Central Florida ("Wishes for Kids"). Its mission is to bring hope, healing and happiness suffering from grief, loss or life-threatening illness. New Hope achieves its mission through two programs- The Center for Grieving Children and Children's Wish- which provides assistance to children and their families during some of life's most difficult challenges. The Center for Grieving Children helps children and families cope with the feelings of grief and loss after the death of a loved one. The Children's Wish program grants wishes to children, ages 3- 18, diagnosed with a life-threatening illness. A life-threatening illness is defined by New Hope for Kids as any illness which will in all likelihood shorten the child's full life expectancy. Since its beginning in 1985, more than 1200 wishes have been granted. New Hope for Kids Wish program credits its successfulness to its focus, follow-up and flexibility (New Hope for Kids, 2014). Rosie Wilder is the director of the Children's Wish Program.

Boys Town of Central Florida

Boys Town of Central Florida is a registered non-profit organization that provides abused, abandoned, and neglected children the family, support and care they need to overcome their circumstances and realize their potential. Its mission is "Changing the way America cares for children, families and communities by providing and promoting an Integrated Continuum of Care that instills Boys Town values to strengthen body, mind and spirit" (Boys Town Central Florida, 2014). Boys Town services and programs include a behavioral health clinic,

intervention and assessment services, family homes, foster family services, in-home family services, common sense parenting, community support services and unifying elements. The Boys Town model is based on five principles: 1- teach children and families life-changing skills; 2- help children and families build healthy relationships; empower children and families to make good decisions on their own; 4- care for children in a family-style environment; and 5- support children and families in religious practices and values. Trained family consultants work with families that are struggling to stay together or are in danger of having a child removed from the home. Reunification of the family is always the ultimate goal. In 1986, the largest campus outside the Village of Boys Town, Nebraska is in Oviedo, FL. This site also works with the state of Florida to combat child abuse and neglect through short term Intervention and Assessment, Community Support Services including Children in Need of Services/Family in Need of Services (CINS/FINS), Common Sense Parenting classes and Project Safe Place, a national program that assists at – risk girls and boys in crisis. These programs and services touch the lives of 7,600 children and families in Central Florida each year (Boys Town Central Florida, 2014). Terry Knox is the director of development at Boys Town Central Florida.

Signature Flight Support

Signature Flight Support provides aviation support and services to clients in the Central Florida area. The mission of Signature Flight Support is to provide a 'magical experience' to its customers based on a stand and deliver promise, the highest level of quality service and competitive pricing with every visit. Its facility offers 11 acres of aircraft parking and a modern terminal building to meet the demands of its customers. Features include availability 24 hours a

day, 7 days a week, Jet A and Avgas, competitive pricing and contract fuel available, modern spacious lobby, executive conference room, flight planning with WSI, pilot lounge with quiet room, 11 acres of continuous ramp, 18,000 square feet of corporate hangar space, 5,000 square feet of corporate office space, long term tie down storage, shuttle service to and from main terminal and US Customs on airport (Signature Flight Support, 2013). Amanda Wolf is the director of Human Resources.

Tijuana Flats

Tijuana Flats is a Tex-Mex style restaurant with franchises in the Central Florida area. Based on an 'anything goes' mentality, Tijuana Flats offers competitively priced Mexican food in a casual and unique atmosphere. The core values of Tijuana Flats are respect, quality, opportunity, integrity and community. Tijuana Flats commits itself to treating their employees and customers equally with respect and recognizes that every individual has unique worth and value. It also emphasizes a clean workplace with exceptional and friendly service. Community support is also an integral tenet of Tijuana Flats' operation. Tijuana Flats strives to participate and support the greater community by lending time and resources to worthy causes by embracing their responsibility as business leaders (Tijuana Flats, 2014). An example of their community support is their Just in Queso foundation which has provided more than $1,000,000 in financial and physical resources to many local non-profit organizations. Rick Brown is the owner/operator of three Central Florida Tijuana Flats franchises.

McLane Company Inc.

McLane Company Inc. is a $42 billion supply chain services leader, providing grocery and foodservice supply chain solutions for convenience stores, mass merchants, drug stores and chain restaurants through the United States. McLane evolved from a small retail grocer in 1894 to a leading grocery wholesaler in the 60s and 70s, to a worldwide logistics powerhouse in the 1990s (McLane Company Inc., 2014). Today, McLane is a supply chair services leader, delivering more than 10 billion pounds of merchandise to customers every year. McLane Company Inc. operates 80 distribution centers and one of the nation's largest private fleets. The company buys, sells and delivers more than 50,000 different consumer products to nearly 90,000 locations across the US. McLane is a wholly owned unit of Berkshire Hathaway INC and employs 20,000 teammates. Since 1894, McLane Company Inc. has been built on honesty, integrity and high Christian principles. These beliefs and values are the principles that guide the company today. For the McLane teammates, the principles are evidenced in McLane's environments for personal growth, effective open communication, and respect for individuals, teamwork pride, open door policy and commitment. For McLane's customers, the principles are found in exceeding customer expectations, strategic supplier alliances, superior execution and valued service. For McLane's shareholders, the principles are seen in stewardship, fair return and enhanced reputation. Michael Doucet is the director of logistics for McLane Company Inc.

APPENDIX F: DESCRIPTION OF PARTICIPANTS OF FOCUS GROUP TWO

Creative Realty Group LLC

Creative Realty Group LLC operates offices in Miami, FL and Cleveland, OH to provide residential and commercial real estate services. Creative Realty Group focuses on expanding into new markets, disposing of excess space, restructuring leases, auditing leases, investing in or managing properties by offering supervision of property maintenance and personnel, property staffing and payroll, procurement of service contracts, supervision of on-site management and monthly management reports. (Creative Realty Group, 2013). The owner of the Longwood, FL, location is Catharine Cold.

The American Automobile Association

The American Automobile Association (AAA) is a federation of motor clubs throughout North America and the world. AAA is a not-for-profit member service organization with 51 million members as of 2011 (AAA, 2014). AAA provides emergency road services to members such as towing, lockouts, winching, tire changes, automotive first aid, and others, which are handled by private local towing companies contracted by a state AAA club. In addition, AAA sells roadside assistance for a variety of motor vehicles, including motorcycles and in some areas, AAA offers bicycle roadside assistance. Many AAA clubs have an automotive fleet division serving large metro areas, while private towing companies cover the surplus call volume by area. AAA also focuses on seniors with specialized programs to help seniors stay mobile longer by promoting senior-friendly road design, screening tools, education for seniors and their families, and supplemental transportation (AAA, 2014). AAA clubs also distribute road maps (including customized map guides for specific journeys, branded as "TripTik") and travel

publications (TourBooks), and rate restaurants and hotels according to a "diamond" scale (one to five). Laura Palermo is the Manager of Community Relations for the AAA National Office in Heathrow, FL.

National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA)

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) is the agency of the United States government that is responsible for the nation's civilian space program and for aeronautics and aerospace research. President Dwight D. Eisenhower established NASA to lead US space exploration efforts, including the Apollo moon-landing missions, the Skylab space station, and the Space Shuttle. NASA also supports the International Space Station and oversees the development of the Orion Multi-Purpose Crew Vehicle and Commercial Crew vehicles as well as the Launch Services Program (LSP). NASA is focused on better understanding Earth through the Earth Observing System and using advanced robotic missions to share data with various national and international organizations such as from the Greenhouse Gases Observing Satellite. Since 2011, NASA's strategic goals have been to extend and sustain human activities across the solar system; expand scientific understanding of the Earth and the universe; create innovative new space technologies; advance aeronautics research; enable program and institutional capabilities to conduct NASA's aeronautics and space activities and share NASA with the public, educators, and students to provide opportunities to participate (NASA, 2013). Keith Britton is the lead engineer for NASA.

Orlando Regional Medical Center (ORMC)

As part of the Orlando Health system, the Orlando Regional Medical Center (ORMC) is a 808-bed tertiary hospital located in downtown Orlando, Florida. ORMC is one of six teaching hospitals in the state and Central Florida's only Level One Trauma center. ORMC specializes in trauma, cardiology, orthopedics, neurosciences, internal medicine and minimally invasive bariatric surgery. The Arnold Palmer Hospital for Children and Families is dedicated to the care of children by offering nationally ranked cardiology, cardiac surgery, gastroenterology and orthopedic programs and pediatric specialty practices (Orlando Regional Medical Center, 2014). Arnold Palmer Hospital is the only children's hospital in Central Florida to be ranked as a "Best Children's Hospitals" by U.S News & World Report. Dr. Alfonso Mireles is a pediatrician at the Arnold Palmer Hospital.

Seminole County Public Schools

Seminole County Public Schools is a public school district located in Central Florida and comprises elementary, middle and high schools. Winter Springs High School opened in 1997 as the latest high school of Seminole County. The community of Winter Springs successfully lobbied to have the school built as a way of creating a "town identity and center, and not just be an outgrowth of the surrounding cities" (Seminole County Public Schools, 2014). A.W. Epps was the school's first principal and the first class graduated in 1999-2000. In 2012 Dr. Mickey Reynolds was named the fourth principal of Winter Springs High School. The technology teacher at Winter Springs High School is Sue Cappetta.

Gaylord Palms Resort and Spa

Gaylord Palms Resort and Spa in Orlando is a total destination resort offering exceptional service, family entertainment, a Relâche spa and recreation. The resort features 115 suites, restaurants, lounges, unique shops, full-service spa, on-site child-care center and a variety of entertainment venues of extraordinary service and superior amenities for leisure and business travelers. Business travelers and meeting planners can utilize 400,000 square ft. of flexible meeting space and 178,500 square ft Florida Exhibition Hall. The event coordinator at the Gaylord Palms Resort and Spa is Vicki Lavendol (Gaylord Palms Resort and Convention Center, 2014).

Holland Pools

Holland Pools is a Central Florida organization whose mission is to provide every client with an experience of honesty, quality, integrity, excellence, attention to detail, on time scheduling and guaranteed workmanship all at an affordable price. Holland Pools is dedicated to the customer and will always provide the highest performance and expertise in the industry. Holland Commercial Pools gives every commercial pool client the best professional solutions, the most up-to-date safety regulations, the finest craftsmanship, as well as timely project completion. (Holland Pools, n.d.). The owner and founder of Holland Pools

is Mike Holland.

City of Oviedo

The City Council is the five member elected legislative and governing body of the City responsible for establishing policies, managing growth and land use, adopting an annual budget and tax rate, setting water rates, wastewater rates and other fees and charges for City services, adopting local laws and ordinances and hiring and overseeing the City Manager. The strategic goals of the City of Oviedo are to ensure the environment is healthy and sustainable, to foster economic development, mobility and transportation, to increase economic vitality, and to offer a wide range of quality recreation, arts and culture activities which satisfy the expectations of residents while also serving to attract new residents and business (City of Oviedo, n.d.). The Chief of Police of the City of Oviedo is Chief Jeff Chudnow.

The Orlando Magic

The Orlando Magic are an American professional basketball team based in Orlando, Florida. They are part of the Southeast Division of the Eastern Conference in the National Basketball Association (NBA). The franchise was established in 1989 as an expansion franchise, and has had such notable NBA stars such as Shaquille O'Neal, Penny Hardaway, Grant Hill, Tracy McGrady, Steve Francis, Dwight Howard, and Rashard Lewis throughout its young history. The franchise has also been in the playoffs for more than half of their existence (14

playoff appearances in 24 years). Orlando has been the second most successful of the four expansion teams brought into the league in 1988 and 1989 in terms of winning percentage, after the Miami Heat. As of 2012, they are the only team in the "big four" sports leagues to play in the city of Orlando (National Basketball Association, 2014). The sports member services director is Paul Moletteire.

M Paul General Contractors

M Paul General Contractors provide general contracting, pre-construction, construction and construction management services from a simple remodel to ground-up construction. Headquartered in Orlando, Florida, M PAUL General Contractors was founded with the goal of providing a diversified general contracting firm distinguished by integrity, quality, teamwork and a drive to exceed client's expectations. Their primary mission is to provide their clients with an unparalleled level of service in the preconstruction and construction phases of their projects. In 2007, our Safety Program was awarded the Associated Builders & Contractors, Inc. (ABC) Gold Level STEP Award (Safety, Training & Evaluation Process) for safety excellence (M Paul General Contractors, 2014).   The owner of M Paul General Contractors is Paul Goddard.

University of Central Florida – Division of Administration and Finance

The University is a metropolitan public research university located in Orlando, Florida, United States. It is a member institution of the State University System of Florida, and it is the second-largest university in the United States by enrollment. UCF is tied for No. 94 among

national public universities in the 2014 rankings, which were released today. UCF also ranks No. 170 overall among national universities. Both rankings are four spots better than where UCF placed last year. It also was ranked again among the nation's top 15 "up-and-coming" schools. Those institutions are selected by college presidents, provosts and admissions deans for recently making promising and innovative changes in the areas of academics, faculty, student life, campus or facilities.

The University was authorized by the Florida State Legislature in 1963, and opened in 1968 with the mission of providing personnel to support the growing U.S. space program at the Kennedy Space Center, which is located only 35 miles (56 km) to the east. The university was renamed in 1978, as the university's academic scope expanded beyond its original focus on engineering and technology. The university's intercollegiate sports teams, commonly known by their "Knights" nickname and represented by mascot Knightro, compete in National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Division I and the American Athletic Conference and the 2014 Fiesta Bowl Champions.

The mission statement of the Division of Administration and Finance provides high-quality services and a safe and effective campus environment to support the university's mission of education, research, and community service (UCF Administration and Finance, 2014). The director of the Division of Administration and Finance is Lee Kernak.

Peckett's Plantastics Inc

Peckett's Plantastics Inc. is a wholesale foliage growing operation with 750,000 square feet of greenhouses on 50 acres of land in Apopka, Florida, in Central Florida. Founded by Chet Peckett in 1978, with one 10,000 square foot greenhouse, Peckett's now has numerous varieties of foliage plants including Spath, Holiday Cactus, Peace Lily and Zygocactus, but has been concentrating on Spathiphyllum and Christmas Cactus for the past 10 years through their own tissue culture lab. The team consists of 60 professionals to help us meet the needs of their customer base (Peckett's Plantastics Inc., n.d.). The director of Human Resources at Peckett's Inc. is Michele Melynck.

Emergency Services & Reconstruction

Emergency Services and Reconstruction (ESR) offers disaster restoration, remediation and reconstruction for water, smoke, fire, mold, painting & waterproofing. as well as a licensed General Contractor. Emergency Services and Reconstruction provides integrity, efficiency and confidence into disaster contracting by offering guaranteed value, and timely and accurate assessment to restore homes, businesses and contents to their original condition (Emergency Services and Restoration, 2012). The business development representative for Emergency Services and Reconstruction is Cathy Bowers.

# APPENDIX G: DESCRIPTION OF PORTER'S FIVE FORCES

Framework/theory

Porter's Five Forces of Competitive Position Analysis were developed in 1979 by Michael E Porter of Harvard Business School as a simple framework for assessing and evaluating the competitive strength and position of a business organization.

This theory is based on the concept that there are five forces that determine the competitive intensity and attractiveness of a market. Porter's five forces help to identify where power lies in a business situation. This is useful both in understanding the strength of an organization's current competitive position, and the strength of a position that an organization may look to move into.

Strategic analysts often use Porter's five forces to understand whether new products or services are potentially profitable. By understanding where power lies, the theory can also be used to identify areas of strength, to improve weaknesses and to avoid mistakes.

Porter's five forces of competitive position analysis:
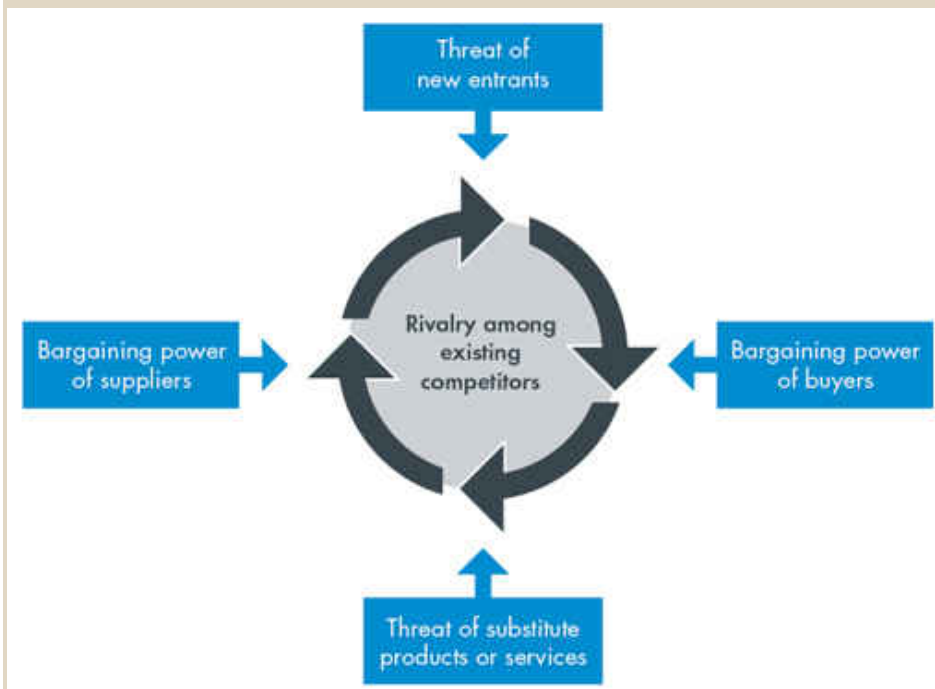
The five forces are:

1. Supplier power. An assessment of how easy it is for suppliers to drive up prices. This is driven by the: number of suppliers of each essential input; uniqueness of their product or service; relative size and strength of the supplier; and cost of switching from one supplier to another.

2. Buyer power. An assessment of how easy it is for buyers to drive prices down. This is driven by the: number of buyers in the market; importance of each individual buyer to the organisation; and cost to the buyer of switching from one supplier to another. If a business has just a few powerful buyers, they are often able to dictate terms.

3. Competitive rivalry. The main driver is the number and capability of competitors in the market. Many competitors, offering undifferentiated products and services, will reduce market attractiveness.

4. Threat of substitution. Where close substitute products exist in a market, it increases the likelihood of customers switching to alternatives in response to price increases. This reduces both the power of suppliers and the attractiveness of the market.

5. Threat of new entry. Profitable markets attract new entrants, which erodes profitability. Unless incumbents have strong and durable barriers to entry, for example, patents, economies of scale, capital requirements or government policies, then profitability will decline to a competitive rate.

What benefits does Porter's Five Forces analysis provide?

Five forces analysis helps organizations to understand the factors affecting profitability in a specific industry, and can help to inform decisions relating to: whether to enter a specific industry; whether to increase capacity in a specific industry; and developing competitive strategies.

Actions to take / Dos	Actions to Avoid / Don'ts
• Use this model where there are at least three competitors in the market • Consider the impact that government has or may have on the industry • Consider the industry lifecycle stage – earlier stages will be more turbulent • Consider the dynamic/changing characteristics of the industry	• Avoid using the model for an individual firm; it is designed for use on an industry basis

Source: http://www.cgma.org/Resources/Tools/essential-tools/Pages/porters-five-forces.aspx

APPENDIX H: INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE INVITATION

Researcher Information:
Lauryn De George
University of Central Florida
4000 Central Florida Blvd.
Orlando, FL 32816

Invitation to Participate

Lauryn De George, a doctoral candidate at the ucf, in the College of Teaching, Learning and Leadership with a focus on Curriculum and Instruction, would like to invite you to participate in a confidential focus group for her dissertation aimed at examining students' projects in the Capstone course in the College of Business to understand if the skills evidenced in those projects are significant and relevant for potential employment. The skills evidenced by students' projects in Capstone courses have been generally characterized as the culmination of students' academic careers. Yet, the assessment of specific skill sets indicates ambiguity among graduate capabilities and employability skills. Research of this nature will be significant in that it will generate input from community leaders on the qualities they deem imperative for employment success and the qualities that they indicate are lacking for employment. The comparison of these characteristics in comparison to the course skills will provide the most valuable information. The purpose of the research is to use focus group analysis to review students' projects from the Capstone course and determine if the student projects demonstrate skills necessary for employment. Further, based on the review of students' projects, the focus group will also suggest the absence or lack of proficient skills.

Lauryn De George is seeking business community leaders with experience in recruiting and selecting potential employees and additional employment practices to participate in a focus group. The participants will be selected for their views of the characteristics of graduate skills and employability capabilities and will be comprised of community leaders from various industries throughout the Central Florida region. These participants will possess diversity in gender, age, educational and professional background and will be selected for their community leadership and knowledge of employment practices.

A focus group is a carefully planned series of discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, non-threatening environment. As a member of this focus group, you will receive information on the Capstone course and students' projects. You will be charged with examining students' projects from a Capstone course to determine if the projects demonstrate skills necessary for employment. Your input will also be used to suggest if certain skills are deficient or missing. There are no direct benefits to the participants and there is no monetary or other incentive to participate.

In order to ensure confidentiality during data collection and in the final report, the identity of the focus group members will not be released and participant's names will be replaced with pseudonyms. Participant's comments will be recorded and transcribed for accuracy. If you do not wish to be recorded or have your comments present in the final report, please inform me and accommodations will be granted. In addition, all participants will receive the opportunity to review the final report and ensure that their

information has been accurately reflected. Further, copies of the final report will be available upon request.

The focus group will occur in the Dean's Conference room, found on the second floor of Business Administration Building One. The focus group will take no more than two hours of your time and requires no further commitment. The risk to you as a participant is minimal. Discomforts or inconveniences to participants may include difficulty in parking or inability to find the location of the Conference room.   To alleviate this, the researcher will develop a package of information for the participants that will include directions, maps and parking passes. These packages will afford participants greater accessibility to the campus.   While at UCF, every accommodation will be made to put the participants at ease and light refreshments will be served.

Mari Rains will serve as the facilitator of this focus group. She is the Chief Learning Office for From Knowing to Doing and a prominent faculty member for the College of Business at UCF.   Ms. Rains has extensive experience in diverse industries developing people and organizations as a change agent, organization development consultant, corporate trainer, leadership coach, leader and speaker. She also serves as the Faculty Advisor for the Society for Human Resources (SHRM) at UCF student chapter.

If this opportunity is of interest to you, please contact me directly at lDe George@bus.ucf.edu or 407-823-2915. Upon receipt of your interest to participate in the focus group, you will be contacted to receive additional information including directions, a campus map, and a parking pass for greater accessibility to the UCF campus.

APPENDIX I: IRB APPROVAL OF EXEMPT HUMAN RESEARCH

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
               FWA00000351, IRB00001138
To: **Lauren A. Migenes and Co-PI: Mari Yentzer Rains**
Date: **March 12, 2012**

Dear Researcher:

On 3/12/2012, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review:	Exempt Determination
Project Title:	Do graduates of the Capstone course possess the needed skills to gain potential employment in Central Florida?
Investigator:	Lauren A. Migenes
IRB Number:	SBE-12-08215
Funding Agency:	
Grant Title:	
Research ID:	n/a

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Patria Davis   on 03/12/2012 10:18:05 AM EST

IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX J: DIVERSITY STATEMENTS OF FOCUS GROUP MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Boys Town of Central Florida:

>Boys Town maintains a policy which abides by federal law with regard to equal opportunity for youth and families accessing services

City of Oviedo:

>It is the policy of the city of Oviedo to consider applications for all positons without regard to race, color, religion, creed, national origin, age, disability (unless the disability precludes performance of the essential functions of the positon, marital/family or veteran's status or any other legally protected status.

Holland Pools:

>No diversity statement

McLane Inc:

>Principles that Guide our Relationships: Teammates, Customers and Shareholders

New Hope for Kids:

>No diversity statement

Orlando Magic:

>Magic in the community- The Orlando Magic is committed to helping children reach their full potential and creating an inclusive environment in which fans, community partners and employees feel welcome and appreciated. We are focused on developing opportunities that will positively impact all segments of our community.

Orlando Regional Medical Center:

>Diversity and Inclusion- Community Diversity, Patient Diversity, Workforce and Recruitment diversity

NASA:

NASA Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity- Mission and Values

Seminole County Public School:

It is the policy of the school board of Seminole county, Florida, that no employee, student, or applicant shall- on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, marital status, age, religion, or any other basis prohibited by law- be excluded from participating I, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination and harassment under any education programs, activities, or in any employment conditions, policies or practices conducted by the District.

Signature Flight Support:

No diversity statement

Tijuana Flats:

Core Values – Respect, Quality, Opportunity, Opportunity, Integrity, Fun, Community

UCF:

Office of Diversity Initiatives

Diversity includes all of us – all the time.

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