

IConference Workshop Proposal

iSchool Capstone Experience (Full day workshop)

Title: Creating Exceptional Capstone Learning Experiences

Organizers:

Matthew L. Saxton, Senior Lecturer & Associate Dean for Academics

Andrew J. Ko, Associate Professor & Chair, Informatics Degree program

Richard Sturman, Lecturer

Abstract (150 words): Capstone programs require high investment, but have deep potential to return rich gains in regard to bridging academia, industry, and community. Participants will identify best practices in implementing capstone programs through a panel presentation of exceptional programs and an afternoon session on writing up guidelines for successful planning to achieve learning outcomes and nurture relations with external partners. Participants will learn how to leverage capstone to advance multiple school objectives: authentic learning experiences, outreach to industry partners and your alumni network, student recruitment, and contributing to long term social impact.

Description (1000 words):

Purpose and Intended Audience:

This workshop is intended to share and identify best practices in designing and implementing a rich capstone program, defined as culminating experiences for iSchool students to demonstrate their learning in a real-world project where the students attempt to resolve a significant information problem, address a social issue, or exploit a market opportunity. These programs require high investment of faculty time, staff support, and engagement with sponsors or other project partners, but at the same time have great potential to contribute to many critical objectives - developing authentic problem-based learning opportunities, engaging students in research or design, showcasing student achievement, growing and sustaining industry relations and alumni networks, student recruitment, visibility, or creating long-term social impact. When executed well, the capstone is a robust bridge between academia, industry, and community.

Intended participants include faculty at schools seeking to either establish a capstone experience, or improve the scope and impact of their current program. Additional participants may be interested in the aspects of strengthening their industry relations effort. The particular focus of this seminar will be on the undergraduate capstone experience, though many lessons and practices easily apply to graduate capstones.

Proposed Format:

This is a full day workshop. The morning session will consist of a program overview and panel presentation with faculty from four iSchools: University of Washington (Andy Ko & Richard Sturman), Singapore Management University (Benjamin Gan), Northumbria University (Julie Walters), and Carnegie Mellon University. Topics will explore learning objectives & assessment, structure & scale, instructional staffing, recruiting project sponsors, intellectual property, managing student teams, and supporting change (the capstone must continuously evolve to maintain relevancy). Opportunities for Q & A will be interspersed at different points in the presentation. In the afternoon session, participants will work in small groups to contribute to compiling a “playbook” or set of best practices that spans the pedagogical, logistical, and administrative dimensions of executing an exceptional capstone program.

Goals or Outcomes:

Participants will:

- Learn the intimate operational details for four exemplars of high quality programs from different countries.
- Share best practices from their own experiences and fellow participants.
- Identify actionable steps their school would need to take to establish or improve their capstone program.
- Contribute to the creation of an online document (playbook) that outlines best practices and serves as a “living reference” for iSchool.org members.
- Join a community of practice that continues online dialogue on this topic and contributes further edits to shared best practices document.

Relevance to the iConference:

Many iSchools have incorporated or are considering a capstone experience for students, and many more are seeking to leverage this as a mechanism to strengthen industry relations - recruitment, internship, and sponsorship. The iConference is an ideal venue to gather and share pooled knowledge on this topic, and we would like to see this topic revisited annually at each conference to continually update the playbook. This approach will contribute to the concept of using iConference to develop guidance resources on a range of significant topics for iSchools.

Duration: This workshop will be a full-day event.

Attendance: 40-50 participants. We anticipate high demand for this topic.

Special Requirements: We will require data projection and wifi for access for participants. We would prefer to have participants seated at smaller round tables in order to facilitate the afternoon work

session. Three wireless mics would be preferred for audience questions and for students to share thoughts during the work session. 1-2 student volunteers to assist would be very welcome.