

## Capstone Courses From *Common Learning Agenda*

Advanced courses address the need for depth in students' education; those in the major typically achieve depth partly through specialization as the student advances. Intellectual maturity also involves students understanding their specialties in relation to other areas of study, understanding the broader issues for academic disciplines, and becoming prepared to make committed choices as participants in our complex world. Each student in the College will satisfy the requirement of a Capstone course or an equivalent experience, usually in the senior year after all other general education requirements have been completed. A normal Capstone course will be a seminar of no more than 15 students, but alternative forms of experience will be available. The Capstone Experience offers college seniors the opportunity to draw together the diverse threads of the undergraduate experience as a reflection on what they have learned and in preparation for active participation in the broader world. An interactive group activity in which a student gains exposure to the perspectives and assumptions of other students is an essential element in a Capstone Experience.

The overall goal of the Capstone Experience, therefore, is to provide students in their senior year with the opportunity for synthesis and integration of their studies, reflection on the entirety of their undergraduate years, and orientation of the results of their studies toward the broader issues for academic disciplines and for the world students are about to enter. The Capstone Experience offers a unique opportunity within the Common Learning Agenda for realizing in a single academic endeavor the expectations of Bucknell's Mission Statement that "its students become both productive citizens and intellectually mature, self-aware individuals."

### Goals for Capstone Courses

**Synthesis** The Capstone Experience should provide students with the opportunity to bring together into a single, focused enterprise the knowledge and perspective acquired and developed within and outside the major. Courses and other forms of experience should be constructed so as to disclose and reinforce connections within and across disciplines; where possible, they should integrate the perspective(s) of one discipline with those of another discipline or set of disciplines.

**Reflection** The Capstone Experience should provide students with the opportunity to reflect on and evaluate their entire educational experience.

**Connections** The Capstone Experience should relate the topic of focused study to questions that will continue to engage students after they leave Bucknell. Identification of and attention to the controversies the topic of study generates, as well as to the consequences of disciplinary approaches to them, should be given high priority. These include issues which affect disciplines and their practitioners, such as the "canon debate" or the role of higher education, or issues such as professional ethics or values implicit in different approaches or applications.

**Interaction** Whether the Capstone Experience takes the form of a normal course or one of the available alternatives, a group activity in which students interact is essential. Encountering and understanding a variety of approaches to the same topic encourages a better understanding of one's own perspective and fosters a collaborative approach to learning and creative problem-solving that will carry over into the students' future lives.