

## **Capstone Experience Guidelines:**

The Master of Arts (Christian Studies) program requires completion of a two semester hour capstone project. The Capstone must meet the following objectives:

- Demonstrate a holistic understanding of the completed curriculum with integration from biblical, theological, historical and global studies.
- Exhibit a time investment of approximately 84 clock hours (2 semester hours credit).
- Address application of the Capstone to the student's ministry context.

The Capstone may be completed in one of the following modes:

a) An Integrative Paper (described above) that applies the theory of the completed program curriculum (biblical, theological, historical and global studies) to a particular topic. Papers must be approximately 10,000 words in length.

b) A ministry project which applies the theory of the completed program curriculum to a particular ministry situation in the student's ministry context (curriculum development, program scheme, Clinical of Pastoral Education completion, etc). Upon completion of the project a 3,000 word project report is to be submitted.

The basis of and the purpose for the Capstone Project is to help students solidify their knowledge and skills acquired in the course of study by applying them to a particular ministry context.

The **Capstone Project** can consist of any substantial effort by the student that would: a) demonstrate what the student has learned, b) expand the student's learning through a challenging exercise, and c) be a substantial product that serves or contributes to the current or anticipated ministry aspirations of the student.

Examples may include but are not limited to the following:

- ❖ "Creating a series of 6 one-and-one-half hour workshops on racial reconciliation designed for use in a college/university environment. Project includes the design of the content/discussion questions for all six workshops; training of small group discussion leaders; designing of an assessment/ evaluation questionnaire; written 10-15 page reflection/evaluation of the entire project."
- ❖ "Preparing for and undertaking a short-term (1-3 weeks in length), missions trip. Preparation includes, but is not limited to, familiarizing oneself with intended destination (culture, history, political and economic situation; religious environment, etc.), issues of cross-cultural communications, anthropology, missions, etc.; active involvement in a type of ministry on the ground at location (vs. being a missionary tourist!); followed by a written 10-15 page reflection/assessment of what has been learned in the process in preparation for future trips."

The **Integrative Paper** is yet another way for MA CS students to integrate the knowledge acquired in their course of study with their chosen vocational field. This integration is to be expressed in the form of a major written **Integrative Paper** (25-35 double-spaced pages), usually submitted during the last semester of course work at Trinity. In fact many extension students prefer the **Integrative Paper** to the **Capstone Project**.

For the **Integrative Paper** to be of practical use to the student, it is vital that it focuses on an issue or problem that one encounters or anticipates to encounter in one's chosen vocational field. The methodology employed will encourage the students to begin developing the skills of integration by providing the tools and framework for addressing any problem, need, or issue they will encounter in their ministry careers, and help them develop as disciplined, careful and objective researchers and practitioners. Students writing the **Integrative Paper** are encouraged to consider the following methodological outline in guiding their research:

Methodological Outline

- I. **Analysis of the Issue**
- II. **Biblical and Theological Backgrounds**
- III. **Related Literature and Models**
- IV. **Alternatives and Analysis**
- V. **Conclusions and Action Plan**

Example of an **Integrative Paper** proposals for topics:

- ❖ **Topic:** "The Role of the Church in Providing Support for Married Couples at First Presbyterian Church."
- ❖ **Topic:** "The Role of Media and Visual Imagery in Communicating and Teaching the Bible to Young Adults at the Chapel."
- ❖ **Topic:** "Discipling the Woman Who Does not Read Through a Collaborative Bible Study."
- ❖ **Topic:** "The place and ministry of Chaplains in the work force."

Be Idealistic in taking on issues which at the time may seem larger than your capacity or the capacity of your church or ministry to address. Only by studying an issue or a problem systematically and in depth that a potential solution can begin to emerge. You should also be realistic basing your research firmly in your current or anticipated context. Integrative papers should deal seriously with what it means to build a ministry on the training of a Trinity's MACS program.

For those choosing to write an **Integrative Paper** contact your faculty advisor for further guidance on methodology and specific requirements.