

Capstone Reflection:
Notes on My Experience and Looking Forward

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This capstone project has been one of the most challenging but most rewarding experiences of my professional career. From start to finish, I found myself actively engaged in work that was fulfilling, interesting, and contemporary. Up until this point, coursework had been entirely self-contained; projects in my law and policy class were related to law and policy and projects in my finance and budget class were tied to finance and budget, etc. In this case, however, I was able to utilize all the cumulative knowledge and skills acquired from all of my courses in my work on this project.

I must admit: when I first learned that the final portion of my degree would rely on a group project, I wasn't exactly thrilled. I have had some terrible experiences with group work as an undergraduate student that have left a lasting impression. Though I did have one group paper for my finance class that was successful, I more or less attributed that to a one-off outlier rather than the norm. Even so, the more I spent working with Maia and Diane on this project, the more I enjoyed our group dynamic. Where I was perhaps overly ambitious, Maia made sure to keep us on task. When Maia was uncertain or unsure of the value of her contributions, Diane continuously reminded her of her value and boosted her confidence. When Diane was a bit anxious and overanalyzed some small details, I would keep her grounded. All in all, I think we made a great team on this project, and I have a better appreciation for group work than I did before.

This project also helped me rethink some of my academic and professional habits. As someone with neurodivergence, focus is hard for me and I tend to work better under pressure. Even now, I still struggle with keeping track of my homework deadlines and have a hard time anticipating how long something will take me to complete. As a result, I was initially a bit concerned about the length and workload of this project. The amount of work and its

intensity—and the short time we had to work on it—made me incredibly nervous. I found myself pleasantly surprised by my ability to keep to task. I attribute this in large part to the structure of this course and weekly check-ins. This makes me wonder about the possibilities of implementing something similar for myself for my personal and professional habits.

From this experience, I now turn to my next potential hurdle: the EdD program. Though I may be young in terms of my professional career in higher education, I hope to continue to further develop my knowledge. This doesn't necessarily need to be in the form of the EdD program, but I am heavily considering it. I was using this capstone experience as a test for myself to see how I handle a project of this scope as well as balancing my personal commitments. Though a capstone project does not necessarily correlate to the workload of a doctoral program, I feel I have a better grasp of the kind of work that is expected of a graduate student and how to succeed in an academic setting.

More than anything, I am grateful for this experience and how it has impacted my personal life. Though I might have been a bit stressed the past few weeks, my friends and family were all eager to hear about my project and learn about what I was researching. I found more common ground with their opinions on the issues my capstone project addressed than I thought I would. It also showed me how considerate and compassionate they can be; with their mindfulness of my time and energy, I was reminded of their love for me and that I should be as invested, considerate, and kind in their lives as they have been for me these past few weeks.

All in all, this capstone has been incredibly interesting, useful, and eye-opening for my professional and academic careers and in my personal life. I look forward to being able to implement all the knowledge and experience I have gained from this project and hope to continue my learning in the future.