

WHAT IS THE CAPSTONE?

The Capstone Program facilitates a required collaborative project completed in partnership with a public, private, or non-profit organization in Colorado and beyond.

The Capstone Program provides MENV graduate students with real-world, hands-on, application-based experiences in response to Capstone Partners' proposed projects.

Capstone students work as graduate studentconsultants who come into the projects as experts equipped with prior professional experience and knowledge in sustainability. They provide innovative solutions and valuable deliverables to Capstone Partner organizations.

WHY MENV CAPSTONE?

In addition to work experience, students acquire:

- Professional connections in their desired industry
- Knowledge and skills relevant to their future careers (including "soft" and technical skills)
- High quality deliverables for their professional portfolio
- Potential for future internships and jobs

STUDENT SKILLS & COMPETENCIES GAINED

Consulting Principles & Implementation
Systems Thinking
Community Engagement
Toolkit Development
Impact Measurement
Su

Policy Analysis & Advocacy
Data Collection & Analysis
Data Visualization & Mapping
Sustainability Reporting & Certifications
Financial Analysis

Project Management
Personal Adaptation & Resilience
Effective Communication
Leadership
Collaboration

CAPSTONE CLASS SEQUENCE

Capstone Innovation Lab 1 (CIL1) Fall Year 1 (1 credit)

Students learn leadership and collaboration skills, kick start their professional and career development, and are guided to select and apply to a relevant Capstone project by December. Students are assigned to projects based on their preferences.

Capstone Innovation Lab 2 (CIL2) Spring Year 1 (2 credits)

In teams, students launch Capstones and collaborate with partners to conduct background research and create a work plan. Students also take technical skill workshops including data collection, analysis, and visualization.

Capstone Summer Session Summer Year 1 (5 credits)

Each students contributes 300 hours towards successful execution of their Capstone Project.

Capstone Leadership Lab (CIL3) Fall Year 2 (1 credit)

Teams finalize their projects, communicate outcomes to diverse audiences and to their partner organization, and celebrate their successes at a Symposium!

After Capstone, students take advantage of our Career and Professional Development Team and prepare to apply for jobs in Spring!

CAPSTONE ADVISOR RELATIONSHIP

Each Capstone Project team is assigned a faculty Capstone Advisor who is available to:

- Resolve team conflict
- Provide technical expertise
- Identify additional resources

Capstone Advisors are responsible for ensuring that deliverables meet a professional standard and graduate rigor. Most teams meet with their advisors weekly or every other week.

Capstone Advisors become mentors to Capstone Teams and individual students and support student careers often past the Capstone project.

CAPSTONE PARTNER RELATIONSHIP

The relationship between Capstone Partners and Students functions similarly to a client-consultant relationship.

Unlike an internship, you can expect to work collaboratively with your partner and meet at least once a week for the duration of the project.

Capstone Partners often become student mentors and aside from the project, support their career and professional development during and after the Capstone Project.

Many students link their professional success to their Capstone Projects.







CAPSTONE EVENTS

Capstone Networking Session - November

Students meet potential capstone partners to learn more about projects and identify their own areas of interests prior to Capstone selection.

Capstone Design Workshop - March

Teams present their initial scoping and research to other students in order to receive questions, identify gaps, and brainstorm possible solutions in a peer-to-peer setting.

Capstone Poster Session - September

Student teams present the results of their summer work via conference-style posters.

Capstone Symposium - October

Joined by partners, community professionals, and guests, the MENV Community celebrates student work! Teams present on the conclusions of their work to a hybrid audience. In 2024, we hosted more than 700 attendees!

In addition to learning from our students, we invite keynote speakers to our public-facing events.

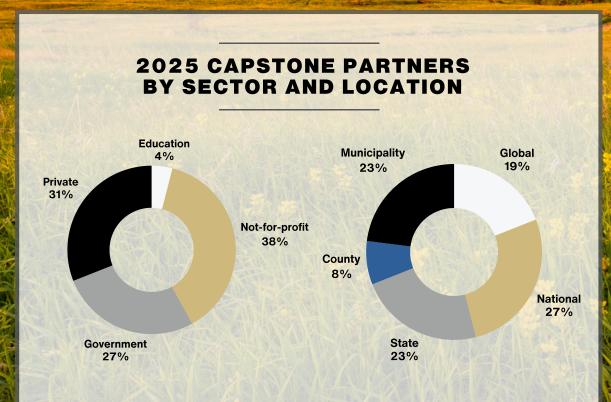
MENV was thrilled to welcome Justin Schwartz, CU Boulder Chancellor, and Jonathan Asher, Director of the Colorado Governor's Office of Climate Preparedness and Disaster Recovery and recipient of the 2023-24 Charles F. Kettering Award for partnerships with MENV, to the 2024 Capstone Symposium.

CAPSTONE COMPENSATION

The Capstone Project is professional work experience. Many Capstone Partners recognize the value students bring to their organizations and are able to offer a stipend to their teams.

Most teams receive compensation from their Capstone Partner Organizations in the form of a a stipend, although some partners have offered hourly wages. In 2025, the average project compensation was ~\$2,400 per student.

In 2024, we launched the MENV Capstone Support Scholarship! This additional funding is available by application to all students who receive no or limited compensation from their Capstone Partners. The amount of Capstone Support Scholarship varies depending on the overall compensation from Partners and availability of funds.





PROJECT SOURCING

Students are not responsible for finding their own Capstone Partner organizations. However, interested students may work with Capstone Lead to identify additional Partners.

Prospective Partner organizations must submit their Capstone proposal by October. MENV faculty review all proposals for graduate rigor and professional relevance.

In December, students meet prospective partners at the Networking Event and rank their top five project choices.

In 2025, ALL students were paired with one of their first three choices and 72% of students were paired with their first choice.





PAST CAPSTONE PROJECTS

To learn more about past projects, review 2024 project briefs here.





















































