

# ONBOARDING INSTRUCTORS IN AN ESTABLISHED CAPSTONE PROGRAM

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## CAPSTONE IS DIFFERENT ...

Capstone courses emphasize:

- Applying prior knowledge
- Real-world projects
- Communication, ethics, teamwork

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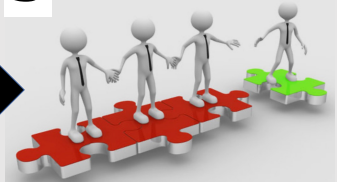


Remember on the first day I said you need to jump right in?

## ... AND NEEDS DIFFERENT ONBOARDING.

Whether designing new content or joining an established course, new capstone instructors must quickly **learn and adapt**.

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## JOINING AN ESTABLISHED PROGRAM HELPS ...

This paper discusses new instructors joining the **Multidisciplinary Capstone Program (MCP)** at Oregon State University.

- Two 10-week terms
- Multiple sections
- 80 students/section
- Design, build, & test
- Writing Intensive Course
- Team competition, faculty, and industry project



## TEAMWORK

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## WHO'S DONE IT?

5 new instructors (4 years)

- Some with prior teaching experience
- Some with none (capstone only)

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## HOW OSU HELPED WITH ONBOARDING

New MCP capstone instructors were

- Canvas template
- Committee meetings
- Observer access
- **A complete project list**
- One-on-one meetings with experienced instructors

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"DON'T RUSH ME. CAN'T YOU SEE THAT I'M NEW AT THIS?"

## ... BUT LEARNING IS STILL NEEDED

Must learn:

- Curriculum
- Evaluation (technical + communication)
- Design reviews
- Team management
- Deliverables

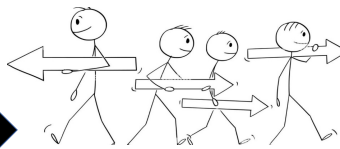
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## WHAT CHALLENGES REMAINED

- Time management
- Team dynamics
- External entity interactions
- Advising vs. directing
- Grading consistency
- Technical vs. communicative content

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## HOW CAPSTONE DIFFERS FOR NEW INSTRUCTORS

- Unpredictable workload
- Early team formation critical
- Managing external partners
- Assessment challenges (fairness & consistency)
- Guidance vs. student autonomy
- Justifying course requirements

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## KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Capstone teaching is not traditional teaching
- Onboarding must be structured
- Mentorship speeds adaptation
- Managing uncertainty is key