

Laurel School's Capstone Experience

Signature Programming

The Research Focus: Student Expectations

The culmination of a student's participation in the Capstone Experience is her completion of a Research Focus. A Research Focus is comprised of the following:

1. It is a multi-year project with a particular topic as a point of focus.
2. The lens of the student's Capstone category is used to examine the Research Focus.
3. Research sources (relevant, expert literature about the topic; interviews; multi-media resources, etc.) create a foundation on which to build the Research Focus. Suggested number of sources: 20 or more.
4. A Research Focus should be a substantial project (i.e. the equivalent of a 20-25 page research paper). However, a Research Focus can take a number of forms: art or music portfolios; a narrative or play; a business plan; a government policy; a new mobile app., etc.
5. When and where possible and appropriate, a student's Research Focus should incorporate other pieces of the Capstone Experience — insights from speakers, from articles read for Capstone discussions, from travel, from MayTerm or internship experiences.
6. As she forms her Research Focus, a student will be supported by her Mentor, her Cohort Leader, the Capstone staff, and her Cohort peers.
7. At minimum, a student is expected to meet regularly — either virtually or face to face — with her Mentor. She also will be updating her Capstone Cohort about the progress of her Research Focus approximately three times per semester. Just to emphasize, she also should use her Cohort Leader and the Capstone staff as sources of guidance and support throughout.

Here is a timeline for the completion of a Research Focus during a student's time in Laurel School's Capstone Experience:

April of Tenth Grade: Capstone Candidate, with the help and approval of her Cohort leader and the Capstone staff, chooses a Research Focus

April/May of Tenth Grade: A Mentor is identified; possible MayTerm internship related to Focus

Summer of Tenth Grade: Research gathering and Mentor contact; possible internship related to Focus

Fall of Eleventh Grade: Research gathering; Mentor contact; Cohort updates

Spring of Eleventh Grade: Planning and beginning to create Research Focus; Mentor contact; Cohort updates; possible MayTerm internship related to Focus

Summer of Eleventh Grade: Creating a completed draft of Research Focus due by beginning of September; possible internship related to Focus

Fall of Twelfth Grade: Break from Capstone Research Focus to apply to college; possible use of Research Focus to highlight college applications

Spring of Twelfth Grade: Finalize Research Focus by beginning of Spring Break; Present/Defend Research Focus during April/May; Banquet to celebrate completion of Capstone Experience

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Laurel School's Capstone Experience *continued*

Below are examples of a Research Focus topic question oriented around the subject of homelessness. For greater clarity, we also provided research possibilities and a Research Focus for the lens of Civic Engagement. We hope you will notice that many topics can relate to any Capstone category and that a number of strategies might be used to investigate a topic and create a Research Focus:

Civic Engagement: How does the city of Cleveland approach the issue of homelessness?

Research: City policy; Cuyahoga County policy; number, type, and mission of non-profit organizations; interview government officials; interview non-profit employees; interview people in the homeless community; articles regarding the subject.

Research Focus: Write a white paper for the City of Cleveland in regards to homelessness.

Entrepreneurship: What type of social entrepreneurship venture best serves the needs of the homeless community?

Global Studies: How do different communities in different cultures approach the issue of homelessness?

STEAM: How might social media technology serve the homeless community?

The Research Focus: Expectations for Mentors

First, thank you very much for considering being a Mentor for Laurel School's Capstone Experience! In addition to this explanation, please read the Capstone documents. One summarizes the objectives and programming of Laurel School's Capstone Experience; this one explains the expectations for the student's culminating project in Capstone — and the basis of mentorship — the Research Focus.

The expectations of a Mentor are as follows:

1. **Guide the student** to relevant resources, information and contacts
2. **Give the student feedback** (written and verbal) as she develops her ideas
3. **Meet with the student** (either face to face or virtually) a minimum of once a month to discuss her progress on the Research Focus
4. **Allow the student appropriate ownership** as the Research Focus takes shape — DO NOT do the project for her; instead, allow her to make mistakes and develop different strategies and modes of thought
5. **Commit to working** with the Laurel student for two years
6. **Attend the student's defense** of her Research Focus in spring of her Grade 12 year
7. **Attend the celebratory banquet** shortly before the student's graduation from Laurel School

Two other important details about the role of a Capstone Mentor:

1. In appreciation of the time and effort a Mentor puts forward, an honorarium may be made available for Capstone Mentors
2. When possible and appropriate, a Mentor may be able to facilitate the opportunity of a relevant internship/externship for the Laurel student