Welcome to Capstone!

I hope you are excited about this final course in your MSA degree program, it is a wonderful opportunity to show what you have learned and how you can apply it in the real world. I am sending you some tips to ensure a good start to the fall semester and your capstone. This starts with a good research topic and knowing it well enough to determine a research problem to investigate. To that end you can bring forward your topic and research from IN 601, with the understanding that you will be responsible for expanding, refining, and improving it to be capstone worthy.

1. Be sure your literature review starts with a good argument
   a. Think in a pattern similar to this
      i. National to regional (general context) , to city, to neighborhood (specific context)
   b. Discuss the **general context** of your research topic in 1-2 paragraphs
      i. History, background, show the wider extent of the research problem
      ii. *For example*, Synthetic drugs became prevalent in the American illegal drug market in the early 1990’s as students who had access to chemistry labs experimented with inexpensive formulas that were legal at the time. Law enforcement and legislatures often found themselves 1-2 steps behind as the formulas were modified and used to exploit a widening circle of demand.
   c. Discuss the **specific context** of your research topic in 1-2 paragraphs
      i. This narrows the topic to be more localized and more relevant
      1. *For example*, as the formulas became more available through the internet, and the materials were readily available the demand for these low cost synthetic drugs expanded into low socioeconomic communities. These drugs are often sprayed onto or soaked into everyday
products like potpourri or bath salts, which are innocuous enough to avoid detection, and are not classified as drug paraphernalia.

d. Then discuss the **research problem** you will investigate and propose a **working theory** in 1-2 paragraphs.

i. What problems does this research topic represent, and which of the problems will you address in this research paper?

ii. Then consider your purpose, which might be to change the nature of the problem

iii. *For example*, These synthetic drug products, particularly in the form of bath salts and potpourri, are very popular with college students and your between 18 and 24. However, the popularity is not without danger, many reports of heart attacks, additions, and critical health issues resulting from consuming these products. With the widespread availability of low cost synthetic drugs many youth in low socioeconomic neighborhoods are encountering these substances during their adolescence, when they are far more likely to suffer critical, severe, or irreversible damage as a result of consuming them in search of a cheap high. Washington Hospital Center reports that synthetic drug use leads to higher risk for teens and especially early adolescents to experience death from cardiac arrest, long-term health issues, and psychological damage. Many early adolescents develop hallucinations that recur long after they are technically clean and sober, requiring medication for many years. These symptoms occur often in the first use of the synthetic drug.

iv. *For example*, This research operates under the theory that early adolescents will better avoid the temptations of a cheap high from synthetic drugs if they engage in an educational intervention led by knowledgeable peers.
v. *For example,* The purpose of this research is to design a comprehensive model of educational and behavior intervention for early adolescents.

vi. *For example,* theoretical perspective – Bandura’s social learning theory and models of cognitive behavioral theory (CBT).

e. You will see this pattern repeat in the paper a few times

i. Abstract - in sentence length rather than paragraphs
   1. 1-2 sentences general context
   2. 1-2 sentences specific context
   3. 1-2 sentences research problem

ii. Preamble to your introduction as concise paragraphs
   1. 1-paragraph general context
   2. 1 paragraph specific context
   3. 1 paragraph research problem and working theory

iii. Summarizing your paper at the end of the discussion chapter.

f. Note that my examples should be heavily supported by citations to references!

2. At this point you are ready to **meet with me** regarding your research

a. If you need help with the above process or narrowing your topic, that is your sign! Come meet with me.

b. If you have done the research your logical argument should sell me on its relevance and worth.

   i. Logical argument is based on the rhetorical pattern
      1. General context to specific context, to research problem, and working theory!

3. Next make a list of the factors or topics that should be discussed in your literature review to ensure that your audience can recognize your mastery of your research topic.

   a. This takes much reading and analysis of scholarly literature and texts so engage with those free online resources from Trinity!
4. Then try to make a theoretical framework (qualitative, proves causation) or a theoretical construct (reflects factors related to the research problem).
   a. This model represents what you will investigate in your research.
      i. See how you might model the research problem and working theory from my example.
5. Now write that literature review, before class start on August 24, 2015!
6. Decide on a research method.
   a. I prefer you use quantitative surveys or qualitative interviews
      i. We can learn so much from others, and it is networking!
   b. You might consider a content analysis if there is no available population
      i. You will have to sell me on that!
   c. Review your methods chapter and read some research that used your method
   d. Consider your population, where you will find them, and how you will contact them
7. If you are ambitious, write your research chapter before class.

If you are looking for some resources, look on the BGS homepage under ‘For Current Students’ and select either ‘Writing Resources’ or ‘Research Resources’

Writing Resources – BGS Style document, citing in APA format, common mistakes to avoid, and more!

Research Resources – of interest to those who want to get ahead of the curve in Capstone – The Capstone Quickstart Guide, the Topic-Problem worksheet, Toulmin’s argument structure (a good guide to a logical argument and what should be included in each section of your literature review).

I am only available to you through the 17th of July, and then back from vacation the week of the 18th of August. So get your topic and argument together and meet with me soon!