



Innovative Approach to Graduate Capstone Project Development

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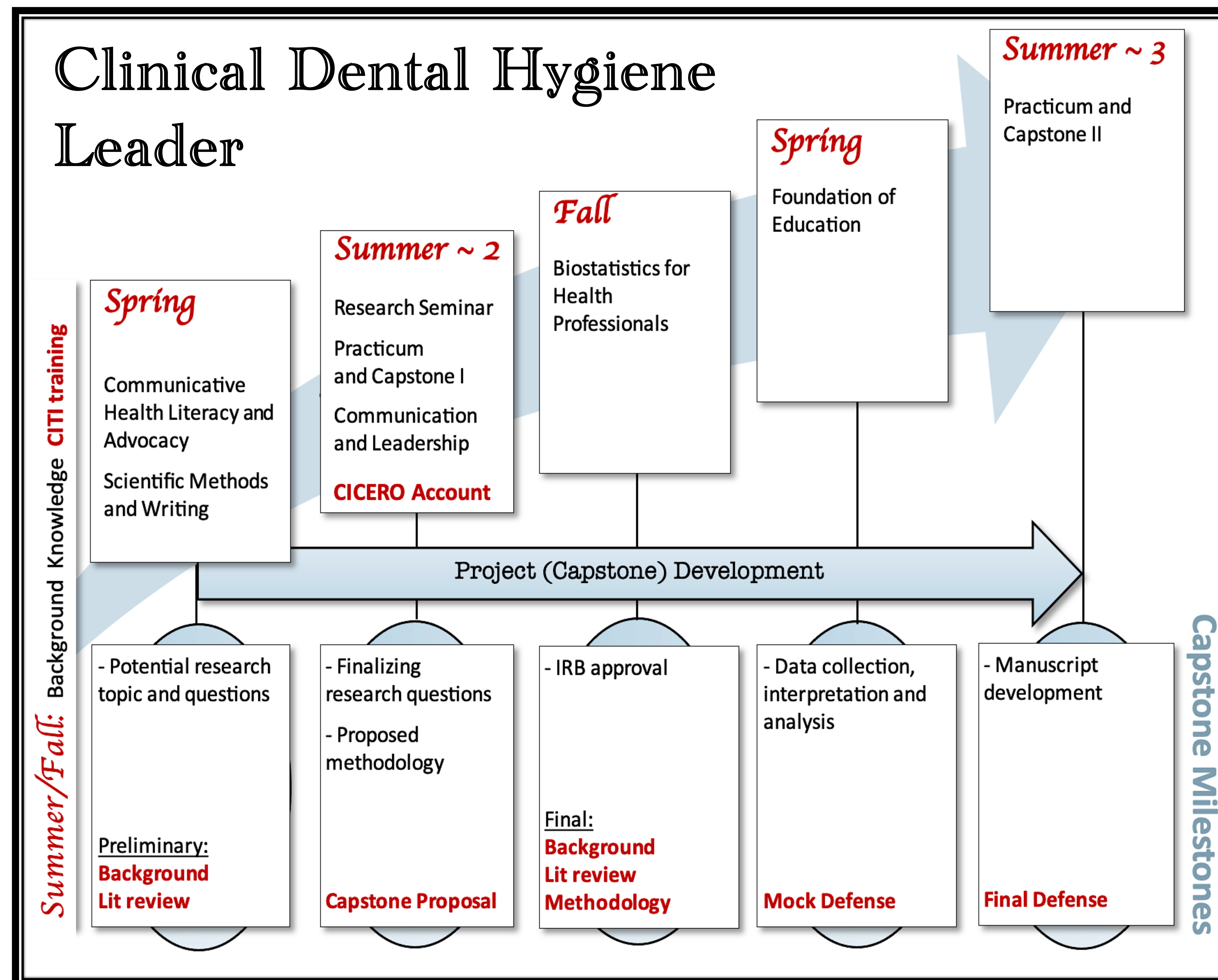
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Background and Problem:

A Clinical Dental Hygiene Leader (CDHL) program administered through the University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD) offers a dual BS/MS degree in Dental Hygiene. Students enrolled in the CDHL program take both undergraduate dental hygiene and graduate classes to fulfill the graduation requirements. Considering the rigorous structure of this two year program, and graduation requirements inclusive of a graduate research project (Capstone), enrollees have struggled with timely Capstone development and completion.

Upon evaluation of the existing curriculum, and through constructive feedback from the CDHL graduates, the areas in need of improvement were identified. A lack of Capstone progress checks and redundancy in the CDHL coursework contributed to intermittent progress and last-minute, rushed completion.

The purpose of this presentation is to share the modifications made to the existing graduate dental hygiene curriculum to ensure stepwise progress in graduate Capstone development and completion.



Approach:

To address the problem, a thorough curriculum review and analysis, and suggestions obtained from the CDHL graduates were incorporated into developing a viable solution.

Redundancy in the CDHL coursework was addressed through elimination of undergraduate course requirements similar to that of the graduate coursework. Such modifications created a much-needed “space” in the CDHL curriculum that now was dedicated towards Capstone progress checks. The novelty and innovation of this approach was creating a separate CDHL section in the undergraduate coursework, with “built-in” course requirements aimed toward Capstone progress and completion.

Outcomes:

- As a result of these modifications, the CDHL students are now held accountable for continuous Capstone coursework throughout the curriculum.
- The added Capstone progress checks, in lieu of similar coursework experiences, ensure a stepwise progress of Capstone development, and eliminate the frustration associated with last-minute, rushed Capstone completion.

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