Capstone Part 1: Panic Before It Even Begins

A little before the start of the semester, my friend Maddy Bonnanzio wrote a great post about how college years fly by too fast. This entry, though humorously written in typical Maddy style, filled me terror.

JUNIOR YEAR IS ALMOST OVER. I’VE PRACTICALLY GRADUATED.

Right now you’re asking, aren’t you overreacting a little bit? Spring semester just started, you still have basically three semesters left of college.

To which I reply, yeah, ONLY THREE SEMESTERS. UNTIL I HAVE TO GET A REAL JOB. AND BE A REAL PERSON.

Okay, now I’m getting a little ahead of myself. I have a lot to stress out about before I start stressing out about being a real person.

Namely, the Capstone Experience.

This is a stress that I have been pushing to the back burner since I was accepted to Commonwealth Honors College three years ago. When I was told that honors students have to do a final Capstone project, I, like many students, felt a bit uneasy. That sounds hard, I thought. I don’t really want to do that. I only want to do fun things, isn’t that what college is supposed to be about? However, at the time, 18-year-old me decided not to worry. After all, 21-year-old me would be prepared to do this. She would be mature, and responsible, and intellectual. Her three years of higher education would provide her the courage to craft and execute an undergraduate thesis with poise and grace. She could probably write the whole thing during a two hour nap. She would be that good.
Eighteen-year-old me, that was really flattering and everything, but I think that you overestimated how awesome I would be just a little bit. Because I am now 21-year-old me, and I am frozen with panic just THINKING about the C word (wait, what, you mean Capsto- PLEASE DON’T SAY IT. Seriously, you won’t even say it? Like Voldemort? Uh, yep, just like Voldemort).

Alright, I’ll be reasonable. The Capstone Experience is a great opportunity. Completing the kind of project that the Capstone Experience requires really makes it possible for honors students (like 21-year-old me) to go above and beyond what many students are able to accomplish in their undergraduate years by creating self-driven, original content that really stands out to employers and graduate schools, even if said students are occasionally a bit lazy (like 21-year-old me) and might not have sought out such an opportunity if it weren’t required.

Plus, the Capstone Experience is pretty structured, even when you choose to pursue an Independent Capstone. There are deadlines and resources and a panel of advisors specifically available to read and assist with your project. Really all it takes is a little bit of inspiration and a fair amount of discipline (21-year-old me, you’ve got this). Also, some deep breaths. In through the nose, out through the mouth.

The Capstone Experience is a great thing. I can admit that. I also don’t have any problem being honest about the fact that I’m a little nervous right now with it looming just over the horizon. But you know what they say, Rome wasn’t build in a day, so I’ll take this project one baby step at a time.

First on the agenda: scheduling some meetings with professors to find my advising panel, and maybe thinking of something to write about.

Wish me luck!

P.S. if you have written, are writing, or will write a Capstone and want to share some insight or some commiseration, I would love to hear it in the comments.

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