Adaptations
A Journal of Exploratory Research and Analysis

The articles published here reflect the Capstone Research projects completed by graduating seniors in the Stanislaus State University Honors Program. They present projects conceived from personal academic interests and mentored by faculty members familiar with the research and scholarship driving these efforts of discovery.

Like their undergraduate peers across the country and around the world, Stanislaus State Honors students designed, completed, and published this work in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic caused by the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and its variants. When classes started on January 27, 2020, and students gathered in HONS 3990 to begin preliminary research on their projects, the 1,000 bed Huoshenshan hospital in Wuhan city, China, was on day 4 of its record-breaking 10-day construction, approximately 2,829 COVID-19 infections and 82 deaths had been reported, and the first quarantine orders had been issued in Hubei Province.

As students’ preliminary research coalesced around a topic and they began planning data-collection strategies, community spread and lock downs in hotspots across Asia, Europe, and even on cruise ships made it clear that the virus would have a far-reaching, devastating impact. By the midpoint of the semester, as students began submitting drafts of their preliminary research methodologies, the impacts came into sharp and personal focus for those of us in the CSU when the World Health Organization (WHO) declared a pandemic on March 11, 2020, and the Governor of California issued the first stay-at-home order on March 19, 2020. Research projects, and University life as we knew it, "pivoted" on-line—and stayed there.

Students completed the remainder of their Capstone Project and, in most cases, their undergraduate education, on-line and off-campus. They presented both their preliminary posters and final research findings in Capstone Conferences held virtually. Projects that normally involved long days in the lab, braving the heat and sun on Warrior Wednesdays to collect survey data in the quad, or hours dedicated to observational studies in a wide variety of settings were redesigned to focus on theoretical or computational inquiries, data that could be collected via on-line surveys or Zoom interviews, or topics that focused on responses to the pandemic itself. While the story of the pandemic is often told in numbers (e.g. the WHO reported 2.7 million cases and 205,650 deaths world-wide when students presented their preliminary posters in the 2020 Capstone Conference and 145.3 million cases and 3.2 million deaths when they shared their final results in the 2021 Capstone Conference), individual experiences are more varied and nuanced. Many students lost family members or friends; others lost much-needed income as the lockdowns stretched on; all lost the college experience they expected to have.

But, just as vaccination campaigns, preventative measures, and new treatments raced to outpace the virus and its variants, so too did Stanislaus State Honors students find new and innovative ways to adapt to ever-changing conditions. They pioneered new methods to gather data virtually, dug deep to finish projects with limited faculty support, and even built required research equipment at home.

We are very proud of the research published in this year’s Journal of Exploratory Research not only because of the knowledge and insights produced, but also because of the resiliency, determination, grit, and ability to rise in the face of unimagined challenges that the completion of each and every project represents. We salute the authors and hope you will join us in recognizing their achievements.

The Honors Capstone Project
Seniors in the Honors Program are encouraged to tackle complex problems using methods, insights and knowledge drawn from relevant disciplines. Honors Program faculty and capstone research mentors offer critical feedback and guidance along the way. The main objective is for students to explore, gather, and analyze information effectively, and to share their reflections on the implications of what they have discovered. Group discussions help to promote thoughtful questioning and critical analysis. The primary goal is to communicate knowledge, judgments, and original perspectives cultivated on the basis of careful inquiry, exploration and analysis.
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