Name: Carol Ann MacGregor  
College/Department: CSS/Sociology  
Rank: Assistant Professor  
Chair/Professorship:  
Date Submitted: November 15, 2014  
Start Date: January 2014  
Completion Date: August 2015  
Title of Project: The Capstone Companion and Capstone Improvement Initiative  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Budget</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Supplies (itemize below)</td>
<td>$2500</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Printing &amp; Copying</td>
<td>$</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Journal Page Charge</td>
<td>$</td>
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<td>4. Travel (itemize below)</td>
<td>$780</td>
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<td>5. Per Diem (itemize below)</td>
<td>$</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Other Costs (itemize below)</td>
<td>$</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>$3280</td>
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Budget Justification: (Please do not attach other budget pages.)

Funds are requested for the following expenses:

1. A 5-user license for Atlas.ti at the educational rate costs €1875 ($2500). If funds are particularly limited a single user license could be obtained for less ($680) but this would significantly limit students ability to actually use the software and my ability to incorporate their struggles into my educational materials. Note that this would become a university resource available to all faculty and students.

2. Travel costs for a single student to attend the American Sociological Meetings in Chicago are as follows:
   - Registration: $130
   - Airfare: $250
   - Hotel (2 nights): $400
What other sources of funding (internal and external) have you identified for this project? The Department of Sociology will be using departmental funds to cover the costs of publishing *The Capstone Companion* and we will be working with the university’s web team to create the promotional video that highlights student capstone research projects.

The Department of Sociology and the College of Social Science supports faculty conference travel and therefore we are only requesting funds to support student travel costs to the American Sociological Association meetings.

If you have received any prior Loyola University grant funding within the past three years, please list the years and amounts. For each award, specify whether a final report was submitted. If any documents are outstanding, please explain why and specify whether a formal extension was granted.

I was awarded a 2013 Marquette Faculty Fellowship. The final report was submitted and I received a letter from the Provost’s office indicating it had been accepted.

Does your research involve human subjects? ____ Yes ___X____ No. If yes, funding for this project is contingent on receiving IRB approval. If you have IRB approval prior to submitting your proposal, please attach the approval memo to your application. If you do not have IRB approval at the time of your submission, please complete the IRB protocol as soon as possible after your proposal submission.

I have submitted the Employee Conflict of Interest Disclosure Form. ___Yes__

I have read and understand the University’s reimbursement policy. ___Yes___

Narrative Description (use no more than one additional page and please write for a general academic audience):

In a recent study conducted by the American Sociological Association students who had completed a capstone or worked closely with a faculty member were more likely to report obtaining a career-level job after graduation.\(^1\) A capstone project can serve as a bridge to graduate study or research and writing oriented non-academic positions by sharpening students’ methodological and critical thinking skills and by providing students with a strong writing sample. In addition, a capstone experience can result in at least one letter of recommendation from a faculty member with whom a student has worked closely. In the Department of Sociology we have spent the last year discussing and beginning to implement a series of initiatives designed to ensure that every Sociology major concludes their time at Loyola by creating an original piece of empirical scholarship. We believe strongly that this form of experiential learning is critical to student recruitment, student retention and student success.

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\(^1\) Spalter-Roth, Roberta, Nicole Van Vooren, Michael Kisielewski, and Mary S. Senter “Strong Ties, Weak Ties, or No Ties: What Helped Sociology Majors Find Career-Level Jobs?”  
http://www.asanet.org/documents/research/pdfs/Bach_Beyond5_Social_Capital.pdf
As part of our efforts to improve the quality of the Capstone experience we have taken the following steps:

1. Improved the quality of the required research methods class and made the final project for this class a research proposal that can be used as a foundation for Capstone research projects.
2. Transitioned to a system where responsibility for supervising Capstone research is shared by the entire faculty and where students are matched with faculty on the basis of research interest and methodological expertise.
3. Begun the development of a comprehensive resource for students called *The Capstone Companion* which walks students through the process of choosing a research question, conducting a literature review, selecting and executing an appropriate research design, and writing and presenting research findings effectively.

In the coming months we hope to continue our Capstone Improvement Initiative by:

4. Expanding *The Capstone Companion* to include detailed guides for using SPSS (the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences) and Atlas.ti (a program for Qualitative Data Analysis). SPSS is widely available on campus and often used in Capstone research. Atlas.ti is an important software necessary for Qualitative Data Analysis but currently is only available in limited capacity on campus. I am asking for funds to buy Atlas.ti so that our students can use it in their research and so that I can incorporate using Atlas.ti into *The Capstone Companion*.
5. Creating a video where students are interviewed about their Capstone research. This video will be posted on our website and shown at recruitment events to inspire current freshman and juniors as well as prospective students.
6. Incentivizing students who excel at research by sponsoring a student with the best Capstone of Spring 2014 or Fall 2014 to attend the 2015 American Sociological Association Meetings in Chicago. Full papers must be submitted in January, so the 2015 conference is more viable than 2014. I am asking for funds to cover the costs of registration, airfare, and two nights accommodation.

Items 1, 3, 4, and 6 are central to my personal professional development as a teacher-scholar. I am the person primarily responsible for teaching research methods in the Sociology Department and I am the author of *The Capstone Companion*. James Cook the Sociology editor at Oxford University Press has agreed to send a modified (i.e. not specific to Loyola and focused on the Social Sciences instead of just Sociology) version of the manuscript out for review. Being able to add a section on Atlas.ti would greatly increase the appeal of this textbook. In addition, the entire text will be much improved if it is developed as a way of providing solutions to problems students at Loyola actually encounter when using the software. The ultimate goal of the *Capstone Companion*, and our efforts as a Department to make this central to our curriculum, is to create students who are competitive for spots at top PhD programs, entrance into professional degrees and who are successful at finding rewarding careers outside of academia. Supervising a student who is presenting a Capstone project at the American Sociological Association Meetings, where there is an extensive program devoted to undergraduate researchers, would provide invaluable insights into whether or not our efforts have been successful. In addition, the experience would enhance my ability to write a section of the companion/textbook that deals with presenting at academic conferences.