

**FAQS FOR NOMINEES:  
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS FREQUENTLY ASKED  
ABOUT THE MARY BALDWIN COLLEGE CAPSTONE FESTIVAL**

**1. *What is the Festival?***

The Capstone Festival is an annual showcase of the best senior projects, honors theses, and special research projects completed by Mary Baldwin College students during the preceding academic year. The inaugural Capstone Festival was held in 2006 and revives a tradition from the early years of Augusta Female Seminary, when “commencement” involved public oral presentations and contests.

The Festival provides an opportunity for students, faculty members, families, and members of the community to learn about original work done in all disciplines. For nominees, it is a chance to celebrate their achievement and communicate their results to a broader audience.

**2. *When is the Festival?***

This year’s Festival will be held on Thursday, May 13, 2010, beginning in the early afternoon. Presentations will occur during several sessions throughout the afternoon and will be followed by a Celebration ceremony and reception.

**3. *How do I get nominated for the Capstone Festival?***

Nominations must be made by Mary Baldwin College faculty members. Some departments decide collectively on which majors to nominate and others leave it up to individual faculty.

**4. *How many people participate in the Festival?***

Approximately 30 students present their work during the Capstone Festival, representing about 10% of the graduating class.

**5. *I’ve been nominated. Do I have to participate?***

Participation is entirely voluntary, but only nominees who participate will have the chance to earn special awards and recognitions.

**6. *I’m going to be studying abroad during May Term. May I still participate?***

If you will be studying abroad on an MBC May Term or other approved program, you may have information about you and your project listed in the Capstone Festival brochure. See the nomination form for details.

**7. *Can my friends and family attend and see my presentation?***

Definitely. Family members and friends (on campus or otherwise) are encouraged to attend.

**8. *I’d like to participate, but I didn’t get the results I expected from my project. What should I do?***

Sometimes we learn the most from experiments that go awry. Presentations in such cases may focus on background information, methodology, and the discoveries that you did make. The point is to help your audience become better informed about an area of inquiry that you have confronted first hand.

**9. *I have class that afternoon. Will it be possible for me to participate?***

Faculty are generally very supportive of Capstone presenters. Some faculty members cancel classes on festival day so that all of their students may attend. Although they are not required to do so, all faculty have been requested to give Capstone presenters an excused absence for the day and give them an opportunity to complete any missed work. Please talk to your May Term professor as soon as possible to confirm your arrangements.

**10. *What if I've been nominated for more than one project?***

You may present both projects or choose one. If you present both, we will schedule your sessions to eliminate a conflict.

**11. *What presentation category should I choose?***

Your nominator has recommended a presentation category that he or she thinks will fit your project, but you are free to choose any appropriate category. Your presentation does not have to be in the same format you chose for the original project. The presentation categories are:

1. Paper Presentation;
2. Multimedia-supported Presentation;
3. Poster Presentation;
4. Reading or Performance;
5. Visual or Audio-Visual Creation Presentation. .

Although reading/performance is the most obvious choice for music, theatre, or creative writing projects, you may also choose to adapt material from other disciplines into a performance presentation. Visual or audio-visual presentations are suitable for art and film projects. Most projects in the sciences, humanities or social sciences can be presented as a paper presentation (a read or “delivered” paper), a multimedia-supported presentation, or a poster presentation. Posters are more common in the sciences and papers in the humanities.

**12. *Is a Capstone presentation the same as a senior project presentation?***

No. The Festival is *interdisciplinary*, which means that students from all majors present together during each session, and many people attending will have little background in your project area. This means that your presentation should be geared toward a *lay audience* rather your original faculty audience.

**13. *How is the festival organized?***

The festival is organized in separate concurrent sessions. In 2009, we had one poster session with six presenters; two paper sessions with four presenters each; two multi-media sessions with four presenters in one and five presenters in the other; and one visual/audio-visual session with four presenters. We try to find a loose theme to link the presentations in each session. Presenters are required to stay for the entire session to which they are assigned and are encouraged to attend other sessions throughout the day.

**14. What happens during the paper presentation sessions?**

Presenters stand in front of the audience and either read a shortened version of their longer work or summarize their project in lecture style. Allow ten minutes for the presentation plus five minutes for questions. Papers in the humanities are generally at least partly memorized, but are more often read rather than being given as a fully extemporaneous lecture, especially if specific language and quotations are critical to interpretation.

**15. What happens during the multimedia-supported presentation sessions?**

The multimedia-supported presentations are similar to paper presentations. Presentations in the social sciences and sciences are often done extemporaneously, using PowerPoint to illustrate key results and concepts. Humanities presentations may also use PowerPoint or other multimedia aids to illustrate key concepts. Again, allow ten minutes for the presentation plus five minutes for questions.

**16. What happens during the poster presentation sessions?**

Poster presenters construct a visual representation of their project on a large sheet of poster paper (see guidelines for size requirements, etc.). The poster will be displayed in Hunt West throughout the afternoon and evening of the Festival. If you are a poster presenter, you will participate in an open session of about an hour and 45 minutes, during which you will stand near your poster and answer questions from students, faculty, staff, and community members. Members of the judging team will also visit your poster during this time. You should be prepared to provide a five- to ten-minute overview of your project while using the visual materials on your poster as a guide. Then be prepared to answer questions. Your poster should also make sense to someone reading it even if you are not present to answer questions.

**17. What happens during the visual/ audio-visual sessions?**

The visual/audio-visual sessions feature a completed work, such as a painting, film, or graphic design, in whole or in part. Allow ten minutes for the presentation plus five minutes for questions. Presenters should provide an introduction to the work, give an opportunity for viewing, and answer questions from the audience and judges. For example, a documentary film presenter might 1) give a five-minute introduction describing a key issue she explored, a technical problem she faced, her motivations and intentions for creating the work, and some conclusions about the subject; 2) show a five-minute clip from the film; and 3) allow five minutes for questions from the audience and judges.

**18. What happens during the reading/ performance sessions?**

As in the visual/audio-visual sessions, performance presenters give an introduction to the work, present the work or selections from a longer work, and then answer questions from audience and judges. Reading and performance presenters may have up to twenty minutes, including the introduction and question period.

**19. Can I do a less formal presentation? Can a paper session involve audience interaction?**

Creativity is encouraged! Discuss with your faculty advisor what best fits your project and personal style. You should also feel free to contact the Festival coordinators listed below if you have questions.

**20. Who are the judges?**

Judges include MBC faculty and staff members, members of the Advisory Board of Visitors (ABV) and outside judges. Faculty judges will not judge their advisees' presentations.

**21. What are the judging criteria?**

Judging criteria vary slightly according to presentation category, but all presenters will be judged on the overall merit of the project as well as how well they condense and communicate their key concepts to a lay audience. Teams of judges will be assigned to a single presentation category, so the same team will judge all presenters in a single category. Specific judging criteria for each category will be included in the guidelines for that category. This is an interdisciplinary festival, and while projects should conform to a style consistent with the main presentation format in a particular discipline, they should also be accessible to an educated audience with little or no specific background in the discipline.

**22. What help is available for me to prepare my presentation?**

Ask your advisor and/or nominator to help you prepare for the Capstone Festival by discussing techniques for adapting your material for your presentation category and for an audience of laypeople. Also ask him or her to review your materials well before the day of the Festival. Practice your presentation in front of your friends. And don't forget to ask your advisor or someone else to proofread anything that will be shown or distributed to the audience. A fresh pair of eyes is always helpful!

Consult your category guidelines (at <http://www.mbc.edu/research/capstonefestival.asp>) for additional preparation hints and information about special workshops for Capstone presenters. Also feel free to contact Lydia Petersson ([lpeterss@mbc.edu](mailto:lpeterss@mbc.edu)) or Tracy Deem ([tdeem@mbc.edu](mailto:tdeem@mbc.edu)), x7235, with specific questions.