1. Describe what you think went well in your capstone project process.

My project proposal, timeline, and literature review were the only portions of the project where I felt as though my project was on track. Most of these chapters were started before the course began. Every single other chapter felt like I was pulling it off at the last possible minute, even when that wasn’t the case. My analysis and comparison pipelines were thorough and easily adaptable, which made pivoting when I decided to do the 2023 subset easier. Grammarly sped up proofreading and editing, despite the word plugin not being as robust and reliable as the website. The project updates did provide some value and assisted me in a few areas, as I saw not only what people were saying about my project, but also how classmates were approaching their projects.

1. Discuss what you would do different in your capstone process, if you were to start over.

I should have started with an object-oriented strategy sooner because I feel I waited too long to move from procedural to OOP. I would have familiarized myself more with APA – nearly every point I’ve lost this semester thus far is APA-related. Rework cost me a lot of time – figures labeling, figure titles, cropping. At some point, I ended up in APA 6 on Purdue Owl, which cost me time to rework (twice) away and back towards APA 7 for labeling. I underestimated the need for processing time on a full grid search. I also would not have waited for the EDA phase to complete before starting the modeling.

1. What are the two key lessons you learned from completing your capstone project?

Understand the presentation requirements. Most people do not use APA style and past tense outside of an academic setting. I learned that I’m capable of rationally combining all the skills taught, researching problems, and coming up with solutions to solve them. There was a turning point when I finished chapter 3 and started working on chapter 4. I realized how much I’d learned, and it really put the fire under me. This was an excellent confidence booster.

1. What advice do you have for future DS program students who are preparing to start the capstone project?

If they’re starting the project as it stands today, start sooner rather than later. The amount of time you can lose on unexpected things like a virus sweeping through your house, work requirements, a funeral, or any other stuff adds up. Start with the product in mind – APA standards, target audience, and project objectives.

1. What would you add to the capstone course, if you were teaching the class? If no changes, what did you like about the course?

Additive things –

I would have liked to see more professors involved in the course, specifically with chapter reviews.

Things I’d change/take away—

The literature review does not apply to the modern work environment. I get that the literature review provides a framework for students and faculty to understand the project, but it makes the project feel like a thesis, which we know it’s not. The literature review could have been much smaller and still gotten the same result.

I feel like the capstone project, being a “choose-your-own-adventure” project, caused buyer’s remorse in more than one student this semester, and possibly some students reusing projects from work.