

## SEATTLE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

### PROJECT CENTER

### Sponsor Liaison Guide

The Seattle University Project Center welcomes you as a Sponsor Liaison for our 2020-2021 academic year. This project is the pinnacle of our students' academic experience. You will serve as your student team's principal link to your organization from the Fall Workshop on September 21, 2020 until the completion of the project and Projects Day on June 4, 2021. You are absolutely critical to the team's learning and the project's success. Our most successful projects are the ones where the Sponsor Liaison is fully engaged, meets with the students frequently and takes time to be available for student questions. External partners such as you are what makes Seattle University's capstone projects meaningful by allowing our students to gain experiences that can be applied once they start their careers and facilitating the flow of innovation from the university into industry and our community.

### Preparing for the Fall Workshop

We will have the kickoff for your project on September 21, 2020 at 3pm and this will be a virtual event. You will meet the Project Center staff, your student team and faculty advisors. This will be your team's introduction to the technical details of the project, so we suggest that you arrive prepared to discuss your project with the students.

In this initial meeting with your student team at the Fall Workshop, you will do the following:

- Discuss the communication process [e.g., frequency, format, your availability, preferred mode of communication (email/Slack/Skype/phone/cell/other)]
- Discuss the project (background, goals, scope)
- Define your expectations and deliverables
- Brainstorm ideas for how to start project

Please remember that these are students. They have had an extensive education in their discipline, but it is possible they won't be familiar with your organization or the problem you are asking them to solve. We believe that being able to learn a new skill while working on a problem is a vital professional skill and we want all of our students to have an opportunity to practice this. Therefore, you may have to educate them or point out educational opportunities for them to pursue during the course of the project. If you are able to recommend useful resources, we encourage you to do so.

### Team Expectations

The core purpose of the Project Center experience is to provide our student teams with an opportunity to solve a problem presented by your organization. Our students are asked for project preferences and then our Design Coordinators, who are the instructors in the capstone courses, assign the students based on this information while also considering team dynamics, student skills and interests. Your student team will function much like an external consulting team. Like consultants, they will need to be brought up to speed and introduced to the problem. With a good introduction and open communication, they will be able to begin work on the project. It is likely they will not know all technology and concepts needed to complete the project, but that is part of the learning process. As

mentioned before, we want our students to not only exhibit their skills, but also develop the skill of learning new information in order to get work done. We request that you don't provide all the answers, but instead provide guidance as the students explore new ideas and technologies.

Seattle University is on a quarter system, and the projects run throughout fall, winter and spring quarters. We will provide you a class syllabus so that you know the timeline the students will be expected to follow. As the Liaison, you will bring your knowledge and spend the beginning part of the project helping the team fully define the scope of the project as well as project outcomes and expectations. We have a worksheet that can help document these desired project outcomes.

Setting expectations can be tricky. You want to set expectations high enough that the students are engaged, but don't want to set them so high that the students become frustrated and demotivated. Please work with your Faculty Advisor (see below) to help understand the right balance when setting project outcomes and expectations.

## Roles

**Students:** Our students are seniors in Civil/Environmental Engineering, Computer Science, Electrical and Computer Engineering, Environmental Science or Mechanical Engineering. Students will still be taking some classes their final year where they will be learning technical information related to your project. Because of this, there may be a learning curve so please talk to your students to see what courses they have remaining and take this into consideration when setting goals and timelines with your students. In addition, many of the students will be experiencing their first long-term interactions with organizations such as yours. We welcome your input on effective management practices used by you or in your organization.

**Sponsor Liaison:** This is you! We rely on you and your expertise to provide guidance and mentorship to your student team by meeting regularly and having an open door for student questions. We request that you spend an average of one hour per week meeting with your team, with some weeks requiring more time and others where you may not need to meet with your student team. If you are unavailable due to vacation, illness or other reasons, please assign someone else to work with the students in your absence. **Please note that due to COVID-19, we ask that all meetings be virtual until further notice from the Project Center.**

**Faculty Advisor:** The Faculty Advisor is chosen by the Design Coordinator to work with your student team. They will provide coaching and guidance and will also be grading your students' work. They will not be expected to contribute directly to the technical work, but they are a resource for the students when tackling tough problems and exploring resources available. The Faculty Advisor is expected to attend the weekly meetings you have with the students and will also meet separately with the team each week. The Faculty Advisor is also a resource for you if you have any difficulties with the student team. Please feel free to contact the Faculty Advisor if you have any questions or concerns with your student team.

**Design Coordinator:** Each department has a Design Coordinator. The Design Coordinator is responsible for convening the capstone courses and assigning the students' grades each quarter with input from the Faculty Advisor. They are also responsible for assigning all students to projects and reviewing all project scopes to ensure they provide an appropriate learning experience and challenge for our students. The Design Coordinators also serve as a resource to the Faculty Advisors and are frequently the Faculty Advisor

for a project themselves. You may also contact the Design Coordinator if you have any team or Faculty Advisor concerns.

**Project Center Staff:** The Project Center Staff consists of a Director, a Corporate Relations Manager and a Project Center/Administrative Assistant. The Corporate Relations Manager is responsible for recruiting projects and working with the sponsors and the faculty to define appropriate projects. In addition, the Corporate Relations Manager ensures that all contracts are in place between sponsors and Seattle University. The Project Center staff are responsible for coordinating events such as the Fall Workshop and Projects Day and for developing the program for the joint sessions, which provide additional project management and communication skills training to the students in the fall quarter. In addition, the Project Center staff oversees the administration of the program, the assignment of project rooms, student budget oversight, purchasing, reimbursements and Sponsor Liaison parking requests. The Project Center staff conducts the mid-year student survey and the end-of-year student and sponsor surveys. They also field any project concerns that cannot be addressed by the Faculty Advisors or Design Coordinators.

## Meetings and Time Commitments

Communication is the key to your project's success! As the Sponsor Liaison we expect you to meet with your team for one hour a week at a minimum. All meetings must be virtual until further notice due to COVID-19. These meetings can be done through Zoom (the campus-supported virtual meeting solution), another virtual meeting platform or telephone. In addition to this weekly meeting, it will be beneficial to the project outcomes if you can be available for project-related questions via email or other communication channels of your choice at any time during the week. We don't want the students holding all questions until the weekly meeting because this can slow or stop progress on the project. It is critical to your project's success that you communicate regularly and openly with the students. If you foresee not being fully available to answer your student team's questions, it would be beneficial for you to have multiple liaisons that the students can contact. Be sure to register any additional liaisons with the Project Center Staff.

Please be mindful that our students are enrolled in other courses in addition to the senior design or graduate capstone courses. This may impact meeting schedules. We guide our students to spend 10 to 12 hours per student a week on their projects, but we also place the focus on doing the work and not necessarily just filling the time commitment. The key to getting the highest performance out of your student team is to ensure that they are fully engaged and excited about the project. We find that when this is the case, there is no issue with the students committing the time and getting the work done.

## Site Visits

**Due to COVID-19, all site visits must be virtual or postponed until further notice from the Project Center.** Site visits, when possible, are incredibly valuable experiences for our students. Exposure to your organization helps them understand the project more in context and gives them a glimpse of your internal culture. While we normally request that you do at least one site visit early in the project, it is not as feasible during the pandemic. Please work with your team to see how to recreate the experience with virtual technologies. This is subject to change due to the evolving response to the pandemic.

Also, you are not limited to the presentations dictated by the class syllabus, so feel free to schedule additional presentations as you see valuable for your organization and for the students' experience. A

great way to showcase the work our students are doing and engage your employees is to hold a “brownbag” forum where our students present to your general employee population. This is great practice for our students and we have found it to be very engaging for employees as well. Due to COVID-19, the presentations should all be virtual. This is subject to change due to the evolving response to the pandemic.

## **Providing Data and Information**

You may need to share data or other confidential information with your student team. All information deemed sensitive by you and your organization will be kept confidential. All Seattle University students and faculty involved in the projects sign disclaimers that hold them to strict confidentiality standards. Please let your student team know what information is to be kept confidential. Work with your team on the best way to share these data and keep the data safe.

Please be mindful that any delays in sending relevant data can hold the project up, so ensure that you are able to deliver any data needed for the project in a safe and timely manner. Also, be open to our students coming up with solutions for sharing data in a confidential and secure manner. This is a great way to drive innovation and learn new technologies you may find useful. This is also an opportunity to help guide the students in finding the best solution versus giving them a set methodology.

## **Presentations**

All presentations will be virtual due to COVID-19. This is subject to change due to the evolving response to the pandemic and the Project Center will notify you as soon as there are any changes. The students are required to make several presentations throughout the year, both to their peers in class and to your organization. Please refer to the syllabi that will be provided to you each quarter for presentation schedules. You are welcome to attend as many of your team’s presentations as is feasible. In addition, the students can make comparable virtual presentations for your co-workers or administrators. Do not hesitate to request such a presentation from your student team. Sponsor-based presentations are often scheduled near the mid-year point and/or at the end of the project. Talk with your student team about when sponsor presentations are expected by their department and schedule based on that and your organization’s schedule.

The student team will give a final presentation on Projects Day to the general public. It is important to review their final presentation to ensure all information they are presenting is acceptable for the general public and contains no confidential information.

## **Sponsor Survey**

At the end of the year, the Project Center Corporate Relations Manager will send a survey asking for your feedback. We ask for your open and honest feedback regarding your participation as a Sponsor Liaison. We use this information to improve upon the Sponsor Liaison experience. We also welcome your feedback throughout the year. If you have questions or suggestions prior to receiving the Sponsor Survey, please contact Rachael Brown, Corporate Relations Manager at 206-296-2822/ [brownra@seattleu.edu](mailto:brownra@seattleu.edu).

## **Tips and Tricks**

We want this opportunity to be beneficial to you and your organization, so we are providing several tips

and tricks to help maximize your experience.

- Invite students to participate in stakeholder meetings at your organization. This gives them exposure to your culture, as well as opportunities to practice communication skills in the workplace. Due to COVID-19, these should be attended virtually only for the time being.
- Hold a brownbag/"lunch and learn" event where the students present their project to your general employee population. This is a great employee engagement activity because employees are energized by the ideas and seeing college students and their application of new technologies and techniques. Due to COVID-19, these should be done virtually only. This is subject to change.
- Don't always give the students the answers, but instead serve as a guide to help them find a solution. The learning opportunities and innovation lie within the path to searching for the answers.
- Help the student team clearly define deliverables up front so they don't spend time redefining these through the project. Scope creep happens, but if you can start with the clearest definition of success you have more time to work towards it!
- Let students know your organization's set holidays and other times when you will be out of the office.

## **FAQs**

### **When does the technical work start?**

This depends on the program and course requirements, but the technical work typically begins in fall quarter as soon as the teams become familiar with their projects. Please reference your team's class syllabus and talk to your Faculty Advisor about this.

### **Why do engineering teams do written proposals?**

The reports are done to ensure the students are learning professional written communication skills so that they graduate with this skill.

### **For Computer Science projects, do you use Agile methodologies?**

Yes, our students do 2-week sprints throughout the academic year and student team members hold roles as defined in the Agile methodology.

### **What happens to any intellectual property or patents that result from the project?**

Per your contract, you keep all intellectual property. Any patents you apply for are yours. We have had sponsors include the names of the students in the patent application so that they get credit for their work but have no financial claim.

### **Who do I contact if I have issues or concerns with students, faculty or Project Center Staff?**

For issues with students, please work with your Faculty Advisor.

For issues with your Faculty Advisor, please work with your Design Coordinator or the Project Center Corporate Relations Manager.

For issues with Project Center Staff, please contact the Project Center Director, Dr. Jean Jacoby at 206-296-5526 or [jacoby@seattleu.edu](mailto:jacoby@seattleu.edu).

*Contact information can be found at the end of this guide.*

### **What do I do if I witness or experience bias or discrimination while engaged in my project with Seattle University?**

If you personally experience bias, harassment or discrimination, or witness any of these, we encourage you to reach out to the Project Center immediately, via the Corporate Relations Manager at 206-296-2822 or [projectcenter@seattleu.edu](mailto:projectcenter@seattleu.edu). If you do not feel comfortable contacting the Project Center, please feel free to reach out to Seattle University's Office of Institutional Equity-Assistant Vice President for Institutional Equity, Andrea Herrera-Katahira 206-220-8515 or [katahira@seattleu.edu](mailto:katahira@seattleu.edu)

### **My team is stuck! What do I do?**

We've all experienced this! As a mentor to your student team, you may share how you get past a creative block. Sometimes going back and identifying the problem and recalibrating by determining who is working on what can help. Take a 1000-ft level view and brainstorm about why they are stuck. The students are new to doing long-term projects, so any guidance you can give them when you see them stuck will enhance their learning experience and better prepare them for their careers.

### **I can't meet with my team every week. What should I do?**

Assign someone who can! While weekly meetings may not always be needed, communication with the Sponsor Liaison is absolutely critical to the project's success. Even if you can't meet a few weeks, it is important to have a backup to be available for student questions and who is available to meet or communicate with the students. The time and availability you give to your student team is directly related to how well your project goes.

### **How do I get a parking pass?**

No parking passes will be issued at this time due to COVID-19. We require all meetings be virtual. If you have questions about parking and virtual meetings, please contact to the Project Center staff.

### **How does my team rent a vehicle for travel through the University?**

No vehicle rentals will be allowed at this time due to COVID-19. If the students have a need to rent a vehicle, they must get approval from the Project Center staff. This is subject to change due to the evolving response to the pandemic.

### **What labs and other resources are available on campus?**

Due to COVID-19, all project work should occur virtually. Please contact Rachael Brown, Corporate Relations Manager at 206-296-2822/ [brownra@seattleu.edu](mailto:brownra@seattleu.edu) with any questions you may have.

### **What are Joint Sessions?**

You may hear your students talking about Joint Sessions at the beginning of the year. These are sessions that are coordinated by the Project Center where students from all engineering departments, computer science and environmental science participating in Senior Design Projects come together and receive

additional training and coaching on career and project-related skills. You do not need to attend these sessions. FYI, we are conducting the following Joint Sessions during fall quarter 2020:

October 5            Joint Session One: Implicit Bias & Team Dynamics

October 12          Joint Session Two: Project Management Skills

October 26          Joint Session Three: STEM Ethics

### **Tools**

- Project Deliverables Worksheet
- Academic Calendar
- Class Syllabus
- Slack group: If you would like more information about the Slack user group, please contact Rachael Brown, Corporate Relations Manager at 206-296-2822/ [brownra@seattleu.edu](mailto:brownra@seattleu.edu).

### **Contacts**

#### **Project Center Staff**

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#### **Design Coordinators**

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