Project Meetings

To: Worcester D Term Project Teams
From: D. DiBiasio, F. Carrera, S. Matson, N. Mello, and S. Taylor
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Subject: Project Meetings

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

Every team will meet with the advisors once a week for about 45 minutes. Here are some ground rules for PQP meetings. They will also apply for project meetings during D term. The PQP/IQP is a learning experience in several dimensions. One of these is a professional dimension. You will be working with professionals in the city, and we expect students to learn how to properly function in a professional environment.

- **Arrive on time**. Please let your team members or advisors know in advance if you have to miss a meeting for legitimate reasons.

- **Be prepared**. This includes completion of weekly tasks and writing assignments.

- **Bring an agenda**. Agendas typically include weekly accomplishments, questions or issues needing attention, and plans for the upcoming week. More on the Agenda below.

- **Run the meeting**. One team member will act as a meeting **chair** and will control and coordinate the proceedings (on a rotating schedule).

- **Take minutes**. At least one person should do this, and you should rotate minute-taking duties for each meeting. Moreover, each person could also take notes and the team later combines them into one set of minutes. Minutes are typed up and sent to advisors (and sponsors when on site) by the next business day. More on Minutes below.

- **Dress properly**. For PQP meetings this means normal attire for attending classes, except please remove outerwear and all caps and hats. For sponsor meetings, attire will include business dress appropriate for the agency. Usually this is a collared shirt and tie for the men and business suit for the women (with appropriate shoes in each case---no sneakers).

- You should use the same format and procedures for all your own team meetings.

Meeting Secretary (or Recorder)

- One team member will act as a meeting **secretary** and will record the proceedings (on a rotating schedule)
- The **secretary** will produce the meeting's **AGENDA** before the meeting (see below) and then write-up the **MINUTES** at the end of the meeting (see below).
- A different person will then become responsible for the following week's meeting AGENDA, RECORDING and MINUTES.

- Agendas and Minutes will be archived weekly in a project log notebook.

- The performance of each student as the secretary will be noted and will count toward the final grade.

Preparing for the first meetings (among yourselves)

Here is a guide for your first team meeting (without advisors):

- Introduce yourselves, and get to know each other a little. It's a good idea to go around the room and talk about how each of you is feeling about the project and the entire prospect of doing your IQP at the Worcester Community Project Center.

- Exchange information (telephone numbers, email addresses, etc.). Talk about preferred modes of communication; you need to know if your partners are "email people" or not, for example. (Note: your advisors are very much "email people", so be sure to check yours regularly this term!)

- Discuss your schedules for the term, and some meeting strategies. Remember that ID 2050 + PQP = 1/2 unit, and 1/2 unit = 25 hours/week per person. Since you will only be in classes and meetings with us 5 hours/week, this means that a three-person team will need to put in about 60 person-hours of outside work the project each week. **We'll be looking for evidence of this in our meetings**. Some of this time MUST be spent meeting and communicating with each other for things to go smoothly.

Some General Advice Regarding Meeting With Your Partners

- It's important to realize that your partners are likely to have different styles of working and interacting with others than you do. Try to be aware of your own style and openly seek ways to work together. Diversity is a strength in project work--it usually makes for better results--but it also makes the teamwork more challenging.

- If some team members already know each other well, it's important NOT to have meetings by yourselves about the project, especially before the team is able to meet about a particular issue. Do your best to save your ideas for when all of you are together.

- Rotate who runs the meetings among all partners. Not everyone is equally eager or experienced in doing this, but it's important that everyone has chances to do this. (We'll be expecting you to do this in meetings with us.)

- Be careful to rotate other tasks, such as note-taking, research, etc., among all partners. Don't fall into the roles you're most comfortable with unless everyone has agreed on it. Avoid roles based on gender, whether out in the field, or in meetings.

- Make certain that all members get time to voice their opinions and ideas. Don't let anyone dominate the discussion. It is VERY hard for extroverts to learn to shut up long enough to let other people have time to think through and voice their ideas. Extroverts like to think aloud, and actually start talking before they know what they're going to say. Consequently, they are always ready to say something BEFORE other people, and are also fonder of having the floor than others. The results aren't good unless we learn to make a point to hear from those who aren't as quick to voice opinions. Their ideas are often much better thought out!

- When there are reasons for the team to break into small subgroups – and there will be many times during prep and the project when this makes sense – be sure to split yourselves up in varied ways, especially at the beginning.

- Schedule meetings in locations that are convenient and comfortable for all members. Meeting on "neutral turf" somewhere on campus might be most effective.

AGENDA

The project team has the responsibility to run weekly meetings. The progress report /agenda for each meeting should always include the following items:

- ***Accomplishments in the previous week.*** Instead of just providing a laundry list of topics or tasks, really try to make your report informational, so that it has some take-away value. What specifically did you learn? What major issues emerged? What key resources did you find? Where appropriate, include attachments as part of an agenda "packet" in order to provide more information. *Do not list "trivial" accomplishments such as sending an e-mail, making a telephone call, etc., nor should you list obvious, routine things such as going to meetings and classes. Focus on substantive accomplishments of interest to the attendees, and especially on the outcome of your efforts.*
- ***Discussion topics.*** The agenda should set the tone for the meeting. It should contain a list of items to be discussed, both related to project logistics, as well as to content. A bulleted or numbered list will suffice. Be specific in your items list. Do not use generic headings. If you want to group discussion items into larger heading, do so, but make sure that the specific topics to be discussed are listed. .
- ***Plans for the next week.*** Again, focus on substantive plans and what you intend to accomplish by the next meeting. Be specific, and include who will be doing what.

Another way to gauge the appropriateness of these agenda items is to ask yourselves if the content reflects the level of expected effort (outside of class) for a one week period, which is about 60 hrs/three-person team! Are the outcomes of the work effort evident? Remember that each team member should participate in every meeting, with responsibility for some subset of the agenda items. The chair's role is to keep the meeting on track, not to report everything himself or herself.

The agenda should fit on a <u>single</u> page. Unfinished tasks from the previous week should be moved to the "action" list for the current week.

- Each team <u>must</u> send the AGENDA to the advisors by 4pm the day before the meeting.
- Each team <u>must</u> bring enough copies of the AGENDA to the meeting. Each advisor will get a copy and one copy will be for the team.

MINUTES

The secretary should compile the minutes following the conclusion of each meeting. He or she should record the meeting date and start and end times as well as the people in attendance. The secretary's name should be indicated at the top. Minutes are due to the team members and advisors by 4 pm on the next business day following a regularly scheduled meeting.

The meeting minutes should be written by filling in the spaces between the agenda's discussion topics, using the agenda document as a base. One or two sentences under each topic should suffice to summarize the discussion. Make sure you keep track of whatever conclusions were reached, as well as loose ends. Action decisions should be noted and tasks assigned to specific people. Deadlines should be placed on tasks assigned.

Here are some important items regarding note-taking during project meetings with the advisors:

- Advisors usually get annoyed when they participate in project meetings in which no student is writing anything.

- Taking notes shows commitment and a good attitude toward the project---the kind of things that help students earn better grades.

- Although some advisors can be accused of talking just to hear themselves talk, most of what we offer is meant to help the group and is worth recording.

- Reporting those suggestions in the minutes is important---particularly for efficient follow-up.

- At the end of a meeting we will typically ask: "So what will you do this week?" When there has been little or no note-taking, the response is usually "Uh, I guess we'll….OK……uh,…I didn't write it all down", or "We're going to do all the things we just talked about." Neither response is acceptable.

- When minutes read like: "Discussed improvements to next draft", that's not helpful. A better example might be something like: "Discussion on background research included:
    - contact Prof. XX about (topic)
    - check library at Univ. of YYY for reference on (topic)
    - investigate use of focus group methods for objective 6"

- At the next meeting, you should have specific results that directly relate to each item. Note that follow-up can mean providing a valid reason for rejecting a suggestion. For example: "Joe contacted Prof. XX and she told him that…(topic)….wasn't important in this problem, so we don't need to worry about it", is way better than "Oh, we forgot you suggested to contact Prof. XX.----We'll do it this week." The most frequent reason the latter answer is given is because no one wrote down the suggestion during the meeting.