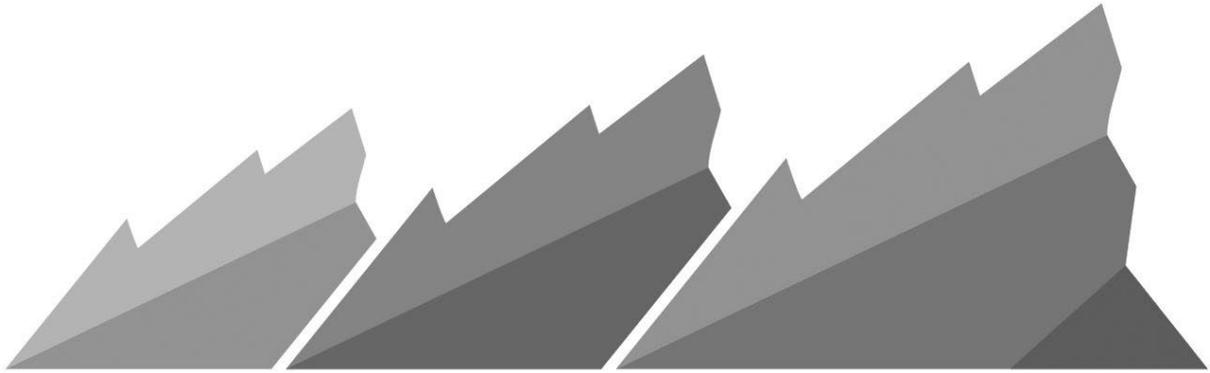


Virtual Capstone Design Conference 2020

Teamwork and Difficult Conversations

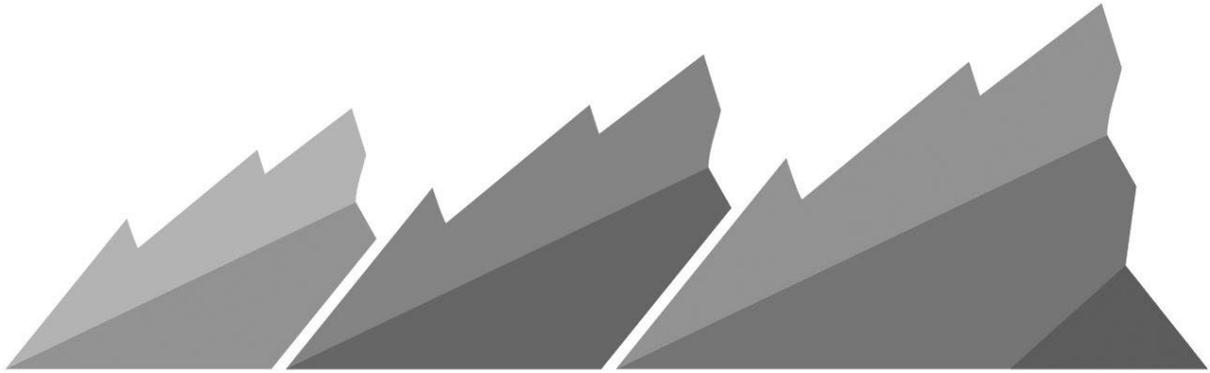
Questions

- *Type your questions for presenters here. @ the panelist your question is directed to.*
 - *Feel free to respond to or second questions as well*
- Two years ago someone suggested having students do a teambuilding task at the start of the course. This worked really well but what can we suggest if students can't get together in person?
 - Do something that can be done remotely, either synchronous or asynchronous? Perhaps writing a story or planning an event or doing a virtual design task?
 - Complete the drawing task - there are online whiteboards where they can all draw on the same page - we use Webex which includes this feature
 - I've seen non-work 'games' that have one person start, the next must respond where the first word is the last word from the previous person... or perhaps the last letter of that word becomes their starting point... can be done verbally or in chat room like zoom
 - Charades works pretty well in Zoom
 - I like progressive poetry and haiku as well - each student writes a line and passes it along.
 - Storytelling game - team member grabs a random object near them and creates a story (or can default to describing something generic - decided by the instructor - for students uncomfortable with sharing things around them). The goal was to exaggerate the truth about what makes the object amazing. The crazier the better. (I think I saw this described as "Exciting sponge", where the default object was a sponge.) They take turns making the story more outrageous.
- Want to echo that... how can you do a teambuilding exercise if part are present, part are remote?
 - I think you design for the least common denominator, thus assume what works for the virtual.



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- Would you please elaborate on what positions you use in a generic team?
- @ Daria - is the bystander training done in capstone, or a different separate course?
- We had the problem this past term of one student feeling like the others weren't pulling their weight, but the others called him "the person who brings a \$100 gift to a \$10 gift grab" How to resolve?
- @Keith, can you send us link to the rubric for escalation made in the earlier session, please
- @ any: how to develop team cohesiveness virtually?
- @any: What are the best ways to first prevent problems before they become apparent and disruptive?
- @any: At what point do you call for a team divorce? (i.e. stop pushing through bad team dynamics)
- @any: What is the best way to determine the degree of contribution in a group project?
 - Our online collaboration tool directly supports this. We can inventory each student's activity. To that we add the peer evaluations plus our observations of participation quantity and quality
- @ any: what are best practices for students to communicate without meeting in person?
 - I've seen a bunch of different ways this is done, but so far I find that letting students be in control helps a lot. Forcing everyone to use a particular technology/platform tends to cause them to push back sometimes. We basically say "As long as you are meeting and sharing your information in a way that the whole group and the advisor can see it, choose what you like best"
- @Daria Are all of the discussed trainings specific to your univ. or are any public?
 - some of these trainings are specific to our university. But, we are always happy to share. We also draw on published works - such as "crucial conversations"
- @any: It seems that self-awareness is critical to resolving conflict. How much emphasis do your programs' strategies emphasize exploration of personality and introspection?
- @Olga, do you have a certain book you recommend for agile?
 - not a book. We are bringing in a Agile Coach from industry - O Pierrakos
 - I found this ASEE article pretty interesting: Using Agile Project Management to Maximize Your and Your Coauthors' Productivity Ted Eschenbach et al P.E., University of Alaska Anchorage - K Demoret



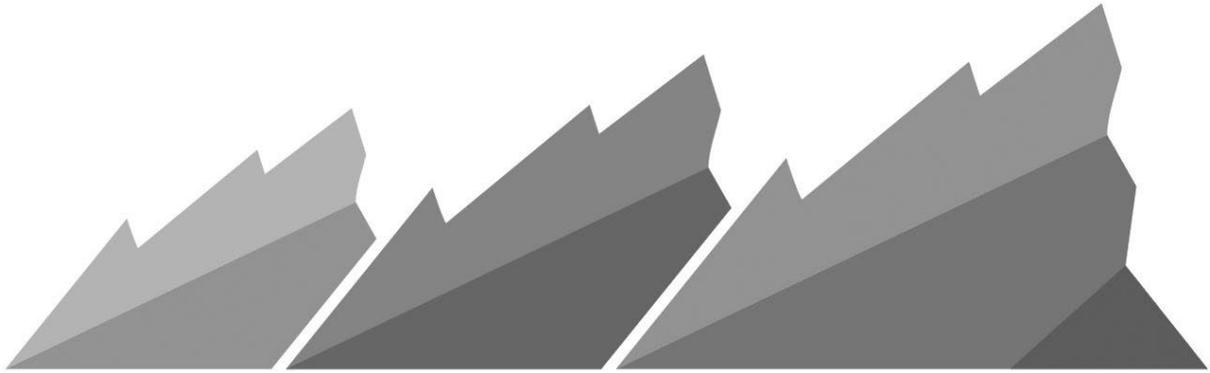
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- there is some ramp up to agile. It is a framework though and not a recipe. Make the process work for you. Think about how work can be made visible. Think about roles that are clear. Build in reflections
- I'm also gathering a small group of alums from my program who regularly use Agile at work to help me frame it for my capstone course (since they know both environments)
- How to talk with group members who have difficulty compromising or following the lead of others? (Second that!)
 - Sometimes we see a type AAA student is freezing other people out, destroying a team dynamic and alienating team mates. S Seidman
 - Rotating the PM role helps with the AAA team member issue with certain deliverables Z Rockow
- Rotation of roles is crucial! We found that women were put in management roles and not doing the technical work because they were considered better communicators. This didn't allow for the others to stretch and denied women the technical experience.
 - Regarding rotating roles, I like rotating the role of project manager on my capstone teams. That way, every team member has the opportunity to have that responsibility and to lead the team. (especially important in capstone where the team lead has responsibility but no authority) --S. Howe
 - We also rotate roles. And consciously work to push extremely talented women out of self-selecting or feeling pushed into certain roles
- Would you please suggest a list of common team role titles?
 - Team lead/project manager, lead engineer, budget/finance director, communications lead, client liaison, scribe (definitely need to rotate this!), inventory manager (important for projects with lots of hardware) -- S.Howe
- @ any Does anyone have a grade impact on team conflict, especially for the person who is designated as Project Manager?
 - Extension Q: do any capstone courses give different grades to members of a team?
 - We have grade impact rotating for the PM for that deliverable. - Z Rockow
- @any: how to deal with teams where one member doesn't participate?



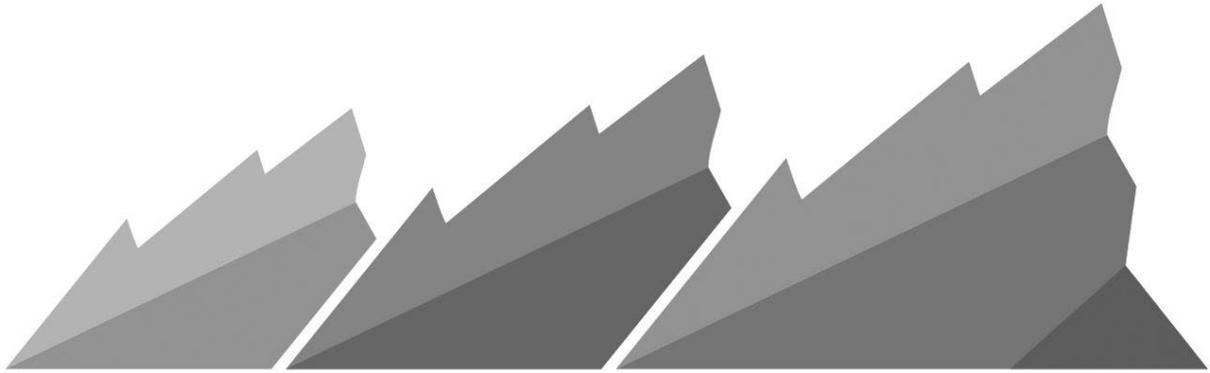
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- In some cases, there are situations where a student's participation is justifiably low priority for that student.
- agree: we need to get the full story before trying to help resolve the issue
- we've sometimes (rarely) used the performance plans to help students "recover" - Mark @RPI
- We have started having the problem that with virtual teams students can go 'radio silent' and you don't know - are they sick? Slacking? Having internet issues? And if they don't respond to you via email, there may be no other way to find them. No idea what to do with a team member who just vanishes and won't respond to anyone.
- Under clear course learning outcomes related to a senior design course, how do you deal with the student who has major home issues or personal insecurities? We cannot give a free pass but we must be compassionate.
- @Daria: as far as "training" the sponsor themselves in some of these areas. What does that look like in practice? Is it a general conversation initially or a recurring conversation throughout the project?
- @anyone- As a faculty member, any recommendations on what to do if we are the ones experiencing discriminated acts?
- @any: In online meetings I am noticing some members stay on mute the whole time...any suggestions for getting them to contribute to meetings?
 - we require every team member to speak for equal amount of time for updates
 - try providing opportunities for students to contribute via writing (such as a live notes doc) or even asynchronously. - S Howe
 - To help press all team members to contribute in zoom meetings, I'm thinking about having students rotate the job of initial status. - K Dermoret
 - When I am in a meeting with my capstone teams, I deliberately ask questions of each individual person during the course of the meeting, but it can be hard to monitor if the students are meeting without you.
 - In my experience, students who never spoke during live meetings became more chatty over zoom! (seconded)
 - Zoom meetings for our design lab times and I'll include breakout rooms for each team. I will jump into each room as they call/chat for my assistance. LOVE virtual meal via Zoom we do it all the time with friends...



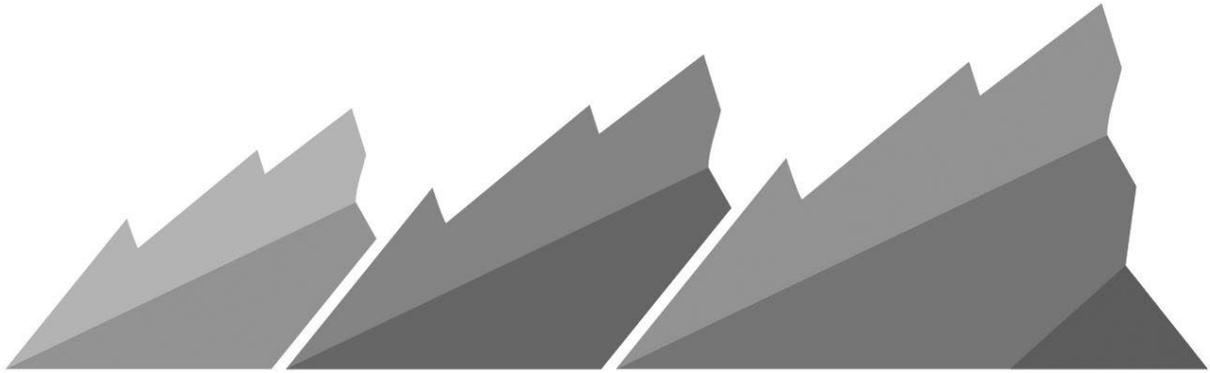
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- What about time zone issues? For some students, real time communication is a real issue.
 - One of the things that I've been doing is having office hours at a lot of different times of day - from 9-10 am to 7-8pm on different days. This way everyone around the globe has a decent chance to ask questions when they are awake.
- @any What are advantages and disadvantages of capstone teams having a team leader?
 - Not sure I can recall a leaderless team that had a great output - Mark @ RPI
- @ any: sometimes students belonging to under-represented minority groups/ international students have trouble communicating effectively- both verbal and written. Has anyone found a good way to address this issue?
 - One of our biggest issues was students who had to go back home, and home didn't have reliable internet. One of my students went back to Myanmar and didn't have electricity at night when everyone else on the team was awake. They made an arrangement to have him need to update by time x every day, so they could keep touch, albeit asynchronously.
- @Daria (or anyone): when saying that you work with students to find out what the root issue is for their difficulties, you also said that these are also important skills for team members out in the world. Have you given any thought for how we can model the compassion and care you show those students encountering difficulties with the rest of your students? So that they can learn not just to label someone lazy at work and write them off but show some care?
- @any: What are advantages and disadvantages of capstone teams having a team leader?
 - our teams identify their own leader... we may have to nudge them into that or nudge the clear leader to step forward... all my successful teams have had a leader... the others? sigh...
 - Different leaders/PMs Our phases: RFP (request for proposal) - team leader or PM; conceptual deliverable a separate PM, final design report (PM) , and lastly presentation (either live or video PM but all speak)
- @any: Do you all reimburse for team building activities?



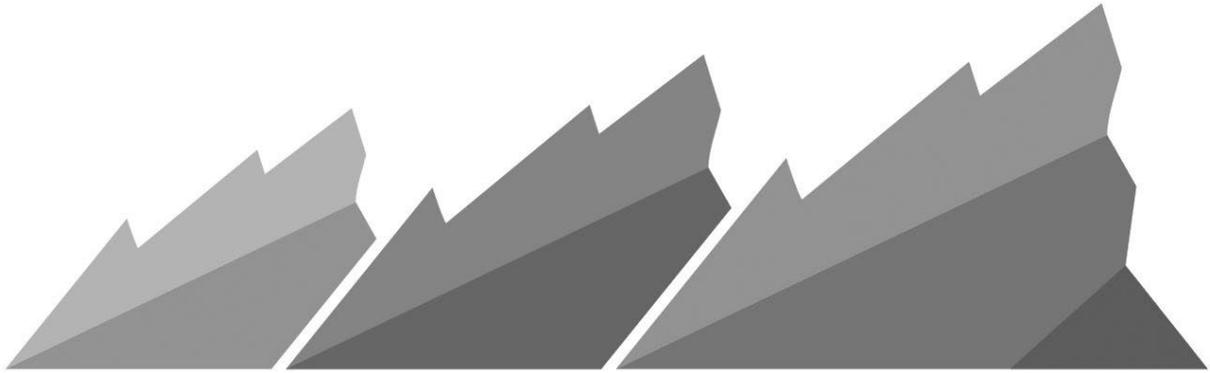
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- For our soph experience - no. Expenses are in line with a textbook or two. For our senior capstone - yes. Mark @ RPI
- Quality internet is an issue in lower income areas ... we take high quality internet connection for granted.
- @any: how to build teams online?
 - Zoom meetings for our design lab times and I'll include breakout rooms for each team. I will jump into each room as they call/chat for my assistance. LOVE virtual meal via Zoom we do it all the time with friends...
 - I found zoom meetings so useful that we will be switching to zoom meetings ONLY starting fall 2020
 - What about time zone issues? For some students, real time communication is a real issue.
 - One of the things that I've been doing is having office hours at a lot of different times of day - from 9-10 am to 7-8pm on different days. This way everyone around the globe has a decent chance to ask questions when they are awake.
- Student training: Kognito At-risk peer
 - UF is now pushing for all its students to take that training
 - we have a campus wide "Early Warning System", to flag to student problems to the campus learning center. usually that finally gets the student's attention
 - We have an academic alert system that we can red flag students who fall off the radar
 - We have an academic alert system, so the advisors can 'stalk' them, but it can still be tough to get them to respond.
- @ Any: Can we consider talking about coping with covid in an open session at the beginning of the semester. Not graded, just an open session to share coping strategies and resources? [One of our students in the spring set up a department wide slack channel with subchannels for each class in the department, as well as channels for people to ask for and receive help, good vibes, etc. This has been really a great venue for students to interact with each other and with professors in a way that a lot of students really like.](#)(Bridget Smyser) Thank you (Great idea)
- @Daria - do you have a good template for the team charters? - seconded!
 - Any exemplar for Team charter documents?



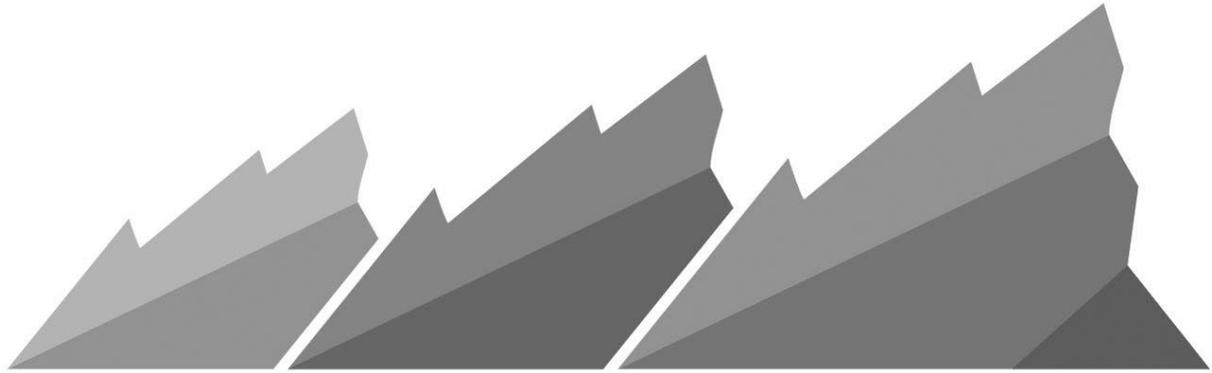
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- Just a thought: as we prepare students for real world, we should make capstone grade free? Just P/F? I think it will bring in more risk component and willingness to fail and be ambitious in building cool projects
 - @Sid - I've been mulling this too. But does it potentially hurt the students who haven't been "A" students in previous courses but really shine in capstone, and thus would only get a "P" on the transcript? --S. Howe
 - Personally I feel lack of a letter grade (or campus equivalent) is not a motivator for strong performance in college age students but might increase it for returning students.
- Is there a benefit for creating a team-charter earlier in the semester (first two weeks vs later)?
 - We use the team charters as the basis for their peer reviews.
- my fear is the guilt of not being able to deliver all the mentoring that I do in person and access to facilities in school that is driving to p/f
 - since all on campus have Webex, I can and have, reached out asynchronously to students to just ask how things are going.. No longer has to be tied to end or start of class meetings...
- I have huge teams and lots of teams, so I need some insight on what's going on. I think the team time cards will be even more valuable in a hybrid/remote setting
 - To be brutally honest, seniors work 2-3 hours a week in Fall and maybe 10 hours a week in the last week.
 - I say 12 hours/week for 4 credit class. But it ends up being 10 ish and students are very honest about low hours.
 - add more intermittent deliverables to ramp up time spent
 - students find deliverables unnecessary and tedious unless it is a physical meeting to sho their demo
 - We have a form to check both individual time commitment AND project advances
 - As a past manager of engineering professionals, I did not examine time cards only results. I try to extend that courtesy to students. Strong results usually speak for themselves as do weak ones (tho not always for the weak ones!).
- The agile methodology seems like a really good way to hold people accountable. What is the ramp up time for faculty not familiar with Agile typically?



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- There is some ramp up to agile. It is a framework though and not a recipe. Make the process work for you. Think about how work can be made visible. Think about roles that are clear. Build in reflections
- I'm also gathering a small group of alums from my program who regularly use Agile at work to help me frame it for my capstone course (since they know both environments)
- From experience with traditional waterfall and Agile, I do not feel that one improves accountability over the other. They are different in how they manage it perhaps. But people own and must complete tasks by when they are due. If you are tracking that using any tool, then you can have accountability. IMHO as we say :) Mark @ RPI



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Comments

- *Type your comments about presentation content here*
- I found this ASEE article pretty interesting: Using Agile Project Management to Maximize Your and Your Coauthors' Productivity Ted Eschenbach et al P.E., University of Alaska Anchorage
- In the book, The Power of Full engagement, the importance of habit and ritual is discussed. If something is routine, it requires less energy to follow through to do the right thing. I am taking that to heart and trying to build in the routine meetings...
- Trust is built by a series of small moments!

Recording link:

Topic: Difficult Conversations

Start Time : Jul 9, 2020 03:44 PM

Meeting Recording:

https://northeastern.zoom.us/rec/share/6_woD7TazkdLE53usHnFYf97IK7Jea8gyge__YPyh4qDCT3w18NptMcFgmXlCkb

Access Password: 2j#2i?2K