



Panel 1B: After the Sponsor Says Yes: Onboarding and Managing Industry- Sponsored Projects

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Panelists: Michael Robbeloth (Ohio State), Philip (Phil) Hittepole (GVSU), Kristy Csavina (Colorado School of Mines)

Description: Getting the project is only half the battle. Our panelists will discuss the best practices for setting the sponsor and the students up for success.

Notes:

Industry sponsor role

- Available for kickoff
- Speed dating type session
- Meet every 2 weeks
- Scrum/agile approach
- Welcome packets for the students
- Discuss the technical requirements they use and want students to use
- Have an engineer dedicated to the project to meet with the team each week
- Students should feel like a consulting firm to the Client and meet them regularly
- **Audience Qs**
- How to define constraints
 - Require sponsor to submit the scope of the project
 - Have a sponsor day for students to go meet them after reviewing project scope to ask questions

- Team once formed meets with sponsor to revise/nail down the specs for the project
- How often do you as the instructor attend the weekly meetings with the Client
 - No - have a set of slides to help guide the student team for meeting with Client
 - Attend KO meeting and occasional check-ins
 - Students are top 1% so they are usually good
 - Don't attend weekly meetings
 - Want the team to stand on their own
 - Do some "fly on the wall" visits to meetings
- What should be happening at the Client meeting? Do you prepare them (the Clients)?
 - Set of slides sent to the Clients to help them understand the process
 - 2 of 3 on the panel do not prep the Client in any specific way
- Any contact between instructor and Client during the semester?
 - Not specifically, but the individual project advisor does see them regularly
- Discussion on scope creep from the sponsor side
 - Train the students to not just say yes
 - Project advisors also help control that
- Discuss more on "speed dating" with the sponsors before project selection
 - 90 minutes in a room
 - Students go to the sponsors to ask questions
 - Have seen the project descriptions before hand
 - Students rank projects
 - Mines manually make the teams
 - How do students react to not being on their top project?
 - 80% or so, and most all are on top 3, all on top 8
- Any adjustment of the rubric/deliverables based on the project? In BMEN there is such a wide range how to grade
 - Expect all teams to deliver a working device - based on the process not the quality of the final prototype
 - Grades based on how painful the process was
 - Also students that don't pull their weight - use peer evals to help separate grades for that
 - Rubrics are the same - based on the process, not the different style of project
 - Rubrics are also broad to allow for this

Unique challenges of multidisciplinary

- MR - does software innovation
 - Sponsors are trying to pivot to new markets

- Need to focus on deliverables for the SW
- KC - client based on what is needed - some require 6 disciplines
 - Clients know what they need and don't require training
 - Smaller clients sometimes do need that
- PH - Similar to KC
- **Audience Qs**
- How to handle scoping for MD projects
 - Require students to learn things they do not know (MEs have to learn to do electrical work)
 - No real client prep
- How to get the different disciplines to work together
 - Tell them they have to! (is there a need for structure team building and gap ID?)
 - Do peer evals (CATME or Feedback loop as options)
 - More detail on Q - students are in different capstone classes by major and have to come together
 - Team has to discuss how to work together (Team Charter development)
 - Use peer evals to make sure that everyone is performing
 - Especially in a honors program - many ready to replace them
 - Get them in the same class with a single faculty advisor (more of a project manager than a SME, this last is expected to be seek separately)
- Impact of customer satisfaction on grade
 - Make sure the deliverables are achievable and doable during the process
 - Try to make sure the projects all complete successfully - hold students accountable and delay grad until they have delivered
 - Sponsor satisfaction is very important - donate \$\$, engaged with the university, etc.
 - Sponsors are not a factor in the grading due to very different levels of expectations

Contact Audience between the team and the sponsor

- MR - Other than KO meeting weekly or bi-weekly to discuss progress and get feedback
 - Local prefer in person, but meetings can be remote or email based
- KC - constantly tweaking
 - How to guide students through the process
 - Students do slides of their progress biweekly
 - Requires introverted students to present and grow
 - The more they mandate reporting/presenting the more they come out of their shells

- MH - Team chooses a team captain and a single point of contact with the sponsor
- **Audience Qs**
- SVH and John Estell created a meeting planning doc to help teams prep for meetings (include link here:)
- Issues with communication from the sponsor - sometimes lacking - how to handle?
 - Reminding the sponsors that communication is key and the more they are involved the better the results will be
 - If issues persist, instructor gets involved
 - Remind sponsors to not hold back and give good/bad feedback to team
- How formal is your agreement with the sponsor?
 - KC - has a contract
 - No specific “meet every 2 weeks” reqt
 - PH - nothing in particular to require them to meet weekly, etc.
- How to get the "right" contact for the team?
 - Contract has a spot to include the name of the contact - needs to be a degreed engr
 - Ask for an administrative and a technical contact
 - Opportunity id: connect with technical (eng. background) contact to agree with expectation upon project acceptance and line up to kick off.
 - Require a technical contact
- What questions to ask to get the right people involved from the sponsor side?
 - PH - interfaces with mid-level people is where they live and usually the right level
 - React as needed
 - MR - In the SW world tends to be HR related or special projects people
 - KC - not an issue based on doing capstone for a while so they know to find the right people and get the project scoped properly

Open questions

- Do you treat sponsors as just clients or actual partners?
 - MR - needs long term sponsors so more of a partnership
 - Long term relationships yield more projects, donations, etc.
 - KC - intentionally use the word Client
 - PH - similar
 - Make sure they focus on the educational process for the students
- IP question
 - Redirect to other session upcoming
 - Issue is “we paid for class, why do they get the IP”
 - They get credit towards graduation

- Recommendations to help find jobs, etc.
- PH - haven't had students bring it up