CAPSTONE NEWSLETTER

KEY UPCOMING DATES

MARCH 10
Mid-term reviews complete with client

WEEK OF MAY 2
Target window for end of semester project reviews

MAY 5
College of Engineering Capstone/ Senior Design Expo

We recently allocated class time for each team to provide an overview of their project. I asked the teams to create a draft PowerPoint 'poster' as a starting point for the College of Engineering Expo later in the semester. Their presentation should cover the why, what, and how for the project.

After each team presentation, the rest of the class filled out a brief survey on the quality of the poster, the quality of the presentation, and the likelihood that the team will meet the course mission of meeting or exceeding customer expectations, growing skills, and enhancing the reputation of NDSU Computer Science in the industry. The class of peers also offered suggestions to improve the presentation.

Each team received a report that compared their peer feedback with the class averages. I did some analysis to identify the top posters and reviewed these in class. I also aggregated

COMMUNICATION, CLARITY & TRUST

scores across poster, presentation, and mission feedback to recognize the top five teams.

What was interesting was that there was strong alignment across all three categories. The teams with the best posters were the best performing teams overall. For me, this was a great indicator of the importance of communication skills in the success of projects. Or, at a minimum, it shows how strong communication skills drive a belief in the team's ability to get things done.

As noted in the engagement model shared in the last newsletter, we focus on clarity and trust as core values in our projects. The team presentations reinforced how strong communication creates clarity. And clarity drives trust in the team's ability to be successful.

The presentations and peer feedback combined to provide an excellent quantifiable example of how the three 'soft skills' of communication, clarity, and trust work together to enable project success.

MID-TERM ACTIVITIES
The mid-term brings to the close the first of two major development phases in the semester and there were several activities recently completed. The

project teams did a mid-term review for their client and created a video of the review presentation as a class assignment. The clients have provided feedback on the state of the project and individuals on the team. We are also doing some peer review within project teams to get a well-rounded perspective on how things are going.

The product backlog has been completed for Dev Phase 2 and teams have a good idea what the project end state will be. To improve for the second development phase, we learned how project retrospectives can increase quality and effectiveness. Each team then completed a project retrospective which was shared as part of the mid-term review.

LOOKING AHEAD
The second half of the semester will go by quickly and the College of Engineering Expo will be here before we know it. I'll provide more information about this event in my next newsletter.

I continue to be so impressed with the commitment of the client mentors involved in the projects. You are providing invaluable experiences for the project teams, and I thank you for your contributions to the NDSU Computer Science program!