All engineering seniors at the University of Washington must complete a capstone design project during their senior year. These projects, which are done in teams over two to three quarters, give students valuable experience solving substantial problems using concepts that span several topic areas within their major. Companies now have the opportunity to sponsor student teams to tackle real-world problems from their businesses.

**ABOUT CAPSTONE PROJECTS**

Capstone design projects allow students to experience the rigor and structure of a full-cycle design, including problem definition, benchmark studies, concept generation and feasibility study, engineering design analyses, and, in most cases, prototype fabrication and testing. Through the capstone experience, students learn to fully define a design problem. This includes not only a statement of the project deliverables and objectives in the client’s terms, but also a full definition of the agreed-upon functional requirements and constraints.

Opportunities for capstone projects include design competitions, research in a professor’s lab and now real-world problems brought in by industry sponsors.

**OPPORTUNITY FOR INDUSTRY**

Companies now have the opportunity to sponsor capstone projects within the UW’s College of Engineering. Departments offering industry capstone projects include Aeronautics & Astronautics, Electrical Engineering and Mechanical Engineering, with more departments expected to participate. Sponsors bring in real-world problems from their businesses and support a team of creative, talented UW senior engineering students in developing solutions. Participating companies pay a $10,000 sponsorship fee and designate an employee to mentor the student team. The mentor helps the team understand the problem in depth and meets with the students weekly to keep them on track as the project progresses. Projects typically start in fall or winter quarter and run for two or three quarters.
BENEFITS

Sponsoring a capstone design project provides a company with several important benefits:

- The opportunity to assess student talent and recruit for jobs
- Low-cost means to get a fresh look at a challenging problem, perhaps one that the sponsor doesn’t have the resources to do in-house
- A nonexclusive commercial license to any project intellectual property developed by the student team or UW employees
- An excellent professional development opportunity for a company employee who mentors a team
- The chance to get better acquainted with the UW’s College of Engineering and the many other opportunities for industry engagement

PROCESS

Interested companies work with faculty leads in participating College of Engineering departments to define suitable capstone projects based on real-world design problems. Companies present their projects to students at a pitch event and students complete a survey to indicate which projects they would like to work on. Based on the survey results, teams of three to six students are formed for each project. The companies then identify a mentor, sign a simple sponsor agreement, and pay the sponsorship fee.

CONTACTS & LINKS

Please contact us with any questions about the UW’s Industry Capstone Program.

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Department of Aeronautics & Astronautics Capstone Program:
aa.washington.edu/students/academics/capstone2016