Reference for Student Participation in IAFF 6119
International Trade and Investment Policy Capstone

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INTRODUCTION

The International Trade & Investment Policy (ITIP) capstone course (IAFF 6119) provides an opportunity for students to conduct research and apply the multidisciplinary knowledge acquired in the ITIP program to a practical real world international policy problem. In the capstone, students will independently form small teams to complete a research project in conjunction with the interests of a sponsoring organization. The capstone is a one-credit course graded on a Pass/Fail basis. The project is completed in the final year of the student’s MA program.

In order to provide sufficient time for successful completion of the projects by mid April 2014, student teams will need to identify sponsoring organizations by the Fall semester 2013 prior to registering for IAFF 6119 in the Spring semester. Initial contact with the sponsor must be arranged in the Fall and one preliminary report must be submitted in November. Special arrangements should be made for students who are away from campus during the Fall semester.

This guide provides information about sponsors, project proposals, a timeline indicating deadlines, a list of deliverables and info about the final presentation at the Elliott School.

Please feel free to contact me (smsuran@gwu.edu or 202.994.7579), or Kyle Renner (itip@gwu.edu or 202.994.5320), if you have any questions about the project. We are always open to suggestions for improving the course.

BACKGROUND

All ITIP students take a set of core courses that includes international trade theory and policy, international finance theory and policy, international political economy, and a second-level course in quantitative methods that includes multiple regression analysis. In addition, each student takes an additional set of four courses in one of four fields of study: international economic policy analysis, international business, development economics, or finance. Finally, each student demonstrates proficiency in a foreign language.

Features of the capstone include:

- A suitable project will require a team of students to conduct research, analyze data and report on an issue of interest to them and the sponsoring organization.
- The project may require students to consider aspects of a problem across several disciplines (i.e., economic, political, historical, legal and/or social).
- The project must be able to be completed by a team of 3-4 students in a 3-5 month period of time, with about 3-5 hours per week per student.
There is a strong preference for at least some formal statistical or regression analysis as part of the project. This is an important skill for students to practice during the capstone. Requisite empirical data must be provided by the sponsor or be available from public sources.

- Sponsors may require non-disclosure or confidentiality agreements to be signed by the students.

Please visit [http://elliott.gwu.edu/academics/grad/itip/capstone.cfm](http://elliott.gwu.edu/academics/grad/itip/capstone.cfm) for examples of appropriate project topics include these from past years. Specific examples include:

1. Food security in West Africa
2. Prospects for Commercial Nuclear Energy in Southeast Asia
3. Increased Foreign Control of U.S. Air Carriers and the Implications for Labor
4. Microfinance Profitability--Indicators for Success
5. Energy Security, Global Economic Integration, and Global Warming in Eurasia
6. The Impact of the Global Economic Crisis on Human Development in Eastern Europe & Eurasia
7. Prospects for Doubling US Exports in Five Years

**PROJECT TIMELINE**

The Spring 2013 capstone projects will begin in the summer of 2012 when students will independently form teams with 3-4 members and will work together to begin to identify a project topic and a potential sponsoring organization. Usually this will involve a) identifying shared student interests, b) identifying a contact in an organization and meeting to discuss whether student project interests match the sponsor's interests.

By **August 23, 2013** capstone students must inform the ITIP director via email of the following:

a) the probable members of your team
   a. If you are not yet on a team, please let us know that so we can assist with team formation and sponsor identification.
   b) a preliminary topic for the project (a title and a couple of sentences is sufficient)
   c) one or more sponsoring organizations along with:
      a. your actual or intended contact person
      b. a brief report about the outcome of any preliminary discussion with the sponsor organization.

Please note that the ITIP Program Director makes the final decision about the composition of student teams. If adjustments are necessary to assure that all teams are strong, the Program Director will discuss the changes with affected members before announcing the change.
Mandatory Friday September 6, 2013 Meeting (6pm):
At this meeting student teams will present a very short progress report highlighting their team's proposed research plan and their progress in securing an external sponsor organization to work with.

By Friday September 27, 2013 students must submit to the ITIP Director via email to itip@gwu.edu AND to the sponsoring organization a draft proposal with the project description and scope. Please title the email "ITIP Project Proposal – Your Sponsor's Name"

The project proposal should include an overview of the sponsor organization and a short description of the question, issue or task to be accomplished. A one page description is sufficient. We will be happy to provide an example of a previous project's prospectus to use as a template.

The sponsor must assign one person from its organization to serve as the project director ("Sponsor Project Director" (SPD)). The SPD will work with the students by providing information from the organization, arranging internal meetings, and signing off on project milestones. The project proposal must include complete contact information for the SPD and any other designated liaisons.

During the next two weeks, students and the SPD will work to further refine the nature and scope of the project, the results of which are presented in a Draft Project Statement. This "Project Statement," which is a refinement of the Project Proposal, is provided to the SPD and ITIP Program Director no later than October 11, 2013.¹ The ITIP Program Director will be available for consultation with the sponsor and students prior to this deadline for help in assessing the appropriate scope.

Mandatory Friday November 15, 2013 Meeting (6pm):
At this meeting student teams will present a short progress report, including an outline of the project and individual team member responsibilities.

Mandatory Friday January 24, 2014 Meeting (6pm):
At this meeting student teams will present a midterm progress report, including a more detailed outline of the project and description of any problems or obstacles encountered. This may include problems with finding appropriate data to problems working with the sponsor organization.

¹ For some ESIA capstone projects, international travel is sometimes necessary to collect and acquire data necessary to evaluate and answer the project question. The ITIP director is willing to work with external organizations to arrange funding for short-term data acquisition excursions abroad. Ideally these would take place during the winter break but potentially could also take place during Spring Break in March.
Mandatory Friday February 28, 2014 Meeting (6pm):
At least 3 days prior to this meeting students must present a preliminary draft report to their sponsor organization and to the ITIP Director. The draft report will consist of:
   a) a clear thesis statement, and/or the hypothesis being assessed. (What does the sponsor wish to know?)
   b) a description of the data sources and methods to be used to determine the validity of the hypothesis. (What info will be collected and analyzed to support your conclusions?)
   c) a brief description of some of the possible outcomes or conclusions from the project.
   d) An outline of the final report including,
      a. A listing and description of the main report sections
      b. Listing and brief description of the main tables/charts or diagrams to be presented.
      c. Identification of team member responsibilities for the final report.

At this meeting student teams will also discuss any feedback from the sponsor and an outline of what still needs to be done to finish the project.

Mandatory Sponsor Presentation:
Students are required to present a draft report at the sponsor organization before Friday, April 4, 2014. This meeting is designed to provide final feedback and to make any necessary final adjustments to the project. However, the project should be in its near final form at this meeting and require only minor adjustments. Students will provide the final written version of the project to the SPD by April 4. The SPD will submit a brief assessment of progress and likelihood of successful completion to the ITIP Director at itip@gwu.edu after this meeting.

Mandatory Student Presentations: April 11 and April 12, 2014:
Each student team makes a final 30 minute presentation to the Elliott School either on Friday, April 11 or Saturday, April 12. Representatives of the sponsoring organization are welcome to attend the final presentation. The final report is submitted to the ITIP Director at this time.

The Sponsor Project Director will submit a brief report to the ITIP Director at itip@gwu.edu by Friday April 18, 2014 with a final assessment of the project. Comments concerning the quality of the report, whether the report matched, exceeded, or fell short of expectations, and the professionalism of the student team are welcome. The sponsor may also provide an assessment of challenges faced by the student team and their success in overcoming them. The sponsor’s suggestions for improvements of the capstone project are also welcome.
Roles and Responsibilities

Role of the Students

Three or four students will be assigned to each project. The students’ role is similar to an external consulting company. Using specifications and guidance from the sponsor organization, students will clarify project goals and objectives, determine what tasks need to be accomplished to achieve these goals, and identify who on the team will be responsible for each assignment. Students will self-manage the project. They are free to choose a team project manager or work as a collective. All members will be equally responsible for the success of the project. Each project will be graded on a Pass/Fail basis and each project team member will generally receive the same grade.

Role of the Sponsor

The sponsor organization works with an ITIP team to develop a project proposal in light of its own interests or needs. One individual in the organization serves as the Sponsor Project Director (SPD) and is the main contact for the students. The SPD arranges meetings between students and relevant organization members, monitors and reviews project progress, and communicates periodically with the student team and the ITIP Director. Upon completion of the project the SPD submits a short report to the ITIP Director with an overall assessment.

Role of the ITIP Director

The ITIP Director is responsible for the final selection of student teams. The ITIP Director collects and reviews progress reports submitted by student teams and the SPD during the course of the project and provides guidance when needed. Upon completion of the project and receipt of the final assessment by the SPD, the ITIP Director assigns the final student grades.
ITIP CAPSTONE CALENDAR
2012-2013

August 23
Students inform the ITIP program director about probable team members, project topic and sponsor organization.
Students will provide a very brief description of the project and sponsor contact information, if available.

September 6
Mandatory capstone meeting (6 pm). Student teams will present a very short progress report highlighting their team's proposed research plan.

September 27
Student Draft Project Proposals due to ITIP director and to sponsor organization.
Student Draft Project Statement due to ITIP director and Sponsor

October 11
Sponsor Project Director sends notice of receipt with any comments to the ITIP Director at itip@gwu.edu.

November 15
Mandatory capstone meeting (6pm). Student teams will present a very short progress report highlighting their team's project and individual team member responsibilities.

January 24
Mandatory capstone meeting (6pm). Student teams will present a midterm progress report, including a more detailed outline of the project and description of any problems or obstacles encountered.

February 28
Mandatory capstone meeting (6pm). Student teams will present a final progress report, including a description of feedback from the sponsor and an outline of what still needs to be done to finish the project.
Student presentation at sponsor organization

April 7 (prior to)
Sponsor Project Director submits a brief progress report after this meeting to the ITIP Director at itip@gwu.edu.

April 11 and April 12
Student final presentation at Elliott School. Mandatory attendance.

April 18
Luncheon in the Elliott School Commons for ITIP students and Sponsor representatives.

April 18
Sponsor Project Director submits Final Assessment to the ITIP Director at itip@gwu.edu
**Policies to Prevent Free Riding**

1) By the first week of the spring semester, each capstone group will establish a two-hour time block that all team members *can attend every week* during the semester and notify the ITIP Director. The default time is the one associated with the capstone registration though students are welcome to choose a different time.

2) Any member of the capstone group, with at least a one-day notice, can call a meeting within that time block. All team members are expected to attend.

3) If one team member cannot attend a called-meeting, either all other team members must agree, or the non-attendee must obtain permission from the ITIP Director for an excused absence.

4) If any student believes that another team member is negligent in their responsibilities to the capstone project, that student may inform the ITIP director. All such correspondence will be strictly confidential.

5) Each team will identify discrete areas of project responsibility for each team member and provide a description of these responsibilities in November.

6) If at the termination of the capstone project the ITIP Director has sufficient evidence to support allegations that a team member has not contributed adequately to the final outcome, that student will receive a NO PASS grade.

7) If a NO PASS grade is received the student will have two options to complete the ITIP capstone requirement:

   a. Retake and pass the capstone course the following year.

   or

   b. Complete and pass a three-hour comprehensive exam, offered at the beginning of the subsequent fall semester, covering the ITIP core course content.