

**Capstones Portal: Frequently Asked Questions**

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# Function of the Capstones Portal

## What is a capstone project?

A capstone project is a one- or two-semester long project in which university students work on a technical project related to their field. The projects are often taken for university credit and/or are part of graduation requirements. Capstone projects can be worked individually or with a small team of students.

## When is it inappropriate to submit a project to the Capstones Portal?

Capstone projects are not intended to just be a source of staff augmentation or free labor for MITRE efforts, such as MIPs, but should instead be standalone projects where MITRE employees act as a technical advisor to the student(s) working on the capstone project.

## When would I consider using the capstones portal?

The capstones portal enables MITRE employees to submit capstone project ideas for university students to review and potentially execute. University students can view submitted capstone projects, evaluate relevant project information, and initiate direct communication with the MITRE points of contact for projects that align with their interests. If a MITRE employee already knows which university or college that they want to work with, it generally makes more sense to coordinate directly with a POC from that university or college.

## What is the commitment from MITRE employees?

After submitting a capstone project, the only commitment from the MITRE employee is a technical advisor for the student team working on the project. Unless there is explicit project funding for this time, the MITRE employee’s time commitment is done voluntarily. MITRE employees can use Civic Time (C Time) to cover time spent supporting a capstone project. Generally, capstone projects run for either one semester or two semesters.

## What is the expected timeline for a capstone project?

Capstone project timelines will vary among universities, but most capstone projects start in the Fall semester and run for one or two semesters. There are incremental checkpoints throughout the academic year.

## Are there deadlines associated with any steps in the process?

Generally, capstone project for Fall semester should be submitted by May. Projects for Spring semester should be submitted by November. However, deadlines will vary from university to university, so please feel free to submit projects at any point through the year.

## Are we engaging with undergraduate or graduate students?

The UIX program engages with the selected university’s proposed team which may include undergraduate students and graduate students. MITRE employees can specify any preference on whether to work with undergraduate and/or graduate students when submitting the capstones.

## Are the capstones only offered to students who are US citizens?

Within the project submission form, MITRE employees can specify whether their capstone project is limited to US citizens or not.

## What are the criteria for capstone projects to be selected?

All capstones are distributed to MITRE’s university partners. University students review and select projects that look interesting and align with their university’s capstone requirements.

## What do I do if my project is selected?

If a project is selected by a university team for execution, the MITRE employee coordinates directly with the university team to determine logistics like project timeline, meeting cadence, and so on. If there is funding exchanged between MITRE and the university, then the MITRE employee should coordinate directly with the Subcontracts office (FJ: [Subcontracts](https://communityshare.mitre.org/sites/Contracts/Pages/Subcontracts.aspxhttps%3A/communityshare.mitre.org/sites/Contracts/Pages/Subcontracts.aspx)).

## What is the scope of the capstone project? Are there required deliverables?

The capstone project can address any domain where the MITRE employee and university students have shared interest (e.g., cyber, AI/ML, healthcare). There are no formal deliverables required from MITRE, but universities may have their own requirements for the capstone project, potentially including required deliverables.

# Working University Innovation Exchange (UIX) Partners

## Which schools are part of the UIX?

Our current UIX partners are:

* Christopher Newport University (CNU)
* George Mason University (GMU)
* James Madison University (JMU)
* Norfolk State University (NSU)
* Old Dominion University (ODU)
* University of Virginia (UVA)
* Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU)
* Virginia Tech (VT)
* Virginia State University (VSU)
* William and Mary (W&M)

## What are the benefits of working with UIX partners?

The most substantial benefit of working with UIX partners is that, if there is any funding for a capstone, the UIX Master Agreement and existing NDAs will expedite contract negotiations with these universities. Additionally, MITRE has strong existing relationships with these universities and have established mechanisms for distributing capstones within each of these universities.

## What is the purpose and scope of the UIX Master Agreement?

The UIX Master Agreement acts as an umbrella subcontract agreement with an overarching set of terms and conditions that apply to engagements with the universities on both direct and indirect projects. By having a negotiated and established common set of terms and conditions, the focus is on the relationship with the university and the work, with the expectation that the contracting process timeline is reduced.

# Contracting Process

## When would I need a contract?

MITRE only needs to write a contract if there are funds exchanged between MITRE and the relevant university. Unfunded capstones will not require any formal contractual agreement.

## If I have funds available, how do I fund a capstone?

MITRE can fund capstones with either direct or indirect funds. However, many capstone projects do not require funding and provide students university credit instead of pay.

## What are the steps in the process for engaging contract negotiations with a university?

There are many ways to engage a university.

* For direct and indirect projects:
* Identify a need/requirement.
* Generate a Statement of Work (SOW) and budget for university support.
* Request and obtain budget from the university.
* Complete a Services Purchase Requisition (SPR).

## How do I write a statement of work (SOW)?

A SOW should clearly describe the objective for the services, task requirements, deliverables, and schedule. For a template, FJ: [Subcontracts](https://communityshare.mitre.org/sites/Contracts/Pages/Subcontracts.aspxhttps%3A/communityshare.mitre.org/sites/Contracts/Pages/Subcontracts.aspx).

## How do I fill out a service purchase requisition (SPR)?

FJ: [SPR](https://communityshare.mitre.org/sites/SPR/SitePages/Home.aspx). Look at the Quick Reference Guide.

## What is the invoicing submission and review process?

Invoices should be submitted in accordance with to the UIX Master Agreement terms. The Project Leader is responsible for reviewing and approving the invoice. For more details, FJ: [Subcontracts](https://communityshare.mitre.org/sites/Contracts/Pages/Subcontracts.aspxhttps%3A/communityshare.mitre.org/sites/Contracts/Pages/Subcontracts.aspx).

## What are the contract types are allowed?

Universities will propose either Firm Fixed Price (FFP) or Cost Reimbursement (CR).

## What amount of negotiating is anticipated?

No negotiation is anticipated for the UIX Master Agreement, which is relevant to all UIX partners. Negotiations will occur when developing and agreeing to the SOW requirements and budget/cost.

For non-UIX partners (i.e., universities outside of Virginia), negotiations will vary from university to university. We encourage all MITRE point of contacts (POCs) to utilize the UIX Master Agreement as a baseline for contract negotiations.

# Other Contract Provisions

## Can the university’s effort ever count towards STE (Staff Years of Technical Effort)?

No, university efforts do not count towards STE.

## Can a faculty member work with MITRE as a consultant?

If you are seeking the support of a specific faculty member, the services of that individual may be provided under the UIX Master Agreement by the university. Alternatively, the faculty member’s employment with the university may allow him/her to contract directly with MITRE as an independent consultant.

## What contract provisions should the Project Leader be aware of?

The Project Leader is responsible for ensuring the SOW is clear, understandable, and accurate with respect to services to be performed by the university and deliverables. As with all subcontracting, the Project Leader needs to be aware of and understand MITRE’s expectations with respect to publishing, intellectual property, and export control as related to the SOW.

## How is intellectual property (IP) handled under the UIX Master Agreement?

For direct projects, Intellectual Property (IP) is governed by the applicable Prime Contract FAR/DFAR clauses.

For indirect projects, each party retains the IP it develops independently, and IP developed collaboratively by MITRE and the university is jointly owned by the parties. For IP solely developed by the university, MITRE and the government, receive certain rights.

# Points of Contacts and References

## Who is the primary POC for the capstones portal?

Please contact capstones@mitre.org for all capstones-related questions.

## Who is the primary POC to negotiate and issue task orders?

The Subcontracts Office is responsible for contract negotiations and issuance of task orders.

## When should I alert the Subcontracts Office when considering engaging with a university on a project?

As early in the process as possible. The more advanced notice, the better, but at a minimum, as soon as a budget and requirements are being contemplated.

## Can I request a copy of the UIX Master Agreement?

A copy of the SOW, and as appropriate, sections of the agreement associated with Project Leader’s/Task Leader’s responsibilities may be provided by the Subcontracts Office.