

Human-Computer Interaction Institute
School of Computer Science
Carnegie Mellon University
5000 Forbes Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213-3891

412 268 1266 FAX
www.hcii.cmu.edu
HCI@cs.cmu.edu

If you have a potential project or would like more information, please contact the

Graduate Program Coordinator-Masters
Human-Computer Interaction Institute
Carnegie Mellon University
300 S. Craig Street, Suite 221
Pittsburgh, PA 15213

412 268 7971
412 268 1266 FAX
hciimasters@cs.cmu.edu

More information about the project course, including the list of all of the past sponsors and a promotion video, is available at:

<http://www.hcii.cs.cmu.edu/M-HCI/>

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**We are looking
for companies
to sponsor our
Human-Computer
Interaction Masters
Project course
starting in
January of
each year.**

• **Human-
Computer
Interaction
Institute**

Become a sponsor

About the HCII Masters Project

In the HCII Masters Project Course, a team of students design, prototype and test an idea proposed by the sponsor, to investigate, refine and verify concepts for new products and services. Past sponsors have included large high-tech firms as well as start-ups, manufacturing companies, companies in the service sector and government agencies. The course is designed to provide the students with real-world experience, while integrating everything they have learned into an "end-to-end" practical project.

The project runs from January to August each year. It is the required capstone course for all Masters students. Two faculty members supervise the project teams and meet with them weekly.

Students work in interdisciplinary teams, typically of five students whose first degrees are in Computer Science, Psychology, Design, and other related disciplines. The team members work on the project part time in the spring and full time over the summer, totaling approximately 700 hours per student—more than 1.5 person-years of work from a team of five students. At the end of the project, the team produces a working prototype for the sponsor that serves as a proof of concept of the service or product idea.

Project Process and Timeline

The project itself is structured to cover a complete product design and build cycle. In the first few months of the project, students conduct user research and brainstorm product ideas. The user-research phase begins with students conducting contextual inquiries and background research to understand the nature and needs of users and the tasks relevant to their problem. Based on that understanding, students go through an innovation phase, producing product ideas to meet the identified needs. With strong sponsor input, they narrow down their ideas and select one or more to pursue further.

Then, over the summer, students engage in multiple cycles where they produce prototypes with increasing fidelity and analyze and test them with users to improve the design. By the end of the summer, product prototypes are well refined and adapted to user needs.

Sponsor Involvement

Both the sponsor and students gain the most benefit from projects with strong sponsor involvement. Successful projects have weekly conference calls between the sponsors and student teams along with frequent email contact.

Sponsors normally make three visits to meet with their team. The first is a January kickoff session, where sponsors introduce their company and its business goals and introduce the project and define requirements. The second typically comes in May at the end of the background research and idea generation phases, where students present 5-6 product designs, and sponsors select the most promising ones for students to develop over the summer. At the final meeting in August, students present the results of their product prototype along with evidence of usefulness, usability, and desirability.

Sponsor Commitment

To support the project we ask sponsors for a donation. A consulting firm that charges \$100/hour would cost more than \$300,000 for a project of this scope. The project sponsorship is typically structured as a gift to the HCI Institute to support education.

For an extra cost, we can work out a project sponsorship contract, which can provide the sponsor with exclusive rights to any intellectual property developed. Many sponsors dispense with an IP agreement, however, since the results are uniquely adapted to their needs and not easily appropriated by others. Students post a summary of their work on a public website, but the content of the report must meet the sponsor's approval. We are happy to work with sponsors regarding any IP concerns. Project teams, for example, can sign nondisclosure agreements and withhold public presentations until patents have been filed.



Sponsors receive user research, product design and prototyping services from an interdisciplinary team of HCII Masters students whose backgrounds include Computer Science, Psychology, and Design, as well as other disciplines.

