

Embedding a Focus on Communication Skills Throughout the Online Project Management Graduate Curriculum at Western Carolina University

GAC Academic Forum

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University of North Carolina System





Graduate PM Programs at Western

- **Masters of Project Management (MPM)**
 - Accredited by PMI in 1983
 - Initially a campus-based program with an international focus through partnerships with Dutch and French institutions
 - Internet and web-based technology had reached a level where it was possible to offer a rigorous master's degree online
 - Transition to web-based delivery occurred in 1998 – team of content and design experts from College of Business created scope and sequence of curriculum
 - First cohort of students to earn their degrees fully online graduated in August 2002.

Curriculum – MPM Program

- **Six core courses (each 6 credits for 15 weeks)**
 - Project Management Systems
 - Project Plan Development
 - Project Plan Analysis & Approval
 - Project Implementation: Policies and Procedures
 - Project Implementation: Monitoring and Production
 - Project Completion and Professional Evolution (including special topics paper and project management manual)
- **One course taken each 15 week trimester for two years**
 - Build a professional library
- **Program designed for students with project management experience**



Graduate PM Programs at Western

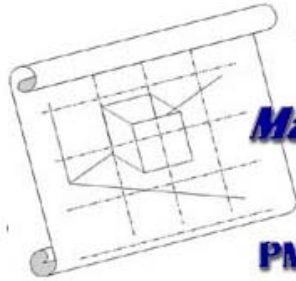
- **Graduate Certificate in Project Management**
 - Four three-credit courses offered as electives to existing graduate students and as a separate certificate program for anyone wanting to enroll in just that program
 - Introduction to Professional Project Management
 - Life Cycle of Successful Projects
 - Project Teams: Tools and Techniques for Global Collaboration
 - The Art and Science of Project Planning
 - No project management experience required
 - Students completing all four courses can transfer to the MPM program and start with the third course

Communication Structure Embedded in Each Course

- Delivered totally online using Blackboard Vista and Wimba technology
- Emphasis on both synchronous and asynchronous collaboration
- Weekly assignments require active (almost daily) student interaction with the virtual learning environment
- Many instructors hold weekly audio chat sessions with the entire class
- Majority of assignments include a team component
 - Each team has a private team audio chat room
 - Each team has a private working discussion forum and a finished work discussion forum where the final versions of team assignments are posted

Communication Structure Embedded in Each Course

- With most team assignments, teams submit a process statement describing how they completed the assignment and what their lessons learned were for that assignment
- Between 15-20 percent of a student's grade for each course is based on their participation
- Each course includes a confidential evaluation of student participation by all members of the team
- The instructor makes an independent evaluation of each student's participation



WESTERN Master of Project Management CAROLINA UNIVERSITY PM650 Project Management Systems

Contact Information

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Lessons



Mail



Discussions



Text Chat



Calendar



Research Links



PMBOK



StudentPresentations



Course Audio Chat



Professor's Homepage



Team A Audio Chat
(Conditional)



Team B Audio Chat
(Conditional)



Team C Audio Chat
(Conditional)



Team D Audio Chat
(Conditional)



Team E Audio Chat
(Conditional)

Weekly Lessons

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1.1. Dr. Vittal Anantatmula's Home Page

▼ 2. PM650 Course Description

2.1. Academic Integrity Policy

2.2. Course Description

▼ 3. Lesson 1: Introductions

3.1. Lesson 1 Notes and Assignments

3.2. Personal Information Form

3.3. Create a Web Page in Mozilla Composer

3.4. Create a Web Page in Netscape Composer

▼ 4. Lesson 2: Project Management Context

4.1. Lesson 2 Notes and Assignments

4.2. Basic Concepts

4.3. Team Assignments

Asynchronous Collaboration

Discussions

[Compose message](#) | [Topic settings](#)

Click on a topic name to see its messages.

Topic	Unread	Total	Status
Course Announcements	2	23	public, unlocked
Raising Your Hand	0	101	public, unlocked
Good Examples of Submitted Assignments	0	0	public, unlocked
Arthur Stanwood	0	2	private, unlocked
Bobbie Shrivastav	0	2	private, unlocked
Bradley Williams	0	1	private, unlocked
Dana Rice	0	5	private, unlocked
Derek Stenner	0	1	private, unlocked
Joseph Suprick	0	2	private, unlocked
Perry McFall	0	1	private, unlocked
Robert Griffin	0	1	private, unlocked
Sanjiva Bhargava	0	1	private, unlocked
Seth Hopkins	0	0	private, unlocked
Tori Williams Reid	0	2	private, unlocked
Wagner Parente	0	5	private, unlocked
Wendy Anderson	0	0	private, unlocked
Yee Yang	0	1	private, unlocked
Brian Hernel	0	4	private, unlocked
David Pepsny	0	3	private, unlocked
Dhiman Bose	0	0	private, unlocked
Garrett Smith	0	2	private, unlocked
Jack Morgan	0	1	private, unlocked
Jennifer Johnson	0	0	private, unlocked
John Roberts	0	2	private, unlocked
Joseph Schnople	0	1	private, unlocked

Team A Work Forum	2	6	private, unlocked
Team A Finished Work Forum	0	0	private, unlocked
Team B Work Forum	6	7	private, unlocked
Team B Finished Work Forum	0	0	private, unlocked
Team C Work Forum	1	2	private, unlocked
Team C Finished Work Forum	0	0	private, unlocked
Team D Work Forum	1	4	private, unlocked
Team D Finished Work Forum	0	0	private, unlocked
Team E Work Forum	0	1	private, unlocked
Team E Finished Work Forum	0	0	private, unlocked
All	12	191	---

Synchronous Collaboration

The screenshot displays the Wimba Voice Direct interface. At the top left, the logo and text "Wimba Voice Direct" are visible. In the top right corner, there are three icons: a document with a lock, a document with a checkmark, and a document with a plus sign. Below these icons is the text "Archives Options".

The main content area is split into two columns. The left column contains a welcome message:

*Welcome Jeanne Dorle
Only one person can talk at a time
Click on the hand to request the microphone
You can also press the Control Key
(If the Control Key does not work, click on the applet once)
This conference is being archived*

The right column contains the name "Jeanne Dorle".

At the bottom of the interface, there is a control bar. On the left is a hand icon in a circle. In the center, the text "Click the hand to speak" is displayed above a yellow horizontal bar. On the right is a circular icon with a plus sign.

At the bottom right of the interface, the text "powered by Horizon Wimba" is visible.

Additional Focus on Communication in the MPM Curriculum

- Cohort-based structure of MPM Program creates unique opportunities to focus on the importance of effective communication on project teams
 - Students are assigned to the same team for two courses (30 weeks)
 - Teams are reconfigured three times during the two-year program
 - Students really get to know each other and by the end of the program have worked with everyone in the cohort
 - During the fourth course we do some extensive work examining thinking styles and problem solving styles using the Herman Brain Dominance Inventory (HBDI) and the Kirton Adaptive Innovative Inventory (KAI)

Additional Focus on Communication in the MPM Curriculum

- During their last (sixth) course, students are required to create a Project Management Manual for their organizations which reflects what they have learned throughout the entire program.
- As part of this assignment, they are also required to present their recommendation of this manual to an executive committee (MPM faculty) using the course audio chat room.
- For the presentation, the focus is on effective communication to senior management as well as on a demonstration of comfort with the virtual environment.

Questions and Follow-Up

- Questions and Comments
- For addition information contact Jeanne Dorle at jdorle@email.wcu.edu or 828-227-3603
- Thanks for your interest!