Bren School Request for Group Project Proposals

The Bren School of Environmental Science and Management at the University of California, Santa Barbara seeks Group Project proposals for the 2003-2005 MESM class. The Group Project serves as the thesis for all Bren School Master’s-level graduate students. The projects will be carried out from April 2004 to March 2005.

Group Project Objectives

The goals of the Group Project are to provide students with training and experience in multidisciplinary environmental problem solving, in preparation for professional careers; and to provide a mechanism for students to learn important management skills, such as working as a team, developing leadership skills, managing time and financial resources, organizing, negotiating, etc.

Desirable Group Project Attributes

Appropriate topics are real and current environmental problems, which require significant analysis to provide a recommendation to the “end customer”, which might be a private firm, a government agency, a non-governmental organization, or a combination of interested parties. Projects should involve quantitative analysis and scientific investigation in order to reach a policy and/or management recommendation. It is important to keep the scope realistic: projects should be manageable for a group of 4-5 Master’s-level students, working 25% of their time during the three academic quarters (9 months), and with a very limited budget. Projects that require a completion date well before March 2005 are less desirable.

Proposals designed to investigate or expand knowledge of an environmental issue are appropriate if they are multidisciplinary (i.e. they include both science and management aspects) and have a clear problem-oriented objective. Proposals that are mainly designed to collect information without a problem orientation are undesirable. Projects must be justified on their own merits, not as part of a larger project, unless the objectives are clear and meet the other characteristics of a project (e.g. have a defined problem, science and management aspects, will reach conclusions and will deliver a recommendation to the client).

Projects whose main purpose is model construction or data set development (e.g. collect data into a GIS or database) are not appropriate, though such work may be part of the project. Extensive data collection is generally time and resource intensive and thus is difficult for a group project to undertake, making this less desirable. Proposals identifying an existing dataset needing analysis and some complementary work are much more appropriate, if a policy recommendation is the outcome.

Although it is useful to have some external funding for the project, either for partial internships during the summer or for supplies, sampling and analysis, or other requirements, this is not the most important factor in the project selection process. However, if the proposal clearly requires substantial resources, a commitment from an identified client will increase the probability that it will be chosen.

Proposers MUST contact a Bren School faculty member to serve as a sponsor early in the proposal preparation process. Refer to http://www.bren.ucsb.edu for information on the faculty. Proposals without a faculty sponsor will not be considered in the review process. A faculty member might receive several inquiries and may help in the development of more than one proposal. Up to two faculty can work on a proposal, but due to limited faculty resources there might be some reassignment of projects after the selection process. The Proposal Selection
Committee will evaluate the proposals and will determine those that have a higher probability of success based on the criteria indicated below.

Proposal Format

Proposals for projects are due by January 16, 2004 and are limited to three pages (excluding references). Refer to the sample proposal on the website (http://www.bren.ucsb.edu/research/gp_files/Sample_Proposal_02.pdf) for an example from a previous year. Current proposals must follow this format:

1. Title, descriptive of the environmental science and management problem to be solved.

2. Name and contact info (email, phone) of the proposer(s). Only two Bren student proposers may be listed, unless the students have obtained prior permission of the Group Projects Faculty Supervisor.

3. Bren Faculty Sponsor(s). No more than two faculty members. They must have participated in the development of the proposal.

4. Proposed Project
   A. Problem Statement. What is the context for this work?
   B. Project Objectives. What questions need to be answered by this project? Are there clear science and management questions?
   C. Project Significance. Why is this work important? Who is the target audience/client?
   D. Background information. Where is the project location (if applicable)? In general, how did the problem evolve? What has been done to date, if known?
   E. Stakeholders, other than the client. Who are other people who would be benefited or affected by the results of this work?
   F. Possible approach and available data. This should be concise and not overly restraining, simply providing general guidance. One of the tasks for the group project participants is to decide how best to meet the project objectives and develop their own approach. If data sets are available, it is very useful to identify them here, to increase likelihood of approval.
   G. Deliverables. What types of recommendations do you expect to have as an outcome from the project at its conclusion? Are there specific products that you expect to have at the end of the project, other than the final written report and oral presentation?
   I. References.

5. Client, including name and email (or phone) of contact person. We might need to contact the client to clarify general expectations and level of support.

6. Anticipated Financial Needs and Sources of Support. Indicate expectations with respect to financial needs, and any support commitments that exist or are very likely. A letter of support from identified clients increases the likelihood of approval. The letter of support does not count towards the 3-page limit.
**Project Selection Criteria**

Up to 12 Group Projects will be undertaken in 2003-2005. Criteria used to select projects include:

- Extent to which project represents a real environmental problem that requires a solution from the group project.
- Extent to which the project has clear science and management questions.
- Extent to which the project matches expertise and capabilities of Bren School students and faculty. Refer to [http://www.bren.ucsb.edu](http://www.bren.ucsb.edu) for information on the school and its faculty.
- Extent to which the anticipated financial needs of the project are met by external support.
- Extent to which scope of project is limited and feasible, given student experience and time availability.
- Extent to which logistics are practical. Projects that involve traveling large distances are less likely to be successful, given the limited resources (time and money).

**Selection Process**

All submissions will be reviewed by a selection committee composed of faculty and students. Anonymous reviews of the proposals will be solicited and used as input to the decision-making process. Proposers with promising projects may be asked to resubmit revised proposals as part of the selection process. Initial reviews will be completed by early February. Final selection will be made by late February. Students and faculty will then be informed of the projects that have been accepted and will be assigned based on expressed preferences (1st, 2nd, 3rd choice).

**Project Timeline**

Group projects occur mostly in three quarters (Spring, Fall, and Winter) spanning part of the students’ first year of their Masters’ program and their entire second year. The project might involve summer internships, usually for a small number of project participants (1-2).
Additional Information
Examples of final reports from completed projects are available at
http://www.bren.ucsb.edu/research/group_projects.asp.

Questions regarding Group Project goals or proposal preparation can be addressed to
the Group Project Coordinator (Jill Richardson, jrichardson@bren.ucsb.edu).

Submit proposals to:
Bren School of Environmental Science & Management
2516 Bren Hall
UC Santa Barbara, CA 93106-5131
Attn: Jill Richardson

Or email jrichardson@bren.ucsb.edu

(Electronic submissions are encouraged.)