

MASTER OF URBAN INNOVATION - CAPSTONE COURSE

OVERVIEW:

The Masters of Urban Innovation (MUI) is a 20-month professional masters' program for students interested in urban issues and economic development, offered through the University of Toronto Mississauga (UTM). Through the MUI program, students are trained to lead and manage innovative urban economic development initiatives. For more information on the program, and to view our student profiles, please visit our home page: <https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/mui/welcome-master-urban-innovation>

MUI's second intake of students are now entering the second year of their studies in September 2022, and a major component of their work this year will be to undertake a Capstone Project. These projects provide an opportunity for the students to apply their learning to a real world project, working with a project sponsor (or client) in an organization that can effectively engage their skills to create value for the sponsor organization and a practical learning experience for the students.

This is not an internship or a co-op placement. It is more akin to an unpaid consulting project team working toward the objectives of the sponsor client. This may include visits to the sponsor organization, but most of the work will be done remotely, and most meetings will also be done through Zoom or another video communication tool. Please note that all work is part of a full year course for which the students are receiving a full-year academic credit.

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION:

Working in groups of two or three students, under the supervision of a MUI faculty member, student teams will work from late September to early April on a project with the sponsor acting as a non-paying "client".

Initially, MUI faculty will work with potential sponsor organizations to identify appropriate Capstone Project opportunities that fit with the needs and interests of the sponsor organization, the time frames of the program (September to March/April), and the interests and capabilities of the students.

It is important that the projects provide real research, insights, and a final product (presentation deck and report) that is of value to the sponsor organization. This will ensure true engagement with the students. Student teams will be assigned to the identified projects based on their skills and interests.

PROJECT TIMING:

Once student teams are assigned to identified projects they will likely engage in an initial meeting with the client/sponsor (or an alternative method) to ask questions and to understand the sponsor's needs and objectives.

In October, students will prepare and present a project proposal/scope of work to the sponsor for their input and approval. This will describe:

- the student teams' understanding of the sponsor's objectives for the project
- the scope of work for the project
- the project methodology and work phases
- timing of key milestones and deliverables
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The sponsor then has an opportunity to make adjustments or provide feedback to the student teams, which will be reflected in a final version of the proposal to be agreed by the student team and the sponsor organization in early/mid-October.

Through the remainder of the first semester the student teams will undertake Phase One research and analysis as agreed in the proposal, resulting in an interim report/presentation in December/January.

Based on sponsor feedback from the interim report/presentation, the student teams will engage in further research and analysis, focusing on the development of a set of recommendations, and/or action plan (as agreed in the proposal).

A draft final report/presentation will be submitted to the sponsor in March. Incorporating sponsor feedback, the student teams will then deliver a final report and presentation to the sponsor client by mid- April.

APPROPRIATE PROJECTS:

Please note that the students are unpaid, and are in training to be professionals in innovative urban development. While they will be working under the supervision of the Capstone faculty (who are experienced as consultants), it is important to remember that the students are not professional consultants. These teams should not be engaged as a substitute for a professional consultancy.

They also do not have a budget for transportation, field work, or access to paid data bases, although they do have access to resources through the University of Toronto Library system and the MUI faculty.

The projects most likely to produce the best outcome for sponsors and student teams would involve:

- projects that are meaningful for the sponsors, but are not mission critical
- projects that fit within the project timing as described above
- projects that primarily require literature scans, desk and/or telephone research, review of best practices, analysis, assessment of options, and a set of final recommendations, and an action plan or outline of recommended next steps.

BENEFITS TO YOUR ORGANIZATION

The desired benefits to the sponsor organizations are as follows:

- exposure to/engagement with students who may be potential employees or collaborators in the future.
- no cost/very low cost research and analysis for a discrete issue/assignment.
- insights and ideas from a student team which can provide an external perspective based on the latest knowledge of urban innovation and development issues and best practices. research and analytic skills commensurate with second year professional-track masters students in a top tier university

HOST TESTIMONIALS

"We are very pleased with the work that was completed by the students, as it is comparable to other works we have had completed by consultants in the industry. This project is one of the many action items noted in our Economic Development Action Plan 2021-2025, and its completion is instrumental in achieving our departmental goals.

I would highly recommend this program to other economic development organizations or anyone in municipal government who is tasked with seeking innovative solutions to community challenges." **City of Hamilton**

"Throughout the process they were extremely professional and treated me and the broader team like a real client. I would highly recommend this to other sponsors/clients and would be happy to serve as a reference." **University of Toronto**

For more information:

Ian Bromley, Capstone Instructor,

Master of Urban Innovation

ian.bromley@utoronto.ca