LIS590MGL – Project Management for LIS
Requirements for the Student Paper

Subject

The subject of your paper should be a recent project (underway or completed within the last year) that you are not managing yourself. Since you will be interviewing the project manager, you should pick a project where you can get access to the project manager. This may be easiest if the project is within an organization with which you are already associated. But, if you are persuasive, you can probably talk your way into an opportunity to speak with a project manager in almost any organization. People in the LIS community are usually very helpful to LIS students. I recommend that you use this to your advantage.

Ideally, you should pick a project in which you have strong interest. This might be the type of project that you see yourself managing very soon. Or, perhaps this is the kind of project that you hope to manage in a few years. Maybe it is the type of project that you are already managing. In any case, the more interest you have in the project the more rewarding this exercise will be. That said, I want to emphasize that the project need not be related to LIS. For instance, it could be a project to design and build a single family home.

Focus

During our course, we will be learning about a large number of formal project management tools and techniques. Except in the very largest of projects, it is not appropriate to apply all of these tools and techniques to each project. Also, organizations that have been managing their projects informally can only digest the introduction of so many new formal tools and techniques on each project. The project manager is left with the decision of choosing which parts of formal project management they will employ on each new project. There is an art to doing this well and new project managers often struggle with these choices. My goal for you is that when you finish your work on this paper that you will have a realistic idea of which of the formal project management tools and techniques that you would employ on the next project that you manage. So, when that project comes, you will not forsake all that you have learned in this course, and you will not be paralyzed with having to make too many decisions that you have not already considered. You will be ready to get organized and get started.

The first part of your paper (Project Manager Report) will be a report on the experience of the project manager in making choices of formal tools and techniques for the subject project:

- What project management approach was taken? Agile? Traditional? A combination?
- Which formal tools and techniques were chosen?
- Were others not chosen for a particular reason? Or, was the project manager not familiar with that tool or technique?
- Now that the project is underway (or complete), how does the project manager feel about the tools and techniques chosen? Would they make different choices given their experience on the project?

- What level of success has the project achieved in terms of scope, time, cost, and quality? Does the project manager feel that any of the formal tools and techniques that were used had a significant impact on these measures of success? If so, which and how?
- Is there any tool or technique in which the project manager has lost interest due to their experience on this project? If so, which and why?

This portion of your paper should be a report of the experience of the project manager as told by you. It should not editorialize. Nor should it be a critique. Just include the facts and insights that you get from the project manager.

The second part of your paper (Student Insights) will be a discussion of how you might make choices differently should you be assigned a project of similar character and dimensions to be carried out in the kind of organization in which you expect to be working. Some of the differences will come from insights that the project manager has shared with you – these are things that the project manager would also do differently. But, others will be due to your individual point of view:

- You may be aware of more tools and techniques by having taken this course.
- You may be more comfortable (or less comfortable) with a particular tool or technique based upon your own character or capabilities.
- You may be more comfortable (or less comfortable) with a particular tool or technique based upon the character of organization in which you plan to work.
- You may be more convinced (or less convinced) of the power of formal project management.

In any case, the goal of this portion of the paper is not to critique the efforts of the project manager that you interviewed. You will find that it is often easy to be critical when you have the benefit of hindsight. Rather, the goal is to be insightful about the choices that you will make on your next project.

Methodology
Your research work for this paper is made more difficult by the fact that you will be learning about formal project management at the same time that you will be doing the research. If your only interview with the project manager is at the very beginning of the course, you will not know enough to ask the right questions. If you wait until the very end of the course to speak with the project manager, you will not have enough time to write the paper.

My suggestion is that you spend the time at the beginning of the course identifying the project and arranging access to the project manager. By that time that you have accomplished this, you will probably be ready for your first interview. In this interview, you can concentrate on asking mostly open-ended questions that will give the project manager a chance to share their point of view on the project. You can formulate quite a few useful questions of this type without having mastered all of the course knowledge yet.

At some time closer to the end of the course, when you have a better knowledge of formal project management, conduct a follow-up interview with the project manager. This will give you the opportunity to ask more closed-ended follow-up questions like "I

notice that you didn't use such and such technique, can you tell me why"? At this point, you might already have some ideas of your own about things that you might want to use on this type of project that this project manager did not use. You could pose a question like: "I was thinking that when I do a project like this that I might try such and such a tool. Do you think I'm being realistic"? Ideally, by the time that you get finished interviewing the project manager, you will have received quite a bit of value from their experience.

Organization
Your paper should be organized according to the following outline:

1. Project Manager Report
    a. Project Description
    b. Description of the Project Management Approach (agile, traditional, combination)
    c. Usage of Formal Project Management Tools & Techniques

2. Student Insights
    a. Expected Project Description
    b. Description of the Project Management Approach (agile, traditional, combination)
    c. Expected Usage of Formal Project Management Tools & Techniques

Please be sure to use this exact outline when writing your paper, taking care to put the name of each section into **bold type**. Some substantial number of points will be allocated to this issue in the grading rubric for this assignment. This is because a fixed outline makes it easier for me to write comments regarding your paper while grading that you can easily associate with a particular section of your paper.

Both of your main sections will include a project description. In the Project Manager Report section, you will be describing the actual project. In the Student Insights section, you will be describing the type of project that you expect to manage and how it might be different from the subject project.

Likewise, both of your main sections will include a discussion of the usage of formal project management tools and techniques. In the Project Manager Report section, you will be describing the formal project management tools and techniques used in the subject project. In the Student Insights section, you will be describing the formal project management tools and techniques that you expect to employ on a project and how they might be different from those used on the subject project. I suggest that you use the table of contents of the Schwalbe book as a checklist when writing this portion. I will be using a similar checklist when grading to see how many tools and techniques that we covered were included in your discussion.

Confidentiality
While the "research" that you will be doing for this paper does not fall under the formal requirements of the University Institutional Review Board (IRB), you should still take due care with information about the people and organizations involved in your subject project. It is probably best to not identify individuals by name. You may also want to describe the organization in general terms rather than identify it by name. Your papers will not be published. But, you will be sharing some parts of them with your classmates.

So, make sure that anything that should be confidential remains so. Also, it is probably wise to not include comments in your writing that could be taken as insults by people involved in the subject project. For instance, you do not want to write that "the people on the project were slugs and they didn't put in a decent day of work during the whole project". Instead, it would be more appropriate to write "the project manager had concerns about the productivity of the project team that were never fully resolved".

Format
Your paper should be a typewritten single-spaced report that follows the outline described above. Citations are not required, especially for those ideas that originate from a textbook author (Schwalbe or Layton) or from the PMI Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK). Nevertheless, if you should mention a famous theory or approach (e.g., fishbone diagrams), please attribute the theory or approach to its originator (Ishikawa).

Your paper should be in Adobe PDF format. This applies to early versions of your paper posted for comments from your teammates as well as the final submission.

Length
You should expect to write approximately 6 to 8 pages of single spaced text. Papers will be graded based upon the number of relevant issues identified and how well each is discussed. If you can state your case succinctly, it will be all the more powerful.

Sharing and Commenting Within Groups
A forum will be created in our Moodle course space shortly that can be used for posting drafts of your papers as a work in progress to be shared with other members of your group. Each student is expected to post their work in progress to the forum and to comment on work posted by other members of their group.

Submission
Please see the Weekly Schedule for the due date and time. There will be a Moodle submission activity created for this submission. Please see the Weekly Schedule for the activity name.

The file that you submit should be named according to the following scheme:

paper_yourLastName_yourFirstName.PDF

So, if I were to submit a paper in my own name, I would name the file:

paper_trainor_kevin.pdf