

# Luke Van Leeuwen - Team Pitstop

Self-reflection narrative after the in-class Team Pitstop activity

As part of the Wheelers Design team, Antony Saleh, Connor Gumbs, Hongyu Guo, and I are working on designing and creating a solution for our client's problem. Our client Rice Robotics needs a set of 6 wheels for their mock Mars Rover for the University Rover Challenge (URC) competition. Our group comes from varied backgrounds. Academically, we have two mechanical engineers, an electrical engineer, and an Operations research major. The other members of the team are all freshmen, while I am a sophomore. This combination of backgrounds has equipped our team well for producing a satisfactory solution for our client. The four of us represent a diverse range of cultures, having an international student from China, one from Palestine, and two U.S. natives from Texas and Florida. Our team's values are equality, communication, and responsibility.

Our pit stop was productive, as our problem situations and the action plans we created from those situations were agreed upon. We all participated in recognizing our shortcomings and worked well together to develop what we believe to be effective action plans. To start, we decided that our communication had been lacking in two situations. First, we had struggled to find meeting times that worked for all of us, or we weren't willing to make certain sacrifices to be able to make meetings. We agreed on finding and setting a fixed meeting time every week instead of our previous flexible scheduling. This way, we know to plan things at a set time so that we are all free to meet for an hour at least once a week. Second, we agreed that we had not been communicating with each other on developments in our work. This has caused wasted time and inefficiency as some parts of our work have relied on the prior work of others in our team. Additionally, this has caused further problems when members of the team are proceeding on their work, which has caused others to have to wait even longer to do the work that builds on that. We agreed to fix this by updating each other as we finish each task in our work that we have delegated among ourselves, and we have set an earlier deadline over the weekends for all of our work to be completed by, so that if anything comes up or if any proofreading needs to be done, we have the time to do so. Next, we recognized a situation that we feel is hampering our overall

collaboration with each other; we feel that we aren't bonded enough. Given that our group can be more on the introverted side, this has been a fever idea to us in our recent brainstorming sessions. A lack of familiarity has also caused less empathy, which we fear may cause problems down the line as work and stress ramp up. We agreed to try and schedule in some bonding sessions or hangouts at the recreation center or in Rice village to help build our relationships with each other.

All of us agreed on these goals and feel that as we implement them, we will see positive change among our team and positive benefits in our work. To add on to the positive momentum we built from this pitstop, I also set individual goals for myself. I set a smart goal, committing myself to hold a short 5-minute period before or after our writing mentor meetings, where I lay out the tasks and assignments that we have to get done before the next Sunday. This will help with task delegation and while also allowing us to visualize more how much time we need to put into our work that week. Additionally, I set a goal to try and mentor my freshman teammates more. Be it about classes, opportunities, or skills, I want to help them navigate their time at Rice as a freshman and help them acquire skills that could be beneficial to the design of our project, such as CAD skills or manufacturing skills. This will also enable us to all be able to add and implement our diverse ideas on the project since none of us will be held back by our knowledge limitations.



