

Connor Gumbs - Team Pitstop

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

Introduction

Our Rover Wheels group consists of four members, with diverse academic backgrounds and representing different parts of the world, bringing different experiences and perspectives. I am a freshman and was born and raised in Miami. I am in Jones College and plan to major in mathematical economic analysis. Luke, a sophomore from Texas, is studying mechanical engineering and is part of Duncan College. Antony is a freshman from McMurtry and is from Palestine, majoring in electrical engineering. The last member of our group, Hong, is a student at Sid Richardson College from China, majoring in mechanical engineering. Our team's international mix means that we each bring different cultural insights and approaches to challenges, which in turn helps us be more creative and well-rounded.

During our team pit stop, we identified scheduling, updating, and bonding as our core values. In our first and only non-academic meeting, we played squash at the rec center. It was the first time playing squash for most of the group, and it ended up being a really fun experience, giving us a chance to see another side of our team members beyond the classroom. We all agreed that having more of these events would be extremely beneficial. We believe it is important to see other sides of people you work with every day to develop empathy, become more open and relaxed, and ultimately create a better team dynamic. When we feel more comfortable around each other, we are also more likely to contribute ideas and voice our concerns. This is extremely important because our team's international mix means nothing if we all do not participate.

Another issue we discussed was scheduling meetings. Although we've had several, coordinating them has been challenging, and punctuality has occasionally been an issue. Improving our scheduling process by setting recurring meeting times or group reminders is a main goal for us. We also identified communication as an area for improvement, particularly in terms of keeping each other updated on task progress and completion. Since many parts of the EDP process are sequential, better communication will help us stay on track.

The first team pit stop gave us the opportunity to reflect on our current team dynamics. Set specific goals to strengthen team chemistry, increase productivity, and establish more consistent meeting times. Lastly, we want to continue to work on the things we do well as a team, especially as we progress through the solutions stage.

SMART Goals Action Plan

Criteria	Situation	Action Plan (SMART Goals)	Follow-up Plan
Scheduling	We have struggled to find a meeting time that works with all of our schedules, which has caused some setbacks.	Team: We will establish a recurring weekly meeting time by [specific date] using a scheduling poll, and all members will commit to blocking this time for the remainder of the semester.	After two weeks, we will evaluate meeting attendance rates/punctuality and adjust the time if fewer than all members can consistently attend.
Updating	We have not been updating each other on our progress consistently on our work, which has wasted time waiting on each other.	Team: We will post progress updates via our team group chat at least twice per week (every Monday and Friday by 5pm)	After three weeks, we will review whether updates are being posted on schedule and if team members feel better informed about project progress.
Bonding	We need to spend more time bonding with one another to create familiarity and comfortability so that we feel more safe in presenting ideas and solutions to each other.	Team: We will dedicate the first 10 minutes of each meeting to a team-building activity or casual check-in for the next four meetings.	After one month, we will discuss as a team whether we feel more comfortable sharing ideas and if we should continue this practice.
Team Communication	I sometimes stay quiet in meetings and miss chances to contribute ideas.	Individual: I will participate in every meeting by sharing at least one idea or comment.	After four meetings, I will reflect on whether I consistently contributed.
Organization	I tend to sit back instead of taking the initiative in group discussions	Individual: I will take on a leadership role at least once per week by guiding part of a meeting or task	In two weeks, I will check with my team to confirm they noticed my active leadership.

Reflection

The first team pit stop gave me a chance to reflect on both our strengths, weaknesses, and areas for growth as a group. As a team, we recognized that scheduling, updating, and bonding are values that we need to actively strengthen. By setting goals such as dedicating the first 10 minutes of each meeting to a team-building activity, posting progress updates on our group chat by a specific time, and establishing a recurring weekly meeting time using a scheduling poll. This will hold us accountable, help us continue to learn from each other and about one another, and, lastly, create consistency in how we work together.

For my individual role, I realized that I can contribute more in team meetings by being more engaged and proactive, rather than just being present and listening to my team members. My goal of participating more actively during team meetings and taking leadership roles during discussions will not only make me a stronger teammate but also bring a different perspective to the group, which is valuable since I am the only one not majoring in engineering. These actions ensure I input my unique perspective and that my voice is heard.

The positive impact of my individual plan is that our group discussions will become more balanced, with multiple voices contributing and leading at different times. I also hope to help guide our meetings in a clearer direction through structured discussion. To stay accountable, I will monitor my own participation and also check in with my teammates to see if they have noticed a change and whether they feel my leadership has been useful.

With the goals we established at both the team and individual levels, I believe we will continue to grow and become more efficient, even as the workload increases in the solutions stage, as we move forward with our task of creating a wheel for the Rice Robotics Club.