Project Overview and Instructions

A "coffee chat," in a professional context, is a short, informal informational interview. The goal is **not** to ask for a job, but to build a connection, learn from a professional's experience, and gather insights. For your project, this is your chance to ask questions about company culture, new technologies, and career paths in a low-pressure, conversational setting.

This is a *pair project* designed to build your professional outreach and networking skills. The project is divided into **three main steps**:

1. **Step 1: Professional Outreach:** You and your partner will identify and send a formal email request (using the guide below) to a professional in the CS field.
2. **Step 2: The Coffee Chat:** As a pair, you will conduct the 15-20 minute virtual interview, asking the questions you prepared.
3. **Step 3: Report & Share (Presentation):** You will then synthesize and report on what you learned from the interview in the presentation in ==*Week 15*==. ==**Submit step 1 and 2 of the project in Week 14.**==
4. **Submission Guidelines**
   - **Screenshot of the Email**
   - **Interview Video**
   - **Presentation Slides**

STEP 1: The CS Coffee Chat Outreach

As first-semester students, your greatest asset is your curiosity. This "email builder" will help you write a formal request that is humble, respectful, and highlights your eagerness to learn.

Email Format: A 4-Part Builder

Follow this structure. Do not just copy and paste; you must research the person to complete each section authentically.

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1. The Subject Line: Clear, Respectful, and Specific

The goal is to be immediately clear about who you are and why you're asking.

- **Option A (Alumni Focus):** [Your University] First-Year CS Students Seeking Advice
- **Option B (Curiosity Focus):** Career Exploration Inquiry from [Your University] Students

- **Option C (Direct Request):** Coffee Chat Request: First-Year [Your University] CS Students

2. The Opening: The 2-Sentence Hook

This is the most critical part. You must immediately establish **who you are** and **why you are emailing *them* specifically.**

- **Sentence 1 (Who you are):** "My name is [Your Name], and I am a **first-semester** Computer Science student at [Your University]."
- **Sentence 2 (The specific "why them" hook):** Be honest about your newness. This is your chance to show genuine curiosity.
  - **If they are an alum:** "...I found your profile on the [University Alumni Network / LinkedIn] and was really inspired to see an alum from our university working at [Their Company]."
  - **If you're curious about the company:** "...I am just beginning my CS journey and am exploring different career paths. [Company Name]'s work in [Specific Field, e.g., 'mobile development' or 'cybersecurity'] is a field I'm very curious about."
  - **If you're curious about their role:** "...As someone brand new to tech, your role as a [Their Job Title] seems incredibly interesting, and I would be grateful to learn what that work is really like."

3. The "Ask": Clear, Brief, and Respectful of Their Time

State your project's goal and make your request.

"My project partner and I are currently working on a university assignment to learn about different career paths from professionals in the field.

Would you be open to a brief, 15-20 minute virtual coffee chat in the coming weeks? We would be grateful for the chance to ask you a few questions about your experience and any advice you might have for students **just beginning** their CS journey."

4. The Closing: Professional and Thankful

Make it easy for them to say yes and show your gratitude.

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"We understand you have a very busy schedule, so we are flexible and happy to work around your availability.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best regards,

STEP 2: Conducting the Interview

Prepare for a professional virtual or on-site meeting.

A. The Settings

- **Virtual:** Be 1-2 mins early. Test your tech. Use a quiet, well-lit room with a clean background.
- **On-Site:** Arrive 5-10 mins early. Dress smart-casual (no t-shirts/ripped jeans). Silence phones. Offer to pay for their coffee (they will likely decline, but the offer is polite).

B. Recording & Consent (Mandatory)

You must record this interview. At the start of the chat, ask for permission.

> *"Thanks for meeting with us. For our university project, we're required to record this. Is it okay with you if we start recording?"*

Wait for "Yes" before recording (using a virtual recorder or a phone's voice memo app). If they say no, take detailed notes instead.

C. The Questions

- Requirement: Each student must ask at least 4 thoughtful questions.
- Coordination: Decide *who* asks *what* beforehand to look prepared.
- Listen: Ask natural follow-up questions. Don't just read your list.

D. Interview Question Bank (What to Ask)

Focus: Ask about their journey, the job, and their advice. Do not ask things you can Google. **Ask questions related to company culture, the career path and advice for new students.**

Step 3: The Presentation Guide

Goal: Professionally present your key findings in a 5-7 minute presentation. Both partners must speak.

Presentation & Slide Structure

Slide 1: Title Page

- **Content:** Project Title (e.g., "Coffee Chat with [Pro's Name]"), their Name, Title, & Company. Your names.
- **Speech:** Introduce your project, who you interviewed, and what you'll be covering.

Slide 2: The Professional

- **Content:** Brief bio of the professional (who they are, what they do). Why you chose them (e.g., "University Alum," "Works in AI").
- **Speech:** (Partner 1) Explain who you met and why they were an interesting choice. State when/where the interview happened (virtual/on-site).

Slide 3: Insights on Culture & The Role

- **Content:** 2-3 bullet points on their "day-to-day" work and the company culture (e.g., "Highly collaborative," "Fast-paced," "Good work-life balance").
- **Speech:** (Partner 1) Share what you learned about the job and the work environment. What surprised you?

Slide 4: Insights on Industry & Career Path

- **Content:** A key industry trend they mentioned (e.g., "Impact of AI"). A powerful quote or surprising fact from their career journey.
- **Speech:** (Partner 2) Share their perspective on the industry and one key moment or challenge from their career.

Slide 5: Key Advice for First-Year Students

- **Content:** The top 3 pieces of advice they gave you. Use clear, short keywords (e.g., "1. Master the Fundamentals," "2. Build Projects," "3. Get Involved in Clubs").
- **Speech:** (Partner 2) Clearly list and briefly explain the most valuable advice you received.

Slide 6: Conclusion

- **Content:** State your single biggest takeaway from the *entire* experience. "Thank You" & "Questions?"

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- **Speech:** (Partner 2) Deliver your concluding thought and open the floor for questions.

NOTE: STEP 1 & 2 carry 80 marks. Rubric for step 3 will be shared later.