The term project is a team assignment. The focus this term will be web-information-based competitive analysis. Working within the general area of interest defined for your team, choose a firm within that area. Imagine that you have been hired to review the firm's web site, as well as the web sites of its competitors. Prepare a thoroughgoing competitive analysis, identifying strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities for the firm. Begin with standard search engine work. Then go beyond search engines to obtain additional web content, utilizing focused web crawlers and text analytics as needed. Management recommendations should include specific information about how the firm's web site should be revised in order to respond to competitive threats. In addition to a final report at the end of Session 10, checkpoint assignments are due at the end of Sessions 2, 5, and 8.

Areas of Interest. There are eight possible areas of interest for this term: *Art and Music, Automobiles, Consumer Electronics, Finance and Investments, Food, Health and Fitness, Movies,* and *Sports.*

Session 1. Project Bid and Statement of Interest (10 points). The project bidding process utilizes a form available under Blackboard Assignments. Each student expresses his or her degree of interest in working on each of the possible term project topics. Ratings are obtained using a 100-point constant-sum scale. In particular, each student distributes 100 points across the possible research topic areas with no area receiving fewer than 5 points, with no area receiving more than 50 points, with no two areas receiving the same number of points, and with assigned points being integers.

Project Teams. At the beginning of Session 2, following the results of the bidding process, students are assigned to teams of three to five students to work on the term projects. Division of labor makes sense within teams. It may be good to organize around discrete tasks, such as programming, data acquisition, exploratory data analysis, model development, testing, project management, graphic arts, and report writing.

One student could serve as team project manager, watching over the project development process, submitting papers to Blackboard Assignments, and submitting project-specific queries to the team's Q&A thread under the Discussion Board in Blackboard. The team project manager also serves as the host of team-specific meetings. Various technologies may be used for collaboration, including Sync Sessions using Adobe Connect.

Session 2. Team Checkpoint A: Project Plan (30 points). The end of Session 2 marks the first term project checkpoint. The student team provides an introduction to the term project, including a plan for completing the project, a plan for communicating with one another about the project, and team member responsibilities. The deliverable at this and all subsequent checkpoints is a double-spaced paper with a two-page maximum, submitted in Adobe Acrobat pdf file format. One paper per team is posted to the designated Blackboard Assignments link.

Session 5. Team Checkpoint B: Review of Data and Methods (30 points). The end of session 5 marks the second term project checkpoint. The student team has identified a firm within the general area of interest of team members. The firm's major competitors have been identified. The team has begun its initial data acquisition and analysis. The team provides a description of the data and methods to be employed in completing the term project.

Session 8. Team Checkpoint C: Preliminary Report (30 points). The end of Session 8 marks the third and final project checkpoint. By this time the student team has completed its data acquisition and has carried out much, if not all, of its data gathering and analysis. The final report writing has begun. The team presents a short overview of its plan for the management report. An outline is sufficient.

Session 10 Final Term Project Report (200 points). The completed term project is due at the end of Session 10. The final report is submitted as a formal white paper or management report (not a slide presentation or executive overview). The final report is a team report, maximum ten pages in length (not including the reference list), double-spaced, accompanied by a zip archive file including all program code and output. The Report and supporting materials are posted both as Blackboard Assignments and as attachments to the team's thread under a special Blackboard forum for final reports. As a result of this posting, all students have the opportunity to view the research reports and accompanying materials of all teams.