



Law, Data & Design Lab

Vertically Integrated Project (VIP) Team



Instructor

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About VIP

The Vertically-Integrated Projects (VIP) Program operates in a research and development context. Students who join VIP teams earn academic credit for their participation in design/discovery efforts that assist faculty and graduate students¹ with research and development issues in their areas of expertise.

The teams are:

- Multidisciplinary - drawing students from all disciplines on campus;
- Vertically-integrated - maintaining a mix of sophomores through PhD students each semester;
- Long-term - each undergraduate student may participate in a project for up to three years and each graduate student may participate for the duration of their graduate career.

The continuity, technical depth, and disciplinary breadth of these teams are intended to:

- Provide the time and context necessary for students to learn and practice many different professional skills, make substantial contributions to the project, and experience many different roles on a large, multidisciplinary VIP team.
- Support long-term interaction between the graduate and undergraduate students on the team. The graduate students mentor the undergraduates as they work on VIP projects embedded in the graduate students' research.
- Enable the completion of large-scale projects that are of significant benefit to faculty members' research programs.

Learning Objectives

Through VIP students will:

- Learn and practice professional skills;
- Make substantial contributions to the team project;
- Experience different roles on a large, multidisciplinary team.

Law, Data & Design Lab Focus

The Law, Data & Design Lab (lawlab.gatech.edu) brings together researchers and students from across disciplines, including law, business, policy, design, and computer science, to work on research and applied projects with the goal of increasing fairness, efficiency, transparency, and access to justice in the civil and criminal legal systems in the United States and around the world.

Sub-Teams

The full VIP team will be split into sub-teams focused on particular projects. Each sub-team will have its own in-person meeting with Prof. Alexander each week. Students are responsible for participating in all team meetings. If you miss any meeting, you are responsible for knowing what occurred in that meeting, typically by discussing it with other team members. An excused absence does not relieve you of that responsibility.

¹ VIP students will have the opportunity to work with a variety of different people associated with Prof. Alexander's lab. This may include graduate students at Georgia Tech and other institutions, as well as affiliated faculty from Georgia Tech and other universities and outside companies and organizations that collaborate with the lab.

Attendance and Absences

Attendance is your responsibility, and repeat absences or failure to complete work will reduce your grade, either directly or by reducing your peers' evaluation of your work. If you need to miss meetings or cannot complete work due to an official Institute activity, extended illness, family emergency, or the like, please get Institute-level documentation or use the Class Absence Verification process administered by the Dean of Students' Office. The form to request a Class Absence Verification may be found here: <https://studentlife.gatech.edu/request-assistance>. Missed meetings or incomplete work due to religious observances, voting, jury duty, or any other reason listed in the Institute's attendance policy at <https://catalog.gatech.edu/rules/4/> should be handled according to the steps described in that policy.

Time Expectations

Time spent outside of class varies by the number of credit hours for which students register, which is similar to the ratio for traditional courses.

- Students who register for **1 credit hour** can expect to spend about **2-3 hours outside of class** working on their projects each week.
- Students who register for **2 credit hours** can expect to spend **4-6 hours outside of class** working on their projects each week.
- Students who register for **3 credit hours (1)** can expect to spend **7-9 hours outside of class** working on their projects each week OR **completing other TA requirements**.

Grading and Assessment

Your grade is based on three areas. Although each student contributes in different ways and with different time commitments, you must demonstrate achievements in all three areas below. Your final course grade is the only grade in the class. You will receive an advisory midterm performance assessment based on a review of your work to date, your self evaluation, and your peer evaluation results, to let you know where you stand.

1. Documentation (33%): **If it's not documented, you didn't do it!**
 - a. VIP notebook via Basecamp (required for all students; see below for more information and grading rubric);
 - b. Memoranda, reports, other documentation (depending on assignment)
 - c. Code via GT GitHub (depending on assignment)
2. Contributions (33%): **Should be well-documented (see #1 above)**
 - a. Engagement in project;
 - b. Pursuit of knowledge necessary for project;
 - c. Contributions to the technical progress of the team;
 - d. For more experienced members of the team, contributions to the management of the project may be expected.
3. Teamwork and Interaction (33%)
 - a. Midterm and final peer evaluations. Online evaluations will be administered at the middle and end of the semester. Failure to complete either peer evaluation will result in a full letter grade deduction (one deduction for each evaluation). Late submissions are not accepted.
 - b. On-time attendance in meetings;
 - c. Coordination of activities with other team members;
 - d. Collaboration with other team members;
 - e. Participation in and contribution to team presentation(s).

VIP Notebooks

Your "VIP notebook" contains the cumulative record of your work on the project, as well as your plans for future work. Historically, VIP students used a hard copy notebook that was turned into the instructor and graded. Instead, we will use weekly questions on Basecamp, an online project management platform. Regardless of its format, the purposes of the VIP notebook have not changed:

- Facilitate learning (organize thoughts, think about work, reflect)
- Documentation (document work, track progress, allow hand-off to future VIP students)
- Enable assessment (shows individual contributions and collaborations, tangible item to grade)

In Basecamp, you will be prompted each week with two questions. Write enough to make sure that a new team member could follow along. Feel free to paste in links, images, upload documents, etc. Be sure to set up your Basecamp notifications so that you do not receive everyone else's responses to the check-in questions. If you are writing a check-in response and need to flag it for another team member, tag them using the @ sign.

- What did you do this week on the project? Which of your to-do items from last week did you accomplish? For tasks that are still open, what is their status? If applicable, why didn't you make progress? What issues/limitations/challenges do you need to address?
- What do you plan to do in the coming week? What is your plan for executing your next steps/to-do items? **NOTE:** Do not leave each week's meeting without at least one clear task to accomplish by the next class meeting. If you are unclear about your task, ask Professor Alexander.

Notebooks will be evaluated according to the rubric below.

	Poor	Average	Exemplary
Documentation			
What was done each week	Very little explanation of work, progress or interactions/meeting notes for each week.	Adequate explanation of work, progress and interactions/meeting notes for each week. Someone knowledgeable/skilled in the field would be able to: - Understand decisions student made - Repeat what was done - Obtain the same result	Meets "Average" requirements AND includes reflections on: - What did/didn't work - Issues/ limitations/ challenges to be addressed
Plans and to-do items for coming week	Not consistently created each week.	Created each week. Someone knowledgeable/skilled in the field would be able to identify and carry out next steps/to-do items.	Meets "Average" requirements AND easy for reader to understand AND clear plan for executing next steps/to-do items.
Contributions			
<i>Given the student's experience, academic rank and number of credit hours</i>	Very few contributions OR the work was too simple OR the work did not advance the project or help the student gain skills that would advance the project.	Adequate contributions AND the work advanced the project and/or helped the student gain skills needed to advance the project.	Meets "Average" requirements AND contributions are outstanding OR clear evidence of leadership.

Card Table and Task Management

While your VIP notebook questions will track your weekly work as an individual contributor, we will use a standardized task management workflow using Basecamp's Card Table functionality. All team members are expected to be familiar with the workflow and actively engage with the Card Table.

Academic Honesty

The main principle in VIP academic honesty is that you will not present someone else's work as your own. Specific assignments, e.g. presentations and documentation, must be your own work. For other work you are encouraged to consult whatever sources are helpful in learning and understanding the issues associated with the project, but you should always provide appropriate references and citations where such material is included in your VIP notebook, code, presentations, etc.

Additionally, to provide a good working environment for all students, you're expected to adhere to rules given here, posted, or disseminated in class. Academic Honesty is taken seriously and failure to follow these principles will result in disciplinary actions as stated in the Student/Faculty Handbook.

Computer, Data, and Account Usage

Computer accounts are issued for your use only. You may not share computer accounts with anyone else, even another team member. All computer usage is subject to rules and policies of Georgia Tech, the University System of Georgia Board of Regents, and the State of Georgia. Additionally, you are expected to be considerate of other users. Computer permissions are not authoritative. For example, just because you have file access to something does not indicate that it is appropriate for you to read or modify that file.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Georgia Tech offers accommodations to students with disabilities. If you need an accommodation, please make an appointment with the Office of Disability Services (www.disabilityservices.gatech.edu). If you have an accommodation letter from ODS, please provide your instructor with a copy of your accommodation letter and discuss how your accommodations will be applied. This should be done as early as possible in the semester.

Class Schedule

Regular all-hands meetings will be held once per week. Additional meeting times will be scheduled on a sub-team, per-project basis.