Hello prospective open source project mentor,

I am grateful for your interest in supporting Facebook Open Academy which provides a unique hands on learning experience for computer science students and has the potential to have a tremendous impact on the computer science education around the world.

To review, I'm Jay Borenstein and I teach computer science at Stanford University. I am working with a number of folks to develop a program to provide more practical software engineering experience in university level computer science curricula. We currently have great university and open source projects from around the world involved in program and we're looking to expand our efforts in the coming year.

The hypothesis we are exploring is that the best way to learn about software engineering is to do software engineering. As simple as that sounds, we have not traditionally done a good job with this in academia. CS departments may provide a project experience as part of the curriculum, but it typically does not map well to a real world software engineering experience.

We want to do better.

We think that partnering with select open source projects holds a great deal of promise on a number of levels; it will give our students exposure to learning how to come up to speed in an established code base, revision control, project estimation and access to examples of good software engineering practices beyond what we are able to provide inside university walls, among many other things.

Clearly, for these benefits to be fully realized we have to do a good job of selecting open source projects that are relevant in today's software ecosystem (and therefore interesting to our students). Even more importantly, we must engage with the mentors behind those projects who are best suited to serve as teachers and guides to students. Key attributes in these mentors are an enjoyment of teaching and the patience to work with inexperienced committers.

For the open source projects, we believe the biggest value is seeding awareness among future technology leaders. Ideally there will also be some value to the development work student teams contribute back to the project as well.

One question we are sometimes asked is, "how is this different than Google Summer of Code?" One key difference is the tight integration with universities. Facebook Open Academy runs as a university course offering for which a student receives a grade and academic credit. It also allows the university teaching staff to stay very involved and work in tandem with the open source mentors to give students good support for their software development efforts. Another difference is the team element. This course offering partners students from around the globe on teams that work together.

In a nutshell, the program works like this:

- A student team of 3-8 students, potentially spanning multiple universities, is formed
- A matching process is run that puts a student team with an open source project
- The team and a "mentor" from the open source project are flown to a location for a weekend ramp up Code Sprint (the location is Facebook headquarters in Menlo Park, CA this year)

- The students can work on improving the project in two ways
    - By knocking out low hanging fruit issues that already exist
    - By identifying and pursuing new functionality
- The students will work on projects for between 8-20 weeks depending upon the schedules of the universities involved
- University faculty will be closely involved and consult with the mentor when determining final student grades. Expectations will be set with the students that states the coding contributions they make - the quality and ambition of them - will be the main factor determining their grade
- Start date: January-Feb depending on university
- Feb 7-9 Code Sprint at Facebook Headquarters in Menlo Park, CA
- Midterm Acknowledgement (tbd)
- End date: Mar - Jun depending on university

Summary of expectations for mentors

- Attend Code Sprint at Facebook HQ Feb 7-9, 2014 (your flight and hotel will be paid for)
    - Meet the students working on your project(s)
    - Help the students select project goals and develop plans to achieve them
    - Set expectations for how you like to communicate with the team
- Be responsive to requests from the team during the course
- As often as possible, attend weekly, 30 minute remote team meetings (IRC, Hangout or equivalent)
- Be prepared to provide the course instructor with a grade recommendation at the end of the course.
- Overall time commitment: You are obviously in control of this and it is also proportional to the number of students you decide to have, but not counting the Code Sprint, 3-5 hours per week is our expectation

Thank you for helping to provide this kind of course experience to students! We look forward to the opportunity to work with you and help grow your contributor community!

Best,

Jay