

CMSC 436 Semester Project Ideas

We have created the following list of ideas as starting points for your semester projects. These ideas tend towards projects for which 1) there is a known or likely customer who would like to have such an app, 2) the app has some “wow” factor because it could have some impact on civic or social issues, or university life, and where appropriate, 3) the app creates and/or uses large publicly-available data sets, such as that found at data.gov, that are stored/retrieved from off the network.

Remember that these project ideas are only starting points. You will need to flesh out many details in order to come up with your actual project. Feel free to suggest other ideas to us, but do so by Thursday, Oct. 4 at 11:59pm, because we need to get teams assigned and get the projects underway.

Note that some ideas may require the use of an actual Android device. Others can be done with an emulator. Many of these apps will require you to build some kind of back end server. **In cases where specific topics are not covered in depth in this course, you will be expected to learn them on your own. Get started early.**

Please read over the following list of ideas. We may add some additional choices, so check back. Then choose your top 3 choices and submit them through a Google sheet that will be emailed to you shortly.

1. Composting.

A few municipalities in Prince Georges County have begun composting programs. Hyattsville is beginning such a program to complement its existing yard waste program to reduce tipping fees at landfills and increase use of food waste as a resource. How could an app help to engage participants and improve their composting behaviors?

2. Panther Hour.

Annapolis High school runs a program called “Panther Hour,” which gives students an opportunity to get course help or use school spaces for self-directed activities such as clubs. There are multiple blocks of time available, multiple spaces to use, and numerous requirements around teach availability and oversight. Your app would help students and teachers to effectively manage and use Panther Hour.

3. Anti-litter campaign.

The City of College Park has developed an anti-litter campaign, and seeks ways to promote it. How could your app help? Could you gamify trash pickup? Could you document examples of litter in our environment? What else?

4. Bar/Restaurant recycling.

Most bars and restaurants in College Park do not recycle for a variety of reasons. The Student Government Association Sustainability Committee is working with the College Park Committee for a Better Environment to explore how to increase or maximize business recycling, beginning with some of the more popular collegiate bars. Can Bar and Restaurant customers help encourage recycling by the establishments they patronize?

5. Reducing single-occupancy vehicle traffic in Hyattsville.

Exploring potential current inefficiencies in bus routes, exploring ride sharing. One aspect of reducing vehicular traffic is increasing the use of mass transit; Hyattsville is also interested in increasing the efficiency of the many bus routes in the jurisdiction, primarily Metrobus, the County bus and the University of Maryland shuttle. This proposed project could also include commercial ride sharing programs as well.

6. Trails and bikes.

The proximity of University Park lends itself to bike riding to neighboring College Park and the University of Maryland, and this project seeks to enhance and expand the trail system to facilitate walking or biking. Some trails need to be clarified and improved, and all can be better mapped and promoted.

7. Food Pantries Support.

Riverdale Park is interested in collaborating with the University of Maryland to provide food supplies for the hungry and low-income residents of the Town. Apps could support the economic viability of local food production (e.g., community gardens, non-profit and for-profit urban farming), food recovery, and distribution of food and money from local stakeholders. This might build on current University efforts such as the Field of Greens, the Food Recovery Network and Terps Against Hunger.

8. Mosquito Control.

Residents of University Park have worked with staff to develop a mosquito control program, and seek to collaborate with the University of Maryland on means of improving and more thoroughly implementing the program, which involves voluntary measures by residents and other property owners.

9. Local community service.

Prince Georges public schools have a requirement for a certain number of hours of community service for graduating seniors. Students often achieve these hours through community projects that foster sustainability and resilience. Apps could help to publicize, enroll and measure success of different community service activities.

10. Adopt a stream.

Every school and every building in the immediate vicinity of the University of Maryland is located in a subwatershed of the Anacostia Watershed. If, as a part of Green School certification or otherwise, every Prince Georges County public school in the immediate surrounding area of the University of Maryland were to adopt a local stream, the potential for increased engagement in reduced contamination could be significant.

11. Removing invasive species.

As part of Berwyn Height's landscape management, removal of invasive species will help native plants and animals survive and thrive, and assist in biohabitat. Invasive species removal is labor-intensive, but can be part of good volunteer recruitment.

12. Trash master.

Design an app that would allow citizens to: lookup their trashcan number, know when their trash pickup days are, get time estimate of when trash is picked up, report trash for city cleanup (photo & GPS), request and track the replacement of stolen trash cans. Hyattsville now has GPS trackers on its garbage trucks - show citizens where trucks are and when they are scheduled to pass a given location. Also, could support "just in time" trash pickup that let's residents schedule a pick up, or indicate a missed pickup. May work best for special items or location, such as bulk trash, compost, multi-resident trash cans.

13. Recycling reminder.

Create an app that lets garbage collectors tag a residence (on a map) as not separating recyclables. Helpful electronic reminder sent to homeowner, homeowner on a given street, etc. Could include some historical views of repeat offenders.

14. Mobile survey system.

Allow people visiting a park or other city facility to take a survey, leave suggestions, etc. Could be based on scanning a posted QR code.

15. Citizen science.

Use an app to organize and execute distributed, crowd-source data collection and experiments. For instance, count the number of cars passing at a given intersection and identify the model/typ of the car (i.e., for school kids), or similar data for bird sightings, pest control, etc.

16. Heal City / Moving with the Mayor.

Support existing city programs by building a virtual game app where people get points or badges for completing activities/quests, such as walking a certain distance, visiting all parks in the city, eating 5 fruits and vegetables in a day, etc. Additionally, consider tracking city residents and awarding points based on various criteria such as walking or taking public transportation to an event.

17. Call-a-bus.

Support for existing senior citizen program. Schedule bus, get text reminders / alerts when bus is coming. Allow relatives of the senior citizen to get messages as well.

18. Tree counters.

Tree surveys involve a very manual process. Can citizens help by mapping the trees in their neighborhood?

19. Can you help me?

When a constituent calls up angry about X, can you come up with a system to help city staff direct the caller to the correct and most meaningful agency and contact to solve the issue? What about just help the staff to answer the question? May require AI approaches to learn the institutional routing information known by staff.

20. Ultrasonic connectivity.

Chirp.io offers an SDK for building applications that emit and process ultrasound signals. Ultrasound is interesting because it can be distinguished from other noises in a given environment. One application of this technology is to estimate the number of people in a given space. Another is to identify when two or more users are in close proximity, facing each other. For instance, I'm working on a project that is trying to track people with the flu to understand how flu is transmitted between people. A new startup in India is using ultrasound to transfer money between two users.

21. Planet.com

Planet.com provides access to detailed map images around the world. Unlike other services, these images are updated relatively frequently. Therefore, the images may be useful in business intelligence applications, such as identifying the number of cars in a store's parking lot to see how popular that business really is. Another application might be to compute biomass in a given area, to determine how much fertilizer a farmer should use on their farm. Given the recent occurrences of hurricanes in the US, can you think up an interesting app aimed at disaster recovery?

22. Location-Based Tour Guide.

Build a system and framework where an author can create tours for a set of locations. The system allows users to link audio and video content to each stop on a tour. Users use the app to follow the tour and to automatically view linked content when they arrive at a particular location on the tour.

For example, UMD could create information content for interesting sites of campus, a history professor could create a tour of important sites at the Antietam battlefield, etc. App users could then go to these places and see the information.

23. Feelings Diary.

Your app will allow high-school to college age users record and respond to negative personal feelings. See <http://psychcentral.com/lib/an-overview-of-dialectical-behavior-therapy/> for more information.

24. Parent Screen Controller.

Create a calendar that specifies times when your apps can be used. The use case is for parents with kids that have tablet computers for school use. Could also include a reporting feature. The system should also terminate apps if they are already running, but later move into a blackout period. Most importantly, you must ensure that this system can't be defeated by just uninstalling the controller app. This will involve rewriting the Android system code, so only for dedicated hackers.

25. Collaborative Art.

Create an app that lets users collaboratively create art? For instance, let users virtually "tag" visible images on their phones (e.g, buildings) with hand drawn graffiti. The tags would be visible to others viewing the same buildings/structures through the app. Another possibility, would be an app that allows people to create and share "Six-Word Memoirs" that are organized around geographic locations. See: <http://www.npr.org/2008/02/07/18768430/six-word-memoirs-life-stories-distilled>.

26. Call Your Mother.

We communicate with many different people. Often urgent, day-to-day communications crowd out other important communications, such as reaching out to extended family members. Design and create an application that tracks who the users calls to a circle of people, and then presents the user with information or reminders that some contacts are being neglected. Some issues to consider are defining which contacts are part of the calling circle, what normal or acceptable calling patterns are, what happens when certain contacts haven't been called recently?

27. Locating Electricity Dependent Medical Equipment.

From the web site: "Many in-home patients require the daily use of a piece of electrically powered durable medical equipment (DME). During a disaster or other event that leads to a prolonged power outage, these patients often end up at shelters or emergency rooms looking for sources of power or alternate ways to manage their medical needs. We need a reliable system available to identify, locate, and assist these individuals in a timely fashion."

See <https://www.innocentive.com/ar/challenge/9933433> for more information.

28. Feed the Kitty.

With this app a circle of people can fund an event. Suppose that you and your friends want to get together to watch the super bowl. Such an event require snacks, so the host for the event would create an event and make it available to a circle of people along with information about the event. People in the circle would use a payment service, such as Venmo or PayPal to fund the event and would receive some "receipt" for their contribution to it.

Users could leverage existing social networking systems such as Facebook, Twitter, or Google+, controlling the distribution of the event. Event creators can post the event as a status to Facebook, Twitter, or Google+ to get the word out about the event. Any member who has visibility of a fund, can also share it to their social media circle. When a fund creator creates a fund, they can attach a hashtag to their fund. This will allow a fund page to have a stream of statuses about their fund.

29. Read Aloud with Stuffed Animal.

This app will allow a small child to create a simple text story, laid out over several book pages. Your app might allow the child to illustrate the story's text. This story can then be sent to an electronic stuffed animal that can read the story back to the child, automatically turning the pages of the story as the story is read.

30. Audio Dictionary.

Students learning languages often find it difficult to learn how to pronounce words correctly. This app will allow native speakers of a particular language to record themselves pronouncing a word by itself and a word in a sentence. These audio snippets are then attached to the dictionary entry. In addition, native speakers have the ability to rate individual audio snippets to ensure that they are pronounced correctly.

31. Whos There?

This app allows people to meet up with friends. For instance, if the user is in the same building as a friend both would each receive a notification informing them that the other friend is in the building.

This app should be configurable so that it only notifies people when meeting up would be unusual to some degree. For example, family members shouldn't be notified each time they enter their common home. In addition, this add should be configurable so that the distance at which two people are considered to be in the same place changes. This might interact with meeting frequency as well.

If a friend I haven't seen in a year is 50 miles away, I might want to be notified. In addition, this app could be expanded to consider a user's likely location in the future (by examining the user's calendar).

32. Context-aware Ringer

This app allows users to define different ring volumes and settings for different contexts, such as when they enter a certain location or place. For example, your app would allow users to configure their phone to go into 'Do Not Disturb' mode every time they enter a library, movie theater, or A.V. Williams or lower the phone's volume if they are using headphones. Ideally, your users could control and define a number of different contexts and enable and disable them easily. You might get even more creative and create an app that learns from its user how to respond to particular events when in different contexts. If you're interested in this idea, you may want to look into Google's new Awareness API: <https://developers.google.com/awareness/overview>

33. Blockchain

Blockchain is a hot technology that allows people and businesses to exchange value in a trusted way. For example, blockchain underlies the virtual currency, BitCoin. I don't have a concrete app in mind here, but if you're interested in exploring this new technology let Dr. Porter know.

34. uCurate

This app meant will encourage art enthusiasts to explore their local communities and discover its art. Piloted on the UMD campus, art pieces (as defined by the user) can be tracked by location and by image. Users can organize subsets of these art pieces into collections. The app will then create walking tours allowing other users to visit this collection. Additional features may include public artworks tagged by users, supplementary information designated by gallery/museum curators, etc.

35. Geek-Out

Adapt the tabletop trivia game Geek-Out for use on a mobile platform. Geek-Out asks open-ended questions that can have multiple answers, such as "Named Fictional Dragons" or "Coen Brothers' Films". Advantage is given to players who know more rather than players who say answers faster. This app should allow multiple players to play at the same time (possibly remotely).

36. Barze.

Create an app that allows users to record and check key information about bars in the College Park area. Such information might include the current wait time for entry, cover charge, ambience once inside, etc. The application receives this data from the users similar to how Waze updates the current traffic conditions and special hazards on the road. Consider how your app will incentivize user participation.

37. Seefood.

With this app users will take pictures of food labels and the app will extract nutritional information from the food labels. This capability will be used in some nutritional use case (diabetes or high blood pressure sufferers, people trying to lose weight, people supporting vegetarian lifestyles, etc.) Rather than expecting the user to record every single food item they eat the purpose of the app would instead be to give a visual display to see how a serving size of the food plays into a healthy, daily diet. For example could show a pie chart with what percentage of daily sodium the serving would be.

38. Lost & Found

People sometimes misplace their belongings. This app would implement a "lost-and-found" system that allows users to both (1) search for a lost item on campus, (2) to indicate that they have found a misplaced item that belongs to another by making a posting with details such as the location found, pictures, item description, and tags (for searching ability), and (3) to arrange to transfer the lost item to the item's owner.

39. StoryBoard.

An app that will help organize thoughts, connect the writers' community, and advertise products for writers. The Storyboard app will help writers come up with ideas, organize ideas for an original story, suggest plots or themes for writing prompts, etc. Along with weekly challenges to be submitted to the communities, and individuals beta-reading/viewing other writer's pieces, this app helps connect the writers' community and further improve an individual's creative prowess via pushing the limits of their current studies and providing peers to learn from.

40. Local Apparel.

This app will allow people to sell and rent clothes to people near them. Sometimes people may not afford to buy a whole new wardrobe or do not want to buy a whole new outfit for a particular event where they will only wear it once. This app will allow people to post any clothing piece they might want to get rid of or rent a certain piece of clothing in order to get some money in their pocket, while still helping people who want or need their clothing. This app will track the sellers and customers location and filter the clothing items displayed based on proximity. How will your app be better than other similar, existing websites? Be creative.

41. Food Infrastructure Assessment Project.

A UMD prof has a paper-based tool to assess the quality of foods in stores that sell groceries including grocery stores, convenience stores, dollar stores, and pharmacies. In the end, each store receives an overall food quality score. It would be great to transition this to an app which would make it easier to complete and allow us to expand some of the categories. Another addition is adding a spatial tool that allows users to know whether they are in a food desert or food swamp, nearest grocery store, information on food delivery services, food related health tips, etc. Gamification would make this interesting.

42. Stomp Mold

Can you develop a mold education app that helps students on campus name the mold that may be in their dorm or provide a menu of photos that can select to help them diagnosis whether or not the conditions for mold are present in their building. It would have a diary function which will allow students to note when they see mold and also note any physical symptoms that may have.

43. Queue Up.

Develop an app that allows people to intelligently schedule and use multiple shared resources. For instance, suppose there is a set of laundry machines that are available to use. The app should allow people to get into line, set a preferred start time, and then give them notifications when the requested machine is available. Depending on the kind of system being managed, the app should remind people when their service is about to end and should intelligently move work around based on real time behaviors in the system.

44. Wearables.

I'm buying a pack of Spire Health Tags. These are wearable devices that get attached to your clothes to take various measurements of your activity. Would be interested to hear some ideas for apps related to this.