



NORTHEASTERN'S CAPSTONE PROTOCOL OVERVIEW

Here is guidance for interpreting the university's intellectual property policy, particularly regarding ownership of undergraduate intellectual property.

Generally, undergraduate students retain ownership rights in any intellectual property (IP) they invent as part of their coursework, specifically including Capstone projects. There are exceptions, including grants or corporate sponsorships that stipulate that students must assign their rights. In these latter cases, students should understand, prior to beginning any work, that they will be required to assign their rights to the University, and any student who objects to such assignment is to be given the chance to select an alternative project.

If the Capstone students are the only inventors on a particular invention, then they decide how to proceed with protecting and commercializing the invention. Should they wish to proceed independently, the students do NOT need to file an invention disclosure with the Center for Research Innovation (CRI) since it is not University-owned IP.

Alternatively, the students may decide to transfer all ownership and rights in the IP to the University. In that event, students file an Invention Disclosure Form with the CRI, which the CRI will then review for possible commercialization. If the CRI decides to commercialize the invention and Northeastern receives income as a result, all inventors share as spelled out in the Faculty Handbook ("Patent and Copyright" section). If the CRI elects to discontinue commercialization, ownership of the invention will be returned to the inventors.

For further information or questions, please contact [Paige Clapp](#), Intellectual Property and Contracts Associate, and have any invention-related funding documents on hand since ownership and obligations with respect to intellectual property are usually governed by the funding agreements.

The following chart illustrates the four principal Capstone scenarios:

INVENTORS	ACTION PLAN	REQUIRED ACTION
Students	Commercialize independently	Students do NOT have an obligation to disclose and may proceed without the CRI. STUDENTS SHOULD NOT FILE an Invention Disclosure Form (IDF).
Students and Professor	Commercialize independently	Professor files an IDF and assigns to NU. Students may proceed without the CRI, subject to limitations imposed by NU's ownership interest. Students may negotiate an exclusive license with the CRI.
Students	CRI to review for possible commercialization	Students do NOT have an obligation to disclose. IF a unanimous decision to disclose is made, students file an IDF and assign their individual rights to NU. NU will decide whether or not to commercialize. In the event of income to NU, all inventors will share as stipulated in the Faculty Handbook.
Students and Professor	CRI to review for possible commercialization	Professor files an IDF and assigns to NU. IF a unanimous decision to join disclose is made, students sign the IDF filed by the Professor and assign their individual rights to NU. NU will decide whether or not to commercialize. In the event of income to NU, all inventors will share as stipulated in the Faculty Handbook.
Notes		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If students file an IDF, they need to assign to NU.• NU will not file a provisional patent application without assignment.