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College in the Schools: Connecting the University of Minnesota and High Schools

College in the Schools (CIS) is a nationally accredited concurrent enrollment program offered by the College of Continuing Education at the University of Minnesota. In this program more than 100 high schools offer University of Minnesota courses on their home campuses. The program has existed since 1986; it currently offers 31 courses in 16 academic disciplines. German was the first world language offered through CIS. Since its inception in 1989 with two schools, the German program has grown to 28 schools, which teach the University's second year courses to more than 400 students in their high schools.

Articulation between the high school programs and the University is achieved through collaboration between the teachers and the University. All teachers meet for a workshop in summer and two meetings during the school year. High school teachers use the curriculum and tests created by the U of M; they have flexibility in choosing ancillary readers and films. An advisory committee of high school teachers works with the program's faculty coordinator to plan field days and teachers' meetings. Additionally, the faculty coordinator conducts observations of the high school teachers, and prospective teachers are encouraged to observe a U of M class and work with a mentor teacher to ease the transition into teaching the college curriculum. All students enrolled in the fourth semester German class take a proficiency test, which includes an interview and reading, listening and writing tests. The interviews are recorded and reviewed by staff at the University and the entire cohort grades the writing tests. This

helps ensure consistent standards from school to school and between the high schools and the University of Minnesota.

All CIS students can get a U of M ID, and their grades are recorded on an official University transcript.¹ CIS students have access to the University's online resources and also can attend on-campus events. There are two field days each year. On these days the high school students come to the U of M for a presentation and other activities ranging from visiting a German class, to touring the Weisman Art Museum (in German), and meeting students from other high schools and from the University. The highlight of the spring field day is the video competition where trophies are awarded for the best videos.

The connections between the U of M and the high schools are furthered by visits to the schools by graduate students. Each year two graduate students are awarded Hella Lindemeyer Mears Fellowships; as a condition of the fellowship, the recipients are asked to engage in a limited number of hours of outreach work. The Mears Fellows visit high schools throughout Minnesota and meet with students at all levels to promote German and encourage students to continue their study of German.

Students who successfully complete both CIS German courses can earn 10 credits from the U of M. The opportunity to get this number of credits is a strong financial incentive for students to continue their study of German.² And students who want to continue their study of German at the University are able to begin with the major-level courses; this jumpstart gives students greater flexibility in planning their college programs. Student satisfaction with CIS is clear with 99% of CIS participants noting that they would recommend CIS to other high school students.³

High school teachers who participate in CIS are listed as affiliate faculty members, and they see the connection with the U of M as one of the strengths of the program. Another is the chance to share ideas with other high school teachers; this is especially true for those who are the only German teacher in their school. Furthermore teachers note that participating in CIS helps raise the standards for all their German courses, since they are structuring their beginning courses to prepare students to succeed in the CIS courses.

High schools benefit from participation in CIS as well. The Postsecondary Enrollment Option (PSEO) allows high school students in Minnesota to enroll in classes at colleges and universities, but shifts tax dollars to the institutions where the students are enrolled. The CIS program helps keep the students (and the tax dollars supporting them) in the high school. CIS courses also offer the rigor that help set a school's standards.

CIS is a very successful program. High school teachers sometimes have to overcome problems such as convincing administrators of the need to adhere to the University's class size limits, or overcoming budget problems for buying textbooks, or work-

ing with fewer technological resources than are available at the University. The teachers are convinced of the advantages of teaching in the CIS German program, however, and work to make it successful in their schools. The success of the program can be seen by the fact that one of the first CIS teachers is still with the program, and in the fact that most of the growth in the cohort occurs from high school teachers convincing their colleagues of the value of teaching CIS German. Student success stories include two former CIS German students who are now teaching CIS German, and many CIS German students who continued their study of German at the college level. A good number of these students go on to study abroad and to major or minor in German.

Notes

¹ Taking CIS courses helps students get a head start on their college education whether or not they attend the University of Minnesota: 92% of high school graduates surveyed in 2007-08 reported that they received recognition for the U of M CIS credits at other colleges. "CIS: Research and Evaluation." College in the Schools website:

<http://www.cce.umn.edu/cis/research/index.html>

² In Minnesota, the school districts agree to pick up the costs of CIS. In 2008-09 the cost is \$143. Per student per **course**. CIS Faculty Coordinators Handbook, p. 3. Available online at http://www.cce.umn.edu/pdfs/DGP/fc_handbook.pdf (U of M students pay \$326.92 per **credit**.)

³ "CIS: Research and Evaluation." College in the Schools website:

<http://www.cce.umn.edu/cis/research/index.html>

About the author

Virginia (Ginny) Steinhagen received her Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota in 1996. She is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of German, Scandinavian and Dutch at the University of Minnesota where she has taught since 1998. She has been coordinator of the College in the Schools German Program since 2001.

She is a co-coordinator of the second-year German program, and a co-author of the University of Minnesota's second year curriculum *Sprünge*.

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