Program Description: Campus Writing Program at the Colorado School of Mines
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This program description covers five areas: WAC/WID, FYC, tech. comm., the Writing Center, and the land beyond required Tech. Comm. courses. The Campus Writing Program is housed in the Division of Liberal Arts and International Studies (LAIS) at the Colorado School of Mines (CSM). CSM has approximately 4,000 students, roughly 2900 of whom are undergraduates. Almost all students are enrolled in engineering or applied science, with a handful of mineral economics and business majors. We have approximately 200 full-time faculty.

WAC/WID
Although the fledgling WAC efforts that began in 1970 in the US were more widespread by 1988, when approximately 50% of all US postsecondary institutions had WAC programs, CSM began its WAC program due to multiple catalysts that coalesced in the mid-1990s (hey, better late than never). These catalysts included a broad, university-wide curricular reform, a 1994 alumni survey citing communications, and writing in particular, as a curricular area for improvement, industry contacts stressing the importance of communication, and faculty dissatisfaction with student writing, both in general academic and in discipline-specific writing. Due to the force of the latter factor, our WAC movement was largely bottom up, supported and owned by faculty. In 1997, the WAC Committee was formed and worked collaboratively with faculty liaisons in each department to construct consensus, university-wide writing-intensive (WI) guidelines. Approved in 1999 by our Undergraduate Council, these WI guidelines stipulate that all undergraduate degree-granting departments or divisions designate four required courses as writing intensive, generally two at the junior and two at the senior year.

Today, all such courses are tagged with "WI" in our annual undergraduate bulletin. Since some technical courses, such as senior design, are a better fit for writing, faculty across campus asked for flexibility in the WI guidelines. Hence, our guidelines stipulate that all four courses must feature a total of over 15,000 (roughly 50 pages) of some informal but mostly formal writing, to be distributed across the four courses as the department deems pedagogically appropriate; WI courses should devote 40% of the course grade to writing. Other WI guidelines are described at http://www.mines.edu/Academic/lais/wc/wac/undergradap.html. Before students take those WID courses, they also take other required WI courses, some of which are described below. In addition to bottom up support, we also have top down support; we have convinced the central administration that a successful WAC/WID program requires a strong infrastructure. Hence, they have over the past several years funded stipends for faculty who participate in summer WAC/WID workshops. Since the summer 1998 workshop, 61 faculty have participated in these workshops. During the academic year, on an as needed basis we consult on WAC/WID with numerous course instructors from across campus.

FYC
We do not have a traditional FYC course. During the mid-1990s curricular reforms, the Director of the Division of Liberal Arts and International Studies (LAIS), in which the Campus Writing Program is housed, advocated for two new three-credit semester courses, Nature and Human Values and Technical Communications (TC). In a move we now call "engineering math," the CSM Undergraduate Council reduced these six credits to four and combined the two courses into a single required first-year course called Nature and Human Values (NHV). We shortly gave up the charade of teaching TC on thematic content that accentuates how humanity affects nature and how nature affects humanity. However, we do introduce some "tech. comm. light" elements (with plenty of "a third less filling" jokes), including email, memos, abstracts, and other readability issues (segmented text, etc.), along with direct composition instruction on the three principal writing assignments. Initially taught as a two-hour large lecture and two-hour/wk small seminar course, we now have a one-hour large lecture and three-hour 20-student seminar. Lately, the interdisciplinary collaboration among lecture and seminar instructors, who hail from literature, comp/rhet., cultural studies, philosophy, and science and technology studies, has been more effective due to new course leadership. Experienced seminar instructors now deliver some of the large lectures, the thematic focus is now on environmental and professional ethics, and student course evaluations have improved overall. A significant current challenge rests with hiring new full-time faculty; from 1997-2003, 75% full-time and 25% adjunct faculty taught NHV. Last year, those percentages were inverted, and next fall full-time faculty will teach roughly 10% of all small seminars. This is largely due to full-time faculty teaching other courses and to faculty hiring not keeping pace with increased student enrollment.

Required Tech. Comm.
All required technical communications instruction in the first two undergraduate years takes place in a program called EPICS, Engineering Practices—Introductory Course Sequence, which is under the VPAA's direction. Part of a design-across-the-curriculum effort, EPICS features problem-based learning on open-ended projects involving real clients (NASA, ASEE, etc.). Students take two, three-credit EPICS courses, one in the first and another in the second year. EPICS is co-taught by one technical faculty member and one communications faculty member (sometimes from our writing program), and TC elements include several oral technical presentations, including one for a panel of outside judges, and written technical documents such as a letter of understanding, project plan, subsystems analysis, and design report. Quality in TC instruction varies considerably by instructor. No other campus wide TC requirement exists.

The LAIS Writing Center
Staffed by full-time lecturers and some adjunct faculty, the LAIS Writing Center (WC) tailors instruction to various needs in the campus community. We do thesis-writing workshops for grad. students, hold face-to-face individual and team meetings on an appointment or drop-in basis, and feature online services such as electronic paper submission and interactive tutorials.

Beyond Required Tech. Comm.
Three other elements provide opportunities for students to advance their TC knowledge.
   a. Writing Proposals: A service learning course in which students write an actual funding proposal for a nonprofit organization and a systemic analysis.
   b. Academic Publishing: A graduate course in which students learn how to write more effectively, both in general and for their particular academic discipline.
   c. Under Construction: A TC course requiring co-enrollment in Senior Design; students will broaden their rhetorical abilities on TC documents and presentations.