



UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Driven to DiscoverSM

College in the Schools at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities has been partnering with high schools throughout the state for almost a quarter of a century. It is one of the oldest current enrollment programs in Minnesota, and also one of the largest. During the 2008-09 school year, CIS served 101 high schools—urban, suburban, and rural-- in 27 different counties throughout the state. Nearly 250 teachers taught 5,597 students who earned more than 35,000 college credits in 17 different disciplines.

Accreditation by the National Alliance of Concurrent Enrollment Partnerships ensures that participating students are held to the same academic standards as students at the University and CIS teachers are selected, trained, and continuously supported by University faculty.

"[CIS] is overwhelming at first, but ... that's good because this is how college is really going to be, and you're going to experience it first-hand."

—Kia Yang, CIS Writing Studio, Student, St. Paul Central High School

Challenging students

College in the Schools helps students build confidence in their academic abilities because they are able to demonstrate learning over an entire semester, rather than on a single, high-stakes test. And the credits they earn are accepted by colleges and universities across the nation.

"...we came down to the U of M, walked in, sat down...and had somebody give us directions—all in Spanish!"

—Blake Regnier, CIS Spanish Student, North Branch High School

The program gives high-achieving students direct experience with the academic rigor and pace of college work. It creates an environment in which they are challenged to use higher-level thinking skills to achieve a more sophisticated understanding of the subject.

College in the Schools also offers courses for students in the "academic middle," who rank between the top 50 and 20 percent of their class and show high potential. Some of these students may not have considered college, but success in a college-level course often changes their vision of the future.

All CIS students have a chance to experience the college environment during on-campus field days. At the University, they interact with students from other high schools, as well as University students and faculty. Activities vary, but all are designed to complement the curriculum of the CIS courses the students are taking. For students, it's the best of both worlds. They can reap all the benefits of taking college classes while still participating fully in the high school experience.

"CIS has absolutely changed the way I teach. It's made me a better, more effective teacher."

—Heather Megarry, CIS Literature & Writing Studio Teacher, Ubah Medical Academy

Renewing teachers

CIS fosters and supports great teaching. Participating high school teachers enjoy expanding their content knowledge by participating in on-going, discipline-specific workshops. Led by University of Minnesota faculty, these workshops address content, pedagogy, and assessment issues related to the course.

"We want to put as challenging a curriculum on the board as they would in Wayzata or Edina... CIS has allowed us to do that."

—Larry Peterson,
Superintendent, Eden Valley-Watkins

Teachers may, for example, learn to access and contribute to an online image library used in on-campus anatomy and physiology classes; explore new ways to present French culture in the classroom; discuss how to provide effective feedback on student writing; or hear about research conducted by University faculty in their discipline.

In 2008-09, CIS provided teachers with an average of 19 hours of workshop-based professional development. Teachers new to the program received even more: an average of 33 hours. University faculty coordinators also observe CIS teachers in the classroom and provide feedback.

Teachers broaden their expertise and hone their teaching skills. They build collegial relationships with University of Minnesota faculty and with other motivated high school teachers. And they return to their classrooms with fresh ideas and renewed enthusiasm, and their students respond.

Promoting excellence

CIS strengthens schools because it allows them to offer high-quality, rigorous courses that keep motivated students on the high school campus. And because these students often serve as role models for other students, CIS helps

"It's just extraordinary to be in a room with 11 of the top teachers of political science in the state of Minnesota four times a year and to learn from them..."

—Timothy Johnson, PhD,
Faculty Coordinator, CIS
Political Science

“Universities end up having students who are really ready to learn.”

Esther Neu, CIS Alumnus,
U of M student

raise the bar for all students.

The impact of CIS goes well beyond the CIS classroom. Participating teachers incorporate CIS pedagogy and content, as appropriate, in all their classes. In addition, CIS courses that are highly sequential often strongly influence the content and pedagogy of the high school courses that precede them. CIS teachers can also serve as catalysts for strengthening all course offerings in their department because they understand what students are expected to know and do in college-level courses.

CIS strengthens the University, too. Faculty coordinators and their colleagues gain understanding of K-12 systems, as well as more insight into the preparation high school students receive before entering college. They also talk with high school teachers on a regular basis – a valuable, but rare, opportunity for most University faculty. Sometimes University faculty even “steal” instructional ideas and strategies from their CIS colleagues.

Freshmen who have successfully completed CIS courses in high school have already made the transition to college-level learning. They arrive on campus well-prepared and ready to learn.

In short, CIS benefits all participants. It’s truly a win-win situation for everyone!