

UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Twin Cities Campus

College in the Schools

*Precollege Programs
College of Continuing Education*

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Minneapolis, MN 55455*

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Memo

To: Principal
From: Julie Williams, Director, College in the Schools
Re: Request for letter of recommendation

An essential part of the application to teach a UMN-Twin Cities course through College in the Schools is a letter of recommendation in support of the applicant, from the principal. It serves three primary purposes:

- As the applicant's supervisor, your letter serves as a **critical validation** for the Higher Learning Commission, the accrediting body for the University, of the depth and breadth of the applicant's content knowledge in the subject area of the UMN course they are applying to teach. If you don't have direct knowledge of the applicant's understanding in the subject area, you may wish to have a conversation with others who can attest to this before you write the letter of recommendation. See how the recommendation letter can be used to effectively validate content knowledge in the example on the next page.
- Faculty at the University are also interested in your knowledge of the contributions of the applicant to the high school.
- Lastly, the letter affirms that you understand the school's responsibilities in the partnership with the University of Minnesota.

On school letterhead, please address **each** of the following:

- How long you have known and worked with the applicant;
- Evidence of the applicant's knowledge in the subject area; include one or two specific accomplishments or achievements that demonstrate knowledge in the subject;
- Evidence of the applicant's commitment to deepening his or her own knowledge and improving instruction in the subject or related subjects;
- Examples of the applicant's initiative, creativity, resourcefulness, leadership ability and/or other examples of the value that the applicant brings to your school;
- Anything else you believe is important for faculty to consider as they are reviewing the application.

In the last paragraph of your letter:

- Affirm that you understand your school's responsibilities in the partnership with the University. Those responsibilities are summarized on the following pages.

Please send your completed and signed letter to:

cis@UMN.edu

or

College in the Schools
Room 107, Armory Bldg.
15 Church St. SE
Minneapolis MN 55455

Example: Principal's letter of recommendation

11/1/2016

To whom it may concern:

I am pleased to write this letter in support of Elaine Welker's application to teach WRIT 1201—Writing Studio. She is a talented and committed teacher and her knowledge of writing and how to teach writing is extensive. Elaine was an English teacher at Berry High School when I took the position as principal 4 years ago.

I've not had many opportunities to work closely with Ms. Welker on projects that would demonstrate the depth of her understanding of writing and the writing process, but in preparing to write this letter I talked with the district curriculum director, Dr. Susan May, about Ms. Welker's leadership on a curriculum committee from 2013 - 2015. The committee was convened to build writing instruction into all of the courses offered at the high school. Elaine led the initiative to develop uniform grading standards for written work through the use of rubrics and anchor papers. Dr. May described Elaine's contributions to the committee, over the two-year period, as "significant and very insightful. Ms. Welker clearly understands academic writing and how the writing process can build higher order academic skills."

Elaine has taught both literature and composition courses at Berry for six years and in that time she has reviewed and graded hundreds of essays and reports. Her commitment to deepening her knowledge of writing and effective writing instruction are clear. She has participated in a variety of professional development workshops, including Advanced Placement trainings in literature and composition, as well as workshops sponsored by the Minnesota Writing Project at the University of Minnesota.

I would also like to emphasize that Elaine has worked successfully with the target student population for WRIT 1201. 40% of our high school students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch, and all students are required to take the English courses that Elaine has taught. She fully appreciates that offering the UMN writing course through CIS will be a challenge for some of her students, but she has always held them to high standards and expected great things.

In closing, I wish to affirm that I understand the responsibilities of the high school in offering a University of Minnesota course through College in the Schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "George Martin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

George Martin
Principal
Berry High School
952-238-4841
marting@berry.k12.mn.us

College in the Schools

Summary of School Responsibilities

Detailed information about these responsibilities and policies is available on the [CIS website](#), in the following three downloadable documents.

- [CIS Guide for High School Administrators](#)
(<http://cce.UMN.edu/documents/DCP/CIS-High-School-Administrator-Guide.pdf>)
- [Policies Governing University of Minnesota, Twin Cities Courses in the High School](#)
(<http://cce.UMN.edu/documents/DCP/CIS-UMTC-Policies.pdf>)
- [Quick Guide to Course Requirements and Related Policies](#)
(<http://cce.UMN.edu/documents/DCP/CIS-Quick-Guide.pdf>)

COSTS

Schools or districts pay \$145 per student, per course (not per credit). This fee has remained at \$145 since 2009-10.

Additional expenses include:

- The cost of textbooks, materials, and equipment (a list of required texts and materials is part of each course description on the CIS website; alternatives to required texts must be approved by the faculty coordinator in advance. Textbooks in most cohorts are infrequently replaced. Where this is not the case it is noted on the course description and in the [Quick Guide to Course Requirements and Related Policies](#).)
- Internet access at the school for teachers and students
- Required laboratory facilities and equipment (see course descriptions on the [website](#) for details)
- Substitute teachers for release days when CIS teachers attend required CIS professional development and Student field days
- Transportation for CIS students to field days.

Stipends for instructors:

CIS instructors must attend professional development sessions during the summer as well as during the academic year. We strongly encourage all school districts to provide stipends for participation in required summer professional development sessions.

SCHOOL OR DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Pay fees and costs associated with offering UMN courses through CIS.
2. Provide required textbooks and course materials for all CIS students.
3. Abide by all CIS and University policies (summarized below and described in the current [Quick Guide to CIS Course Requirements and Related Policies](#) and in the [CIS Guide for High School Administrators](#)).

4. Review the [Quick Guide](#) and the [Guide for High School Administrators](#) for policy changes when they are emailed to you annually.
5. Notify the CIS office of all teacher absences you expect to last 11 or more consecutive work days.
6. Provide teacher application and supporting documents for an appropriate substitute for any CIS teacher gone for 11 or more consecutive work days, and for a replacement for any CIS teacher leaving permanently.
7. Obtain approval for role of student teachers in UMN courses.
8. Provide release days and substitutes for teachers to attend CIS professional development workshops and student field days.
9. Provide transportation for students and teachers to campus field days.

CIS AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES

1. **Class composition:** 75% of students participating in a UMN course offered through CIS must be enrolled for UMN credit. Up to 25% may be enrolled for high school credit only. This requirement is critical to ensuring that the course functions at the University level.
2. **Entry Point Project:** 60% of the students enrolled in an Entry Point Project course need to be from one or more of the following target student populations:
 - In the academic middle (between the top 50% and the top 20% of their class)
 - Multilingual/ELL
 - Members of racial or ethnic minorities
 - First-generation college-bound students
 - From families of low to moderate income
3. **Student eligibility criteria:** Students enrolled for UMN credit need to meet eligibility criteria set by the faculty coordinator on behalf of the department that owns the course. Student eligibility criteria are meant to facilitate selection of appropriate students by teachers, counselors, or administrators—or self-selection by students; however, if there is any question about whether or not a student is prepared for the rigor of the University course, the decision rests with the CIS teacher in consultation with the UMN faculty coordinator. CIS teachers may override eligibility criteria in cases where they have reason to believe the student could do well in the UMN course.
4. **Class size caps:** CIS teachers and schools are required to observe the same class-size limits as are used in discussion sections on the University campus; these limits are set by the academic departments that own the courses—not by CIS. Students taking the course for high school credit only as well as those taking the class for University credit are to be counted equally for the purposes of measuring class size. When enforcing class caps, CIS looks for a pattern of over-enrollment over a two-year period. If sections are repeatedly over-enrolled schools risk losing the option to offer the course.
5. **Student credit load per term:** Typical full-time undergraduate enrollment is 15 credits per semester. Excessive credit may require CCE Scholastic Committee approval. Contact Jennifer Koontz (koont001@umn.edu) for more information and assistance with this process.
6. **9th and 10th grade students:** Legislation now makes it possible for schools to offer certain college courses to class sections composed entirely of young students. If you are considering the option, contact Jan Erickson at CIS (j-eric1@umn.edu) well in advance of offering it. CIS will need a signed agreement from the department that owns the course in order to offer it for UMN credit to this

younger student population. Currently, the following departments have agreed to provide the option: Chinese, Japanese, Greek and Latin.

7. **Student field day participation:** Although most courses available through CIS hold on-campus student field days, student and teacher participation is required for only a few, which are noted in the [Quick Guide](#).
8. **Teacher professional development participation:** CIS teachers are required to participate in all UMN-sponsored professional development for their cohort the summer prior to each academic year in which they will be teaching a UMN course. They are also required to participate in two to three days of UMN-sponsored professional development for their cohort during each academic year in which they are teaching a UMN course.

If they teach every other year or on an irregular schedule, teachers in a few cohorts are also required to attend professional development events during their *non-teaching* years. These cohorts are noted in the [Quick Guide](#). Other teachers who teach a UMN course every other year are strongly encouraged, but not required, to also attend during *non-teaching* years.

9. **Combining the University course with Advanced Placement test prep:** Former CIS students often present a course syllabus to gain recognition for UMN credits earned through CIS. Because of this, it's important that syllabi clearly identify courses as UMN courses. As long as the content of the UMN course is fully and completely covered, teachers are free to include additional material, including content necessary to prepare students for the AP test.

On the syllabus, a course should be identified only as a UMN course. Courses offered through CIS are not CIS courses, UMN/AP courses, CIS/AP courses, or UMN/CIS courses. Please identify the course as a UMN course, and use the University's designator and title.