Writing futures
Prepare students for digital literacies and writing challenges of the future

Writing is itself a form of technology, and in the 21st century, writing is global, social, and digital. We strive to integrate emerging technologies and problem-based projects into our courses to better prepare today’s students for tomorrow’s writing contexts. Online education provides an opportunity to extend the reach of our programs to more students.

Increase exposure to digital writing technologies and literacies
Your gifts will increase exposure to structured authoring environments that professional writers use and help equip our Digital Writing Studio with the current and emerging digital writing technologies.

Writing technologies continue to expand and grow, and students need access and practice with these technologies. We strive to integrate technologies such as software programs, email, social media, websites, and content management systems in the courses we teach to better prepare students for writing they may encounter as professionals.

Conduct research on emerging technologies
Your gifts will foster research on emerging technologies like augmented and virtual reality and the academic and learning analytics associated with learning management systems.

Our department founded an interdisciplinary research group called Emerging Technologies Research Collaboratory (ETRC). Colleagues and graduate students in this interdisciplinary group meet regularly to discuss their research interests in technologies and tackle empirical research intended for publication. Initially, projects addressed innovative technologies such as smart devices and their uses.

Explore writing in health and medical communication
Your gifts will enable scholars to investigate aspects of health communication, including interventions that may result in improvements in physician patient communication.

Writing plays an increasingly important role in health communication today. Physicians are expected to document more and more aspects of their work with patients; medical and health information is written and shared with public audiences; patients have greater access to their medical information via electronic health records.

Provide online programs in technical communication to increase student reach
Your gifts will support scholarships for students enrolled in these programs, providing greater access to distance learning.

Writing Studies has long supported online education, offering some of the first online courses at the University of Minnesota. A long-term goal is to offer our M5 degree program fully online starting in 2019. This program will provide access to working professionals who hope to expand career options.

Writing is a fundamental human activity that is rhetorical, social, global, and technological. To write is to define the world around us and create knowledge with others. It is to shape language in such a way that it reflects meaning, and how it generates action within and among communities. We examine writing studies as a discipline involving past, present, and future.

We explore writing as an engaged and social activity in multiple contexts such as business, technology, science, health, law, and public spaces. Through a student-centered approach, we invite students to work with us as we examine both the theoretical roots of writing and new applications of writing that continue to evolve. To foster engagement, we teach in active learning spaces that facilitate collaborative work where students work together to practice writing.

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We study ways that writing has evolved technologically. Some might say writing itself is a technology—from papyrus to print to digital to multimodal formats. Writing continues to evolve in the digital age as software, applications, social media, and internet technologies change and advance, and writers must develop critical awareness of technologies and their reach. This awareness strengthens career readiness by helping students understand the importance of writing and communication in our interconnected world.

In 2007, the Department of Writing Studies joined the College of Liberal Arts, combining former programs in writing, rhetoric, and technical communication that dated back to 1908. Today, as we celebrate our collective strengths in our new home department, we define writing as a civic practice that influences education, workplace, and the public sphere.

In this exciting time for our department, we invite you to join us in bringing our goals to life.
**Writing and public outreach**

Serve as a leading resource for writing instruction and research in the state of Minnesota

**Strengthen the First-Year Writing Program**

Your gifts for First-Year Writing will support student scholarships and graduate assistantships focused on pedagogy and instructor training.

Through our First-Year Writing (FYW) Program, undergraduates from across the University participate constructively and thoughtfully in public discourse. Students conduct library and community-based research into a wide range of topics with the goal of transforming polarized, one-sided, argumentation. Classes emphasize how writers in new digital environments can update the traditions of critical thinking, deliberative exchange of different perspectives, and communication and rhetoric as an art of learning and cultural inclusion.

Through our College in the Schools classes, FYW engages over 1000 advanced high school students and their teachers from across the state of Minnesota to develop their writing as a central practice of citizenship. In total, First-Year Writing involves over 3500 students and offers professional development for more than 100 high school teachers every year.

**The Center for Writing**

Your gifts will support instructional activities like one-to-one consultations and outreach programs across the state.

In more than 12,000 one-to-one writing consultations each year, the Center helps student writers develop confidence and effective writing strategies. We serve as a resource for all University instructors through consultations, workshops, and research on using writing as a tool for critical thinking, learning, and communicating in all fields. Programs also include outreach to K-College educators throughout the state with the Minnesota Writing Project, a National Writing Project site which provides professional development opportunities for teachers and writing camps for youth.

**Invest in civic engagement research**

Your gifts will be used to support civic engagement research or teaching projects that help bridge campus and community.

Research by faculty and students in Writing Studies often examines how writing and rhetoric play a role in various communities. As an example, one award-winning dissertation project in our department investigates how Somali immigrants make sense of the many documents that comprise the health care system in the State of Minnesota. The project discusses how immigrants gain critical literacies as they navigate available resources and services. As another example, several Writing Studies instructors assign writing projects with community partners, such as our web usability course that partners with Hennepin County Library to conduct usability tests on their website and mobile applications.

"This class focused on team-based approaches to organizational problems and was geared toward creating compelling, useful, and multi-modal products. We used class time to compare the experience with technical communication scholarship on localization, multilingual and cross-cultural communication, and user-experience methods."

—UMN instructor Kari Campeau on her partnerships with the Cedar Riverside Adult Education Collaborative, the Hmong American Partnership, and Franklin Library Learning

**Experiential learning and writing**

Increase career readiness through experiential writing opportunities

We strive to be a leader in preparing students for writing. Through experiential writing, we emphasize competencies such as applied problem solving, oral and written communication, and analytical and critical thinking. These competencies contribute to an overall sense of career readiness among our students.

**Launch a workplace mentor program**

Your gifts will help us meet our goal of providing mentors for 15-20 students each year.

As one of the oldest and most respected programs in technical communication in the country, our students and faculty are actively engaged with local, national, and international companies and organizations. Our Technical Communication Advisory Board (TCAB) is a group of 15 business leaders who provide pathways to experiential learning opportunities for our students. Together with the TCAB, we’re launching a Workplace Mentor Program for volunteers to work one-on-one with a Writing Studies student. The mentoring relationship can involve informational interviewing, job shadowing, and networking opportunities to talk about career advice.

**Increase internship opportunities**

Your gifts will help us hire an internship director—an important step towards creating more contacts and internship opportunities. In addition, your gifts will provide scholarships for students to supplement unpaid internships and incentivize these important experiential learning opportunities.

Students who complete internships often say the experience was one of the most important of their academic career; yet our students often seek and find these opportunities on their own, and sometimes internships are unpaid. An important goal is to increase internship opportunities for students.

"Studying technical writing at the U of M has given me an advantage because it’s such a niche area within the tech field."

—Writing Studies student James Cho, who landed his dream internship at Tesla

**Create more learning abroad opportunities**

Your gifts will support learning abroad opportunities around the world.

Writing today has global implications, and students need the opportunity to experience writing across borders. We have relationships with specific global institutions that could be further developed into learning abroad opportunities, including University of Limerick in Ireland and University of Trieste in Italy.

**Host a professorship in entrepreneurial writing and communication**

Your gifts will bring a leading scholar to campus.

Workplaces increasingly include entrepreneurial opportunities. A visiting faculty member could explore these emerging workplace contexts through research and share those findings in courses they teach with students.