

Virginia Tech, College of Engineering
Department of Computer Science
ViEWS Proposal
Addendum: Resources Outside the Department

Freshman Year

1. EngE 1024 Engineering Explorations
EngE 1104 Digital Explorations

The 2005/6 academic year will be the second year this requirement is in effect for Computer Science students.

This requirement is a consequence of the department's move to the College of Engineering, where both EngE 1024 and either EngE 1104 or 1114 is required of all freshmen. The resources to teach these courses are provided by the Engineering Education Department as part of its mission within the college.

2. Engl 1105-6 Freshman English

This is not a new requirement.

Since these courses, or Comm 1015-6, are required for the Writing and Discourse area of the Core Curriculum, and since students who will eventually become Computer Science majors are actually General Engineers at the time they take these courses, the department did not feel it necessary to negotiate individually with the English Department about access to freshman English.

Junior or Senior Year

1. Comm 2004 Public Speaking

This requirement has been in effect since 1999, when it was introduced as part of the department's revision of its curriculum to meet accreditation requirements.

In October 2004, as the department was preparing its ViEWS proposal, several e-mails were exchanged between the Computer Science Department and the Communication Department, including between the two heads. The Communication Department indicated its willingness to continue to service Computer Science majors in the Public Speaking course.

Since this course is a prerequisite to a required upper-level CS course, CS majors take it in either semester of the junior year, or, at latest, in the first semester of the senior year.

2. Engl 3764 Technical Writing

This requirement represents a modification of a current requirement. Under the current Core Curriculum Writing Intensive requirement, the department requires its students to take one writing intensive course outside the major selected from one of the humanities or social sciences departments previously located in the College of Arts and Sciences. A majority of students has always met this requirement by taking an English course. In the 2004 calendar year, 101 CS graduating seniors (55%) had taken Engl 3764. Twenty-six students (14%) had taken other English writing intensive courses for a total of 69% meeting this requirement with English courses.

When the Computer Science Undergraduate Program Committee decided to include Technical Writing in its ViEWS proposal, Dennis Kafura, Head, met with Lucinda Roy, English Department Head, to ask her support for this move. Professor Roy indicated that her support was dependent on the availability of resources and asked about the expected number of students per year needing the class. Dr. Kafura shared with her the numbers given above of CS students already taking Engl 3764 and other English courses. He also informed her that nationwide CS enrollments have been falling in recent years, e.g., the VT CS freshman class entering fall 2004 was just half the size of the class that entered in fall 2001. He could not, however, give her a reliable size estimate of the first class of CS students who would need Engl 3764. This number will depend on the number of students in the fall 2005 GE freshman class who choose Computer Science as major in spring 2006. And since this will be the first year that Computer Science receives its students through the GE pool, the department has no past experience on which to base an estimate of its 2009 graduating class.

Professor Roy asked that the CS Department allow maximum flexibility regarding when in the curriculum CS students would take Engl 3764. This is easy to accomplish. Since this course is not a prerequisite to anything else in the curriculum, students can take it either semester of either their junior or senior year. Thus the earliest CS students in the class of 2009 would take Engl 3764 would be the 2007-8 academic year, and more probably 2008-9.

Because of the resource issue, Professor Roy requested that Dr. Kafura copy Deans Niles and Aref on an e-mail to her summarizing the substance of their meeting. This was done and no further exchanges have occurred.

Other Types of Resources

The department is participating in meetings regarding the use and the on-going development of software to support e-portfolios. The decision whether to use e-portfolios or non-electronic portfolios will be made during the 2005-6 academic year and will depend on the features implemented by then and the stability of the product.