Peace Corps Prep Student Guide

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The Peace Corps Prep program at Colorado School of Mines (http://pcprep.mines.edu) prepares Mines students for international community-development work and for potential Peace Corps service. In Peace Corps Prep, you'll build *four core competencies* through appropriate coursework, hands-on experience, and professional-development activities. The four core competencies, or learning objectives, are:

1. Training and experience in a particular Peace Corps work sector
2. Foreign-language skills
3. Intercultural competence
4. Professional and leadership development

This document explains each of these requirements in detail. Use this guide to map out your Peace Corps Prep course of study. In particular, refer to this when completing your **PC Prep Program Application**, where you'll document how you plan to fulfill each requirement. This guide aligns point by point with each section of the application.

1. Training and experience in a specific work sector

> 3 courses + 50 hours of related experience

Leveraging concrete knowledge and skills is central to on-the-ground international community-development work. Through the Peace Corps Prep program, you will begin to build a professional specialty that should serve you well whether or not you choose to become a Peace Corps Volunteer.

For PC Prep, you must complete at least **3 courses** that align with a specific Peace Corps work sector (they can be chosen from your academic major, but are not required to be). You must also accumulate a minimum of **50 hours of volunteer or work experience in that same sector**, preferably in a teaching or outreach capacity.

Peace Corps Tip!

If you intend to apply to the Peace Corps, the best way to assure that you will be a strong candidate is to identify the type of assignments in which you'd like to serve through this interactive tool (http://www.peacecorps.gov/openings), then review the required qualifications and build your skillset accordingly. In the process, you will also fulfill these PC Prep experiential requirements!

There are six sectors in which Peace Corps Volunteers serve—detailed below. **Choose one sector to focus on** then complete at least **3 courses + 50 hours of related experience** in that sector.

Note: Actual Peace Corps assignments are based on local needs, and thus may or may not align seamlessly with your qualifications. Flexibility is central to the Peace Corps experience!

Teach lessons that last a lifetime. Education is the largest Peace Corps program area. Volunteers play an important role in creating links among schools, parents, and communities by working in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary schools as math, science, conversational English, and resource teachers, or as early-grade reading-and-literacy teacher trainers. Volunteers also develop libraries and technology resource centers.

If you choose Education, take 3 courses from one or more of the following areas:

- Math
- Computer science
- Engineering
- English
- Any physical or biological science
- A course on the *theory and practice of teaching* is highly encouraged.

And build 50 hours of related field experience through an activity such as:

- Mentoring in community or school "makerspaces." Makerspaces are appearing in lots of places —at Mines, at Red Rocks Community College, and throughout Jefferson County high schools.
- Mentoring middle-school students in STEM subjects (for instance, Bell Middle School in Golden has such a program).
- Tutoring college math (for example, Red Rocks Community College hires Mines students as peer assistance for college math, algebra, and trigonometry).
- Teaching in one of these or a similar form: in a classroom, with a community outreach organization, or in a formal tutoring capacity.
- The subject of the teaching may be English as a Foreign/Second Language, special education, drama, or a STEM subject.

Serve on the front lines of global health. Health Volunteers work within their communities to promote important topics such as nutrition, maternal and child health, basic hygiene, and water sanitation. Volunteers also work in HIV/AIDS education and prevention programs to train youth as peer educators, develop appropriate education strategies, provide support to children orphaned by the pandemic, and create programs that provide emotional and financial support to families and communities affected by the disease.

If you choose Health, take three courses from one or more of the following areas:

- Pre-med-type courses (typically offered by the Chemical and Biological Engineering Department)
- Biomechanical-design courses (offered by Mechanical Engineering)
- Design studio courses focusing on assistive technologies for disabled people (see Prof. Joel Bach for more details)
- Biology

- Environmental or sanitary engineering
- Assistive technologies

And build 50 hours of related field experience through an activity such as:

- Working directly with patients in HIV/AIDS outreach, hospice care, family-planning counseling, emergency medical technician (EMT) or CPR teaching/certification, maternal health, and hands-on caregiving in a hospital, clinic, or lab technician setting.
- Volunteer, internship, or work experience in such areas as water-delivery systems (the student group Mines Without Borders is working on such a project now), water filtration, sanitation systems, environmental mitigation of hazardous materials.
- Counseling or teaching in health-related subjects.
- Working as a resident advisor in a dormitory, as a peer nutritionist, as a sexually transmitted infections counselor, or suicide-prevention-hotline counselor.

#3 Environment
http://www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/whatvol/env

Help forge a global movement to protect our planet. Volunteers lead grassroots efforts in their communities to protect the environment and strengthen understanding of environmental issues. They teach environmental awareness in elementary and secondary schools and to youth groups and community organizations, empowering communities to make their own decisions about how to protect and conserve the local environment. Volunteers also address environmental degradation by promoting sustainable use of natural resources.

If you choose Environment, take three environment-related courses from one or more of the following areas:

- Environmental science or related field
- Water
- Sanitation
- Biology or botany
- Ecology
- Geology
- Business or economics
- Waste mitigation

And build 50 hours of related field experience through an activity such as:

- Mines Field Sessions involving watershed management, snowpack, and other environment-related topics.
- Educating the public on environmental or conservation issues, or working on environmental campaigns.
- Conducting biological surveys of plants or animals.
- Reforestation (urban or rural); for instance, the Institute for Environmental Solutions in Denver (http://www.i4es.org) has many such opportunities.
- Gardening, farming, nursery management, organic or low-input vegetable production, or landscaping; Denver Urban Gardens (https://dug.org) has many such programs.

- Providing technical assistance and training in natural resource management.
- Red Rocks Community College offers programs in environmental ethics (with a service-learning component) and Outdoor-Education and Wilderness Leadership programs as well.

Lead grassroots efforts to fight hunger in a changing world. Agricultural Volunteers work with small-scale farmers and families to increase food security and production and adapt to climate change while promoting environmental-conservation practices. They introduce farmers to techniques that prevent soil erosion, reduce the use of harmful pesticides, and replenish the soil. They work alongside farmers on integrated projects that often combine vegetable gardening, livestock management, agroforestry, and nutrition education.

If you choose Agriculture, take three courses from one or more of the following areas:

- Projects for People (EGGN 401) courses directly related to food production
- EPICS projects related directly to food production
- Appropriate Economics and Business courses with a food component
- Biology courses with a significant food focus

And build 50 hours of related field experience through an activity such as:

- Working with a food-oriented non-governmental organization like GoFarm in Golden (http://www.gofarmcoop.org).
- Internships or volunteer work with an NGO like Friends of Enca Farm (http://encaorganicfarm.com) advancing organic farming in the Philippines.
- Working with a large- or small-scale business or farm involved with vegetable gardening, farming, nursery work, tree planting or care, urban forestry, landscaping, livestock care and management, or fish cultivation and production.
- Teaching or tutoring the public in environmental or agricultural issues/activities.
- Working on the business management or marketing side of a commercial farm.
- Red Rocks Community College (http://rrcc.edu) has programs to create sustainable gardens in concert with their Engineering, Holistic Health, and Biology programs.
- Warren Tech High School in Lakewood may be looking for support for its ongoing organic-gardening project (https://sites.google.com/a/jeffcoschools.us/warrentech-home-page).

Empower the next generation of changemakers. Volunteers work with youth in communities on projects that promote engagement and active citizenship, including gender awareness, employability, health and HIV/AIDS education, environmental awareness, sporting programs, and information technology.

If you choose Youth in Development, take three courses from one or more of the following areas:

- Humanitarian engineering

- Community development
- Social justice
- Philosophy of development
- Business development
- Think outside the box: LAIS Professor Jay Straker's African literature courses generally have a strong focus on youth in Africa.

And build 50 hours of related field experience through an activity such as:

- Teaching or counseling in at-risk youth programs.
- Activities that involve planning, organizing, assessing community needs, counseling, and leadership, in areas such as education, youth development, health and HIV/AIDS, the environment, and/or business.
- Coaching or refereeing youth sports programs.

#6 Community Economic Development
http://www.peacecorps.gov/volunteer/learn/whatvol/busdev_01

Harness 21st-century tools to help communities lift themselves. Volunteers work with development banks, nongovernmental organizations, and municipalities to strengthen infrastructure and encourage economic opportunities in communities. They frequently teach in classroom settings and work with entrepreneurs and business owners to develop and market their products. Some Volunteers also teach basic computer skills and help communities take advantage of technologies such as e-commerce, distance learning, and more.

If you choose Community Economic Development, take three courses from one or more of the following areas:

- Humanitarian engineering
- Community development
- Social justice
- Philosophy of development
- Business development
- Computer science and related majors
- Economics and business

And build 50 hours of related field experience through an activity such as:

- Membership in, and leadership of, development-oriented student organizations such as Mines Without Borders (sign up on OrgSync: https://orgsync.com/login/colorado-school-of-mines).
- Working with businesses, organizations, or cooperatives in accounting, finance, microfinance, management, project management, budgeting, or marketing.
- Starting and running your own business or other entrepreneurial activity.
- Training others in computer literacy, maintenance, and repair.
- Website design or online marketing.
- Founding or leading a community- or school-based organization.

2. Foreign language skills

Working across cultures often means mastering languages distinct from your own. Building foreign-language skills is thus a second key component of the PC Prep curriculum.

Where would you like to serve? PC Prep course requirements align with actual Peace Corps requirements, which vary by linguistic region.

- **Latin America**: Individuals wishing to serve in Spanish-speaking countries must apply with *strong intermediate* Spanish proficiency. This typically means completing two 200-level Spanish courses.
- **West Africa**: Individuals wishing to serve in French-speaking African countries should be *proficient* in French (or, in some cases, any Romance language), usually through one 200-level course.
- **Everywhere else**: The Peace Corps has *no explicit language requirements* for individuals applying to serve in most other countries. However, you will still likely learn and utilize another language during service, so it is always helpful to have studied another language previously.
- **Note**: If you are a native speaker of French or Spanish and want to serve in a country that speaks that language, you can skip this requirement.
- **Note**: Language courses taught at Red Rocks Community College are transferable to Mines.

3. Intercultural competence

Engaging thoughtfully and fluidly across cultures begins with one's own self-awareness. With this learning objective, you will deepen your cultural agility through a mix of three introspective courses in which you learn about others while reflecting upon your own self in relation to others. The goal is for you to build your capacity to shift perspective and behavior around relevant cultural differences. Choose *three* of these, or propose courses of a similar nature looking at cultural differences:

- Intercultural Communications (see LAIS Professor Jon Leydens for details)
- Introduction to Cultural Anthropology
- Anthropology of Development
- Engineering and Sustainable Community Development
- Engineering and Social Justice
- Indigenous Peoples and Natural Resource Development
- Community Based Research
- Service Learning

Is there another course in the catalog that you feel meets this requirement? Please discuss it with your PC Prep Coordinator.

Prolonged intercultural experiences—such as studying or volunteering abroad, supporting new immigrants or refugees in the United States, or volunteering in diverse schools—would also strengthen your Peace Corps candidacy significantly.

There are many opportunities to travel or live abroad during your time at Mines. For example, the Mines Office of International Programs (http://oip.mines.edu) offers many one- and two-semester study-abroad programs. The Guy T. McBride Honors Program in Public Policy (http://mcbride.mines.edu) provides financial and academic support for summer trips abroad for its students.

4. Professional and leadership development

Résumé and interview support + leadership experience

International development is a highly credential-focused sector. It is a difficult field to break into and demands personal initiative and leadership to advance professionally within the field. PC Prep requires three specific activities that will strengthen your candidacy for the Peace Corps (or any other professional endeavor):

1. Have your résumé critiqued both by someone in the Mines Career Center (http://careers.mines.edu) *and* by your Peace Corps Prep coordinator.
2. Attend a workshop or class on interview skills at the Career Center, then conduct a practice interview with your Peace Corps Prep coordinator and returned Peace Corps Volunteers now working or studying at Mines (we can help arrange that).
3. Create an electronic portfolio highlighting your accomplishments on LinkedIn or similar site.
4. Develop at least one significant leadership experience and be prepared to present it at length to PC Prep coordinators. For example, organizing a campus event, leading a work or volunteer project, or serving on the executive board of a student organization could apply here. But be sure to explain specifically how you had responsibility over decisions, people, and resources like budget.
5. Consider applying for internships—perhaps checking with the dozens of non-governmental development organizations at the Posner Center for International Development in Denver (http://posnercenter.org)—that focus on topics like sustainable community development.
6. Consider applying for summer internships that would give you a significant cross-cultural experience abroad or at home.

Next steps...

1. Download and start to fill out the Mines Peace Corps Prep Program Application at: http://pcprep.mines.edu/PCPREP-Checklist
2. Contact a Mines Peace Corps Prep program coordinator to go through your application with you and answer any questions you may have: http://pcprep.mines.edu/PCPREP-Contact-Us

That's it! See you soon to begin your Peace Corps Prep experience!