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Starting Them Early: A Student-Owned and Student-Run Mineral Exploration Company

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On the rare occasions that ore deposits courses are offered at the university level, they often teach from an academic, first-principles approach to understanding how ore deposits form. While this approach is certainly useful, it does not adequately prepare students for the realities of a career in the mining industry. In addition to a traditional ore deposits course, I offer a unique set of courses at the University of Wyoming that allow students to participate in the mining industry directly.

In these courses, the students form their own legally valid mining company and conduct exploration activities throughout Wyoming. The claims that they stake are real claims, the funds that they generate belong to the students (a.k.a. the shareholders), and they must operate within a tight budget. Their decisions have real-world financial, environmental, and legal consequences. The students make all exploration decisions themselves, and I make none of those decisions for them.

At the conclusion of the courses, the students produce an industry-style scoping study for the most promising property in their portfolio. The students gain valuable experience with geologic mapping, ore characterization, geophysical surveying, soil sampling, decision making, financial analysis, etc. In the future, I plan to expand this model to students outside the University of Wyoming and offer it via a field-camp-style summer course.