Revising Undergraduate Curriculum for Environmental, Soil, and Water Sciences. (5308)

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Abstract:
Curricula in undergraduate programs for natural resources have been introduced and revised during the past several decades as academic departments desire to stay current with emerging issues and technologies and relevant to constituents. In addition to collecting student, alumni, and employer input, the Department of Crop, Soil, and Environmental Sciences (CSES) faculty at the University of Arkansas engaged in a decision making process to facilitate revision. Faculty first articulated goals for undergraduate students and then evaluated coverage of course material and instruction for skill development using a curriculum matrix. Constructing and completing this matrix allowed faculty to visualize strengths, weaknesses, redundancies and gaps in the undergraduate program. Decisions concerning curriculum revision were made in part based on the outcome of the matrix. CSES decided to revise or introduce courses in environmental ethics and the applied sciences such as introductory water science, applied ecology, applications of geographic information systems, and analysis of environmental contaminants. Current challenges for curriculum revision include implementation while courses are being developed, and offering new courses while trying to simultaneously build student enrollment to ensure a critical mass to sustain new course offerings.

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