



People and Nature: Our Future is in the Balance

National Wildlife Federation

11100 Wildlife Center Drive • Reston, VA 20190 • <http://www.nwf.org/>

Clemson University Clemson, South Carolina Spring 2003, Environmental Literacy

BACKGROUND

Campus Profile

Clemson is a public land-grant and research university located in a rural area in the northwest corner of South Carolina. It has an enrollment of approximately 17,000 students, served by approximately 1,200 faculty and 4,500 staff. Bachelors' through Ph.D. degrees are offered in a number of disciplines. The university emphasizes on agriculture, architecture, business, education, engineering, natural resources, science and technology.

Contacts

Summer Smith Taylor
Department of English
Phone: 865-656-6689
E-mail: sjsmith@clemson.edu

Patricia Jerman
Sustainable Universities Initiatives Manager
Phone: 803-777-7760
E-mail: Jerman@sc.edu

GOALS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Goals

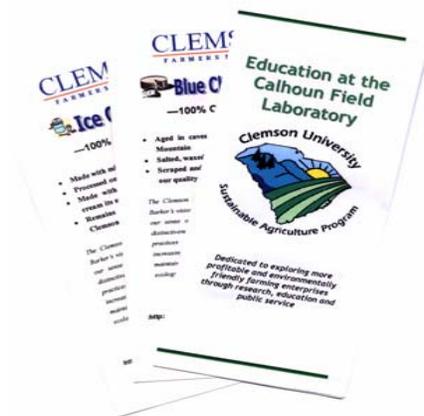
The purpose of the project was to enhance the environmental literacy among students taking business or technical writing classes, to give them practical experiences and to provide a genuine service to campus clients. Majors represented in the classes primarily include fields in agriculture, the sciences, engineering and business. The courses are intended to prepare students for the types of writing tasks they will encounter in the workplace.

Accomplishments

Over the course of one semester, the 260 students enrolled in 11 sections of business or technical writing prepared 192 deliverables for clients. The deliverables represent a wide range of written documents:

- 66 poster signs
- 43 flyers and brochures
- 22 instruction manuals
- 18 white papers and reports
- 14 poster presentations
- 6 radio, TV and print ads
- 5 web sites, 2 PowerPoint presentations
- 16 letters, forms, logos and other materials

One section alone submitted over 7,000 pages of research on green construction options. Others produced very professional brochures, print and radio advertisements, scripts for use in freshmen orientation (to encourage recycling and waste reduction) and the unique "stall stories"—one page information sheets designed to be slipped into holders in residence hall toilet stalls. Clients included the Clemson University Environmental Committee, Housing (green building, recycling,



waste management), Calhoun Fields (organic gardening, free range poultry), Farmer's Market (locally and organically grown products), dining services (waste reduction) and several local schools (design of community gardens.)

The written products that the students produced for the clients will advance the clients' goals to improve the environmental sustainability and awareness of the Clemson campus and community. In addition to these tangible products, the projects also led to significant changes in the students' own environmental awareness. Teachers of the classes report that students:

- Changed their habits to become more sustainable by reducing their use of clothes dryers, printing drafts of their documents on recycled paper, making efforts to recycle glass and plastic products and so forth,
- Became more aware of the volume of waste on campus and the costs of disposing of it,
- Began to understand the complexity of environmental policies and practices,
- Saw themselves as agents of change in the university and community.

Challenges and Responses

Although we haven't heard any complaints, the project was obviously much more time consuming than traditional courses. The faculty organizers prepared a manual of teaching resources as well as a booklet for prospective clients. Individual instructors had a more challenging evaluation task than usual- recall the 7,000 pages of research prepared for just one section! Finding enough clients with truly meaningful projects was a bit of a challenge initially, although prospective campus clients are now seeking out the faculty members in hopes of participating next year. Finding the time to keep up with student needs was undoubtedly a challenge for the clients. Some clients managed the time demands by asking that one "project manager" be the primary contact point, ensuring that requests were not duplicated and best use was made of everyone's time.

ENGAGEMENT & SUPPORT

Leaders and Supporters

The idea for the project arose from faculty members committed to service learning as well as to environmental improvement. Their energy and enthusiasm was communicated to participating faculty members and carried the project forward.

Funding

Funding for planning came from the Sustainable Universities Initiative. The Department of English paid faculty for the 11 sections of the courses.

CLOSING COMMENT

Peter Skewes is a faculty member who worked with students developing materials to promote the planned Clemson Farmer's Market, which will highlight locally grown, and sometimes organically grown, agricultural products. He notes that traditional faculty reward systems are very clear about research and publication and very unclear about the value of participating in projects such as this. However, he said, "This has been an incredible experience and I'm pretty sure I've changed more students' thinking by doing this than I would by writing a few more papers. They worked so hard, and did such a good job—I'm just astonished. I'm not sure I could have found anyone to pay to provide the kind of services they gave me, but if I did, it would have cost at least \$30,000."