Francis Marion University
Pee Dee, South Carolina
Spring 2002, Environmental Literacy

BACKGROUND

Campus Profile

A small liberal arts university with a total enrollment of nearly 4,500 students. Francis Marion University (FMU) is comprised of 12 academic departments, more than 30 programs of study and a variety of cooperative and pre-professional programs structured into three schools: the Francis Marion College of Liberal Arts, the School of Business and the School of Education. The university employs over 200 faculty members of which 84 percent hold terminal degrees in their field. Additionally, FMU boasts a student/faculty ratio of 15 to 1 and an average class size of 20. *U.S. News and World Report* has ranked FMU as having one of the more diverse student bodies.

Established in 1970, Francis Marion University was founded in response to an overwhelming need for a public higher education institution in the Pee Dee region of South Carolina. The majority of students who come to FMU are first in their families to attend university. Nearly 93% of FMU's students are from the Pee Dee region of South Carolina. The Pee Dee area includes the following counties: Chesterfield, Clarendon, Darlington, Dillon, Florence, Georgetown, Horry, Lee, Marion, Marlboro, Sumter, and Williamsburg. The Pee Dee region is one of the most economically and educationally disadvantaged areas of South Carolina, marked by high unemployment, low educational attainment and growing illiteracy.

Group/Class Profile

Amelia Wallace Vernon- volunteer and financial supporter.
Dr. Jeffery Camper-FMU Biology Professor, advisor to project, specifically biodiversity study & herpetology.
Dr. Gerald Long-FMU Biology Professor, advisor to project, specifically plant identification and the guidebook.
Dr. Julia Krebs-FMU Biology Department Chair, supervised guidebook and oversea internship.
Travis Knowles-FMU Biology Professor, advisor for biodiversity study and guidebook.
Dr. John Mattox-FMU Physics Professor, chair of Wallace Woods Committee.
John Liston-Photojournalist for the *Morning News*, graphic design of guidebook, signs, and brochures.
Angela Payton-FMU Publications Editor, advisor to all written materials.
Lisa Pike-FMU Biology Professor, publicity during Earth Day celebration.
Jim McGuire-Coordinator for after-school programs, promoted trail via Chamber of Commerce and school districts
Dr. Larry Swails-retired FMU Biology Professor, advisor on plant identification.
Dr. Timothy Shannon-FMU Biology Professor, advisor on funding sources.
Paige Grooms-student, assisted with biodiversity study, trail upkeep and as a volunteer tour guide.

Candace Smith-student, assisted with biodiversity study, trail upkeep and as a volunteer tour guide.
Ty Hardyman-student, assisted with biodiversity study.
Ashley Fowler-student, current intern.
Haley Drew-student, current intern.

Contacts

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GOALS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Short-Term Goals

The goals and accomplishments for this project are intertwined and ongoing. Short-term goals that were met include the biodiversity study, the establishment and upkeep of coverboards and tree frog retreats and the introduction of the Wallace Woods trail to surrounding school districts as an educational outlet for a variety of subjects including art, history and of course, ecology/biology. Additionally, guided tours were, and continue to be, offered to visitors. To aid the tour, a guidebook was developed and will be printed soon for distribution. Publicity materials for the Wallace Woods trail include a brochure detailing the rich content of the trail and its importance to the Pee Dee region. The trail will become a focal point during future Earth Day celebrations.

Jennifer Liston explains the ecology of Wallace Woods during one of the free public nature walks.

Long-Term Goals

Long-term goals include the firm establishment of an internship program within the Biology Department. Prospective students will receive additional credits for maintaining the condition of the trail and for providing guided tours for visitors to the trail. Moreover, there is an effort underway to have the university recognize the Wallace Woods trail in all of its publicity materials including the Student Handbook, University Catalog and the official University map. Other possibilities that are being explored include using the Wallace Woods trail as a curriculum enhancement for many university courses. Art faculty can use the trail as a still-life representation for its students; history faculty can place the Wallace Woods trail within the historical context of the University's setting, and, of course, the Biology Department can utilize the diverse content of the trail for a host of its courses.

Perhaps the most important goal to attain is the appreciation of the flora and fauna of the Wallace Woods trail, and this will only be accomplished by attracting as many visitors as possible. To that end, a website is being designed to showcase the beauty and diversity of the Wallace Woods trail. Also, a PowerPoint presentation has been created to educate the public

about the Wallace Woods trail. One clear use of future presentations will be for student teachers that can use technology to teach the biological and ecological significance of the Wallace Woods trail.

Challenges and Responses
The biggest obstacle of the Wallace Woods trail project was time. There was not enough time and human resources to accomplish the number of tasks that came to mind. To meet the goals set, I scaled back some of the more ambitious ideas and worked on those that I could directly impact. If I did this over again, I would set goals that I could accomplish myself and add additional tasks as people volunteered to help.

Dr. Gerald Long and his daughter Emily take a walk in Wallace Woods to identify the many interesting plants that need to be labeled.

ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT

Funding and Staffing
I had $1,200 support from NWF and $1,500 from other sources.

National Wildlife Federation's Campus Ecology Program
The NWF Campus Ecology program's fellowship grant is directly responsible for the Wallace Woods trail project because it provided the catalyst for undertaking such a project and lended credibility as well.

OUTREACH, EDUCATION AND PRESS

The Wallace Woods trail was given extensive coverage by both the university and community. Articles and other outreach materials from a host of sources are in the appendix. Additionally, faculty members are interested enough in the trail to include it in their course curriculum. School districts as well as private schools and home school groups have expressed an interest in field trips to the Wallace Woods trail.

CLOSING REMARKS

Find others who share your enthusiasm and care for the project(s).
Never forget that creating a project for environmental education is like throwing a pebble into a pond. That initial pebble may seem small, but it causes ripples throughout the pond which will have lasting effects in the community. In many ways, even the smallest effort creates a ripple, furthering the effect in silent yet potent ways. The results may not always be immediately visible, but difference is there.