

# ACADEMIC PROGRAMS



College of Agricultural,  
Consumer and  
Environmental Sciences

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

From the Office of the Associate Dean

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## **Enhancing Learning** with Technology 2000-2001

### **Opening the Door to Class Web Pages in ACES**

*Question* - How can we insure that students can easily find up-to-date information on any ACES course? That enrolled students easily find the home page for their course? *Answer* - The ACES Course Portal at: <http://classes.aces.uiuc.edu/>

Phase one of this portal is complete. Every ACES course has a web page with the official course description that also links to a course web site, if any. But we need to do more. Students deciding on courses would benefit from an abstract of the course instead of just a generic catalog description. They would also benefit from the ability to search for courses based on different criteria.

To address these needs, the next phase of the ACES Course Portal will provide a searchable database of all ACES courses. In order for this project to be a success, collaboration with departments and instructors is required to maintain up-to-date information on abstracts, course URLs, and other fields of the database. The plan is for departments to control such information for their own courses but upload it to a central database. The database will be accessible from the Course Portal on the ACES home page but will also be available from a department page with the same look and feel as other department pages. So, it is a centralized resource that only has to be built once, and the departments control their course listings with the access to the database.

We are also working with departments to help instructors build actual web sites for their courses. We are working with ITCS to finalize a list of web services for instructors. We coordinate closely with CET and Web Tech to make their services easily available to ACES faculty. Finally, we are working to support the distance learning needs of ACES

faculty. We encourage you to contact us to explore using the web to supplement on-campus courses, or to reach off-campus students. These are both major goals for the College of ACES in the 2000-2001 academic year.

Thanks to John Schmitz and Don Meyer for providing this information and giving leadership to the ACES course web site efforts.

## ACES Welcomes 674 New Students

The College welcomed 574 new freshmen and 100 new transfer students at the beginning of Fall 2000. Once again the College enrolled more freshman than the target set by campus. The new freshman class was chosen from nearly 1,200 applications; 74 percent of the admitted students actually enrolled (campus average is 51 percent). No major shifts in degree programs occurred.

The number of freshmen per department stands at 158 in ACE, 34 in AG ENG, 107 in AN SCI, 18 in CR SC, 92 in FSHN, 98 in HCD, and 67 in NRES. Total undergraduate enrollment in ACES stands at 2,235 for the current academic year.

## ACES Grads Placed Well

The Student Development and Placement office in Academic Programs conducts an annual employment survey of May graduates. The self-reported data from May 2000 graduates show that (for 143 respondents of the 360 graduates) the average starting salary was \$31,725, an increase of \$2,700 over the previous year. Consistent with recent years, about 25 percent of the grads are

enrolled in graduate or professional school.

## D'Arcy Selected for National Teaching Award

Cleora J. D'Arcy, Professor in Crop Sciences and Assistant Dean in Academic Programs, received the USDA Food and Agricultural Sciences Excellence in National Teaching Award. Cleo is one of only two award recipients at the national level who were recognized with eight regional winners during the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges meeting this month in San Antonio.

Dr. D'Arcy has been recognized in several ways for her excellence in teaching. She has received the College of ACES Senior Faculty Award for Excellence in Teaching, the NACTA Teaching Award of Merit, the Field and Furrow Club Outstanding Instructor Award, and has been named a NACTA Teacher Fellow. She has been on the Incomplete List for 12 years, is a member of the ACES Academy of Teaching Excellence, and is a Fellow in the American Association for the Advancement of Sciences and the American Phytopathological Society. She is co-PI for an NSF grant in undergraduate education.

A former student wrote, "Dr. D'Arcy is able to demonstrate how science is relevant and to make students think about science in relation to current world issues in a way that engages the students and forces them to think independently. It is obvious that she wants her students to succeed both in and out of the classroom. This experience has shown me that a person can be a serious researcher, a fine educator and still remain completely approachable. That is a goal I will strive to attain."

Dr. D'Arcy joins four other ACES faculty in receiving the award. Phil Buriak received the national award in 1999. Robert Skirvin (1997), Darrell Miller (1993) and Shelly Schmidt (1992) have been recognized with regional awards.

Congratulations, Cleo!

## Instructors Study Cognition

Several ACES faculty participated in a three-session Spice Box Seminar on cognition. Participants learned more about writing student learning goals clearly so that student assessment can be associated with teaching goals. Those goals were then reviewed to determine the level of cognitive

level that the instructor *expects* of students. Finally, the instructors reviewed student assignments and test questions to determine the cognitive level the instructor *assesses* student learning.

Participants were relieved to know that there is no "right" answer. Each instructor must decide at what level of cognition should the instruction be geared and the students be tested. But participants were also surprised with the lack of clarity in learner outcomes goals and the potential disconnect between teaching intent and student assessment. Again, there is no one answer, but all agreed that students should be tested according to the cognitive expectations rather than what is easiest to grade!

The seminar series may be repeated during Spring 2000. Watch for an announcement.

## Career Expo a Success for Students and Recruiters

Nearly 600 ACES students participated in the annual ACES Career Expo in early October at the Illini Union. Students had the opportunity to meet with recruiters from 85 different businesses and agencies represented at the Expo. Nearly every degree option in ACES was represented by at least one recruiter, giving the students the opportunity to learn about internship and job prospects in their chosen field. Thanks to faculty and administrators who encouraged student participation and attended this important activity.

## Student Financial Support

Ever wonder to what extent ACES undergraduates receive financial support? The UIUC Office of Student Financial Aid provided the following information for 1999-00.

A total of 1,493 ACES students received some form of financial aid, totaling more than \$9 million. The four largest sources, in terms of amount of funds and number of students, were Federal Direct Loans (\$3M, 965 students), Illinois Student Assistance Commission (\$1.5M, 445 students), Federal PLUS loans (\$1.2M, 168 students), and UIUC grants and scholarships (\$1.2M, 1,043 students).

## Study Abroad Reaches 20 Percent

During the 99-00 academic year, 120 ACES students participated in an international study experience, ranging from a two-week study tour to year-long enrollment in a foreign institution. That number translates into approximately 20 percent of the undergraduate students in ACES completing an international experience while a student at UIUC, matching the campus goal for study abroad.

How does this happen? First, the College has made international experience a priority, through academic programming and through full-time staff leadership. Secondly, the College partners with campus, so that ACES students can take advantage of study abroad opportunities in the College as well as through the UIUC Study Abroad Program.

ACES maintains student exchange agreements with more than a dozen universities, plus offers internship and Discovery Courses in others. If you've not viewed the new ACES Study Abroad booklet, stop by 109 Mumford. And if you've not suggested a study abroad experience to a student, do it!

## ACES Virtual URL Service

In the 'old days' before all UIUC staff had an e-mail alias, it was a nuisance if your e-mail account changed. You would have to write everyone to provide your updated address. But with an e-mail alias, your address never changes even though your actual email account may move to different servers over the course of your career. A Virtual URL is like your e-mail alias. The Virtual URL remains the same even though your course web pages may be hosted on different servers. You give out your Virtual URL that never changes and it redirects the browser to the current course site.

Easy to remember and intuitive, the format is always: <http://classes.aces.uiuc.edu/> {course rubric}. (e.g.: <http://classes.aces.uiuc.edu/fshn101>) Try it out for your classes -- if you find it doesn't redirect to the correct site, contact Don Meyer at <dlmeyer@uiuc.edu> to update the URL for your class. The Virtual URL service is already used by many ACES instructors and it is being incorporated into the Class Portal project. Contact John Schmitz or your department liaison for more information.

## Update Your PH

No, we're not talking the acidity of your soil. It's your electronic directory entry!

Did you know that your electronic directory entry is not updated for you when you move offices or change your phone number? Now you can make those changes easily via the web.

Why change? As the College continues to expand web-based course offerings, the "front pages" will be database driven. In other words, data will be retrieved from existing sites, and some instructor information will be gathered from your PH Directory file.

So check yours out and make the needed updates at this web site. <https://www-s.uiuc.edu/ede> Be sure to read the URL carefully; noted the "s" after http.

Then just follow the instructions. You cannot make a major mistake; the site does not allow it! And thanks for updating your PH.

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## How Well Do You Communicate With Students?

By Bob Bohlken and Bayo Oludaja, Northwest Missouri State University in *The Teaching Professor*.

In this era of “electronic” and “distant” learning, the “real” classroom instructor has one significant advantage – an interpersonal relationship between the instructor and students. We refer to this relationship as the instructor’s “socio-communicate style.” We define that concept further by characterizing it as the instructor’s skill in initiating, adapting, and responding to the students’ communications.

These relationships between instructor and students are very much related to the instructor’s ability to see his or her role as a facilitator of learning rather than a source of information or knowledge. We can no longer lecture at the students from behind the podium and assume that the students listen to us as if we are the fountain of knowledge.

The first step in understanding our role as facilitators of learning is to develop an awareness of how the students perceive our communication styles for teaching. Listening becomes an essential skill. We have developed an instrument designed to give you feedback on your listening and interactive skills from the students’ perspective. We recommend that you have your students complete the following instrument, after three weeks of the course. To calculate means after students have completed the form, assign a 7 to the “seldom” side of the scale and a 1 to the “often” side. The lower the average, the better the score. This instrument is intended to be a self-analysis of the variables that our research has shown to be significant influences in classroom relationship listening. It will provide excellent feedback on your classroom communication skills.

### Assessing My Listening and Communication Skills

Students: I’m interested in obtaining some feedback on my communication skills. Would you rate me on the items below? I appreciate your feedback and will use it to try to make my communication with the class even more effective.

	Seldom	Often
1. I listen well when you speak.	_____	_____
2. I make eye contact with you while you are speaking.	_____	_____
3. I ask you questions about what you have said.	_____	_____
4. I appear to anticipate with interest what you are saying.	_____	_____
5. I respond vocally (uh huh) to what you say.	_____	_____
6. I respond to what you say with facial expression and head movement.	_____	_____
7. I attend to what you are saying and am not preoccupied with other thoughts or time.	_____	_____
8. I appear to have a purpose for listening to you and show an interest in what you say.	_____	_____
9. I acknowledge your presence in and outside of class.	_____	_____
10. I expect you to listen to me.	_____	_____
11. I make reference and/or “tags on” to what you have said.	_____	_____
12. I appear to have a relaxed demeanor while listening to you.	_____	_____
13. I make the class open, personal, relevant, and involving.	_____	_____
14. I am dynamic in both action and language.	_____	_____
15. I provide a purpose for you to listen and learn.	_____	_____
16. I provide examples and comparisons that create mental images for you.	_____	_____
17. I appear organized but flexible in my classroom communication.	_____	_____
18. I demonstrate a sense of humor.	_____	_____
19. Our class is interesting.	_____	_____
20. In class I encourage interaction as well as coverage of course content.	_____	_____