

HISTORY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY AND ENVIRONMENTAL  
RESOURCES AT NORTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY, 1979-2008

VI. UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES<sup>1</sup>

Although extra-curricular activities have always played an important role in the Department's undergraduate program, since 1980 they have increased in number, depth, and kind so that by any reasonable standard the program today is far richer than it ever has been. This is due in part to a broadening of the scope of the Department's offerings but also because there is now more financial support for such activities than there was in the past.

In 1980 extra-curricular activities were focused on the Forestry Club, the Student SAF Chapter, and the local chapter of the forestry honorary society Xi Sigma Pi. Don Steensen and Tom Gemmer served as advisors for these groups. The Forestry Club had the larger membership and typically was involved in more activities. Activity in the SAF Chapter was limited. Typical activities for the Forestry Club were the fall Rolleo at the Hill Forest, regular participation in the Southern Forestry School Conclave where forestry skills were contested with the other Southern Forestry Schools, occasional participation in other woodsmanship competitions, and a spring social/dance, the Loggers Brawl. In addition, the Club regularly was involved in community service activities, such as Wake County's Wood for Warmth. Much of the money to support Club activities came from jobs felling or clearing trees; largely because of potential liability problems, this activity was progressively curtailed. As student enrollment declined, membership in the Forestry Club and the Student SAF Chapter also declined and, in the mid-1980s, the two were combined for financial, membership, and program purposes. This combination was dissolved in 2001. In the early 1980s, Jim Gregory became the Forestry Club advisor, assisted by Larry Jervis, and Bill Smith became the advisor to the Student SAF Chapter. Joe Roise succeeded Gregory as Forestry Club advisor and Smith as SAF Chapter advisor in 1996, with Bronson Bullock taking over the Forestry Club in 2003.

The Rolleo and Conclave deserve special mention. Of all undergraduate activities these are as important in 2007 as they were in 1980. The Rolleo is always held at the Hill Forest in mid-autumn and involves an inter-class competition in technical and skill forestry events. As might be expected, the seniors usually win but upsets have

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<sup>1</sup> Much information for this section was obtained from Pinetums, the yearbook of the College published each year. It is interesting that the changes between 1980 and 2007 in the character of the College, and Department, seen in so many areas, are reflected clearly in the Pinetum. In the early 1980s most coverage of forestry student activity was limited to the Rolleo, the Conclave, and the SAF. By the mid 00's although those traditions were still covered, a far more diverse array of undergraduate activities was included, particularly in the wildlife program and the international arena.

occurred. The program starts early in the morning and always ends with a barbeque or pig-picking and night-time festivities. In 2002 a new tradition was begun when VPI was invited to participate. The Conclave involves all 14 Forestry programs in the southeast and its location rotates among the various schools. Competition is held in both technical and physical skill events. Preparation, practice, and participation are extremely time consuming and the trip itself, when it is in Texas or Arkansas, can be grueling, particularly for the faculty who accompany the group. NC State has hosted the Conclave twice since 1980, at Ellerbee in 1987 and again in 1999. Hosting the Conclave is a major responsibility and both times students took care of the majority of the planning. NC State's team has usually been among the top 5 finishers in total score. Stephen F. Austin and Arkansas-Monticello, it seems, have had a lock on either first or second between 1980 and 2007.

In the fall of 1987 the Forestry Club, working with Larry Jarvis, arranged an Alumni Symposium consisting of a dinner and round table discussion with recent graduates about their experiences and how their education did (or did not) prepare them for employment. In 1989 this program was held on the same weekend as the Rolleo which served as an enticement for alumni to attend. The program continued through 1991, was not held in 1992 when the National SAF meeting was in Richmond, and did not resume thereafter.

During the 1980s the student SAF Chapter, with Bill Smith playing an important role by urging the best students to join SAF and advising the group, became much more active. In the fall of 1984 a group of students traveled with Smith and Art Cooper to Washington, DC where they met with US Forest Service staff (even had lunch with the Chief!), and also visited the SAF National Office and offices of conservation and forest industry groups. This trip was repeated through 1988 and was generally agreed to be an important benefit to the students participating. Bill Smith insisted that the group always visit the Viet Nam memorial during the time in Washington. This experience always had a sobering effect on everyone.

Another activity begun by Smith was student attendance at SAF professional meetings. Although students had attended both the Appalachian and National meetings off and on in the past, Smith essentially made this an annual affair, aided by increased funding from the College. During the 1980s more students attended the APSAF meeting with the number attending the national meeting usually no more than 6. However, when Joe Roise took over as advisor to the SAF chapter after Smith's departure to the US Forest Service, and as more money became available from the College, much larger groups attended the national meeting. Twenty or more students attended meetings in Memphis, Traverse City, Portland OR, Denver, and Pittsburg. Virtually the entire senior and junior classes attended, and worked at, the National meeting in Winston-Salem in 2002. Smaller numbers traveled to Washington, DC, Buffalo, Edmonton, and Ft. Worth. A particularly important feature that Roise added to these trips, and to which he devoted a great

amount of personal time and effort, was pre- or post-meeting field trips. A forest management-oriented trip was taken to the Olympic Peninsula after the 1999 Portland meeting, a wilderness trip to Rocky Mountain National Park before the 2001 Denver meeting, another wilderness trip to Mt. Robison Provincial Park near Edmonton, CA, in 2004, and a trip was taken to the Olympic Peninsula after the 2007 meeting in Portland, OR. The 2001 trip was especially memorable as the group was in the Rocky Mountain wilderness when the tragic events of September 11 occurred. Attendance at the January APSAF meeting, usually by a smaller group, has continued regularly up to the present. As Roise points out, these trips represent a sizable investment of time and resources in developing student professionalism.

The forestry honor society, the NC State chapter (Mu) of Xi Sigma Pi, had been in existence 40 years in 1980. Don Steensen was serving as its advisor and did so until his death in 1989, with Rich Braham serving as co-advisor from 1987-89 and advisor from 1989 to present. In the 1980s, Xi regularly held a wine and chili dinner in the fall (with Steensen providing his trademark chili), a senior steak dinner, a spring picnic, and provided free tutoring services for the Department. During this time membership was opened to deserving students from other departments in the College. Now Xi's activities are generally limited to its initiation banquet, at which an average of 35 students are accepted as members, and a spring picnic.

Growth of the Natural Resources and Environmental Technology curricula led to an interest in participation in professional affairs by those students. In 1995 a student chapter of the National Association of Environmental Professionals, open to students in the Colleges of Natural Resources and Agriculture and Life Sciences, was established with Gary Blank as advisor. In its early years the group held meetings with speakers, sometimes met with the local chapter of NCAEP, sent a few of its members to national meetings, and participated in local environmental improvement programs. Eventually students who wanted the organization to become an advocacy group rather than a professional affiliate severed ties with NCAEP and became the Student Organization for Sustainability. As of 2007 that group had died, sustainability in action appearing to have been the groups' most immediate problem.

As minorities became a more visible presence in the College, a chapter of Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS) was established in 2000. This organization "promotes academic and professional advancement by empowering minorities in agriculture, natural resources, and related sciences." Students in the Department are participating in this organization. Among its activities are a fall cookout to recruit new members, professional presentations, community service work, and a trip to the organization's National Career Fair.

When the Fisheries and Wildlife Program joined the Department in 2003 it brought along its own set of extracurricular activities.

Chief among these is the Leopold Wildlife Club, which has had a long tradition of providing hands-on experiences as well as formal presentations and trips to students. The Wildlife students have their own Conclave featuring competition in technical and skill events.

In recent years the College has instituted service-learning programs that work in conjunction with a collaborative teaching and learning strategy housed in the Provost's office. In Forestry and Environmental Resources this experience has been centered in George Hess's Natural Resources Measurements course, where students have been working with Wake County's Water Quality Committee to assist in developing standards for controlling runoff, and in Bronson Bullock's forest measurements classes where students taught forest measurements to middle school classes and participated in year-long community service projects.

The most dramatic change in extra-curricular activities has been the large number of opportunities for international study now available to undergraduates. Beginning in the early 1990s trips abroad for forestry students, with some funding from the Department, were begun. Jan Laarman initially played a major role in developing and leading these trips; after his departure in the late 1990s Erin Sills took on this responsibility. The first seven trips (1992 to 1998) were club activities of the International Society of Tropical Foresters. Graduate students - and a few undergraduates - in ISTF helped raise funds and plan the trips, which generally took place over a couple weeks in the early summer. Beginning in 2000, faculty started organizing and offering study tours at different times of year, including many over spring break. These tours have attracted more undergraduate participation. Since 2000, there have been study tours to the Mexican Yucatan (2000), Paraguay (2001), Costa Rica (2002 and 2005), Chile (2003 and 2007), Ghana (2004), China (2006), and Turkey (2007). Faculty leaders have included Ted Shear, Lee Allen, Fred Cubbage, Jacek Siry, Dan Robison, Subhrendu Pattanayak, Carol Love, Bronson Bullock, Fikrit Isik, John Frampton, Barry Goldfarb, Sarah Warren, Bailian Li, Susan Moore, and Doug Frederick. In addition, wildlife students have for several years gone to Namibia, and a wildlife study tour to Nicaragua is planned for 2008. Funds from the Nicholson Trust have been used to support trips by Swedish students to NC State (in collaboration with Purdue) in even numbered years and by NC State students to Sweden in odd numbered years. Gary Blank has coordinated this activity, including study tours to the Mexican Yucatan and to northern and Central Europe with undergraduates from NC State, Purdue, and SLU. A small number of undergraduates have also spent semesters studying at universities in other countries (including Finland and South Korea) through NC State's exchange programs, with scholarship support from the Department. Finally, some undergraduate are members of the International Society of Tropical Foresters. These new opportunities for international experience give today's students an opportunity and outlook on forestry and natural resources to which students of the early 1980s never had access.