

History of the Field Ecology Summer Regional Governor's School

as found in the 2020 Administrative Procedures Manual

Years in Operation: 35 (1985-2019)

The Field Ecology Summer Regional Governor's School at Dabney S. Lancaster Community College, sponsored by the Virginia State Department of Education, was under directorship of Dr. Harold S. Adams since its inception in 1985 through 1999. This program initially served two different populations of students: a group of eighth and ninth graders for two weeks followed by a group of tenth and eleventh graders for the same length of time. Eighth and ninth graders were provided optional college level credit of 3 quarter hours (at their personal expense) for PHED 126 (Wilderness Encounter) whereas the tenth and eleventh graders were provided the option for the same number of credits (at personal expense) in BIOL 264 (Quantitative Field Ecology) for their participation. Since few tenth and eleventh graders attended and their interest level was not nearly that of eighth and ninth graders, we decided to serve only the latter group after 1985. In 1986 and 1987, the eighth and ninth grade participants were provided the option of receiving 3 credits (personal expense) in PHED 126 (Wilderness Encounter) for their participation.

After the change to semesters in 1988, optional credit (paid for by participant) in PED 183 (Outdoor Adventures I, 2 cr) was offered. In 1989 and 1990, the program was lengthened to three weeks and participants earned a total of five college semester credits (cost paid by grant monies) for their participation; the courses were Biology 270 (General Ecology, 3 cr) and PED 183 (Outdoor Adventures I, 2 cr). Additionally, two DSLCC college students joined the program as mentor-aides. From 1990 to 1999, participants have earned five college semester credits [Biology 270 (General Ecology, 2 cr) and Biology 215 (Plant Life in Virginia, 3 cr)] upon successful completion of the program. In 2000, the course credits were changed again to Natural Science 95 (Plant Life, 3 cr.) and Natural Science 98 (Ecology, 2 cr.) The courses were slightly modified in 2004 to Natural Science 95 (Ecology, 3 cr.) and Natural Science 98 (Forest Ecology, 2 cr.).

In 1995, a new position was created. Selected from among K-8 science teachers from schools in the service area of the college, this instructor-aide benefits the program by helping in some of the teaching and preparation and benefits from the program by learning science content and methodology. Due to difficulty in finding applicants for the instructor-aide position, it was dropped in 1999.

In September 1999, Dr. Adams turned the directorship over to Dr. Susan W. Rollinson. The program was changed again in 2004 to better accommodate family schedules of the participants. The first two weeks emphasized general ecological principles, while the optional third week focused on forest ecology. This change did not improve recruiting and retention of participants, and the previous three-week program was reinstated for 2005.

For the 2006 session, renovation of DSLCC's science labs limited the space available for the Field Ecology program. The reduced size of the temporary facilities made it necessary to reduce the

number of students accepted to 16 (rather than 20) for this year only. The full-size program of 20 students resumed for the 2007 session, and a total of 22 completed the 2008 session.

In November 2007, the directorship for the Field Ecology program was assumed by E. Jane DeGroot and Joshua S. Craft. Both also served in the capacity of course instructors. In 2011 program Dr. Susan Rollinson replaced Mr. Craft as co-director/instructor with Ms. DeGroot.

An advanced curriculum available to rising ninth and tenth grade students who completed the Governor's School in a previous year was added to the program in 2011. This proved to be highly valuable for both the program and the second-year participants, and continued in 2012 and 2013.

As a response to declining interest in the program, a major change was made for 2014. The program was split into two independent 7-day sessions. The first session focuses on general ecology and continues our long-term salamander study in the Laurel Fork area of the George Washington National Forest. The second session focuses on forest ecology and performs a forestry study at Greenbrier State Forest in West Virginia. Each session has a maximum enrollment of 16 and a minimum of 12 participants. In 2015, the sessions were lengthened to 8 days each.

Service Area

The region is a predominantly rural area with the forest products industry as the major source of income. One of the largest paper mills in the United States is located only ten miles away at Covington. The campus of Dabney S. Lancaster Community College, setting of the Governor's School, is one mile west of downtown Clifton Forge on a 117-acre tract. It is centrally located with respect to localities from which participants are selected.

Special Features for Field Ecology

DSLCC is cradled in the very heart of the ridge-and-valley terrain of the mid-Appalachians which are clothed by predominantly oak forests. Fifteen miles to the west, extending into West Virginia, the Allegheny Plateau provides a totally different topography and vegetation. Approximately fifteen miles to the east, one enters the Great (Shenandoah) Valley of Virginia with its relatively flat terrain. Continuing fifteen miles further to the east, the Blue Ridge Mountains are encountered. The bulk of the activities of the Governor's School occur in the science laboratories on the campus of Dabney S. Lancaster Community College. The College is surrounded by the George Washington and Jefferson National Forests and is bounded on three sides by the Jackson River, a river that has been impacted by man's industrial and recreational activities. Virginia's only remaining major unpolluted stream, the Cowpasture River, forms the James River at its confluence with the Jackson River only five miles from the campus. Further, one of Virginia's outstanding recreational sites, Douthat State Park, is only six miles away. The Monongahela National Forest, several designated wilderness areas, and other unique habitats are within 30-60 minutes driving time of DSLCC.

Philosophy

We believe that gifted and talented eighth through tenth grade youth in the service area of Dabney S. Lancaster Community deserve a challenging program that is not possible to offer in their home institutions. This program should concentrate on one of the most important areas in the field of biology today—ecology. Further, it should inspire in our academically gifted participants a respect for the natural environment that is their heritage, a heritage that might soon be lost if theirs and succeeding generations are not taught to cherish and preserve it. The aim of the Governor's School is to awaken an awareness and interest in native plant and animal life of Virginia as a rich and varied natural resource. As such, emphasis is placed on the relationships between organisms and their natural environments, and on the role and impact of humans on these ecosystems. The program should enhance critical thinking skills of participants and their understanding of how science works. In addition to challenging their intellectual skills, we feel the program should be equally demanding of their physical capacities in order that they might have a complete sense of accomplishment at the program's end.