



Society of American Foresters
Committee on Accreditation
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Committee on Accreditation Summary Findings and Action

University of Arkansas - Monticello 2011

Current Review:

Reaccreditation

Currently Accredited Curriculum:

Forestry curriculum leading to a BS in Forestry.

Accreditation Expires: 2011

Previous Reviews:

Initial Accreditation: 1984

Previous Onsite Visit: 2000

Interim Review:

Substantive Change:

Progress Report: 2001

INTRODUCTION

An SAF Visiting Team was invited to the University of Arkansas on April 4-7, 2011 to review the Forestry Option within the Forest Resources curriculum leading to the Bachelor of Science degree as administered within the School of Forest Resources. The currently accredited Forestry degree is being combined with the Wildlife Management degree into one Forest Resources degree with options in wildlife and forestry. These degrees are being combined to meet University enrollment guidelines. The Forestry Option within the new degree is the same in substance as the current Forestry degree. UAM seeks accreditation of the Forestry Option.

SUMMARY FINDINGS

STANDARD I: FORESTRY PROGRAM MISSION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

The mission of the University, the mission for the School of Forest Resources, educational objectives for the SFR and two professional objectives are clearly expressed in the University Catalog and are on the School's website. Providing a broad liberal arts and professional natural resources education, enlarging the body of scientific knowledge, preparing students for employment, transferring technology, and instilling a sense of professionalism are reflective of forestry as an interdisciplinary profession that must meet diverse needs and values of multiple constituencies. It is evident that these objectives are regularly considered and successfully addressed throughout the curriculum.

The standard is met.

STANDARD II: CURRICULUM

The Forest Resources degree (Forestry Option) requires 124 semester credit hours partitioned as follows: general education (44 credit hours); core (36 credit hours); and Forestry Option courses (44 credit hours). Of the 44 credit hours required within the Forestry Option, 33 credit hours are explicitly specified and the remaining 11 credit hours are free electives.

General Education

Table 1. General Education Requirements – required courses and restricted electives:

	Communications	Science & Mathematics	Social Sciences & Humanities
Required	9	10	3
Restricted Electives	6	4	12
Total	15	14	15

Students receive a solid foundation in all three broad subject areas. The lack of suitable courses in supporting departments/schools at UAM, particularly in the areas of economics and basic statistics, has resulted in much of this material being brought in-house. While contributing significantly to the teaching responsibilities of the forestry faculty, it also demonstrates the SFR's strong commitment to providing a quality education.

Professional Education

Table 2. Professional Forest Resource Education (semester hours)

Ecology & Biology	Measurement of Forest Resources	Management of Forest Resources	Policy, Economics, and Administration	Total
19.25 - 20.50	15.0 - 15.50	16.0 - 16.75	11.5	69

This table reflects the 36 Core hours required by all forestry majors as well as the 33 hours required by the Forestry Option. The curriculum provides appropriate balance between the four subject areas and many courses have labs that provide opportunities to develop field skills. Many of the measurement skills are developed in a 6 week field camp. Both Forestry and Wildlife Management students take the senior capstone course “Integrated Resource Planning and Management”, which requires a collaborative effort and integrates concepts learned throughout the curriculum.

The school has a commendable approach to tracking core competencies. Competencies are identified by each instructor and communicated to the students at the beginning of each course. Students must demonstrate proficiency on each competency in order to receive a grade above a D for the course. Methods of demonstrating competency include test questions, use of field techniques, and one-on-one discussions with an instructor. Student performance on these competencies is tracked throughout their undergraduate career. Their performance in the capstone is correlated with their performance on various prerequisites competencies.

Alumni and employers agree that UAM graduates possess good analytical and problem-solving skills and are well prepared for employment.

Ethics are specifically addressed in the policy course. This section of the course covers the SAF Code of Conduct and requires the students to evaluate various ethical scenarios and dilemmas. Ethical issues are integrated into various other courses as well.

The Standard is met.

STANDARD III: FORESTRY PROGRAM ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION

The University of Arkansas at Monticello has nine schools, including the School of Forest Resources, reporting to the Provost/Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs for academic matters. The Dean of SFR also serves as Director of the Arkansas Forest Resources Center, and reports to the Associate Vice President for Agriculture-Research at Fayetteville for research issues, as well as to the Associate Vice President for Agriculture-Extension at Little Rock for Extension matters. The Dean has full and equal responsibilities and representation among the other Deans at the University. The Dean is responsible for planning, organizing, and directing the activities of the School and has wide latitude in development of programs and authority over, and responsibility

for, the School's budget. Responsibility for curriculum and degree requirement development rests with the faculty.

Recruiting on the UAM campus is coordinated centrally by the Office of University Relations and Student Affairs. There is an open admissions policy at the University of Arkansas at Monticello for all applicants who have a high school diploma (or equivalent) and satisfactory completion of core high school courses specified by the state.

Teaching is the primary responsibility of all UAM faculty - the SFR faculty is the only one on campus that also maintains research responsibilities. Individual instructors receive feedback through the traditional student evaluation surveys administered at the end of each semester. Student course evaluations are available to the Dean of the School as a part of the materials he uses for annual faculty performance reviews.

The necessary office equipment, software and supplies appeared to be adequate for the functioning of the administration. Renovation of existing facilities and construction of a new addition began in the spring of 2011.

Outcomes assessment in the School includes a range of components including student course evaluations, core competency linkages (discussed above), a capstone course, exit interviews, alumni surveys, employer surveys, and advisory board input. The School has an Assessment Committee and the faculty and administration take assessment seriously and are committed to the use of the various assessment tools for continuous improvement of their undergraduate programs.

The Standard is met.

STANDARD IV: FACULTY

The number of full-time-equivalent forestry faculty exceeds the SAF accreditation requirement of eight full-time faculty members. Faculty members' vitae show that they come from a variety of educational backgrounds, institutions, nationally and internationally, represent a diversity of disciplines, and teach mainly in their areas of expertise. The faculty is not ethnically or gender diverse with one female and one non-Caucasian faculty member, although this is not unusual for forestry schools generally. UAM has established procedures and protocols regarding equal opportunity employment and SFR searches for faculty have been conducted within the affirmative action guidelines throughout the advertisement and hiring processes.

Faculty retention is a concern. Of the 18 faculty hires in the past ten years, nine remain employed by SFR or UAM. This situation has often resulted in short term imbalances in teaching expertise. In order to insure courses are offered, the school has reassigned faculty, offered special topics and sought alternate courses that meet the curricular requirements. However, these commendable efforts mean some faculty may be teaching outside their areas

of expertise and that students may receive instruction from a limited number of faculty members.

Despite a lack of documented expectations, the annual review process is reported to be rigorous and evidently prevents unexpected poor results when applying for promotion and tenure. Faculty members who are poor teachers have been terminated in the recent past as a result of the significant weight placed on teaching in both annual and P&T review processes. Faculty members who remain at UAM take their teaching responsibilities very seriously, providing high quality instruction in the courses that support the forestry curriculum.

The Standard is met.

STANDARD V: STUDENTS

The School of Forest Resources is a major academic unit on the UAM campus, as well as the only forestry program in Arkansas, so forest resources-related programs are actively discussed during recruiting events. SFR hosts an annual recruitment day on campus for high school students from across the state, showcasing its curricula through demonstrations and activities set up in the section of the School Forest adjoining the campus.

Because UAM has an open enrollment policy, many students are not necessarily prepared for the academic rigor of higher education. Students entering the Forest Resources degree program in particular may misinterpret the scientific and mathematical rigor of the curriculum. Focusing recruitment activities more clearly on this seems to be resulting in higher retention. UAM offers a number of support programs for incoming students to help them adjust to campus life and the demands of a university level education. These include educational testing, tutoring, counseling, career planning, classes in study skills and remedial courses. The majority of undergraduate students are from southeast Arkansas. Gender and ethnic diversity of the student body reflects that of the forestry profession as a whole.

Students are assigned a faculty advisor to help with course scheduling as well as counsel about courses of study and careers. Undergraduate students believe most faculty members are readily accessible, approachable, willing to help them achieve success in their coursework, and sincerely dedicated to helping them receive the education they need to move into professional forestry careers. Forestry students are able to utilize the Student Development Center for help with writing resumes, seeking employment, and interviewing. UAM holds an annual career fair; forest resources-related job opportunities are posted on a bulletin board in the SFR building, and faculty advisors provide information about career and graduate school opportunities.

UAM offers a number of extracurricular opportunities including intramural sports, clubs, and involvement with campus ministries. SFR students also have opportunities to be involved with School committees and various profession-related organizations.

There is a strong sense of community among the students who are generally pleased with their academic experiences. Alumni are consistently proud of their degrees, speaking highly of how well the forestry program prepared them for either the world of work or graduate school.

The Standard is met.

STANDARD VI: PARENT INSTITUTION SUPPORT

The SFR is respected across the campus and across the state and receives support sufficient to achieve its mission. Salaries for SFR faculty on average exceed those of faculty in other UAM Schools, but are somewhat lower than at other forestry schools in the mid-South. The relatively high faculty turnover rate in recent years does not appear to be due to lack of institutional support. Faculty members have appropriate opportunities for professional development, continuing education and involvement in professional organizations.

The School has its own IT staff and budget and a replacement schedule for all computers, servers, and related hardware. It receives good budget support and is able to keep both hardware and software up to date.

Approximately 700 acres of University forests are near enough to campus to be available for afternoon labs. This forest is used for teaching, research, and work opportunities for students.

The library provides both on-line and in-print access to numerous scientific journals and other publications related to forest resources. Resources not available on site can be obtained through inter-library loan. A complete renovation and expansion of the SFR/AFRC building is planned in 2011.

UAM currently has 650 beds in its residence halls. With a current enrollment of 3500, it plans to expand capacity, particularly adding more apartment-style and interest-focused facilities. All campus facilities and grounds are clean, well-maintained, and provide a safe atmosphere conducive to learning. UAM has a planned program of building renovation and replacement across campus.

The Standard is met.

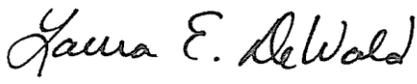
GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The faculty is commended for a very well-prepared Self-Study and for the careful attention paid to documenting SAF Standards and Areas of Study. The approach to assessing outcomes is innovative, directly tied to (and driven by) SAF Core Competencies and by all appearances, is successful. Multiple lines of evidence point to faculty who take teaching seriously, and who “go the extra mile” necessary to instill a sense of professionalism in students.

COMMITTEE ACTION

The SAF Committee on Accreditation grants accreditation through **2021**, for the Forestry Option within the Forest Resources curriculum leading to the Bachelor of Science (BS) degree as administered by the School of Forest Resources at the University of Arkansas.

The above summary findings and action by the SAF Committee on Accreditation are based upon a review of the 2011 Self-Evaluation Report, the Visiting Team Report, supplemental documentation provided to the Committee by UAM and discussions with Philip Tappe, Dean of the School of Forest Resources, University of Arkansas-Monticello and Keith Belli, Visiting Team Chair at its 2011 annual meeting.

By: 
Laura E. DeWald, Chair
SAF Committee on Accreditation

Date: January 5, 2012