

Unit Review

Teaching Overview

What majors, degree programs and certificate programs do you offer?

The Crop & Soil Sciences Department has undergone a number of changes in majors offered since the last program review. In 1998, the department offered a major in Crop Science, Environmental Soil Science, and Turfgrass Management and minors with each of these majors. Because of changes in transfer requirements and student interests, the major in Crop Science was deactivated in 2004, the Environmental Soil Science was merged with the BSFR in Forest Environmental Resources to form a BSES and BSFR in Water & Soil Resources in 2005, and the BSES in Environmental Chemistry was added in 2005. In addition, the department is home to the BSA in Agriscience & Environmental Sciences taught at the Tifton campus since 2003 and the Environmental Resource Science major taught at the Griffin campus since 2005. The department also is a contributing member of the BSAB in Applied Biotechnology Plant Science Area of Emphasis. Crop & Soil Sciences also offers an extensive course list in Turfgrass Management via distance learning that can be taken for degree credit or continuing education credit.

How do Crop & Soil Sciences academic programs and offerings affect the department's mission and goals, as well as University goals such as diversity, internationalization, or environmental literacy?

Academics are a core component of the Department of Crop & Soil Sciences mission. CRSS's mission statement includes a statement that the purpose of the department is to "Provide baccalaureate and graduate education in crop, soil, and environmental sciences that promotes excellence in student achievement and prepares students to effectively contribute and excel in a changing world" and it is to "...disseminate this knowledge through student education and public outreach programs..." Changes in the department's academic programs over the past seven years underscore the central mission of instruction to the department. As faculty programs on the Athens campus have changed from traditional agronomic areas into plant molecular biology and environmental stewardship, academic programs have changed as well so that the information garnered in research programs can be disseminated to a new generation of students. The new teaching programs at Tifton and Griffin are part of this process as well. At the Tifton campus, the instructional program is geared towards the traditional agronomy student in as much that the research and extension programs on the Tifton campus are oriented towards the intensive row crops of the coastal plain of Georgia. On the Griffin campus, faculty research programs are oriented toward the impact of urbanization on environmental quality and the instructional program on the Griffin campus has that same orientation.

The academic programs in the Department of Crop & Soil Sciences contribute to the University's goals of diversity, internationalization, and environmental literacy in many ways. New academic programs on the Athens campus in Environmental Chemistry and Applied Biotechnology will attract minority enrollment in ways that our traditional programs like Crop Science and Environmental Soil Science could not. The new teaching programs on the Tifton and Griffin campus are designed to attract minority and underrepresented groups from rural Georgia that do not have the opportunity to attend classes on the Athens campus. CRSS has a study abroad course (CRSS 4931, Agroecology in Tropical America) that provides students with a direct opportunity to meet the University's goal of increased study abroad experiences for students. The department also has several other courses that expose students to a non-US perspective of topics as diverse as biotechnology, terrorism, agricultural systems, and environmental stewardship. CRSS has several courses that are approved for the environmental literacy requirement (CRSS(FORS) 1020, Introduction to Water Resources; CRSS 2010-2010L, Crop Science; CRSS(FORS)

3060, Soils & Hydrology; CRSS 4340, Weed Science; CRSS 4400, Crop Ecology; CRSS 4590, Soil Fertility & Plant Nutrition; and CRSS 4670, Environmental Soil Chemistry).

What are your teaching and advising expectations, including real teaching loads, for 9 and 12 month faculty?

All of the faculty in Crop & Soil Sciences have 12-month appointments except for two faculty who have academic appointments that are split with Crop & Soil Sciences and Plant Biology (Dr. Devos) and Ecology (Dr. Hendrix). The formula for determining teaching load in the department has been to assign 0.125 instructional FTE for every three hour course taught. For the new teaching programs at Tifton and Griffin, the department has adjusted teaching appointment to more accurately reflect the faculty contributions to instruction.

In CRSS, only tenure-track faculty advise students. In general, new students to the department meet with the undergraduate coordinator and are assigned a permanent faculty advisor based on their major and career interest within the major. This approach allows students to be paired with faculty advisors who can provide the best advice on course selection, internships, and job placement. For the two past years, students have been surveyed on their advising experience in the department and >90% of the students surveyed rate their overall advising experience as good to excellent.

How do you evaluate teaching the Crop & Soil Sciences and what documentation is available on instructional quality?

Instructional quality in CRSS is evaluated via four methods. All of courses are evaluated by student evaluation form. The results of these student evaluations are reviewed by the department head and faculty member and are on file for review. Instructional faculty are peer-evaluated before their third year review, promotion to Associate Professor, Professor, and during each post-tenure review cycle. Peer evaluation consists of a faculty committee reviewing the faculty member's syllabus, examinations, and making at least one in-class visit. In addition, the course syllabus and other relevant materials are sent to faculty at peer institutions for evaluation. All graduating students are surveyed by the department head concerning their experience in the department. Finally, on a three-year cycle, Crop & Soil Science alumni are surveyed about the quality of instruction.

How does the Department of Crop & Soil Sciences reward quality instruction?

CRSS takes quality instruction very seriously. The Department expects all instructors to continuously maintain a high quality instructional program and makes every effort to recognize and reward faculty that enhance the educational process. Several teaching assessment procedures are established which are used to reward teaching excellence. All faculty are required to periodically have a peer review of their instructional efforts in one class (see Appendix I and section on "how performance of faculty....."). This process provides an external and internal review for improving instructional quality. In addition, all instructors are evaluated by students in each class taught. Student advisement and academic governance activities are critical components of quality instruction and involvement by faculty is encouraged and considered part of faculty program assessment. All of these activities are used on an annual basis as well as during the three-year review and/or the tenure promotion process to reward quality instruction.

What initiatives have the Department of Crop & Soil Sciences implemented to support and improve teaching performance?

Student evaluations and the peer review of instruction are both part of the each faculty member's dossier, and are used as part of the annual evaluation, the three-year review, and promotion and tenure assessment processes. In addition to the departmental mechanisms, the seven-year University review assessment

program helps to ensure quality instruction and that our instructors are continuously striving to improve their teaching performance. Each undergraduate and graduate student completes a survey and is interviewed by the Department Head during the last semester of their program. The department also conducts a post-graduation survey to seek alumni input on the Department's educational programs. We are in the process of establishing an external advisory committee for the Water and Soil Resources major that will annually meet with faculty and students and provide guidance on curriculum issues and related matters. We have also instituted an annual progress report for our graduate students to ensure appropriate progress. All these measures of teaching performance are used annually, during a faculty member's evaluation, so that salaries reflect quality of instruction as appropriate to the responsibilities of the faculty member. In addition to these mechanisms, CRSS also has an annual teaching conference that we use to discuss teaching issues and thereby enhance our instructional performance.

What is the URL where Crop & Soil Science's course syllabi are available?

<http://www.caes.uga.edu/academics/courses/CRSS/index.html>

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Total Credit Hours Generated	2697	2335	2062	2163	2194	2234	2563
Undergraduate	2187	1737	1385	1345	1339	1445	1509
Graduate	510	598	677	818	855	789	1054
Instructional EFT							
% of Credit Hours taught by:							
Tenure track faculty	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Non-tenure track faculty	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Graduate Assistants	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
External Instruction Grant/Contract Expenditures				\$3,264	\$88	-0-	-0-