

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**FORESTRY PROGRAM ACCREDITATION REPORT**  
**AT IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY**

**Action Requested:** Receive the accreditation report for the Bachelor of Science Program in Forestry in the Department of Natural Resource Ecology and Management (NREM) in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Iowa State University.

**Executive Summary:** The Bachelor of Science Program in Forestry (1) underwent a self-study that addressed the standards and criteria defined by the accrediting body; and (2) had an on-site visit by peer evaluators. The program was accredited for the maximum period of 10 years without further reporting required. This report addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priority to provide “educational excellence and impact” as well as Goal #8 – “Iowa’s public universities and special schools shall be increasingly efficient and productive.”

**Background:**

- ◇ **Description of Program.** The Bachelor of Science Program in Forestry is the only four-year forestry degree program in the state. ISU awarded its first degrees in forestry in 1904, making the program one of the oldest continuous programs in existence in the United States. First accredited in 1935, the Forestry Program provides the knowledge and skills to scientifically manage the nation’s private and public ecosystems. Forestry courses cover the management of forest ecosystems for multiple benefits, including wood and fiber products, biodiversity, recreation, interpretation, water, wilderness, and wildlife. The program offers five options – Forest Ecosystem Management; Interpretation of Natural Resources; Natural Resource Conservation and Restoration; Sustainable Materials Science; and Urban and Community Forestry. Graduates of the program are employed as urban foresters, naturalists, restoration ecologists, natural resource conservationists, park rangers, or fire ecologists; they also work with wood and bio-based products.
- ◇ **Purpose of Accreditation.** An accredited educational program is recognized by its peers as having met state and national standards for its development and evaluation. To employers, graduate schools, and licensure, certification, and registration boards, graduation from an accredited program signifies adequate preparation for entry into the profession. In fact, many of these groups require graduation from an accredited program as a minimum qualification. Accreditation is also intended to protect the interests of students, benefit the public, and improve the quality of teaching, learning, research, and professional practice.
- ◇ **Accrediting Agency.** The accrediting body is the Society of American Foresters (SAF).
- ◇ **Review Process.** The self-study prepared by the Forestry Program contained the responses to the standards required by the accrediting body – Forestry program mission goals, and objectives; curriculum; Forestry program organization and administration; faculty; students; and parent institution support. The program sought accreditation only for the Forest Ecosystem Management (FEM), Natural Resource Conservation and Restoration (NRCR), and Urban and Community Forestry (UCF) options due to concerns whether the Sustainable Materials Science and Interpretation of Natural Resources curricula provide sufficient depth of the interdisciplinary, specialized knowledge to meet the accrediting standard.

- ◇ On-Site Team Report. In April 2012, the visiting team determined that the Forestry Program was in full compliance with the standards.
  
- ◇ Sample Program Commendations Identified by the Visiting Team.
  - ⇒ “The faculty is energetic and deeply engaged with students. Alumni described faculty as highly invested in student success and indicated high-quality teaching is clearly a priority.
  - ⇒ The curriculum provides strong computer literacy and communication skills, and real-world problem solving and critical thinking are emphasized.
  - ⇒ Although the program seeks to create broadly trained foresters, students are able to gain more focused training in their area of interest through the selection of an option which helps prepare them for the workforce.
  - ⇒ The Department chair is readily accessible, her leadership is highly valued by faculty and administrators, and departmental stability and morale are on the rise.
  - ⇒ The creation of a new advisory council for the Department will infuse new energies and focus strategic planning. Alumni and employers we spoke with are willing to serve on this council.
  - ⇒ Program planning and assessment efforts are well organized and will be highly effective at guiding curriculum change.
  - ⇒ The development of internship opportunities by the faculty and staff is exceptional.
  - ⇒ The new recruiter and support from the new chair should result in more effective marketing of the program outside the university and to undeclared students within the University. Opportunities exist for increasing student diversity through recruitment at community colleges.
  - ⇒ Retention is outstanding after students complete fall camp.
  - ⇒ The off-campus facilities are outstanding and accessible to campus.
  - ⇒ The Library has excellent facilities and resources for forestry program.
  - ⇒ Efforts by faculty provide opportunities to students to practice critical thinking and decision-making skills are outstanding.”
  
- ◇ Sample Observations of Site Team.
  - ⇒ “Although the mission of the Forestry program is stated in the self-evaluation, the mission statement on the home web page for the Department does not include a statement specific to the forestry program.
  - ⇒ In addition, the mission statement in the self evaluation could be better connected to the SAF by more directly emphasizing the distinction of forestry as an interdisciplinary profession, and describing the needs of the constituencies that the program seeks to serve. We also encourage them to reference they have an accredited Forestry program on the Department website.

- ⇒ It is unclear if the five options currently available to the students are guided by the program's mission or if they are what constituencies want and need from the program's graduates. In addition, although we feel restoration ecology and management is a strength of the program, employers were unaware of this strength.
- ⇒ There is a concern that the use of the RMM model to allocate resources may not help to position ISU as a leader in preparing the next generation's forestry workforce for Iowa and beyond. Strategic funds to the Department will enhance ISU strategic efforts.
- ⇒ Although integration occurs throughout the curriculum, faculty outside the core forestry area were less familiar with how their course content integrates into the professional competencies required for SAF accreditation.
- ⇒ While efforts to deliver content and concepts in an interdisciplinary way are commendable, faculty involved must have the disciplinary expertise based on their Ph.D. specialization and other advanced training/scholarship that is documented in the faculty member's CV."

◇ Institution's Implemented or Planned Changes.

- ⇒ *The Department has updated the website to more clearly articulate the departmental mission, and highlight the SAF accreditation.*
- ⇒ *The NREM Forestry constituents and collaborators have been identified.*
- ⇒ *A new course, National Resources Photogrammetry and Geographic Information System, has been proposed to be added to the core curriculum to meet the SAF competency of 'ability to identify and measure land areas and conduct spatial analyses.'*
- ⇒ *The department has increased coordination among the faculty who teach courses related to policy to address the team's concern about having sufficient faculty expertise in the area of policy to fully meet the competencies required for the policy, economics, and administration area.*
- ⇒ *Faculty members, in collaboration with constituents, are reviewing the capstone course, learning outcomes, and the overall program depth and breadth.*
- ⇒ *The Department is developing an advisory committee.*
- ⇒ *The process to recruit new faculty members is engaging the college diversity officer to attract more diverse candidates.*

◇ Accreditation Status. In December 2012, the Society of American Foresters awarded accreditation to the Bachelor of Science Program in Forestry (for the Forest Ecosystem Management, Natural Resource Conservation and Restoration, and Urban and Community Forestry options) in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Iowa State University for the maximum period of 10 years through 2022. No further actions are required by the accrediting body.