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FORESTRY CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AT CHEMEKETA COMMUNITY COLLEGE: METHODS TO ENSURE STUDENT SUCCESS

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ABSTRACT: To better prepare technicians for the future workplace, the National Science Foundation created a new program in 1994 that supported attempts to improve technical education across the nation. The Advanced Technological Education (ATE) Program promotes exemplary advanced technological education at the national and regional levels through support of curriculum development and program improvement. One of the ATE "Centers of Excellence," the Northwest Center for Sustainable Resources (NCSR), in Salem, Oregon, addresses improvement in natural resources education. Since its inception in 1995, the center has developed and revised curricula in forestry, fisheries, wildlife, and agriculture programs at five community colleges in Oregon, Washington, and California. The Chemeketa Community College Forest Resources Technology (FRT) program, in Salem, Oregon, under funding provided by the NCSR, is undergoing extensive curriculum updating.

Forestry departments of community colleges are challenged with providing curricula that effectively mirror the skills students need in their potential places of work. This paper describes the efforts of curriculum developers at the Chemeketa Community College FRT Program to assure that a newly developed curriculum is relevant to the demands of employers, provides appropriate general education skills to students and parallels current thinking in natural resource management. Chemeketa's FRT program is in the process of developing course work that reflects qualitative data gathered from current literature, a DACUM task analysis, and interviews conducted with representatives from the public, private, and academic sectors of forestry in the Northwest.

An overview of the data gathered reveals some predominant educational needs of today's two-year forestry students: 1) exposure to a broader base of biological science and sociology courses, 2) more proficiency in written and verbal communication skills, 3) an understanding of what their intended job entails, 4) exposure to newer natural resource technology, such as GIS and GPS tools, 5) proficiency in some basic technical forest measurement skills, 6) aptitude in algebra, trigonometry and statistics, and 7) introduction to specific forestry courses.