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David D. Close  
Department of Forestry, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale

Jean C. Mangun  
Department of Forestry, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale

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CHARACTERIZING UNDERGRADUATE FORESTRY MAJORS
AT SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

David D. Close¹ and Jean C. Mangun²

¹Department of Forestry, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale IL 62901. Tel.: 618-453-3341; e-mail: dclose@siu.edu
²Department of Forestry, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale IL 62901. Tel.: 618-453-3341; e-mail: mangfor@siu.edu

ABSTRACT: A survey administered to undergraduate students (n=74; 94% response rate) enrolled in Forestry 100: “Introduction to Forestry” contained questions addressing student background, early life experiences, exposure to natural resources, and goals and aspirations as a student in forestry at Southern Illinois University (SIU). Information from this questionnaire represents the first stage of data collection in an ongoing study tracking students over the course of their academic careers. Data collection will culminate in a senior exit interview. The purpose of the first stage is to better understand social, environmental, and familial influences that motivate students to pursue careers in natural resources. Preliminary analysis of students’ understanding of public valuation of natural resources exhibits a normal distribution slightly skewed toward negative perceptions. Students’ understanding of the public’s view of forestry elicits a similar mixed response. The majority of students report no previous family ties to the department. Initial results suggest that youthful experiences with natural resources may have more bearing on career choice by SIU forestry students than a family legacy.