Infusing experiential learning into a wildlife curriculum: Two models for one course

Kelly F. Millenbah
Michigan State University, East Lansing

Joshua J. Millspaugh
University of Missouri, Columbia

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/nrei

Recommended Citation
Available at: http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/nrei/vol9/iss1/26

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Quinney Natural Resources Research Library, S.J. and Jessie E. at DigitalCommons@USU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Natural Resources and Environmental Issues by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@USU. For more information, please contact beckythoms@usu.edu.
INFUSING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING INTO A WILDLIFE CURRICULUM: TWO MODELS FOR ONE COURSE

Kelly F. Millenbah¹ and Joshua J. Millspaugh²

¹Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI 48824-1222. E-mail: millenba@msu.edu
²University of Missouri, Columbia, MO 65211. E-mail: millspaughj@missouri.edu

ABSTRACT: Experiential learning refers to contextually relevant knowledge acquired through problem solving, critical reflection and discussion, and decision making. It is not a new concept to academe; however, ways to incorporate experiential learning into our curriculum have been challenging as class size increases and student contact hours decrease. For wildlife students, learning experientially is an unwritten job requisite. Increasingly, students are exiting learning environments with little to no contact outside of formal lecture experiences. In this paper, we suggest ways to incorporate experiential learning into an undergraduate curriculum. Specifically, we focus on experiential learning in the wildlife curriculum with particular emphasis on the “Wildlife Techniques” course. This course is centered on teaching the practical application and limitations of various field, analytical, and management techniques. Consequently, this course is a perfect candidate to be taught using experiential learning techniques. We present two models for teaching this course that incorporates experiential learning throughout the duration of each program. One course is a two-week intensive program with little formal lecture periods, while the other is a semester-long course with a one-week intensive session at the beginning and more formal lecture, discussions, and case-study activities throughout the remainder of the semester. The pros and cons and lessons learned while teaching under these respective structures will be presented.