You can’t have it all (but you can still have plenty)
An optimist’s guide to the future of natural resources education

Larry A. Nielsen
Professor, Natural Resources
North Carolina State University

© Larry A. Nielsen 2010
I’m a Cubs fan and an NC State fan.

We’re all optimists in natural resources.

We work to make the future better than the past.
World is better today

Remember when…

…the Cuyahoga River burned?

…we could only get sweet corn in July?

…we had to get up to change the channel?
Yes, we have problems

Remember when...

...you *had* a retirement fund?

...Tiger Woods was a hero?

...you just got on an airplane?
But we’re not done yet

My 2-year-old grandson proves the world starts over every day.

So, get over yourself!

And get on with making the most of today.
There’s no business like the “know” business

Here’s your job description:

• Do inspiring, compelling work
• To make the world a better place
• With dedicated colleagues and students
• In a beautiful and safe setting
• For a very handsome salary
• With unparalleled job security
• And almost no supervision

I dare you to take that to the corner bar and complain.
But we have to change

We’re about learning.
As we learn, we see the world differently.
If the world is different than we thought and we want to succeed, then we must...
As Albert Einstein said...

Insanity: Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.
How an architect might see it

Snøhetta Architects, Oslo and New York

Photo courtesy of Craig Dykers, Snøhetta Architects
How an architect might see it

Snøhetta Architects, Oslo and New York

Client defines two, architect defines the third

Cost

Quantity of space

Quality of space
Translate to NR education

Cost

Quality of experience       Content of work

We have to adjust all three
Adjusting our content

Set priorities

• Set specific priorities – and act on them
• Everything we do has value
• Need criteria about what has most value
Adjusting our content

Stop doing some things

• Stop, stop, stop!
• Cut, cut, cut!
• Not trim—stop, cut!
• (the provost will love you for it)

No one wants “across the board” cuts – until they actually have to eliminate something.
Adjusting our content

Do a tough curriculum review

• What do students need?
• Not “what do we want students to get?”
• Forget professional society accreditation
Adjusting our content

New forms of graduate degrees

- Professional masters degrees
- Graduate certificates
- Rein in the MS degree
- (the provost will love you for it)

Every MS student must graduate in two years
Adjusting our quality

How much quality do we need?

Quality affects...

student experience
faculty experience
Adjusting our quality

Give up being the gatekeeper

• Change is okay
• Even in the academy
• Luis Proenza: Let’s be judged not by who we keep out, but by the value we add to those who come.
Adjusting our quality

Reduce expectations of faculty

- Set realistic expectations, not rising ones
- We are our own worst enemies
- (The provost isn’t going to buck you on this)

Want to get professional societies involved? Issue some standards for faculty expectations
Adjusting our quality

Reduce teaching freedom

• It’s not “my course,” but “our course”
• Actually, it’s the student’s course and curriculum
• NR faculty teach less than anyone
• So, teach more
Adjusting our cost

Don’t like anything so far?

Then let’s adjust the cost.

Otherwise you’ll get “value engineered”

(provost is going to make you do this, anyhow)

My premise:
Cut the work out along with the cost.
Adjusting our cost

Don’t subsidize research

• You work for the university, not the DNR or USDA (or the resource)
• Charge what it costs, including overhead
• (the provost knows that overhead is a good thing)

NR has dismal overhead recovery
Adjusting our cost

Hire teachers and advisors

• Can’t afford all TT faculty
• Staffing plan needs...
  – Some TT research-active
  – Some NTT teachers
  – Some professional staff
  – Some hired-in services
Adjusting our cost

Collaborate on Distance Education

• We are blowing it on DE
• Value is collaboration across universities
• Trade courses
• Soften course transfer

Want to get professional societies involved?
Ask them to fund, create and offer courses
We have all the resources we need to do what is truly important.

You can’t escape without a lesson from Steven Covey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Not important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Urgent</td>
<td>Not urgent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We have all the resources we need to do what is truly important.

You can’t escape without a lesson from Steven Covey.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Urgent</th>
<th>Not urgent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Live and work here!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>Stay out of here.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Decide what is truly important

### Content
- What are we teaching and why?
- What degrees are really needed by society?

### Quality
- What do faculty really need to accomplish?
- Who should teach what when?

### Cost
- How much does it cost to do this research?
- What is the right staffing plan?
- How can we use DE optimally?
I’m not goofy, but we are friends