PERSPECTIVES IN RECLAMATION EDUCATION - OUTLOOK FOR THE FUTURE[1]

by

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Abstract. College-level programs in Reclamation are few (about a dozen total in 2yr, 4yr, and graduate programs) in contrast to about 1500 programs in environmental studies. Reclamation programs, like environmental studies programs, are interdisciplinary but are distinguished from the latter by: a) applied emphases characterized by internship work and courses from engineering and agriculture as well as the pure sciences; b) strong influence of the profession on curricular content, and c) a more clearly defined professional peer group. Reclamation programs have only existed for about six years. Some have already been terminated, whereas others enjoy extreme success in placement. Those programs which have depended upon local mining markets for job placement have flourished or perished in accord with the local markets. Those schools which have made national market awareness a priority have endured longer and their graduates have broader career choices. Demand exists for functional well-educated generalists who can combine the physical sciences and the biological sciences in conjunction with engineering and agricultural technology to solve actual problems. The national market for Reclamation graduates appears good and relatively stable. This is mainly true because the relatively few programs are small and incapable of oversaturating a national market. There is benefit to the profession in keeping numbers of graduates small and quality high, but schools often prefer to maintain or initiate large enrollment programs. Future reclamation programs are likely to remain small, interdisciplinary, and will be found at colleges with necessary courses and commitment to excellence in small programs. Courses in soil science, geology, plant taxonomy, hydrology, cartography, environmental law, construction engineering or surface mining, pond design and erosion control, range or land use management, economics, business, and computers are particularly desirable in combination. Graduate placement will be best for those students who obtain a national perspective. Extended field trips, active participation in professional organizations, particularly ASSMR, a self-placement awareness and a strong alumni network are exceedingly important. Opportunities in both mining and non-mining disciplines should be explored.

ADDITIONAL KEY WORDS: Education (environmental, interdisciplinary, applied science, programs, college level), reclamation, employment, curriculum.

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