

Teaching Reclamation through Applied Curricular and Co-Curricular Experiences¹

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Abstract: Students in Environmental Studies and related departments at Ohio University have several opportunities for applied learning in reclamation. While in-class learning is a key tool in developing reclamation professionals, hands-on application allows those students to truly retain the information and gain those skills. Three key examples of these applied student experiences are good models for using applied learning experiences in curricular and co-curricular settings: in-class applied projects, undergraduate or graduate thesis or independent research, and client-based projects. In courses Field Methods in Environmental Studies and Watershed Management, students must complete real-world final projects creating sampling plans, collecting data, and developing management plans for real projects, real problems, and real watersheds. Where possible, students are connected with community organizations that manage the watershed or treatment project. During both the undergraduate and graduate Environmental Studies degrees, these are an option for culminating experience. By designing thesis projects in partnership with faculty engaged in reclamation projects and staff members who maintain and sample those projects, students are able to connect their research questions and methods to problems that need to be solved. Students in the Master of Science in Environmental Studies have the option of completing a practicum rather than a thesis in which they conduct a professional project for a client based on client needs. Practicum students have frequently worked with local watershed groups to develop projects, conduct reconnaissance, prioritize project sites, and write watershed planning documents. One student collected the data to develop a project, wrote the Ohio EPA approved watershed planning document for the project, and wrote a grant with multiple partners to get the project completed. These examples of using applied learning in multiple ways are only a sampling of methods we can use to train future reclamationists.

Additional Key Words: student learning, community engagement, project-based learning

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