

**PERENNIAL REPORT TO THE
MICHIGAN TURFGRASS CONFERENCE GENERAL SESSION**

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In March the two-year program in Sports and Commercial Turf Management graduated its largest class ever, 15 students. There were excellent job opportunities available to these men and competition was keen for their services. Job placement by sector is as follows: landscape (5), lawncare (2), irrigation (2), golf courses (2), sales (1), and minor league baseball (1). The two grads in the lawncare sector have started their own businesses, and most of those working for landscape companies are involved directly in the lawncare divisions of those companies. At least one of those in golf is in charge of clubhouse grounds. This is the first year that we've graduated an irrigation specialist, and I hope to have more of these as I feel these are excellent jobs. The strongest demand continued to be from lawn care companies, but the students were reluctant to consider these jobs despite very good pay and benefits.

Twenty-two incoming students helped maintain the overall enrollment at around 33 students. This group, along with four students who entered last spring, represented the largest first-year class in this program's history. Its size helped offset the relatively small number of second-year students. I hope to avoid a cyclical recruiting pattern by sustaining and improving the current strategies and practices. My plan is to limit the number of new enrollees so that my overall program is around forty students.

This past year was my last as interim Director of the Hancock Turfgrass Research Center. We have expanded our area with two and one-half additional acres, giving us 20 contiguous acres. Across Farm Lane we have established five more acres that will be used for the Turf Producers International 1999 summer conference. We are also now fully moved into the Ernest Fuller Building, and we have already renovated half of the old building. As always, credit is due to farm manager Mark Collins and research specialist Ron Calhoun. Dr. Jim Baird has now assumed overall responsibility, and I can assure you that he and your MTF Board have a great vision for the center, and you should expect continued improvements there.

I'm happy to report that I am now taking the last class of my Ph.D. coursework. My doctoral research continues with Dr. Joe Vargas concerning dollar spot and its associated resistance to demethylation inhibitor (DMI) fungicides. The five-year study at Lochmoor Country Club in Grosse Pointe Woods is now concluded, and I will report those findings here at a later session. A paper detailing this research was published in the Research Journal of the International Turfgrass Society and presented by Dr. Vargas at the ITS international conference last summer. I was unable to attend due to the birth of my first child, Madeline Manderfield Gilstrap, on 7/11.

The research of Dr. Rieke, Thom Nikolai, and myself that deals with the effects of different nitrogen protocols on lawn turf was presented by me at the 1998 Michigan Turfgrass Field Day. This research continues as well as another study of ours that is looking at the effects of early season scalping of Kentucky bluegrass to improve visual appearance.

In summary, our overall numbers are holding well in the Sports and Commercial Turf Management program, and I'm looking forward to an increase next year. I appreciate the opportunity to have served you and the university as interim Director of the Hancock Turfgrass Research Center, and assure you that new leadership will serve you well. And finally, I'm now reporting the results of my research that I hope will aid you in making your agronomic decisions.