

Penn State Offers Turfgrass Science Major

The board of trustees at Penn State recently approved the College of Agricultural Sciences turfgrass science major, the first of its kind to be offered among the country's land-grant universities.

Dr. Thomas Watschke, professor of turfgrass science, said Penn State's agronomy department designed the major to prepare graduates for the wide variety of jobs available in the rapidly-expanding turf industry.

"In the past, land-grant university under-graduates interested in turf-related careers could take two or three turfgrass science courses, within an agronomy or horticulture curriculum," he said. "These programs qualify students in soil or plant science, but don't address the business aspects of turf management." In addition to the curriculum's four specific turfgrass science courses, turf majors are required to take 15 credit hours of basic business classes, such as accounting, business law, finance, marketing and labor-industry relations.

While 17 students pursued Penn State's turfgrass science option five years ago, there are more than 40 students in the program today. Watschke predicts continued industry demand and the inception of a specific baccalaureate program will double enrollment in four years. He adds that 50 percent of the new major's graduates probably will enter the golf course industry.

"The National Golf Foundation predicts there will be 40 million more golfers by the year 2000, requiring more than 4,000 new courses in this country," he said. "Right now there are more new courses under construction in Pennsylvania than ever before."

"With the increased wear and tear on existing golf courses and the challenge of maintaining 36-hole complexes, the golf course superintendent of the future will need both technical and business training to pull it

off," he said. In addition to completing the business courses, turfgrass science majors will be required to complete an internship with the industry, but Watschke says there are enough summer jobs for students who want to work on turf for three summers and earn a good wage. "We encourage students to work somewhere in the turf industry every summer. There are so many jobs out there it isn't even funny," he said. "Since our two-year turfgrass management certification program began in the

1950s, it has established a reputation for producing quality turf managers. Watschke says incoming freshmen may opt to work in different types of management positions for two summers before deciding on a career-oriented internship between their junior and senior years.

"A student interested in athletic field management may work on the ground crew at the Double-A baseball stadium in Reading, or for the super-

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Private Owners—

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Quality playing conditions aren't always the most important consideration. I sometimes cynically chuckle when I think of the state mission of the golf course superintendent at many private clubs. Their basic mission is to provide quality playing conditions for the club members and their guests, within the confines of well-established and defined budgets.

Privately owned public courses operate with a different set of goals, resulting in a different mission for the superintendent. Quality to a degree is the goal. Profitability is the ultimate goal - we do not exist to simply break even. Consequently, budgets that are defined on paper may be ignored in the quest for profitability. Management staff must constantly strive to save money or face the consequences.

This businesslike attitude, which I do believe is necessary and has been

beneficial for myself, leads me to think about the logical next step. That would be to own a golf course of my own. Many superintendents think about this idea, but not too many pursue this dream.

What would it take to own a golf course? What are the risks and benefits? Many superintendents would certainly need to change some attitudes and practices in order to survive as business people. Exposure to privately owned operations easily leads one to consider the possibilities.

Some superintendents, through exposure to public golf, have taken the plunge into course ownership. Most have turned it into a successful venture.

The subtle encouragement of this idea by one's owners/employers is a very real benefit of working in public golf. Exposure to their business experience rubs off, gets under the skin and starts the itching.

More superintendents should consider scratching that itch.

—Credit: *The Grass Roots*

Penn State—

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visor at Beaver Stadium," he says. "If transportation isn't a problem, we might be able to land a student a summer job at Joe Robbe Stadium in Miami."

"As the turf industry continues to grow, it is becoming very aggressive in recruiting qualified people," he says. "With a degree in turfgrass science and summer work experience, our graduates will be very competitive."

Methyl Bromide Ban

EPA is preparing a ban on U.S. production of methyl bromide by the year 2000, according to Susan Wayland, acting deputy assistant administrator of the Office of Pesticide Programs and Toxic Substances.

Wayland says the ban is required by the Clean Air Act. She added that the agency put off the ban until the year 2000 to allow time to identify alternatives.

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