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New Turfgrass Education Initiatives at the University of Maryland

The economic downturn which we face both as a nation and as individuals will force us to reevaluate how we conduct our day to day activities. Change is inevitable and how we adapt to this new business environment will determine our ability to compete. Education is a major cornerstone in allowing us to better adapt to these future challenges.

At the University of Maryland we have been actively involved over the past year in reviewing our educational offerings in turfgrass science and management. Starting in 2009 new initiatives in our undergraduate education and new online educational opportunities will better serve both our Maryland and regional stakeholders. The following initiatives represent innovative and unique methods in delivering quality education for both resident and online students.

The Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture and the Institute of Applied Agriculture are offering courses to both our baccalaureate and academic certificate students. Dr. Thomas Turner, Dr. Mark Carroll, Mr. Roy Walls, and Dr. Kevin Mathias will be teaching in this joint program. This initiative benefits all of our turfgrass students by bringing together the teaching resources and expertise of two programs thus providing a truly exemplary educational experience. Two new courses, **Surveying & GPS Applications in Agriculture** and **Irrigation and Drainage Practices for Turf** have been developed and will be offered in the fall 2009 semester and the spring 2010 semester. Dr. Carroll and Dr. Mathias will also be co-teaching an introductory turfgrass management course in the fall 2009 semester.

Within the Institute of Applied Agriculture (IAA) two new options, Sports Turf Management and Golf Course Construction Management will start in the Fall 2009 semester. This will allow students more options of study within our Turfgrass Management program. The IAA's nationally recognized Golf Course Management program will continue to prepare top-notch superintendents while these new options will meet an industry demand for trained individuals in the areas of sports field management and golf course construction operations.

Online industry training modules, that can be used as an effective means to update and train your staff in different areas of turfgrass management ranging from soil fertility to insect identification and control, were unveiled at Turfgrass 2009 Conference and Trade Show. Several of these modules meet Pesticide Recertification requirements by MDA and can also be used to maintain professional certifications. These modules are self pacing, available 24/7, and allow self assessment of the subject matter. To get more information on these online training modules go to www.iaaOnlineCourses.umd.edu.

Finally, the Gateway program just got underway during the fall 2008 semester and will allow students majoring in turfgrass and horticulture, among other majors, to begin their education at the IAA. Once in the IAA they can then apply for transfer to the College of Agriculture & Natural Resources baccalaureate program. For more information about the gateway program contact Glori Hyman at 301-405-4685.