

A new model for training soil science students to compete in a global society

Donald L. Sparks

University of Delaware, Newark, DE 19716, USA, Email dlsparks@udel.edu

Abstract

Without question, this is an exciting time for soil scientists and the discipline of soil science. Many of the grand challenges that we face globally, including climate change, environmental degradation and restoration, food security, population growth, and energy sustainability must involve soil scientists. With these challenges and the pending retirements of many soil scientists, particularly those of the baby boom generation, there are many opportunities for placement of well trained soil scientists in academe, government, and the private sector. This new generation of soil scientists must be globally engaged and experienced in operating in the international environment. To be competitive in securing jobs and to ensure a productive and satisfying career, our students must be trained in different ways than in previous periods. They must have: coursework and training in not only traditional areas but in engineering, social policy, business and economics, ethics, and public policy; transdisciplinary research opportunities that are multi-scale, internships in industry and government; international experiences; and training to enhance oral and written communications skills. These aspects of training will be discussed in the paper presentation.