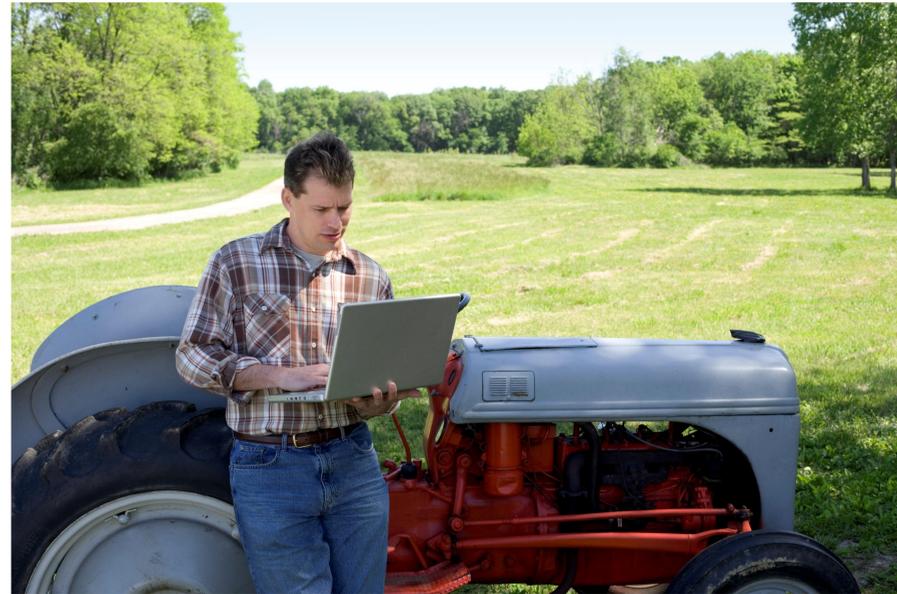
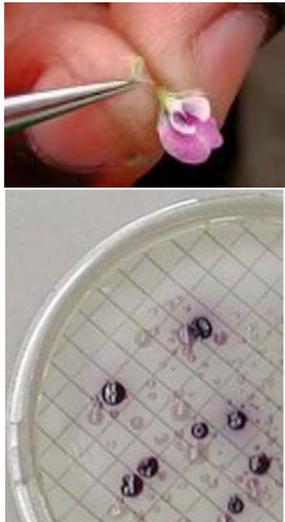


Introduction

The Department of Agronomy and Soils at Auburn University began offering undergraduate and graduate distance education courses during the 2008/2009 academic year. In fall 2010, we began offering a distance education graduate degree program in Agronomy and Soils, which allows students to obtain thesis and non-thesis Master's degrees. The courses and degree program are attracting students who would not otherwise study in our department or field.



Distance Education Benefits to Non-traditional Students

- Working professionals who cannot come to campus can take our courses from home
 - Students can obtain a degree without loss of job or uprooting family
- Students work on own time
- Program can provide additional specialization for non-agronomic or soil science-related fields

Characteristics of our Courses

- Web-based, using Canvas Learning Management System
- Asynchronous
 - Students listen to lectures and do assignments at times convenient to them
 - Most lectures consist of Powerpoint lectures recorded in CourseCast or Camtasia.
- Video, computer simulations, spreadsheets & other media used for laboratory exercises and other learning methods
- Campus visits are required in only few cases
- **Student evaluations and testimonials have been very positive.**



Distance Education Attracts New Kinds of Students

Students who might not normally study Agronomy and Soil Science are enrolling in our distance education courses.

- Patent and environmental lawyers needing to better understand the science related to their professions
- Investment banker seeking to change professions.
- Natural Resources Conservation Service employees who lack a Bachelor's degree
- Doctoral student working at a remote location

Distance Education also Benefits Campus Students

- Students who need course who have conflicts with classroom course schedule
- Because a faculty position has not been filled, a faculty member at University of Georgia is teaching our students soil physics via distance education
- Recordings and other improvements used in face-to-face courses
- Lectures and some labs are available for additional review or to makeup an absence



Conclusions

Distance education

- Benefits working professionals
- Attracts students with non-agricultural backgrounds who want to broaden their expertise.
- Spillover benefits to face-to-face courses

We are expanding our degree offerings to include new Masters programs (in development)

- Master's in Soil, Water and Environmental Science through the AG*IDEA Consortium
- Master of Turfgrass Management

