“Teaching Urban Forestry Management at a Non-Forestry School: An opportunity to expand the profession”

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Presentation highlights urban forestry instruction at Indiana University's School of Public and Environmental Affairs (SPEA). Students in non-forestry school programs such as environmental science, environmental sustainability, environmental management, etc., can become interested through a single urban forestry course. The student perspective is quite different from the traditional forestry school. Students are much less interested in how to do arboricultural things (climb trees, use equipment) or think of the urban forest as discrete forest stands. Instead, they think about the urban ecosystem, how it functions as a social-ecological system and divide the city into urban patches (neighborhoods, etc.) rather than forest stands. On the other hand, forestry students understand measuring trees and forest inventory while non-forestry students need dedicated instruction and field experience. Non-forestry students appear more likely to look for urban-based volunteer opportunities, internships and full-time employment in a broad range of urban greening activities rather than just arboriculture. They are oriented more towards urban greening non-profits and ecologically based consulting. As an instructor, I focus on a different set of topics and opportunities than at a forestry school. Case studies with non-profits, research projects for a city, ecosystem services discussions, etc., become more the norm. While traditional forestry schools have low enrollments in urban forestry and strategize to attract students, non-forestry school programs such as SPEA routinely have large class sizes (~40) taking urban forestry. Finally, in addition to directly benefiting the urban forestry profession with a new and different type of urban forester, these students will create a future a pool of knowledgeable citizen volunteers and supporters.