

Southeastern Community College

Whiteville, North Carolina USA



Overview of the SCC Online Invasive Species Management Training Program

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Southeastern Community College has developed an online program to train invasive species field managers. The five core courses in the program cover all aspects of invasive species management – including pre-clearance of commodities at foreign ports of exports, border clearance at ports of entry, early detection and rapid response, and control.

Free living populations of introduced invasive species such as Chinese wisteria and English ivy are the number two threat to native plants and animals in the U.S., and cause over \$150 billion in losses to the American economy, annually. Efforts to control invasive species are piecemeal and under-funded. Compounding the problem is a lack of trained technicians to assist with control and management efforts. People seeking invasive species management positions generally have training in biology, forestry, agronomy, or related fields – but generally no training or field experience in controlling invasive species.

In response to this need, Southeastern Community College in Whiteville, North Carolina, is offering the first ever online college-level program to train invasive species field managers. Under this program, students may complete classes for continuing education requirements, a Certificate of Invasive Species Management, or an Associate in Science degree in Environmental Science Technology with a second year focus in invasive species management.

The new online program at SCC, which is international in scope, includes five core courses and two support courses for a total of 18 credit hours. This includes **IVS 110** (Introduction to Invasive Species) (3 credit hours), **IVS 210** (Overview of Invasive Species Management Strategies) (3 credit hours), **IVS 211** (Overview of Invasive Species Management Programs) (3 credit hours), **IVS 220** (Invasive Plant Survey Methods) (4 credit hours), and **IVS 221** (Invasive Plants Control Methods) (3 credit hours). Support courses include **IVS 260** (State Pesticide License Exam Preparation) (1 credit hour), and **GIS 110** (Introduction to GPS and GIS Mapping) (1 credit hour).

A number of the survey and control concepts that are taught in the five core courses of the program can be learned through on-the-job experience over a several year period. However, this online program accelerates that learning process and provides a unique professional development opportunity for learning about and interacting with nationally recognized invasive species specialists from around the world (e.g., **Chuck Barger**, Director, Early Detection, Distribution and Mapping System, University of Georgia; **Steven Manning**, President, Invasive Plant Control, Inc., Nashville, TN; **John Madsen**, Associate Professor and Aquatic Weed Control Specialist, Mississippi State University; and **Rod Randall**, World Weed Geographer, Western Australia Department of Agriculture, Perth, Western Australia). In addition, a number of invasive species management principles (e.g., Regulatory Exclusion, Early Detection and Rapid Response) are covered in the first three courses of the program that are currently not being taught in any other college level invasive species management training courses. Upon completion of this program, students will have a fluent knowledge of all aspects of invasive species management – from pre-border inspection and clearance at port of export in other countries, to border clearance at ports of entry, early detection and rapid response, and long term control.

The SCC online IVS Management Program provides an innovative new curriculum for training new personnel that are needed to control invasive species on public and private lands across the world.

The distant learning format of the program provides a flexible educational delivery method that permits students to continue working while they are enrolled in the courses. It also allows them to interact with other students from across the U.S. and Canada – and beyond.

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