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ACES ACCESS Enables Community College Students to Earn U of I Credit

URBANA – The University of Illinois is now offering College of Agricultural, Consumer, and Environmental Sciences (ACES) courses to Illinois community college students through a new partnership known as ACES ACCESS. These courses combine distance learning technology and an on-campus lab to enable community college students to complete U of I credits.

ACES ACCESS allows community college students to complete basic courses in animal, plant, and soil sciences that may not otherwise be offered in their location.

Introductory courses in Horticulture and Animal Sciences will be offered in spring 2011 and fall 2011, respectfully.

“ACES ACCESS was developed to expand the range of agriculture courses that community colleges can offer their students, with the understanding that many Illinois colleges are challenged by declining financial and faculty resources,” said ACES Associate Dean of Academic Programs Laurie Kramer.

In a collaborative effort to properly prepare students to meet the demand of the 48,000 ag-related jobs that become available each year, Kramer along with Dennis Sorensen of Kankakee Community College, developed the ACES ACCESS program with a team of leaders from other Illinois community colleges

During the 2011 spring semester, Robert Skirvin and Margaret Norton, from the U of I Department of Crop Sciences, are teaching “Introduction to Horticulture.” Participating colleges are Southeastern Illinois College, Kankakee Community College, Sauk Valley Community College, Wilbur Wright College in Chicago, Waubensee Community College, Rock Valley College, and Carl Sandburg College. In all, 32 community college students are participating this semester.

“The course itself covers many topics on an introductory level, including how horticulture affects our daily lives from what we eat to where we live, and the pleasure we take in a garden or a simple flower,” Norton said. “We talk about horticulture from the standpoint of an art, a science, and a business. We look at plants from the cellular level to the whole plant level.”

Students in Introduction to Horticulture take part in a blended-learning environment including weekly course meetings via the interactive distance learning technology known as Elluminate

(www.illuminate.com), an asynchronous instruction course management system, and will meet for one all-day, face-to-face on-campus lab in April. In addition to the on-campus lab, students will participate in independent lab projects and assignments.

This course is the fourth course offered in a sequence of introductory U of I agricultural science courses taught via distance learning technologies. Previously taught courses include Animal Sciences, Crop Sciences, and Soil Science.

All Illinois community colleges have been invited to participate in the new program by offering any or all of the courses. Participating students register through their regular registration process each semester and pay the standard tuition rate of their home institution while earning course credit through their college. Credits are easily transferrable to the University of Illinois or other 4-year institutions.

For more information about the program, contact Heather Miller, program director, at hmill1@illinois.edu or 217-266-6568.

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