Revitalizing a Campus Natural Area for Training Future Natural Areas Professionals
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Introduction:
The Outdoor Classroom has been property of UW-Stout's Biology Department since 2007. The University of Wisconsin-Stout's Outdoor Classroom is a 2.5 acre delineated wetland and natural space that has been neglected for years. As a result, the space contains substantial populations of *Rhamnus cathartica*; *Lonicera tatarica*, *Hesperis matronalis* and *Miscanthus sacchariflorus*. Through dedicated work from students and professors in the Biology Department, changes are being made to the area that will have positive effect in the long term.

Objective:
- Restore the area into three distinctive ecosystems: Prairie, Wetland and Forest areas.
- Plant trees with the plan of creating an arboretum of native Wisconsin trees. Patch Habitat
- Build communities of people and plants together by having a natural escape

Methods:
- Use by Courses:
  - Plant Ecology: Invasive plant sampling for development of an adaptive management plan.
  - Soil Science and GIS
    - Moisture data was collected and analyzed using GIS for the prairie area.
    - Erosion patterns were analyzed using GIS by looking at the hill-slope and the contours.
  - Plant Taxonomy: Use as laboratory for identification practice
  - Lower level courses: Invasive plant removal and other survey techniques
- Grant Funding from the Midwest Regional Collaborative for Sustainable Education (MRCSE) Seed Grant
- Involvement of student organizations: Natural Areas Club (NAC) was a primary organization in which the students took ownership over the project.
- Student Manager – Independent study course in which the student is responsible for continuing work on the Outdoor Classroom according to the established management plan. Aids students in performing ecological based research within the Outdoor Classroom such as researching Miscanthus removal methods.

Results:
Natural Areas Club work days
- Students who already had knowledge in plants and management were able to teach the ones who were interested, but didn’t have the understanding until getting the hands on experience.

ReLEAF Tree Planting
- Success is determined by whether the project moved the Outdoor Classroom forward as a valuable resource for students and a tool to teach about sustainability.

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- Press Releases, Posters, Newspaper articles, emails, and social media were used in promotion of the events.

Students learned important field management techniques through these events, such as invasive removal, plants, trees, and location selection, and soil science. Within the past year, about 5% invasive plants have been removed. According to our Management plan, we are behind and have a lot of work to do within the next few years.

Conclusion:
We considered this project to be a success:
- 38 different shrubs and trees were planted in the 2.5 acre area
- Create a path that tours by each new tree
- Students will be able to learn these native trees, and recognize them in the field
- Courses use the Outdoor Classroom to train land management resource concentrations
- Native prairie seeding will occur in the prairie section
- Initiated a process that will be sustainable for years to come

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