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Caripac summer camp for science teachers: instrumental in the promotion of agricultural sciences curricula

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Promotion of Agricultural Sciences Curricula requires a series of strategies to reach and influence high school student attitude. Change in postures of school teachers towards agricultural sciences is particularly important, especially those inclined to promote natural sciences. During the summer of 2008, ten teachers from public middle and high schools participated in a two-week summer camp offering a series of workshops with hands-on experiences focused on Concepts and Laboratory Practices in Agricultural Sciences. Participating teachers were mainly from the western region of the island (Aguada, Cabo Rojo, Lajas, Rincón, San Germán, San Sebastián) and Juncos, P.R. Hands-on experiences included disciplines such as Plant Pathology, Entomology, Natural Resources and the Environment, Horticulture and Food Technology. Concepts and laboratory practices were conducted by faculty members of the College of Agricultural Sciences of the University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez Campus, specialized in each discipline. The final intention was that each teacher will implement the experiences in their schools. A questionnaire was used to evaluate the different workshops, laboratory facilities and UPR faculty. Nine criteria were evaluated during the workshop, these were organization, audiovisual resources, faculty preparation at the moment of the workshop, competencies in the use of terminology related with the discipline, skills learn in the used of materials and equipment and integration of the experiences to the classroom, among others. Each criterion was evaluated from poor to excellent. The summer camp was evaluated excellent, 93% of the time and good the other 7%. Faculty evaluations were excellent, ranging from 95 to 99%. Overall, the experience was unique for many of the teachers and they were motivated to participate in this type of activity in the future. Ultimately the experience will enhance the recruitment of undergraduate students in the food, agriculture, natural resources and related fields at the UPR-Mayagüez Campus. The event was part of a project sponsored by the USDA-NIFA Residence Instruction Grant for Insular Areas.

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