THE INTRODUCTORY COURSE IN SOIL SCIENCE

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Individual changes in the organization of a college course or in the teaching methods applied to it are not always sound. Nevertheless it seems worth while to study at intervals the general trend of the pedagogy as recorded by a number of colleges and universities. Individual mistakes and freak developments may be minimized by numbers and certain interpretations made possible. The combined judgment and activity of many teachers of the same subject can not but be helpful in indicating, in a general way at least, what is probably suited to our present teaching situation. The data from such a survey should be of more than passing interest to our older teachers and may save the younger members of the profession some dubious experimentation.

Considerations such as these have led the Committee on Soil Teaching Methods of the American Society of Agronomy to undertake a study of the organization, teaching methods, and instructional features of the introductory course in soil science as it is taught in the United States and Canada. Questionnaires from 4 Canadian and 45 American colleges and universities form the basis for the investigation. The data are for the college year of 1927-28.

ORGANIZATION DATA

The length of term or semester at the various institutions canvassed varies from 10 to 18 weeks. At 43% of the colleges reporting the term is 18 weeks in length; at 31%, 12 weeks; and at 26% of the colleges 16 weeks.

The length of the introductory course in soil science ranges from one to three terms. In 77% of the cases the course is one term in length; in 19%, two terms; and in 4% of the cases three terms.

On the basis of weeks, the length of the introductory course varies from 10 to 36 weeks. At 43% of the institutions the course is 18 weeks in duration; at 14%, 12 weeks long; and at 11% of the institutions 24 weeks.

1A report of the Committee on Soil Teaching Methods of the American Society of Agronomy. A very brief report was made by this committee at the annual meeting of the Society held at Chicago in November, 1927. Received for publication April 20, 1928. Reprints of this report may be obtained from the chairman of the Committee.

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