Improvements in the Teaching of Crop Production

L. V. SHERWOOD, E. F. POTTHOFF, AND O. T. BONNETT

THE primary purpose of the general course in crop production at the University of Illinois is to develop in the student a definite interest in the subject and the ability to recognize, comprehend, and solve independently the greatest possible number of agronomic problems. To accomplish this purpose, at least eight major aspects of the problem must be considered as follows:

1. The working objectives of the course must be specified.
2. The scope and content of the course must be determined in line with these objectives.
3. The course should be presented in logical sequence from the standpoint of the learner and by an effective method.
4. Good examinations must be prepared.
5. Effective teaching aids must be developed.
6. Class meetings should be properly scheduled for maximum effectiveness.
7. The course should be presented in good physical surroundings.
8. The best teachers obtainable should be provided.

The working objectives of the course at the University of Illinois are:

1. To stimulate a continued interest in the course on the part of the student.
2. To develop in the student both knowledge of and efficiency in the techniques of agronomy. Such training should result in:
   a. Improvement of crop yields.
   b. Improvement of crop quality.
   c. Increased net return from crops.

The scope and content of the course conform to these objectives, and any material that does not help to accomplish them is omitted. Since it is impossible to include all of the subject matter on crop production in one course, it is necessary to select only a limited part. The material chosen should be such that it will help the student, after he graduates, to solve independently his practical, everyday problems of agronomy.

The question frequently arises whether to cover all crops sketchily or a few very thoroughly. The best plan seems to be to emphasize the underlying principles of agronomy rather than to cover a large number of crops. Basically, the only reason for presenting more than one crop is that some of the principles cannot be developed adequately,