Investigating the Introductory Geoscience Course
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Abstract

According to the American Geosciences Institute's Exit Survey for 21,052 geoscience graduates, 62% of undergraduates choose to major in the geosciences during their first, second, or third years in college, indicating the importance of the introductory geoscience courses as a recruitment tool for future majors. Not only are the introductory courses key for recruitment, often they contain non-science students trying to complete their science credit. Therefore, the geoscience introductory courses may be the last opportunity to teach non-science majors how to think critically and scientifically. Over a decade ago, AGI released a report presenting the enrollments in introductory geoscience courses to establish a baseline understanding of the number of students taking these introductory courses in broad subject categories. Due to the continued importance of introductory geoscience courses, AGI released a new survey on introductory geoscience courses in 2015 asks questions related to total enrollments and class sizes, title/subject area of course, the existence of a complementary lab course, the number of faculty teaching introductory courses, and the total number of course hours for a semester.

1,246 geoscience departments at 4-Year Institutions participated, approx. 20% of all geoscience departments at 4-Year Institutions in North America

57% geoscience departments integrate field/lab components in introductory courses.

Integration of Math, Chemistry, and Physics within Introductory Courses

Integration of Field/Lab Components within Introductory Courses

Comparison of the Size and Abundance of the Introductory Courses Between Different Categories of Institutions

Major Subject Areas of Introductory Geoscience Courses

Percentage of Geoscience Departments

Participating Departments

When Students Decide to Major in the Geosciences

Who are Teaching the Introductory Courses?

Educational Methods Integrated to Engage and Teach Introductory Students

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Visual elements include statistical data and charts that illustrate the distribution of introductory geoscience courses across different institutions and subject areas. The data are presented in a way that highlights key trends and findings from the survey.