



Educator Profile

Dr. Patricia Layton

By Ellen A. Vincent, Clemson University Environmental Landscape Specialist

Dr. Patricia (Pat) Layton is the new School Director for the School of Agriculture, Forest, and Environmental Sciences. The Departments of environmental horticulture; entomology, soils, and plant sciences; agricultural education; agricultural mechanization; and forestry and natural resources have all merged under this new title in order to stimulate new collaborations; display higher student enrollment numbers; and pool resources. In this position she assists 80+ faculty and over 600 students. She is a passionate advocate for both faculty and students and is determined to make both groups' Clemson experiences the best they can be.

Dr. Layton was born and raised in West Columbia, South Carolina and her favorite memories are of hunting or walking in the woods with her father. Even now she can recall the sound of the leaves crunching as they stepped on them and the smell of light vegetative decay in the air. As she grew older she knew, "I have to work in nature." She earned her bachelor's degree in forest management at Clemson; her master's degree in forest science at Texas A&M; and her Ph.D. in forest genetics from University of Florida, Gainesville.

She began her professional career working for private industry (first Owens-Illinois, Inc. then Scott

Paper Company, followed by American Forest and Paper) conducting research; implementing sustainable practices; and developing and implementing policy. These were skills that transferred seamlessly into academia. She returned to Clemson in 1999 as professor and chair of the Forestry department. Her duties expanded in 2003 and she became chair of forestry and natural resources. She became interim director of the new School in 2010 and director in 2011. Her best moments on the job happen regularly every year. First, it is at summer orientation when she meets and greets the new students. The next is at graduation when she snaps the group shot of graduates from her department, now School.

Pat Layton is passionate about her work and brings dynamic energy into any room, meeting, or engagement. Her experience in business and academic administration has led to a philosophy of sorts for her, "Teaching is key. It's about standing up for what you know to be true and having science behind you." She quickly acknowledges that policy and administration is not wholly influenced by science. She first interacted with legislative bodies at Scott Paper back in 1989 and she quickly learned "It is not the best science that wins people over, rather it is the most articulate sound bite." Historical figures that

inspire her are men who knew the science but also had the power to articulate conservation practices to citizens of the United States. These men ultimately effected policy that protected the environment. These clear speaking visionaries are Gifford Pinochet, Teddy Roosevelt, and Aldo Leopold. Her favorite places are Yellowstone, Central Park, British Columbia, and Clemson.

She sees her work now with the new School at Clemson as an opportunity to create opportunities for collaboration. Soils instructors are teaching key classes for multiple disciplines; agricultural education now requires their students take HORT 101; and guest lectures and special seminars are now open to all School students and faculty. But Pat Layton is just getting started. She is looking for more collaborators from industry. She encourages any interested green industry professional to contact her if they wish to share an opinion or ideas that benefit students or faculty in the arenas of recruitment, careers, or curriculum/teaching. "Clemson can't do this without you" she says. "Let us know what you think." She may be reached at playton@clemson.edu. But be prepared, she will probably put you to work making the Clemson School for Agriculture, Forest, and Environmental Sciences an even better, more sustainable entity.