Final Report on SEEDS Career Workshop on Communicating Science

The Abess Center for Ecosystem Science and Policy hosted a 1-day workshop on science communication for 50 participants on April 11, 2014. The workshop had three stated goals:

1. Educate: educate attendees on fundamentals of analytical design, evaluating and combining data, and effective data presentations for different mediums (paper, in person, multimedia, etc.) and for different audiences.

2. Engage: engage scientists and engineers in a frank discussion of data visualization and the limitations of certain presentation styles.

3. Train: train scientists and engineers in how to combine datasets across disciplines and produce visually compelling outputs of academic merit.

Fifteen participants filled out evaluation forms after the event. Based on that feedback and informal conversations, we believe that the program was generally successful, with participants stating that they learned a lot and gained a number of useful takeaways. Of the sessions hosted, the most successful were the Games workshop led by Clay Ewing and Lien B. Tran and the Poster assessment led by Kathryn Tosney. Those two were the most interactive and assumed no previous knowledge. In fact, some verbal comments after the workshop were that the whole day could have been devoted to just one of the breakout sessions, which would have allowed for more hands-on learning.

The R programming session was met with mixed results, largely because of the divergent skill levels of the audience. We had some people stating it was far too basic, while others found it so difficult they could not execute the first example. In this regard, the Fall 2013 Abess R Workshop was far more successful because it took people through the program in greater detail in a step-by-step fashion. We would plan to follow that format in future.
The afternoon session on infographics was deemed the least effective. As one participant put it, the presenter shared his work but not his ideas. Although we had requested that all speakers include a hands-on component, this one failed to comply and the session did not deliver many lessons on how scientists could themselves create effective images to communicate their work.