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Engaging Operations Research Students with a Local Reservoir Management Problem.

Liberal arts students engaged in a semester-long challenge designing an operating diagram for a local reservoir suffering from a grossly outdated model and disagreement among stakeholders. Unlike working with contrived projects, students spent the semester exploring stakeholders, determining model relationships, gathering data, creating and solving models, evaluating potential solutions and repeating. In addition to mathematical skills, students learned skills relevant to the liberal arts such as communication of ideas (written and oral), social responsibility, and arbitrating benefits between more than five stakeholders relying on the water.

This talk will discuss why this inquiry-based problem was selected as part of operations research course, followed by advantages and pitfalls of integrating such an approach into courses. Tips on initiating conversation with project related industry professionals will also be presented. (Received September 22, 2012)