

SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY **AG CENTER'S**

S SEEDS OF *Success!*

A Monthly Newsletter of the Southern University
Ag Center, College of Ag, and Chancellor's Report

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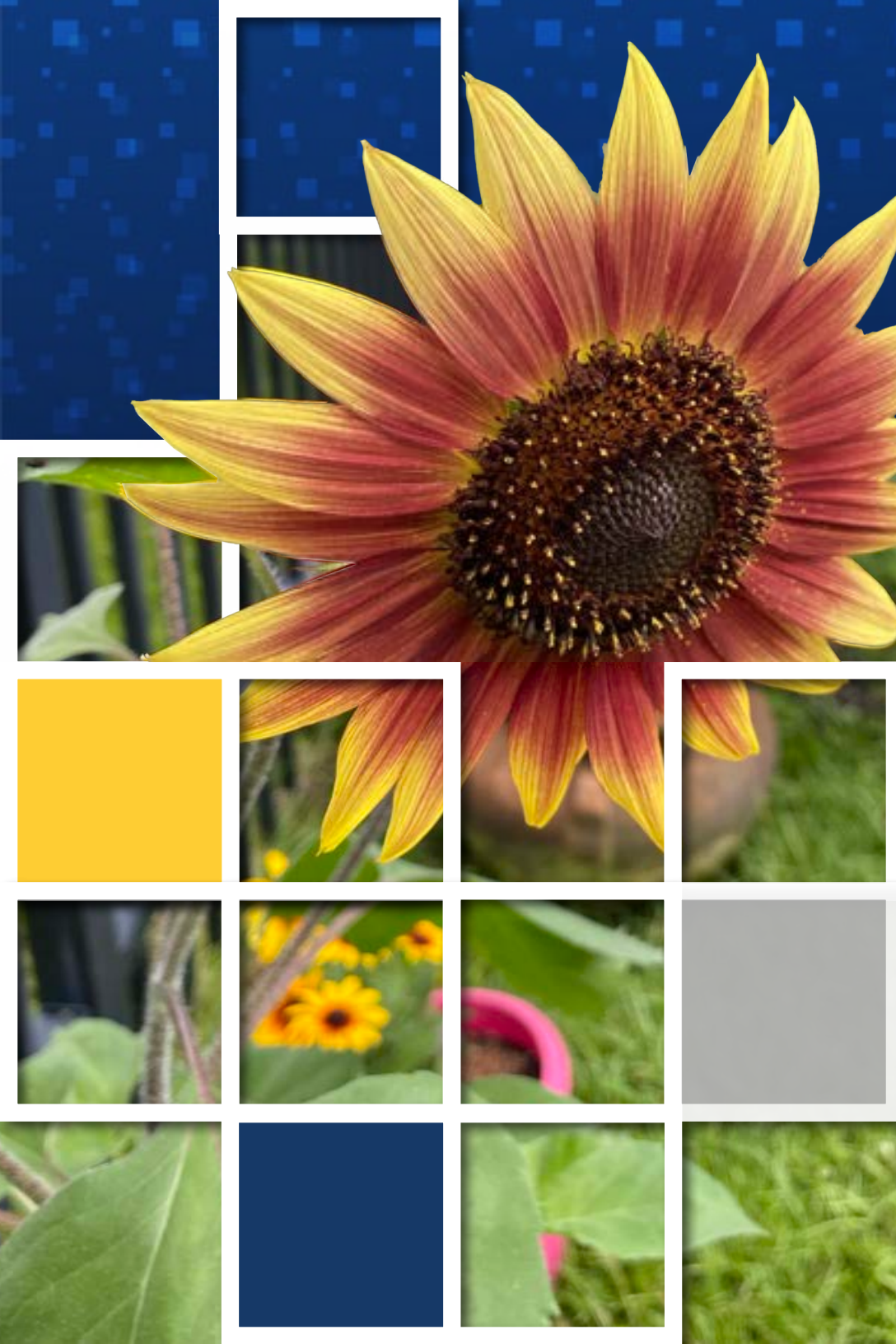
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SU College of Ag Students Cyra Ford and Nickolas Lawrence Gain Research Experience on the Point Sur Research Vessel



While many students were enjoying the downtime of summer, Southern University College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences (CAHES) students Cyra Ford and Nickolas Lawrence were making waves aboard the Point Sur Research Cruise.

As part of the Mississippi River Delta Transition Initiative Consortium (Miss Delta), Ford and Lawrence were conducting hands-on marine science research and exploring environmental sustainability. From collecting ocean samples to studying coastal ecosystems, these future scientists gained invaluable real-world experience in one of the most dynamic outdoor classrooms on Earth.

The Point Sur Research Vessel is equipped for wet and dry lab work and can deploy and recover various research equipment.

Since 2023, CAHES assistant research professors Drs. Jacqueline McComb and Crystal Vance have participated in the Miss Delta multi-member consortium effort led by Tulane University and Louisiana State University to seek ways to save the Lower Mississippi River Delta. This collaborative initiative allows the CAHES team to conduct intensive research while simultaneously creating research opportunities for students that will fill gaps in knowledge and understanding in the management of water and land.

For additional information on the College of Ag's work with the Mississippi River Delta Transition Initiative Consortium, contact Dr. McComb at jacqueline.mccomb@sus.edu.



SU Ag Center Participates in Back to School Resource Drive



Over 30 vendors gathered to support Baton Rouge students and families during the Back to School Resource Drive, hosted by Baton Rouge Mayor-President Sid Edwards' Office and Senator Regina Barrow, on August 3, 2025 at the Raising Cane's RiverCenter.

Aralynn Davis, SU Ag Center's Regional Youth Development Agent for Orleans Parish, and Dr. Raquel Ayles, SU Ag Center's Associate Vice Chancellor for Extension and Outreach, participated in the event to bring awareness to youth development programs and activities offered by the Ag Center. They also had the opportunity to give away school supplies to families and children in the community. Mayor-President Edwards and First Lady Edwards were excited to hear about the exciting opportunities the SU Ag Center offers and were happy to see Southern University represented at such a resourceful event, which provided families with classroom supplies and toiletries. Parents were even given the opportunity to obtain haircuts and hairstyles for their young scholars, as well as register them with youth sports organizations and an array of youth leadership programs during the event.

Hip Hop to Gen Z Summer Camp participant, DJ KJ, also MCed and musically cultivated the event. It is safe to say that the Back to School Resource Drive touched the lives of many, and the vendors truly helped prepare the students for their first day of school.

For additional information on the SU Ag Center's Youth Development Program, contact Dr. Raquel Ayles at raquel_ayles@suagcenter.com or visit <https://www.suagcenter.com/cooperative-extension/youth-development/about-youth-development>.



Soul of the Soil: Rooted in Resilience Luncheon Uplifts Black Farmers and Builds Bridges for Opportunity



New Orleans played host to the “Soul of the Soil: Rooted in Resilience” luncheon—a vibrant gathering that brought together farmers, entrepreneurs, educators, policymakers, and advocates to celebrate the enduring legacy and growing impact of Black agricultural producers on July 2, 2025. This powerful event centered on food sovereignty, cooperative economics, and the collective power of land-based traditions.

The luncheon opened with a warm welcome and a special video message from Congressman Troy Carter, recognizing the critical work of small-scale farmers and the organizations supporting them. Guests enjoyed a delicious, locally sourced meal featuring produce from Black growers across Louisiana, followed by a dynamic panel discussion titled *“Positioning Your Agriculture Business for Opportunity.”*

Panelists included Dr. Dawn Mellion with the National Black Growers Council, Bruce Harrell with the Federation of Southern Cooperatives, Pamela Broom with Newcorp, Inc. and Farmacia NOLA, and Dr. Marlin Ford, Research Professor and Urban Agricultural Specialist at the SU Ag Center. The panelists addressed challenges in distribution, cooperative economics, policy advocacy, and market innovation. Moderators and speakers such as Kenneth Walker from the Alcorn State University Policy Center, Kelisha Garrett from the Louisiana Chamber of Commerce Foundation, and Mark Samuel from the Southern Region Minority

Supplier Development Council (SRMSDC) helped guide a robust and inspiring conversation.

PJ Haynie, Chairman of the National Black Growers Council, delivered a stirring keynote address focused on land retention, access to capital, and the future of Black-led agriculture. His remarks energized the room and affirmed the importance of legacy, resilience, and collaboration.

A major highlight of the event was the local vendor market, showcasing products and services from entrepreneurs participating in the ACRES program—a collaboration between the National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC) and the SU Ag Center. The vendor market allowed attendees to support Black-owned agri-businesses and highlighted the entrepreneurial talent fostered through ACRES.

Partners and sponsors of the luncheon included the Southern University Ag Center, National Black Growers Council, SRMSDC, Louisiana Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Farmacia NOLA, Federation of Southern Cooperatives, Alcorn State University Policy Center, and NMSDC.

The *Soul of the Soil* luncheon was more than an event—it was a celebration of legacy and a call to action. Rooted in the strength of Black growers past and present, it left attendees inspired to cultivate deeper relationships, stronger networks, and lasting impact in agriculture and beyond.



Out the Mud: Nurturing Bright Futures Through Horticulture



The Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center is transforming lives through its innovative “Out the Mud” Urban Horticulture Program, providing agricultural training to incarcerated, adjudicated, and homeless youth. Operating across multiple campus garden sites, the Southern University Ag Center integrates gardening with nutrition education, interpersonal skill development, and workforce preparation.

The program’s objectives are clear: to create therapeutic horticulture experiences for youth within correctional facilities and school campuses, to promote healthy lifestyles through nutrition education, and to build professional and interpersonal skills that open pathways to careers while strengthening family connections. Participants engage in both classroom instruction and hands-on activities, cultivating and maintaining horticultural garden plots. This dual approach not only equips them with technical knowledge but also fosters teamwork, responsibility, and resilience.

Upon completion, participants earn certificates that can be added to résumés and job applications, enhancing their employability in horticulture and related industries. The impact is measurable and inspiring—72 students have graduated with certifications, with 30% securing agriculture-related employment. Over the past three years, 134 youth have participated in the program, growing more than 500 pounds of fresh produce for their own consumption, reinforcing lessons in nutrition and self-sufficiency.

By combining agriculture, education, and personal growth, the SU Ag Center’s multidisciplinary approach works to disrupt cycles of poverty and incarceration. This program not only plants seeds in the soil but also in the minds and futures of young people—seeds of confidence, skills, and opportunity—ultimately fostering healthier lives and reducing recidivism.

For additional information on the Out of the Mud Urban Horticulture Program contact, Stephanie Elwood, Horticulture Specialist, at stephanie_elwood@suagcenter.com.



**COOPERATIVE
EXTENSION**

Urban Farming Takes Root in New Orleans Through Educational Partnership



In a groundbreaking collaboration, the Southern University Ag Center has teamed up with the Material Institute to offer a highly successful Sustainable Urban Agriculture Certification Program to New Orleans residents. These nine series of hands-on classes provided participants with the knowledge and practical skills needed to grow their own food, while fostering food security and sustainability within the community.

The program attracted a diverse group of individuals with varying levels of gardening experience and backgrounds. Participants learned essential urban agriculture techniques, including soil health, plant nutrition, pest management, and sustainable farming practices. Through both classroom instruction and hands-on activities, the program equipped urban gardeners and farmers with the tools necessary to cultivate their own food efficiently and sustainably.

One of the key outcomes of the program was to empower participants to tap into additional resources, such as the USDA, to expand their operations. Several graduates of the program have already used their new knowledge to enhance their urban farming ventures, while others have started their own home gardens, contributing to the growing movement of food self-sufficiency in New Orleans.

The program's success is a testament to the effectiveness of collaboration between local institutions like the SU Ag Center and the Material Institute.

In the future, the SU Ag Center plans to continue expanding this initiative, ensuring that more New Orleans residents have access to the tools and knowledge needed to become successful urban farmers and gardeners.

For additional information on the Sustainable Urban Agriculture Certification Program contact, Asha McIntyre, Urban Agriculture Agent for Orleans Parish at, asha_mccintyre@suagcenter.com.



SU Ag Center's Research Unit Focuses on Strengthening the State's Producers Through Its' Research Efforts

The SU Ag Center's Research Unit aims to transform lives through innovative research and education. The Unit has expanded its research portfolio and strengthened its strategic partnerships to improve the conditions of agricultural producers and communities throughout the state. This article will highlight three research programs that aim to assist Louisiana's agricultural producers.

Viticulture and Enology Program

The SU Ag Center has established a research and demonstration vineyard dedicated to the science, cultivation, and management of grapevines, with a primary focus on wine grapes. The vineyard was established in March 2020 and serves as a key research site for studying Pierce's Disease (PD)-tolerant American, French-American hybrid bunch grapes, and Muscadine grapes in Louisiana.

The SU Ag Center plays a critical role in supporting Louisiana's wine industry by researching factors that affect grapevine quality, pest and disease management, and wine production techniques. The Center's viticulture program seeks to raise consumer awareness and appreciation of wines made from Southern-grown grapes, helping to elevate Louisiana's presence in the wine market.

For additional information on grapes, vineyard operations, or Viticulture contact, Dr. Devaiah Kambiranda, Associate Vice Chancellor for Research at, devaiah.kambiranda@sus.edu or visit the vineyard at the SU Ag Center's Horticultural Farm.



SUN Beef

Southern University Natural (SUN) Beef is an “all-natural, hormone-free beef product that arose from a beef cow-calf research project conducted at the Southern University Ag Center's Beef Research Institute.

The focus of the initial part of this study was on colostrum. In most other mammals, including humans, the mother transfers passive immunity in the form of immunoglobulins (IgG) to the baby. So most babies are born with an initial immunity against any disease the mother passed on to the offspring. However, in cows, it does not work this way since there is no immunity transferred across the placental membrane. Once the baby calf is born, it must nurse its mother within 24 hours since those factors carrying passive immunity (IgG) can only pass through the intestinal walls for absorption for not more than 24 hours, and then the passage closes.

Research work in dairy cows was conducted to determine the impacts of colostrum level on lifetime calf productivity. The first phase of the cow-calf study was to feed cows prior to calving either two or five lbs. of additional supplement, with the expectation that cows fed higher levels of feed supplement would produce more and higher-quality colostrum. Earlier studies showed that high-quality colostrum impacted calves for their entire lifetime. The first day of life impacts the entire productive life of a cow.

Additionally, other studies with dairy cows evaluated the impacts of the daily gain of calves during the first 60 days of life. Those studies showed that for every additional pound of gain from Day 1 to Day 60 compared to contemporaries, heifers would produce an additional 600 lbs. of milk each year. Therefore, the second half of this study was to feed cows either two or five lbs. of supplemental feeds for about the first 75 days of life for calves. After about 75 days, the calves were fed either two or five lbs. of supplement daily, and presumably cows fed five lbs. will produce more milk and calves gain faster, with this phase of the trial ending. At this point, calves are divided into two groups of cow-calf pairs, and calves either do or do not receive a creep feed. Creep feeds are provided in enclosures that allow calves access to the feed but not the cow. This has an impact on calves gaining more weight.

After grazing in pastures all summer long, steers are placed on full-feed in a feedlot for about 150 days, getting them to an average weight of about 1,250 lbs. The steers are then harvested. The carcass weight, USDA Quality Grades, and other carcass characteristics are measured.

Some of this beef is harvested through our meat processing plant on the Southern University campus. Those carcasses are processed into steaks, roasts, and ground beef,



with most being served through the University's cafeteria and the remaining sold to the public through the campus meat lab.

SUN Beef provides the campus and local community with farm-fresh, locally produced, high-quality beef that is all-natural, with no hormones, and no growth implants. It is some of the highest quality, best-tasting beef anywhere around. It was also a featured protein during the Super Bowl's Taste of the NFL 2025.

For more information about the SUN Beef Program, please contact Dr. Clyde Bagley at, clyde_bagley@suagcenter.com.

Urban Forestry and Natural Resource Management Program

The Urban Forestry and Natural Resource Management Program conducts research in areas such as forestry, climate change, Geographic Information System (GIS), wetlands, nanotechnology, bioenergy, and alternative sources. It conducts research in urban forest structure and function; the environmental benefits of urban forests; carbon sequestration and the urban forest effects on air quality; and urban forest effects on UV exposure in relation to proper vegetation design.

The term urban forest refers to all publicly and privately owned trees within an urban area, including individual trees along streets and in backyards, as well as stands of remnant forest. Urban forests are an integral part of community ecosystems, whose numerous elements (such as people, animals, buildings, infrastructure, water, and air) interact to significantly affect the quality of urban life. Trees are managed in urban areas by taking tree inventories of the different species and conducting risk assessments of trees for structural damage and diseases. Removal of high-risk trees, maintenance of healthy trees, and replanting new trees will continue tree sustainability for the communities. Part of the research conducted by SU Ag Center's scientists is to ensure the tree health of urban forests.

Through collaborative efforts, the program also addresses urban sprawl, heat island, air quality improvement, and species ratings pertaining to urban forests and urban ecosystems. It provides education and training for Louisiana citizens in the practice of using urban wood from municipal tree removals for traditional wood products.

The goal of the program is to strengthen the productivity, profitability, and competitiveness of Louisiana's forestry and fisheries while enhancing the environment and the wise use of natural resources.

For additional information on the SU Ag Center's Research Unit contact, Dr. Clyde Bagley, Vice Chancellor for Research and Director of Beef Research Institute at clyde_bagley@suagcenter.com or visit <https://www.suagcenter.com/research/departments-of-research>.

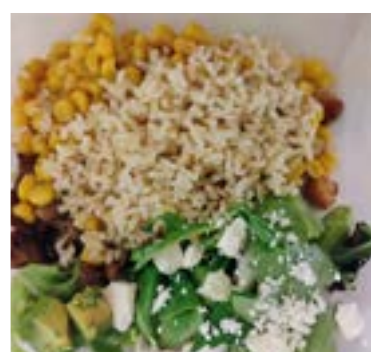


SU Staff Members Are Introduced to Sustainable Protein Options During the Excellence Exchange Lunch & Learn



SU faculty & staff gathered for the Excellence Exchange Lunch & Learn, hosted by the 1890 Center of Excellence for Nutrition, Health, Wellness, and Quality of Life (COE) on July 23, 2025. The hands-on workshop kicked off with a fun chair-based fitness session led by Tanesha Craig Stewart.

Inspired by the COE's July 22, 2025 virtual seminar on Sustainable Proteins with guest Dr. Bianca Datta from The Good Food Institute, participants learned about sustainable protein options and cooked plant-based steak, chicken, and chickpeas. The participants sampled the plant-based options and used them to build their own delicious protein bowls!



This lunch and learn combined movement, mindful eating, and sustainability in one interactive afternoon.

The Center of Excellence continues to lead innovative efforts that support the well-being of staff, promotes healthier habits, and workplace wellness.





SU AG PODCAST

Tune in to the latest edition of the SU Ag Center's Podcast. In this episode, Dr. Devaiah Kambiranda, SU Ag Center's Associate Vice Chancellor for Research, will discuss

Hosted by:
Dexter "Dex" Newman

**"Growing Grapevines at the
SU Ag Center."**

LISTEN TO THE EPISODE AT:
<https://www.suagcenter.com/podcast>



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