

SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY **AG CENTER'S**

SU SEEDS OF *Success!*

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

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SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

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Chancellor-Dean

OFM



AG LEADERSHIP



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**SU Ag Center
and the College
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Employees, and
Alumni**



SU AG HOMECOMING 2025



The Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center (SU Ag Center) and the College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences (CAHES) held several activities Oct. 13 – 18 to celebrate Homecoming Week 2025.

Activities began with the Café Lacumba Meal Preparation/Campus Food Pantry Stocking and the Morrill Society Induction on Oct. 13. The Café Lacumba Meal Preparation/Campus Food Pantry Stocking was held to address the growing problem of food insecurity on college campuses.



OCTOBER
13
MONDAY

Morrill Society Induction Ceremony



MORRILL
SOCIETY
EXTENSION • TEACHING • RESEARCH

The Morrill Society Induction Ceremony was held at the Matthews Center for Innovation. The ceremony inducted its 3rd Cadre of members, who support the Ag Center and the College of Ag annually through financial contributions. Founding members are designated as the first 90 individuals reaching \$5,000 or more in unrestricted, lifetime giving to Southern University Agriculture Programming.



The goal of the fund is to provide recurring, annual, unrestricted support for the Southern University Ag Center and the College of Ag.

This year's inductees were:

- Dr. Donovan Segura
- The Joe W. and Dorothy Dorsett Brown Foundation
- Dr. James Gilmore

They join a distinguished group of visionary partners whose commitment to the institution is both generous and strategic:

Cadre 2 – 2024:

- Tina N. Donatto

- Gina E. Eubanks, Ph.D.
- Renita Marshall, DVM
- George E. Robinson, DVM, MSPH
- April J. Stull, Ph.D., RDN, FAND
- Katara Williams, Ph.D.
- De'Shoin A. York, Ph.D.
- The Mosaic Company
- ExxonMobil

Cadre 1 – 2023:

- Leodrey Williams, Ph.D.
- Adell Brown, Ph.D.
- Orlando F. McMeans, Ph.D.
- Brunetta Gamble-Dillard

The fund was established in 2020 under the leadership of Dr. Orlando F. McMeans, Chancellor-Dean of the SU Ag Center and the College of Ag.

SU AG HOMECOMING 2025

OCTOBER
14
TUESDAY

Mind Your MANNRS



The “Mind Your MANNRS” student workshop, Lacumba’s Nutrition Clinic, and Better You at SU Nutrition Class were held on Oct. 14. The MANNRS workshop brought together powerful voices and real-world insight to help students navigate the critical shift from campus to career. With assistance from the Weyerhaeuser’s Leadership Team, Ronald Crear, Sr., and Dr. Christopher Chappell, Associate Professor of Urban Forestry at Southern University, the students engaged in a dynamic conversation on purpose-driven work, personal growth, and preparing for success beyond the classroom.



Lacumba’s Nutrition Clinic



The Lacumba’s Nutrition Clinic offered personalized nutrition counseling, healthy eating information, and practical tips to help faculty, staff, and students feel their best, both in and out of the classroom. During the Better You at SU Nutrition Class, Dietetic Interns provided free nutrition information on the topics of nutrition basics, energy needs, hydration, smart snacking, meal prepping, food label reading, and SMART goals.

SU AG HOMECOMING 2025

OCTOBER
15
WEDNESDAY

SU Student Health Center's Annual Homecoming Health Fair

Staff from the SU Ag Center participated in the Southern University Student Health Center's Annual Homecoming Health Fair on Oct. 15 in the Smith-Brown Memorial Union. Representatives from the 1890 Center of Excellence, Precision Nutrition & Food Science, and the Communities of Color Network provided nutrition information, healthy eating tips, and the negative health impact of tobacco. Students were also recruited to take part in the Department of Research's supplement use and obesity survey.

OCTOBER
16
THURSDAY

Chancellor-Dean's Coffee Chat

The Chancellor-Dean's Coffee Chat was held on Oct. 16 in the lobby of Pinkie Thrift Hall. It provided a forum for students to talk with Dr. Orlando F. McMeans in a relaxed setting.



JagFresh Farmers Market

The JagFresh Farmers Market was held in front of the Smith-Brown Memorial Union and provided a venue for the Southern University community to purchase locally grown fruit, vegetables, eggs, meat, homemade jellies, and other products from local farmers and vendors.



SU AG HOMECOMING 2025

OCTOBER
17
FRIDAY

Vino on the Bluff

The 4th Annual “Vino on the Bluff Scholarship Fundraiser,” was held on Oct. 17 at the Leon R. Tarver II Cultural and Heritage Center.

The event raised over \$115,000 for student scholarships, including a \$100,000 donation from Southern University System Board of Supervisors Chair and District Attorney Tony Clayton. The funds will support the Darjean Jones Wines Continuing Education Scholarship Fund for students enrolled in CAHES.

Activities during the event included a curated wine and whiskey tastings, farm-to-table inspired food, a silent auction, live entertainment, and VIP experiences.

This year’s event also served as the launch of the SU Ag Center’s 801 Wine Collection at 8:01 p.m. Named after “801 Harding Boulevard,” the address of Southern University, the collection features several red and white wines made from grapes grown at the Southern University Ag Center’s



vineyard in Baton Rouge, La.

The Darjean Jones Wines Continuing Education Scholarship Fund has provided two CAHES students with a four-year scholarship totaling \$12,000. In addition to the funding, each student has also received research experience through the scholarship.

WBRZ News Channel 2 also aired a live grape juice tasting during their morning show on Oct. 17.

Homecoming Tailgate & Football Game

Activities concluded on Oct. 18 with a “Homecoming Tailgate,” on the lawn of Fisher Hall before the 2025 SU Homecoming Football Game against Prairie View A&M University in A.W. Mumford Stadium.

OCTOBER
18
SATURDAY



SU Ag Center and College of Ag Held Ag Week 2025



The Southern University Ag Center and the College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences held its 2025 Ag Week from Oct. 20 – 25, 2025 themed “Greaux Pink: Powered by Purpose. Planted in Pride,” with events that engaged Ag students and staff.



Greauxing Awareness: “Did You Know?” Fun Facts About SU Ag Virtual Event

The week began with the Greauxing Awareness: “Did You Know?” Fun Facts About SU Ag virtual event. This interactive campus-wide trivia experience used QR codes to highlight the impact of SU Ag.

Hip-Hop Farmers Movie Preview

The Hip-Hop Farmers Movie Preview was also held on Oct. 20 in the auditorium of Stewart Hall. The event provided students, faculty, and staff with opportunities to view the movie Hip-Hop Farmers, a film that bridges urban and rural communities through music, farming, and entrepreneurship.



Greauxing Flavor: Chopped – The Ag Cook-Off Challenge

Greauxing Flavor: “Chopped – The Ag Cook-Off Challenge” was held on Oct. 21 in the lobby of Pinkie Thrift Hall. The cook-off was hosted by the SU Ag Center’s 1890 Center of Excellence and the CAHES. Student chefs battled it out in a sizzling taco showdown featuring Southern University Natural (SUN) Beef, an all-natural, hormone-free beef product that arose from a beef cow-calf research project at the SU Ag Center’s Beef Research Institute. The event highlighted research and innovation in food systems in a lighthearted friendly competition.





Greauxing Outreach: Community Produce Giveaway

The Greauxing Outreach: “Community Produce Giveaway” was held on Oct. 22 at the Charles R. Kelly Community Center in Baton Rouge, La. This Community Produce Giveaway served 100 residents in the 70807-zip code, purchasing Louisiana-grown beef, greens, and sweet potatoes from four small-scale farmers.

This event was made possible by the Joe Burrow Foundation, one of our dedicated Harvest Heroes. These partners help the Ag Center and the CAHES build food security, support small farmers, and strengthen local communities.

Produce Giveaways go beyond food, they are a movement providing fresh, locally sourced products to food-insecure families across Louisiana.

A special thanks to our Southern Ag Center Network Farmers Muse3Farm, LandY Acre Farms LLC, B&P Enterprise of Avoyelles Parish, and Fekete Farms for providing fresh produce and meat.

To date, the Ag Center’s Produce Giveaways have distributed more than 1,200 five-pound bags of fresh food to families in five parishes.





Greauxing Financial Future: Financial Literacy and Empowerment Workshop with First South Farm Credit

The Southern University Ag Center and the College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences (CAHES) held the Greauxing Financial Future: “Financial Literacy and Empowerment Workshop with First South Farm Credit” for students enrolled in the CAHES in the Valdry Center for Philanthropy on Oct. 23.

John Sport, Vice President and Young, Beginning, Small Farmer (YBS) Director provided students with information on the financial literacy touching on the ways that they can begin to build credit, information on the importance of a credit score in lending, and budgeting.

“When you’re young and you’re paying for does education and living expenses, it’s challenging sometimes to make those credit card payments when they come up,” expressed Sport when discussed how to build credit. “I share this with you now so that you can get off to the best start possible. Whatever credit you have, thirty-five percent of your (credit) score is based on how timely you make your payments. So ever if it’s a credit card, just at least make that minimum payment.

By making that minimum payment, you meet the standard of a timely payment. Do everything you can to make that minimum payment on time.”

Dr. Renita Marshall, Vice Chancellor for Academic & Student Services/Associate Dean, told the students that she wished that she knew the information that Mr. Sport shared while she was in college and implored the students to take head to the information that was shared.

First South Farm Credit also presented a \$2,500.00 check to CAHES to support student scholarships.

The SU Ag Center and the CAHES look forward to continuing our partnership with First South Farm Credit.





Greauxing Wellness: SU Together Edition

Later that evening, the Greauxing Wellness: “SU Together Edition” was held in Pinkie Thrift Hall. During this cooking class, students learned to make sushi bowls and participated in a bike ride throughout the campus with Geaux Ride.



Iowa State University School of Science and Technology Informational Session

The Iowa State University School of Science and Technology held an informational session on funded graduate programs in their School of Mental Health on Oct. 24 in the lobby of Pinkie Thrift Hall. CAHES students also learned how they could receive tuition support and a living stipend while advancing their education and preparing for a career working with children and families.



Greauxing Tradition: Field to Fork Ag Tailgate & Ag Football Game

The week ended on Oct. 25 with the Greauxing Tradition: “Field to Fork Ag Tailgate” at the SU Field House. Chancellor-Dean Dr. Orlando F. McMeans and the SU Ag Executive Team also participated in the Game Toss against the FAMU Rattlers in A.W. Mumford Stadium.



Jaguar N.E.S.T. Receives Generous Donations from Aldi and La Capitale (LA) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated



The College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences proudly recognizes and extends its gratitude to Aldi and the La Capitale (LA) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated for their recent contributions in support of the Jaguar Nourishment, Essentials, Support to Thrive (N.E.S.T.), a campus-based initiative designed to combat food insecurity among college students.

Aldi provided a donation of \$1,000.00, while the La Capitale (LA) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated, under the leadership of Dr. Raquel Square Ayles, presented a \$2,500.00 donation on September 22, 2025. These contributions reflect a shared commitment to ensuring that Southern University students have consistent access to nutritious meals and essential items.

Launched in November 2024, the Jaguar N.E.S.T. was established to address the growing problem of food insecurity on campus. Research indicates that nearly 40% of college students in the United States experience food insecurity, defined as the lack of reliable access to affordable and nutritious food, according to a 2019 report by Goldrick-Rab, Baker-Smith, Coca, Looker, and Williams. At Southern University this issue is even more critical, as the campus is located in a food desert with limited access to grocery stores

and fresh food outlets. Through the leadership of the Dietetic Internship Program and the ongoing support of community partners such as State Representative Vanessa LaFleur, the Baton Rouge Sigma Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Inc., and the My Kid Plate Foundation, the Jaguar N.E.S.T. has already demonstrated measurable impact. Since its opening, the program has served more than 500 students across campus.

The Jaguar N.E.S.T. operates entirely through donations and volunteer efforts, showcasing the power of collective action. With convenient locations at Pinkie Thrift Hall and the Horace W. Moody Intramural Sports Complex, the program provides accessible resources that directly support student success, health, and well-being.

“These generous contributions from Aldi and the La Capitale (LA) Chapter of The Links, Incorporated reinforce the importance of community collaboration in addressing food insecurity,” expressed Alexis D. Motley, Dietetic Internship Director and coordinator of the Jaguar N.E.S.T. The continued generosity of community partners, donors, and volunteers ensures that the Jaguar N.E.S.T. remains a vital resource for Southern University students.



CAHES Holds Mini Farm Day



Over 150 people attended the CAHES' 2025 Mini Farm Day on the lawn of Fisher Hall on Sept. 17, 2025. Southern University students explored animal care, husbandry practices, and met the animals raised on campus.

The event reflected the College's dedication in blending classroom knowledge with real-world agricultural experience.

For additional information on this event, contact Dr. Jodi Morton, Assistant Professor of Animal Science in the CAHES Department of Agricultural Science and Technology at jodi_morton@sus.edu.



Southern University Child Development Laboratory 2024-2025 Recap



This article provides a comprehensive overview of the Southern University Child Development Laboratory's (SUCDL) achievements, highlights faculty, staff, and student milestones, and outlines our vision for the year ahead. Every success reflects SUCDL's unwavering commitment to delivering high-quality early childhood education, strengthening Southern University families, and advancing the mission of the College of Agricultural, Human, and Environmental Sciences.

Acknowledgment of Leadership

The achievements of 2024–2025 are made possible through the extraordinary leadership of Dr. Renita Marshall, whose vision continues to guide the Southern University Child Development Laboratory (SUCDL). Her commitment to innovation, accountability, and excellence ensures that SUCDL thrives as both a learning laboratory for Southern University students and a model for high-quality early childhood education.

Dr. Marshall's leadership has created a foundation where children are nurtured, families are embraced as partners, and staff are empowered to grow. SUCDL's success is a direct reflection of her unwavering support.

Program Performance

SUCDL closed the 2024–2025 academic year with outstanding accomplishments in program quality. The program earned a CLASS average score of 5.98, placing us in the High Proficient category, and achieved an Excellent rating of 6.23 in another performance dimension.

Additionally, SUCDL reached a major milestone by becoming a 4-Star Center, affirming our commitment to excellence in early childhood education and care. These results reflect the hard work of our teachers, staff, and leadership team in providing intentional, research-based instruction, and nurturing environments for children.



Professional Growth and Staff Achievements

Faculty and staff advanced their professional expertise through participation in the Louisiana Department of Education Teacher Leader Summit, where SUCDL was positively impacted. This platform provides access to innovative, research-driven strategies that will directly strengthen instructional delivery and classroom practices. The conference also fostered collaboration among educators statewide, enabling SUCDL faculty to bring back best practices that will enhance teacher-child interactions, improve lesson planning, and support differentiated instruction for diverse learners.

The benefit to staff extends beyond professional development, it positions SUCDL teachers to implement new strategies that nurture children's critical thinking, creativity, and social-emotional growth. As a result, the projected student outcomes include measurable gains in school readiness, increased family engagement in learning, and stronger foundations for academic success.

Highlights of staff achievement include:

- **Krystal Blackwell, Creative Arts Teacher**, completed her Master's in Early Childhood Education.
- **Brittany Robinson, Assistant Director and Instructional Coach**, earned her second Master's degree in Early Intervention.
- **Alexis C. Perkins, SUCDL Director**, was an active participant in the restructuring of tuition, registration, and enrollment processes.

These changes expanded enrollment of all family types (student-parent families, faculty and staff families, and community families) while maintaining program quality and integrity.

Staff Team Building Experience – Studio BE Art Has Power

In Spring 2025, SUCDL staff engaged in a transformative team-building experience at the Studio BE *Art Has Power* Museum in New Orleans, Louisiana. Immersed in 30,000 square feet of breathtaking murals and installations, our team encountered a living canvas of Black excellence, creativity, and resilience. The art evoked powerful conversations, deep reflection, and a renewed sense of pride in the richness of culture and innovation.

The experience allowed the staff to pause and recognize the excellence that defines our own team dynamic. Collectively, SUCDL staff hold over 100 years of experience in early childhood care and development, a wealth of knowledge that shapes our daily work. Just as each brushstroke, color, and texture contributes to the brilliance of a mural, each team member brings unique gifts and perspectives that together create a masterpiece.

This beauty spills outward into classrooms where children learn, into relationships with families, into mentorship of Southern University students, and into partnerships with SU Ag faculty and staff. Like the art at Studio BE, SUCDL reflects resilience, brilliance, and excellence. The experience left an indelible mark on our team, reminding us that we, too, are art in motion.

As we prepare for the 2025–2026 academic year, SUCDL proudly introduces its new guiding theme: RESET – Reignite. Empower. Support. Elevate. Thrive. RESET is more than a theme—it is a framework for teaching, learning, and collaboration. It embodies our pledge to reignite passion for discovery, empower staff and families, support one another through meaningful connections, elevate instructional excellence, and ensure that every child entrusted to us thrives.

Cafe Lacumba Provides Hands-on Training to Dietetic Interns



The College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences proudly announces the return of Cafe Lacumba, a student-led restaurant at Southern University A&M College that brings healthy and innovative menu options to the Jaguar community. Operated by the Dietetic Internship Program, Cafe Lacumba provides interns with hands-on training in food service management while offering nutritious, thoughtfully prepared meals to students, faculty, staff, and community members.

Supporters are encouraged to dine in and experience the creativity, professionalism, and skill of Southern University's future dietitians.

On September 17, 2025, the Dietetic Internship Program and Cafe Lacumba were featured on WBRZ News Channel 2, which highlighted the interns' dedication to planning, preparing, and serving meals that emphasize health and wellness. The coverage showcased Cafe Lacumba as a unique campus space where students gain valuable real-world experience while making an immediate impact on their community.

The semester officially began on August 27, 2025,

with a spirited Jaguar tailgate football theme that set the tone for the year. The opening was a tremendous success, thanks to the dedication of the dietetic interns and the enthusiastic response of the campus community.

"Cafe Lacumba is a learning laboratory where our students gain real-world skills and where our campus benefits from healthy, creative meals," said Alexis D. Motley, Program Director. "The success of Cafe Lacumba reflects the hard work of our interns and the continued support of the Southern University community."

The Dietetic Internship Program prepares future registered dietitians with practical training in nutrition, food service, and community engagement. Through initiatives like Cafe Lacumba, students gain critical leadership, management, and clinical skills while advancing the mission of promoting health and wellness across diverse communities.

Cafe Lacumba operates inside Pinkie Thrift Hall and all proceeds directly support the educational experiences of dietetic interns at Southern University A&M College.



Five CAHES Students Explore Coastal Science at LUMCON



Southern University's College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences students Abriana Rubin, Chasity Joseph, Terrance Banks, Myles Moore, and Jared Anthony participated in the MissDelta Initiative's Fall 2025 field excursion to the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium (LUMCON) in Cocodrie, Louisiana, held October 10–12, 2025.

During the trip, students explored Louisiana's unique coastal ecosystems through hands-on learning experiences, including marsh transect studies, salt marsh ecology, and a research cruise aboard the R/V Acadiana. These immersive activities introduced participants to real-world environmental science – from water quality testing to studying coastal biodiversity and ecosystem health.

The experience fostered collaboration, scientific curiosity, and environmental awareness among students pursuing agricultural, environmental, and marine sciences.

This trip was part of the MissDelta Initiative, which connects undergraduates with applied research and field experiences that strengthen workforce readiness in sustainability and ecological stewardship.



Yale School of the Environment Partners with Southern University to Expand Opportunities for HBCU Students



Dr. Jacqueline McComb, Assistant Professor in the CAHES, recently hosted Te'Yah Wright, Program Manager at the Yale School of the Environment, for an outreach and networking event highlighting new opportunities for HBCU students.

Yale School of the Environment was recently awarded a grant providing \$50,000 scholarships to students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) who are admitted during the current application cycle. As an Alcorn State University alum, Wright is leading recruitment visits across the Deep South to connect with prospective students and strengthen pathways between HBCUs and Yale's graduate programs.

During her visit to Southern University, Wright hosted a tabling session and networking event for students, faculty, and alumni, offering insights into graduate study, research opportunities, and careers in sustainability and environmental leadership. This collaboration underscores a shared commitment to broadening access, representation, and innovation within environmental science and education.

SU Ag Center Hosts Its 20th Annual Business Development & Procurement Conference



The Southern University Ag Center held its 20th Annual Business Development and Procurement Conference October 27-29, 2025. The conference, themed “A Legacy of Leadership: 20 Years of Innovation and Impact,” held sessions in the F. G. Clark Activity Center and the Valdry Center for Philanthropy on Southern University’s Baton Rouge campus.

The conference provided resources for individuals looking to launch their business, and established enterprises who were ready to scale their businesses. This milestone year was all about creating space for entrepreneurs and business leaders to not only learn, but to truly grow.

“I am excited about our expanded conference format that now includes interactive sessions designed to provide hands-on, personalized assistance,” expressed Dr. Krystle Allen, Conference Director and Community and Economic Development Specialist at the SU Ag Center. “These sessions will help small business owners strengthen capacity, identify new opportunities, and walk away with actionable strategies to move their business forward.”

Topics covered during the conference include:

- A panel discussion on Government Contracting Opportunities
- Access to Capital for Small Businesses
- Non-Traditional Funding Sources
- Information on the Office of State Purchasing
- Cybersecurity for Small Businesses



- **Scaling and Growing your Business: Setting up Infrastructure**
- **Workforce Development and Training**
- **Human Resources and Relent Development**

The conference also featured interactive sessions that helped business owners develop a strategic business plan and enhance the company's procurement readiness and navigating key marketing platforms.

"Beyond the sessions, small business owners gained access to decision-makers, connections with potential partners, and joined a community of innovators who are shaping the future of business," expressed Dr. Allen.

The conference was free and opened to all small business owners and contractors. For additional information on the 20th Annual Business Development and Procurement Conference, contact Dr. Krystle Allen, at krystle_allen@suagcenter.com.

SARDI Holds Its Fall Garden Workshop

The Sustainable Agriculture & Rural Development Institute (SARDI) hosted a Fall Gardening Workshop on Friday, October 3, 2025.

Attendees explored fall vegetable cultivation, participated in gardening and hydroponic demonstrations, and sampled locally grown dishes such as gumbo, collard greens, and sweet potato fries.

They also took home fresh produce – including lettuce, spinach, kale, okra, sweet potatoes, and purple hull peas – all grown right on the SARDI campus.

SARDI hosts gardening workshops each spring and fall to provide knowledge and resources that help our community grow.



SARDI Partners With Dads and Kids of Acadiana to Bring Positive Mornings for Students



SARDI's Community and Youth Outreach Specialist Heather D. Bob has partnered with Dads and Kids of Acadiana to spread Positive Mornings at schools in Acadiana.

Through this activity, members of the organization and community leaders conduct a positive spirit tunnel that welcomes the faculty, staff, and students from the selected school with positive affirmations and words of encouragement to start their day off with a positive morning. The group believes that when someone starts the day off with a positive morning, they are more likely to have a more effective day and give out positive vibes to other.

"We may never know what someone is going through before they make it school; so, it is always better to be greeted with kindness and a smile," said Bob.

Some of the schools that have been visited span between St. Landry (Northeast Elementary, Grolee Elementary, Central Middle School, Creswell Elementary, and Lawtell Elementary) and Evangeline Parishes (James Stevens Elementary, Chataigner Elementary, and Reimagine Elementary).

Dads and Kids of Acadiana is a non-profit organization that is on a mission to strengthen the bond between fathers and children through engaging morning events, father-son walks, and heartwarming family gatherings. They also provide unwavering support to school employees who are instrumental in shaping the lives of children in Acadiana.



Southern University Hosts 3rd Annual “Calf Roping on the Bluff” at the Marice A. Edmond Livestock Arena



The SU Ag Center hosted the 3rd Annual Calf Roping on the Bluff, on September 28, 2025 at the Marice A. Edmond Livestock Arena. The event, which was created by Livestock Show Director Meguna Johnson and Southern University alumnus Denim Hill, brought together skilled calf ropers from across the Southern region to compete in one of the University’s fastest-growing agricultural traditions.

Each year, the event draws participants and spectators from Louisiana, Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, and surrounding states, offering a blend of athletic competition, family fun, and agricultural education. The event serves as a bridge between traditional rodeo culture and youth engagement in agricultural sciences, a core mission of the Livestock Program.

“The Calf Roping on the Bluff has become more than just a roping competition, it’s a celebration of heritage, community, and the future of agriculture at Southern University,” said Johnson. “Our goal is to provide a space where students, alumni, and the community can come together to celebrate excellence and hands-on learning.”

In addition to showcasing talented ropers, the

event featured food vendors, live entertainment, and student volunteers from the Southern University Ag Center’s Livestock Show Ag-Vocate Program, who assisted with event coordination and livestock handling.

Under the leadership of Johnson and Hill, this event continues to grow each year, strengthening the Ag Center’s legacy of excellence in agricultural education, community outreach, and cultural tradition.

The following is a list of winners in various roping categories.

- **Open Breakaway:** Davon King, Natchez, Mississippi
- **Jr. Breakaway:** Adeline Vidrine, Washington, Louisiana
- **Open Tie Down:** James Berry III, Natchez, Mississippi
- **Double OO Tie Down:** Fred Maberry, Natchez, Mississippi
- **Triple OOO Tie Down:** Warren Pelican, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

The Calf Roping on the Bluff also received media coverage from WBRZ News Channel 2.



Southern University's M-Tech Unit Brings Critical Education and Recovery Support to Louisiana Communities



The following article appeared on the Extension Disaster Education Network's (EDEN) website on Oct. 14, 2025.

When disaster strikes, access to reliable information and communication can be just as essential as food and water. The Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center (SU Ag Center) is meeting that need through its Mobile Technology Education Center (M-Tech Unit), a mobile classroom that delivers educational programs and disaster recovery support across Louisiana.

Launched with federal recovery funds after Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, the M-Tech Unit was created to help small agricultural businesses rebuild. "After those storms, many of our clientele along the coast lost everything, including their businesses, equipment, and customer base," said William Augustine, M.Ed., Project Coordinator ECP/ MTEC Technician at Southern University Ag Center. "We developed four certification programs—Food and Farm Safety, Small Business Development, Sustainable Urban Agriculture, and Master Small Ruminant Production—to help them get back on their feet."

The mobile classroom is equipped with internet access, computers, and printers, making it a traveling hub for education and outreach. Although not originally built for disaster response, its capabilities have made it a vital tool in crisis situations.

"When hurricanes or tornadoes hit and power and communications go down, we can roll in and provide internet access so people can contact insurance companies, apply for SNAP benefits, or complete FEMA paperwork," Augustine said. "Even if the community has lost power, we can establish a connection and help them communicate with local or federal government."

After Hurricane Laura, the unit deployed to Bastrop, Louisiana, where residents had been cut off from essential services. "We set up internet, computers, and printers inside and outside the unit so more people could apply for assistance," Augustine said. "We also distributed water and COVID supplies. People were so relieved to finally move forward."



When not supporting disaster response, the M-Tech Unit fulfills its core mission of providing statewide certification training. Augustine said this dual role—education during normal times and response during disasters—makes the unit uniquely valuable. “It’s not just what we teach,” he said. “It’s how we show up for people when they need us most.”

While the M-Tech Unit operates within Southern University’s Extension programs, its work connects closely with national efforts to strengthen disaster preparedness and community resilience. The Extension Disaster Education Network (EDEN), a collaboration of land-grant universities that share research-based resources before, during, and after disasters, highlights programs like Southern’s to demonstrate how Extension supports recovery. Augustine hopes sharing the M-Tech model will inspire similar outreach in other states.

“We do a lot of extension work that may not be widely known,” he said. “EDEN could be a great platform to help more people learn about what we offer, and help other states consider similar models.”

With its innovative design and boots-on-the-ground approach, the M-Tech Unit stands as a model of how land-grant institutions can combine education and disaster resilience to meet community needs. As Augustine puts it: “Wherever we can help, we go.”



Seniors Helping Seniors Learn the Difference Between Salt & Sodium

The Southern University Ag Center Family and Human Sciences (FHS) Associate Agent, Angell C. Jordan, discussed the topic "Salt and Sodium" with seniors on September 5, 2025.

The seniors were surprised to learn the difference between salt and sodium and how to read nutrition facts labels to see just how much sodium is in a product. The attendees were even more amazed when they learned the amount of sodium one should consume in a day. They were given sample nutrition facts labels to learn how to read the sodium amounts in their favorite food items. There were a lot of sad faces while reading the labels but on the other hand they were extremely grateful to learn how to determine how much sodium is in a product.



SU Ag Center Holds Southern Strength Pink Out Breast Cancer Awareness Event for Seniors



The Southern University Ag Center held the Southern Strength Pink Out Breast Cancer Awareness event on October 17 at the Charles R. Kelly Community Center in Baton Rouge for member of elderly population.

The event included health information, nutrition education, a food demonstration, physical activities, and games.

A nurse practitioner from the Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center was also in attendance and provided resources and educational information.

The goal of the event was to educate the older community on age-appropriate screening and symptoms of breast cancer and to provide them with the resources to help them make healthy choices.



Evaluation of Muscadine Table Grape Varieties for Regional Adaptability and Market Quality



The Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center (SU Ag Center) Viticulture Project is currently evaluating several commercially available table muscadine cultivars to determine vine vigor, yield potential, fruit quality, and ripening period. The fruits produced during the season are made available for interested growers to sample and use in recommending cultivars for local U-pick operations and fresh market production.

The study includes a diverse collection of bronze, red, and black muscadine grapes planted in a randomized block design, including *Hall*, *Late Fry*, *Big Red*, *Black Beauty*, *Darlene*, *Dixie Red*, *Sugargate*, *Triumph*, *Janet*, and *Fry Seedless*. Preliminary observations indicate differences in bud break, flowering time, and sugar accumulation, with an average Brix value of 18.0° across cultivars. Popular table variety Black Beauty recorded a Brix of 17.0°, while the highest sugar contents were observed in Sugargate (20.5°) and Hall (20.26°), and the lowest in Big Red (13.2°). The weight of individual berries ranged from 2 -12 g/berry and size varied from 13- 27 mm.

These table grapes were also showcased during

college welcome week, Ag Week, and several fundraising events. The vineyard continues to serve as a learning site for new and existing farmers seeking information on varietal performance for table and wine grapes in the region. As part of its outreach, the SU Ag Center recently visited White Farm in Baton Rouge, LA, where Pastor White is working with the viticulture team to revitalize his muscadine vineyard as a local U-pick operation. Farmers like Pastor White represent the core mission of the SU Ag Center's Viticulture and Enology research to support and strengthen grape production for the region.

The SU Ag Center will continue to evaluate table and wine grapes for regional adaptability and stand ready to assist growers interested in establishing vineyards for fresh market, juice, or wine production.

The Viticulture and Enology research team consists of Joshua Reason, Micheal Walker, Dr. Devaiah Kambiranda.

For more information on this research contact Dr. Kambiranda at, devaiah_kambiranda@suagcenter.com.



SU Ag Center Hosted Ag Drone Certification Test Prep Training



The Southern University Ag Center hosted a drone certification test preparation training at the M. A. Edmund Multi-Purpose Building from Oct. 13-16, 2025 through a partnership with Alcorn State University.

The four-day training was designed for farmers, researchers, students, educators, entrepreneurs, and professionals interested in using drones for agriculture, research, business applications, or anyone seeking to become an FAA-certified drone pilot.

“The training was held to help individuals prepare for the FAA-certification exam,” said Dr. LaShunda Anderson Hodges, SU Ag Center Research Professor of Soil and Plant Sciences and FAA Part 107 Certified Drone Pilot. “By hosting training sessions, the SU Ag Center provides valuable opportunities for education, workforce development, and innovation, ensuring that our community stays at the forefront of agricultural and technological advancements,” added Dr. Hodges.

“Farmers are getting older and it’s harder to get the younger generation to get into farming so

Dr. Hodges and I came up with the idea to inject advanced technology into drones to peak the interest of more people in the field of agriculture,” said Azali Muhammad, Drone Director at Alcorn State University and SU College of Ag alumni.

The training provided participants with information on the fundamentals of drone operations, FAA Part 107 regulations, airspace classifications, weather effects on drones, safety protocols, and how to prepare for the FAA Part 107 certification exam. Participants also gained hands-on knowledge of how drones can be applied in agriculture, research, and technology-driven industries.

Dr. Hodges is planning to hold another training in earlier 2026.

WAFB News Channel 9 aired a story on the training during its 5 p.m., 6 p.m., and 10 p.m. broadcasts on Oct. 16, 2025.

For additional information on the Ag Drone Certification Training contact, Dr. Hodges at lashunda_hodges@suagcenter.com.



SU Ag Center, College of Ag Held 2nd Annual 'Pinking for You!' Breast Cancer Awareness Event



The 1890 Center of Excellence Nutrition, Health, Wellness and Quality of Life (NHWQL) at the Southern University Ag Center and the SU College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences (CAHES) hosted, "Pinking for You! A Breast Cancer Awareness Event," on October 30, 2025 at the Leon R. Tarver II Cultural and Heritage Center on Southern University's Campus.

The event promoted awareness in support of breast cancer survivors and individuals who are fighting breast cancer. The Center of Excellence also donated items to two local organizations that benefit breast cancer patients who are receiving treatment.

Darrell Davis, DNP APRNFP-C, Family Nurse Practitioner at the Reddy Family Medical Clinic and Southern University alumni, served as the inspiring speaker for the event. Davis is the first male to obtain a Doctorate from Southern University's School of Nursing.



The program also included on-site screenings provided by the Mary Bird Perkins Cancer Center's Mobile Unit, a food demonstration by Chef Celeste Gill, a panel discussion on the topic "Talk Pink to Me: Awareness Starts with a Conversation" featuring representatives from Alliant Benefits and AFLAC, and a Pedals for Pink Bike Ride session with "Geaux Ride."

For additional information on the Pinking for You! Breast Cancer Awareness event contact, Keandrys Dalton at keandrys_dalton@suagcenter.com; Kiyana Kelly at kiyana_kelly@suagcenter.com; or Brittany Howard at brittany_howard@suagcenter.com.



Faculty & Staff Spotlight

Alexis C. Perkins Has Been Named Director of the Southern University Child Development Lab



SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY
Child Development
LABORATORY
“Learning Without Limits”

Alexis C. Perkins has been named the Director of the Southern University Child Development Laboratory (SUCDL).

Perkins exemplifies the mission of the Southern University Ag Center and the College of Agricultural, Human, and Environmental Sciences. She transferred to Southern University in 2017 with an Associate Degree in Care and Development of Young Children and completed her Bachelor of Science in Family and Consumer Sciences with a concentration in Child Development two years later. Perkins went on to earn her master’s in early childhood education in 2021.

Alexis began her employment at SUCDL in 2019 as the first Infant Teacher and has since held every teaching role, often in dual capacity, as the program expanded. She later served as Assistant Director and now leads as Director. In addition to her role at SUCDL, Perkins serves as an Adjunct Instructor in CAHES, teaching courses in Child and Family Studies and Child Life Specialist programs.

These courses are not only critical to the success of the Child and Family Studies Program, but also vital to the ongoing growth of SUCDL. Her approach to teaching is holistic and highly hands-on. When she assigns work to her students, she intentionally integrates SUCDL into their learning experience, providing them with authentic, real-world exposure. This ensures that students develop confidence in their ability to perform across all areas of early childhood education. Her success as an adjunct professor is rooted in her selflessness; students remain her number one priority, and she consistently invests in their growth and success.

Her leadership at SUCDL has restructured operations by streamlining tuition, registration, and enrollment processes, resulting in increased enrollment of student-parents and families. She mentors emerging teachers, strengthens family partnerships, and models the RESET spirit of excellence.



ALEXIS C. PERKINS

Faculty & Staff Spotlight

SUCDL Program Director Keisha Y. Dandridge Elected as First Vice President of the Louisiana Head Start Association Board of Directors



SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY
Child Development
LABORATORY
“Learning Without Limits”

SUCDL Program Director, Keisha Y. Dandridge, has been elected to serve as First Vice President of the Louisiana Head Start Association Board of Directors. Her term began in 2025 and will continue until 2028. This role expands SUCDL’s visibility, influence, and representation at the state level, ensuring Southern University families and educators have a strong voice in shaping early childhood policy and practice.

Dandridge also served as the keynote speaker for the Louisiana Head Start Association's Annual Conference in Lafayette at the Cajun Dome in July 2025. Her message on leadership, resilience, and building cultures of excellence in early childhood education resonated with hundreds of professionals statewide.

In addition to delivering the keynote, Dandridge facilitated several powerful sessions that further showcased SUCDL’s leadership and innovation. Session titles included:

- **The Secret Sauce: Cooking Up Leadership Excellence in Head Start**
- **The Cookout Cure: Grilling Out the Toxins, Serving Up Growth & Mindfulness in Head Start Workplaces**
- **Are You Ready, Get Set, Let’s Go: Staying Observation Ready**

Through these sessions, she provided practical strategies, reflective insights, and motivational tools that inspired Head Start leaders and staff to strengthen their programs and prioritize workplace culture, observation readiness, and leadership growth.



KEISHA Y. DANDRIDGE

**CAHES Student
Support Coordinator
Keandrys Dalton
appointed to Forum
on Education Abroad's
Careers, Internships,
and Global Learning
(CIGL) Conference
Committee**



Keandrys Dalton, CAHES Student Support Coordinator, has been appointed to serve on the Forum on Education Abroad's Careers, Internships, and Global Learning (CIGL) Conference Committee.

In this role, Dalton will join higher education leaders from across the globe in shaping the content and direction of the 2026 CIGL Conference, scheduled for October 11–13, 2026, in Lisbon, Portugal. The conference, hosted by the Luso-American Development Foundation/Study in Portugal Network at the Universidade de Lisboa, will be held in conjunction with the Forum's Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA) Conference, October 14–16, 2026.

Her term of service will run from October 2025 through October 2026. During this time, she will contribute to the call for proposals, encourage diverse submissions, and review and score session content designed to advance student preparation for careers, internships, and global learning experiences.

"As an alumna of the College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences, this appointment is deeply meaningful to me," shared Dalton. "Having had the opportunity to travel to several countries as both an undergraduate student and now as a staff member, I know firsthand the transformative impact of global experiences. I am excited to bring that perspective to the Forum on Education Abroad's committee and to represent Southern University on an international platform. This role allows me to contribute to meaningful conversations about preparing students for careers and global learning, while ensuring that the voices of our 1890 Land-Grant Institutions are heard. Most importantly, I look forward to creating pathways that inspire and empower our students to thrive in a global society."

Dalton's appointment is not only a personal achievement but also a milestone for Southern University, showcasing the institution's commitment to academic excellence, international engagement, and student success.





SU AG PODCAST

*"Everyday we use some form of agriculture,
from the time we wake up, until we go to bed.
From clothing, gasoline, food, and bed linens
— agriculture is all around us!"*

**Join us as we interview your Ag favorites,
and bring you agriculture news.**

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