



SEEDS OF

SU Success!

SEPTEMBER

2026

VOLUME 24 | ISSUE 9

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



@suagcenter



@su_agcenter



www.suagcenter.com



Orlando F. McMeans, Ph.D.
Chancellor & Interim President of the
Southern University System



C. Reuben Walker, Ph.D.
Executive Vice Chancellor/Director of
Development: SU Agricultural, Research
and Extension Center Special Projects



Devaiah Kambiranda, Ph.D.
Interim Vice Chancellor, Research



Tiffany W. Franklin, Ph.D.
Vice Chancellor, Extension and Outreach



Brunetta Gamble-Dillard, MBA
Vice Chancellor, Finance & Administration



Renita W. Marshall, D.V.M.
Vice Chancellor, Academics & Student
Support Services/Interim Dean



Katara A. Williams, Ph.D.
Vice Chancellor, Institutional Advancement
and External Relations

Executive Leadership



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dr. Orlando F. McMeans Participated in the SU System's Give Day Chancellor's Session	4
RWE Americas Invests \$10,000 in Tri-Parish Youth STEAM Programming Through Southern University Ag Center Partnership	5-6
College of Ag Student Bryman Williams, Jr. Sworn in as the SU System Student Board Member	7
Newly Funded National Science Foundation Project on Tire-Wear Pollution Strengthens Southern University - Grambling State University Research and STEM Training Partnership	8-9
Baton Rouge Delta Development Corporation Debutantes Give Back Through Savor & Serve	10
Community Partnership Helps Keep Jaguar N.E.S.T. Shelves Stocked for Fall 2026	11
SU Ag Center Promotes Youth Workforce Development Through a Partnership with the Mayor's Youth Workforce Experience	12-13
Beyond Ready for Work and Life: 4-H Youth Development Participant Crowned Miss Louisiana Teen USA	14
Youth Learned "Cooking Tips in the Kitchen 101"	15
ANR Livestock and Poultry Show Staff Participated in a ShoWorks Training	16
More than 1,000 Participate in SU Ag Center's Grant Writing Series	17
From Information to Action—GROW LA Made a Measurable Impact in Opelousas!	18-19
SU Ag Center Selected for FAA UAS-Collegiate Training Initiative	20-21
From Classrooms to Communities: Supporting School Readiness Across Louisiana	22
Helping Jaguars Thrive: The Center of Excellence Connects More Than 600 Families to On-Campus Programming During Parent Orientation	23-24
Tamika Porter Earns Dual Professional Certifications in Higher Education Finance	25
Keandrys Dalton Appointed National MANRRS Membership Committee Chair	26-27
SU Ag Podcast	28



Dr. Orlando F. McMeans Participated in the SU System's Give Day Chancellor's Session



Dr. Orlando F. McMeans, Interim President of the SU System and Chancellor of the SU Ag Center participated in the Chancellor's Session during SU Give Day on August 27, 2026 at the Valdry Center for Philanthropy.

During the session, Dr. McMeans discussed the enrollment growth of the College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences, the construction of permanent research labs for the Ag Center's Research Unit, the completion of the SU Ag Center's Experiment Station Road, the Cooperative Extension Program's statewide mandate, and the reinstatement of 1890 Land-Grant Scholarships.

"Last year the 19 HBCUs that were receiving \$1 million dollars (for scholarships) were cut by 50%," said Dr. McMeans. "Those scholarships were reinstated this semester, so the Southern University College of Agriculture received \$1 million in scholarships for this year. One of the things we did with that \$1 million was that we gave all our (incoming) Freshman a \$1,000 coming in."

The five chancellors from the SU System's campuses participated in the session with each highlighting their campuses accomplishments and how donations can assist in preparing student leaders to make an impact on the nation.



RWE

RWE Americas Invests \$10,000 in Tri-Parish Youth STEAM Programming Through Southern University Ag Center Partnership



Representatives from RWE Americas, a global energy company with major operations in renewable energy, electricity generation, and energy trading, joined SU Ag Center faculty and staff at the Matthews Center for Innovation and Disaster Recovery at Southern University for a check presentation and special discussion highlighting the partnership on August 19, 2026. The event focused on the shared commitment of both organizations to creating opportunities for youth through education, community investment, and workforce development.

The partnership developed from the inaugural St. Helena Parish STEAM Expo, coordinated by SU Ag Center Parish Youth Agent, Dr. Charity Schaffer. Held in February 2026, the Expo provided approximately 300 students from St. Helena Parish with access to hands-on STEAM education, career exploration, and representatives from educational institutions, community organizations, and industry.

For RWE Americas, supporting this initiative closely aligned with the company's commitment to the communities where it operates. Adriana Quiroga, senior associate for community engagement, explained that supporting the initiative was an easy decision for RWE because youth workforce development is the company's "bread and butter," making the opportunity to invest in young people and their future an initiative the company was fully prepared to support.

Building upon the success of the Expo, RWE Americas committed \$10,000 to support continued youth programming across St. Helena, Tangipahoa, and Washington Parishes. The investment will help expand opportunities for students to engage in agriculture, drone technology, precision agriculture, renewable energy, engineering, and other STEAM-related experiences while increasing their exposure to educational and career pathways.

The partnership reflects the SU Ag Center's continued efforts to connect youth development with workforce preparation, particularly in rural communities. Through hands-on programming and industry partnerships, students are introduced to emerging technologies, career fields, and the skills needed to participate in Louisiana's evolving workforce.

Dr. Robert Easley, Jr., Director of Advancement for the SU Ag Center, led a conversation with RWE Americas representatives Quiroga, Marcus Gann, and Rory Simington, along with Dr. Schaffer. The discussion highlighted the importance of community investment, collaboration, and providing young people with meaningful opportunities to explore careers connected to agriculture, technology, and emerging industries.

The event also recognized RWE Americas' support as part of Southern University's 'Are You In' fundraising campaign designed to encourage individuals, businesses, alumni, and community partners to invest in the continued growth and impact of the Southern University System. The campaign reinforced that supporting Southern can take many forms, from financial contributions to partnerships that provide expertise, resources, and opportunities for the communities the University serves.

Dr. Schaffer echoed that message while encouraging others to consider how they can contribute to the SU Ag Center's youth development efforts.

"Support doesn't always have to look the same. It can be financial, but it can also mean sharing your expertise, volunteering your time, providing resources, or simply opening a door for a young person to experience something new," said Dr. Schaffer. "RWE Americas is a great example of what can happen when an organization says, 'We're in,' and backs that commitment with action," she added.

Through the collaboration, the SU Ag Center and RWE Americas are helping create a stronger connection between education, industry, and community development while expanding opportunities for youth from St. Helena, Tangipahoa, and Washington Parish to envision themselves as part of the future workforce.

The partnership represents another step toward ensuring that young people in rural Louisiana have access to the experiences, resources, and career exposure necessary to prepare for opportunities in agriculture, technology, renewable energy, and related industries.





*College of Ag
Student Bryman
Williams, Jr.
Sworn in as the
SU System Student
Board Member*



CAHES senior agricultural business major Bryman Williams, Jr., was sworn in as the student board member of the Southern University Board of Supervisors on August 21, 2026.

The Madison, MS native is the Student Government Association President for the Baton Rouge campus. Prior to being elected as SGA President, Williams served as the SGA Vice President, Sophomore Class President, and Freshmen Class President.

Williams is a member of MANRRS and a CAHES Beginning Agricultural Youth Opportunities Unlimited (BAYOU) Program participant.

He will serve a one-year term on the board.





*Newly Funded National
Science Foundation Project
on Tire-Wear Pollution
Strengthens Southern
University - Grambling State
University Research and
STEM Training Partnership*

Southern University and A&M College has received \$893,779 in funding from the National Science Foundation (NSF) for a collaborative research project with Grambling State University (GSU) focused on the emerging environmental impacts of tire-wear pollution. The project, which began September 2026, is led by Dr. Sanjay Batra, Professor and Chair of the Department of Environmental Toxicology in Southern University's College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences (CAHES), as Principal Investigator (PI), with Dr. Waneene Dorsey of Grambling State University serving as Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI). The project brings together the complementary research and educational strengths of two Louisiana HBCUs to advance fundamental environmental science while expanding interdisciplinary research and STEM training opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students.

The research focuses on 6-PPD quinone (6-PPDQ), a transformation product of 6-PPD, a chemical widely used in automobile tires. Tire wear releases these chemicals into the environment, and 6-PPDQ has emerged as a contaminant of growing concern due to its widespread occurrence and documented biological effects. Despite increasing recognition of this emerging contaminant, the fundamental molecular mechanisms through which 6-PPDQ affects cellular function remain incompletely understood. The Southern University-Grambling State University research team will investigate how 6-PPDQ disrupts the molecular processes that allow cells to respond and adapt to environmental stress. Particular emphasis will be placed on interactions among stress granules and processing bodies, which regulate RNA processing during cellular stress, and Polycomb repressive complexes, which regulate gene activity through epigenetic mechanisms. Using human lung epithelial cells, the investigators will integrate advanced molecular biology, high-resolution imaging, transcriptomics, proteomics, and computational approaches, including molecular modeling, molecular dynamics simulations, and density functional theory, to determine how the environmental contaminant perturbs interconnected RNA-regulatory and epigenetic networks. The research is expected to generate fundamental knowledge and broadly applicable experimental and computational approaches for understanding the molecular actions of emerging environmental contaminants.

Importantly, the newly funded NSF project represents an expansion of an established research and student-training collaboration between Southern University and Grambling State University. Through their ongoing partnership, Drs. Batra and Dorsey have provided opportunities for Grambling State University undergraduate students to participate in research and training activities alongside Southern University faculty and doctoral students. These interactions have exposed students to research-intensive environments and provided hands-on experience in environmental toxicology, molecular and cellular biology, and computational approaches. The project will significantly expand these opportunities by providing a more structured and sustained framework for cross-institutional research, mentoring, and workforce development.

A major emphasis of the project is research training for undergraduate students from Grambling State University. GSU students will engage directly in project-related research and receive hands-on training in environmental toxicology, molecular and cellular biology, advanced imaging, transcriptomic and proteomic approaches, computational modeling, and data analysis. Students will work closely with Southern University faculty and doctoral trainees, creating an interdisciplinary environment where undergraduate researchers can develop technical expertise, critical-thinking abilities, scientific communication skills, and greater confidence as emerging scientists. The project will also provide important professional development opportunities for Southern University doctoral students, who will participate in training and near-peer mentoring of GSU undergraduate researchers. This multi-level mentoring approach will simultaneously provide undergraduate students with access to research mentors and enable doctoral trainees to develop leadership, teaching, and mentoring skills that are increasingly important for careers in academia, biotechnology, industry, and government.

An important long-term goal of the collaboration is to strengthen an undergraduate-to-doctoral STEM pathway between Grambling State University and Southern University. By providing GSU students with sustained research experiences, faculty, and graduate-student mentoring, exposure to advanced research technologies, and familiarity with Southern University's doctoral training environment, the project will encourage talented undergraduate students to consider advanced education, including doctoral training in Environmental Toxicology at Southern University. The project will further extend its educational impact through K-12 STEM outreach activities designed to introduce younger students to environmental science, toxicology, biotechnology, and computational research.

Through the leadership of Dr. Batra at Southern University and Dr. Dorsey at Grambling State University, the newly funded NSF project demonstrates how strategic collaboration among Louisiana HBCUs can simultaneously advance scientific discovery, strengthen institutional research capacity, and expand opportunities for students. By integrating cutting-edge research on an emerging environmental contaminant with undergraduate research experiences, doctoral training, near-peer mentoring, computational science, and K-12 outreach, the initiative will help develop a highly skilled STEM workforce while strengthening the CAHES' leadership in environmental toxicology, biotechnology, and interdisciplinary research.

The research project will conclude in August 2029.



Baton Rouge Delta Development Corporation Debutantes Give Back Through Savor & Serve

The Baton Rouge Delta Development Corporation's (BRDDC) 57th Debutante Cotillion Coterie partnered with Southern University's CAHES Dietetic Internship and Human Nutrition Program for Savor & Serve, a Personal Development Session focused on leadership, service, and addressing food insecurity.

Under the leadership of BRDDC Chair, Ashley Cox Coates; Cotillion Chair, Kalonda J. Carmouch; Cotillion Co-Chair, Dr. Janet Cook; and Personal Development Session Co-Chairs, Yoursheka D. Butler, Esq., and D'Shawn Valery, debutantes learned from presentations by the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank, The Red Shoes, and the CAHES Dietetic Internship and Nutrition Department before preparing and packaging nutritious meals for the Jaguar N.E.S.T. Pantry.

The initiative highlighted the power of collaboration and community service while supporting Southern University students and reinforcing BRDDC's commitment to developing young leaders through meaningful service.



Community Partnership Helps Keep Jaguar N.E.S.T. Shelves Stocked for Fall 2026



The Jaguar N.E.S.T. (Nourishment, Essentials, Support to Thrive) received a generous donation of more than \$1,200 in food and personal hygiene items from Foresters Financial Group, helping ensure students have access to essential resources as they return for the Fall 2026 semester.

The donation included shelf-stable foods, healthy snacks, beverages, and personal care products that will be distributed throughout the Jaguar N.E.S.T. locations to assist students experiencing food insecurity and basic needs challenges.



This generous contribution strengthens Southern University's commitment to student success by helping stock the Jaguar N.E.S.T. before the start of the academic year. Through partnerships with community organizations like Foresters Financial Group, the University continues to expand access to nutritious food and essential supplies, ensuring students have the support they need to thrive both inside and outside the classroom.



SU Ag Center Promotes Youth Workforce Development Through a Partnership with the Mayor's Youth Workforce Experience

The Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center strengthened its commitment to youth workforce development this summer through a partnership with the City of Baton Rouge Mayor's Youth Workforce Experience (MYWE). The eight-week paid internship program connects high school students with professional mentors and workplace experiences designed to strengthen career awareness, transferable skills, and workforce readiness.



As a host site, the SU Ag Center welcomed three high school interns and provided an experience designed to extend well beyond traditional summer employment. Students were immersed in the work of a land-grant institution and introduced to the ways Teaching, Research, and Extension translate university knowledge into programs, resources, and services that respond to the needs of Louisiana communities.

Throughout the summer, interns worked alongside faculty, administrators, and staff while rotating through programs and participating in community outreach activities. Their experiences provided exposure to youth development, agricultural sciences, nutrition, research, community engagement, technology, and other areas represented across the Ag Center. This approach allowed students to observe a range of professions while gaining a broader understanding of the academic preparation and skills associated with each field.

The university setting also provided an important connection between workforce development and post-secondary education. Interns were able to experience the professional environment of an 1890 Land-Grant Institution while interacting directly with individuals whose careers span education, science, agriculture, research, technology, and public service. These interactions gave students access to professionals who could answer questions, share career experiences, and help them begin thinking more intentionally about the relationship between their interests, educational choices, and future careers.

Professional expectations were embedded throughout the experience. Interns were responsible for maintaining work schedules, completing assignments, communicating with supervisors, collaborating with colleagues, and adapting to different professional settings. Rather than learning workplace readiness only through instruction, students practiced these competencies each day as members of the Ag Center community.

The partnership also created value for the University. By serving as a host site, the SU Ag Center introduced young people from the Baton Rouge community to Southern University and A & M College, the College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences, Cooperative Extension, Research and the breadth of contemporary careers connected to agriculture and the land-grant system. For students who may have previously viewed agriculture primarily through the lens of farming, the internship provided a broader picture of a field that encompasses science, technology, education, nutrition, natural resources, community development, research, and public service.

At the conclusion of the summer, the interns were recognized for successfully completing their experience and for their contributions to the Ag Center. More importantly, they left with greater exposure to higher education, professional expectations, and career possibilities that can inform the decisions they make beyond high school.

Through partnerships such as the MYWE, the Southern University Ag Center continues to demonstrate that workforce development is an important extension of its educational mission. Investing in young people today strengthens the pipeline of students, professionals, and community leaders who will help shape Louisiana's future.

For more information about the Southern University Ag Center's participation in the Mayor's Youth Workforce Experience, contact Dr. Raquel Square Ayles, Associate Vice Chancellor for Extension and Outreach and State Program Leader for 4-H Youth Development, at raquel_ayles@suagcenter.com.



Beyond Ready for Work and Life: 4-H Youth Development Participant Crowned Miss Louisiana Teen USA



The Southern University Ag Center's 4-H Youth Development Program is dedicated to preparing young people to become confident leaders who are ready to succeed in college, careers, and life. Through hands-on learning, leadership development, public speaking, civic engagement, and service, 4-H equips youth with the skills and experiences needed to achieve their goals and make a positive impact in their communities.

That mission is reflected in the accomplishments of one of our 4-H participants, who was recently crowned Miss Louisiana Teen USA 2026. Kadie S. represented Louisiana in the Miss Teen USA competition, demonstrating the confidence, leadership, and character that defines today's young leaders. Success in pageantry extends far beyond the stage. It requires effective communication, self-confidence, discipline, resilience, and a commitment to serving others. These are the same qualities that 4-H Youth Development strives to cultivate through meaningful learning experiences and leadership opportunities.

Throughout the year, participants engage in programs that strengthen leadership, workforce readiness, civic responsibility, and problem-solving skills. Whether exploring STEM, participating in community service, developing public speaking skills, or leading projects, youth are encouraged to grow personally while preparing for future success. Kadie's achievement is a testament to the power of positive youth development and the importance of investing in young people. It reflects what is possible when youth are provided with opportunities to discover their strengths, develop their talents, and pursue excellence.

The Southern University Ag Center's 4-H Youth Development Program proudly congratulates our participant on being crowned Miss Louisiana Teen USA. Her achievement exemplifies how 4-H prepares young people to be 'Beyond Ready for Work and Life.' For more information about the Southern University Ag Center's 4-H Youth Development Program, contact Dr. Raquel Square Ayles, Associate Vice Chancellor for Extension & Outreach and State Program Leader for 4-H Youth Development, at raquel_ayles@suagcenter.com.

Youth Learned "Cooking Tips in the Kitchen 101"



Youth campers at the Thensted Summer Camp in Sunset, La. had a course in "Cooking Tips in the Kitchen 101" with FHS Associate Agent, Angell C. Jordan.

The cooking sessions were held July 13-17, 2026, with campers learning food terminology, liquid and dry measuring tools and how to use them, how to read recipes, and lastly preparing a turkey/ham pinwheel recipe.

The campers were hands on and asked lots of questions. While also learning cooking tips, campers were introduced to the five food groups and physical activity. Each participant was given an SU Ag Center apron to take home while preparing their recipes. The youth mentioned "they cannot wait until next summer and neither can I," stated Jordan.

For additional information on the "Cooking Tips in the Kitchen 101" contact Angell Jordan at, angell_jordan@suagcenter.com.



ANR Livestock and Poultry Show Staff Participated in a ShoWorks Training



SU Ag Center's Livestock Program hosted a ShoWorks Training for the Agricultural and Natural Resources (ANR) Livestock and Poultry Show staff from August 24–26, 2026. The training was initiated by Meguna Johnson, SU Ag Center Livestock Director, and lead by Ashee Laird, a ShoWorks Consultant.

The training provided the staff with hands-on instruction to enhance their understanding of the ShoWorks software, which is used to manage livestock shows, including tracking entries, rankings, and payouts for the entire event.

As a result of the training, the staff has strengthened their ability to efficiently manage and organize the only 1890 Youth Livestock and Poultry Show in the nation, held at the Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center.

The 84th Annual Southern University Ag Center State Livestock and Poultry Show will be held February 25–27, 2027 at the Maurice A. Edmond Livestock Arena.

For additional information on the Livestock and Poultry Show contact Meguna Johnson at, meguna_johnson@suagcenter.com.





More than 1,000 Participate in SU Ag Center's Grant Writing Series



The Southern University Ag Center, in partnership with Courtney L. Hunt Coaching and Consulting, held the four-part series, 'Grant Writing Basics: From Mission to Money,' during July 2026 at the Valdry Center for Philanthropy and online via Zoom.

Approximately 1,364 participants attended the four sessions which covered the topics of Understanding Grants: What They Are and How They Work; Getting Grant Ready Before You Apply; Finding the Right Grants and Avoiding Scams; and Writing a Simple But Strong Grant Proposal.

Participants also received supplemental materials and recordings following each session.

After receiving an overwhelmingly positive response to the workshop series, the SU Ag Center has decided to launch another grant writing series in October 2026.

To learn more about the Grant Writing Basics Series or additional economic development workshops contact Dr. Krystle Allen at, krystle_allen@suagcenter.com.





From Information to Action—GROW LA Made a Measurable Impact in Opelousas!



Workforce development is about more than preparing people for jobs. It is also about equipping individuals with the knowledge, resources, and connections needed to create sustainable businesses, strengthen local economies, and build resilient communities. The Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center is advancing this mission through its GROW LA: Growing Rural Opportunities through Workforce & Business Development – Louisiana.



GROW LA is designed to support farmers, producers, aspiring farmers, entrepreneurs, and small-business owners by moving information into action. Two GROW LA sessions were held in Opelousas on August 14 and 21, 2026 at the Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Institute (SARDI).

The program connected 27 participants with professionals from the Southern University Ag Center, USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA), USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), Louisiana Small Business Development Center, and other community partners. These collaborations allow participants to ask questions, navigate available resources, build professional networks, and receive individualized technical assistance.

By combining agricultural education, business development, and workforce-focused strategies, GROW LA recognizes that successful farms and small businesses are essential components of thriving rural communities. The program also reinforced a simple but important message: “Every farm is a business.”

The sessions resulted in a producer visiting a local FSA office to apply for a farm serial number, two producers beginning the eligibility process for farm serial numbers, a producer receiving assistance scheduling an appointment to explore a Direct Operating Loan, two producers receiving direct assistance from the USDA's NRCS, prospective entrepreneurs learning the foundational steps for starting a business, and two business owners receiving Louisiana Small Business Development Center resources and service information.

Through GROW LA, the Southern University Ag Center is helping individuals build skills, increase economic opportunity, and transform knowledge into sustainable action. When farmers and entrepreneurs are empowered with the right tools and support, they are better positioned to grow their businesses, create opportunities, and strengthen the communities they call home.

To learn more about the SU Ag Center's GROW LA Program, contact Krystle Allen, Ph.D. at, krystle_allen@suagcenter.com or Jamerson Jackson, J.D. at, Jamerson_jackson@suagcenter.com.





SU Ag Center Selected for FAA UAS-Collegiate Training Initiative



The SU Ag Center's drone education and training program has been selected to participate in the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Unmanned Aircraft Systems-Collegiate Training Initiative (UAS-CTI).

The FAA UAS-CTI designation recognizes collegiate institutions that provide students with education and training designed to prepare them for careers involving unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), commonly known as drones. The designation represents an important milestone in the SU Ag Center's continued efforts to expand drone technology, aviation education, workforce development, and applied research opportunities for students and communities. This designation was achieved in partnership with Alcorn State University.

"Being selected for the FAA UAS-Collegiate Training Initiative is an important recognition of our commitment to preparing students for the rapidly evolving opportunities associated with unmanned aircraft systems," said Dr. LaShunda Anderson Hodges, Full Research Professor of Soil & Plant Sciences at the Southern University Ag Center. "This designation strengthens our ability to connect agricultural research, drone technology, workforce development, and hands-on education while preparing the next generation of professionals to safely and effectively use UAS technology."

The FAA's UAS-CTI program recognizes institutions that prepare students for careers in unmanned aircraft systems. Participating institutions provide academic instruction and training addressing key areas of UAS operations, including flight practices, applications, safety, maintenance, privacy considerations, and federal policies and regulations governing unmanned aircraft.

The Southern University Ag Center's drone program integrates UAS technology with agricultural research, precision agriculture, soil and plant sciences, environmental monitoring, remote sensing, and workforce development. Students gain exposure to the practical and scientific applications of drone

technology while developing skills relevant to emerging careers in agriculture, aviation, environmental sciences, geospatial technology, and related STEM fields.

“Our goal is to move beyond simply teaching students how to fly drones,” Dr. Hodges said. “We are preparing students to understand how UAS technology can be used as a scientific and decision-making tool. From assessing soil health and crop conditions to collecting aerial imagery and supporting environmental research, our students are learning how drone technology can address real-world agricultural and environmental challenges.”

The SU Ag Center has continued to expand its drone research, education, and outreach activities through collaborations with federal agencies, industry partners, drone professionals, researchers, students, and community stakeholders. Programming includes FAA Part 107 preparation, hands-on flight experiences, drone-based research, aerial data collection, photogrammetry, multispectral and thermal imaging, precision agriculture applications, and the integration of UAS technology into soil health and environmental research.

The program also supports the Southern University Ag Center’s broader mission of advancing innovative agricultural research, providing experiential learning opportunities, developing a highly skilled STEM workforce, and ensuring that students and communities have opportunities to participate in emerging technologies transforming agriculture and related industries.

Selection for the FAA UAS-CTI program will further strengthen opportunities for Southern University students to develop technical knowledge, professional competencies, and practical experience that can position them for careers within the growing unmanned aircraft systems industry.

About the FAA UAS-Collegiate Training Initiative

The Federal Aviation Administration’s UAS-Collegiate Training Initiative works with colleges and universities to prepare students for careers in unmanned aircraft systems and to strengthen the pipeline of qualified professionals entering the rapidly developing UAS workforce.





From Classrooms to Communities: Supporting School Readiness Across Louisiana

The Center of Excellence collaborated with local organizations, churches, schools, summer camps, and community partners to distribute 1,000 backpacks filled with grade-appropriate school supplies to students ranging from Pre-K through college, as part of their summer community outreach. All participants enrolled in summer programs and partner camps received backpacks to help ensure they were prepared for the upcoming academic year.

A key highlight of the initiative was a Back-to-School Wellness Event held in partnership with Mount Pilgrim Baptist Church. Participants received educational resources on the updated Dietary Guidelines for Americans, the importance of regular physical activity, and healthy, budget-friendly meal options through a live food demonstration.

In addition to distributing backpacks and school supplies, the Center participated in community health fairs and back-to-school events throughout Louisiana and neighboring communities, providing families with educational resources and wellness information.

Serving families across more than 50 zip codes, the initiative helped reduce financial barriers, promote school readiness, and support academic success for students. By combining educational assistance with health and wellness outreach, the Center strengthened community partnerships and demonstrated its commitment to improving the quality of life and creating positive outcomes for students, families, and communities.





Helping Jaguars Thrive: The Center of Excellence Connects More Than 600 Families to On-Campus Programming During Parent Orientation



Members of the Center of Excellence staff participated in Jag 365 Parent Orientation, introducing parents and guardians to a variety of programs and resources designed to support student health, wellness, and success.

Throughout the orientation, the Center showcased several key initiatives within the Southern University Ag Center and College of Ag, including SU Together: Move More, Eat Better, Sew and Seaux, and the JagFresh Farmers Market. Staff members shared how these programs provide students with opportunities to learn new skills, build healthy habits, and connect with their campus community in a welcoming and supportive environment.

A major focus of the presentation was highlighting that all Center of Excellence programming is offered free of charge to students. Through the SU Together: Move More, Eat Better program, participants gain hands-on experience preparing nutritious meals while engaging in physical activities that encourage overall wellness and healthy lifestyle choices.

Families also learned about the JagFresh Farmers Market, which helps increase access to fresh produce



and ready-made food items from local vendors. In addition, the Center shared information about campus food pantries including the Jaguar N.E.S.T., and community refrigerators that provide students with food and essential items outside of regular dining hall hours, helping address food access and support student well-being.

Adding a flavorful touch to the experience, Evan Egana, SU Ag Center Outreach Extension Agent, prepared a healthy ramen dish for attendees to sample. The demonstration offered parents a firsthand look at the practical nutrition education and healthy meal preparation skills promoted through the Center's programming.

Across three orientation sessions, the Center of Excellence engaged with more than 600 parents, creating meaningful opportunities to discuss the resources, services, and support systems available to students. These conversations helped families gain a deeper understanding of how the Ag Center's programs contribute to student success by promoting health, wellness, and personal growth throughout the college experience.





Staff Spotlight:

Tamika Porter Earns Dual Professional Certifications in Higher Education Finance



Tamika Porter, Comptroller in the SU Ag Center's Office of Finance, successfully completed two distinguished professional development programs that strengthen financial leadership and operational excellence in higher education.

Porter earned her Certificate of Completion from the College Business Management Institute (CBMI), a nationally recognized professional development program co-sponsored by the Southern Association of College and University Business Officers (SACUBO) and the University of Kentucky. The intensive three-year program equips higher education business officers with advanced knowledge of financial management, leadership, and emerging issues affecting colleges and universities. Throughout the program, participants engage in rigorous coursework led by experienced higher education administrators while earning continuing professional education (CPE) credits.

In addition, Porter completed the Treasury Management Track Certificate through the Treasury Institute of Higher Education (TIHE). Offered in partnership with CBMI, this specialized program provides focused instruction in treasury operations, cash flow management, financial strategy, and best practices designed to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of treasury functions within higher education institutions.

"Higher education finance is constantly evolving, and I believe it is our responsibility as financial leaders to continue learning and growing. These programs challenged me to think strategically, strengthened my knowledge of best practices, and reinforced the importance of sound financial stewardship," said Porter. "I am sincerely grateful to Ms. Brunetta Dillard and the culture of learning that is cultivated within the Office of Finance and Administration. I look forward to applying these learning experiences to further enhance financial innovation and strategic planning in support of the SU Ag Center's teaching, research, and extension mission."



Staff Spotlight:

Keandrys Dalton Appointed National MANRRS Membership Committee Chair



Keandrys M. Dalton, Student Support Coordinator in the CAHES, has been appointed as the National MANRRS Membership Committee Chair. This distinguished national leadership appointment further strengthens Southern University's representation within an organization committed to cultivating the next generation of leaders in agriculture, natural resources, and related sciences.

In this national leadership capacity, Dalton will provide strategic direction for initiatives focused on membership recruitment, retention, engagement, and collegiate chapter development. A central priority of her leadership will be ensuring that membership serves as a pathway to opportunity by intentionally connecting students to the broader MANRRS network, industry leaders, professionals, mentors, and career opportunities.

Dalton's vision extends beyond bringing students into the organization. Her focus is on ensuring that students are prepared to enter the rooms where professional relationships are built, opportunities are created, and career pathways take shape. Through increased exposure, professional development, mentorship, and meaningful industry engagement, she aims to strengthen workforce and career readiness while helping students develop the confidence, competencies, and professional networks necessary to successfully transition from the collegiate environment into the workforce.

"It is a tremendous honor to serve as National MANRRS Membership Committee Chair and to represent Southern University in this leadership capacity. For me, membership must extend beyond simply joining an organization. It should create access. I want to ensure that our students are connected to the MANRRS network, prepared to enter the same rooms as industry leaders and decision-makers, and equipped to confidently pursue the opportunities available to them," expressed Dalton. "Through intentional engagement, mentorship, professional development, and career readiness, we can help students build relationships that extend beyond college and position them to successfully enter and lead within the workforce," Dalton added.

Dalton also shared that she is now serving as Advisor for the Southern University MANRRS Chapter, allowing her to extend this national commitment through direct service and leadership with students on Southern University's campus.

"Serving our Southern University students in this capacity is especially meaningful. I am honored to support their leadership and professional development while ensuring they are connected to the broader MANRRS network and exposed to opportunities that can shape their academic and professional futures. Our responsibility is not only to prepare students to enter these spaces, but to ensure they are prepared to contribute, lead, and create opportunities for those who come behind them," Dalton said.

Through these leadership roles, Dalton will help strengthen the connection between Southern University students and the national MANRRS network, expanding access to mentorship, professional development, industry engagement, career preparation, and leadership opportunities. Her appointment underscores the College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences and Southern University's continued commitment to developing graduates who are not only prepared to enter the workforce but positioned to lead within it.



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!"

Hosted by:

Dexter Newman



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

TUNE IN TO THE SU AG CENTER'S PODCAST BY VISITING:
<https://www.suagcenter.com/podcast>

Office of Communications, Technology & Advancement

Katara A. Williams, Ph.D.

*Vice Chancellor, Institutional Advancement
and External Relations*

Clourth L. Wilson Jr., MS-IT

Director of Technology

Robert L. Easley, Jr., Ph.D.

Director of Advancement

LaKeeshia Giddens Lusk, MA

Communications Coordinator

Allison Ezidore-Tassin, MBA

Creative Specialist/Graphic & Digital Designer

Lauryn M. Jackson, BA

*Electronic Content Development/
Communications Specialist*

Dexter D. Newman, MA

Video Production Specialist

Devender Rapolu, Ph.D.

Network Database Admin

D'Andrea Lee, M.Ed.

Special Assistant for Stakeholder Engagement

SEEDS OF **SU**ccess!

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



P.O. Box 10010
Baton Rouge, LA 70813



(225) 771-2242



www.suagcenter.com



@suagcenter



@su_agcenter



Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center and the College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences is an entity of the Southern University System, Orlando F. McMeans, Chancellor and Interim Southern University System President, Tony Clayton, Esq., Chairman, Board of Supervisors. It is issued in furtherance of the Cooperative Extension Work Act of December 1971, in cooperation with the U. S. Department of Agriculture. All educational programs conducted by the Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center and the College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences are provided to people of all ages regardless of race, national origin, or disability.

