



# SUBR

SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY BATON ROUGE

## *Chancellor's* REPORT

*Presented by:*  
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*Chancellor*

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#WeAreSouthern



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*"Southern University didn't just educate me, it believed in me when I needed it most. Here, I found my voice, my purpose, and a family that reminded me I am capable of more than I ever imagined."  
-Kayla Rose*



**MESSAGE FROM...**

*Chancellor*  
**PIERRE**

Dear Jaguar Nation,

As we reflect on the month of April, I am pleased to share continued progress across Southern University and A&M College as we advance our mission of academic excellence, student success, and community impact.

This month, the University proudly served as host for several high-impact programs and engagements that underscore our commitment to leadership, scholarship, and service. Among these was the successful convening of the National Medical Association Regions III and V Conference, which brought together healthcare professionals, scholars, and students from across the nation. This event not only highlighted Southern University's capacity to host large-scale, mission-driven convenings, but also reinforced our role in addressing critical issues related to health equity and workforce development.

We are especially proud to recognize the achievements of Southern University alumni who have contributed to the Artemis Program. Their involvement in this historic initiative to return humans to the Moon and advance deep space exploration is a powerful testament to the strength of our academic programs, particularly in STEM, and the global impact of our graduates. These accomplishments reflect the excellence, innovation, and leadership that define the Southern University legacy.

Academically, our colleges and departments continue to demonstrate innovation and rigor through research initiatives, grant-funded projects, and student-centered programming. We remain focused on strengthening pathways for student achievement while ensuring that our graduates are well-prepared to meet the demands of an evolving global workforce.

In addition, our campus community has shown remarkable collaboration in the execution of cultural and educational programming. Through partnerships with internal and external stakeholders, we have expanded opportunities for engagement that celebrate our heritage while preparing for our future.

As we move forward, we remain committed to operational excellence, strategic growth, and the continued elevation of Southern University as a premier institution within the Southern University System and beyond. Thank you for your continued support and leadership.

*John K. Pierre*

**SUBR**

**SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY BATON ROUGE** #WeAreSouthern

## 'SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY DAY AT THE CAPITOL' PROMOTES ADVOCACY, AWARENESS OF IMPACTFUL RESEARCH



On Tuesday, March 31, Southern University System faculty, staff, students, alumni, administration, and supporters convened at the Louisiana State Capitol for "Southern University Day at the Capitol," a day of advocacy and engagement, highlighting the mission, impact, and future of the System.

All five campuses of the System were represented, Southern University and A&M College, Southern University Law Center, Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center, Southern University at New Orleans, and Southern University at Shreveport. Students and faculty presented research in the rotunda, while connecting with state legislators and other participants. A resolution proclaiming Southern University Day at the Capitol was read on the House and Senate floors during session presentations.

The event at the Capitol was preceded by a pre-reception and the official opening of Southern's new [Welcome Center](#).

Earlier in March, Southern's five campuses participated in HBCU Day at the Capitol, presented by the HBCU Advisory Council of the Louisiana Board of Regents. The event, which was held at the Capitol Area Museum, featured displays on the impact that Historically Black Colleges and Universities, along with their partners, have on workforce development in Louisiana.

[SOURCE: SUBR.edu](#)

For photo galleries, click below:

[Southern University Day at the Capitol](#)  
[HBCU Day at the Capitol](#)

## SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY ALUMNI CONTRIBUTE TO MILESTONE PROGRESS ON ARTEMIS III



Southern University proudly celebrated the continued contributions of its alumni to the nation's space exploration efforts, as a major milestone was achieved in the advancement of the Artemis III mission.

The successful delivery of the Core Stage III via barge from Michoud Assembly Facility to Kennedy Space Center marked a critical step forward in preparations for Artemis III, which aims to return humans to the Moon. This achievement reflected the dedication, expertise, and innovation of teams across both industry and government, including a strong representation of Southern University alumni.

Southern University graduates contributed to this historic mission through their work with Boeing and NASA, particularly at the Michoud Assembly Facility and other key sites. Among those recognized for their contributions were:

**Boeing – Michoud Assembly Facility (MAF):**

Jeremy Plater, Jeff Harris, Jakina Hebert, Henri Hammond, Kelvin Minor, and Dwayne Evans

**Additional Contributors (Extended/Former Team Members):**

Angel Fleming, Cordial Poole, Cedric Cole, Lorenzo Phillips, Reggie Boutte, and James Chavis

**Southern University – NASA Partners:**

Clayton Lewis, Angela Sullivan, Richard Turner, Brett Smith, Nick Benjamin, and Dr. Sylvester Dorsey III

# SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY ALUMNI CONTRIBUTE TO MILESTONE PROGRESS ON ARTEMIS III

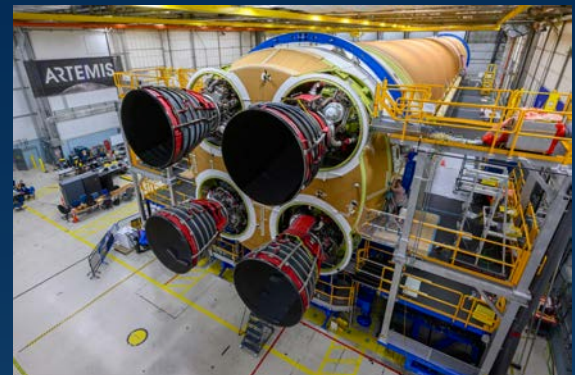


Mr. Brett Smith

These individuals represent the excellence and impact of Southern University alumni within one of the most ambitious space exploration programs in modern history. Their work spans engineering, project management, systems integration, and mission support, demonstrating the University's strength in preparing graduates for high-impact careers in STEM fields.



Mr. Nick Benjamin



## SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY ALUMNI CONTRIBUTE TO MILESTONE PROGRESS ON ARTEMIS III

Henri Hammond

Artemis III Spotlight:

Southern University proudly recognizes Henri Hammond, who is contributing to the Artemis III mission at the Michoud Assembly Facility.

Through his work in engineering and production, Henri plays a key role in advancing the Space Launch System and supporting NASA's return to the Moon.

Jakina Hebert

Artemis III Spotlight:

As a Senior Project Manager with the Space Launch System, Jakina Hebert represents excellence in leadership and innovation. Her work helps ensure mission readiness and successful execution of critical aerospace initiatives.

Angela Sullivan

Artemis III Spotlight:

Angela Sullivan continues to make an impact at NASA's Michoud Assembly Facility, contributing to one of the most ambitious space programs in history.

Kelvin Minor

Artemis III Spotlight:

From Southern University to the forefront of aerospace innovation, Kelvin Minor is helping drive progress on Artemis III through his work at Boeing.

Jeremy Plater

Artemis III Spotlight:

Jeremy Plater represents the strength of Southern University's engineering pipeline, contributing to the development of critical components for NASA's lunar missions.

Dr. Sylvester Dorsey III

Artemis III Spotlight:

Southern University celebrates Dr. Sylvester Dorsey III, whose work at NASA reflects the power of advanced engineering and research.

Dr. Dorsey's contributions highlight the importance of innovation, mentorship, and representation in STEM.



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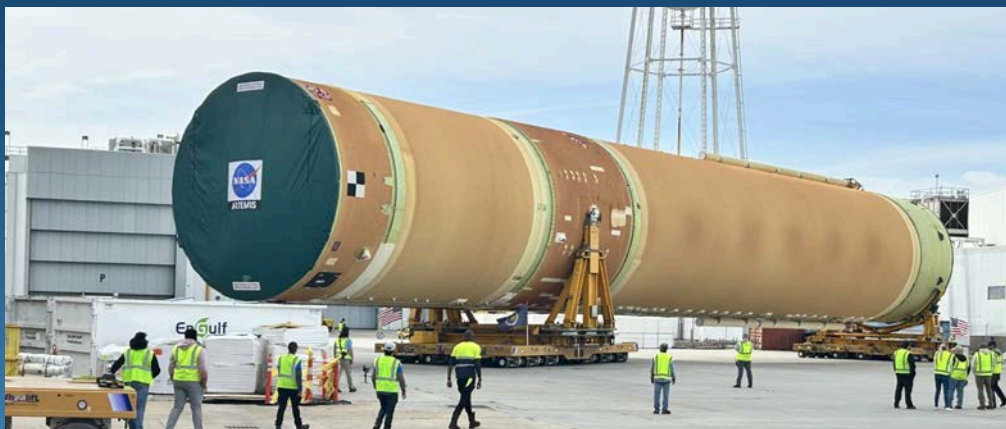
Dr. Sylvester Dorsey III & Family

# SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY ALUMNI CONTRIBUTE TO MILESTONE PROGRESS ON ARTEMIS III

In addition to current contributors, the legacy of Southern University's influence in aerospace engineering continues through pioneers such as Professor Morgan M. Watson, Sr. (pictured) and Dr. Hugh V. McKnight, Sr., whose foundational work helped pave the way for future generations of engineers and innovators.



This milestone not only highlighted the progress of the Artemis mission but also underscored Southern University's role in shaping a workforce that drives innovation at the highest levels. As the nation moved closer to the launch of Artemis III, Southern University proudly recognized its alumni who contributed to this historic achievement.



## DR. LEALON MARTIN FEATURED ON CNN, HIGHLIGHTS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY'S IMPACT ON ARTEMIS PROGRAM



Southern University proudly recognizes Dr. Lealon Martin for his recent feature on CNN, where he highlighted the University's significant contributions to the Artemis Program.

During the segment, Dr. Martin spoke on Southern University's growing impact in the field of aerospace and engineering, emphasizing the role of its alumni in advancing one of the nation's most ambitious space exploration efforts. His remarks underscored how Southern University continues to produce highly skilled graduates who are contributing to critical components of the Artemis mission.

Dr. Martin's appearance provided a national platform to showcase the University's legacy and ongoing influence in STEM, particularly through the achievements of its alumni working with NASA and industry partners. His insights reinforced the importance of HBCUs in developing a diverse and highly capable workforce that supports innovation at the highest levels.

This recognition not only highlights Dr. Martin's expertise and leadership, but also elevates Southern University's presence in national conversations surrounding space exploration, education, and workforce development.

Southern University remains proud of faculty who exemplify scholarship, leadership, and service, continuing to advance the University's impact on both national and global stages.

## COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES EXPANDS IMPACT THROUGH SCHOLARSHIP, CREATIVITY, AND NATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

The College of Humanities and Interdisciplinary Studies continues to demonstrate a dynamic and far-reaching impact through an impressive array of academic, cultural, and professional initiatives. Throughout the spring semester, the College has remained a driving force in cultivating student achievement, faculty excellence, and meaningful community engagement.

Across the College, departments are creating transformative learning experiences that extend beyond the classroom. The Department of Mass Communication continues to elevate student success through national leadership opportunities, industry partnerships, and alumni achievement. Students are representing the University on national stages, while graduates are excelling in competitive media markets, reinforcing the strength and relevance of the program.

The Department of English and Philosophy has also distinguished itself through impactful faculty scholarship, student engagement, and experiential learning. Students recently participated in a professional visit to 225 Magazine, gaining firsthand insight into publishing and media production. Creative expression continues to thrive through initiatives such as the English Club's Open Mic Night and the Writing Claw student journal, which provide platforms for student voice, storytelling, and publication.

The Visual Arts Program has further amplified the College's cultural footprint through a series of dynamic exhibitions, workshops, and community-centered events. The recent exhibition, *The Seeds You Sow*, showcased interdisciplinary collaboration through visual art, performance, and music, drawing strong community engagement and support. Student artist Chasity Joseph's work not only garnered significant attention but also demonstrated entrepreneurial success, with substantial artwork sales contributing back to the program.

In addition, the Southern Soul Spring Fest brought together students, artists, and the broader community for a multi-day celebration of creativity, featuring pop-up shops, interactive art experiences, and live engagement opportunities. The Visual Arts Program also maintained a vibrant presence at Jazz Fest, where faculty and students curated exhibitions and facilitated hands-on activities for youth and families, further strengthening community ties.

# COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES EXPANDS IMPACT THROUGH SCHOLARSHIP, CREATIVITY, AND NATIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Faculty within the Visual Arts Program continue to gain national recognition, with exhibitions featured in prominent galleries across New Orleans and published work in respected arts publications. These accomplishments reflect the College's commitment to fostering both academic rigor and artistic innovation. The College's interdisciplinary reach is further exemplified through the Southern University Dance Minor Program, which is undergoing transformative enhancements, including the development of a Black Box studio and creative space. Additionally, students and faculty are participating in the nationally recognized multimedia production Still Here, highlighting the intersection of art, storytelling, and social justice on a national stage.

Complementing these academic and creative advancements, the College is also strengthening its student support infrastructure. We are pleased to welcome Ms. Taria Dearbone as the new Academic Advisor for the Interdisciplinary Studies Program. With a strong background in student success, nonprofit leadership, and academic development, Ms. Dearbone brings a wealth of experience and a deep commitment to supporting student achievement and engagement.

Collectively, these efforts reflect the College of Humanities and Interdisciplinary Studies' unwavering commitment to excellence, innovation, and impact. As the College continues to expand its reach, it remains dedicated to preparing students to think critically, create boldly, and lead effectively in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

Please welcome to the College of Humanities and Interdisciplinary Studies the new Academic Advisor for the Interdisciplinary Studies Program, Ms. Taria Dearbone




Taria Dearbone is a student success advocate with experience spanning business, higher education, research, and nonprofit program development. She has over six years of experience in the nonprofit sector, where she served as an Assistant Director of High School Programs and Entrepreneurship Instructor for Urban Restoration Enhancement Corporation. During her time there, she focused on maximizing student engagement, college readiness, professional skills, and academic enrichment.

Her academic and professional journey has been fueled by her passion for understanding behavior and helping others thrive. She holds a Master of Business Administration with a concentration in Human Resource Management and a Bachelor of Science in Psychology with a minor in Marketing from Southern University and A&M College. During her graduate studies, Taria was selected as a National Academy of Human Resources Master's Fellow and scholarship recipient, recognizing her commitment to academic excellence and leadership. She was also honored as a MyHBCU Matters Lead Scholar, a National Black MBA Association Scholar, and a Thurgood Marshall College Fund Leadership Institute Scholar.

Taria currently serves as the Academic Advisor for the Interdisciplinary Studies Program, in the College of Humanities and Interdisciplinary Studies at Southern University, where she looks forward to supporting students as they navigate their academic journeys and achieve their goals. Outside of her professional life, she enjoys listening to music, writing, painting, and traveling.

**Taria Dearbone**

DEPARTMENT OF MASS COMMUNICATION  
MARCH - APRIL 2026




**A Message From the Department**

The Mass Communication Department continues to create meaningful opportunities for students through industry engagement, experiential learning, and national recognition. From internships and fellowships to major event production and broadcast opportunities, our students are building strong professional pathways while representing Southern University with excellence.

**Mass Communication Student Achievements**

Congratulations to our outstanding student, Britana Mocks on being selected as a Baton Rouge Press Club Scholarship recipient. Recognized for the strength and quality of their work, this honor reflects a commitment to excellence in journalism and includes a \$1,000 award to be presented on May 4.


We are proud to see our students continuing to make their mark in the field.



**Student Spotlight: Gianni Frangilla**

We're excited to spotlight Gianni Frangilla, who stepped into the field as a News Intern at WBRZ-TV. During this opportunity, Gianni will be working closely with multimedia journalist Halle Jefferson, gaining hands-on experience covering stories and engaging directly with the community.

We're proud to see our students turning classroom knowledge into real-world impact.



**Scholarship Recognition: Myleshay Harris**

Congratulations to Myleshay Harris for being awarded the Sumner Emmy Scholarship through the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences.


This highly competitive opportunity, shared earlier this semester with our students, has resulted in national-level recognition and support for their academic and professional journey in media.

We're proud to see our students not only apply, but win.

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH & PHILOSOPHY  
APRIL - MAY 2026

**Faculty Achievements**

Dr. Christina Jen



Dr. Christina Jen recently published her essay "Margaret Ophiar's Epigram of 'Harbour' Miss Marjankas as the Satriani's Collector" in *Humour Across Victoria*, edited by Mui-Lan Wong and James Whithead (Knowledge, September 2025). She is also co-editing, with Dr. Matthew Davies of Morehouse College, a special issue titled *Adapting Thackeray*, forthcoming in *Nineteenth Century Theatre and Film*.


**We are seeking student writers and editors!**

Did you know that our department has a student creative writing journal called the *Writing Claw*? We are looking for student writers and editors!

Students can gain experience in publishing and editing serving on our student editorial team. Student writers can send in their creative writing pieces for a chance to become a published author!


Please contact Mr. Willie Soriat or Ms. Malysem Norra for more information: [willie.soriat@sou.edu](mailto:willie.soriat@sou.edu) & [mledjen.norra@sou.edu](mailto:mledjen.norra@sou.edu)

**Trip to 225 Magazine**



On March 31<sup>st</sup>, our department took students from English, mass communication, and interdisciplinary studies to visit the office of *225 Magazine*. Our students heard an inspirational message from Julie Melera, CEO of Melera Enterprises, on the publications the company produces and what it takes to start a publishing company.

Editor-in-Chief Kelli Rozeaman and Managing Editor Olivia Deffen shared insights into 225's story development, writing, editing, and publishing process. Students toured the offices and got to see firsthand how 225 is published.



## NATIONAL MEDICAL ASSOCIATION REGIONS III AND V CONVENE AT SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY FOR HEALTHCARE JUSTICE CONFERENCE



Southern University proudly hosted the National Medical Association (NMA) Regions III and V Healthcare Justice Conference, bringing together physicians, healthcare professionals, students, and leaders from across the region for meaningful dialogue and collaboration.

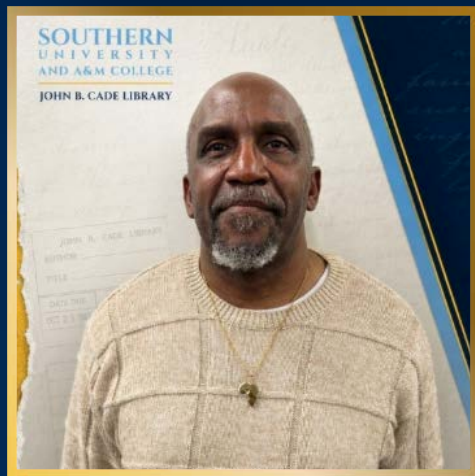
The conference served as a dynamic platform to address critical issues impacting healthcare access, equity, and outcomes, particularly within underserved and historically marginalized communities. Attendees engaged in a series of panel discussions, workshops, and networking opportunities focused on advancing health equity, strengthening the healthcare workforce, and addressing disparities in care.

The convening of Regions III and V at Southern University underscores the institution's commitment to serving as a hub for impactful conversations at the intersection of health, education, and community. The conference also highlighted the vital role Historically Black Colleges and Universities play in preparing the next generation of healthcare professionals and advocates.

Students benefited from direct engagement with practicing physicians and industry leaders, gaining insight into career pathways, mentorship opportunities, and the importance of culturally competent care. The event further reinforced the importance of collaboration between academic institutions and healthcare organizations in driving sustainable change.

Through its partnership with the National Medical Association, Southern University continues to support initiatives that promote healthcare justice, advance equity, and improve outcomes for communities across the nation.

## JOHN B. CADE LIBRARY ADVANCES SCHOLARSHIP, PRESERVATION, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Mr. Eddie Hughes

The John B. Cade Library at Southern University continues to serve as a cornerstone of academic excellence, cultural preservation, and community engagement. Through award-winning leadership, impactful programming, and innovative archival initiatives, the library remains a vital resource for students, faculty, and the broader Louisiana community.

A significant highlight this semester is the statewide recognition of Head of Special Collections Eddie Hughes, who was named the 2026 recipient of the Lucy B. Foote Award by the Louisiana Library Association. This prestigious honor recognizes Hughes's decades-long

commitment to preserving African American history and expanding access to archival collections. Under his leadership, the Special Collections unit has grown into a premier repository of materials documenting African American life, civil rights history, and Louisiana culture, serving both scholars and the community at large.

Further elevating the University's presence in archival scholarship, University Archivist Angela Proctor recently represented Southern University at a statewide roundtable hosted by Tulane University School of Law. The event, *Unearthing Our Stories*, brought together archivists and historians to explore the importance of preserving institutional history. Proctor highlighted Southern University's ongoing digitization efforts and commitment to expanding access to its extensive archival collections, reinforcing the University's role as a steward of historical memory and cultural heritage.

The library also continues to champion student creativity and expression. The Pinkie Gordon Lane Poetry Contest and Recognition Program provided a powerful platform for student voices through this year's theme, "Raise Your Voice." Notably expanded to include both high school and college participants, the program fostered a rich exchange of perspectives and celebrated the transformative power of storytelling. The event brought together students, families, and faculty in a meaningful recognition of artistic expression and intellectual engagement.

**The HISTORY PROJECT**  
TULANE UNIVERSITY

**Unearthing Our Stories:**  
Exploring Campus Histories at Tulane, Centenary, and Southern

TUESDAY, MARCH 31, 2026  
5:00PM  
WEINMANN HALL 110, TULANE LAW SCHOOL  
6329 FRERET ST, NEW ORLEANS

Join us for a conversation about the importance of preserving and documenting campus and community histories across Louisiana. The conversation will be moderated by **Halima Leak-Francis**, Program Director and Senior Professor of Practice for John Lewis Public Administration Program and Tulane History Project Co-Chair.  
*A reception will follow the program.*

**Speakers**

<b>MARCIA WALKER-MCWILLIAMS</b> Executive Director, Tulane University History Project	<b>CHRIS BROWN</b> Director of the Centenary College and UMC of Louisiana Archives and Instructor	<b>ANGELA PROCTOR</b> University Archivist and Digital Librarian, Southern University and A&M

MORE INFORMATION: [HTTPS://TULANE.EDU/HISTORYPROJECT](https://tulane.edu/historyproject)

## JOHN B. CADE LIBRARY ADVANCES SCHOLARSHIP, PRESERVATION, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



In addition, the John B. Cade Library successfully hosted National Library Week 2026, themed “Find Your Joy.” The week featured a series of interactive programs designed to promote research, creativity, and community connection. A highlight of the week was Booked at Cade, featuring author and speaker George E. Koonce Jr.. The program also included a meaningful visit and engagement with SU football and NFL standout Matthew Dorsett, further enriching the dialogue and student experience. Koonce’s message of resilience, purpose, and personal growth resonated deeply with attendees.

The celebration concluded with the Delta Sigma Theta Authors on Tour, further emphasizing the library’s role in promoting literacy and lifelong learning.



Dr. George E. Koonce, Jr.

Collectively, these initiatives underscore the John B. Cade Library’s enduring commitment to innovation, access, and engagement. Through its leadership in archival preservation, support of student expression, and dedication to academic excellence, the library continues to enrich the intellectual and cultural life of Southern University and the broader community.



## SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY HOSTS "TO THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE" DEMOCRATIC U.S. SENATE DEBATE

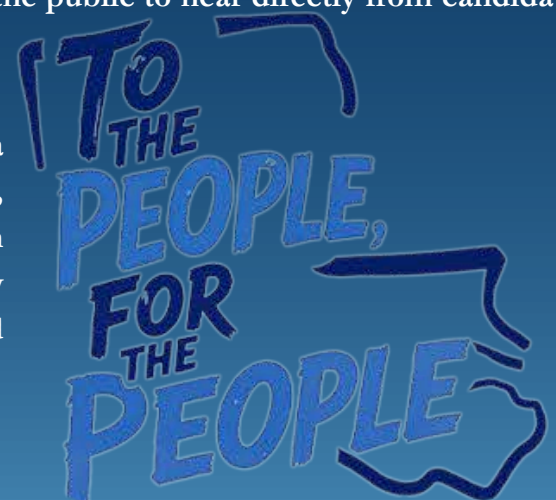


Southern University and A&M College proudly served as the host site for the “To the People, For the People” Democratic U.S. Senate Debate, held at the Leon R. Tarver II Cultural & Heritage Center. The event reaffirmed the University’s role as a leading institution for civic engagement, public dialogue, and democratic participation.

The debate featured candidates Nick Albares, Gary Crockett, and Jamie Davis, who engaged in a dynamic and substantive discussion on key issues impacting Louisiana and the nation. The forum provided a platform for thoughtful exchange, ensuring that diverse perspectives were presented in an informative and respectful setting.

The evening was moderated by Destiny Beasley, who welcomed attendees both in person and via media and streaming platforms across Louisiana. In her opening remarks, she noted the significance of the moment, highlighting that Democratic voters will soon select their nominee for the United States Senate. She emphasized that the debate served as an important opportunity for the public to hear directly from candidates regarding their vision, priorities, and approach to leadership.

The debate was presented in partnership with a coalition of media and civic organizations, including The Bayou Progressive, WRKF, the Louisiana Illuminator, Louisiana First News, 10,000 Women Louisiana, Indivisible Baton Rouge, and the Forum for Equality Louisiana, among others. These partnerships helped ensure broad access, community engagement, and statewide visibility.



## SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY HOSTS "TO THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE" DEMOCRATIC U.S. SENATE DEBATE



Students, faculty, and community members gathered for this important civic event, with students gaining firsthand exposure to the democratic process in action. The debate also created valuable experiential learning opportunities, particularly for students in political science, mass communication, and public policy.

Hosting the Democratic U.S. Senate Debate further elevated Southern University's visibility as a trusted venue for impactful civic programming. The successful execution of the event reflects the University's strong institutional capacity and commitment to fostering informed and engaged citizens.

The debate provided a meaningful opportunity for students and the broader community to engage with public policy discussions and deepen their understanding of leadership, governance, and civic responsibility.

Southern University remains committed to serving as a hub for dialogue, innovation, and community engagement, continuing to create spaces where critical conversations take place and future leaders are inspired.



## SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY CAPTURES FIRST DIVISION II ESPORTS NATIONAL TITLE



Southern University has claimed the Eastern College Athletic Conference EA Sports College Football National Championship, becoming the first historically Black college or university to win a Division II title in collegiate esports.

Coby Robinson, a sophomore computer science major known as “KingCoby,” secured the title in a best-of-five championship series against Bellarmine University. Robinson clinched the series 3-2 with a 38-29 victory in the deciding Game 5.

The championship series was a back-and-forth battle, with Robinson using Texas to defeat his opponent, who played as Oregon, in the final game.

Robinson reflected on his championship victory.

“I feel great, happy and accomplished because this has been a dream of mine,” said Robinson. “To see myself continuing to dominate and make history shows that I belong and that my dream is within reach.”

Christopher Turner, director and head coach of the Southern University Esports Digital Gaming Ecosystem, credited the team effort behind the win.

“This is a monumental moment for Southern University and the entire HBCU landscape,” Turner said. “This victory was a team effort that required total commitment to the plan.”

Turner also recognized contributors to the team’s preparation, including Mahcoe Edwards, a program alumnus; Jaeveon Jordan, a graduate student at Alabama A&M University; and Civ, owner of [Civil.gg](#).

The national title highlights the continued growth of esports at Southern University and the role of HBCUs in expanding opportunities for students in competitive gaming and STEM-related fields.

SOURCE: [SUBR.EDU](#)

## SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY HOSTS UNITED NATIONS AMBASSADOR TO CÔTE D'IVOIRE, EXPLORES INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



Southern University recently welcomed a distinguished international guest, H.E. Ibrahima Touré, for a meaningful campus visit that highlighted the University's expanding global footprint and commitment to international collaboration.

During the visit, Ambassador Touré engaged with faculty, and university leadership in discussions centered on diplomacy, global development, and the role of education in shaping future leaders. Emphasizing the importance of strategic planning, he noted that a strong international development plan is essential to the continued growth and sustainability of any nation.

In highlighting the educational landscape of Côte d'Ivoire, Ambassador Touré shared that the country has established eight new universities over the past 14 years and now operates a total of 15 universities serving a population of approximately 30 million people. This expansion reflects a national commitment to increasing access to higher education and strengthening the country's capacity to compete in the global economy. He further emphasized a desire to increase the nation's ability to produce for and effectively participate in the global market, positioning education and international partnerships as critical drivers of that goal.

Ambassador Touré also highlighted the country's youthful population, noting that approximately 70 percent of its citizens are under the age of 35. This demographic reality underscores both the urgency and opportunity to invest in higher education, workforce development, and international collaboration to meet the needs of a rapidly growing and dynamic population.

## SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY HOSTS UNITED NATIONS AMBASSADOR TO CÔTE D'IVOIRE, EXPLORES INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



A key outcome of the visit was Ambassador Touré's expressed interest in establishing a formal partnership with Southern University through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The proposed MOU would guarantee long-term engagement and sustained interaction between Southern University and partner institutions in Côte d'Ivoire, creating structured opportunities for academic exchange, collaborative research, and cultural connection. This agreement would serve as a foundation for enduring international collaboration and mutual advancement.

Additionally, Ambassador Touré expressed a desire to host representatives from Southern University in Côte d'Ivoire, further strengthening the relationship through direct engagement, cultural exchange, and on-the-ground collaboration.

Amb. H.E. Ibrahima Touré

Importantly, discussions also identified manufacturing as a key area where Southern University can contribute meaningfully to Côte d'Ivoire's development goals. Through its academic programs, research capacity, and workforce development initiatives, the University is well-positioned to support industrial growth, technical training, and innovation, aligning with the country's objective to expand its presence in the global market.

Equally central to the conversation was the importance of culture and reciprocal knowledge exchange. Both parties emphasized that sustainable partnerships are rooted not only in academic and economic collaboration, but also in mutual respect, shared learning, and the intentional exchange of cultural perspectives.

Welcome **TO**  
SOUTHERN  
UNIVERSITY  
AND AGRICULTURAL & MECHANICAL COLLEGE

**HONORABLE H. E. IBRAHIMA TOURÉ**  
UNITED STATES AMBASSADOR TO CÔTE D'IVOIRE



# SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY HOSTS UNITED NATIONS AMBASSADOR TO CÔTE D'IVOIRE, EXPLORES INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



Notably, Côte d'Ivoire's vision closely aligns with Southern University's mission, as the nation seeks to educate, empower, and transform lives through strategic investments in education, workforce development, and global engagement. This shared commitment creates a strong foundation for meaningful and lasting collaboration.



Aligned with this mission, the engagement provided students with valuable insight into international affairs while also creating opportunities to explore careers in diplomacy, development, and global service. It further underscores the University's commitment to preparing globally minded graduates equipped to lead in an increasingly interconnected world.



Southern University remains dedicated to advancing strategic international partnerships that enhance academic excellence, cultural awareness, and global impact.



## SPRING 2026 COMMENCEMENT SPEAKERS ANNOUNCED

SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY AND A&M COLLEGE  
 SPRING 2026 GRADUATE COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER



**DR. HARRY L. WILLIAMS**  
 PRESIDENT AND CEO  
 THURGOOD MARSHALL COLLEGE FUND  
 #WeAreSouthern #SUgrad26

Graduates are preparing to participate in Spring 2026 Commencement ceremonies at Southern University and A&M College in the F.G. Clark Activity Center. The graduate ceremony will be held on Thursday, May 14 at 2 p.m. and the undergraduate ceremony will be held on Friday, May 15 at 10 a.m.

The speaker for the graduate ceremony is Harry Williams, Ph.D., president and chief executive officer of the Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCF), a nonprofit organization that supports students attending publicly funded historically Black colleges and universities and predominantly Black institutions through scholarships, leadership development and career opportunities.

Under Williams' leadership, TMCF has experienced significant growth while strengthening partnerships with major employers and expanding opportunities for HBCU students. He is a former president of Delaware State University with a longstanding commitment to student success and institutional advancement.

The speaker for the undergraduate ceremony is Paula A. Shepherd, senior vice president and chief operating officer of Banner Plans and Networks, a health insurance and care coordination organization affiliated with Banner Health that provides health plans and network services, focusing on aligning insurance coverage with coordinated, patient-centered care across multiple states.

With more than 25 years of experience in healthcare leadership, Shepherd has held executive roles at Blue Cross, overseeing operations that served millions of members. A two-time Southern University alumna, she remains active in community service, ministry and board leadership across Louisiana.

SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY AND A&M COLLEGE  
 SPRING 2026 UNDERGRADUATE COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER



**PAULA A. SHEPHERD**  
 SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER  
 BANNER PLANS AND NETWORKS  
 #WeAreSouthern #SUgrad26

Recording artist Justin Garner, a Southern University alumnus, will perform the national anthem. A native of Plaquemine, Louisiana, Garner is an R&B singer and songwriter who has built an international following and performed for major professional sports teams and national platforms.

Both ceremonies are open to the public. Tickets are not required. For more information, go to [subr.edu/sucommencement](http://subr.edu/sucommencement).



# SUBBR

SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY BATON ROUGE



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