



SEEDS OF **SU**ccess!

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



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*Dr. Orlando F. McMeans,
SU Ag Center and College
of Ag Faculty, Staff, and
Students Participated
in the 2026 Association
of Research Directors
Symposium*



Eighty-three Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center (SU Ag Center) and College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences (CAHES) administrators, faculty, staff, and students participated in the Association of 1890 Research Directors, Inc. (ARD) 22nd Annual Research Symposium held at the Hyatt Regency in New Orleans from March 28 – 31, 2026.



Dr. Orlando F. McMeans, President of the Southern University System and Chancellor of the Southern University Ag Center, officially opened the Symposium during a ribbon cutting ceremony on March 29. The ribbon cutting featured the Southern University 'Human Jukebox' Marching Band and a Second Line with SU Ag Center administrators and ARD Committee Members.



More than 2,000 students, faculty, staff and researchers from across the nineteen 1890 Land-Grant Institutions



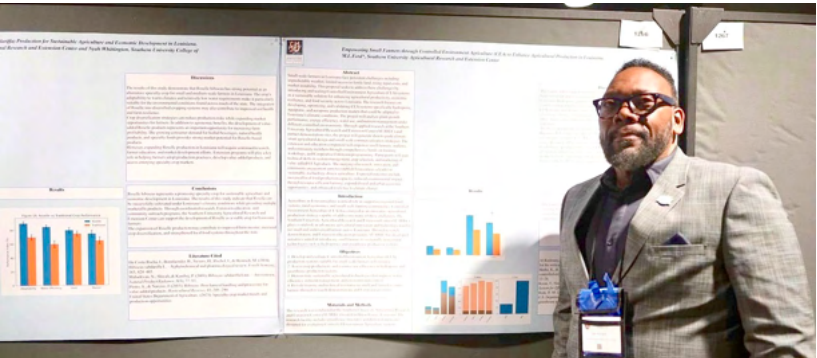
attended the conference to showcase their research findings, compete in student oral and poster presentations, and network with fellow 1890 universities.

Louisiana Congressman Troy Carter and a representative from the New Orleans Mayor's Office provided greetings to attendees during the Symposium's Opening Session on March 30. Southern University CAHES students Courbin Crosby and Morgyn Edwards also welcomed the students of the 1890 Land-Grant Universities to the

symposium during the session.

The ARD Research Symposium is held every two years and is sponsored by USDA-NIFA Evans-Allen funding.

The Association of 1890 Research Directors is the federation of the nineteen autonomous 1890 Land-Grant Universities that provides coordination of research initiatives among member 1890 Institutions in cooperation with federal, state, and private partners.





SU Ag Center and CAHES Participated in the 2026 HBCU Day at the Capitol



The Southern University Ag Center and CAHES participated in the 2026 HBCU Day at the Capitol on March 17, 2026. The event was held at the Capitol Park Museum and themed, “Partnerships in Workforce Development.”

The day’s events included the HBCU Advisory Council annual meeting, the reading of resolutions recognizing each campus in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. CAHES staff also participated in workshops conducted by Complete College America and served as panelists on the “Chat & Chew” panel strategy session.

In the evening, members of the Ag Center and CAHES shared details about programs and projects that are building workforce development with legislators and community members during the HBCU Day Reception.

Each year, the Southern University System (including its five campuses), Dillard University, Grambling State University, and Xavier University of Louisiana come together with the Board of Regents during the state’s regular legislative session to highlight each campus and its students during HBCU Day.





SU Ag Center and CAHES Showcase Research Projects During SU Day at the Capitol

The SU Ag Center and CAHES participated in the SU Day at the Louisiana State Capitol on March 31, 2026.

During the event, students and staff members had the opportunity to share several impactful research programs that are being conducted in the areas of Viticulture and Enology, SUN Beef and Smart Ranching, Drone technology, Child and Family Studies, and Environmental Toxicology with legislators and individuals visiting the state capitol.

The day included Research in the Rotunda and resolutions presented in both the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Each year, the five campuses of the Southern University System come together to highlight each campus' programs and students.



*Four CAHES
Students
Selected as
2026 Farm Credit
VIP Scholars*



SOPHIA CHENAULT



MORGYN EDWARDS



SAIGE KENNER



NYLA REISS

College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences (CAHES) students and Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS) members Sophia Chenault, a junior Agricultural Business major with a minor in Supply Chain Management from Fort Worth, TX; Morgyn Edwards, a senior Agricultural Business major from Houston, TX; Saige Kenner, a junior Agricultural Business major from Baton Rouge, LA; and Nyla Reiss, a senior Agricultural Business major from Mobile, AL, have been selected as 2026 Farm Credit VIP Scholars.

Farm Credit and MANRRS announced the 2026 Farm Credit VIP Scholars Program winners, recognizing outstanding MANRRS students who are passionate about agriculture. As recipients, the students will receive a \$1,000 academic award, full travel to the 2026 National MANRRS Conference, and exclusive access to the VIP Scholars track for professional development and networking with Farm Credit leaders.

The VIP track offers meaningful interactions with Farm Credit professionals, leadership development opportunities including Clifton

Strengths assessments and professional etiquette training, and insights into various careers in fields such as finance, credit, capital markets, information technology, marketing, and more.

For more than a century, Farm Credit has supported rural communities and agriculture with reliable, consistent credit and financial services with the capital necessary to make businesses successful and by financing vital infrastructure and communication services.

MANRRS is a national organization dedicated to developing and empowering individuals in agriculture, natural resources, and related sciences. Through leadership development, career readiness, and meaningful industry connections, MANRRS nurtures potential, supports unique journeys, and creates pathways to internships, careers, and lifelong success.

To read the full announcement and view the complete list of scholarship awardees visit, <https://blog.manrrs.org/manrrs-spotlight-2026-farm-credit-vip-scholars>.



Southern University Dietetic Interns Bring Healthy Cooking to YWCA Youth



The Southern University Dietetic Internship Program is partnering with the YWCA of Greater Baton Rouge to teach healthy eating to local youth. Throughout the Spring 2026 semester, dietetic interns have been leading hands-on cooking classes for young people. During the classes, the children are learning how to prepare simple and nutritious meals. They explore new foods and enjoy tasting what they create. The children are excited, fully engaged, and are building confidence in the kitchen. They are also learning healthy habits that can last a lifetime.

This experience also supports intern training by allowing interns to practice nutrition education and community engagement. They gain real-world skills that prepare them for their careers. This partnership is making a positive impact by supporting student learning and strengthening community health.



Southern University Dietetic Students Step into the World of Sports Nutrition



The Southern University Dietetic Internship Program's interns recently toured the New Orleans Saints' training facility, gaining an inside look at nutrition in professional sports.

During the visit, interns connected with registered dietitians who fuel NFL athletes every day. They learned how nutrition supports performance, recovery, and overall health. They also saw how meals and hydration plans are designed to meet the needs of elite athletes.

Interns were engaged, curious, and excited to ask questions. This experience brought their classroom learning to life and introduced new opportunities in sports nutrition. Experiences like this continue to prepare confident, well-prepared future dietitians while demonstrating what is possible in the field.

*The Fab Lab
Introduced Fashion
Design to Southern
Lab's Girl Scouts
'Kitten Troop' 10551*



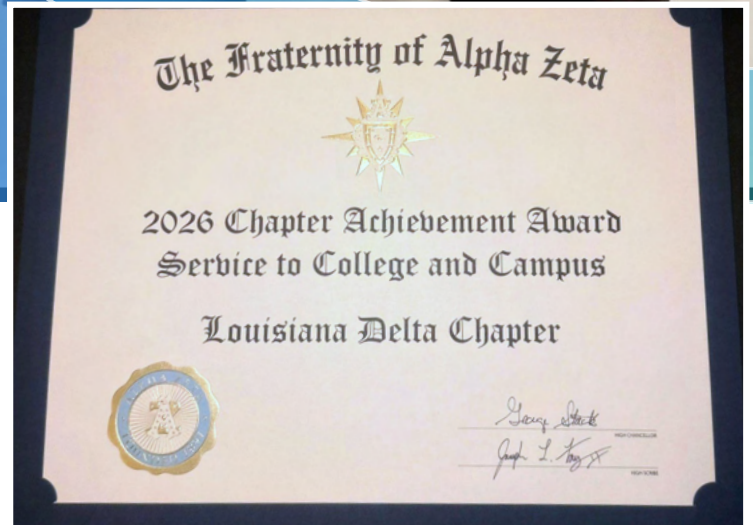
The Fab Lab hosted the Southern University Laboratory School's Girl Scouts 'Kitten Troop' 10551 on March 19, 2026.

During the visit, the girl scouts learned to use a sewing machine, sewed a pouch with the assistance of Fab Lab Fellows, designed a paper girl scout vest, and made bookmarks. This visit allowed each girl scout to earn a sewing patch at the conclusion of the session.

Outreach projects like this provide an avenue for Fab Lab Fellows to give back to the community and introduces the vast career opportunities available in the field of Agriculture, such as fashion, merchandising, and design, to youth at an early age.



The Fraternity of Alpha Zeta Louisiana Delta Chapter Won a National Award at Alpha Zeta Summit



Rising senior Kaidra Knatt represented Southern University and A&M College at the Alpha Zeta National Summit, held April 9–12 in Nashville, Tennessee, where she accepted the 2026 Chapter Achievement Award for Service to College and Campus on behalf of the Louisiana Delta Chapter during the Awards Banquet.

The award recognizes the chapter’s commitment to service, leadership, and meaningful campus engagement. Over the past year, the Louisiana Delta Chapter has hosted a range of impactful activities, including Tea & Meditation, the Graduate School 101 webinar, and SUBR Career Services Basics. These programs are designed to support student well-being, professional development, and academic advancement.

Alpha Zeta is a professional, service, and honorary fraternity for men and women in agriculture. Its mission is to unite a varied community of lifelong leaders who actively promote and serve global food, fiber, and environmental systems through scholarship, leadership, service, and fellowship.

The Louisiana Delta Chapter at Southern University and A&M College, chartered in 2023, continues to

build a strong legacy of excellence and service within the College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences. Students are eligible for membership after completing 30 or more credit hours with a minimum GPA of 3.0, while also demonstrating strong character and leadership potential. Eligible students receive invitations during the Fall semester.

This national recognition reflects the chapter’s ongoing dedication to serving the Southern University community and preparing future leaders in agriculture and related fields.

To learn more about Alpha Zeta or the Louisiana Delta Chapter, contact advisor Dr. Jodi Morton at jodi.morton@sus.edu



The SU Ag Center Supported Youth Participation in the Ignite by 4-H Summit Held in Washington, D.C.



The SU Ag Center, through its Youth Development Program, supported student participation in the Ignite by 4-H Summit, a premier national youth leadership conference held in Washington, D.C. from March 25-29, 2026. This opportunity allowed Joshua Jackson and Charles Ruth, students from St. Augustine High School in New Orleans, to represent Louisiana while engaging in hands-on learning experiences focused on leadership development, civic engagement, and community impact.

During the summit, the students who were chaperoned by SU Ag Center's Community Encourager and Regional Coordinator of the Communities of Color Network, Ryan Sugulleh, participated in interactive workshops that emphasized identifying and addressing social, economic, and environmental challenges within their communities. A key highlight of the experience was youth-led community mapping, where students explored innovative ways to assess local conditions and communicate areas in need of improvement. These activities align directly with the mission of the Southern University Ag Center's Youth Development Program to empower youth as change agents and future leaders in public health and community development.

In addition to educational programming, students were exposed to national leaders, policymakers, and peers from across the country, broadening their perspectives and strengthening their capacity for civic participation. This experience reinforces the Ag Center's commitment to developing the next generation of leaders through meaningful, real-world engagement.





SARDI Holds Health and Spring Gardening Fair

The Sustainable Agriculture & Rural Development Institute (SARDI) held a Health & Spring Gardening Fair on Friday, April 10, 2026 in Opelousas, LA. Health screenings, insurance information, spring plants, and garden preparation were among the activities discussed at the fair.

SARDI also planted its first grape vines for its Viticulture project with the assistance of Viticulture Research Associate, Michael Walker. Additionally, participants toured SARDI's grounds and saw current crops being grown and received vegetable plants to take home for their gardens.

SARDI is a satellite campus of the Southern University Agricultural Research & Extension Center located in Opelousas, LA.



The Impact of Calf Nutrition on Animal Performance



Agriculture is the largest industry in the U.S., and beef cow-calf production is the single largest Ag commodity. Of the four largest agronomic crops grown in the U.S. (corn, soybeans, wheat, and hay) three of those are primarily grown as animal feeds, wheat being the exception. Louisiana has a long, humid growing season and has primarily been a cow-calf producer, selling calves at weaning. However, this research project takes a long-term look at production practices, including developing replacement heifers into cows, and taking steers through both a stocker and a finishing phase with heavyweight, market-ready steers going to harvest at about 1,300 lbs. at less than two years of age. Many producers have the opinion that they can have a period of relatively poor animal performance and follow that with better nutrition and use “compensatory gain” so these calves will catch back up in weight to where they should be. This study took a holistic evaluation of the entire production system in calves from birth to first calving (heifers) or harvest (steers). We also evaluate the impacts of differing nutrition levels in

cows pre- and post-calving and that impact on the cow and the possibility a cow will produce more milk to increase weight gains in the calf. Further, we evaluate creep feeding and its effect on weaning weights, and whether those impacts carry-through later in life for these cattle.

Approximately 80 cows were assigned to one of four treatments: hay plus two or five lbs. daily supplement pre-calving or two or five lbs. daily supplement post-calving. At about 75 days, calves were blocked according





to prior treatment and received 0 or + creep feed ad lib until weaning. Post-weaning, all calves were placed in one group for backgrounding on forages. At the start of breeding season for heifers (May 1) the groups were separated. In about mid-October each year, steers were placed on a small feedlot and received a high-concentrate diet for approximately 150 days, after which time they were hauled to a USDA inspected meat facility, harvested, and carcasses were evaluated 48 hours later.

Differences observed were as expected. Cows fed more pre-calving gained more weight and had slightly higher Body Condition Scores (BCS). Feeding cows more when suckling baby calves resulted in slightly heavier calves. All these differences were small, and it does not appear to be economically justified. However, creep feeding calves from about 75 days of age until weaning had a significant impact, increasing weaning weights more than 40 lbs. More importantly when steers were fed for 150 days and harvested, calves that had been creep fed more than one year earlier were still more than 40 lbs. heavier and were fatter at harvest. While there were only slight improvements in USDA carcass quality grades, the dressing percentage of creep fed steers was 1% higher, indicating fatter carcasses.

For additional information on the impact of calf nutrition on animal performance contact, Dr. Clyde Bagley, Vice Chancellor for Research at the SU Ag Center at clyde_bagley@suagcenter.com.



The 1890 Center of Excellence Symposium Held Its' 2nd Annual Symposium

The 1890 Center of Excellence for Nutrition, Health, Wellness and Quality of Life (COE or COENHWQL) held its 2nd annual Symposium themed, "Connecting Cultural Practices and Modern Research for Improved Nutritional Health and Wellness," on March 31, 2026, at the Hyatt Regency in New Orleans.

Nearly 80 students, faculty, and staff from the nineteen 1890 Land-Grant Institutions participated in the symposium, which included student undergraduate and graduate poster presentations. Approximately 20 poster presenter abstracts were submitted from students at 1890 institutions. CAHES students Courbin Crosby and Sa'Niya Stephenson, placed 1st and 2nd, respectively, among the undergraduate poster presenters.

The Symposium also included physical activity led by Nicole Scott of the Yoga Noir Project, a food demonstration by Chef Celeste Gill with each attendee receiving a can of seasoning curated by Chef Celeste, and her cookbooks were raffled off as prizes. There was also a panel discussion facilitated by Dr. Felicia Nave, President and CEO of the 1890 Universities Foundation.





Dion Dawson, Founder of Dion's Chicago Dream, served as the keynote speaker for the event. Dion's Chicago Dream is one of the nation's most efficient last-mile Food-Is-Medicine Enterprises. Since launching on Chicago's South Side, Dawson scaled Dion's Chicago Dream from startup to a \$7 million operation, raising more than \$17 million while serving thousands of households weekly and delivering hundreds of thousands of pounds of fresh food monthly across the Chicagoland region achieving 6,400% growth while maintaining positive margins since its launch.

The Symposium also provided a space for the recipients of four RFA funded pilot projects to present research updates. These projects were: "Designing of Dairy- Free Yogurt Analogs with Baby Ginger for Improved Health Benefits," presented by Dr. Ayesha Sarker, Assistant Professor of Food Science, Dr. Hamidreza Kazemeini, Postdoctoral Researcher of Food Science, and Dr. Aaron Dudley, Research Scientist of Food Science and Technology/Co-Project Director, all from West Virginia State University; "Interaction of Soil Microbiome and Soil Micronutrient Availability on Plant Biochemical Pathways" presented by Dr. Babu Valliyodan, Research Scientist of Food Science and Technology/Co-Project Director at Lincoln University; "Assess Dietary Habits and Nutrition Knowledge to Develop Education Programs for Management of Chronic Diseases among African-born Immigrants," presented by Dr. Samuel Besong, Professor of Food and Nutritional Science at Delaware State University; and "An Interdisciplinary Coalition of Early Childhood and Nutrition Sciences Presents: An Approach to Training Undergraduate Students to Implement Best Practices for Nutrition Education and Wellness in Early Learning Centers," presented by Dr. Kimberly Haynie, Associate Professor of Nutrition and Food Science at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff.

COE Symposium Advisory Board members also attended the Symposium, which was sponsored by funding from USDA-NIFA.





Staff Spotlight:
Dr. Tiffany Franklin
Accepted Into
the Food Science
Leadership Institute

Dr. Tiffany Franklin, Vice Chancellor for Extension and Outreach at the SU Ag Center, has been accepted into Cohort 22 of the Food Science Leadership Institute (FSLI).

The two-year fellowship will begin this fall in Raleigh, NC.

“The experience and perspectives you bring as a Fellow are of great value to the program,” said Dr. Sarah H. Kotzian, Program Manager of the Food Systems Leadership Institute. “We are excited to have another cohort of experienced and dedicated leaders preparing to begin the program this fall,” she added.

FSLI offers high quality, executive leadership development for current and emerging senior leaders in higher education, government, and industries related to global food systems. It has a mission of preparing highly qualified leaders to address a range of issues relating to the food system by developing their personal, organizational and, food system leadership abilities.

The FSLI experience will include three residential sessions, topic specific webinars, and individualized learning activities which will include executive coaching sessions, mentoring, and leadership projects.

For additional information on FSLI visit, <https://fsl.org/>.



Staff Spotlight: *Dr. Crystal Vance* *Graduates from* *LEAD21*



Dr. Crystal Vance, Assistant Professor of Plant and Soil Sciences in the CAHES, was among 84 individuals completing the LEAD21 leadership-development program. This group of distinguished individuals represents land-grant institutions and their strategic partners from across the nation. Over the course of the past year, these individuals have met regularly with their peers, both in-person and virtually, to enhance their personal leadership capacity. The graduation was held at the culmination of the third in-person session, where the focus was on organizational leadership through collaboration, communication, and leading change.

The primary purpose of LEAD21 is to develop leaders in land-grant institutions and their strategic partners who link research, academics, and extension who can lead more effectively in an increasingly complex environment, either in their current positions or future leadership positions.

LEAD21's goals are to enhance the application of skills and knowledge across a set of nine leadership competencies, to develop a network of peer leaders to enhance personal leadership practice, collaboration and diversity of perspective, and to develop and implement an individual's leadership development process.

For more information about LEAD21, visit www.lead-21.org.

DISCOVER AG 2026

JOIN THE FUN AT ONE OF OUR SUMMER ENRICHMENT CAMPS!

The following summer camps will be offered by the Southern University Ag Center:

NourishEd K.I.D.S. – Youth Summer Cooking Camps

The NourishEd Knowledge of Ingredients for Daily Success (K.I.D.S.) Youth Summer Cooking Camps will be held in four parishes this summer. The camps are designed to introduce students ages 9–12 to the fundamentals of preparing simple nutritious meals by learning safe food handling, measuring, how to follow recipes, and basic cooking techniques.

• **Registration Fee:** \$50.00

• Avoyelles Parish | June 15-19, 2026

LSU/SU Ag Center – Extension Office
8592 LA-1
Mansura, Louisiana 71350

Field Agent: Camellia Brown

Email: camellia_brown@suagcenter.com

• East Baton Rouge Parish | June 1-5, 2026

SU Campus – Pinkie Thrift Hall
801 Harding Blvd.
Baton Rouge, Louisiana 70813

Field Agents:

Evan Egana

Email: evan_egana@suagcenter.com

Chrishana Thomas

Email: chrishana_thomas@suagcenter.com

• Union Parish | Camp 1: June 15-19, 2026 Camp 2: June 23-26, 2026

LSU/SU Ag Center – Extension Office
210 East Water Street
Farmerville, Louisiana 71241

Field Agent: Marianna Langston

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• West Carroll Parish | June 1-5, 2026

LSU/SU Ag Center – Extension Office
10284 LA-17
Oak Grove, Louisiana 71263

Field Agent: Theresa Sammons

Email: theresa_sammons@suagcenter.com

BAYOU Summer Program

This residual program targets rising high school seniors and incoming college Freshmen who are interested in career opportunities in Agriculture, Family and Consumer Science, business, or the natural sciences. Participants gain knowledge of these opportunities through campus and departmental tours, industry excursions, immersion in a collegiate classroom environment, and laboratory experience in the form of a short-term research project.

• **SU Campus | May 31 – June 5, 2026**

**Registration has closed for this program.*



Jagcation Phase I

The JAGcation Summer Camp focuses on various concepts and careers in agriculture, family, and consumer sciences. It aims to enhance youth interest in agricultural, family, and consumer science fields to strengthen students' perspectives to address global grand challenges.

• **SU Campus | June 15 - June 26, 2026**

Ages: 9 -11

Registration fee: \$125

To register visit, <https://foundation.sus.edu/jagcation/jagcation-phase-i/>.



Hip Hop to Gen Z Camp

The Hip Hop to Gen Z Camp is designed for students in grades 6th–12th with a passion for music. Campers will be taught dance, songwriting, DJ skills and will cover a wide range of topics linking music to STEM career fields.

• **SU Campus | June 1 – 11, 2026**

Grades: 6-12

**Registration information will be available soon.*





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 LATEST EDITION AT:

<https://www.suagcenter.com/podcast>

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



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