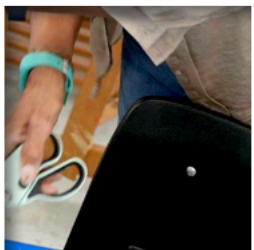
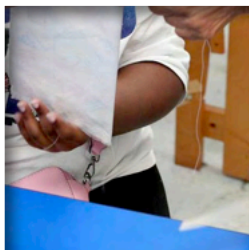
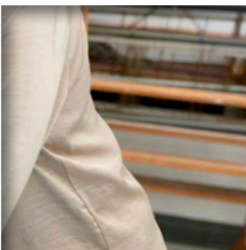
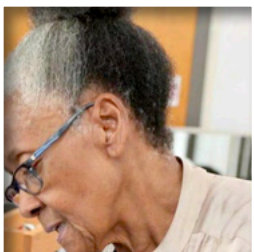
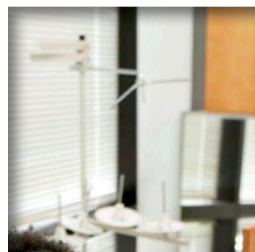


SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY **AG CENTER'S**

SU SEEDS OF *Success!*

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

VOLUME 23 | NO. 8 | AUGUST 2025

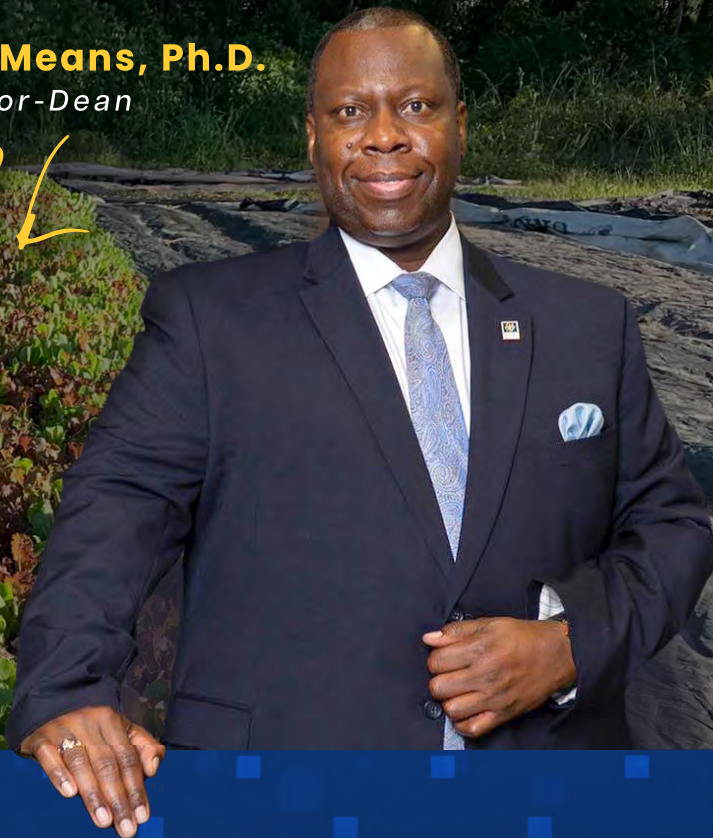


SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

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Chancellor-Dean

Orlando F. McMeans



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*Vice Chancellor, Institutional
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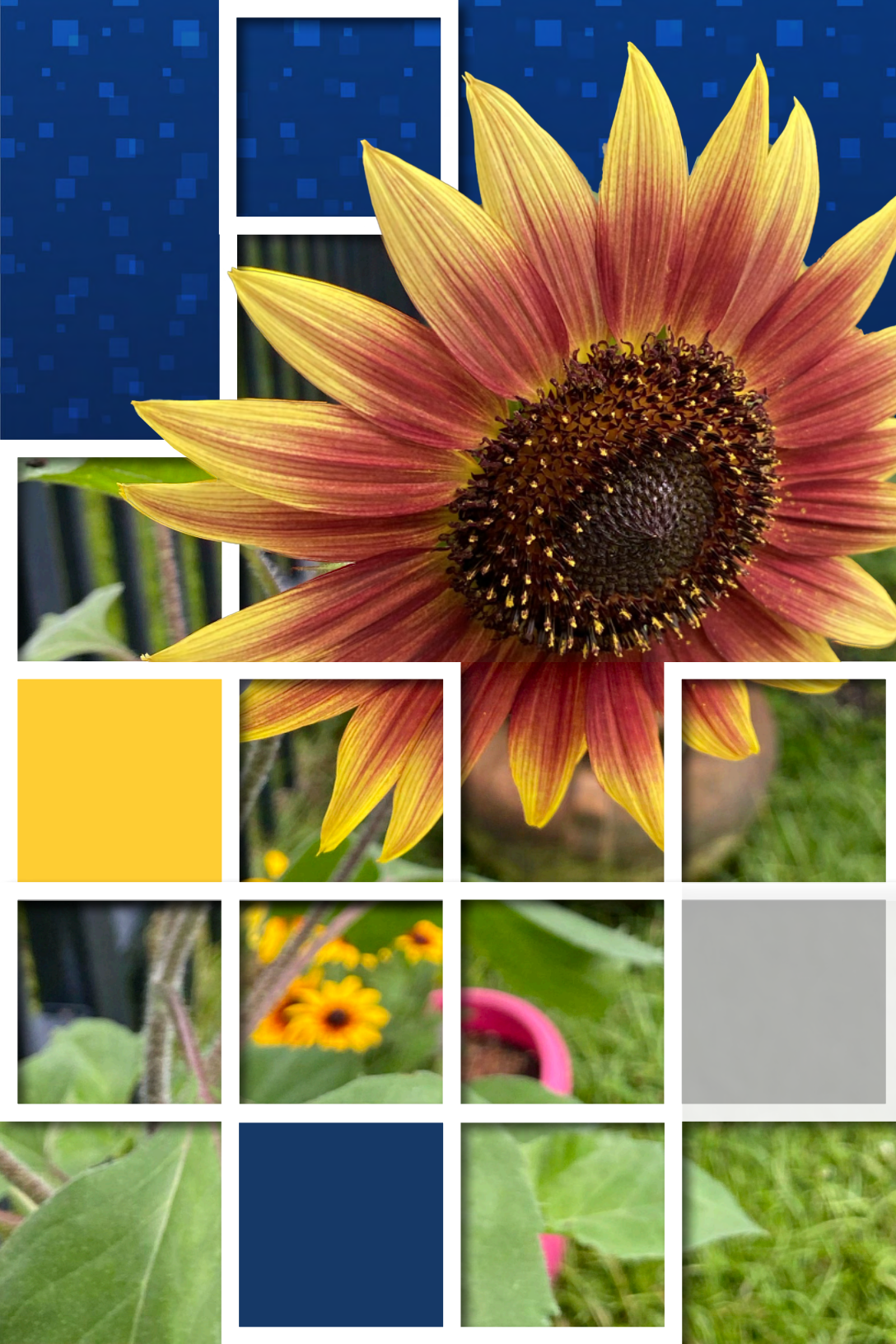
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SU Ag Center Holds Annual Executive and Extended Executive Team Retreat

Members of the Southern University Ag Center and College of Ag's Executive and Extended Executive Teams participated in an annual retreat and workshop from June 30 – July 2, 2025 at the Westin Hotel in New Orleans.

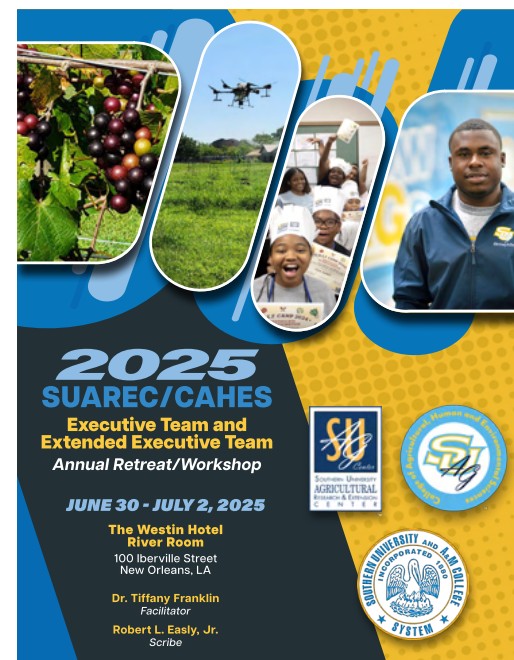
SU Board of Supervisors member Attorney Edwin Shorty, Jr., and Dillard University President Dr. Monique Guillory provided greetings for the teams during the opening session.

Orlando F. McMeans, Chancellor-Dean of the SU Ag Center and the College of Ag discussed the importance of the teams coming together to learn from each other and bringing new ideas to continue the growth of the SU Ag Center and the College of Ag.

Dr. Vladimir Appeaning, Vice President for Strategic Planning, Policy and Institutional Effectiveness, served as the guest speaker for the retreat. He highlighted how data-driven insights can inform strategic planning.

Dr. Katara Williams also led a strategic planning think tank session in preparation for the development of the SU Ag Center's 2025-2032 Strategic Plan.

The final day of the retreat included team presentations on the book, "On Leadership" and a compliance presentation by Dr. Donovan Segura, Associate Vice Chancellor for Compliance.



Five SU College of Ag Alumni Will Begin Their Veterinary School Journey This Fall

All five decide to attend LSU School of Veterinary Medicine



**AHLAYNA
CALHOUN**



**KARRINGTON
HALL**



**CAMERON
HAYS**



**TYLER
JACKSON**



**CACHE`
LANDRY**

Five graduates of the Southern University College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences (CAHES) will begin their journeys to become veterinarians this fall.

The students, Ahlayna Calhoun from Monroe, La.; Cashe` Landry from New Orleans; Karrington Hall from Baton Rouge, La.; Cameron Hays from Zachary, La.; and Tyler Jackson from Baton Rouge, La., have all been accepted into schools of veterinary medicine. Three of the students received multiple acceptances to schools such as Tuskegee University's College of Veterinary Medicine and the Ross University School of Veterinary Medicine, as well as offers to apply to several schools. All five decided to attend LSU's School of Veterinary Medicine.

Receiving acceptance into a veterinary school or being asked to apply to a school is no small feat. According to the American Association of Veterinary Medical Colleges (AAVMC), in the 2020-2021 admissions cycle, there were over 10,000 applicants, and each applicant submitted applications to an average of 4.89 different schools. Nationwide, approximately 3,000 students are admitted to veterinary schools each fall.

"As the Pre-Vet Program Lead in CAHES at Southern University, I'm incredibly proud of our students who've been accepted into veterinary school," said Tyra Davis, D.V.M., who is also an Assistant Professor in CAHES and Campus Veterinarian for Southern University. "At CAHES, we work hard to make sure our students are prepared, offering hands-on experiences, research opportunities, and programs like Vet Explore and Vet on Wheels that bring veterinary medicine to life. These experiences don't just build resumes—they build confidence and real-world skills," she expressed.

That hard work and access to opportunities are what the students said helped them reach their goal of entering vet school.



“Southern not only prepared me to step confidently into my next chapter of vet school, but the College of Agriculture provided me with diverse opportunities to further my knowledge and skills in the field,” stated Ahlayna. “Over the past four years, I have had the privilege of working closely with professors on various research projects, attending multiple conferences and symposiums, and traveling across the country every summer for different internship opportunities. These experiences have been invaluable in shaping my understanding of veterinary medicine and preparing me for the challenges ahead,” she added.

Cache`, Karrington, Cameron, and Tyler each echoed Ahlayna's sentiments.

“The hands-on experiences, the demanding coursework, and the support of mentors shaped me not only as a student but as a future veterinarian,” said Cache`. The College of Ag didn’t just prepare me for vet school – it gave me the resilience, the knowledge, and the confidence to step into a future filled with opportunity and purpose,” she added.

“My journey is one that I will forever look back on as something that has shaped me into the person I am today. From the moment I stepped on the Bluff, I hit the ground running. The opportunities and connections I made through the College of Ag are unmatched. From study abroad experiences, internships, TV appearances, and working toward my ultimate goal of getting into veterinary school, my time at Southern has been truly unforgettable,” said Karrington.

“Whether it was presenting research, traveling the world, or engaging with the community, I was constantly challenged to grow both personally and professionally. The support from faculty, staff, and my peers created a foundation that I know will carry me through veterinary school and into my future career,” Karrington added.

Cameron said that from a very young age, she knew that Veterinary Medicine was her calling, and CAHES helped fuel her passion to reach her end goal.

“During my time at Southern, I gained lifelong mentorship. Their encouragement gave me the confidence to pursue internships that allowed me to gain invaluable hands-on experience in various veterinary settings,” she said. “I was offered research opportunities that broaden my understanding of veterinary science and animal welfare.”

Tyler also said he had always known that he wanted to pursue a career in veterinary medicine, but at the time, his experience was limited to working with dogs and cats at a small local animal clinic. During the spring semester of his freshman year, he began volunteering at the university’s poultry, rabbitry, and swine units, located on the campus. This opened the door for research opportunities.

“I conducted my own research on rabbits under the guidance of Dr. Jodi Morton and assisted with several other research projects. Each summer of my undergraduate career, I secured internships that allowed me to explore different aspects of veterinary medicine, engage in research, and gain a broader understanding of the profession,” reflected Tyler. “These experiences strengthened my resume and helped shape me into a well-rounded student, ultimately leading to my acceptance into two veterinary schools: Louisiana State University and Tuskegee University. The College of Agriculture at Southern University has been an incredible part of my journey, and I wouldn’t trade this experience for anything in the world,” said Tyler.

“We’re proud of what our students have accomplished, and we’re committed to creating even more opportunities to help them succeed in the future,” added Dr. Davis.

As Ahlayna, Cashe`, Karrington, Cameron, and Tyler prepare to enter the next chapter of their academic careers, they leave the following advice to students who aspire to become veterinarians.

“Seek out as many opportunities as possible, whether within the college or around the country. These experiences will broaden your perspective and provide practical insights into the field,” said Ahlayna. “Networking is invaluable; build connections with peers, professors, and professionals in the field. These relationships can offer guidance, support, and potential career opportunities. And last but not least stay positive and resilient; maintaining a positive attitude will help you navigate challenges and stay focused on your goals. Remember that setbacks are part of the journey, and perseverance is key to success,” she added.

“Hold onto that dream with everything you’ve got,” said Cache`. “This path isn’t easy. There will be long nights, hard days, and moments when you feel like it’s just too much. You’ll cry. You’ll doubt yourself. But I promise, if this is what you truly want, it is so worth it. Lean on your support system. Let your professors challenge you—especially the ones like Dr. Davis who push you when you’re at your breaking point, because they see something in you that you might not see yet. Trust that. Believe in that. And most of all, be kind to yourself. You don’t have to be perfect. You just have to be persistent. Every small step you take is part of something so much bigger. It may take more than one cycle but stay the course,” she added.

“Take it one day at a time, because that is all you can do,” expressed Karrington. “The journey to veterinary school is not always easy – it is filled with challenges, moments of doubt, and hard work – but it is also filled with growth, discovery, and incredible rewards. Stay consistent, stay passionate, and trust that every step, no matter how small, is bringing you closer to your dream.”

“The journey is challenging but with determination you will overcome every obstacle. Build relationships with mentors at the university that will help guide you on your journey. Remember to give yourself grace because the end goal will be rewarding,” stated Cameron.

“My advice to future scholars like me who aspire to become veterinarians is to stay open-minded and willing to step outside of your comfort zone. Not every opportunity will immediately seem appealing, but you never know the impact it could have—some experiences can truly be life-changing,” said Tyler. “Don’t be afraid to ask questions and seek guidance. Take every chance to build connections along your journey, they can open doors you never expected could be opened,” he added.

For additional information on the CAHES Pre-Veterinary Medicine Concentration, visit <https://www.suagcenter.com/academics/departments-of-agricultural-sciences-and-technology>.

SU Ag Wins 1st Place in Juneteenth Campus-wide Decorating Challenge



The Southern University College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences won first place in the Southern University Juneteenth Decorating Challenge. The announcement was made on June 19, 2025 during the Baton Rouge campus' Juneteenth Celebration.

The theme of the challenge was, "Juneteenth: Honoring the Legacy, Shaping the Future," and participants were asked to decorate their building/lobby area using symbols, colors, and imagery that represent African American history, culture, and the spirit of Juneteenth; host a display or mini exhibit highlighting African American leaders in their field or the contributions of Southern University history and/or alumni; and/or offer educational or interactive



programming, such as a presentation, student-led discussion, art installation, or open house related to the theme.

Each entry was evaluated on the categories of Creativity & Originality, Cultural Relevance & Historical Representation, Visual Impact, Incorporation of Theme, and Effort & Completeness.

Erica Goldsberry, Administrative Assistant IV in the CAHES, spearheaded the entry and the concept of the exhibit.

“As a college rooted in the legacy of land-grant institutions and dedicated to serving underrepresented and rural communities, the College of Agriculture recognizes Juneteenth as more than a day of commemoration—it is a powerful reminder of freedom, resilience and history,” said Goldsberry. “Our participation in this celebration reflected our commitment to honoring that legacy,” she added.

Historically, agriculture has been both a symbol of oppression and a path to



independence for African Americans. From the forced labor of slavery to the self-sufficiency of black farmers after emancipation, agriculture has played a central role in shaping black history and empowerment. Through Juneteenth, we reflect on this history and highlight the importance of reclaiming land, knowledge, and opportunities in agriculture.

“Our Juneteenth display and programming were designed to pay tribute to the contributions of Black farmers, innovators, and agricultural scientists whose stories have often gone untold,” Goldsberry explained. “By participating, we aimed to educate, inspire, and celebrate progress while acknowledging the work still to be done in building a more just agricultural community,” she added.

The exhibit incorporated authentic, hand-stitched Nigerian dresses, hand-woven baskets from Kenya, Liberian Dolls, African artifacts from Zimbabwe, fresh flower arrangements were provided by Milagro



Berhane, Hibiscus Tea was provided by Zanetta Augustine and the Chancellor-Dean’s Office, signs were provided by Ricoh, decorations, facts, refreshments, hard work, and dedication were provided by CAHES faculty, staff, and students.

Members of the SU Ag Center and CAHES also manned booths, held a petting zoo, and presented presentations during the Baton Rouge campus’ Juneteenth Celebration.



SU College of Ag Holds a Successful 2025 BAYOU Program



The College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences (CAHES) hosted 31 high school seniors and incoming college freshmen from Louisiana, Texas, and Iowa for a week during the college's annual Beginning Agricultural Youth Opportunities Unlimited (BAYOU) Program.

BAYOU provides students with the opportunity to gain first-hand knowledge about career opportunities in Agriculture, Family and Consumer Sciences, Business, or the natural sciences.

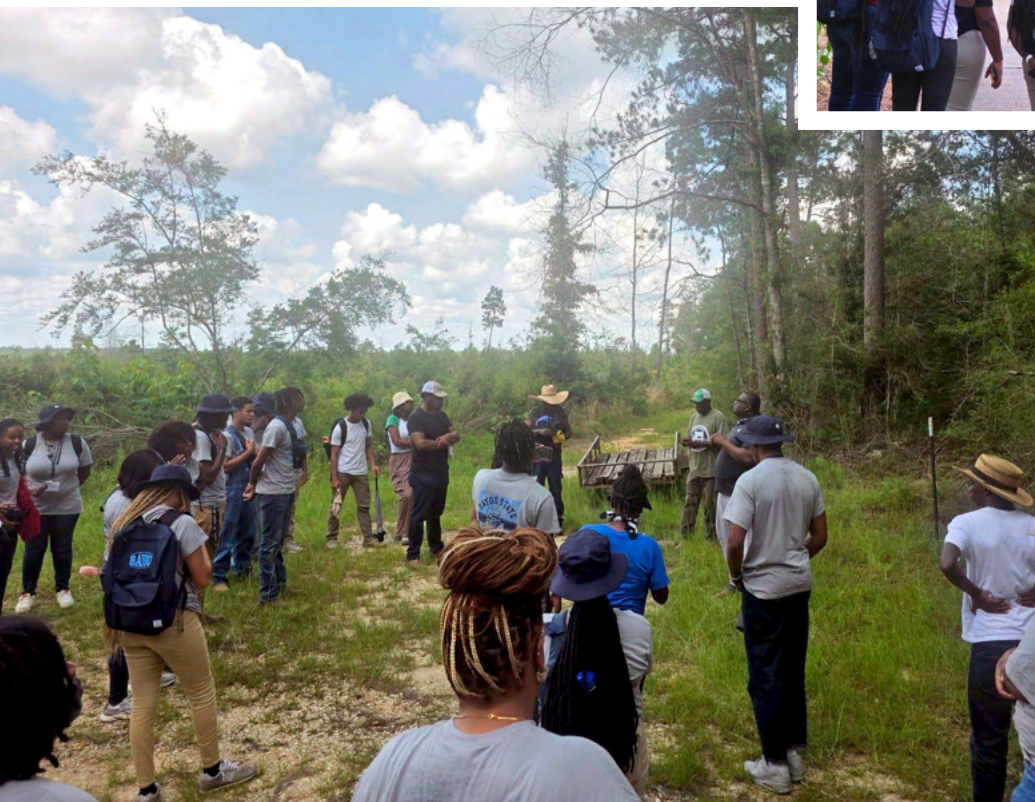
The program, which began on June 1, 2025, allowed the participants to venture through CAHES and engage with professors in the college's concentrations. The students also participated in several activities and field trips which included Photography in the Ag World, The Printing Source Experience, the Southern University Admissions Office, Bluebonnet Swamp, and Muse 3 Farms.



The students resided in the residential dormitories throughout the program, which concluded with a closing ceremony on June 7.

To participate in the free BAYOU program, students had to have completed the 11th grade with a minimum grade point average of 2.5. Graduating seniors had to have an ACT (SAT equivalent) composite score of 18 and above, or a high school grade point average of 2.5 or greater, or rank in the top 50% of their high school's graduating class, and require no more than one remedial course. Participants also had to submit their high school transcript, ACT/SAT scores, write an essay about their career goals and aspirations, and complete the BAYOU application.

For additional information on the BAYOU program visit, <https://www.suagcenter.com/academics/college-of-ag-summer-camps>.



Participants Received Sewing Machines During the College of Ag's Quilt Design Summer Camp



The Southern University College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences (CAHES) Fashion Design, Merchandising and Textiles (FDMT) Program held its 2025 Quilt Design Summer Camp for youth aged 13-17 from June 9 –19, 2025.

Four students participated in the two-week camp, which taught them quilting techniques and how to operate several types of sewing machines. Each participant also created a pin cushion, a small pouch, a pillow cover, and a potholder.

Dr. Jungim Seo, Associate Professor in CAHES and Program Leader said she created the camp after realizing that a large amount of material is wasted.

“We throw away a lot of material, so I teach the youth how to sew. You can use any strip of fabric and make a quilt product like a hot potholder,” stated Dr. Seo. “We teach them sustainability.





These are skills they can use forever, like using a sewing machine. Happy sewing, happy quilting, and saving the Earth,” added Dr. Seo.

The participants also learned the history of quilting in the African American community. Camp volunteers Latricia Greggs and Mary Judson brought quilts to the camp and shared the various quilt-making techniques with the participants.

Each participant said they enjoyed their time at the camp and planned to use the skills they learned.

“The best part of the camp was making things from fiber, like a pillow cover, which was really fun and was easy to make,” Kirsten, a 14-year-old participant. “I would recommend it because you can learn to sew and make different things. Start with small things

and then move up to the bigger stuff, like making the blankets and everything.”

On the last day of the camp, Brenda Harris, Quilt Lab Manager, presided over an awards ceremony. During the event, each participant displayed the projects they completed during the camp to their family members and SU Ag Center and CAHES faculty and staff.

Each participant received a certificate of completion for the 2025 Quilt Design Summer Camp and a sewing machine provided by the Propel Center.

For additional information on the Quilt Design Summer Camp contact, Dr. Jung-Im Seo at jungim_seo@suagcenter.com.



Dietetic Internship Program Participates in the Louisiana Anti-Hunger Coalition Virtual Press Conference Highlighting the Need to Protect SNAP & Medicaid



CAHES Dietetic Interns participated in a virtual press conference with the Louisiana Anti-Hunger Coalition and co-sponsoring organizations to call attention to ongoing threats to critical food and health programs in the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act” on June 25, 2025.

The virtual event featured presenters from various organizations, including Feeding Louisiana, Louisiana Organization for Refugees and Immigrants, New Orleans Health Department, and the NAACP Louisiana State Conference.

The Dietetic Internship Program launched the Jaguar N.E.S.T. to address the growing issue of food insecurity among students on campus. This initiative not only provides access to healthy food options but also empowers students through nutrition education, hands-on food preparation, and community support.

As part of their advocacy efforts, dietetic interns and nutrition students recently spoke at the Louisiana State Capitol in support of the Anti-Hunger Campaign, emphasizing the critical importance of protecting programs like SNAP and Medicaid. Their participation in the statewide virtual press conference, co-sponsored by over 20 other organizations, highlighted the real-life impact of policy decisions on college students facing food insecurity. This advocacy reinforces the program’s commitment to food justice and community health through both action and policy engagement.

Nearly 18% of Louisianians – including 350,000 children and 100,000 seniors – rely on SNAP to help pay their grocery bills. Medicaid provides coverage for roughly 1.4 million Louisianians.

The goal of the Louisiana Anti-Hunger Coalition is to put an end to hunger across our state.

They strive to achieve food security for every resident of Louisiana by promoting and supporting programs and agencies that aid those facing hunger and food insecurity, advocating for well-informed public policies, cultivating grassroots support, and educating key stakeholders about the issue of hunger in Louisiana.

Information for this story and the press conference co-sponsor logo image were provided by the Louisiana Anti-Hunger Coalition.



Louisiana Organizations Opposed to SNAP/Medicaid Cuts and Changes in the “One Big Beautiful Bill Act”



Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center Welcomes Mandela Washington Fellows



The Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center was honored to host 25 exceptional Mandela Washington Fellows – a prestigious cohort of young African leaders recognized for their innovation, entrepreneurship, and dedication to advancing agriculture across the continent.

Chosen from a pool of over 50,000 applicants, the 700 fellows selected for this year's Mandela Washington Fellowship represent the brightest minds from across Africa. The SU Ag Center, in partnership with Dr. Sarah Becker of Louisiana State University (LSU), proudly welcomed a select group of 25 agricultural changemakers to its campus for an intimate tour and engagement session highlighting the Center's impactful research, outreach, and community-based agricultural initiatives.

On June 25, 2025, the visit began in the third-floor auditorium of T.T. Allain Hall, where the fellows were introduced to the Ag Center's mission and its commitment to agricultural education, innovation, and equity. The fellows – representing a wide range of agricultural expertise, including aquaponics, urban farming, specialty crop production, and beginning farmer training – shared insights into the work they are leading in their home countries, demonstrating a shared vision of sustainable and inclusive agriculture.





During the visit, the fellows engaged in thoughtful dialogue with SU Ag Center's distinguished faculty and staff, including:

- **Stephanie M. Elwood, *Horticulture Specialist***
- **Mila Berhane, *Senior Research Farm Associate***
- **Dr. Harold Mellieon, *Chair, Department of Agricultural Sciences, and Assistant Professor of Agricultural Science***

These interactions provided a meaningful platform for cultural and professional exchange, allowing the fellows to explore potential collaborations and deepen their understanding of agricultural research and extension practices in the United States.

“The opportunity to host these inspiring fellows from across Africa is a profound honor,” said Stephanie Elwood. “Their passion for sustainable agriculture and community empowerment mirrors the mission of our work here at the SU Ag Center. We look forward to building bridges that continue beyond this visit.”

The Mandela Washington Fellowship, a flagship program of the U.S. Department of State’s Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI), has become a transformative experience for young professionals, offering academic and leadership training at institutions across the United States. This visit underscores the global reach and significance of the work being done at the Center.

As global agricultural challenges grow increasingly complex, collaborations like these are vital to cultivating a new generation of agricultural leaders committed to food security, environmental stewardship, and economic development on a global scale.

Hurricane Season is Here and Emergency Management Education is too!



Seniors at the West Baton Rouge (WBR) Council on Aging got a lesson on Emergency Preparedness from the SU Ag Center's Family and Human Sciences (FHS) Agent, Angell Jordan, on June 11, 2025.

During the session, the seniors learned the importance of being prepared for disasters, especially now during hurricane season. They learned important terms like the difference between a watch and a warning, how to assemble their emergency kit for themselves, and how to prepare a kit for their pets. The seniors were extremely engaged and asked many questions.

At the end of the presentation, each participant received handouts on assembling an emergency kit, learning important terms, and everyone received an Emergency Hammer & Seat Belt Cutter. Seniors at WBR COA are ready and prepared!



Pollination Comes to Life Through Project- based Learning at the Southern University Child Development Lab



The Southern University Child Development Lab recently buzzed with excitement as students embarked on a hands-on science adventure led by Dr. Charity Schaffer, Youth Development Agent and author of Kai's Pollination Expedition. Written and designed by Dr. Schaffer, this charming, educational story introduces young learners to the fascinating process of pollination through engaging storytelling and play-based learning.

During her visits, Dr. Schaffer shared the vibrant tale of Kai and his journey to discover how bees and butterflies help flowers grow. The story captivated students, laying the foundation for deeper exploration through a sensory-rich activity called Pollinator Pals. Using plush bees and butterflies, the

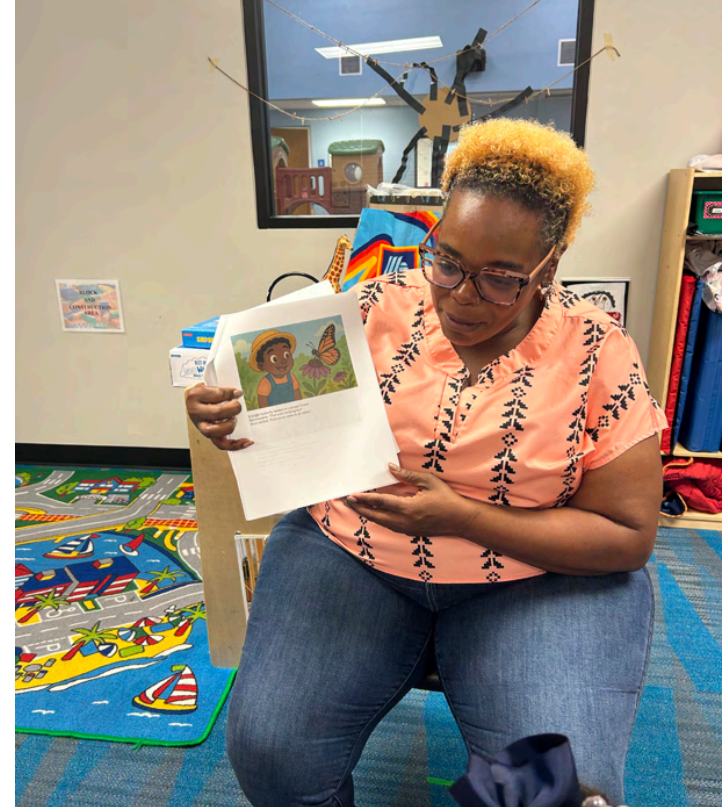


young scholars “flew” their pollinator pals from flower to flower, mimicking the essential role these creatures play in helping plants bloom. It was learning in motion, filled with joy, movement, and meaningful discovery.

This interactive session is just one part of a larger collaboration between Dr. Schaffer and Senior Research Associate/ CAHES Professor Mila Berhane. Together, they have worked to create a series of project-based learning experiences that bring science and nature directly into the classroom. In a follow-up lesson, students crafted biodegradable flowerpots from recycled newspapers and planted pollinator-friendly blooms, reinforcing their understanding of plant life cycles and sustainability.

Through the fusion of literacy, science, and creativity, the SU Child Development Lab is moving full S.T.E.A.M. (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) ahead, providing even its youngest Jaguars with opportunities to explore the natural world in thoughtful, hands-on ways.

With Kai’s Pollination Expedition, Dr. Schaffer has sown the seeds of curiosity, critical thinking, and environmental stewardship in the minds of our future scientists. Stay tuned—the pollination project finale is sure to be a blooming success!



Hip Hop to Gen Z Camp 2025: Where Beats Meet Brilliance and STEAM Inspires the Future



From June 9 - 19, 2025, the Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center came alive with creativity, curiosity, and cultural energy during the second annual Hip Hop to Gen Z Summer Camp. Thirty-one students in grades 6th through 12th participated in this exciting two-week program that blended the expressive power of hip hop with the hands-on exploration of STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics).



Held on the campus of Southern University in Baton Rouge, the camp offered students an unforgettable experience rooted in self-expression, innovation, and skill-building. This year's theme focused on transformation, encouraging students to turn their creativity into confidence, and their talents into tools for future success.

A Creative Launchpad for STEAM Learning

Hip Hop to Gen Z is more than a summer camp. It's a platform where music, movement, media, and mentorship come together to open new pathways for youth. Students spent their days learning the real-world applications of audio production, digital storytelling, vocal performance, and video editing. They were guided by an incredible team that included industry professionals, Youth Development



Agents, and talented students from Southern University's College of Agriculture and the Department of Fine and Performing Arts, all of whom brought both expertise and heart to each session.

Throughout the camp, classrooms became creative labs where students produced original music, short films, and live performances. The program culminated in a final showcase filled with energy, talent, and pride as students shared their work with family, friends, and supporters.

Investing in Innovation and Identity

The Hip Hop to Gen Z Camp is part of the Southern University Ag Center's broader mission to support youth through culturally relevant programming. It recognizes that creativity and culture are powerful entry points into STEAM learning, especially for students who may not see themselves represented in those fields.

Through this experience, students developed not only technical skills but also a deeper belief in their own voice and potential. The camp helps young people see that their creativity matters, and that it can lead to real opportunities in the future.

Which was 13-year-old Kennisen's experience. The 2024 camp sparked her interest in DJing. After attending the camp, she began taking private lessons and DJed at several events.

"My first big event was a girls' STEM convention," she said with a smile, adding that she was able to make a little money. "This year, I was an ambassador for DJing and software engineering and I helped with all the DJ drops."





A Special Thank You

We would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Dr. Rani Whitfield, member of the Southern University Board of Supervisors, for his unwavering support of this year's Hip Hop to Gen Z Camp. His commitment to youth development and his visible presence throughout the program made a lasting impact on our students and contributed greatly to the camp's success. We also express our sincere gratitude to the talented creative professionals who brought this experience to life. DJ Ma3stro introduced students to the art of DJing and the importance of stage presence. Quiana Lynell led empowering sessions on vocal performance, songwriting, and confidence-building. Roxi Victorian guided students in lyric writing and expressive movement. D'Ray Washington provided hands-on instruction in filmmaking, covering storyboarding, directing, and editing. Amos Singleton brought the technical world of studio production to life through audio mixing and sound engineering. Each of these individuals helped create a space where students could explore, create, and thrive.

Looking Ahead

As Hip Hop to Gen Z continues to grow, so does its impact. We are excited about the future of this program and the doors it opens for young people who deserve to see themselves as creators, innovators, and leaders. What began as a summer camp is becoming a powerful movement that shows students what is possible when culture, education, and opportunity come together.

For more information about the Hip Hop to Gen Z Camp, please contact: Raquel Square Ayles, Ph.D., Associate Vice Chancellor for Extension and Outreach at the Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center via email at, raquel_ayles@suagcenter.com.

Want a glimpse into the magic?

Scan the QR code below to watch highlights from the 2024 Hip Hop to Gen Z Camp and see the power of this experience in action.



Ageless Circle Campers Soar Into STEAM With Drone Demo and Building Workshop



The East Baton Rouge Council on Aging's Ageless Circle Summer Camp took to the skies on July 8, 2025, as campers participated in an exciting Drone Demo Daze and Drone Building Workshop, led by SU Ag Center staff members Dr. Charity Schaffer, Robert Easley, and Aralynn Davis.

Campers were introduced to the fundamentals of drone technology through a hands-on experience that combined flight demonstration with drone assembly. With tools in hand and curiosity in full flight, participants built their own drones from scratch before testing them in the air. The energy was electric as students watched their creations lift off, gaining both technical skills and confidence in the process.

The event not only highlighted the power of experiential learning but also introduced campers to the possibilities within the growing field of unmanned aircraft systems. By integrating science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM), the workshop inspired campers to imagine themselves as future innovators and problem-solvers.

Dr. Schaffer and her team were thrilled to help guide these bright young minds through an unforgettable learning experience—one filled with discovery, excitement, and elevation. The future of STEAM is in good hands, and the skies are truly the limit!



Southern University Ag Center Celebrates the Successful Completion of the Spring 2025 Small Farmer Academy



The Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center proudly celebrates the successful graduation of 25 aspiring agricultural professionals from the Spring 2025 cohort of the Small Farmer Academy—a transformative program dedicated to equipping the next generation of agricultural leaders with the tools, knowledge, and confidence to thrive in today’s evolving agri-food system. Led and directed by Cornelius Jackson, Extension Agent, and Zanetta Augustine, Program Leader for Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR), the Small Farmer Academy continues to serve as a cornerstone initiative within the Southern University Ag Center’s broader mission to advance agricultural innovation, education, and sustainable rural development.

This season marked a significant milestone in the Academy’s legacy of impact. The cohort engaged in a robust curriculum that combined classroom-style instruction with experiential learning opportunities, allowing students to gain a well-rounded understanding of modern agriculture. Topics covered included business development, sustainable farming practices, marketing, grant writing, soil health, livestock and vegetable production, and regulatory compliance, among other critical areas. Participants also benefited from a series of strategically designed field experiences, including visits to active vegetable and livestock farms, as well as thriving local farmers' markets. These immersive site visits were designed to expand students’ perspectives and demonstrate the real-world applications of agricultural principles, technologies, and entrepreneurial opportunities.



In addition to curriculum and fieldwork, the program provided students with essential tools and materials necessary for practical success in the field. A highlight of the Academy was the integration of guest sessions with experts from diverse sectors—including the private industry, state and federal agencies, and higher education institutions—who generously shared their expertise and answered pressing questions posed by Academy participants. The energy, curiosity, and dedication of the 25 graduates were evident throughout the program. Their commitment to learning and growing, both personally and professionally, was both inspiring and affirming of the Academy’s purpose.

“It has been a rewarding experience to support the journeys of these emerging agriculturalists,” said Cornelius Jackson. “Our goal is to not only prepare them for current agricultural challenges but to ignite their passion to innovate and lead in the years to come,” he added.

As the Southern University Ag Center looks to engage future cohorts, the success of this spring’s program underscores the importance of continued investment in farmer education and workforce development initiatives. The Academy’s long-term vision is clear: to develop confident, capable, and community-minded producers who will serve as catalysts for growth in Louisiana’s agricultural sector and beyond. Until next season, we remain committed to our mission—to grow the growers and cultivate success in agriculture.



SU Ag Center Holds Phase I of Its' 2025 Jagcation Summer Camp



Twenty-five participants aged 9-11 years old participated in Phase I of the SU Ag Center's Jagcation Summer Camp from June 2-13, 2025.

JAGcation focuses on various concepts and careers in agriculture and family and consumer sciences. Agricultural specialists, researchers, and academicians introduced campers to the areas of animal science, entomology, food science, nutrition, plant and soil sciences, and public health, among other topics.



Campers also visited Chapple Farms, Magnolia Wilds, learned to cook jam, food etiquette, financial literacy, personal hygiene, emergency preparedness, participated in art therapy, and a hibiscus tea demonstration.

The camp aims to increase campers' awareness and knowledge of careers in the Food, Agricultural, Natural Resources, and Human Sciences through hands-on learning activities such as farming, gardening, nutrition, and healthy social and behavioral development.



Youth Learn to Cook Healthy Meals During the 2025 East Baton Rouge Parish CHEF Camp

Seventeen youth aged 9-12 learned how to cook meals during the “Creating Healthy Enjoyable Foods” (C.H.E.F.) youth cooking camp hosted by the Southern University Ag Center’s SNAP-Ed Nutrition Education Program in partnership with the LSU AgCenter.

The week-long camp was held June 23 - June 27, 2025, on the Southern University campus.

The youth cooked five food group salads, pancakes, mini pizzas, kick ‘n chicken, and banana boats. Every meal had a healthy twist, such as using whole-grain flour in the pancakes and pizza dough.



The campers also learned cooking principles and nutrition education based on the USDA’s, “MyPlate” food guidance system and Dietary Guidelines, healthy eating and physical activity principles, food preparation, kitchen and food safety, common cooking terms, proper food handling, measuring techniques, critical thinking and team-building skills, planning, and time management.

The SU Ag Center has held CHEF camps in West Carroll, Avoyelles, East Carroll, Richland, St. James, East Baton Rouge, Morehouse, Evangeline, Madison, Ascension, and Jefferson Davis Parishes.

WAFB News Channel 9 also aired a story on the CHEF Camp on June 25, 2025.



SARDI Holds Its 2025 Summer Enrichment Camp in Opelousas



The SU Ag Center's Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Institute (SARDI) held its Summer Enrichment Camp from June 2 – 12, 2025. Students, ranging from ages nine to twelve, learned the importance of sustainable agriculture and how it can positively affect their future when put to use.

Each day, students went outside to plant and harvest vegetables. They also participated in several other activities that relate to the development of the whole child, such as the importance of positive affirmations. Janya Fontentot-Joseph gave a great interactive workshop on how to develop a routine every day to help build students' self-esteem and confidence.

Dr. Charity Schaffer introduced the students to drones and the importance of the role that drones have in the field of agriculture and other career options that utilize drones. Students were also given the opportunity to fly the drone, take pictures, and learn a few programming techniques with the drones. Cieara Gorrell, Fantazia Minix, and Donavon Lewis represented the Washington Career and Technical Center discussed different careers that students may be willing to explore in the future. Students learned about hotel management and hospitality, first responder procedures, and culinary techniques. Savion Dents, a representative from the Second Harvest Food Bank, finished the week with a food demonstration on healthy food options. Mona Wilson got the students in shape with an intense physical fitness relay day, and Officer Yolanda Lewis did an excellent job in ensuring that the students knew the importance of the dangers of drug usage and how to be future leaders. Overall, students were able to have fun while learning many valuable life lessons.

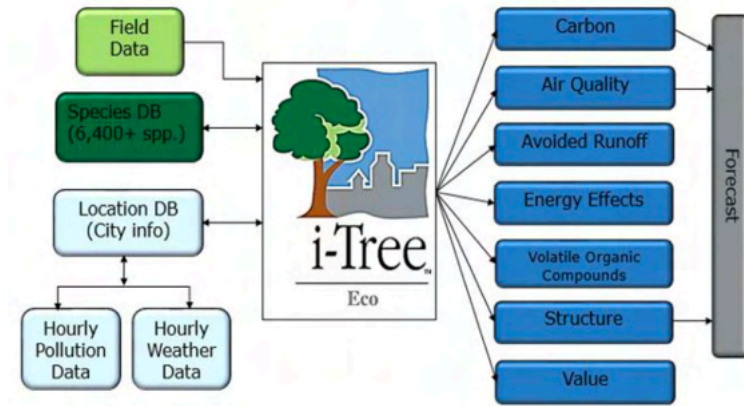
SU Ag Center's Urban Forestry Research Project Is Assessing Ecosystem Services Within Communities



Communities in the Gulf Coast region experience extreme weather including hurricanes, tornadoes, severe storms, flooding, and high temperatures. Forests can serve as buffers that absorb stormwater, reduce flooding, and lower temperatures. Forests and tree assessment in communities is critical to maximize the benefits provided by forests and trees.

In an effort to serve our communities, the faculty-student team of the SU Ag Center's Air, Nutrient, Soil, Water, Ecosystem, and Remote Sensing (ANSWERS) Institute is conducting research to address community needs. Funded by the United States Department of Agriculture's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Evans-Allen program, the urban forestry research project assesses forests, trees, and their ecosystem services and economic benefits including storm water absorption (avoided runoff), temperature reduction, air pollutants removal, energy saving from cooling buildings, carbon storage, and their associated monetary value provided by urban forests.

The ANSWERS director, Dr. Zhu Ning, has been training her team of student to conduct the project research. Multiple urban forests and community parks were selected as the research sites. Urban forest canopy covers in the research areas were assessed using Geographic Information System (GIS) and remote sensing technologies. Field data was collected using i-Tree Eco data collection protocol. Data collected included tree location, species, age, diameter, height, crown size, and health condition. Data has been analyzed using I-Tree Eco software for tree distribution, ecological benefits, and economic benefits. The diagram illustrates the research field data collection and urban forest ecosystem services assessment using the i-Tree Eco model.



The research results have been published by Dr. Ning's students in four publications and one thesis. The results were also disseminated by her students with five presentations at conferences and a symposium. Dr. Ning's team of students also participated in the i-Tree International Academy training, where one of her students presented the research results and recommendations in an action plan. The students also received the i-Tree International Academy Certificate Award after attending the training.

The research results are provided for responding, planning, and preventing future risks with emphasis on supporting communities. The project increases the communities' awareness of urban forestry, environmental protection, and natural resources conservation; enhances the community's ability in mitigating and adapting to environmental complexities; and increases the young generation's interests and their desire in playing an active role in environmental and natural resource stewardship, and to pursue a career in related fields.

For more information about this project, please contact Dr. Zhu Hua Ning at zhu_ning@suagcenter.com.

Excellence Exchange Lunch & Learn Brings Energy, Education, and Engagement to SU Staff



SU staff gathered for an engaging and uplifting afternoon at the *Excellence Exchange Lunch & Learn*, hosted by the 1890 Center of Excellence for Nutrition, Health, Wellness, and Quality of Life on June 25, 2025. The event combined fun, food, and fitness in an interactive environment designed to promote healthier habits and workplace wellness.

Attendees enjoyed a dynamic, hands-on nutrition session where they explored creative ways to repurpose food items and craft their personalized salad dressings. With numerous valuable insights and fun freebies to keep the momentum going, the workshop was more than just a learning exercise; it was an opportunity to see wellness in action.

To close out the afternoon, instructor Toyia Charles-Comminey brought the energy with a lively line dance session. Staff moved, laughed, and grooved together, highlighting the joy of physical activity and the importance of integrating movement into daily routines.

Events like these reflect our commitment to fostering a culture of health and connection across campus. The Center of Excellence continues to lead innovative efforts that support the well-being of staff and the broader university community.



Faculty & Staff Highlight

SU Ag Center Administrators and Staff Participated in the Association of Extension Administrators Summer Meeting



Southern University Ag Center Vice Chancellor for Extension and Outreach, Dr. Tiffany Franklin; Associate Vice Chancellor for Extension and Outreach Dr. Raquel Ayles, and Extension Associate, SNAP-Ed & EFNEP/Nutrition Education Programs Coordinator, Joshua McDonald, participated in the Association of Extension Administrators Summer Meeting in Charleston, South Carolina from June 23–27, 2025.

The meeting brought together Extension Administrators and staff to discussing best practices for enhancing 1890 Extension programs, identifying partnership opportunities among the programs, discussing strategies for enhancing intra-regional collaborations and aligning the 1890 Extension programs to meet changing societal needs and political landscapes.

The group also visited South Carolina State University and toured their research and demonstration farm during the meeting.

Photos courtesy of the South Carolina State University 1890 Educational Research Center.



Faculty & Staff Highlight

CAHES Professor Attends State of the Coast Research Conference



Dr. Jacqueline McComb, a faculty member in the College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences at Southern University, recently attended the State of the Coast Research Conference, Louisiana's premier gathering for coastal science, policy, and community engagement. Held in New Orleans, the conference brought together leading researchers, government officials, environmental organizations, and educators to discuss critical issues surrounding Louisiana's coast, including restoration, climate change, fisheries, and community resilience.

Dr. McComb participated in sessions on coastal restoration strategies and community-based research initiatives, engaging experts from across the Gulf Coast to explore innovative approaches to protecting Louisiana's fragile coastline.



"The State of the Coast Conference is a vital space for connecting science with policy and practice," said Dr. McComb. "It was inspiring to see so many researchers and community leaders working together to address the challenges facing our coast."

Dr. McComb's attendance reflects Southern University's ongoing commitment to environmental research, coastal stewardship, and preparing students to lead in solving real-world environmental issues.

Dr. Jacqueline McCOMB



SU AG

FOCUS INSIGHT

ON THE SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY AG CENTER

The latest episode of the SU Ag Center's Focus Show is now streaming. The program is built to inform, educate, and motivate people from all socioeconomic backgrounds. Tune in to gain knowledge about health, the environment, agriculture, and much more!

Hosted by:

Dexter "Dex" Newman

**WATCH THE NEW EDITION OF THE
SU AG CENTER'S FOCUS SHOW AT:**

<https://bit.ly/44TOBln!>



SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

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