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2022 | MAY

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SU SHINES AT ANNUAL
ARD
CONFERENCE

COLLEGE OF AG
TAKES ON CALI!

URBAN
FORESTRY
EXCELLENCE

+MORE

SU College of Ag Students Take Home Top Honors During the

1890 ARD CONFERENCE

Students, faculty, and staff from the Southern University College of Agricultural, Family and Consumer Science (CAFCS) represented the University during the 20th Biennial 1890 Association of Research Directors (ARD) Symposium held in Atlanta, GA April 2-5, 2022.

Southern University Ag Center Chancellor and Dean of the CAFCS, Dr. Orlando F. McMeans, served as the chair of the symposium.

The following students placed during the symposium in the competitive oral and poster presentations:

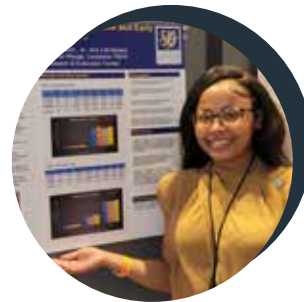
• **Ashley Montgomery**, a senior Apparel Merchandising and Textiles major placed 1st in the poster presentation. Her poster was titled, "Online Grocery Shopping Behaviors of Different Generations."

• **Diana Botchway Frimpong**, a graduate student in the Urban Forestry and Natural Resources Master's degree program placed 2nd in the oral presentation. Her presentation was titled, "The Use of Geospatial Techniques to Assess the Effects of Land Use and Land Cover Change on Air Quality in Baton Rouge – Louisiana."

• **Matilda Anokye**, a graduate student in the Urban Forestry and Natural Resources Master's degree program placed 3rd in the oral presentation. Her presentation was titled, "Effects of Hurricanes on Coastal Ecosystems: A Remote Sensing Study of the Land Cover Change around Bayou – Little Lake, New Orleans."

• **Christopher J. Rogers, Sr.**, a recent Ph.D. graduate in Urban Forestry and Natural Resources placed 1st in the poster presentation. His poster was titled, "An Analysis and New Interpretation of Gentrifying a Community Through Public Input in the Scotlandville Area, Louisiana."

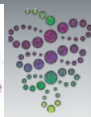
The goal of the symposium was to provide a forum for interactions, knowledge, sharing, building networks for expanded partnerships and to showcase the talents and achievements of the 1890 community.



College of Ag students participated in Precision Viticulture Demo Day in Salinas, CA

Southern University College of Ag students, professors, and SU Ag Center staff participated in the ASEV-NGRA Precision Viticulture Demo Day in Salinas Valley, CA on April 13. The event exposed Food and Agricultural Science students to Precision Viticulture, professional development, and hands-on experimental training.

The demo day was hosted by the American Society for Enology and Viticulture in partnership with the National Grape Research Alliance. During the event, the students toured three early-adopting precision viticulture operations in the Salinas Valley and saw one of the largest row-crop growers in the U.S. On April 14, McBride Sisters SHE CAN Fund via its HBCU Initiative powered by Wine Institute hosted the students at The Sanctuary Beach Resort outside of Monterey, CA. While there, the students received a best-in-class wine tasting experience, bespoke wine making tutorial, and were offered paid internships, and job opportunities.



NATIONAL
GRAPE RESEARCH
ALLIANCE



THE Forestry Feature

URBAN FORESTRY, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND NATURAL RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

Just like the spring flowers, the students at the Urban Forestry Department are blossoming with flying colors under the tutelage of their faculty mentors.

A total of 19 students presented papers at the 1890 Association of Research Directors (ARD) Symposium (16 advised by Dr. Yaw Twumasi, two by Dr. Chris Chappell, and one by Dr. Zhu Ning). Graduate students Diana and Matilda won 2nd and 3rd place at the ARD Symposium for their oral presentations in the renewable energy, natural resources, environment, and climate change category. These students were advised by Dr. Yaw. Dr. Chris Rogers, urban forestry alumnus and recent graduate, won first place at ARD for his poster presentation in the same category. His dissertation advisor was Dr. Yadong Qi.

Two students presented papers at the Southeastern Branch Entomology Society of America (SEB ESA) conference. These students were advised by Dr. Veronica Manrique. Graduate student Abigail won first place in the student presentation at the SEB ESA conference. Thirteen students presented papers at the Louisiana Academy of Sciences Annual meeting. Five students presented papers at the America Society for Photogrammetry conference.

Doctoral student Brittany Benjamin, an urban forestry B.S. and M.S. alumna, was featured in the April issue of the Natural Resources Management Today. Graduating senior Ricker Carter is the spring 2022 recipient of the Kamran Abdollahi Urban Forestry Memorial Scholarship (advisor: Dr. Ning).

Taylor St. Vilus will go to Denver for an internship. Deron Isom will join the National Fishery and Wildlife Federation as a summer intern. Jada Waldon will work at the USDA research lab this summer. Tess Brown was selected for the summer internship program 'Public Health Entomology for All' to work with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Fort Collins, Colorado.

An MOU is in place to establish an Urban Forestry Internship program between the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WI DNR) and Southern University. Odell Kimble and Kolin Bilbrew were interviewed and selected to be the first two interns of this program at the WI DNR.

Urban Forestry Graduate Students Presented Papers at the 2022 American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS) Annual Conference

The American Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ASPRS) is an American-based organization that focuses on research that utilizes techniques in Remote sensing, Photogrammetry, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Five (5) graduate students from the Department of Urban Forestry and Natural Resources at Southern University and A & M College presented their research papers at the ASPRS virtual conference held on March 21-25, 2022. Under the advisement of Dr. Yaw Twumasi, Professor of GIS, Remote Sensing, and Hydrology, the students submitted 5 abstracts based on the society's core disciplines in the collection, management, exploitation, and analysis of geospatial sources and information.

The students presented their papers on the following topics:

•**Matilda Anokye** (MS Student) *Assessing the Land Cover Change Around Bayou Perot – Little Lake, New Orleans Using Sentinel 2 Satellite Imagery*

•**Abena Boatemaa Asare-Ansah** (MS Student) *Tracking the Godzilla Dust Plume Using Google Earth Engine Platform*

•**Julia Atayi** (Ph.D. Student) *A Study on the Shoreline Changes and Land Use/Land Cover Along the Keta Coastal Zone in Ghana*

•**Recheal Armah** (MS Student) *Application of Remote Sensing in Monitoring Forest Cover Change and Carbon Dioxide Levels at Kisatchie National Forest*

•**Caroline Y. Apraku** (MS Student) *Assessment of Wetland Dynamics and Loss in Terrebonne Parish Using Remote Sensing*



asprs

THE IMAGING & GEOSPATIAL
INFORMATION SOCIETY



From left to right: **Matilda Anokye, Abena Boatemaa Asare-Ansah, Julia Atayi, Recheal Armah, and Caroline Apraku.**

Many thanks to ASPRS for awarding these students scholarship grants to enable them to participate at this prestigious conference.

SPRING GARDEN WORKSHOP

The Southern University Ag Center held its Spring Garden Workshop, themed “Pollinators and Wildflowers” from 8:30 a.m. – 2 p.m. on April 27 at the Multipurpose Building of the Maurice A. Edmond Livestock Arena, 14600 Scenic Hwy. in Baton Rouge, La.

Topics covered during the workshop included:

- Wildflowers – The Pollinator Friendly Garden
- Good and Bad Insects in Your Garden
- Bees & Hives: That's How You Keep Your Garden Growing
- USDA Funding for Growing Pollinator Habitats

This event was sponsored by the Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE) Program and the USDA's Office of Partners and Public Engagement.

For additional information, contact

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SU Ag Center held the 17th Annual Virtual Connecting Businesses with Contracts Procurement Conference

The SU Ag Center held the 17th Annual Virtual “Connecting Businesses with Contracts” Procurement Conference. The event began with an in-person networking soirée on April 11 at the Montecristo Cigar Bar and Bistro, followed by the two-day virtual conference on April 12-13, 2022.

The Procurement Conference has become the premier event for small businesses throughout the state of Louisiana. Attendees received information on the requirements needed to contract with federal, state and local government agencies, contractor fraud, capital landscaping, developing effective pricing for bids and proposals, methods of financing, and were able to network with other small business owners and contracting agents.

Sessions covered during the conference included:

- Category Management-Increasing Small Business Participation
- CVE and Veteran-Owned Small Business Certification
- Mental Health Wellness, Taking Care of Yourself While Taking Care of Business
- Federal Contract Readiness Program
- Responding to Proposals and Addressing Contract Disputes
- Building Capacity Through Joint Ventures and Mentor Protégé Agreements
- LED Programs and SSBCI Presentation
- DBE Certifications and Technical Assistance Available



This event was co-sponsored by the United States Small Business Administration, the Louisiana Small Business Development Center, LED, and Louisiana PTAC.

2022 National 4-H Conference:

Ignited Locally Blazing a Trail Globally

The SU Ag Center's 2022 National 4-H Conference Youth Development Delegation consisted of representatives from Baker and SU Laboratory High Schools. The conference was held from March, 19, 2022-March 24, 2022 in Crystal City, Virginia. Catilyn Johnson and Hannah Brister participated in various workshops and roundtable/group discussions. Each participant's roundtable group presented their findings and action plans to federal officials from National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the Small Business Administration (SBA). The delegates also had the opportunity to tour the National Mall Memorial Park and ended the conference with a flag-raising ceremony in front of the U.S. Department of Agriculture Administration Building.

WORKSHOPS

- "The Heart in 4-H: Relating to Caring, Why It Matters When Building Relationships" (students engaged in impactful conversations to understand the similarities and differences of others)
- "Safe or Sus" (students learned the important food safety concepts)
- "Let's Date Smarter: Healthy Teen Relationships" (students learned important concepts of building healthy relationships)
- "Do Youth Really Care About Climate Change?" (students learned about how Climate Change is impacting youth around the world)
- "Tackling Food and Nutrition Insecurity" (students learned about designing menus to improve their understanding of eating healthy on limited budgets)

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS

- Entrepreneurship- Challenge Question: What needs to be done to encourage and support the next generation of entrepreneurs, farmers, and small business owners?
- NASA Research- Challenge Question: If you could help NASA by contributing to their research for providing solutions to challenges NASA is currently facing, what would it be and why? What challenges are NASA currently researching that interest you the most and why?



4-H Louisiana Coastal Restoration Project

The Southern University Ag Center's Youth Development Program traveled to Washington, D.C. to attend the 2022 National Youth Summit on Agri-Science. According to the National 4-H Council, the summit is a pioneer in the National Youth Summit Series, bringing together teen agriculture and science leaders from across the country to focus on learning about and solving agri-science issues impacting their communities and economy. While there, high school students develop the skills and knowledge needed for the challenges facing agriculture, food security, and sustainability. As part of the amazing venture, as a group, youth are tasked with deciding on an issue and developing an action plan.

The Louisiana delegation included youth from Southern University Laboratory School, Baker, and Zachary High Schools. The consensus of the group was to focus on Louisiana Coastal Erosion, titling the project, "Louisiana Coastal Restoration." As residents of south Louisiana, coastal erosion is a growing concern. It is a complex problem that fluctuates from year to year, depending on several natural and human factors. Key contributors are climate change, rising sea levels, subsidence, storms, flooding, oil and gas exploration, and levees, which cut wetlands off from land-restoring river sediments. To paint a clearer picture, although it does not occur at a constant rate, coastal wetland loss in Louisiana from 1985 to 2010 averaged approximately a football field an hour, or 16.6 square miles per year (Baurick, 2019).

To help combat this issue, these bright young ladies are determined to be part of the solution to save Louisiana's coastline by planting sustainable grasses and trees to aid in reducing land loss, either by holding sand in place or promoting the growth of sand dunes. With support from the Southern University Ag Center and federal agencies, the youth delegation will work to fight coastal erosion by conducting routine visits at the beginning of each season to evaluate and treat any necessary concerns that may have developed. Through these valued partnerships, youth have the 4-H's (Head, Heart, Hand, and Health) to successfully implement the proposed "Louisiana Coastal Restoration" community action plan.



A Message from The Nutrition Programs Department of Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center

March is National Nutrition Month!

What Is National Nutrition Month?

National Nutrition Month® is an annual nutrition education and information campaign created by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. The campaign, celebrated each year during the month of March, focuses on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits.

How Did We Celebrate?

The Southern University Ag Nutrition Programs celebrated National Nutrition Month by creating challenges across our social media platforms and programming sites. These fun challenges encouraged people to show their healthy MyPlates, choose their favorite healthy food option from each food group, and encourage others to join in the community!



Brusly Upper Elementary School Science Fair

Drs. Marlin Ford and Dr. Brian Phillips were invited to be part of the judging panel at Brusly Upper Elementary School's second annual science fair on March 9th. Judges and volunteers gathered from around the parish of West Baton Rouge and area colleges and universities. Educator Christie Gremillion-Monroe executed a well-designed science fair. The students had to closely adhere to the scientific method and demonstrate comprehensive knowledge of their topics. The fifth graders were then given two minutes to explain the scientific method, methodology used, and the outcome of their experiments. Following the students' presentations, the judges had the opportunity to ask follow-up questions. In total, 163 kids competed in the science fair, and 109 made it to the semi-finals. In the end, 44 students made it to the finals. The categories they competed in were chemistry, physics, food science, biology, and engineering.

“The 5th-grade science fair under the direction of Mrs. Christie Gremillion-Monroe was a great example of using science as much more than a body of knowledge. These innovative young scientists were impressive and demonstrated how their projects will be an asset to the scientific community in the future.” -DR. FORD

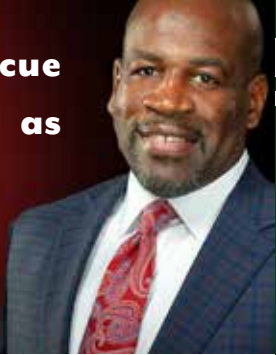
“I was impressed with the complete knowledge of the subject matter these students had on the subjects they covered. The experiments were conducted to demonstrate their knowledge of the scientific method.” -DR. PHILLIPS



SU College of Agriculture alum Deacue Fields to be recommended as the next VP of UA System.



UNIVERSITY OF
ARKANSAS



Southern University College of Agriculture alum, Deacue Fields, Ph.D., will be recommended to serve as the next vice president for agriculture for the University of Arkansas System. The announcement was made on April 20, 2022 by University of Arkansas System President Dr. Donald R. Bobbitt following a national search to fill the position.

Dr. Fields currently serves as the dean of the Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. His start date is expected to be July 1, pending formal approval by the University of Arkansas Board of Trustees in May.

“Throughout our search process, Dr. Fields clearly demonstrated the background, temperament, and leadership skills that we were looking for in the next vice president for agriculture,” said Bobbitt. “He understands the importance of the land grant mission of the university, and I am looking forward to working with him to advance the education, research, and extension efforts of the Division of Agriculture to benefit the citizens and communities across Arkansas that rely so heavily on agriculture for economic and cultural advancement. While this was a difficult choice because of the high quality of both finalists, I am confident Dr. Fields is ready to unite faculty and staff around the goal of advancing the Division to new heights in the years ahead,” he added.

“Going through this process has reinvigorated my passion for agriculture and shed light on numerous opportunities for the division to cultivate partnerships and collaborate during this next chapter,” expressed Fields. “I’m grateful for this opportunity to continue strengthening the impact of the Division of Agriculture as we embrace the land-grant mission of serving our state. I want to thank Dr. Bobbitt and everyone else involved for entrusting me with the responsibility of leading the Division and continuing to shape its imprint on the people of Arkansas. I can’t wait to continue working with the talented professionals that make up the UADA team to craft a vision for the future.”

Dr. Fields earned a bachelor’s degree from Southern University in 1993, a master’s degree from the University of Missouri in 1995, and a doctorate from LSU in 2002, all in agricultural economics.



Brittany

BENJAMIN

Southern U.’s Brittany Benjamin Finds a Home in Urban FIA

This article appeared in the April issue of the Natural Resources Management (NRM) Today Newsletter as part of its Student Profile and was written by Steve Wilent.

Brittany Benjamin works for the US Forest Service’s Urban Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program in Portland, Oregon, and San Diego, California. She’s also enrolled in an urban forestry PhD program at Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana.

As a high school student in New Orleans, Brittany Benjamin had her sights set on being an English major in college and perhaps becoming a journalist. But when a recruiter invited her to enroll in a summer institute for high school students at Southern University (SU), all that changed. The program, Beginning Agricultural Youth Opportunities Unlimited (BAYOU), lets students “gain ‘first hand’ knowledge about career opportunities in Agriculture, Family and Consumer Sciences, and related disciplines” over three weeks at the university.

Of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the US, Southern University is the only HBCU system in the nation. It is comprised of Southern University Baton Rouge, Southern University at New Orleans, Southern University Shreveport, Southern University Law Center, and Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center.

“We got to see the SU soil science program, plant science, animal science, urban forestry, textiles. Then Dr. Ning got up in front of the group and told us about what she does, what she teaches. She does research, writes papers, spends time in the lab and outside. She gave us her spiel, and I felt like she was talking directly to me” said Benjamin. “Dr. Ning walked out of a side door, and I walked out the back door, and I caught her, and I said I want to do exactly what you’re doing. I knew nothing about trees, I knew nothing about urban forestry, but she hit me with the science, the writing,

being able to blaze your own path and come up with your own topic and share your research with the world. And I thought that sounded like the ideal job.”

Zhu Ning, an SU professor in urban forestry/ecophysiology and climate change, is chair of SU’s Urban Forestry and Natural Resources Department and its doctoral degree program leader.

“You can’t beat having Dr. Ning for a mentor,” Benjamin said.

Fast-forward a decade or so, and with bachelor’s and master’s degrees in urban forestry from SU, Benjamin works for the US Forest Service’s Forest Inventory and Analysis (FIA) program as a biological scientist focusing on urban forestry. She’s also enrolled in an urban forestry PhD program at SU Baton Rouge.

The FIA program has been in continuous operation since 1930. Its mission is to “make and keep current a comprehensive inventory and analysis of the present and prospective conditions of and requirements for the renewable resources of the forest and rangelands of the US.” In 2014, Congress expanded the FIA’s focus to include urban areas, with a special emphasis on the nation’s largest cities. Benjamin is based at the agency’s Pacific Northwest Research Station in Portland, Oregon.

Sample Plots

The first thing Benjamin said when I asked her about her work at FIA, was, “I want it be known that I absolutely love my job.”

She then went on to describe Urban FIA.

“FIA started out as the nation’s tree census, focusing on rural areas, but trees in urban areas are forests, too—they are an important part of our natural resources. For doing a tree inventory, we have sample plots where we inventory any tree over six inches in diameter within a 48-foot radius plot, and on four 6.8-foot micro plots we measure

Of course, Urban FIA inventories include data about much more than tree diameters.

“We collect data about tree species, crown condition and other damage, shrubs, groundcover, invasive plants, and other conditions,” Benjamin said.

Ground cover may consist of grass and plants or surfaces that are permeable (gravel, bare soil) or impermeable (asphalt, concrete). When trees are within 60 feet of a building, Urban FIA crews record the distance and azimuth between the tree and the building. If tree roots are compromising a road or sidewalk, or a power line poses a hazard as it passes through a tree canopy, such information is recorded.

Benjamin works in Portland and San Diego, two of numerous cities around the country where the Forest Service is conducting, or plans to conduct, Urban FIA inventories.

“Officially, I’m responsible for quality assurance, but I’m more like the boots on the ground—I’m basically a one-woman team when it comes to urban data collection,” she said. “I love being able to put so many

skills that I’ve learned into practice, like GIS, managing databases, and publishing data. During the summertime, on a typical day I’ll be requesting access from landowners, and once we have access to their property, I establish a plot and do our sampling. Usually I can get through two plots in a day, sometimes three, depending on how many trees there are. This year I’m getting a crew, and I’m so excited that I’ll have some people working for me.”

Benjamin spends much of her time interacting with property owners.

“We get people who don’t want us on their property, who don’t want to deal with the Forest Service,” she said. “Just trying to find out who owns a property can be pretty tricky, and that takes a good amount of my time. So I’m calling, texting, emailing, mailing, trying to fit our visit around their schedule.” Benjamin has noted a difference in the attitudes toward FIA between the two cities she focuses on.

“In Portland, the public is very engaged and interested in urban forestry—far more than people in San Diego are,” she said. “But homeowners in San Diego tend to know more about what they planted on their properties, because they have more influence over their urban forest. It’s pretty cool to see how well so many different species grow in San Diego. So we really have to know our trees. You could have one tree from Tanzania and have another one right next to it that’s from Asia. Sometimes homeowners may know where their trees came from, because they specially purchased them. But Portlanders are more engaged. They want to know what we’re doing; they want to tell us about their trees and what they’ve done to them. That can be super cool, super helpful.”

The City of Portland has been a willing cooperator with the Urban FIA inventory process.

“We are very engaged with Portland’s Urban Forestry Department,” said Benjamin. “They can’t always get onto private land, and the inventories they conduct cover only public property. So these data are something they have no other means to get.”

FIA data are publicly available for anyone to download; the agency does not reveal the exact locations of its plots, in order to protect the privacy of landowners who allow FIA field crews onto their land, as well as to protect the plots from being disturbed.

“Most cities are on a 10-year cycle, meaning that it’s going to take us 10 years to visit all of the plots in those cities. Most cities have 200 plots, and we get about 10 percent of those every year. So every 10 years, FIA compiles all of the information for that cycle and publish reports about the urban forest in a city,” Benjamin said.

San Diego is on a five-year cycle, and plots in both urban and rural areas are being inventoried. My City’s Trees, a web-based application developed with FIA partners Texas A&M University and iTree, lets users explore urban forest inventory data associated with US cities. Data from Chicago was added in October 2021.

Benjamin's goals for the future include assisting other students.

"My partner and I want to start a scholarship for Southern University urban forestry students—that's something I'd like to put in the works very soon."

She also looks forward to returning to the South.

"I want to eventually transition back to the South, to take my expertise back to my home. I am interested in all natural resources. Right now, the Urban FIA program is pretty small, and I really want to grow with this program and see where that can take me. I definitely want to stay in urban forestry and empower more people to be able to have the kind of career I have. Students at HBCUs are ready to work—it's an untapped market. I might start a company or a nonprofit that can help strengthen urban forestry in Louisiana, maybe hire urban forestry students to do FIA work. I'm taking a grant-writing course. I want to be able to write grants and obtain funding to be able to expand urban forestry in Baton Rouge and New Orleans, to get more young people involved," said Benjamin.

"I want to inject as much of my knowledge and experience into Urban FIA while it's still young," she added. "I really appreciate that Urban FIA took a chance on me and that we been doing great things together. I can't stress enough how much I just love this work. I get to jump in my truck, go to people's houses, and hug trees all day."

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