



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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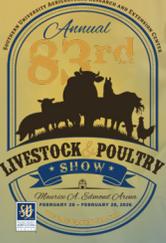
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BOOTS & BLING Affair

4th Annual Boots & Bling Affair Raises \$14K for Student Scholarships & Stockman Success Grant



The Southern University Ag Center held its 4th Annual Boots & Bling Affair on January 31, 2026, at the F. G. Clark Activity Center.

More than 1,160 attendees were entertained by zydeco accordionist and singer, Chris Ardoin.

The event, which was hosted by Mia Monet, WBRZ News Channel 2's morning anchor, and Spancia Johnson, raised \$10,000 for the Ag Center and College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences Pathways Scholarship Fund and Stockman Success Grant. The Non-Stop Riders; Muse 3 Farms; Dr. Orlando F. McMeans, Southern University System Interim President and Chancellor of the SU Ag Center; and Tony Clayton, Esq., Chairman of the Southern University System Board of Supervisors, each donated \$1,000 to the Livestock Program.



One of the most powerful moments of the evening was recognizing past scholarship recipients Sydney Marshall, Catilyn Johnson, and Ty Sams—a true reflection of the impact scholarships and community investment make.

The Boots & Bling Affair was an unforgettable night celebrating community, purpose, and the future of agriculture. Supporters, alumni, families, and friends came together to invest in the next generation of agricultural leaders.

*Nourishing
Communities
and Empowering
Students
Through
Service and
Partnerships*



Throughout November and December 2025, the SU Dietetic Internship Program demonstrated commitment to service, experiential learning, and community wellness through a series of impactful partnerships and events that advanced the fight against food insecurity while providing hands-on training for future nutrition professionals.

Emerald Plate Initiative: Nourishing Families and Building Wellness

The Dietetic Internship Program partnered with the La Capitale Links Chapter to host the Emerald Plate Initiative on November 22, 2025. The initiative has a community-centered mission designed to nourish families and strengthen overall wellness. Dietetic interns led an interactive nutrition education experience in collaboration with the SU Ag Center’s Youth Development Program, engaging youth and families in hands-on learning about healthy eating, food access, and sustainable practices. This initiative highlighted the power of academic-community partnerships while reinforcing the program’s focus on culturally responsive nutrition education and workforce preparation.

Girl Scouts Nutrition Learning Day

The Dietetic Interns welcomed Girl Scouts of the USA Troop 10573 to campus for a Nutrition Learning Day on November 25, 2025. The interactive session introduced the girls to foundational nutrition concepts, food safety, and healthy meal planning. At the conclusion of the program, each participant proudly earned a nutrition patch in recognition of their learning and engagement. In the spirit of service, Troop 10573 made a generous donation of food to the Jaguar N.E.S.T., directly supporting students facing food insecurity and reinforcing the importance of youth leadership in community service.



Give Day 2025: Community and Alumni Support

Give Day 2025 served as a powerful reminder of the collective impact of community and alumni engagement. Supporters from across the region contributed resources to strengthen the Jaguar N.E.S.T. and expand access to nutritious food for Southern University students. In the spirit of giving, the Louisiana Department of Health, Office of Public Health, Bureau of Community Preparedness, formally adopted the Jaguar N.E.S.T. and provided a generous monetary donation to support its ongoing operations. This investment underscores the importance of cross-sector collaboration in addressing food insecurity as a public health priority.

Together, these initiatives underscore Southern University's commitment to academic excellence paired with purposeful community engagement. Through the Dietetic Internship Program, students applied classroom knowledge in real-world settings while advancing nutrition education, supporting families, empowering youth, and strengthening the Jaguar N.E.S.T. as a critical safety net for students experiencing food insecurity.



Student Spotlights



The College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences (CAHES) is proud to highlight the academic achievement of the following students.

Jakari Brown

Junior Pre-Veterinary Medicine Honors Scholar, Jakari Brown was selected as a 2025 1890 Diversify Veterinary Medicine Coalition (DVMC) Scholar.

Brown was one of 10 scholars selected to receive the scholarship which provides up to two years of undergraduate funding at \$10,000 per year, and up to \$15,000 per year of veterinary school, for up to \$80,000 of funding per student.

“I felt truly blessed and overjoyed when I found out I had been accepted as a scholar. I didn’t hear back from the scholarship committee for a few months, but I still held on to the faith I had,” said Brown. “I was nervous that I wouldn’t get selected but by learning patience, I felt reassured that God had already claimed this scholarship was for me,” she added.

Brown said being a young woman majoring in agriculture with a focus in Pre-Veterinary Medicine, can be discouraging at times when opportunities don’t come as quickly as you hope.



“In my hometown of Alexandria, La., there are no African American veterinarians, so being selected for this scholarship felt like confirmation that there is space for me to grow, achieve, and thrive as a young black woman in this field,” stated Brown. “I prayed so many nights for this opportunity—not just for myself, but to make my family proud and to take one more step toward the future I’ve always dreamed of.”

Brown said she learned about the 1890 DVMC Scholars Program from her advisor, Dr. Tyra Davis.

“From the moment I met her, she has always looked out for me—and so many other students—making sure we have access to every resource we need to reach our goals,” explained Jakari. “Her guidance has played a huge role in my journey toward becoming a future Doctor of Veterinary Medicine. She has opened countless doors for me and provided opportunities that have helped shape not only my veterinary journey, but also my confidence in the person I’m becoming.”

Jakari said she is looking forward to connecting with the other scholars in the DVMC program, gaining insight from veterinary professionals, and finally feeling a true sense of belonging in the veterinary world.

“I know the impact I want to make in this field, especially for students of color, and this program will give me the tools, guidance, and resources to do that,” said Brown.

She also stated that she wants to show how the Southern University College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences has prepared her for moments like this.

“CAHES has felt like home since my freshman year, and being able to represent my college in such a meaningful way is something I’m truly proud of and excited to do,” expressed Brown. “I’m truly grateful to Dr. Davis and to everyone within the College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences for believing in me and recommending me for this scholarship.”



Georrein Dupré

Georrein Dupré, a doctoral student in Environmental Toxicology in the CAHES, recently participated in the Passages Discover Your Roots Winter 2025/2026 program, a twelve-day international educational experience in Israel for select students from four outstanding HBCUs. The immersive program combined faith-based study, historical inquiry, service-learning, and cultural exploration across some of the region's most significant cities and sacred sites.

A native of Eunice, Louisiana, Dupré described the opportunity to travel abroad as both meaningful and humbling, noting it as a rare and transformative experience. Throughout the journey, participants explored locations including Tel Aviv, Capernaum, Nazareth, Yardenit, Jerusalem, Masada, the Dead Sea, and Jaffa—bringing biblical narratives to life through firsthand experience and cultural context.

Dupré shared that the program was academically, spiritually, and personally enriching, offering a powerful way to close out 2025 and begin the new year with renewed perspective. Visits to the Sea of Galilee, the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the Garden Tomb, and the Mount of Olives provided deeper insight into the historical and cultural foundations of faith. Sites such as the City of David's underground tunnels and the Southern Wall Excavations further highlighted the intersections of archaeology, scripture, and modern-day life, revealing how history continues to shape contemporary communities.

Service-learning was also a central component of the experience. While in Tel Aviv, Dupré volunteered with the Save a Child's Heart Foundation, which supports life-saving cardiac care for children. Hearing the families' stories, learning about their backgrounds, and their resilience reinforced the importance of compassion in action and reflected the program's emphasis on faith expressed through service.

By the conclusion of the program, Dupré said the experience reshaped his understanding of scripture and its relevance across cultures and communities. Exposure to Jewish, Christian, Ethiopian, and Palestinian perspectives strengthened his awareness that faith is continually shaped by context, community, and lived experience. Dupré returned home with a deeper appreciation for cultural understanding and a renewed commitment to thoughtful, informed, and respectful engagement with faith and global perspectives.





PRECISION AGCADEMY



Precision Agcademy Celebrates FAA Part 107 Student Success



The Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center's Precision Agcademy continues to demonstrate measurable success in preparing young adults for careers at the intersection of agriculture, technology, and aviation. One recent milestone includes the successful completion of the FAA Part 107 Remote Pilot Certification Exam by Justin Fuselier of Opelousas, Louisiana.

Fuselier successfully completed his training through the Precision Agcademy under the instruction of Dr. Charity Schaffer, SU Ag Center Youth Development Agent. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in History from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and is currently enrolled at the Southern University Law Center. By earning his FAA Remote Pilot certification, he has added a highly marketable technical credential that complements his academic pursuits and broadens his professional opportunities.

As a member of Precision Agcademy's inaugural student cohort, Fuselier's achievement marks a significant step forward in the program's mission to expand access to industry-recognized credentials for emerging professionals.

The first cohort was made possible through a strategic partnership with Hope for Opelousas and the Ag Center's Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Institute (SARDI). Heather Bob, SARDI's Community and Outreach Specialist for St. Landry Parish led the partnership. This collaboration provided students with hands-on instruction, structured exam preparation, and exposure to the real-world applications of unmanned aerial systems (UAS) technology.

Youth at the Opelousas Boys and Girls Club took the MyPlate Pledge



Youth at the Opelousas Boys and Girls Club in Opelousas, La took a "MyPlate Pledge" on December 10, 2025. The youth made a pledge to Southern University Family and Human Sciences Associate Agent, Angell C. Jordan to eat from the '5 Food Groups' each day.

The youth enjoyed learning about each food group and learning how eating from the groups plays an important role in the functions of their everyday lives. They also enjoyed tasting foods from each food group. The session ended with a group work-out to get their bodies moving and heart rate going.





Southern University Ag Center's Viticulture Research Supported the Development of its First Wine Collection

The Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center released its first wine, the 801 Collection, during the *Vino on the Bluff* scholarship fundraising event in October 2025. This milestone demonstrates the Ag Center's capacity to develop specialty crop production systems adapted to Louisiana's humid subtropical climate while strengthening workforce expertise and institutional infrastructure in grape and wine production.

Viticulture research supporting the 801 Collection emphasized the selection of regionally adapted grape cultivars, disease mitigation strategies, and vineyard management practices tailored to Louisiana growing conditions. Harvest decisions were guided by phenological development and berry chemistry to ensure optimal fruit quality for winemaking. All stages of fermentation, stabilization, and quality evaluation were conducted in-house by the Ag Center's viticulture and enology team.

Building on this foundation, the SU Ag Center is expanding vineyard acreage by an additional six acres and developing a dedicated winery facility to support advanced enology research. The expanded vineyard will integrate precision agriculture tools to improve vine performance, disease modeling, and fruit quality. Planned enhancements include the use of proximal and remote sensing





technologies—such as handheld and canopy-level sensors and UAV-based imagery—to monitor vine vigor, nutrient status, water stress, and disease pressure. These data-driven approaches will support long-term evaluation of cultivar adaptability, vine health, and yield stability under Louisiana conditions.

In parallel, continued development of winery research capacity will focus on optimizing fermentation strategies, improving wine stability and sensory quality, and linking vineyard variability to wine composition. This systems-based approach will strengthen research on fruit quality, postharvest handling, and value-added processing while expanding training opportunities for stakeholders in modern viticulture and enology research.

The public release of the 801 Collection enhanced stakeholder engagement, increased the visibility of land-grant research impacts, and generated resources to support student scholarships and long-term program sustainability.

For additional information on the SU Ag Center's Vineyard contact Dr. Devaiah Kambiranda Associate Vice Chancellor for Research, at devaiah_kambiranda@suagcenter.com.





Staff Spotlights:



Dr. Sanjay Batra, Environmental Toxicology Chair, Serves as the Mentor on the Louisiana EPSCoR IGNITE Cross-institutional Biomedical Research Seed Grant with Grambling State

Dr. Sanjay Batra, Walter Dumas Endowed Professor and Chair of Environmental Toxicology in the CAHES, is serving as the mentor on a Louisiana EPSCoR Initiating Growth through Networks and Interdisciplinary Teamwork (IGNITE) seed grant under the Louisiana Networks of Excellence for Tomorrow (LA NEXT) initiative, which is funded by the National Science Foundation and the Louisiana Board of Regents. Through a partnership with Dr. Audrey Kim at Grambling State University, this project establishes a cross-institutional biomedical research collaboration and a vertically integrated training pipeline that connects undergraduates from Grambling State University with Ph.D.-level mentors from Environmental Toxicology in the laboratory at Southern University.

The project investigates how diesel particulate extract (DPE), a model for emissions from on-road traffic as well as off-road diesel sources such as tractors and agricultural machinery, triggers cellular stress and inflammation in human lung epithelial cells.

Undergraduates from Grambling State University will receive hands-on training in SU's environmental toxicology lab, where Ph.D. students from the CAHES will mentor them in core toxicology and molecular biology methods, including cell culture, viability assays, Enzyme-Linked ImmunoSorbent Assay (ELISA), and gene expression analysis, as they help define a novel moonlighting role for the ribosomal protein RPS6 in DPE-exposed lung epithelial cells. This arrangement simultaneously strengthens CAHES doctoral students' mentoring and leadership skills while exposing undergraduates early in their careers

to authentic biomedical research environments, increasing their motivation and preparation to pursue advanced studies in biomedical and health sciences.

From a training and capacity-building perspective, the IGNITE award is designed to expand high-impact undergraduate research experiences at Grambling State University while leveraging established experimental platforms and graduate training infrastructure at Southern University. The collaboration emphasizes structured near-peer mentoring, regular joint research meetings, and opportunities for students at multiple levels to contribute to abstracts, presentations, and future publications, thereby advancing LA NEXT goals of building sustainable research networks and a diverse, highly skilled STEM workforce in Louisiana.

Over the 12-month performance period (2026), the team will generate preliminary mechanistic data on DPE-induced stress pathways, refine shared protocols, and co-mentor an initial cohort of undergraduate and Ph.D. trainees. These outcomes will position the team to pursue follow-on funding through extramural opportunities, with the long-term goal of sustaining a multi-year, multi-level training pipeline in environmental health and toxicology research across both institutions.

SU Ag Center Staff Accepted into LEAD21 Leadership Development Program

Kiyana E. Kelly, Director of the 1890 Center of Excellence for Nutrition, Health, Wellness and Quality of Life at Southern University and Stephanie Elwood, Assistant Specialist for Horticulture, have been accepted in class 22 of the LEAD21 leadership-development program.

LEAD21 is a 12-month development process intended to meet the future needs for leadership development of faculty, specialists, program and team leaders, research station and center directors, district and regional directors, department heads and chairs, and others in land grant universities' colleges of agricultural, environmental, and human sciences, and USDA/NIFA. Its purpose is to develop leaders in land grant institutions and their strategic partners who link research, academics, and extension to be more effective in an increasingly complex environment, either in their current position or as they aspire to others.



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 for a discussion about mental health therapy in rural communities with Jasmine Matthews.

TUNE IN TO LISTEN AT:

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

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