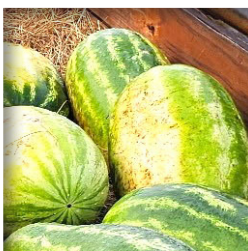
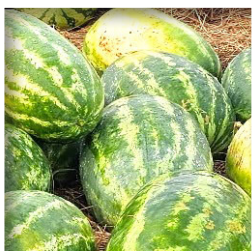
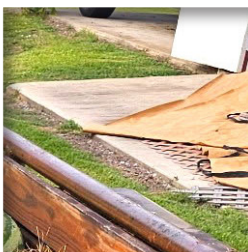
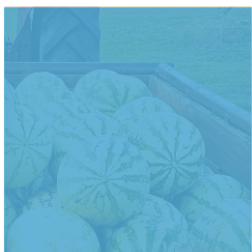
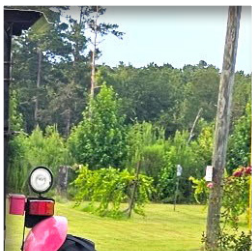
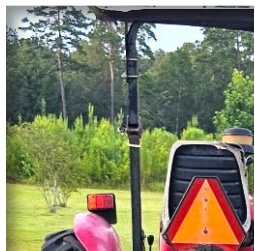


SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY **AG CENTER'S**

SU SEEDS OF *Success!*

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

VOLUME 23 | NO. 10 | OCTOBER 2025

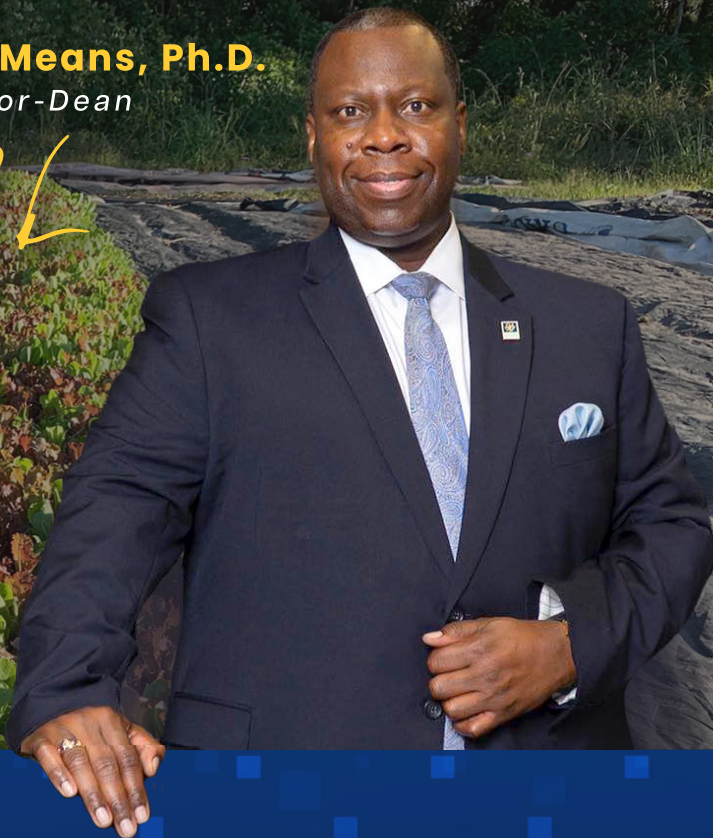


SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

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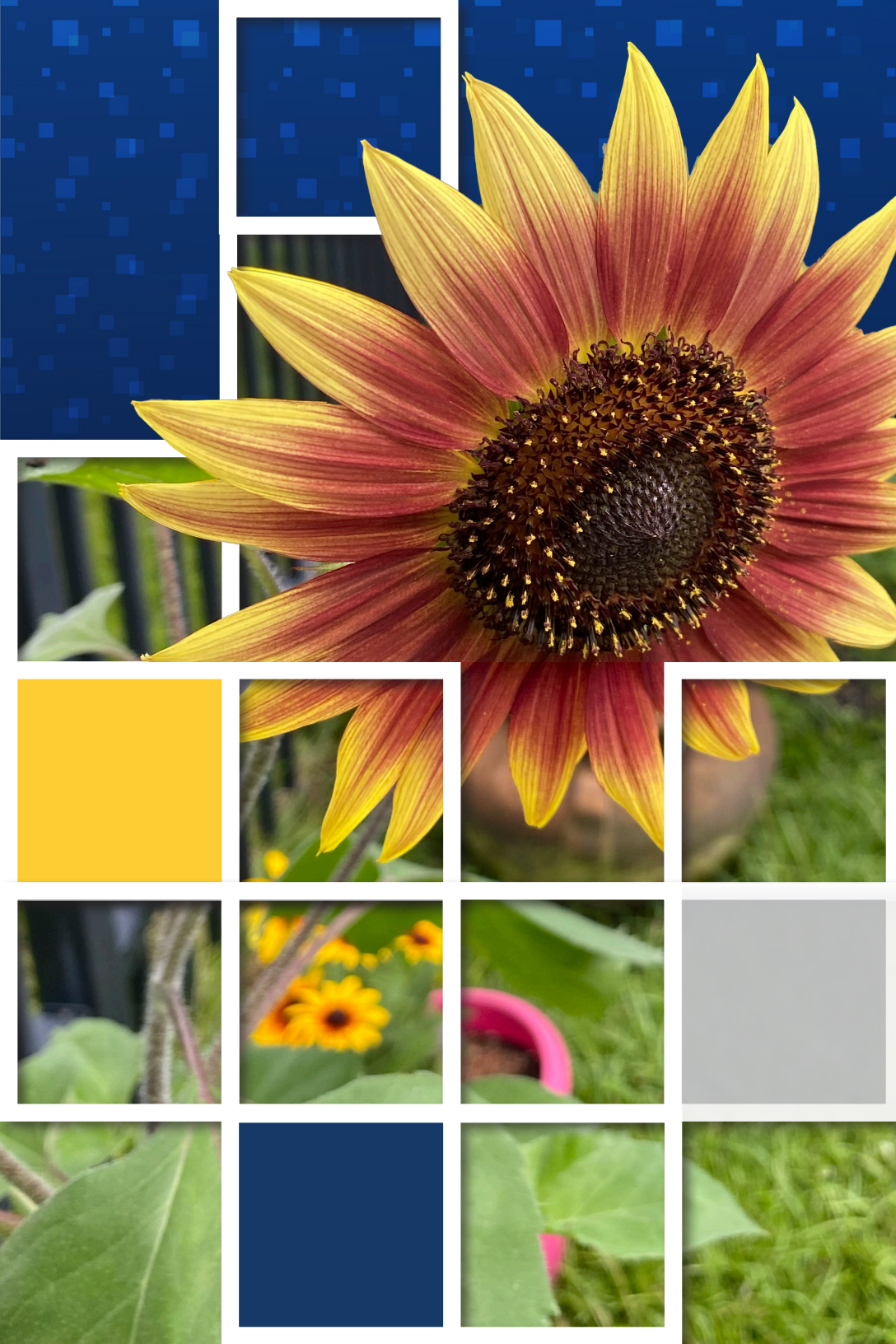
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Dr. Orlando F. McMeans Participates in SU Give Day



Dr. Orlando F. McMeans, Chancellor-Dean of the SU Ag Center and the College of Ag, participated in the Baton Rouge Landmass Chancellor's Session during SU Give Day on August 28, 2025. Dr. McMeans discussed how philanthropy allows the Ag Center and the College of Ag to expand its research initiatives and helps prepare students to be leaders in an evolving industry.



**SU Ag Center
and CAHES
Administrators
and Students
Attended the
Second Morrill Act's
135th Anniversary
Celebration in
Washington, D.C.**



August 30, 2025 marked the 135th anniversary of the signing of the Second Morrill Act of 1890. The Act, authored by Senator Justin Morrill of Vermont, established a land-grant university system of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in states where people of color were banned from accessing public higher education. Today, these institutions are known as the 1890 Land-grant universities. Southern University is one of the nineteen 1890 Universities.

Several SU Ag administrators, staff, and College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences (CAHES) students and faculty participated in the national celebration commemorating the 135th anniversary of the signing of the Second Morrill Act in Washington, D.C. from September 9-10, 2025. The celebration themed, “Celebrating Legacy, Growing Opportunities, Inspiring Innovation, and Uplifting Communities,” included the following activities.



Launching the First HBCU-Led Cyber & AI Games in Agriculture

CAHES students Analyse Houston, Hannah Brister, Micah Warner, Destinae Davis, De'Aree Harris, De'Kevion Ford, Myles Sam, Ty Sam, Leslie Womack, II, and Ross St. Aime made history at the inaugural 1890 Cyber & AI Games for Agriculture, the first HBCU-Led initiative of its kind in cybersecurity.

Hosted at the University of the District of Columbia on September 9, 2025, this competition challenged teams from all 19 HBCU Land-grant Institutions to defend against agricultural cyber security threats such as ransomware, phishing, and sensor tampering – all through the lens of “Agriterrorism” and food system security.

Each team consisted of five students and one faculty or staff coach. The competition featured 25 food and agriculture-related challenges, snacks, awards, and notable guest appearances. This event provided students with hands-on exposure to the intersection of agriculture, artificial intelligence, and cyber defense.



135th Second Morrill Act Commemoration Reception

A celebratory reception was held on the rooftop of the National 4-H Council. The reception provided a space for attendees to connect, reflect, and celebrate the collective impact of our 1890 Institutions.

A large-scale photography exhibit telling the story of the 19-strong campuses' impact on the themes: Celebrating Legacy; Growing Opportunities; Inspiring Innovation; and Uplifting Communities was also presented on digital boards during the reception.

SU Ag Center staff and CAHES students visit Congressional Delegations on Capitol Hill

SU Ag Center staff, administrators, and CAHES students visited with Congressmen Cleo Fields and Troy A. Carter at the Nation's Capital on September 10, 2025 as a part of the national celebration of the signing of the Second Morrill Act of 1890.

The visit was especially memorable as the SU Ag Center discussed our Ag Impact across Louisiana and beyond.



SU College of Ag Hosted Welcome Week 2025



The Southern University College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences (CAHES) hosted its 2025 Welcome August 25 – 29, 2025 with a slate of events for Ag students, faculty, and staff.

Themed “Network 1890: Connecting Students to 135 years of Excellence at an 1890 Land-grant Institution,” paid homage to the 135th anniversary of the signing of the 2nd Morrill Act of 1890.

CAHES Welcome Week events kicked off with TheBreakfastClub:RealTalk and RealNutrition on August 25 in Fisher and Pinkie Thrift Halls on the Southern University campus. This event was held in partnership with the SU Ag Center’s 1890 Center of Excellence and the Cooperative Extension’s SNAP-Ed Program and provided students, faculty, and staff with breakfast, healthy eating tips, and nutrition information.





The CAHES-ish Student Convocation was held on August 26 in the SU Event Center. This CAHES student only event served as a space where students connected with academic programs, research opportunities, and outreach initiatives designed to support their 'SUccess.'

Events concluded on August 28 with the Jaguar Mindfulness Mixer and the Boil and Order: SU Ag Center Unit Event. The Mixer was held in the courtyard of Southern University's Student Union. It was hosted by the Southern University Counseling Center with featured participation from the Ag Center and CAHES. The Boil and Order event was held in Pinkie Thrift Hall. This event was exclusively for CAHES students and SU Ag Center Faculty and Staff and demonstrated how the Ag Center brings academics to life, connects outreach to communities, and drives research that matters.

For additional information on CAHES Welcome Week, contact Keandrys Dalton at keandrys_dalton@suagcenter.com.



\$70,000 in Scholarships Awarded During CAHES Annual Fall Student Convocation



Seventy thousand dollars in scholarships were awarded to students during the Southern University College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences' annual Student Convocation on August 26, 2025. The event was held in the Southern University Event Center.

The scholarships were announced during a check presentation facilitated by Robert Easley, Jr., Director of Advancement at the SU Ag Center.

Zaria Batiste, a freshman majoring in Animal Sciences from Zachary, La., received a \$40,000 CF Industries Foundation Scholarship.

"It's truly a blessing," said Batiste. "It means a lot not having to worry about the debt from going to college. I'm so glad that I was able to receive this," she added.

"I'm so thankful," expressed Zandrea Batiste, (Zaria) Batiste's mother. "Her father, Fitzgerald Batiste, and I both attended Southern University, and we were trying to figure out how school was going to get paid for because Zaria didn't get scholarships, so this definitely is going to help us out tremendously."

In addition to the CF Industries scholarship, 10 students received scholarships from DRAX, an international renewable energy company, and one student received a scholarship from the Ag Center's Livestock Programs.

Each DRAX scholar received a \$2,500 scholarship. These students were Zion Singleton, a senior majoring in Animal Science from Ferriday, LA; Taylor Colman, a junior majoring in Urban Forestry from Royal Palm Beach, FL; Nicholas Carroll, a senior majoring in Agribusiness from Richmond, TX; Mishanti Johnson, a senior majoring in Urban Forestry from Kansas, MO; Ross St. Aime, a senior



majoring in Pre-Veterinary Medicine from Houston, TX; Hannah Brister, a junior majoring in Child and Family Studies from Brusly, LA; Sterling Brown, a senior majoring in Agribusiness from Alexandria, LA; Joi Ector, a senior majoring in Child and Family Studies from Decatur, GA; Camille Barnes, a senior majoring in Pre-Veterinary Medicine from Farmington Hills, MI; and Monyale West a junior majoring in Animal Science from Long Beach, CA. Ty Sam, a freshman from Opelousas, LA also received a \$5,000 scholarship from the Livestock Show.

Prior to the check presentation, Gerroin Dupre, an Environmental Toxicology Doctoral Student, presided over the program.

CAHES Recruitment and Retention staff spoke to the students about the services available through their office. The presidents of the MANNRS, CAHES Ambassadors, Society of American Foresters, Elite Fashion Society, Alpha Zeta, Animal Science/Pre-Vet Club, and Agribusiness Students United student organizations also spoke.



SU SGA Vice President, Bryman Williams, a junior majoring in Agricultural Sciences and Technology with a concentration in AgriBusiness, and Ag Senator, Connor Kinchen, a junior majoring in Human Sciences with a concentration in Fashion Merchandising and Design, encouraged their fellow peers to become active in the SGA and participate in its programs and events.

JiKaya Hart, a Jag STARS Scholar and the Southern University Baton Rouge campus' Miss Senior, discussed the impact of the Jag STARS Scholarship.

“This scholarship has lifted a tremendous weight off me and my family giving me peace of mind as I pursue my education,” said Hart. “Through this program I have not only gained financial support I have also gained a community of peers and mentors who inspire me. Because of this scholarship, I have not only advanced in my studies but also built long lasting relationships that I will carry with me beyond Southern.”

Sydney Marshall, a junior majoring in Agricultural Sciences and Technology with a concentration in Pre-Veterinary Medicine provided a highlight on the NextGen Scholars Program and Destinae Davis, a senior majoring in Agricultural Sciences and Technology with a concentration in Pre-Veterinary Medicine, discussed her internship at Iowa State University.

Dr. Tiffany Franklin, SU Ag Center Vice Chancellor for Extension and Outreach and Dr. Clyde Bagley, SU Ag Center Vice Chancellor for Research, discussed training opportunities available in their areas.

After the Convocation, students visited booths with information on the programs and clubs offered within CAHES and the Ag Center. The students also received a CAHES shirt.

Café Lacumba Opens for the Fall 2025 Semester



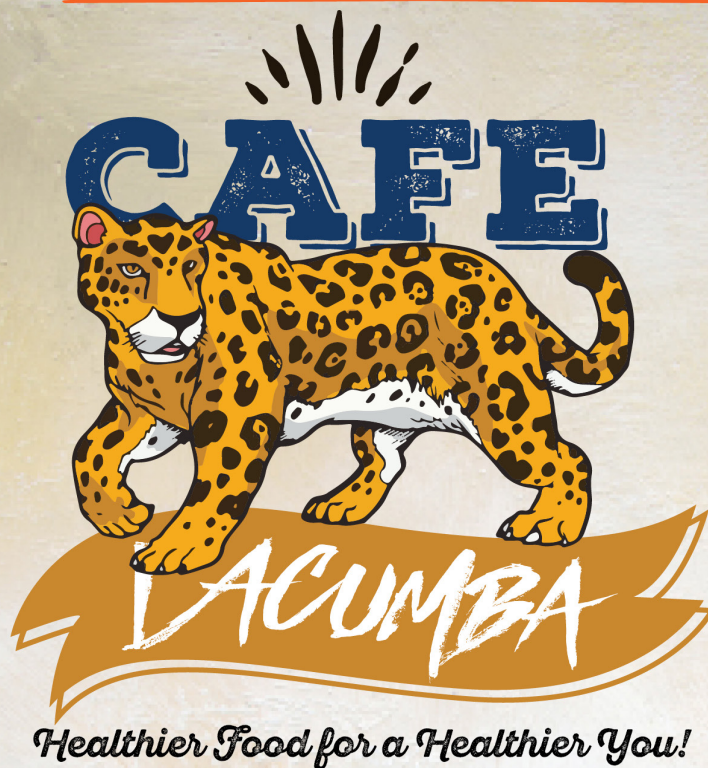
Café Lacumba, a student-operated restaurant, has opened for the Fall 2025 semester. The café specializes in providing healthier food options to the Southern University community. It serves as a valuable learning environment for Dietetic Interns offering hands-on experience in food service operations.

The interns take on various responsibilities such as menu creation, food procurement, front-of-house décor, and more.

Café Lacumba is now accepting JagCash, making it easier than ever for students to enjoy the café's healthier food alternatives. It will open once a month during the Fall semester from 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. on October 22, 2025 and November 12, 2025, in room 161 of Pinkie Thrift Hall on the Southern University campus.

The 18-month Dietetic Internship program is a post-baccalaureate supervised practice program in dietetics. It incorporates the Academy of Nutrition of Dietetics Standards of Education for students to acquire knowledge, skills, and competencies to function as entry-level registration-eligible dietitians. For additional information about the Dietetic Internship program contact, Alexis Motley MS, RDN, LDN, Dietetic Internship Director/Instructor at alexis.motley@sus.edu.

BACK FOR *Fall 2025!*



JOIN US ON WEDNESDAYS!

AUGUST 27, 2025
SEPTEMBER 17, 2025
OCTOBER 22, 2025
NOVEMBER 12, 2025

11:00 AM - 2:00 PM
Pinkie Thrift Hall, Room 161

*Menus will be posted on our social
media @su_dieteticinternship*

The Alpha Zeta Louisiana Delta Colony at Southern University Receives Official Charter

The Alpha Zeta Louisiana Delta Colony at Southern University received its official charter during the 2025 Alpha Zeta Summit and 59th Biennial Conclave held in Ithaca, New York from March 20-23, 2025.

During the meeting, former Chancellor Ian Washington presented on the Louisiana Delta Colony's impact. In recognition of its achievements and growth, Conclave delegates unanimously approved the colony's application for full membership and granted it a charter as the Louisiana Delta Chapter.

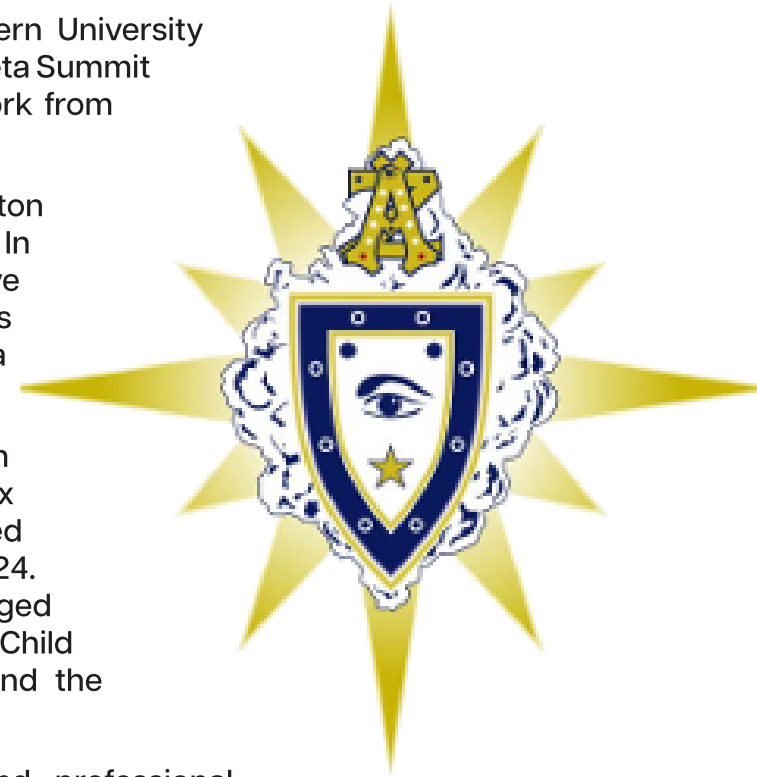
In 2023, the Louisiana Delta Colony at Southern University celebrated the initiation of its first six members. The following year, the colony expanded significantly, welcoming 32 new members in Fall 2024. Since its inception, members have actively engaged in community service through events such as the Child Development Lab Trunk or Treat, Vet Explore, and the Haunting at Pinkie Thrift Haunted House.

The chapter continues to foster leadership and professional development through member-led initiatives, including Tea & Meditation, the What the Hemp webinar, and careers with the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries.

Membership in Alpha Zeta is by invitation only. Eligible students from the College of Agricultural, Human, and Environmental Sciences must have completed at least 30 credit hours and maintain a minimum GPA of 3.0.

Alpha Zeta is a distinguished honorary and professional society for students and professionals in agriculture and natural resources. Founded in 1897 at Ohio State University, it is recognized as the first and oldest collegiate organization dedicated to the advancement of agriculture. Today, Alpha Zeta connects a thriving network of over 125,000 alumni and more than 500 student members across 20 colleges and universities.

For more information, please contact Dr. Jodi Morton, Assistant Professor-Animal Science at jodi.morton@sus.edu or Dr. Crystal Vance, Assistant Professor-Plant & Soil Sciences at crystal.vance@sus.edu.



Bridging the Gap: How Teletherapy is Transforming Mental Health Access in Louisiana



When it comes to mental health, access is often the biggest hurdle. For many Louisianans, especially those living in rural communities, therapy can feel out of reach. The Rural Connections for Rural Resilience Teletherapy Program set out to change that, bringing culturally responsive care directly into homes through free, virtual counseling sessions.

The program offered participants up to eight virtual therapy sessions with licensed providers at no cost. This flexibility proved essential by allowing people to log in from their living rooms, at times that worked for them, and with providers who understood their unique experiences.

“The accessibility of services and the kindness of the therapist really made this experience worthwhile,” stated one participant.

Who It Reached

Fifty-four individuals enrolled, representing both urban and rural parishes across Louisiana. Every participant identified as Black or African American, with the majority between ages 25 and 44. While 78% lived in cities, the program also reached smaller towns and rural communities, bridging a gap where resources are often scarce.

Results That Matter

The outcomes speak volumes. Among survey respondents:

- 67% felt more in control of their mental health.
- 88% developed healthier coping strategies.
- 76% reported more confidence in supporting others.
- Nearly 90% said programs like this are critical for their communities.

“The knowledge my therapist had, with resources that may help me with finding a job, medical insurance, etc. To start me on the path to healing,” expressed another participant.

Looking Toward the Future

In a state where stigma and limited access have long stood in the way of treatment, this program signals a new era. An era where healing can begin at home, where technology meets cultural sensitivity, and where resilience is built one session at a time. The Rural Connections for Rural Resilience Program has been funded again. Sessions resumed on September 15, 2025.

For more information regarding this program, contact Jasmin Mathews, Program Director at jasmin_plowe@suagcenter.com or 225-771-4456.

A promotional poster for the Rural Connections for Rural Resilience Teletherapy Program. The poster features a collage of images showing people in various settings, including a group of people at a community meeting and individuals in therapy sessions. The text on the poster includes: 'THE SU AG CENTER PRESENTS', 'RURAL CONNECTIONS FOR RURAL RESILIENCE', 'COOPERATIVE EXTENSION', 'LINKING CITIZENS of LOUISIANA', 'VIRTUAL COUNSELING SERVICES Via Teletherapy', 'FREE!', 'OCT. 1, 2025 THRU JULY 15, 2026', 'Licensed Counselors', 'UP TO 8 SESSIONS', 'SCAN TO REGISTER OR VISIT: http://bit.ly/4pvD3ZW', 'REGISTER TODAY!', 'FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT: Jasmin Mathews, MPH, Assistant Specialist, Public Health, Email: jasmin_plowe@suagcenter.com', and social media handles for @suagcenter and @su_agcenter. The poster also includes a QR code and a small logo for the SUAG Center Cooperative Extension.

SU Ag Center's Communities of Color Network Holds Its 3rd Annual Back to School Bash



The SU Ag Center's Communities of Color Network (CoC) Region 8 Community Outreach Team hosted its 3rd Annual Back-to-School Bash on August 9, 2025, bringing joy, support, and resources to families as they prepared for a successful school year. This year's event, held at the Louisiana Purchase Gardens and Zoo, was a tremendous success, drawing over 300 attendees.

Southern University's CoC, alongside Jamea Hart, had the honor of leading and hosting this impactful occasion. Families enjoyed not only a day filled with community and connection but also received much-needed resources. Book bags, school supplies, and valuable information were distributed to ensure that children entered the school year equipped and empowered.

For additional information on CoC visit, <https://www.suagcenter.com/cooperative-extension/family-human-sciences/nutrition-health-wellness/communities-of-color-network>.



Saige Kenner: Cultivating Community, Policy, and Health in the Rural South



Saige Kenner, a junior at Southern University and A&M College, is making significant strides in rural economic development through her studies in Agricultural Sciences with a concentration in Agribusiness and a minor in Political Science. Driven to empower rural communities, her work bridges grassroots assets with broader systems and resources. Her centerpiece project, “Strengthening Rural Communities for Better Health,” applies the Community Capitals Framework and Asset-Based Community Development strategies to help local leaders connect community assets with health outcomes and pursue federal funding opportunities. This approach not only highlights what communities already have, but also empowers them to harness those strengths in pursuit of improved public health.

As a Delta Scholar, Saige recently spent two enriching weeks in Mississippi collaborating with community leaders and policy experts, and she will present her project at the Delta Scholars Fall Conference in Boston, Massachusetts this November. She also partners with the Southern Rural Development Center and the Delta Regional Authority through the PROPEL Initiative, amplifying her community-based economic development work. Saige is profoundly grateful for the honor of being both a Delta Scholar and a Harvard T.H. Chan Public Health Scholar—experiences that have strengthened her commitment to public service and deepened her understanding of how to create more equitable systems.

The Delta Scholars Program selected twelve outstanding students from eight institutions across five states for its 2025 cohort, recognizing their academic accomplishments and dedication

to public service. The scholars are Saige Kenner, Southern University and A&M College; Kayle Amos, University of Mississippi; Anna Claire Carter, University of Mississippi; Zayd Elhedoudy, Rutgers University; Rowan Feasel, Mississippi State University; Naiya Fort, Alcorn State University; Anne Marie Sullivan, Mississippi State University; Bianca Hemsath, University of Mississippi; Spencer Lile, Mississippi State University; John Robert Walker, Yale University; and Alexandra Wall, Copiah-Lincoln Community College.

Looking ahead, Saige plans to pursue graduate studies and continue bridging the gap between policy and the communities it is meant to serve. In the upcoming Fall semester, she will be working alongside Dr. Krystle J. Allen, Family and Human Sciences (FHS) Program Leader and Community and Economic Development Specialist at the SU Ag Center, furthering her research and meaningful community work while continuing to deepen her role as a change agent in rural development and public health.





Youth at the Opelousas Boys & Girls Club Get Their First Lesson in Nutrition 101

Students at the Boys and Girls Club of Opelousas got a lesson in Nutrition 101 by SU Ag Center FHS Associate Agent, Angell C. Jordan on September 4, 2025. The youth participated in their first nutrition class, learning the basics of how eating healthy and being physically active can benefit them now and as they grow into their teen years.

The class was asked questions about the differences between healthy and unhealthy foods and snacks. They were extremely engaged and learned that some foods that they consume may taste good but may not be good for them. The students also learned the benefits of being physically active every day. They know that their bodies must be active for blood circulation, strong bones, to build strong muscles, and to make their heart's beat faster. The youth were challenged to make small changes in their food choices, snack choices, and to move a little more this new school year.

JagFresh Farmers Market Opens for the Fall

The SU Ag Center's JagFresh Farmers Market is open for the Fall Season. The first market was held on September 4, 2025 on the lawn of Fisher Hall. The market was led by the Southern University Ag Center's Cooperative Extension, Agriculture and Natural Resource (ANR) team.

Since its' inception, the market has provided fresh, locally sourced items to SU students, faculty, staff, and the surrounding community, featuring products such as eggs, honey, fresh fruits and veggies, goat soaps, jellies, jams, handcrafted teas and smoothies, fresh beef, plant seedlings, baked goods, and more from local farmers and producers from around the state.

The next market will be held from 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. on November 6, 2025 at the Southern University Horticulture/ Research Farm.

For more information or to become a sponsor, contact Cornelius Jackson at cornelius_jackson@suagcenter.com.

**VEGETABLES,
FRUITS,
MEATS,
SMOOTHIES,
BAKED GOODS,
CRAFTS,
TEA BLENDS,
& MORE..**

JagFresh

**FARMERS
MARKET**

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2025

**SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY
SMITH-BROWN MEMORIAL UNION**

135 JESSE N STONE AVE., BATON ROUGE, LA 70807

10AM - 1PM

Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center and the College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences is an entity of the Southern University System, Orlando F. McMillen, Chancellor Emeritus, Dennis J. Shields, System President, Tusculum, Erie, Chairman, Board of Supervisors. It is issued in furtherance of the Cooperative Extension Work Act of December 1917, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. All educational programs conducted by the Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center and the College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences are provided to people of all ages regardless of race, national origin, or disability.

SU **AGRICULTURAL** **RESEARCH & EXTENSION**

FARMERS **MARKET** **COALITION**





Algebra 1 Tutoring Powered by the SU Ag Center

Aralynn Davis, SU Ag Center's Youth Development Agent for Orleans Parish, hosted an Algebra One tutoring session for students in St. John the Baptist Parish on September 8, 2025.

This session was held at the Garyville Library and was open to eight and ninth grade students who are enrolled in Algebra One. Students learned multiplication tricks and tips and explored the polynomial operations lesson students were studying at their respective schools. Students received exit tickets that they completed during school hours and received help with their homework. The two-hour event was a success, and parents asked for more sessions with Davis in the future for their young scholars..

SU Ag Center Holds Canning and Preserving Workshop

The Southern University Ag Center hosted a fruits and vegetables canning and preserving workshop on September 11, 2025, in Pinkie Thrift Hall on Southern University's campus.

The workshop was held to show individuals alternative ways to expand the shelf life of their fruits and vegetables.

Members of the SU Ag Center's SNAP-Ed Program also provided information on food safety and nutrition education to the participants.

Dr. Jodi Morton, Assistant Professor of Animal Science in the CAHES Department of Agricultural Science and Technology and Mila Berhane, Senior Research Associate and Greenhouse Manager, instructed the participants on the steps and equipment needed to safely can and preserve

fruits and vegetables.

After the presentation, participants were able to pickle their own jars of okra, carrots, onions, celery, and Cucuzza to take home.

"I came to this workshop because I wanted to learn more about canning and how to safely do it because I waste a lot of produce so times," said Wisdom Dewey, a workshop participant. "I didn't know that you couldn't reuse the lids on the jars, and I will definitely use the recipes that were provided," she added.

For additional information on this workshop contact Mila Berhane at, milagro_berhane@suagcenter.com; Zanetta Augustine at, zanetta_augustine@suagcenter.com; or Desiree James at, desiree.james@sus.edu.



Urban Forestry Student Reflections On Their Field Study at the National Forests



With funding from the USDA Forest Service, Urban Forestry students Cade Getwood, Maxwell Brown, Recheal Armah, and Daniel Aniewu participated in an experiential learning field study trip guided by Dr. Zhu Hua Ning, CAHES professor of Urban Forestry and project director. The students studied the sites of the USDA Forest Service Custer-Gallatin National Forests and Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forests in Montana, Shoshone National Forests in Wyoming, Umpqua National Forests, Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forests in Oregon, and Six River National Forests in California. They also explored the Yellow Stone Forest and Redwood Forest ecosystems managed by the National Park Service.

“The field study at the National Forests sparked my interest in research, especially in areas like wildfire prevention, restoration, and how trees impact communities in urban areas,” expressed Cade Getwood, a junior in the CAHES. “I liked seeing that research isn’t just academic, it actually helps guide real decisions that affect land and people.”

“Going to the National Forests via Beartooth Mountain road was one of the highlights for me,” stated Maxwell Brown, who is also a junior. “As we climbed higher in elevation, I noticed how the trees changed, the higher up we went, the shorter and more adapted to the harsher climate they became. I had never really thought about how quickly ecosystems can shift with elevation and seeing it in person gave me a whole



new perspective on forest ecology.”

“My research focuses on greenspaces, resilience, and natural resource management through GIS and remote sensing. This trip reinforced the importance of these tools by showing their practical application in forest health monitoring, watershed protection, and biodiversity conservation,” said Recheal Armah, a Ph.D. student. “It also inspired me to consider expanding my research to include forest ecology and park design.”

“One of the biggest takeaways for me was understanding the nuanced differences between forest management approaches in national forests, national parks, state parks, and urban areas,” stated Daniel Aniewu, a Ph.D. student. “I also realized how interdisciplinary the forestry field is, from ecology to public policy, recreation management to community engagement, I saw how many roles play a part in sustainable forest management.”

Putting students on the ground confirms the book knowledge that they acquired at SU in the real world.

“We thank the USDA Forest Service for the funding that enabled the field studies, and we look forward to taking more students to the forests, stay tuned,” expressed Dr. Ning.

For more information about field study opportunities, contact Dr. Zhu Hua Ning, at zhu.ning@sus.edu.

Alumni Spotlight

SU College of Ag Alumna Allison Thomas Appointed Chief Operating Officer of the U.S. Dairy Export Council



Southern University College of Agriculture alumna Allison Thomas has been named the U.S. Dairy Export Council's (USDEC) Chief Operating Officer (COO). The announcement was made on August 11, 2025 by the USDEC and will become effective on August 25, 2025.

In her role as COO, Thomas will report directly to USDEC President and CEO Krysta Harden and serve as her strategic thought partner, oversee USDEC's senior leadership team, and spearhead initiatives to accelerate growth, enhance operational performance, and drive innovation across the organization.

"I am honored to join USDEC to leverage my global affairs experience on behalf of USDEC member companies and the entire U.S. dairy industry," expressed Thomas. "I look forward to bolstering opportunities that expand the global footprint for U.S. dairy while pursuing operational excellence," she added.

Prior to joining USDEC, the Winnsboro, LA native had a 26-year career with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). She most recently served as the Deputy Administrator for Trade Policy and Geographic Affairs at the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS). In that role, Thomas led a team of 120 staff members, including 10 senior leaders, in the implementation and execution of FAS' trade policy goals and



ALLISON THOMAS

objectives which included addressing market access and trade barriers, monitoring and enforcing trade agreements, and trade wins on behalf of U.S. farmers and ranchers.

Thomas also worked closely with the National Security Council, U.S. Trade Representative, State Department, and other government agencies, as well as foreign counterparts, in safeguarding U.S. agricultural interests and at the U.S. embassies in Canada, Kenya and Afghanistan representing U.S. agricultural interests.

Allison credits the Southern University College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences' (CAHES) Beginning Agricultural Youth Opportunities Unlimited (BAYOU) Program with influencing her decision to major in agricultural economics. She

participated in the program while in high school and was introduced to the opportunities available in agriculture.

She would go on to secure a summer internship and ultimately worked her way through the ranks becoming a member of the Senior Executive Service, the highest rank attained in government.

Allison offers this advice to students who are interested in following her career path.

"Students should take heed to the insight, knowledge and wisdom gained at Southern University," said Thomas. "Not only did SU prepare me for graduate school, but also for the real world. I learned how to negotiate, think critically, and problem solve based upon my experiences and exceptional professors in the Ag. Econ Department."

Thomas earned a B.S. and M.S. in agricultural economics from Southern University and A&M College in Baton Rouge, Louisiana and the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, Arkansas, respectively. She also studied abroad at Scotland's Rural College in Aberdeen Scotland. She is also a board member of Women Empowering Nations, an international nonprofit organization that provides leadership and development opportunities to underserved young women throughout the world.

Alumni Spotlight

SU Alums Henry and Robert Harrison's Family Farm is Rooted in Community



SU College of Ag alums Henry and Robert Harrison have been working on their family farm in Washington Parish for many years.

Recently, Robert Harrison visited the Southern University Ag Center and donated one of their 40-pound Washington Parish Watermelons to Dr. Orlando F. McMeans. The watermelon was shared with the faculty and staff of the Ag Center.

Robert is a 1999 SU College of Ag Urban Forestry graduate. His father, Henry, also earned a Bachelor of Science in Vocational Agricultural Education from the SU College of Ag.

Henry has been deeply involved in the community for many years, and his family farm holds significant historical and personal value to his family. He was employed as a County Agent with the LSU AgCenter in Richland and Washington Parishes as a Community Resource Development and Horticulture Agent and Parish Administrator for 40 years.

During his years of employment, Henry incorporated many of the recommended practices from research into his favorite hobby of growing cucurbits. The one he enjoyed the most was growing watermelons. The sandy/acidic soil in Washington Parish is ideal for growing this crop. For the past 30 years, Henry has been growing 6-8 acres of mixed melons.





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*"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!"*

**Join us as we interview your Ag favorites,
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Hosted by:

Dexter "Dex" Newman



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