

my **FIRST** **60 DAYS** *as Chancellor-Dean*



McReport



Dr. Orlando
McMeans

Greetings to the students, faculty, staff, administrators, alumni and supporters of the Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center (hereinafter the SU Ag Center) and the College of Agricultural, Family and Consumer Sciences (CAFCS). I have just completed my first 60 days as Chancellor-Dean of this great institution. I can truly say that this has been an exciting inaugural two months. I personally have had the opportunity to meet and engage with so many individuals at the SU Ag Center, CAFCS and the “Jaguar Nation” as a whole. During this period, I have had the opportunity to meet with stakeholders and constituent groups to discuss the many challenges impacting the respective groups. While I have heard these challenges, I must say the opportunities before us outweigh said challenges. All-in-all, I can indeed say the future for the SU Ag Center and CAFCS is bright.

ACADEMIC

Recruitment, retention and graduation rates are not only a priority to the CAFCS, but the Southern University System as a whole. As it relates to recruitment, retention and graduation rates, we will be intentional and strategic in our efforts to move the agenda forward. I recently named Dr. Renita Marshall as the Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs and Student Services/ Associate Dean. Dr. Marshall and I, along with the faculty in the CAFCS and the Academic Leadership Team, will be implementing strategies that will enhance our recruitment efforts and increase retention and graduation rates. My goal for the SU Ag Center and CAFCS is to provide a student-focused teaching and learning environment. So far this semester, CAFCS hosted its Inaugural Career and Graduate School Expo. We also participated in three 7th grade days where we had the opportunity to interact with 2,000 students from across East Baton Rouge Parish. The college will launch our #GrowJags recruitment campaign in January 2020.

Academically, we are assessing our current degree offerings. The goal is to ensure that our academic curriculum and degrees prepare our students for a competitive job market, and to match our offerings with the market/industry demands. We do not take this assessment lightly, thus we will make the necessary changes as needed to be successful in this academic assessment process.

RESEARCH

As a land-grant institution, research is a cornerstone of the SU Ag Center/CAFCS's mission to advance and promote discovery-based knowledge and innovation, improve quality of life, and enhance economic development. Both basic and applied research seek to answer important questions, address emerging issues, and underpins the academic programs of the University. Land-Grant Universities, such as Southern University and A&M College, have greatly contributed to and benefitted from the technological and societal advances that arise from innovative research programs.

The SU Ag Center has developed a portfolio of salient and well-established research programs, which contribute to scientific discourse as well as benefit the general public. Having said that, there still remains opportunities to grow our research agenda. We will look to expand in the areas of plant science (medicinal plants and hemp), environmental remediation, socioeconomic research and strategic integrated, multidisciplinary research. Additionally, we will place emphasis on research in the areas of nutrition, early childhood education, and reduction and mitigation of foodborne illnesses using a One Health approach. As the SU Ag Center's research portfolio expands, we will continually seek opportunities to partner with state, federal, international, corporate and local agencies to advance our mutual research missions.

EXTENSION

Extension, as the term implies, is a geographical extension of the University's collective knowledge base and expertise to the clientele and communities we serve. Southern University's Cooperative Extension Program has a long and stellar history of delivering meaningful and impactful programs to underserved communities throughout the State of Louisiana. At this time, physically located in 34 parishes, the Extension Program delivers programming in the areas of agriculture and natural resources, economic and community development, youth development, family and human development, diet, nutrition and health education.

As resources allow, Extension services are seeking to expand its geographical footprint. Additionally, we will also look at expanding youth development/4-H and Science, Technology, Engineering, Agriculture and Mathematics (STEAM) programming, hemp production outreach to farmers and growers, and strategic institutional partnerships and outreach efforts. The annual Livestock Show is the only such event currently held at an 1890 institution. In its 77th year of existence, the livestock show continues to promote leadership, stewardship and responsibility among Louisiana youth.



Medicinal Marijuana

Southern University's Medical Marijuana program is up and running. Southern University's Ag Center and Louisiana State University's Ag Center are the only two universities allowed by law to grow and produce medical marijuana. This program was part of state legislation that was originally passed by lawmakers in 2016 (SB271, Act No. 96). Thanks to Southern University's leadership, our partner Ilera Holistic Healthcare, faculty and administrators in the SU Ag Center and CAFCS, products will soon be on the shelves of our cooperating partners. As the program continues to grow, we will look for opportunities to develop research activities around cannabis production and assess developing projects around other medicinal plants. In addition, we will explore opportunities for providing outreach in this area to our clientele and the community.



Institutional Branding

Branding of the SU Ag Center and CAFCS is important for land-grant related academic, research and extension name brand identification and marketing. Branding of an organization is not only associated with the logo, seal, etc., but it is also the association of an organization symbolically. It is that brand visibility that equates to program recognition. The SU Ag Center is currently rolling out its original seal, which is representative of the tripartite mission areas of the land-grant areas. The communications and marketing team will continue to place emphasis on brand recognition and identification. While the term branding sometimes implies formal marketing, there are other ways in which we can market our University/SU Ag Center/College brand. That is wearing or personally displaying the various paraphernalia signifying the Southern University name. Whether that is a shirt, hat, jacket, lapel pin, what have you. It all equates to our "Jaguar Pride."



Funding Diversification

The funding models of the past, which relied heavily upon annual federal formula funding is now becoming outdated and undependable for growing, or even maintaining land-grant programming. To that fact, extramural, competitive and corporate funding is necessary to grow research, extension and even academic programs at the Ag Center and CAFCS. We will work with the Office of Sponsored Programs and other grants and contracts related offices to seek such funding. Sources will include federal agencies, state and local agencies and organizations, industry/corporate and foundations. We will seek said funding and coordinate in a fashion as to make sure we are not duplicating efforts within the Southern University System.

RELATIONSHIPS

It is imperative that we continue to develop strategic relationships and partnerships. Those can be at the state, local, federal and corporate levels. An example of an established partnership that may be a template for mutually beneficial partnerships, is the relationship the SU Ag Center and CAFCS has with the United State Department of Agriculture (USDA). This long-standing relationship has yielded significant research, extension and teaching resources. This relationship has allowed us to have a USDA/1890 Program Liaison located on campus to assist students, faculty and the administration to take advantage of the opportunities with and access to, the USDA and its many resources. Some of those resources have included: funding for renovation and the construction of agriculture-related facilities via the USDA's 1890 Facilities Program, scholarships to support students majoring in food and agriculture-related majors and capacity building funds to develop new research, academic and extension programs.

Over a three-week period, I have met with more than a dozen individuals from the USDA who were recruiting students and/or looking to further partnerships with the University. Amazingly, 10 of those individuals were Southern University and A&M College graduates and most are alums of the CAFCS. Speaking of alumni, as aforementioned, we have a number of alumni of the CAFCS who have gone on to have successful professional careers. This is one of the main focuses of a land-grant institution, it is incumbent on us to make sure that these individuals are connected to the University and the College. These relationships are not only important for philanthropic reasons, but these individuals can also connect our students to careers in their respective fields of study. To those facts, we will be intentional in reaching out to those individuals to make sure they are engaged, or offer opportunities to be engaged, with the Southern University System, specifically the Southern University Ag Center and CAFCS. As we move forward, we will continue "Linking the Citizens of Louisiana with Opportunities for Success."



STAKEHOLDER

Seeking the input of our stakeholder and constituent groups is an imperative step in ensuring that programming benefits the citizens and communities served. That includes internal and external stakeholders. We will continue to meet with students, faculty, staff and alumni to gather information necessary for academic excellence and administrative effectiveness and efficiencies. Additionally, we have a mission mandate to reach out externally to underserved communities, business and industry, farmers and growers, small/minority businesses, etc.

As I close, I want to again state that the future of the Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center and the College of Agricultural, Family and Consumer Sciences is bright. It will, of course, take a collective effort to reach these successes. Since being here, I have embraced the mantra "Endeavor to Be Better." Endeavor to be more student-centered, endeavor to be better fiscal stewards, endeavor to be better recruiters, endeavor to increase graduation and retention rates, endeavor to increase extramural funding and philanthropic activities, endeavor to be better Southern University advocates, endeavor to promote an atmosphere and spirit of professional collegiality and overall, endeavor to be a better Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center and College of Agricultural, Family and Consumer Sciences. I know for a fact; WE Will Be Better!

Since I have your attention, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you and your family a blessed holiday season.

-Dr. Orlando F. McMeans



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