



VOLUME 21 | NO. 18 | AUGUST 2023



# SEEDS *of* SUCCESS

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



# Executive LEADERSHIP



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### Dr. Leodrey Williams Was Officially Named Chancellor Emeritus of the Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center

Former Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center Chancellor, Leodrey Williams, Ed.D., has been officially named Chancellor Emeritus of the Ag Center. The status was bestowed upon Dr. Williams on July 21, 2023 during the Southern University System's Board of Supervisors meeting.

Dr. Williams, who was the first Chancellor of the Southern University Ag Center, began his professional career in Agriculture with Cooperative Extension in 1965 as a County Agricultural Agent at Louisiana State University.

In 1972, Southern University established its own extension office and hired Williams as an Agricultural Specialist, along with a small staff, to recruit and create programs. He later held several positions at both Southern University and Louisiana State University.

He was appointed the Acting Administrator of the United States Department of Agriculture's Extension Service for all U.S. states and territories. He was also elevated to Associate Administrator of the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES), the precursor to the National Institute for Food and Agriculture, USDA-NIFA. He has served on several national and

international committees and as a consultant in Extension administration and education in Sierra Leone and Ethiopia. He has also helped to develop memoranda of understanding with the Republic of South Africa and the Republic of China.

In 1995, he returned to Southern as the Cooperative Extension Director, and in 2001, was asked to lead the newly formed Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center, the fifth campus of the Southern University System. He held this position for 14 years. After a total of 50 years of service, Dr. Williams retired from the Southern University Ag Center on June 30, 2015.

Dr. Williams earned a bachelor's degree in vocational agriculture education from Southern University, a Master of Science in Extension Education, and a Doctor of Education degree in Extension Education/Administration, both from Louisiana State University.

The SU Ag Center and College of Agriculture also dedicated a fruit-bearing pecan tree in the campus' pecan orchid to Dr. Williams, for the many seeds he has sown on the agricultural campus. This spring, Dr. Williams will become the first African American inducted into the Louisiana Agriculture Hall of Fame.





# SU Ag Center Holds Food Drive-Thru Giveaway

The SU Ag Center, along with the Louisiana Home and Foreign Missions Baptist Convention, the Greater Baton Rouge Food Bank, and Feeding America, co-hosted a free food giveaway for members of the Baton Rouge community on July 26, 2023 at the Greater Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church.

Rev. S.C. Dixon, General President of the Louisiana Home and Foreign Missions Baptist Convention said that they wanted to partner with the Southern University Ag Center for this food distribution because food is one of the basic needs of life.

“Many of our seniors and just people, in general, are really struggling,” said Dixon. They are trying to choose between medicine or food. Should they run the air conditioning or should they not run it so they don’t have a high utility bill and sometimes they sacrifice food in lieu of being able to provide themselves with that medication or to keep the air running. So we wanted to try to assist in that way,” he added.

This event was one of several Ag Center food giveaways aimed at assisting individuals who live in food deserts.





# TEACHING



each valued at \$475.00. Dr. Harold I. Mellieon, CAFCS Department Chair of Animal Science, awarded the students who received honorable mention with three Lenovo Chromebooks, each valued at \$279.00. All participants received a Chromebook at the completion of the camp.

The camp was sponsored by the Propel Center and Cox Communications.

For additional information on the Quilt Design Summer Camp contact, Dr. Jung-Im Seo, SU College of Ag Associate Professor at 225-771-4290 or email her at [jungim\\_seo@suagcenter.com](mailto:jungim_seo@suagcenter.com).



## SU College of Ag Holds Quilting Design Summer Camp

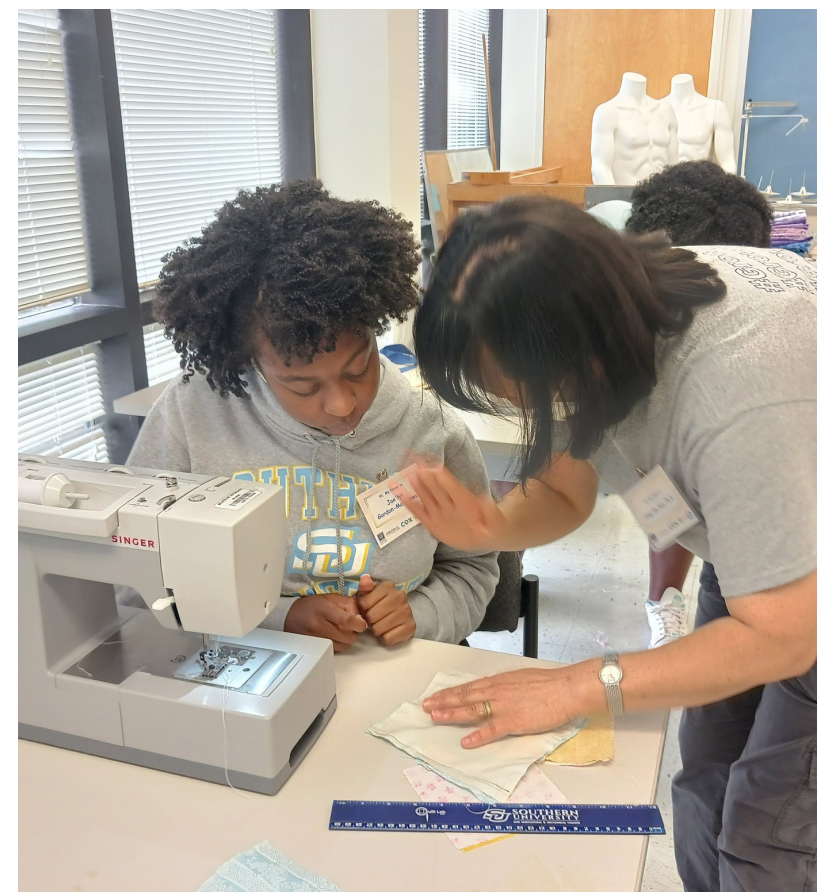
The Southern University College of Agricultural, Family and Consumer Sciences (CAFCS) Apparel Merchandising and Textiles (AMTX) Program held a Quilt Design Summer Camp for youth aged 14-17 from June 20 –30, 2023.

The camp operated from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (Monday – Friday) in Pinkie Thrift Hall on the campus of Southern University.

The eight participants learned quilting techniques and designed their own cushion covers, table runners, and potholders during a sewing machine.

On the last day of the camp, each participant competed in a friendly competition where they discussed why they chose their designs.

COX Communications Inc., awarded the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th place winners with Dell Chromebooks,





# TEACHING



## SU College of Ag Faculty Attends the 2023 National Cooperative Soil Survey Conference

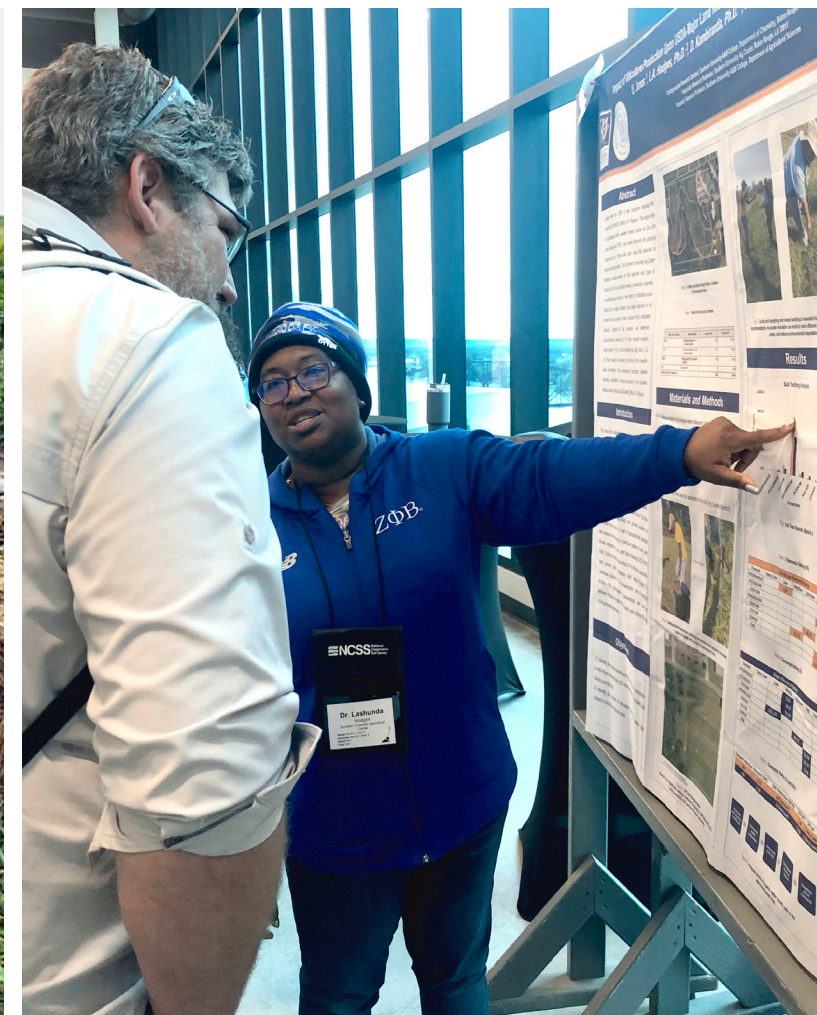
Southern University Research Professors Drs. Lashunda Hodges, Jacqueline McComb, and Crystal Vance attended the 2023 National Cooperative Soil Survey Conference at Bismarck State College in Bismarck, North Dakota, from July 9 - 13, 2023.

The National Conference convenes every two years to discuss and develop solutions to issues of concern to the National Cooperative Soil Survey Program.

The conference, themed, "Soil, Energy, and Agriculture for Resilient Ecosystems," included scheduled events such as expansive field tours, morning networking sessions, oral poster presentations, and seminars from USDA Natural Resources Conversation Service (NRCS) leadership and scientists that explored the history, geology, and soils of Western North Dakota. The conference is a component of the awarded \$150,000 from the USDA-NRCS cooperative agreement to assess the soil health status of urban soils affected by flooding at the Southern University Baton Rouge Campus.



Attendance at this conference further supports climate-smart agriculture and soil health initiatives to manage dynamic soil properties that aid in predicting soil responses to help policymakers, land managers, producers, and others who make decisions that protect soil function.





# TEACHING

## SU College of Ag Holds Its Inaugural FAB Lab Camp

The Southern University College of Ag held its first Fashion and Business Laboratory (FAB Lab) Youth Leadership Program Summer Camp July 17-28, 2023 in Pinkie Thrift Hall.

The camp, which was open to students aged 12 – 18, taught participants about textiles, fashion design, and apparel entrepreneurship.

“I developed this camp after hearing my students say that they wanted to open their own businesses,” said Dr. Samii Kennedy Benson, camp organizer and Assistant Professor of Apparel Merchandising and Textiles in the CAFCS. “I wanted to assist my students and several of them have volunteered during this camp.”

During the camp, participants learned to hand sew a pin cushion and used a sewing machine to make handbags out of t-shirts, hats out of jeans, and tie-dyed skorts and pajama pants.

The camp ended with a fashion show where the participants modeled the items they made during the camp for their parents.

To apply to the camp, the students had to write a one-page essay explaining his/her interest in fashion and apparel entrepreneurship and highlighting their leadership skills and academic excellence, along with a \$25 registration fee and a completed waiver form.

For additional information about the FAB Lab and its Youth Leadership Program's summer camp contact, Dr. Samii Kennedy Benson, Assistant Professor of Apparel Merchandising and Textiles in the CAFCS at [samii\\_kennedybenson@subr.edu](mailto:samii_kennedybenson@subr.edu).

A story on the FAB LAB Youth Leadership Program Summer Camp aired on NBC 33/FOX 44 on July 28, 2023.





## Fresh and Zesty: Micro-farm Hydroponics at Mayberry Dining Hall

If you have visited Mayberry Dining Hall on Southern University's campus recently, you may have wondered what the glass box sitting in the corner is used for. The box is a Babylon Micro-Farm Galleri, a hydroponic micro-farm system used to grow plants.

Initially, SU Ag Center's Agricultural Natural Resources Program Leader, Zanetta Augustine asked Horticultural Extension Agent, Micheal "Terra" Polite, to volunteer with her to revitalize the Galleri. Terra has diligently communicated with Southern's Campus Dining and the Babylon Company to get the machine up and running again, including cleaning and calibrating the chemicals and sensors and ordering plants. At the same time, Augustine has helped calculate the logistics involving Southern's Campus Dining Hall and the SU Ag Center.

This project aims to provide the cafeteria with a beautiful display of produce in the hydroponic micro-farm and connect the student body with the opportunity to understand how efficiently a hydroponic farm should be managed.

Upon starting, the farm was an empty glass box not being utilized to its full potential. With the help of Augustine, Polite, and East Baton Rouge Extension Agent, Cornelius Jackson, Jr. the unit received a full detailed cleaning. Since its cleaning, Polite has made weekly visits to the unit, finding this method to be most efficient for maximum production and to balance the time management of other projects with the Ag Center.

The kitchen staff has shown interest in the unit since its first microgreens harvest on July 12, 2023. The 'Spicy Microgreen Mix' was harvested and given to Chef Lee to garnish the scalloped potatoes. The cooking staff appeared very excited about the new addition.

"The unit runs itself," Polite stated. "I generally go right before Mayberry opens for lunch so that I have an opportunity to draw people over while I am working."

He went on to say that several professors, cafeteria staff, summer campers, and students have approached the unit with interest. Many with questions about how plants can grow without sunlight.

"This unit has everything! The hi-tech automation, full-spectrum lights, and chemical monitoring system allow for a seamless and user-friendly experience," said Polite, hoping to recruit an Ag student to help run the system during the Fall semester. With the system now set up and the implementation of a properly staggered succession planting schedule, there should be something to harvest every week.

Once an Ag student recruit is identified, he/she will be shown how to create a reference data sheet for the planting guide showing the seed-to-harvest timeline. Students can coordinate with Chef Paul to meet a production deadline. All the skills learned will help the student expand their technical agriculture experience and create a farm-to-table experience on Southern University's campus.







## SU Ag Center Held Its Annual Morehouse Parish Farm Field Day

The Southern University Ag Center, in conjunction with the LSU AgCenter, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Morehouse Black Farmers and Landowners Association, Inc., and the National Black Growers Council, held its Annual Morehouse Farm Field Day on July 21, 2023 on Antwain Downs Farm, in Bastrop, LA.

“This field day keeps the farmers abreast of the new technology in seeds, herbicides, and new production,” said Odis Hill, SU Ag Center Assistant County Agent. “The USDA also provided outreach services on their new programs,” added Hill.

The field day included presentations on the importance of wills, USDA updates, and information on loans available through the USDA’s Farm Service Agency. Several companies also attended the event and spoke to the youth about opportunities available within their companies for employment and internships. For additional information about the Morehouse Parish Farm Field Day, contact Odis Hill at [odis\\_hill@suagcenter.com](mailto:odis_hill@suagcenter.com).





# EXTENSION

Center

## SU Ag Center Holds Events for National Minority Mental Health Awareness

The Southern University Ag Center held two events in honor of National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month on July 26 and July 27, 2023.

A nature walk and mindfulness session was held on July 26 at LSU Botanical Garden Learning Tree Trail. Participants took a guided walk in the LSU Botanical Gardens to reconnect with nature and experience the therapeutic benefits of being outdoors. This exercise incorporated mindfulness exercises during the walk to promote relaxation, stress reduction, and present-moment awareness.

An art exhibit was held on July 27 at the Southern University Museum of Art on the Southern University campus. Participants toured the SU Museum of Art for a curated art exhibition walk featuring works on minority health, resilience, and self-care. The interactive art workshop engaged participants in expressive art activities, such as painting, drawing, or collaging, to foster self-expression and emotional well-being.

“At the SU Ag Center, we believe that mental health is a vital aspect of overall well-being, and we are dedicated to promoting awareness and support within minority communities,” stated Ashlyn Harrison, Assistant Specialist for Mental Health at the SU Ag Center.

Both events were free and open to the public.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health, National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month is observed in July to bring awareness to the unique struggles that racial and ethnic minority communities face regarding mental illness in the United States.

**EMBRACING WELLNESS: HEALING THROUGH ARTS, AND NATURE**  
**JULY 26<sup>TH</sup> & JULY 27<sup>TH</sup>**

*Nature Walk and Mindfulness Session*

**LSU Botanical Gardens (Learning Tree Trail)**  
**9 AM - 11 AM**

Take a guided nature walk in the LSU Botanical Gardens to reconnect with nature and experience the therapeutic benefits of being outdoors. This exercise will incorporate mindfulness exercises during the walk to promote relaxation, stress reduction, and present-moment awareness.

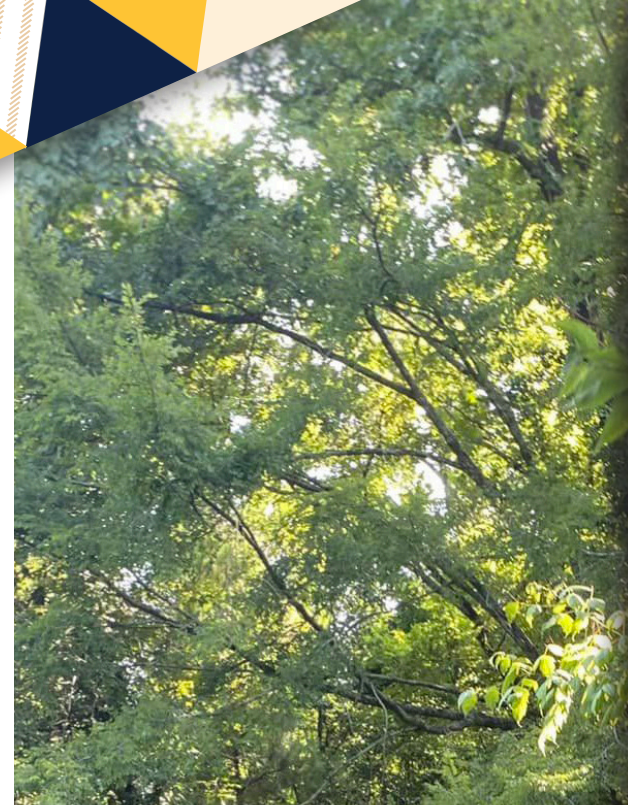
**SU Museum | 1 PM - 3 PM**

Tour the SU Art Museum for a curated art exhibition walk featuring works by minority artist that explore themes of mental health, resilience and self-care. This is an interactive art workshop in which participants will engage in expressive art activities, such as painting, drawing or collage, to foster self-expression and emotional well-being.

*Art Exhibit*

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Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center and the College of Agriculture, Forestry and Cooperative Science is an entity of the Southern University System. Shonda F. Williams, Executive Dean, Delta, Delta





# EXTENSION

Center

## SU Ag Center Holds a Successful St. Helena Agriculture Day

The Fifth Ward Recreation Center in Amite City, Louisiana was buzzing with excitement at the St. Helena Agriculture Day on July 24, 2023. The event was hosted by the Southern University Ag Center in conjunction with the Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education Program (SARE), MUSE 3 Farm, the St. Helena Cattle Company, and the LSU Ag Center and was aimed to raise awareness about agriculture and provided fresh produce to the Greensburg community.

With engaging workshops and interactive exhibits such as vegetable production, composting, and insect identification, attendees learned about sustainable farming practices and food production. There was also information given on hurricane preparedness safety, USDA programs and loans, and mental health.

The event not only offered a chance to savor delicious and nutritious farm-to-table delicacies but also sparked a newfound enthusiasm for local, sustainable agriculture among the attendees.

"The St. Helena Ag Day provided a unique platform to bridge the gap between our rural roots and urban lifestyle, bringing fresh produce and agricultural knowledge right into the heart of the food desert," said Nicholas Muse, Assistant Area and event organizer.

By fostering partnerships and collaboration, the St. Helena Ag Day served as a stepping stone towards building a more resilient and food-secure Greensburg. Youth and adults were able to learn from experts at the SU Ag Center, LSU AgCenter, Muse 3 Farm, Gailee Cattle Co., Homeland Security, and local farmers. "We are thrilled to witness the overwhelming response from the Greensburg community," added Muse.

Thanks to the support of generous sponsors, vendors, and the catering team, the event was a resounding success.





# *Faculty & Staff* HIGHLIGHTS

## **Dr. Katara A. Williams Nominated Into Academic Leadership Institute (ALI) Residential Program**

Katara Williams, Ph.D., Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement and External Relations at the Southern University Ag Center, was nominated into the annual Academic Leadership Institute (ALI) residential program.

The residential program will be held Sunday, July 30 - Thursday, August 3, 2023 in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. The program offers an intensive, on-site learning and networking opportunity for rising leaders committed to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), including faculty of color, as they advance their careers within higher education.

Through ALI, colleagues will be assisted on a path to becoming presidents and provosts, and utilize the network of current and former presidents and provosts who have demonstrated leadership in DEI principles to provide a forum for more intentional and scalable mentoring of the next generation of such leaders.

ALI is a collaboration between Founding Directors Earl Lewis, of the Center for Social Solutions at the University of Michigan, and Dwight A. McBride, President of The New School.

The Academic Leadership Institute's mission is to increase the representation of rising leaders committed to issues of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, including faculty of color. The Institute will help colleagues on the path to becoming future presidents and provosts.

Williams earned a Bachelor's of Arts in Mass Communications, a Master's of Arts in Public Relations, and a Ph.D. in Public Policy, all from Southern University and A & M College.



*Dr. Katara A. Williams*



# *Faculty & Staff* HIGHLIGHTS

## SU Ag Center's Donovan Segura Served as the Keynote Speaker for Land-Grant Summer Meeting

Donovan L. Segura, Ph.D., Associate Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Title IX at the Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center will serve as the keynote speaker for the Association of 1890 Research Directors (ARD) and Southern Association of Agricultural Experiment Station Directors (SAAESD) Summer Meeting.

The meeting was held August 9-10, 2023 in Atlanta, GA. This marked the first joint meeting of these two organizations and focused on the development of impactful programming and relationship building among the 1890 and 1862 institutions at the state and regional levels.

As the keynote speaker, Dr. Segura demonstrated the importance of building relationships based on trust and mutual respect between the 1890 and 1862 Colleges of Agriculture.

The ARD is the federation of the 19 autonomous 1890 land-grant universities that provides coordination of research initiatives among member 1890 Institutions in cooperation with federal, state, and private partners.

SAAESD is one of five regional associations with responsibilities for facilitating the cooperation of regional and national research.

Dr. Segura also serves as a Professor of Public Policy and Public Administration at Southern University and A&M College. In March, he was sworn in as the President-Elect of the Conference of Minority of Public Administrators.

He earned a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, a Master of Arts in Social Science, and a Doctor of Philosophy in Public Policy Administration, all from Southern University and A&M College in Baton Rouge.

*Dr. Donovan Segura*







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