



# SEEDS *of* SUCCESS

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

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# Southern University and LSU Ag Centers Held a Successful Joint Annual Conference

Over 500 agricultural research, extension, teaching, nutrition, and youth development professionals from the Southern University Ag Center, Louisiana State University AgCenter, the Southern University College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences, and the LSU College of Agriculture participated in the 2023 Joint Annual Conference. The event was held December 13-14, 2023 on the LSU campus.

The opening session featured USDA Foreign Agricultural Service Administrator Daniel Whitley as the keynote speaker. Whitley gave an enlightening message on climate change, Africa, and food security. Our Chancellor-Dean Dr. Orlando F. McMeans also discussed the ongoing tripartite mission of the SU Ag Center and how the work being done has led to a significant increase in student enrollment and participation during the session.

Several faculty and staff members were recognized for their hard work and service to the Ag Center and the College during a recognition program following the opening session. The following SU faculty and staff were recognized during the program:

- **Saturn Douglas** received the Outstanding Academics Award.
- **Dr. Devaiah Kambiranda** received the Outstanding Research Award.
- **Joshua McDonald** received the Outstanding Extension Award.
- **Si-Arah McCray-Jones** was named the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Champion.
- **Ervin Antoine** received the Facilities Award.
- **Allison Ezidore-Tassin** received the Communications, Technology, and Advancement Award.
- **Chianti Primus** received the Administrative Assistant Award.



Faculty and staff members from the SU Ag and College of Ag also presented on various topics highlighting the work being done in their areas and presented their research during a poster session on the second day of the conference.

The goal of the conference was to provide the faculty and staff from both institutions with the opportunity to engage and collaborate with other professionals, as well as identify program priorities that expand and enhance the universities' collaborative efforts.





# Southern University Ag Center Signs MOU with St. Kitts and Nevis Ministry of Education



The Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Saint Kitts and Nevis Ministry of Education.

The signing of the MOU by Dr. Orlando F. McMeans, Chancellor-Dean of the Southern University Ag Center and the College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences, on December 27, 2023, was hosted by Dame Marcella Liburd at the Government House in Basseterre, Saint Kitts and Nevis. The ceremony was led by Saint Kitts and Nevis Honorable Prime Minister Dr. Terrance Drew and H.E. Hadiya Claxton, Special Envoy for Investment, Development & International Business Relations, along with other government officials.

Through the MOU, the SU Ag Center will provide sustainable and environmental agriculture consultant services to the Minister of Agriculture Hon. Samal Duggins, which will assist the region's farming community by providing the latest insights and expertise in areas of sustainable agriculture, climate change, and medicinal plants (specifically medicinal cannabis). The Ag Center will also offer certification courses in vendor food safety.

The Southern University delegation consisted of Myron K. Lawson, Chairman of the SU Board of Supervisors; Dennis J. Shields, President-Chancellor of the Southern University and A&M College; Dr. Rani Whitfield, M.D., Vice Chairman of the SU Board of Supervisors; Dr. Allen Vital, Ph.D., Chief of Staff for the Office of the President; Dr. Tracey Taylor-Jarrell, Coordinator of Board







Relations and SU Board of Supervisors; Dr. McMeans; Dr. Renita Marshall, Vice Chancellor for Academics, Student Services, and Associate Dean of the SU College of Ag; Dr. Jose Toledo, Vice Chancellor for Research at the SU Ag Center; Dr. Janana Snowden, Director of the Southern Institute for Medicinal Plants at the SU Ag Center; and Dr. Katara Williams, Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement and External Relations at the SU Ag Center. The delegation toured the Clarence Fitzroy Bryant College (CFBC), Bayford's Farms in Saint Kitts and the Nevis Agricultural Farm operations.

Additionally, Drs. McMeans, Snowden, and Whitfield provided information on medicinal plant research and innovations during a Medical Cannabis Forum organized by Dr. Garfield Alexander, CEO of the Marijuana Commission in the Ministry of Agriculture.

In September 2023, Southern University and A&M College President-Chancellor Shields and St. Kitts and Nevis Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Education, the Hon. Dr. Geoffrey Hanley, signed an MOU that

allowed for the acceptance of credits from the CFBC, in-state tuition rates, and recognition of Caribbean Secondary Education Certificate (CSEC) subjects for entry into Southern University by residents of Saint Kitts and Nevis.

The Southern University Ag Center's MOU officially began on December 27, 2023, and the first student has been admitted to the College of Ag's Urban Forestry Doctoral program.





# TEACHING

## Dr. Sanjay Batra Named Southern University's Outstanding Researcher

Dr. Sanjay Batra, BASF Endowed Professor and Chair of the Department of Environmental Toxicology in the SU College of Ag, received the Fall 2023 Outstanding Researcher Award from the Southern University Baton Rouge campus.



DR. SANJAY BATRA

The award was presented on Dec. 14 by the Southern University Office of Sponsored Programs.

Dr. Batra, who has been employed at Southern University since the Fall of 2014, leads a dynamic research group focused on unraveling intricate molecular mechanisms governing innate immunity and inflammatory responses induced by environmental pollutants. He is also actively contributing to diverse areas of research such as cancer and inflammation.

His many accomplishments include receiving the Regional Service Award (Asia-Pacific), Bursary Award, and the Young Investigator Award for contributions in Clinical Biochemistry, Immunology, and Lung Biology. Dr. Batra also received the 2019 Outstanding Researcher of the Year Award from the Southern University System.





# EXTENSION



## **Dr. Charity Schaffer Has Been Named Parish Chair of St. Helena Parish**

Dr. Charity Schaffer, Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center Assistant Area Extension Agent for Youth Development and 4-H in St. Helena and Tangipahoa Parishes, has been appointed the Parish Chair for St. Helena Parish.

As the Parish Chair, Dr. Schaffer plans to partner with the LSU AgCenter to ensure that all parish groups are being served effectively and to work alongside fellow local extension agents to develop strategies and affirmative steps for assuring open access to programs and services that will meet the needs of underrepresented groups within St. Helena Parish.

The position became effective on January 1, 2024.

Dr. Schaffer has served as a Youth Development Agent at the Southern University Ag Center for two years serving in both St. Helena and Tangipahoa Parishes.

She is a three-time graduate of Southern University's College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences earning B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees in Urban Forestry.





# EXTENSION

Center

## NMSDC Announces Expanded 2024 Acres Cohort Including Farmers from Louisiana

**Acres** | Cultivating Equity  
in Black Agriculture

The National Minority Supplier Development Council (NMSDC) announced an expanded 2024 Acres: Cultivating Equity in Black Agriculture cohort that includes farmers and ranchers from Louisiana and across the U.S. In its second year, Acres trains and certifies Black farmers and ranchers as diverse suppliers. Its goal is to help increase incomes as producers access new markets including commodities, grocery stores, restaurants, and other retail outlets.

In October 2023, NMSDC announced a partnership with the Southern University Ag Center to provide instructors and course material for





the Acres 12-week learning curriculum focused on growing program participants' capacity to take on major national contracts with NMSDC corporate members.

After the program concludes, NMSDC will assist them in obtaining their Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) certification.

Members of this year's cohort include:

- Jacqueline Alexander – Morale Orchards, Hood River, Ore.
- Ina Braxton – I Urban Farm, Covington, Ga.
- Dazmonique Carr – Deeply Rooted Enterprises, Detroit, Mich.
- Samuel Cobb – Sam Cobb Farms, Desert Hot Springs, Calif.
- Donnie Cochran – Cochran Farms, Clermont, Fla.
- Millie Coleman – Farmer Millz Farms, Macon, Ga.
- Tonya Cryer – Cryer Family Produce, Mount Hermon, La.
- Emory Davis – My Mark 61 Cattle Co., Bellville, Texas
- Arthur Eaton – Triple Eaton Farm, Mount Olive, Miss.
- Tope Fajingbesi, –Dodo Farms, Silver Spring, Md.
- Ronald Friday – Candy Friday Farms, Blythewood, S.C.
- Niki and Brandon Gerrins – Sonkissed Meadows, Sylacauga, Ala.
- Darlene Hillery Goodgame – Blue Heron Urban Farms and Sanctuary, Fairburn, Ga.
- Tamu Green – C.O.O.L. Farming, Ridgeland, Miss.
- Brian Guidry – Brian Guidry's Farm, Erath, La.
- P.J. Haynie – Haynie Farms, Burgess, Va.
- Robert Hearst – Rias Family Farm, Laurel, Ind.
- Demetrius Hunter – Black Farmers Hub, Norlina, N.C.
- Lovette Johnson – Foty Farm, Macon, Ga.
- Iris Lee – Lee Hemp Farm, Burlington, Wis.
- Christopher Muse – Muse 3 Farm LLC, Greensburg, La.
- Nia Nyamweya – Beauty Blooms, Silver Spring, Md.
- Jeremy Peaches – Fresh Life Organic, Houston, Texas
- George Poindexter – I am Health, Beauty, and Wellness Farms, Sawyerville, Ala.
- Raphaela and Elijah Polanco – Atlanta Harvest, Ellenwood, Ga.
- Kendrick Ransome – Golden Organic Farm, Tarboro, N.C.
- Sherman Reed – Five Pillars Farm, Eau Claire, Mich.
- Anita Roberson – Botanical Bites & Provisions, Fredericksburg, Va.
- Kenya Valentine – Hartwell MJ Ranch LLC, Pattison, Texas
- Todd Western – Western Family Farms, Maple Grove, Minn.

The increased support for the expanded cohort was made possible through leading agricultural and food companies Cargill and UNFI.

For additional information on the Southern University Ag Center's role in the learning curriculum, contact Brian Phillips, Ph.D., at [brian\\_phillips@suagcenter.com](mailto:brian_phillips@suagcenter.com).



# RESEARCH

Center



## **LaSalle Elementary School Presents: Giving the Gift of Literacy**

Southern University Ag Center Research staff members Dr. Dana Pollard, Felton DeRouen, II, and the Cooperative Extension Program's East Baton Rouge and East Feliciana Parish nutrition educator Chrishana Littlejohn-Thomas participated in LaSalle Elementary School's Holiday Book Fair festivities on December 5, 2023.

One of the events for the day included photos with "special guests." These special guests were a Hampshire Sheep, a Hampshire-Katahdin Cross Sheep, and a Lop Cross Rabbit from the Southern University Ag Center. The students were able to take festive photos with the animals and learned about animal husbandry, and all that Southern University agriculture has to offer.

Darby Smith, Ms. East Baton Rouge USA, and the 88th Miss Southern University, was also a featured guest.

The event provided a great opportunity to introduce agriculture to students at a young age.







## Makalia Scott is Using Research to Gain a Deeper Knowledge in Her Field

*This article was written with information provided by Makalia Scott, a senior Animal Science major.*

Senior Animal Science major Makalia Scott has been conducting research with Dr. Jodi Morton on the effects of dried hibiscus on the growth of fryer rabbits.

Through her research, the Jacksonville, Florida native has been able to show the effects of hibiscus on feeder rabbits' physical and organ growth and data on the alternate feeding solution to reduce overall feed costs.

Scott stated that getting involved in research allows the students to gain experience, deeper knowledge of their field, and a chance to network.





# Ag Sciences Student Tyler Jackson is Using His Research to Prepare for Post-Graduate Studies

*This article was written with information provided by Tyler Jackson, a junior Agricultural Sciences major with a concentration in Pre-Veterinary Medicine.*

Tyler Jackson, an Agricultural Sciences major with a concentration in Pre-Veterinary Medicine from Baton Rouge, La., has been researching the effects of supplementing dried oregano on breeding rabbit does and kits under the guidance of Dr. Jodi Morton.



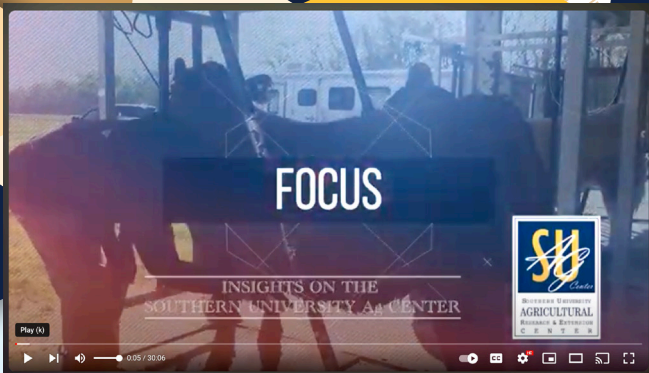
“We conducted this project in hopes of finding a way to reduce heat stress in female rabbits (does) which would in turn lead to better breeding outcomes,” stated Jackson. “We found that there was significant weight gain, wean success, and other signs when the does were fed oregano. Leading us to believe there was success in reducing heat stress,” he added.

“Undergraduate students should get involved in research for the overall academic benefits. As a student, you get to apply skills that you have learned in the classroom to a hands-on activity while preparing yourself for your post-graduate endeavors,” expressed Jackson.

For additional information on these student research projects, contact Dr. Jodi Morton at [jodi.morton@sus.edu](mailto:jodi.morton@sus.edu).



# COMMUNICATIONS



Watch The SU Ag Center's Focus: Insights on the SU Ag Center Show on the Southern University Ag Center's YouTube Channel. The show will feature information on how and what to plant in your garden during the Fall and Winter months, as well as how to protect yourself from COVID-19 and the Flu all year long! Watch the show at, <https://youtu.be/CdMs9spVIKQ>.

**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!"*

**Join us as we interview your Ag favorites, and bring you agriculture news.**

*Hosted by:*  
**Dexter "Dex" Newman**

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*Network Database Admin/  
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P.O. Box 10010  
Baton Rouge, LA 70813



(225) 771-2242



[www.suagcenter.com](http://www.suagcenter.com)



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