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# 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 Teaching Faculty Selected to Participate in Mississippi River Delta Transition Initiative Consortium

Southern University College of Agricultural, Human and Environmental Sciences assistant research professors Drs. Jacqueline McComb and Crystal Vance have been selected and awarded \$499,969 as a part of the \$22 million multi-member consortium effort led by Tulane University and Louisiana State University to seek ways to save the Lower Mississippi River Delta.

The Mississippi River Delta Transition Initiative, or MissDelta, works with the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine Gulf Research Program to establish a network of mentors to increase experiential learning opportunities for underrepresented groups participating in coastal research and workforce development.

"This funding allows our team to conduct intensive research while simultaneously creating research opportunities for students that will fill gaps in knowledge and understanding in the management of water and land," stated Dr. McComb, who is a professor of plant and soil sciences and will lead the efforts at Southern University as the primary investigator.

The Mississippi River Delta has faced increasingly intense hurricanes, rising seas, ground subsidence, and diminishing river sediment. During the five-year initiative, the consortium will mainly focus on testing alternative scenarios and solutions to increase the sustainability of the Mississippi River Delta's ecosystem and the economy that relies on it.

Southern University is one of six HBCUs in Louisiana and Mississippi included in the consortium. The other HBCUs are Alcorn State University, Dillard University, Jackson State University, Grambling State University, and Xavier University of New Orleans. The University of Southern Mississippi, the University of Central Florida, the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, the Louisiana Universities Marine Consortium, the Water Institute of the Gulf, and the College of William & Mary in Virginia will also participate in the initiative.

For additional information on Southern University's work with the Mississippi River Delta Transition Initiative Consortium, contact Dr. McComb at [jacqueline.mccomb@sus.edu](mailto:jacqueline.mccomb@sus.edu).





# TEACHING

## The College of Ag's Fab LAB Has Partnered with the East Baton Rouge Parish 4-H to Hold a Sewing Club

The East Baton Rouge (EBR) Parish 4-H FAB Lab Sewing Club is a collaboration between the SU College of Ag's FAB Lab and East Baton Rouge Parish 4-H Youth Development. The club is open to all 4-H members and FAB Lab Youth leaders. Participants will meet once a month to learn sewing, fashion design, and entrepreneurial skills and have the opportunity to compete in state competitions at the 4-H University held at LSU.

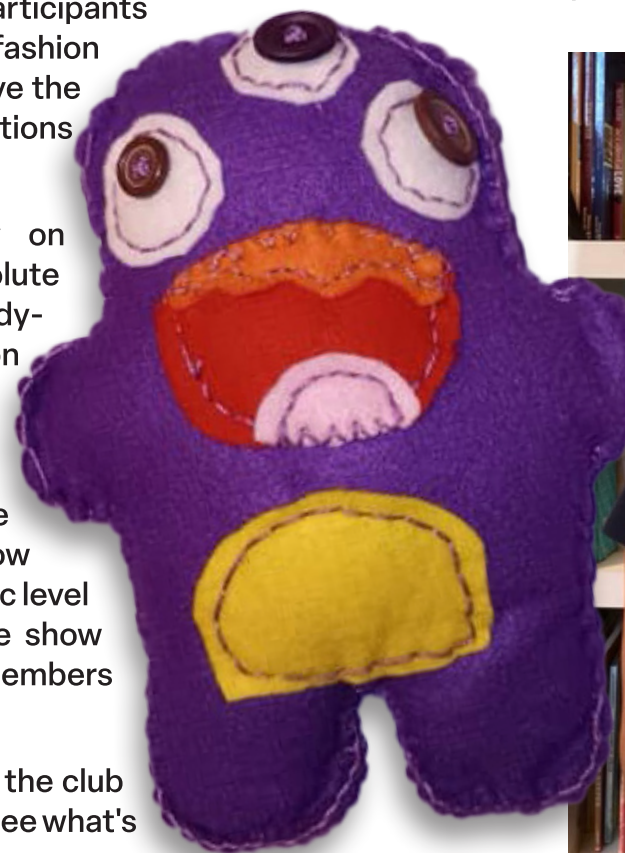
"We kicked off our sewing journey on Tuesday, October 17, and it was an absolute blast," expressed Dr. Samii Kennedy-Benson, Assistant Professor of Fashion Merchandising, Design and Textiles and FAB Lab Project Director. "Our first meeting was filled with laughter, learning, and fantastic company. We dove into the world of sewing and got to know each other while practicing some fantastic level 1 sewing skills. But the real stars of the show were the ADORABLE Felt Monsters our members created," added Benson.

Dr. Kennedy-Benson went on to say that the club members and their advisors can't wait to see what's in store for the months ahead.



The EBR 4-H FAB Lab Sewing Club is organized under the direction of Brandi Brister, Associate Extension Agent of 4-H Youth Development for East Baton Rouge Parish, and Dr. Samii Kennedy Benson.

For more information, please contact Ms. Brister at [bbrister@agcenter.lsu.edu](mailto:bbrister@agcenter.lsu.edu) or Dr. Kennedy-Benson at [samii\\_kennedybenenson@subr.edu](mailto:samii_kennedybenenson@subr.edu).





# Student SPOTLIGHTS

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

## Madison Smith

Madison Smith, a junior Animal Science major from Monroe, LA attended the Southeast Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (SEAFWA) 77th Annual Conference in Corpus Christi, Texas from October 15 -18, 2023.

Smith was able to attend the conference through the support of a Minorities in Natural Resources Conservation (MINRC) sponsorship.

***“I had an incredibly enriching experience. Engaging in workshops focused on refining essential skills such as elevator speeches and mock interviews was invaluable for my personal and professional growth,” said Smith. “The conference provided a platform to connect with passionate individuals who shared my interests, leading to the formation of meaningful bonds, and lasting memories. Additionally, I had the privilege of networking with experienced professionals in the field of Wildlife and Fisheries Conservation, gaining valuable insights and expanding my professional connections. This trip was a transformative experience, enhancing my knowledge and enthusiasm for natural resources conservation,” she added.***

## Christian Jacobs

Christian Jacobs is a junior Agribusiness major from Baton Rouge. He earned a first-place award for his paper, "An Economic Analysis of Factors Influencing U.S. Supply of Bell Peppers from 1970-2021," during the 2023 Conference of the National Association of African American Honors Programs.

The conference was held in Baton Rouge from November 1-4, 2023.

***“Jacobs dedication to exploring economic influences within the agricultural sector not only reflects his personal commitment to excellence but also exemplifies the scholarly values of our college,” said Keandrys Dalton, CAHES Student Support Specialist. “We commend Christian for his remarkable accomplishment and for upholding the high standards of academic inquiry and contribution.”***



## Colby Bonier

Colby Bonier, a senior Pre-Veterinary Medicine major from Natchitoches, LA, participated in the iHeart Radio "Black Effect, Thrill of Possibility Summit" presented by Nissan on November 3-4, 2023. This professional development weekend, which was held in Nashville, TN offered an exceptional platform for learning, engagement, and networking.

Bonier was selected as one of 50 students from various Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), out of a pool of over 2,000 applicants. The Summit featured hosts from the influential Black Effect shows and leading voices from Nissan USA. It stands as a confluence of thought leadership, where industry experts and entrepreneurs across the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) spectrum come together. The summit included dynamic super panels, conducted insightful breakout sessions, and provided mentoring opportunities, all focused on addressing the most relevant, current, and vital topics for today's scholars.

***The Summit allowed Bonier to absorb career insights directly from industry trailblazers, the ability to gain an invaluable perspective on the evolving job market, and strategies to apply that knowledge in innovative and impactful ways.***





# EXTENSION



## SNAP-Ed, Center of Excellence and Mental Health Hosts Fall Wellness Festival at Liberty Magnet High School

The Southern University Ag Center's SNAP-Ed Nutrition Education Program and its Center of Excellence in collaboration with Ashlyn Harrison, the Ag Center's mental health specialist, hosted a two-day Fall Wellness Festival for the freshman students at Liberty Magnet High School in East Baton Rouge Parish.

SU Ag Center Nutrition educator for East Baton Rouge and East Feliciana, Evan Egana said that this was an event she had been trying to put on since she started working with Liberty High. She aimed to keep students engaged by bringing new and exciting ways to teach nutrition education.

The SNAP-Ed program, along with the Center of Excellence partnered with Ashlyn Harrison, to encourage students to participate in "Mindful Stretching." Harrison demonstrated different stretches and brought students to their happy place through breathing and imagination.

Afterward, Egana and Brittany Howard, Program Coordinator for the Center of Excellence, provided a food demonstration on Monster Green Smoothies. Egana explained the importance of consuming well-balanced meals to help energize the students throughout the day with breakfast being the most important meal.

The students told Egana that they had never tried spinach in their smoothies before. After tasting it, they stated they could barely taste it due to the fruit overpowering the spinach taste. Egana and Howard explained how making smoothies is an easy way to get the MyPlate recommended servings of vegetables without tasting them. Overall, Egana says most of the students loved the smoothie and even said they would start making it at home.

This event was just one of SNAP-Ed's initiatives that provide research-based nutrition education that coincides with the USDA Dietary Guidelines and MyPlate Food Guidance System for qualifying individuals in communities throughout the 13 parishes the program serves.





# EXTENSION

SU  
Ag  
Center



## SNAP-Ed Provides Resources in “Health is Wealth” Community Festival

The SU Ag Center’s SNAP-Ed Nutrition Program participated in the “Health is Wealth” Community Festival at Southern University as part of the 2023 Homecoming festivities. The festival focused on providing health, wellness, and nutrition information with live DJs and free food.

The Nutrition Education Program contributed to the festivities by providing the campus community with free nutrition and physical activity resources. The team also made free samples of “breakfast rice,” an easy breakfast consisting of rice, eggs, and turkey bacon, for the campus community to try and encourage them to make it at home.

SNAP-Ed’s goal was to emphasize the importance of a hearty, healthy breakfast. At their table, the program highlighted the importance of eating a meal in the morning. Breakfast is often called ‘the most important



meal of the day,’ and for good reason. As the name suggests, breakfast breaks the overnight fasting period. It replenishes an individual’s supply of glucose to boost their energy levels and alertness, while also providing other essential nutrients required for good health.

They also said that despite the benefits of breakfast for your health and wellbeing, many people often skip it, for a variety of reasons. The good news is, there are plenty of ways to make it easier to fit breakfast into your day. The educators reiterated that breakfast rice takes less than 30 minutes to make and can be refrigerated for breakfast throughout the week.





## The SU Ag Center's Cooperative Extension Program Holds a Fall Garden Refurbishment at the O'Brien House

The SU Ag Center's SNAP-Ed Nutrition Education Program through the "Growing Healthy Gardens" Initiative collaborated with the SU Ag Center's Mental Health Specialist, Ashlyn Harrison on a Fall Garden Day at the O'Brien House.

In April, the team implemented several gardens on the site for the clients to tend to and enjoy. This fall, the O'Brien House invited the team back for a session on the benefits of gardening for mental health, a garden cleanout, and re-planting fall fruits and vegetables such as berries and greens.

The O'Brien House is a halfway house established in 1971 in Baton Rouge for adults, recovering alcoholics, and drug addicts. According to the website, O'Brien House's goals include helping recovering alcoholics

and drug addicts develop and/or restore strength, hope, and stability to their lives so that they become healthy, productive citizens. It offers a three-month comprehensive, multi-phase residential program based upon the American Society of Addictive Medicines (ASAM) Levels of Care criteria. This program utilizes cognitive-behavioral, rational emotive, and motivational enhancement therapies.

Both Harrison and Stephanie Elwood, the Growing Healthy Garden Coordinator, discussed with the clients the benefits of gardening in the recovery process. Harrison emphasized that spending time in nature has a healing effect on the brain. She said gardening benefits people emotionally, socially, physically, and spiritually; just looking at a garden can calm a person, reduce their stress, and recharge their mind.

Michael Landry, a client of the O'Brien House, said the gardening project was personal for him. Gardening has been an ever-present activity in his life through his grandmother. Landry and his grandmother used to spend hours planting and caring for their garden. He says the activity has always calmed him and reminded him of home.

Elwood explained that gardening saved her life—mentally and physically. She said the mental health benefits of gardening are real but the benefits of gardening for nutrition are just as important. Fresh produce promotes healthier diets and improved well-being, which in turn can translate to fewer cases of food insecurity and, overall, healthier lifestyles.

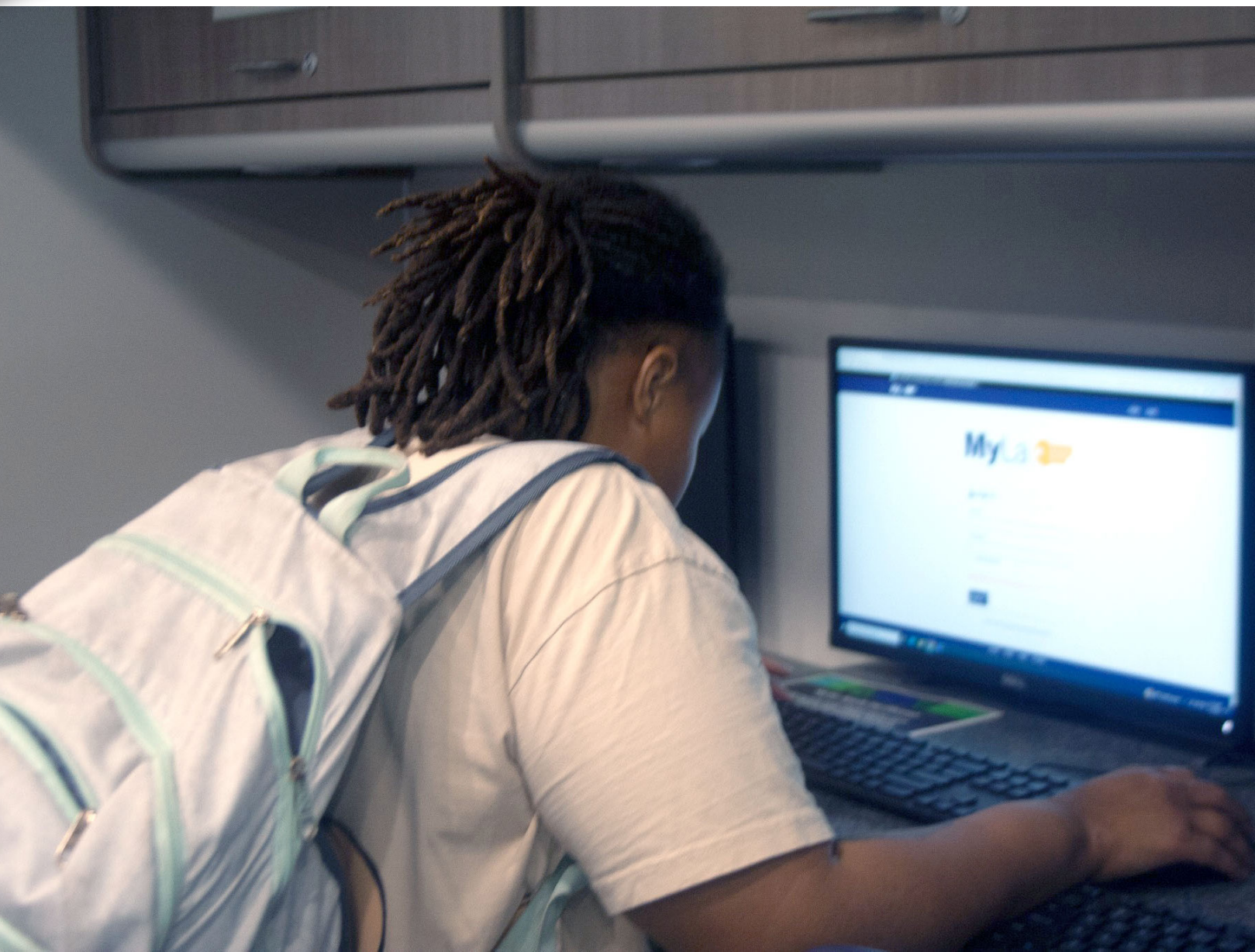




# EXTENSION

SU  
Center

## SNAP-Ed Hosts Second “Secure the SNAP” Event for SU Students



The SNAP-Ed Nutrition Education Program hosted its second “Secure the SNAP” during the second “JAGfresh” Farmers Market on November 9, 2023.

“Secure the SNAP” is an event created by the Nutrition Education Program for Southern University Students to make them aware that they qualify for EBT/SNAP benefits. Students were able to ask general questions and complete online applications onsite in the SU Ag Center mobile unit. According to the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services website, to be considered for SNAP a student must be enrolled at least half-time in an institution of higher education and meet at least one of the following requirements:

- Be under the age 18 or over 49
- Be physically or mentally unfit
- Receiving FITAP benefits
- Employed for an average of at least 20 hours per week and paid for such employment, or if self-employed, employed for an average of at least 20 hours per week and receive weekly earnings at least equal to the federal minimum hourly wage multiplied by 20 hours
- Participate in a state or federally-financed work-study program during the regular school year.

The Nutrition Education Program, as part of its service initiatives to the community, plans to host more SNAP awareness events for students in the future. For more information on “Secure the SNAP,” please contact Joshua McDonald at [joshua\\_mcdonald@suagcenter.com](mailto:joshua_mcdonald@suagcenter.com).





## Center of Excellence on Global Food Security and Defense Global Fellows Visit the SU Ag Center

The SU Ag Center hosted a delegation from Kenya through the Center of Excellence on Global Food Security and Defense (CEGFSD) on Oct. 19 and 20, 2023.

The delegation listened to presentations by staff from the SU Ag Center and the College of Ag and toured the Ag Center's greenhouse, Baton Roots Community Farm, Howell Park, and the Ag Center's Beef Cattle and Small Ruminants Program at its Research Station.

The visit was part of the project, Promoting Resiliency of the Agriculture Sector in Developing Economies in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic: A Project of the East/Southern Africa Cluster under the Leadership of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff.

It primarily focuses on Kenya and seeks to understand how and to what degree agriculture economies in Kenya experienced and responded to disruptions in the local food supply due to shocks in the food value chain of a local, regional, or global nature (considering the COVID-19 pandemic).

Collaborating partners in Kenya are Chuka University, the Kenya Agriculture and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO), Kenyatta University, and the University of Embu. The University of Ngozi is the Burundi partner.

Southern University serves as a United States partner and member of the East/Southern Africa Cluster. Other 1890 institutions that are members of the East/Southern Africa Cluster are Alabama A&M University, Florida A&M University, and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore.



# RESEARCH

Center

## Collaborative Research and Mentorship Between Southern University and LSU

*This article was written by Claire Scheufens, a junior at Louisiana State University (LSU). Scheufens served as a student intern at Southern University during the Summer and Fall of 2023 through the ASPIRE Undergraduate Research Program.*

In the College of Agriculture at LSU, there are numerous programs for students to participate in within their major. The ASPIRE Program at LSU offers internships to numerous majors, including my own, which is Animal Sciences. They also work in conjunction with Southern University and invite their students to apply to this program as well. During the spring of my sophomore year, I applied to this program to which I was then accepted and working at Southern University. Some experience I had before beginning my internship was competing in 4-H livestock shows with sheep and having a previous internship as an intern at Companion Animal Alliance that same spring of my sophomore year. Although I had experience working with animals before, this program allowed me the opportunity to expand my knowledge in all aspects of agriculture, not just with animals.

As part of the ASPIRE Program, a research project must be conducted and presented to the administration at the conclusion of the internship. My mentor, Jodi Morton, Ph.D., and I completed a research project on fermented feed with the seven grower pigs, consisting of Berkshire and Yorkshire. It was a 4-week project, and during that duration, we did weekly weigh-ins on each pig and swabbed their saliva to check their pH levels in the pig's oral cavity. Each morning, I would have to mix water and dry feed and wait for 3 days to allow it to ferment. After those three days, the fermented feed would then be fed to the fermented group. The results from this experiment stated that the control group doubled their weight compared



to the fermented group. For future experiments, we recommend changing the ratios while making the fermented feed or increasing the amount of feed for the fermented group compared to the control group.

Outside of research, my mornings at Southern University would consist of feeding the pigs, rabbits, and chicks at the swine and poultry unit. In addition, I got to work in various departments including the meats lab, plant and soil sciences, and the Southern University Ag Center. Some of the different activities that I accomplished included making sausage, teaching students about animals at outreach events, and working with other animals including sheep and goats. At the conclusion of my 10-week internship, I constructed a poster with information from my research and a PowerPoint in preparation for the research symposium. Being able to partake in a program like this and working at Southern University has taught me numerous things about my major, but it has also given me insight into all aspects of agriculture. The ASPIRE Program has given me the opportunity to reach for things that I couldn't imagine before, and I hope future students get to experience such an informative and illuminating program as this one.





# *Faculty & Staff* HIGHLIGHTS

## Odis Hill Recognized by the Louisiana Chamber of Commerce Foundation

Odis Hill, an Assistant Area Agent for Agriculture and Natural Resources at the Southern University Ag Center was recently honored during the Louisiana Chamber of Commerce Foundation's inaugural Louisiana Leads Luncheon on October 12, 2023.

The luncheon, which was held at the Hilton Capital Center in Downtown Baton Rouge, celebrated the Foundation's fifth anniversary of driving economic development and supporting minority business owners across Louisiana.

"I was just elated when I found out I was an honoree for the Louisiana Chamber of Commerce Foundation," said Hill. "It's a great feeling to know your efforts are not in vain. Acknowledgement builds confidence and makes you feel valued and it's a wonderful feeling to know that my efforts with the farmers and the community are noticed and having my family there to watch was extra special," he added.

Governor John Bel Edwards served as the keynote speaker for the event.

Additional honorees included Congressman Troy Cater, Senior Advisor Mitchell Landrieu, GSA Associate Administrator Krystal Brumfield, Mayor Nic Hunter, USDA Louisiana State Director Deidre Deculus Robert, Esq., SBA Regional Administrator Edward "Ted" James, AT&T Louisiana President David Aubrey, Joshua Hollins, Collis and Britney Temple, Toni Hackett antrum, Wendy G. Daniels, Vaughn Fauria, and Brittney Dunn.





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## OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS, TECHNOLOGY & ADVANCEMENT

Katara A. Williams, Ph.D.

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