

Southern Administrative Heads Updates and Highlights

Winter Meeting February 2024

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Clemson University College of Agriculture, Forestry & Life Sciences

Southern Administrative Heads Section Meeting

July 2023 – January 2024 Update

Organizational Structure

- On December 1, 2023, Clemson's Division of Public Service & Agriculture merged into the College of Agriculture, Forestry & Life Sciences (CAFLS). This brought several specialized units, Livestock & Poultry Health, Regulatory Services and six Centers/Institutes into the college.

Leadership

- Dr. Greg Yarrow became acting (now interim) dean of CAFLS on August 15, 2023. He became interim dean of the combined units on December 1, 2023. Clemson is currently recruiting for a permanent dean of the newly structured CAFLS, via Parker Executive Search Group. (Posting: <http://apply.interfolio.com/138488>)
- Former Vice President of Public Service & Agriculture, George Askew, is retiring April 1, 2024.
- Our Pee Dee Research & Education Center has hired Dr. Jane Dever (Texas A&M AgriLife Research at Lubbock) as its next director, beginning April 1, 2024.
- Our Edisto Research & Education Center is starting a search for its next director.
- Our Food, Nutrition, and Packaging Sciences department is actively searching for a permanent department chair.

Facilities

- Groundbreaking for new forestry and environmental conservation building is scheduled for March 1.

Budget

- The university continues to test "shadow" years as we approach the formal transition to a hybrid RCM budget. The change will coincide with a new enterprise resource planning platform for all HR and Finance systems.

Bragging Points

- Latest freshman retention rate of 94.5%.
- Latest 6-year graduation rate of 92.9%.
- 43% increase in graduate student enrollment over past 5 years, and the largest number of graduate student completions in the past 10 years.

LSU AgCenter IMPACT

Focused on research, teaching and extension to make advancements that will benefit current and future generations.

Highlights of the Louisiana State University AgCenter & College of Agriculture Southern Administrative Heads Section Meeting - Winter 2024

Leadership Changes:

- **Dr. Melissa Cater** was appointed as the Extension Associate Director for Field Operations and **Dr. Chiquita Briley**, as the Extension Assistant Director for Urban Programming, as of January 1, 2024.
- **Jennie Sparks** has been appointed as the Assistant Dean of the LSU College of Agriculture.
- **Dr. Adam Famoso** has been appointed Resident Director and Research Coordinator of the H. Rouse Caffey Rice Research Station near Crowley.
- **Dr. Dan Stephenson** has been appointed Research and Extension Central Region Director.
- **Dr. Kathryn Fontenot** has been appointed Research and Extension Southwest Region Director.

National Titles:

- **Louisiana 4-H** are the **2023 National Shooting Sports Team Champions**. This is their third national championship in the past four years.
- LSU College of Ag's Agricultural and Applied Economics Association (AAEA) **Academic Bowl Team** achieved an outstanding double victory at the **2023 Annual National Competition**.

Highlights:

- **The Center of Research Excellence for the Study of Invasive Species** was approved by the Louisiana Board of Regents. This Center will increase the understanding and control of invasive species. It will provide a framework for the creation of the **Mississippi River Invasive Species Consortium**, to collaborate with institutions in states along the Mississippi River on invasive species research, education and outreach.
- The Family and Consumer Science program changed their name to **Nutrition and Community Health** to more accurately reflect the community-based focus on the health and well-being of Louisianians.
- The LSU and Southern University held a **2-day joint ag research, teaching and extension conference** in December. More than 500 faculty attended the awards, poster presentations and professional development sessions.

TOP 15 RESEARCH RANKING
In Agricultural Sciences

\$101 Million
Total Research Expenditures
A 30% increase

\$46.2 Million
Grants and Awards

Commodity Board Research Grants
Rice \$1.75 Million
Soybean and Grain \$1.7 Million
Sugarcane \$1.39 Million



1 MILLION+

IN-PERSON REACH FOR
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

LSU College of Agriculture

LSU

Fall 2023 Statistics:

- 1,150 undergraduate students
- 324 graduate students
- 356 first-year students in the Freshman Year Center declared a major within the College of Ag
- 73% female & 27% male
- 33% of student population are HUG (Historically Under-Represented Undergraduates)

Scholarships:

- \$211,553 awarded in scholarships
--91 student recipients
--184 total scholarships awarded

College of
Agriculture



January 28, 2024

Division Leadership

- Nicholas Frank of Tufts University was selected as the next Dean of our College of Veterinary Medicine and began September 1, 2023.
- Angus Catchot was named Extension director and stepped into the new role on December 1, 2023. Angus had spent his career as an MSU Extension Entomologist before becoming the Associate Experiment Station Director. Darren Dodds is serving as interim Associate Experiment Station Director.
- Landscape architect and educator Anne Spafford has been named head of the Department of Landscape Architecture at Mississippi State University effective January 1, 2024. Spafford most recently was professor and associate department head of the Department of Horticultural Science at North Carolina State University.

Points of Pride

- Mississippi State University has received a five-year \$15 million extension for the Feed the Future Innovation Lab for Fish to address global food security challenges through aquatic food systems.
- Mississippi State University recently established the MSU Agricultural Autonomy Institute, a university-level center focused on research to minimize the impacts of farm labor shortages. Long-term goals include developing sensing and analytic capabilities of autonomous machines to make input decisions in the field at the level of a square meter or even a single plant.
- The National Science Foundation ranks MSU 11th nationally for agricultural research and 14th nationally for natural resources and conservation research funding.
- In 2023, Mississippi State's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences celebrated 120 years of teaching, research and service with events for alumni, faculty, students and staff.
- FY 2023 yielded a record number of grants and contracts awarded totaling more than \$143 million division-wide. This is an increase of 23% from FY22.
- Mississippi State Extension's PROMISE (Preventing Opioid Misuse In the Southeast) Initiative was awarded the National Innovative Programs and Projects Partnership Award from the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). As part of the project, the MSU-produced film, "On the Farm" was shown at USDA headquarters in Washington, D.C. as part of a farm stress and suicide prevention briefing.
- For the past nine years, College of Veterinary Medicine graduates have exceeded the national average passage rate for the North American Veterinary Licensing Examination.
- In 2022, the MSU CVM Shelter Medicine Program surpassed 100,000 surgeries since the first mobile veterinary unit was acquired in 2007. Last year, the program provided 8,000 spay and neuter surgeries across the state at no cost to animal shelters.
- A partnership with multiple conservation agencies is positioning Mississippi State University's Forest and Wildlife Research Center to manage and positively impact coastal forestland for teaching, research, and conservation of this vital ecosystem.



The 14,000 acres of bottomland hardwood and upland forests—part of the Coastal Headwaters Protection Initiative—are in Harrison County along the Wolf River.

Our People

- Mississippi State University President Mark E. Keenum serves as the Board Chair for the Foundation for Food and Agriculture Research (FFAR.)
- Derris Devost-Burnett, associate professor in MSU's Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences and the university's MANRRS co-advisor, has been elected national president for the professional organization. MANRRS promotes academic and professional advancement by empowering minorities in the fields of agriculture, natural resources, and related sciences.
- The International Academy of Wood Science honored MSU's department head for Sustainable Bioproducts, Rubin Shmulsky, with the designation of Fellow, recognizing his significant scientific achievements and research contributions to the field.
- Jason Krutz, director of the Mississippi Water Resources Research Institute and professor in the MSU Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, is a new American Society of Agronomy Fellow.
- J. Alex Thomasson, department head of Mississippi State's Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering, is the 2023-24 president of the Council for Agriculture Science and Technology (CAST.)

College Enrollment and Instruction

Fall 2023 enrollment remained steady with 2,461 students in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences; 617 in the College of Forest Resources; and College of Veterinary Medicine enrollment increased to 564. 2023 total: 3,642

New Construction

Present construction includes remodeling Ballew Hall for a CALS/MAFES administrative building, and we received an additional \$13 million to cover increased construction costs to remodel Dorman Hall for Plant and Soil Sciences.

The opening of the College of Veterinary Medicine's newly renovated and expanded Animal Emergency and Referral Center in Flowood in 2023 provides additional patient examination and treatment areas, larger surgery suites, a full-time veterinary surgeon, and in-house physical rehabilitation services.

State Funding

Our separately funded units received increases of 2.5 to 2.9% from the Mississippi Legislature. Tax revenue for the state this fiscal year continues to be significantly higher than last year. Our units made merit-based pay raises averaging 2% to faculty and staff this fiscal year. This year's request will include funding to cover increased retirement system contributions for state employees.



College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Administration

- Dean Garey Fox has been in his new role since August 2023.
- Current searches include Senior Associate Dean, Associate Dean and Director of Academic Programs, and Department Head of Biological and Agricultural Engineering.
- We are guided by a new CALS Strategic Plan for 2023-2030 with 10 strategic priorities focused on people, programs, and innovation.
- We are in the process of naming 12 new William Neal Reynolds (WNR) Distinguished Professors across our college (36 total WNR Distinguished Professors).
- Major efforts on innovative and interdisciplinary initiatives: Plant Sciences Initiative (PSI), Integrative Sciences Initiative (ISI), Food-Animal Initiative (FAI), Gene Editing, and Applied Artificial Intelligence in Agriculture (cluster hire program)

Research

- Contract and grant activity continues to increase: \$87.9M in January-December 2022 to \$127.9M in January-December 2023.
- Total new grants and contracts in 2022-2023 were \$106M with \$80M already through January 2024 for 2023-2024.
- Focus on IP and commercialization (statistics below are for calendar year 2023):
 - Number of new plant varieties released - 11
 - New commercialization agreements covering CALS IP - 61
 - CALS IP disclosures - 49
 - CALS patents filed - 85
 - CALS patents issues - 38
 - CALS royalties - \$3.46M
- Focus on digital agriculture with significant investment in research stations and field labs (RS/FL) high-speed internet connectivity.
 - 8 out of 20 RS/FL have on site access to high-speed internet (>250 mbs).
 - 4 of the above 8 RS/FL currently have high speed internet capabilities expanded out across the station for field research and data collection.
 - The remainder need significant investment before high-speed internet is available and we can build out field capabilities.

Extension

- We are working to enhance the use of artificial intelligence (AI) in agriculture and in daily activities of our agents. Our faculty are working with farmers to increase their skills in precision agriculture and big data.
- NC Cooperative Extension FCS agents are working to increase human health through better nutrition.
- 4H Update - 2023 was a comeback year for North Carolina 4-H, with participation numbers reaching 220,000, up from a pandemic low of 140,000 in 2020! This year 4-H introduced the Dinah Gore Healthy Food Challenge, with the winners, Nash county 4-H, competing in the National Food Challenge in Dallas, Texas in October. Finally, North Carolina 4-H teams won National Championships in Poultry Judging, Horse Judging, Horse Bowl, and Horse Skillathon.



College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Academic Programs

- \$1.88M in scholarships to 576 students
- 3,780 students enrolled in Fall 2023 with significant growth projected moving forward
 - 236 students in two year program
 - 2,645 students in 4-year programs
 - 899 graduate students
- New fully distance Agricultural Science undergraduate degree
- New PhD in Agricultural and Human Sciences (formerly an EdD in Agriculture and Extension Education)
- Focus on mental health with an embedded counselor and creation of a wellness council

Philanthropy and Foundations

- Endowed positions: 25 privately funded Distinguished Professorships (DP) with an endowment market value of \$62.4M; Four endowments in the queue for matching funds with an endowment market value of \$4.9M; One building to endowment DP with a \$1.8M commitment
- Graduate Student Support: Secured \$3.3 million in new gifts and commitments for graduate student support in FY24
- Total assets managed under the NC Agricultural Foundation: \$191,467,526 as of June 30, 2023.

Communications

- New leadership - Megan Lybrand as our new Chief Communications Officer (CCO)
- Across CALS social media accounts:
 - Ended 2023 with a combined 28k followers, a 15.6% increase compared to 2022
 - Garnered a combined 3 million impressions, a 46% increase compared to 2022
 - Received a combined 81k engagements (likes, shares and comments), a 52.7% increase compared to 2022
- Strengthening a culture of well-being and belonging by encouraging a “disruption for good”:

As a member of the Wolfpack, your work is vital, and you are critical to the success of the Pack. Continue to commit to excellence in your role as a valuable member of the CALS team and don't be afraid to disrupt for good.

*For the strength of the Pack is the Wolf,
and the strength of the Wolf is the Pack.*

– Rudyard Kipling



CARET/AHS Update, January 2024

1. Personnel

- Jayson Lusk started as Dean and Vice President of the Division of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (OSU Agriculture) on August 1, 2023.
- After a national search, Shane Robinson was selected as the next head of the Department of Agricultural Education, Communication, and Leadership; The previous head, Rob Terry, will return to faculty.
- A number of faculty searches and hires are underway in a variety of fields ranging from extension meat's specialist, quantitative animal genetics, extension cotton specialist, natural resource economist, and a water management extension and research faculty member.

2. Infrastructure

- New Frontiers Agricultural Hall is scheduled for completion in July 2024. The \$115 million, 190,000 square foot facility will house 6 academic departments, classrooms, student-facing administrative and support functions, and modern teaching and research laboratories.
- Plans are underway to update and modernize the agronomy farm, including new greenhouses supporting the wheat improvement team and a new research and education center supporting soil and water testing as well as plant diagnostics laboratories.
- The grand opening for the Horticulture Education Center at the Botanic Garden was held in December. Workshops and other events are already underway in this new classroom.

3. Administration

- Financial team modernization within OSU Agriculture has been completed, bringing departmental personnel into one centralized unit.
- IT centralization within OSU Agriculture has been completed.
- Plans are underway to transition to professional student advising at the College and University levels.



NOURISHING HEALTHIER, MORE SUSTAINABLE
UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES, AND CULTIVATING
STUDENT LEADERS ACROSS TEXAS AND BEYOND

While there are many highlights, the most noteworthy is the 100% state match, a first ever for us, and a big “field leveler” with the 1890 family and also smaller, regional 1862s. The true significance is reflected in the numbers: Texas, one of the largest and fastest growing state in the nation, has a total of 254 counties and an estimated five million underserved residents (out of a 30 million total population). Prior to the full state match, funding constraints restricted our service area to only 56 counties and an estimated one million residents served. The full state match together with growing NIFA capacity funding, will enable us to double both. With a recently renamed and rebranded College, and powered by our innovative staff, students, stakeholders and new technologies, we are **on trajectory to enhance our impact and extend our reach not just across the state but beyond**. Our mandate is to build on an already solid foundation of academic, outreach and research programs, target new audiences and amplify our message to existing audiences in ways that are more synergistic, relevant, and transformative. For example, our ability to offer programs to audiences such as limited English proficiency (LEP) households, home-schooled students, veterans, those impacted by disasters and many more has been greatly enhanced. *PVAMU Wellness in Houston* (<https://www.pvamu.edu/cafnr/pwh/>) is one example of a transformative evidence- and research-based outreach program that is on track to become a national model to **overcome inner-city health disparities and promote healthier lifestyles**. Improving our capability to offer training and upskilling opportunities will hasten the utilization of artificial intelligence (AI) and related technologies which, in turn, should enhance availability and accessibility of educational and outreach programs and services to more areas and underserved audiences across the state than was previously possible.

We are also strengthening expertise of how best to apply **cutting-edge research areas** such as genomics, biosecurity and biodiversity to improve the quality of life and living standards of underserved communities, limited resource landowners, and small and rural businesses. One example is an NIH-funded study that will apply AI to precision nutrition interventions for nutritionally-insecure Texans. Complemented by **academic programs in national need areas (such as a new MS in Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences; proposed new MS in Nutritional Sciences; and a planned new PhD in Food Security and Sustainability)**, we are on track to become an even more impactful, innovative and transformative 21st century land grant college. With our strategic rural location just outside Houston, the fourth-largest city in the country and the energy capital of the world, an 800-acre campus farm that is ideally positioned to become a model for **sustainable, low carbon footprint and high-protein, nutritious food sources** (such as goats, algae, and medicinal plants) our scientists are even better positioned to discover nature-based solutions to address health- and diet-related diseases, climate change and food insecurity through value-added products, nutraceuticals, bioenergy, and climate-smart agriculture.

By continuing to foster a culture of excellence in **Food, nutritional, water, energy, and climate security** targeted to low-income and underserved audiences, we are better strategically positioned to nourish healthier, more sustainable underserved communities, and cultivate student leaders across Texas and beyond. The rest of our story culminating in this historic milestone is documented here:

<https://www.pvamu.edu/cafnr/>

APLU / S-AHS Winter Meeting PROGRAM UPDATES

South Carolina State University

SCSU has been approved to open a new College of Agriculture, Family and Consumer Sciences. The inaugural dean starting October 1, 2023 is Ralph Noble. The college is made up of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Family and Consumer Sciences. Undergraduate degree programs include Agribusiness, Family and Consumer Sciences with concentrations in Child Development, Dietetics, Fashion Merchandising and Nutrition and Food Management. Graduate program include M.S. in Nutrition and Food Management. M.S. in Agribusiness exist in collaboration with MBA in College of Business and Information Systems. Priorities include increase student enrollment, increase in student success matrix and expand impactful academic programs that align with Agriculture Research and Cooperative Extension.

SOUTHERN ADMINISTRATIVE HEADS SECTION

July 2023 - January 2024 Highlights

- **Research:** During the 2022-2023 fiscal year, Tennessee State University secured more than \$100 million in grants. TSUAg was awarded a record-breaking \$47 million in extramural grant funding. Dr. John Ricketts led in grant awards by securing an \$18.1 million USDA NIFA NextGen grant entitled “NEXTGENeration Inclusion Consortium for Building the Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Human Sciences Pipeline (FANHP).” NextGen is a partnership between TSU, Fort Valley State University, Alcorn State University, the University of Houston, Chief Dull Knife College, Middle Tennessee State University, University of Tennessee – Martin, University of Tennessee – Knoxville, Virginia Tech, Vanderbilt University, and the Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences organization. Universities involved in this partnership will provide students and communities with programming, scholarships, internship opportunities, and study abroad opportunities, among other activities.
- **College Restructuring:** The College of Agriculture began in the fall the transformative process to grow our academic department offerings from two to five. The Tennessee State University Board of Trustees and Tennessee Higher Education Commission have approved the college restructuring, introducing three new academic units. With the structural changes in place, new heads of departments include Dr. Korsi Dumenyo (Agricultural Sciences and Engineering), Dr. Prabodh Illukpitiya (Agribusiness and Education), Dr. Samuel Nahashon (Food and Animal Sciences), and Dr. Bharat Pokharel (Environmental Sciences). Dr. Veronica Oates was named the permanent Chair of the Department of Human Sciences.
- **Study Abroad:** In partnership with the University of Tennessee-Martin, TSUAg led a Fashion Abroad study abroad program in Italy. Eleven students spent seven weeks learning new cultures and studying fashion in Milan, Sienna, and Florence. Additionally, in collaboration with Virginia Tech University and the University of Bambe, three students had the opportunity to participate in an extension-focused study abroad in Senegal. Through a project entitled “Illuminating Agricultural Extension and Education Career Opportunities for STEM and Liberal Arts Undergraduate Students.” Students perfected their craft by attending training in food safety and canning before taking the program internationally.
- **Campus Farmers Market:** In the fall semester, TSUAg launched the Tiger Fresh Farmer’s Market to create a place where discussions about food safety, food insecurity and nutrition can happen. Led by Dr. Veronica Oates, the Tiger Fresh Farmer’s Market provided a hard and fast location to purchase farm-to-table vegetables. This initiative was funded by the USDA Agricultural Service Farmers’ Market Team.
- **Otis L. Floyd Nursery Research Center:** As part of a \$6 million grant awarded to Dr. Karla Adesso at the TSU Otis L. Floyd Nursery Research Center, the Center hosted the Joint Ambrosia Beetle and Flatheaded Borer Stakeholder Advisory Workshop from January 23rd to 25th. Over 80 attendees participated in research talks and discussions, both in-person and virtually across three days.
- **New Academic Program:** TSUAg received approval from the Tennessee Higher Education Commission to offer an M.S. in Agricultural Business and Leadership. The new program began in fall 2023.
- **Accreditation:** In its November 1, 2023 meeting, the AAFCS Council for Accreditation voted to grant accreditation to the Department of Human Sciences. The accreditation is for a period of 10 years, expiring in the fall of 2033.
- **Honors and Awards:** Dean Chandra Reddy was named a recipient of the AgInnovation: Science that Feeds the World Award. Dean Reddy received the 2023 award for excellence in leadership, serving the land-grant university system with exemplary distinction.

Associate Dean De’Etra Young was awarded the APLU and USDA National Teaching Award for Excellence in College and University Teaching in the Food and Agricultural Sciences.



DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION

University of Arkansas System

University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture
February 2024 SRAHS Meeting Update

EXTENSION

- Dr. Nina Roofe accepted the Assistant Vice President of Family and Consumer Sciences position.
- Dr. Bob Scott, previous director, returned to a Professor position in Crop, Soil & Environmental Sciences effective January 2, 2024.
- Dr. John D. Anderson accepted the position of Senior Associate Vice President for Agriculture – Extension and Director of Cooperative Extension Service as of January 2, 2024.
- Kevin Lawson, District Director – Ozark District, moved to Faulkner County into a county Extension agent – agriculture position beginning January 1, 2024. The district director position has been advertised; a search & screening committee named. We hope to have a person named in the next months.
- Dr. Vic Ford, Associate VP for Agriculture & Natural Resources, retires at the end of January. We are working to post the position and begin the process of filling it.
- Extension grants awarded Fiscal YTD as of 12/31/23 – 52 proposals for a total of \$6,362,018.

RESEARCH

- Agricultural Faculty (175) published 511 peer-reviewed research manuscripts in calendar year 2023 and were awarded \$21M in new grants for the last 6 months of 2023. Licensing revenues for FY23 were \$3.7M.
- Lanier Nalley and Trent Roberts were named as interim department heads for agricultural economics and agribusiness and crop, soil and environmental sciences while national searches are underway. <https://aaes.uada.edu/news/nalley-roberts-appointed/>
- Dr. Terry Howell was named Department Head of Biological and Agricultural Engineering <https://aaes.uada.edu/news/terry-howell-bioag-engineering/>
- Arkansas Leads \$3.57M National Effort to Improve Disease Resistance in Spinach. The grant is funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture Specialty Crop Research Initiative to expedite the development of spinach cultivars that are resistant to fungal pathogens. <https://aaes.uada.edu/news/spinach-disease-resistance/>



DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION

University of Arkansas System

- UADA hosted USDA officials in conjunction with the Agri-Food Innovation Summit in November 2023. <https://aaes.uada.edu/news/agri-food-innovation-summit-usda-nifa/>
<https://aaes.uada.edu/news/inaugural-agri-food-innovation-summit/>
- UADA hosted the 1st International Avian Influenza Summit and had 1,850 registrations from 80 countries. <https://aaes.uada.edu/news/avian-influenza-summit-2023/>
- The Arkansas Food Innovation Center at the Market Center of the Ozarks, also known as AFIC@MCO, is a food processing center part of the Division of Agriculture’s food science department. It will operate out of the Market Center of the Ozarks, a 45,000-square-foot local food facility in downtown Springdale built with support from the Walton Family Foundation as part of the Northwest Arkansas Food Systems initiative.
<https://aaes.uada.edu/news/afic-at-mco-director/>
- The 30,000sqft headquarters building at the new Northeast Rice Research and Extension Center is set to open in August 2024.
<https://aaes.uada.edu/news/nerrec-groundbreaking-post/>

ACADEMICS

- Jeff Edwards was named Dean of the Dale Bumpers College of Agriculture, Food, and Life Sciences and Senior Associate Vice President – Academic Programs, University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, effective January 1. He previously served as Department Head for Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness.
- Bumpers College enrollments increased this past fall, continuing a 15-year trend; the College saw undergraduate enrollments climb by 7.58% and graduate enrollment increase by 2.66% over the previous year.
- The Department of Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness saw the largest percentage increase, up 17.33% with 351 undergraduate students and 35 MS students.
- The first-year retention rate was 86.5% (up 3% over the previous year).
- As enrollment has increased, so has the number of students graduating:
 - AEAB graduated 70 undergrads and 17 grad students;
 - ANSC graduated 61 undergrads and 8 grad students; and
 - POSC graduated 15 undergrads and 10 MS students and 4 PhD students.

Southern Academic Heads Section

University of Florida, IFAS

Rob Gilbert, Interim Senior Vice President

ragilber@ufl.edu

Leadership

- Scott Angle, former UF/IFAS SVP, was named permanent Provost at the University of Florida in January, 2024. Rob Gilbert, Dean for Research, will continue to serve as the Interim SVP for UF/IFAS for the foreseeable future.
- We anticipate naming an Interim Dean for Research later this spring.

Budget

- Current total budget for IFAS is nearly \$500M per year. NSF HERD ranks UF#1 for agriculture and natural resource spending.
- FI state recurring dollars to UF have grown from \$380M in 2015 to \$720M in 2024. We expect a good budget year this session as well for both UF and IFAS. We have legislative budget requests pending for nutrient management research, an AI in agriculture center (second half of funding), agriculture enterprises accelerator, microbiology teaching laboratory, 4H facilities, and REC student dorms.
- A strategic funding initiative from President Sasse was initiated in Fall, 2023. UF/IFAS had 4 projects funded: crop transformation center, connecting students with cultivated and natural spaces to promote wellness, using business intelligence to modernize Extension through AI, and an innovation hub for urban pest management.

Other topics

- We are welcoming Dr. Shannon Horrillo as our new Associate Dean for UF/IFAS Extension Families, Youth and Communities in March. Dr. Horrillo comes to UF/IFAS from USDA-NIFA, where she served as the Director of the Division of Nutrition in the Institute of Food Safety and Nutrition.
- Total enrollment is stable at ~6600 students; (3900 undergraduate; 2300 graduate; 400 non-degree seeking; ~1000 of graduate students are in fully online, self-funded programs)
- Our AI initiative continues, with a recent visit from Oregon State University on how to launch a similar initiative there. Faculty are highly engaged in teaching courses with AI content. In CALS, 18 unique AI-tagged courses were offered between summer and fall 2023 with 492 students enrolled. In Spring 2024 CALS will offer 23 AI courses with 910 students currently enrolled.
- We launched a three-year pilot of AG-NGINE, a national name exchange to facilitate graduate program recruiting.



College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences

Leadership Updates:

- Josef Broder, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, retired from UGA on December 31, 2023. Dean Kopsell, formerly of the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, will be assuming the role of Associate Dean for Academic and Faculty Affairs on February 1, 2024.
- Laura Perry Johnson, Associate Dean for Extension, plans to retire in spring 2024. We are currently conducting a national search for our next Associate Dean for Extension.
- Todd Applegate was recently named Assistant Dean for CAES International Programs – he will also remain as Department Head of Poultry Science.

CAES Academics:

- We currently have 1,521 undergraduate students and 686 graduate students, which is a 7.3% increase since fall 2022.
- CAES and the UGA School of Law recently established a 3+3 program which enables students in select CAES majors to apply to the UGA School of Law a full year early, beginning their Juris Doctor courses during the fall of their fourth year of study.
- We recently updated the purpose and name of the CAES Office of Diversity Affairs to become the CAES Office of Diversity and Inclusive Excellent (ODIE). ODIE provides student support services and programming, including professional development, working beyond race and ethnicity to also include first-generation and rural students.

CAES Research:

- CAES just completed a multidisciplinary greenhouse renovation and addition, which enables us to increase our research in Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA). This \$5M project added 8,000 square feet of greenhouse and other space to support 26 faculty members.
- We have invested \$1M/year toward upgrades in equipment and infrastructure identified by our REC superintendents to improve our facilities across the state.
- The Institute for Integrative Precision Agriculture (IIPA) is Georgia's brand for digital farming, food and fiber. The IIPA has grown its faculty membership to 76 and internally awarded \$252,641 in seed grants and \$548,945 in equipment grants during FY23.

UGA Extension:

- UGA Extension completed 1,808,305 face-to-face contacts with Georgians in FY23.
- We are currently staffed at 331 agents across 159 counties – of those agents, 141 are agriculture and natural resources agents, 129 are 4-H and youth development agents, and 61 are family and consumer sciences agents.
- UGA Extension has continued its work in rural and farmer stress that encompasses mental health, substance use, and related aspects of emotional stress and wellbeing. Outreach includes online resources, training for county agents, and an annual farm stress summit.

Philanthropy

- The college received a historic gift from the Gatton Family Foundation in the amount of \$100 million.
- Committees are working hard to meet the priorities of the gift and set a significant future for the college.

Engagement

- The college hosted an inaugural Engagement Academy in September 2023 for faculty and staff to learn more about engaged scholarship and how they can develop cross-campus/community programs.
- Nine land-grant engagement awards were extended in 2024; investing more than \$180,000 in creative, multi-disciplinary projects with collaborators from academic disciplines, Extension and the community.

Facilities

- The college is in the midst of a comprehensive and historic transformation of its capital infrastructure with more than \$530 million in new facilities coming online in the next several years.

Scovell Hall – The \$70 million project returns to the college to its historic home with a comprehensive renovation and expansion of the facility. The facility will house several academic programs (Dietetics/Human Nutrition, Human Environmental Sciences), college administration, new classrooms, dining, and student success/life space.



Martin-Gatton Agriculture Sciences Center – The \$60 million project will add new classrooms and student life space to the college’s campus. The facility will include new dining options, space for student organizations and clubs, and 15 new classrooms.



Agricultural Research Complex – The more than \$250 million project is central to the college’s research enterprise. The new facility will include nine teaching labs, a 250-seat auditorium, new headhouse and greenhouse complex, soil analysis lab, 63 research labs, necropsy and vivarium, plant analysis lab, and space for offices, meetings, and industry engagement.



Meat and Food Workforce Development Center – The \$90 million project will provide state-of-the-art space to train the next generation of meat processors, add-value to the agriculture value chain, improve workforce health and safety, and ensure a safe and plentiful food supply.



USDA-ARS Laboratory – The \$65 million project is home to UK scientists and the USDA-ARS Forage Animal Production Research Unit. The 48,000 square foot facility will include six USDA research teams and seven UK research teams, a new headhouse, and new greenhouse complex.



University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture Highlights for Winter 2023 (Covering July–December 2023)

Leadership Additions/Changes

- Keith Carver was named the permanent senior vice chancellor and senior vice president of UTIA on September 19. Carver began serving in the interim role as a two-year assignment on March 1.
- Jim Thompson retired from the College of Veterinary Medicine after serving 15 years as dean. Robert DeNovo has been named the interim dean and a search is underway to name the permanent dean.
- Charley Deal assumed the role of vice chancellor of advancement on December 1. Prior to joining UTIA he served in the same role at UT Martin.
- The search for a new associate vice chancellor for business and finance is in the final phase with onsite interviews planned for early 2024.

Construction

- The finishing touches are being made to the new \$100-million Agriculture and Natural Resources Building on the Knoxville campus. It is expected to be ready for classes to take place in fall 2024.
- A state-of-the-art 4,000-square foot testing facility of natural grass sport fields has been erected at the East Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center Plant Sciences Unit. The facility is designed to support the development of natural grass playing fields under different climatic/geographical conditions for the FIFA 2026 World Cup games, a partnership of the United States, Mexico, and Canada.
- Planning is underway to construct a state-of-the-art, 15,000-square-foot center for protein innovation at the East Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center Blount Unit. The facility will be used for workforce training, student experiential learning, and cutting-edge research related to meat processing, meat quality and safety, and meat products development.
- Planning is underway to establish a next-gen smart broiler research facility at the Middle Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center in Spring Hill. It will consist of four commercial-scale broiler houses and a research laboratory. The facility will be used to conduct research, workforce training, and demonstration of technologies for broiler industry producers and allied industries.

College News

- The Herbert College of Agriculture experienced record enrollment at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The three largest majors were Animal Science, Construction Science and Management, and Wildlife and Fisheries.
- The Agricultural Leadership, Education and Communication major completed its first year of an online undergraduate program in Interdisciplinary Agriculture. This is one of the first two undergraduate online degree programs at the University of Tennessee.
- The College of Veterinary Medicine received notice it is fully accredited by the American Veterinary Medical Association's Council on Education. The next accreditation site visit is in March 2029.
- The UT Creamery officially opened in August and has become a popular site on campus for students, faculty, staff and the public. It is a partnership between the Herbert College of Agriculture's Department

of Food Science and the College of Education, Health and Human Sciences Department of Retail, Hospitality and Tourism Management.

Strategic Initiatives

- UTIA continued the strategic planning process by holding a series of listening sessions with internal audiences and stakeholders across the state. The plan will be produced in 2024.
- UTIA set a new record of research expenditures in FY23. AgResearch also set new record in contracts and grants received for fiscal year 23, 232 percent increase relative to the prior year.
- The UT Center of Farm Management worked with local, county, and state stakeholders and other Extension personnel to develop an interactive, parcel-level Farmland Loss Database. The tool is the first of its kind to quantify and project farmland conversion with the precision necessary for use by state and municipal government leaders and policymakers as well as Extension agriculture and natural resources agents and specialists to ensure that our work continues to benefit the residents of our rapidly developing state. Tennessee is ranked third in the nation for farmland loss to development.
- Last year, 18 new faculty members with a research appointment in reimagined strategic areas were hired across seven departments and one school. UTIA is leading two of UT Knoxville's seven cluster hires, climate-smart agriculture and forestry and bioinformatics, and is participating in two other cluster hires.
- UTIA hosted the Second US Precision Livestock Farming Conference, which drew 219 participants from 22 countries and 32 US states. A \$50,000 USDA-NIFA Conference grant was awarded to attract low-income producers and underrepresented groups to attend the conference.
- UT Extension Family and Consumer Sciences unveiled its 2023–2028 FCS Strategic Plan at the 2023 Tennessee Extension Family and Consumer Economics Professional Conference.
- The Tennessee Extension Leadership Academy launched fall 2023 with a 20-person cohort of Extension professionals and several Extension administrators.
- UT Extension received Employer of the Year for 2023 from the international association representing administrative professionals from many sectors (i.e. manufacturing, health care, education, technology, etc.), over 7,000 members, and more than 76 countries around the world.
- Ten veterinary educators from eight Philippine universities completed a four-month fellowship focused on veterinary education, research, and extension; this fellowship is funded by the USDA Foreign Agricultural Service. Faculty mentors for the fellows will travel to the Philippines in 2024 to complete a reciprocal visit.
- The College of Veterinary Medicine hosted a three-day Veterinary Educator Boot Camp in Knoxville with more than 80 participants from 10 regional veterinary schools attending. Sponsored by the Southeast Veterinary Education Consortium, the event featured sessions on student learning in clinical settings, creating successful clinical rounds, veterinary nurses in clinical education, developing practice readiness skills, professionalism, incorporation of veterinary social work in clinical education, and other topics.
- The College of Veterinary Medicine hosted 37 anatomic pathology trainees from 14 veterinary schools in the US and Canada, as well as five governmental or private laboratories in the US and Korea. The intensive five-day course is for trainees preparing for the certifying exam for the American College of Veterinary Pathologists.



Highlights

ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Three new Bachelor of Science degree programs in Animal Science, Agricultural Business, and Agroecology have been approved by the UVI Board of Trustees in the fall of 2023 and that brings the total number of academic programs being offered in the School of Agriculture to fifteen: Six certificates, Four associate degrees, and Five bachelor of science degrees.

The School of Agriculture (SOA) recruitment activities consisted of visits to community-based organizations, schools, summer programs, and participation in career fairs and UVI campus activities. These outreach efforts, along with individualized communication to prospective students through phone calls, emails, office visits and support throughout the admissions process, were highly effective in boosting SOA enrollment. Recruitment activities will extend to include a series of Fall semester SOA open houses/information sessions targeting specific groups, such as traditional students and parents, high school counselors, and undecided UVI students. Other recruitment activities included participation in VI-EPSCOR's Workforce Development STEM Institute, Adult Education Career Fair, and Future Farmers of America (FFA) Chapter Leaders workshop.

A ten-year MOU was signed between the UVI and Oscar Henry's Farm, Inc. to allow the School of Agriculture to develop the premises into an Agricultural Research, Teaching, and Extension Center (ARTEC) to be used for faculty research, student experiential learning, and community farm/garden demonstrations.

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

Another successful UVI Ag DISCOVERY PROGRAM was conducted on the UVI Albert A. Sheen Campus from July 16-29, 2023. Fifty-one applications were received, from which 22 were selected to attend; included nine (9) local applicants, (7) from St. Croix and (2) from St. Thomas - the highest number of VI applicants since the program's inception in 2016. Additionally, one 2022 and two 2023 participants are now enrolled in the UVI School of Agriculture for Fall 2023.

CES partnered with the VI Good Food Coalition organization to host the St. Thomas Agriculture Resources Workshop and Listening Session on Tuesday, August 8th. The Agriculture Resources Workshop provided the opportunity for farmers to meet with technical assistance and federal resources partners for consultations related to agriculture and business assistance needs. Farmers had the opportunity to meet one-on-one for consultations and participate in workshops related to finance and business best practices.

A tree propagation workshop was conducted on June 1st. This workshop emphasized vegetative methods propagation such as cuttings, and air layering. The workshop demonstrated how to grow different plant species using methods that will produce plants that are identical to the plants.

UVI Pesticide Safety Education Program (PSEP) Trainings were presented by Dr. Amy J. Dreves (Extension Specialist III-Pest Management) in-person and virtual (7-hours each) from January 3 – Sept 30, 2023, for USVI. Over 100 participants attended PSEP trainings, which included: two CORE Pesticide Safety and Integrated Pest Management (IPM) classes, and six CATEGORY classes (one Right of Way - weed management), one Public Health, one Ornamental and Turf, one Agriculture Plant Pest, and two Institutional, Industrial, Structural Health Pests); and two all-day Refresher Recertification Training for those clients within 6 months prior to their license expiration or within 120 days grace period after expiration.

In the 4-H Healthy Habits Program. teens served as “teens as teachers” in their roles as 4-H Health Ambassadors to successfully provide 8 hours of direct healthy living engagement. Teens engaged over 360 youth enrolled in 15 summer camps and programs in improving their nutrition literacy and exploring what a healthy lifestyle is. Eight (8) teens were referred from VIDOL Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) to serve as 4-H Health Ambassadors, including five 4-H teens and three new referrals.

An IGNITE by 4-H – Lead 2 Change (L2C) Project “Grow It and Done” proposal developed by Virgin Islands teens attending IGNITE Conference was selected and awarded an implementation grant in the amount of \$2,000.

The 2023 World Food Day observance, co-sponsored by the V.I. Department of Agriculture, was held on Sunday, October 15th. on the grounds of the AAS Campus. The theme, selected by the Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, was “Water is life, water is food. Leave no one behind.” The observance promotes awareness, seeks to highlight the challenges associated with poverty and world hunger, and encourages action to help feed the less-fortunate people in the territory. Over 5,000 vegetable seedlings, along with descriptive crop production handouts, were distributed to the public.

A two-day Livestock Pasture Management training and tours on St. Croix was held on December 7 and 8th. The program consisted of presentations on the proper management of tropical pastures, by faculty of the University of Puerto Rico, Mayaguez Campus. The topics included: Pasture Weed Management; and Forage Species. Field trips were conducted to the AES livestock research locations, and three livestock farms. This was done in collaboration with the University of Puerto Mayaguez, Mayaguez campus faculty and staff (60 participants).

A 4-H Youth Garden Workshop was conducted involving eight schools and youth groups (39 youth and 8 teachers/educators). The workshop topics were: Seeds and Seedlings; What Makes a Good Soil Great; Selecting the Best Garden Site; Farm to Table; and Take a Peek at Pests. The Expanded Foods and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), in partnership with the UVI Early Child Development Labs – St. Croix and St. Thomas, conducted basic nutrition education outreach for over 28 young children and their parents. The lessons augmented and reinforced nutrition activities being offered at each center.

AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION

A mini workshop on remote sensing analysis (NASA EPSCoR grant) was held on June 6th, 2023, with nine UVI researchers and students. A tour of the breadfruit orchard for VI-ISERP/Workforce Development field trip was conducted for 38 STEM educators (local high school instructors on June 19th, 2023. A tour of soil lab equipment for 4-H students attending the SOA CES Summer Camp Program (31 total) was led by MMES student Race Stryker. June 29th, 2023.

Native trees were donated to the Virgin Islands Rare and Endangered Plants Initiative (20 trees), VI Department of Planning and Natural Resources (101 trees) and St. Croix Environmental Association, 11 *Tabebuia heterophylla* (pink trumpet tree).

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Stryker, Race. 2023. The effectiveness of local and exotic vegetative buffers at reducing runoff generation and sediment production in the United States Virgin Islands. Master's thesis, UVI Master of Marine and Environmental Science. Chair: Hensley, D.A.

John-Baptiste, S. D., Hensley, D. A. 2023. Different Virgin Islands agricultural soils affect water uptake and growth, but not total biomass, of a cover crop. Poster presentation, University of the Virgin Islands Research Symposium, 17 September 2023.

Awika, Henry O., Yvonilyn Lawrence, Jessica Ewer, Thomas Zimmerman, Johnson Southwell and Donna Gonzalez (2023). Spectrometric estimation of total flavonoids, anthocyanin, and fiber in the leaf and root tissues of radish (*Raphanus sativus* L.) under different irrigation regimens. ASA/CSSA/SSSA. Nov. 1. 2023. St. Louis, MO.

Awika, Henry O., Yvonilyn Lawrence and Donna Gonzalez (2023). Machine-learning of leaf derived vegetation indices that can predict the content of water, flavonoids, and carotenoids in carrot roots. ASA/CSSA/SSSA. Nov. 1. 2023. St. Louis, MO.

Lawrenz, W., Bryan, S., Stevens, E., Wilson, Z., Mathurin, D., Greene, A., Carlos, S., and Ehinmowo, O. 2023. "Building stronger communities: The social impact of Agricultural Cooperatives". 52nd Annual Agriculture and Food Fair of the USVI. 2024 (AGRIFEST). Boykins-Winrow, C. 2024. Amaranth's Potential as an Important Feed Component in Various Animal Diets. Agriculture: Our Future and so much more in 2024. Agriculture & Food Fair of the U.S. Virgin Islands (Agrifest). University of the Virgin Islands Cooperative Extension Service.

Lamani Santiago, a senior student, created all the illustrations for **Amy Jo Dreves** and **Laura Martin** peer-reviewed publication titled, "How to Store Pesticide Products in Tropical

Environments” University of the Virgin Islands, School of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service; Extension Bulletin UVI-SOA-CES-IPM # 000b4.

Lamani Santiago, a senior student, created all the illustrations for **Amy Jo Dreves** and **Laura Martin** peer-reviewed publication titled “Reasons Why a Pesticide Product is Not Working, University of the Virgin Islands, School of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service; Extension Bulletin UVI-SOA-CES-IPM # 000b5.

FACULTY AND STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Awika, O. H., Lawrence, Y., Zimmerman T. W. and Ewer, J. 2023. Spectrometric estimation of total flavonoids, anthocyanin, and fiber in the leaf and root tissues of radish (*Raphanus sativus* L.) under different irrigation regimens, CFCS July 2023 - Grenada.

Bennett, E. R., Castro, **M. P., Waddell, K., Guannel, G., Lancellotti, B., Hensley, D. A.**, Metcalfe, C.D., and Yargeau, V. 2023. Contaminants of emerging concern in coastal waters in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands. Poster presentation, Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry North American Annual Meeting, Louisville, KY, 12-16 November 2023.

John-Baptiste, S. Dasani and Hensley, D. A. 2023. Different Virgin Islands agricultural soils affect water uptake and growth, but not total biomass, of a cover crop. Poster presentation, University of the Virgin Islands Student Research Symposium, St. Thomas, September 17, 2023.

Joseph, Samuel and Zimmerman, T. W. 2023. Deflowering Jicama for Reduced Time to Harvest. Caribbean Food Crop Society. July 10-14, 2023. Grenada.

Joseph, Samuel and Zimmerman, T. W. 2023. Sweetpotato: Influence of Cutting Length on USVI Production. American Society for Horticultural Sciences 2023 Annual Conference. July 29-August 5, 2023. Orlando, Florida.

Lancellotti, B. V., and Hensley, D. A. 2023. Freshwater data scarcity in the U.S. Virgin Islands: Implications of limited intermittent stream monitoring. Oral presentation, American Geophysical Union, San Francisco, CA, 11-15 December 2023.

Lancellotti, B. V., Hensley, D. A. 2023. Detection of heavy metals and VOCs in streambed sediment indicates anthropogenic impact on intermittent streams of the U.S. Virgin Islands. *Scientific Reports* 13:17238. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-023-44455-2>

Zimmerman, T. W. 2023. Midnite: New sorrel cultivar for the USVI. Caribbean Food Crop Society. July 10-14, 2023. Grenada.

GRANTS AWARDED

Awika, O. H. and Thomas W. Zimmerman. Remodelling and Equipping Postharvest Facility for Teaching and Student Research. 2023. *USDA-NIFA-RIIA-AGFEI*. **\$199,448/3yrs.**

Henry O. Awika (PI). Improving cucurbit production in protected structures in the U.S. Virgin Islands. USDA-AMS through VI. Department of Agriculture. November 2023 through September 2026. \$74,463.

Samuel Joseph (PI), **Thomas W. Zimmerman** (co-PI). Propagation of Java Plum (*Syzygium cumini*). USDA-Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) through the VI. Department of Agriculture. November 2023 through September 2026. \$49,997.

GRANTS SUBMITTED

Amy Jo Dreves. December 2023. Submitted an EPA eXtension Foundation Pesticide Safety Education Management Program (PSEFMP) grant titled, “Wood Boring Destroyers in the Home and Trees”: pocket guide and poster for \$18,175. *Pending.*

Brantley, E., Guannel, M., Hensley, D. A., Knappenberger, T., Vogel, J., Zamor, R. 2023. “Ghuts, Grit, and Gills: Synthesis of Hydrologic, Water Quality, and Ecosystem Data for Climate Adaptation Planning.” Grant proposal submitted to USGS Southeast Climate Adaptation Science Center. Amount requested: **\$150,000.** *Pending.*

Hensley, D. A. 2023. “Assessing arsenic and soil salinization risk of Sargassum used in crop growth, agricultural compost, and upland waste piles in the US Virgin Islands.” Grant proposal submitted to Southern SARE. Amount requested: \$30,000. *Pending.*

Virginia Tech Updates for SR-AHS Meeting (January 2024)

Academic Enrollment:

Although the number of undergraduate applications to Virginia Tech has continued to increase significantly in recent years (currently >50,000 applications for fall 2024 first year class), the growth in undergraduate student enrollment has been limited due to infrastructure capacity (currently near 31,000 undergraduate students). Consequently, undergraduate enrollment in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (nearly 3,000) has been fairly steady over the past several years. There are plans for increasing student housing capacity, so that enrollment can grow. Graduate student enrollment in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences has grown to approximately 660 graduate students.

Budget:

Governor Youngkin presented the Executive Budget proposal for the 2024-26 biennium to the Virginia House Appropriations and Senate Finance and Appropriations Committees in December 2023. The Governor shared that Virginia's economy continues to exhibit strength, projecting a \$1.0 billion revenue surplus over the biennium. Combined with expected surplus revenue in the current fiscal year, the proposed budget projects a total of \$2.4 billion incremental general fund (GF) revenue for the 2024-26 biennium; however, this news is tempered by continued economic uncertainty and projected increases in mandatory spending items. When the General Assembly convenes in January, legislators will consider the Executive Budget proposal along with several budget amendments, including amendments that provide additional funding for Virginia Tech, Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE), and Virginia Agricultural Experiment Station (VAES). In recent years, VCE and VAES budgets have been receiving increases in new funding to support personnel (new faculty positions and increased compensation for recruitment and retention), new technology and equipment, and IT infrastructure and maintenance.

Capital Projects:

Many new capital projects have been underway at Virginia Tech, including the construction of the new Innovation Campus in Alexandria, VA (<https://www.vt.edu/innovationcampus/index.html>). Virginia Tech's and the Commonwealth's investments in new capital projects also showcases the university's commitment to boost Virginia's agriculture and food industries. The most recent major capital project completed this past year in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences was a multi-year project to upgrade, renovate, and replace livestock and poultry facilities (campus farm sites). Improvements have included a new swine research and education complex, new and renovated cattle research and education facilities, new broiler and turkey research and education facilities, and new equine facilities.

USDA Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities Grant:

An \$80 million grant from the United States Department of Agriculture involving Virginia, Arkansas, Minnesota, and North Dakota officially started this past fall. The grant (largest in Virginia Tech's history) will fund a pilot program that incentivizes producers to implement climate-smart practices on farms of all sizes and commodities. A three-year pilot program will test the feasibility of rolling out a similar program on a national scale.

Search for New Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences:

Alan Grant has announced his plan to retire in October 2024, so a national search for a new dean has been launched: <https://kfopportunities.loop.jobs/job/Korn-Ferry-Executive-Search-Blacksburg-Virginia/213777655> OR <https://faculty.vt.edu/academic-personnel/recruitment/senior-search-information.html>



2023 Southern Administrative Heads Updates and Highlights

- **\$45.8 million in overall grant funding** - we've increased our external funding by 14% in fiscal year 2023
- **Urban and Community Food Complex** – we've broken ground on a new, \$15 million building at the N.C. A&T State University Farm, linking Food and Nutritional Science, Animal Science and Agrobusiness curriculums with community food entrepreneurship
- **\$18.1 million USDA NextGen Grant** – N.C. A&T is leading an \$18.1 million USDA NextGen Workforce award called "System Approach to Promote Learning and Innovation for the Next Generations (SAPLINGS.) The grant will bring professionals and leaders in food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences together with students K-12 and beyond to interest and encourage their study of the many aspects of agriculture.
- **AI/Analytics Software Platform** - The N.C. General Assembly allocated \$1 million for N.C. A&T to acquire an analytical software and AI platform, in partnership with the SAS Institute. The platform will be available across research, Cooperative Extension and academic areas.
- **1,105 Students and Growing** - Fall 2023 enrollment included 132 graduate students and 973 undergraduates for a combined total of 1105 enrolled students - maintaining our position as the largest College of Agriculture among the 1890 Land-Grant Institutions.
- **Accelerated Bachelor/Master's Programs** - Approved for the Agricultural Education, Animal Science, and Agricultural and Environmental Systems programs, and the Agribusiness and Food Industry Management and Sustainable Land and Food Systems concentrations, to begin in Fall 2024, allowing students to complete their Bachelor's and Master's degrees in the same field in five years. Applications for the program will begin in Spring 2024.
- **Graduate Program in Dietetics** – the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics (ACEND) approved this concentration as part of N.C A&T's Food and Nutritional Sciences program, to begin in Fall 2024.
- **\$700,000 in Scholarships** - Deserving students across all CAES departments have received \$700,000 in scholarship funding.
- **USDA Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities Program** – Researchers in the college have been awarded \$550 thousand over five years (starting in 2022) to provides technical assistance to more than 1,000 U.S. cotton farmers across the U.S.
- **Environmental Justice Project** - The Environmental Justice program area priority within USDA NIFA has awarded nearly \$1M to Chyi-Lyi Liang, Ph.D., of Cooperative Extension at N.C. A&T, to lead a team in identifying strategies to evaluate the effectiveness of public investments in underserved communities.
- **"Emerging N.C. Pork Leaders"** - Five undergraduate students from the N.C. A&T Swine Group were accepted in the first cohort of the North Carolina Pork program, where they are able to interact with swine scientists, industry leaders, and executives.
- **Landscape Architecture program** – this program continued its Fountain Lecture Series with U.C. – Berkeley and MacArthur Genius Grant Recipient Walter Hood '81; won first place in an international competition to design a memorial at the historic Scanlonville site; continued its "Diversity by Design" initiative, which has raised \$292,000 since 1981 The program also went through a successful reaccreditation process in 2023.
- **Fashion Merchandising and Design program** - seniors participated in New York Fashion Week for the first time.

