

Southern Administrative Heads Updates and Highlights

Winter Meeting, February 2, 2026

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**Division of
Research and Economic Development
and 1890 Land-Grant Programs**

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**Southern Administrative Heads Updates and Highlights:
Central State University
February 2, 2026**

- Dr. Adrian Petway joined CSU as CFO on 06/26/2025
- Dr. Amy Hobbs-Harris was appointed as the Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs on 08/18/2025
- Dr. Jose U. Toledo started as the VP of Research and Economic Development and Director of 1890 Land-Grant Programs on August 01, 2024
- Dr. Frank Hall started as the Dean of the CESTA on July 31, 2025

Research Update:

- The Agricultural Research and Development Program (ARDP), the research division of the Land-Grant Programs at Central State University, continued its research efforts addressing critical issues during the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-26 aligned with the USDA Strategic priorities. The research plans focus on four critical areas: (i) Plant and Animal Systems, (ii) Food Nutrition and Health Systems (FNH), (iii) Natural Resources and Environmental Systems, and (iv) Advanced Technologies and Commercialization Systems.
- Dr. Jessica Hartshorn was hired as the Associate Professor of Forestry, on June 02, 2025. She provides leadership for the McIntyre-Stennis program at CSU
- Hiring of a new Assistant Professor in Agricultural Economics is underway.

Funding update:

- USDA/NIFA, Evans-Allen capacity funds to support agriculture research at the 1890 Land-Grant institutions. FY 2025-26: \$5,637,089
 - CSU total external funding: For FY25: \$41,751,746.
 - Land-Grant external and competitive related funding: \$29,308,879.

Extension update

- CSU Extension hired 13 new educators in FY 2025 to increase capacity and meet the needs of Ohio communities. The educators were hired in the program areas of Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, and Community and Economic Development.
- CSU Extension's Family and Consumer Science program area started a maternal health program to address the health disparity in some black and brown communities and provide resources and support for expectant and new mothers.

- CSU Extension's Community and Economic Development program has created workforce development classes for communities in high-poverty areas. These classes help community members develop resumes and sharpen interviewing skills, while connecting them to skill-building workshops in high-demand jobs.
- CSU Extension's Agriculture and Natural Resources and 4-H Youth Development are working with communities to develop learning opportunities through agriculture. Urban farms are supported with production and business classes while the youth learn entrepreneurship and career opportunities through local, urban farms.

Infrastructure update:

Central State University's Research and Demonstration Complex (RDC) is steadily transforming from blueprint to reality.

- **Research Facility**
- A state-of-the-art 40,000 sq. ft. research building is under construction in different phases. After completion of the current phase, it will include soil and water; food science and nutrition; smart agricultural technologies; a core shared instrumentation lab; and other expertise associated with plant biotechnology and genomics. Additional new labs and a public-private partnership opportunity for students, faculty, and communities to engage in cutting-edge research and technology transfer for economic development.
- **Storage Facility**
 - NIFA has approved the construction of a 24,000 sq. ft. farm storage building, which will begin soon.

Information on lost or consolidated departments

- CSU is currently undergoing consolidation and elimination of a few academic programs as required by the State's Senate Bill 1. More information will be shared as the final approval materializes.

Submitted by:

Jose U. Toledo, Ph.D.

Vice President for Research & Economic Development
& 1890 Land-Grant Program Director



Clemson University College of Agriculture, Forestry & Life Sciences
Southern Administrative Heads Section Meeting
Update – July 2025 – January 2026

Leadership

- In November, Dr. Carlyle Brewster, the chair of the Department of Plant and Environmental Sciences (PES), was named the acting Associate Dean for Research (ADR) and Agricultural Experiment Station Director. A process has been initiated to name the Interim ADR and Ag. Experiment Station Director, which will conclude in February. A national search will launch later this year to identify the permanent replacement.
- This past August, Dr. Ramesh Jeganathan started his term as the next (permanent) chair of the Department of Food, Nutrition, and Packaging Sciences.
- Dr. Jim Faust has been named the acting PES chair.
- An internal search is moving forward to identify the next permanent chair of the Department of Forestry and Environmental Conservation (FEC). This process will conclude later this spring.
- A national search is moving forward to hire the next permanent chair of the Department of Animal and Veterinary Sciences (AVS). This process will wrap up during the fall of 2026.
- Dr. Cole Smith began his role as Clemson’s next provost on January 1, 2026. Smith is a Clemson alumnus with a background in industrial engineering.
- Following the retirement of President James Clements, Dr. Robert Jones, our prior provost, began as the Interim President on January 1, 2026. A national search for Clemson’s next president is moving forward.

Strategic Planning

- We completed our new, 2025-2035, “**Boundless Impact**” strategic plan this past summer. It identifies six key priority areas, around which we are forming implementation teams. These are:
 - Curriculum + Student Success
 - Attracting and Retaining Exceptional Talent
 - Leveraging Our Statewide Footprint
 - Conducting High-Impact Research
 - Fully Engaging Stakeholders
 - Operational Efficiency + Excellence



Facilities

- Our new forestry and environmental conservation will be completed later this spring. It will include labs, offices, classrooms, and collaboration spaces.

Leadership Changes:

- **Dr. Matt Lee** served as the Interim LSU System President from June through November 2025. Wade Rousse is the current LSU President and James Dalton is the Exec. Vice President and Chancellor. Dr. Lee continues in his role as Senior Vice Chancellor of Agriculture and Dean of the College of Agriculture.
- **Dr. Michael Salassi**, Executive Associate Vice President and Director, Louisiana Agriculture Experiment Station, served as the Interim LSU Vice President for Agriculture and Dean of the College of Agriculture from June through November 2025. He continues as the LSU AgCenter Research Director.

National Titles:

- **Louisiana 4-H** are the **2025 National Shooting Sports Team Champions**. This is their fifth national championship in the past six years.

#12
AG SCIENCES RESEARCH
BASED ON FY24 NSF HERD SURVEY DATA

\$123 MILLION
Ag Sciences Research Expenditures
30.7% INCREASE
FROM FY23 TO FY24

Compare the **TOP 25 SCHOOLS** in Ag Sciences and scale by the size of the states' Ag Enterprise
WE RANK ...

- #5** in Ag Sciences Research Expenditures **PER ACRE**
- #1** in Ag Sciences Research Expenditures **PER FARM**
- #1** in Ag Sciences Research Expenditures **PER PRODUCER**

EXTENSION
STATEWIDE IMPACT

1.4M
IN-PERSON PROGRAMMATIC CONTACTS IN 2025

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

169K **58%**
4-H MEMBERS & PARTICIPANTS INCREASE FROM 2024 TO 2025

13K **FFA MEMBERS IN LOUISIANA**

STRENGTHENING INVASIVE SPECIES RESPONSE:
Secured **\$1 million** in federal funding (ARS) to launch the **Mississippi River Invasive Species Consortium**, coordinated by the LSU AgCenter to lead regional detection and management of invasive species efforts.

LSU College of Agriculture

Fall 2025 Statistics:

- 108 graduates at the Fall Commencement
- 81 bachelor's, 19 master's, and 8 doctoral degree recipients.
- Graduating class represented 37 Louisiana parishes, 10 states, and 11 countries.

Highlights:

- 100% placement for dietetic internships for 5 years.
- 94% of recent graduates report the College of Ag has prepared them for the job market.
- CoA achieved the **highest knowledge rate across all LSU colleges at just over 90%**.
- **43% of undergraduate** students completed at least one internship and/or co-op during their time at LSU.

Commodity Boards Research Grants

Rice \$1.67 Million

Soybean and Grain \$1.59 Million

Sugarcane \$1.47 Million

LOUISIANA SOLUTIONS
GLOBAL IMPACT





Institutional Updates, January 2026

DIVISION LEADERSHIP

- Associate Vice President Dr. Gary Jackson retired in fall 2025 after serving as Director of Outreach and Engagement.
- Dr. Joe Fratesi is serving as Interim Director of Outreach and Engagement.
- Dr. Darrell Sparks is serving as Acting Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and Acting Director of the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station, while Dr. Scott Willard serves as Interim Vice President for Research and Economic Development.

POINTS OF PRIDE

- DAFVM units received 44% of all MSU external grant awards in FY25, reflecting a 20% increase in funding.
- The National Science Foundation ranked MSU 14th nationally in agriculture and natural resources research expenditures.
- ScholarGPS ranks MSU among the top three institutions worldwide in aquaculture, animal health and weed control.
- Private giving to the Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine reached a record level in 2025, exceeding \$102 million.
- MSU officially accepted stewardship of the 14,000-acre Wolf River tract, to be managed by the College of Forest Resources.
- The MSU Deer Lab celebrated 50 years of nationally recognized research and outreach in deer biology, habitat management and land stewardship through a partnership between the Forest and Wildlife Research Center and MSU Extension.
- MSU Extension 4-H programs reached approximately 90,000 youth statewide.
- Mississippi State University was named a "Great College to Work For" for the 10th consecutive year.

OUR VISITORS

- Welcomed national leaders in agricultural science and technology for the Council for Agricultural Science and Technology (CAST) Annual Conference.
- Hosted U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins, who announced USDA Veterinary Medicine Initiatives at MSU.
- Hosted USDA Under Secretary Scott Hutchins for discussions on collaborative research opportunities.
- Hosted the American Kennel Club Diving Dogs Premier Cup, which was televised nationwide.

NEW INITIATIVES

- Launched the Food and Agriculture as Competitive Statecraft Collaboratory, which has received funding from DARPA.
- Established the Reed Family Endowed Professorship and the Food Science Innovation Hub within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station to strengthen food science research and industry engagement.
- The MSU College of Veterinary Medicine established the Center for Rural Veterinary Practice to address veterinary service shortages in Mississippi and rural America.
- The Mississippi Lumber Manufacturers Association Endowed Professorship in Innovative Wood Construction and Design was established in the College of Forest Resources' Sustainable Bioproducts Department, with a joint appointment in the School of Architecture. The endowment supports research in mass timber manufacturing and sustainable wood construction.
- Vision 2030, an initiative of Mississippi's agricultural and forestry sector, released its first report examining value-added leakage from the state.

FACILITIES AND CONSTRUCTION

- Dorman Hall was taken offline for a \$44 million renovation project.
- Broke ground on the Northern Gulf Aquatic Food Research Center.
- Reopened Ballew Hall following renovation.
- Reopened the newly renovated MAFES Sales Store.
- Converted the former A.B. McKay enology laboratory into a new conference center.
- Announced a strategic collaboration with Nancy Link and the MSU College of Veterinary Medicine to construct a state-of-the-art research facility and recruit faculty to advance research on laminitis, a debilitating equine hoof disease.



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE & ADVANCED TECHNOLOGIES

- MSU and the Agricultural Autonomy Institute hosted the 4th Annual AI in Agriculture and Natural Resources Conference, convening national leaders in artificial intelligence and agriculture.
- MSU researchers received the George Marra Award from the Society of Wood Science and Technology for groundbreaking AI-based wood species identification.
- The Agricultural Autonomy Institute is set to receive a \$2.5 million National Research Support Program grant to develop AI-driven autonomous agricultural systems. MSU is the lead institution, partnering with the University of Florida, Cornell University, UC Davis, and the University of Illinois.
- MSU is pioneering a partnership between the Agricultural Autonomy Institute and Hylio, a Texas-based drone manufacturer, to advance research and innovation in agricultural spray drone technology.

OUR PEOPLE

- Dr. Frank Owens, associate professor in the Department of Sustainable Bioproducts, was elected President of the Forest Products Society, a premier international wood products organization.
- Dr. Aswathy Rai received the 2025 USDA Excellence in College and University Regional Teaching in Food and Agricultural Sciences Award.
- Dr. John Green, director of the Southern Rural Development Center and professor of agricultural economics, was named the 2025 Rural Renewal Research Prize recipient.
- Dr. Pratima Adhikari, associate professor in the College of Veterinary Medicine, received the 2025 NOVUS Outstanding Teaching Award.
- Dr. Leslie Burger, associate teaching professor in the Department of Wildlife, Fisheries and Aquaculture, will receive The Wildlife Society's Excellence in Wildlife Education Award.
- Dr. Eric Stafne, professor of horticulture, was elected a Fellow of the American Society for Horticultural Science.
- Claire Green, a junior Biochemistry major from North Little Rock, Arkansas, was named MSU's newest Truman Scholar.

COLLEGE ENROLLMENT

- Fall 2025 enrollment increased across all three colleges:
 - College of Agriculture and Life Sciences: 2,697 students
 - College of Forest Resources: 637 students
 - College of Veterinary Medicine: 588 students
- Total DAFVM enrollment reached 3,922 students, the highest in the division's history

STATE FUNDING

- Separately funded units received legislative increases to offset rising retirement and health insurance costs.
- Units experienced modest increases and decreases for FY2026 operating budgets.
- The division implemented a 1.0% salary increase pool.
- No state bond funds were allocated for new building projects during this fiscal year.



2026 CAES Updates and Highlights – July 1, 2025 - March, 2026

Southern Administrative Heads Meeting

Leadership and Organizational Changes

- **Dr. Radiah C. Minor**, chair, Department of Animal Sciences, became interim dean of the college on July 1, 2025.
- **Dr. Uchenna Anele** is interim chair of the Department of Animal Sciences.

Academics and Student Success

- The college saw an **enrollment growth** to 1,271 students in fall 2025, an increase of 118 over fall 2024. CAES remains the nation's largest HBCU College of Agriculture.



- **The Ph.D. program's** fall 2025 enrollment was 56, a 460% growth from the 10 students at its inception in Fall of 2022. Eight PhD students, were among the fall graduates including William Lashley IV, the first to earn his B.S., M.S., and Ph.D degrees from the CAES and North Carolina A&T State University.

- **"Ag MBA"**: New dual degree pathway, the "Ag MBA", is a joint master's degree between the CAES and the Deese College of Business that allows students to earn a master's degree in business

administration and a master's degree in agricultural and environmental systems at the same time.

- **New concentration:** The food and nutritional science master's program now offers a concentration in **nutrition and dietetics**.
- **Karla Branch**, Animal Science Master's Student won first place in the Young Pork Advocates Issues Meet at the 2025 World Pork Expo.
- **CAES supports 120+ students/year** through our funded research projects and saw 88+ student's complete internships, 6 participate in study abroad opportunities and more than 150 participate in class field trips and conferences.
- **The Pathway 2 Human Lactation program**, currently the only postgraduate certificate training program at a public HBCU, received a \$2.5 million grant from the Melinda Gates Foundation to expand its efforts to support pregnant and post-partum women and prepare the next generation of human lactation consultants.



Extension and Community Engagement

- **Community Resource page:** The college and Cooperative Extension at N.C. A&T built a web page of Resources for the Community, highlighting food access, transportation access and mental health resources.
- **Small Farms Leadership 360**, an agribusiness initiative that teaches farmers and participants how to be more profitable, has relaunched. Twenty participants will attend four sessions throughout the year.
- **Grassroots Leadership Conference** is an annual fall event, attended by several hundred people, that draws community leaders and program specialists to learn community organizational and empowerment methods and provide local legislative access.

- **Agriculture Business Innovation Center (ABIC)**, a \$2.2 Million, USDA-funded, virtual agribusiness hub to provide training and hands-on assistance to agriculture-based businesses nationwide (with a primary focus on small-scale farming and related enterprises,) began programming this year.
- **AI and Robotics Training and Competitions** – Game of Drones, a state-wide coding challenge, has grown to include 19 teams from counties across the state, coding aerial and land-based drones to perform a series of challenges. Teams work with coaches and the college for 12 weeks prior.

Facilities and Infrastructure

- **Urban and Community Farm Complex** – \$12.2 million USDA-NIFA Facilities Grant Program is a food product-development incubator for the community, students and research into N.C. -grown products. Includes a food quality lab, sensory lab, safety lab and a creamery, for producing Aggie ice Cream. The facility is set to open this year.
- **Vivarium** - Core state-of-the-art facility supports biomedical research and increase the advancement of undergraduate, graduate, and post-doctoral training. The facility is working with \$5.1M NIH + \$4.5M Dept. of Education Grants to renovate and modernize the current space.
- **University Farm expansion** – recent purchases of 90 acres of adjacent land have increased the N.C. A&T University Farm’s size to 581 acres, its largest size in university history.

Awards, Honors and Points of Pride –

- **M. Ray McKinnie, Cooperative Extension administrator and CAES associate dean**, has been named one of N.C. State University’s Outstanding Alumni in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences; and has also received the George Washington Carver Award from Tuskegee University in recognition of more than 40 years as an educator and leader in his field.
- **Horticulture professor Gouchen Yang, Ph.D.**, was named a “HortLegend” by the American Society for Horticultural Science (ASHS).
- **Food scientist Shengmin Sang, Ph.D.**, has been awarded an R01 grant from the National Institutes of Health to study the benefits of whole grains on heart disease, and a four-year, \$1 million AFRI grant to study the potential health benefits to be gained by introducing elements of the popular Mediterranean diet into traditional Southern fare.



- **The Fashion Merchandising and Design program** was featured on PBS-NC in a series on HBCUs and fashion as part of the Black Issues Forum series in fall, 2025.
- The university is honoring **the 135th anniversary of the Second Morrill Act of 1890** with a year-long celebration that includes a farm-to-table dinner, a Student Showcase of Excellence with research and internship poster presentation and an AI coding competition.
- Cooperative Extension at N.C. A&T celebrates its **40th year of small-farms impact** this year with its 2026 Small Farms Week. The week-long event features educational forums, farm tours, workshops and the crowning of the 2026 Small Farmer of the Year, given to a grower with exceptional enterprise and community engagement.

The College of Agriculture and Life Sciences continues to focus on aligning workforce preparation with evolving industry and community needs, advancing research agendas informed by industry and Extension insight, and maintaining operational stability across its research, Extension, and academic missions. This work is grounded in strong partnerships with Farm Bureau, NCDA&CS, the NC Grange, and industry organizations, and reflects our shared commitment to a resilient, relevant, and trusted agricultural and life sciences enterprise.



ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

- Record enrollment - **4,471 students**
 - AGI students: **334**
 - Undergraduate students: **3,249**
 - Graduate students: **888**
- Fall Dean's List: **1,550**
- CALS Applications up **8% ↑**



EXTENSION

- New Associate Dean and Director Dr. David Monks installed
- **1,300+** Extension experts (campus & counties)
- Local Extension Centers: **101**
- Extension educational programs provided statewide: **28,000+**
- Extension's economic impact on North Carolina: **\$2.1 Billion**



PHILANTHROPY

- More than **\$58M** raised in FY24
- **950** Scholarships awarded
- **\$295,336,167** Total Endowment Value as of FY24
- Raised funding for National Egg Science and Technology (NEST) Lab, which will train current and future egg industry professionals on the latest technologies.



RESEARCH

- **121.6M+** Grants Awarded
- Novo Nordisk Foundation- **\$35M** grant with **\$8M** to CALS (cutting-edge nitrogen use efficiency research for global crop production)
- Schmidt Sciences Foundation- **\$6M** grant (Resource Engineering Framework for Responsible, Augmented Modeling and Engagement (REFRAME))
- Two CALS faculty named as AAAS Fellows in 2025
- CALS Faculty member (Mike Roe) named to the National Academy of Inventors

NEW CALS TRADITION: WOLFPACK HARVEST

Launched in November as a new CALS tradition, Wolfpack Harvest brought together alumni, students, faculty, staff, and friends in Raleigh and at satellite gatherings across the state for a celebration of community, pride, and our college's mission. The signature event featured interactive exhibits showcasing CALS academic programs, research, and Extension work, opportunities for alumni and Pack members to reconnect, and a festive atmosphere that reinforced shared identity and engagement with CALS' work across North Carolina.

ALIGNING WITH NC AG LEADS

This state-wide industry-driven initiative led by the chamber of commerce aims to strengthen North Carolina agriculture through coordinated focus on workforce, innovation, and long-term competitiveness. Consistent with its land-grant mission, CALS supports this effort by leveraging research, Extension, and education to provide data-informed insight, facilitate collaboration, and help translate shared priorities into practical outcomes across the state.



AGRICULTURE

INSTITUTIONAL UPDATES

FERGUSON COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE

- Hired 14 new tenure-track faculty this year.
- Fall 2025 enrollment was at an all-time high, and applications and admits are up for next year as well.
- The Department of Horticulture and Landscape Architecture renovated studio space, which is now being occupied by landscape architecture students.
- Two OSU students were elected as national officers of FFA, including one from the Ferguson College of Agriculture.
- The Livestock Judging Team won its 24th national championship, the Horse Judging Team claimed the world championship title, and the Meat Judging Team finished as reserve national champions.

OSU AG RESEARCH

- Ceased operations at the Institute for Agricultural Biosciences in Ardmore, Oklahoma, with plans to sell the building and 90 acres. Faculty and staff from Ardmore joined the main OSU campus and are making significant contributions in the departments of Plant & Soil Sciences and Biochemistry & Molecular Biology.
- The Agronomy Discovery Center initiative is making progress on upgrading facilities at the Agronomy Research Station, including a new headhouse, greenhouses, a classroom, and laboratories to support OSU's Wheat Improvement Team.
- The OX wheat varieties, developed by the OSU Wheat Improvement Team, have had an impact on the wheat and baking industries for their potential to replace gluten-based food additives in bread.
- Launched a Beef Center of Excellence initiative, a cross-disciplinary research program in beef cattle to bring together people throughout the beef supply chain. Currently, 17 donors have contributed at the advisory board level.
- Began a major modernization effort for the Robert M. Kerr Food and Agricultural Products Center following a \$6 million investment from the Oklahoma Legislature to expand support for Oklahoma's growing food and agricultural processing sector.
- Celebrated 75 years of the Oklahoma Foundation Seed Stocks, the nonprofit organization that serves as a bridge between OSU plant breeders and certified seed growers.

OSU EXTENSION

- Implemented credit card machines and P-cards statewide in county Extension offices, with 35 of 77 counties using the new credit card system from October through December 2025 and 66 of 77 counties using their P-cards from July through December 2025.
- Oklahoma Gardening celebrated 50 years on the air.
- Helped to launch the inaugural Health Works: Bridging Knowledge and Action Health Forum to improve health outcomes across Oklahoma.



AHS INSTITUTIONAL UPDATE

JUNE - DECEMBER 2025

TSUAG ACADEMICS:



Over the six months, academic accomplishments at the TSU College of Agriculture (TSUAg) included:

- The College broke ground on the massive new \$90 million combined Food and Animal Science and Environmental Sciences building that is now under construction on the TSUAg campus. The combined facility will feature more than 110,000 square feet of learning space that will provide for 35 faculty offices, 23 classrooms and a bevy of multifunctional spaces designed for collaboration. The structure is expected to be completed in time for the fall 2027 semester.
- TSUAg welcomed USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Director Dr. Jaye Hamby for a visit showcasing our research, teaching, and Extension programs. After meeting faculty and touring our facilities, Dr. Hamby engaged directly with more than 100 undergraduate students supported by NIFA dollars, including USDA 1890 Scholars, Farm Bill Scholars, and NextGen Scholars.
- Thirteen USDA NextGen-funded Fashion Merchandising and Product Development juniors and seniors traveled to the University of Houston for an immersive retailing and product development visit. The trip connected students with UH faculty and resources while expanding career and industry exposure beyond TSU.
- We congratulate Dean Chandra Reddy on being named Chair of the national agInnovation organization, the national leadership group that brings together land-grant universities, federal agencies, and industry partners to advance agricultural research, Extension, and innovation goals.



TSU COOPERATIVE EXTENSION:



Over the six months, TSU's Cooperative Extension program had a number of accomplishments including:

- UT-TSU Knox County Master Gardeners earned five placements in the 2025 David Gibby International Search for Excellence Awards; TN Smart Yards and Friends Festival won 1st in workshops.
- Tennessee New Farmer Academy graduated 160 new and beginning farmers statewide from its seven-month TSUAg Extension certificate program.
- Weakley County agent Kari Beth Neville received the TAAA&S Early Career Award for expanding horticulture and livestock programs, coordinating Northwest TN Master Gardeners across four counties, and advancing work toward a Junior Livestock Association.

TSUAG RESEARCH:



Over the past year, research accomplishments at TSUAg included:

- Dr. Suping Zhou leads a \$300K USDA-NIFA Rapid Response project testing heat-tolerant fresh-market tomato varieties and production strategies for Tennessee growers.
- Dr. Sarah Neumann was featured in The Tennessee Conservationist for field research on Middle Tennessee ecosystems and biodiversity.
- Students earned 17 research awards at statewide and national meetings, including multiple honors at the 2025 Tennessee Academy of Science; Dr. Kaushalya Amarasekare received the 2025 Distinguished College/University Scientist Award.
- Reopened three renovated labs - Legume Molecular Genetics, Urban Forest Ecosystems, and Forest Ecology - bringing TSUAg to 37 active research labs.
- Dr. Fulya Baysal-Gurel's Plant Disease Journal feature on vascular streak dieback was named the journal's most prominent and most-read article of 2025.

Southern Administrative Heads Update

University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture – Winter 2026

UADA EXTENSION

AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

- *Recognition:* The [Arkansas Discovery Farm Program received the team award](#) among 13 states and 2 territories of the Southern Region Association of Extension Directors.
- *New Employees since July:*
 - [Yiting Xiao](#) — Bio and Ag Engineering, Ag Wastewater and Nutrient Management Engineer, Fayetteville
 - [Ally Grote](#) — Animal Science, Beef Cattle Nutrition and Management, Little Rock
 - [Flint Harrelson](#) — Livestock and Forestry Research Station Director and Animal Science Faculty, Batesville
 - **Ana Gabriela Morales Ona** — Crop, Soil and Environmental Sciences, Soil Scientist, Northeast Rice Research and Extension Center
- Completed interviews for Beef Systems Management position at Hope (offer not out yet)
- *Crop Production Updates:*
 - Faculty in Crops, Entomology, Plant Pathology and Ag Econ jumped right into the 2026 crop production season by hosting a 2-part webinar series in October focusing on management practices that could potentially lower production costs. Crop budgets have been posted to the Extension website, and county agents have scheduled 22 days of winter 2026 crop production meetings. UADA also hosted the [2026 Tri-State Soybean Forum](#) in Dumas, January 8-9.
 - The Horticulture Department will be hosting the berry associations in Fayetteville, January 29-30, and vegetable growers in Little Rock, February 19-20.
- Extension awards for FY25 were \$19.7M. In FY24, CES was had its largest award year ever, totaling \$39M, thanks to a very large USDA/FSA grant.

FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCES

- FCS faculty are reviewing and revising nutrition and health extension education programs in light of the end of the federal SNAP-Ed program. Existing programs have been expanded (EFNEP, Arkansas High Obesity Prevention Program, Extension Get Fit) while new initiatives are being launched (Nourish the Whole Body, cooking and food preservation courses).
- FCS faculty have partnered with AGECE faculty this fall to offer training and new resources on farm stress management, supporting Arkansas farmers and all residents through trainings aimed at increasing awareness of rural, farm, and other stress; exploring key stress issues; identifying positive coping methods; and identifying potential mental health red flags.

4-H AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

- 32 4-H youth from Arkansas [participated in the National 4-H Congress](#) in Atlanta, Georgia. Youth earn this trip through the advanced record book contest. This trip is a culmination of years of work on projects, building skills, and preparing for life after 4-H.
- Our 4-H shooting sports program trained 33 new level 1 instructors for shooting sports across 3 disciplines representing 18 counties. Unique to shooting sports, our volunteers must complete training to teach our 4-H youth, with a minimum of 12 hours for each discipline they want to instruct.
- The Careers for Arkansas Livestock Leaders (CALL) Program is in the process of notifying its third class of Livestock Leaders of their acceptance into the program. 20 youth will be selected to be a part of the CALL Program's training in January, an in-state experience in March, and the 5-day livestock industry tour in July. This year's out-of-state CALL Tour will explore Missouri, Illinois, and Kentucky. Over the first two years of the CALL Program, 26 youth have been selected as Arkansas 4-H Livestock Leaders. Past participants continue to rave about the way the program challenges them to grow and learn while connecting them with peers, adults, and industry leaders with similar passion for the livestock industry.

COMMUNITY, PROFESSIONAL & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Lead-AR community leadership development program graduated its 20th class in 2025 (40 years for this program).
- Published the [2025 Rural Profile of Arkansas](#): "For 30 years, the Rural Profile has served as a trusted source of data and information for state and local elected officials, policy makers, business leaders, and other local government stakeholders. The Profile is intended to be a resource for state and community leaders in planning, implementing, and refining the policies and programs that impact not only rural Arkansas but the entire state." – *From the introduction to the publication.*
- Applications for summer internships with the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service are currently open. Our two primary internship programs are our County Agent internship (interns work in a county alongside a county agent (FCS, ANR, and/or 4-H) and the Experiential Scholars Program (interns work in one of the CES departments with specialists). Both are paid internships.

UADA RESEARCH

LEADERSHIP

- The Agricultural Experiment Station [hired Dr. Cynthia Sides](#) as Associate Director for Research Development and Compliance.
- UADA [hired Dr. Flint Harrelson](#) as the new Director of Livestock and Forestry Research Station in Batesville, AR.
- UADA has identified 3 finalists for a new Department Head to lead our Department of Food Science. On campus interviews are scheduled for February 2026.

RESEARCH

- [The Arkansas Waterfowl Research Center was established](#) with \$7 million in contributions.
- Dr. Caio Vieira received the [early career award for Soybean Genetics Research](#).
- The Agricultural Experiment Station organized its first [AI in Ag Symposium](#) to highlight the capabilities of these emerging tools.
- The Agricultural Experiment Station Fruit Breeding Program [released its first two Muscadine grapes](#).
- Despite federal delays in awards and RFA releases, research awards for FY25 were \$39.95M, a record for AES, and a 10% increase from FY24 awards.

FACILITIES

- Design of the new 63,000 sq-ft Food Science Research Center continues. Estimated costs of the facility are \$62M and construction is delayed until funding is fully in place.

ACADEMICS

Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences

- Bumpers College continues to see strong momentum in student success outcomes. The college achieved a 90% first-year retention rate, the highest among colleges on campus. In addition, four-year graduation rates increased to 66%, reflecting ongoing improvements in advising, student engagement, and academic support.
- The college is also in the early stages of developing multiple 2+2 articulation agreements. These efforts include collaborations with two-year institutions within the University of Arkansas System as well as external community colleges across the region, with the goal of expanding access and creating clearer pathways for transfer students into Bumpers College programs.
- The college is currently reviewing its undergraduate advising model and is considering a shift toward a professional advising structure. This review is focused on maintaining high-quality, personalized advising while ensuring the model is sustainable as enrollment grows.



**UNIVERSITY OF
GEORGIA**
College of Agricultural &
Environmental Sciences

CAES Research:

- CAES research expenditure has increased to an all-time high of \$75M, with federal award funding at \$65M.
- CAES has inaugurated UGA Grand Farm in Perry, GA, an innovation ecosystem to advance innovation in precision agriculture focused on row crops and specialty crops of significance to Georgia. The partnership started field projects in 2025.
- CAES is completing construction on a \$1.5M greenhouse to support controlled environment agriculture (CEA) on Griffin, GA campus, along with four container farms to replicate commercial operations.

CAES Academics:

- Fall 2025 College Enrollments:
 - 1,537 Undergraduate students
 - 757 Graduate students
 - 2,294 Total students
- Credit hour production for CY2025 was up 2.4% from CY2024, and up 12% from CY 2023.
- Fastest growing majors in the college over the past 2 years are:
 - Regenerative Bioscience (in Animal and Dairy Science Department) is up 161%
 - Animal Biosciences is up 16.5%
 - Turfgrass Management is up 300% (albeit from 4 to 16 total students)
- A successful initiative this past year focused on graduate student recruitment. A future initiative will focus on on-campus student recruitment.

CAES Extension:

UGA Cooperative Extension maintains a statewide network of 361 Extension Agents and 150 Extension Specialists that generated:

- 1.7 M face-to-face contacts
- 180,000 continuing education units provided to clients
- 177,000 contact hours from in-school programming
- 130,000 diagnostic tests performed (soil, water and forage)
- 1.8 M education contact hours
- 201,973 active 4-H participants
- \$375 million in annual economic impact

INSTITUTIONAL UPDATES

LEADERSHIP CHANGE

Dr. Jennifer Hunter is the new Associate Dean for Extension and Director of the Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service in the University of Kentucky Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment. She succeeds Dr. Laura Stephenson, who now serves as Vice President for Land-grant Engagement and Dean of the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment.

RESEARCH

- » \$48.7M in external funding and 591 peer-reviewed publications for FY 2025.
- » Expected completion of a new \$280M Agricultural Research Building (263,000 sq. ft.) in December 2026.
- » Research-forward initiatives in:
 - Food as Health
 - One Health
 - Forest productivity
 - Companion Animal Programs
 - Equine musculoskeletal science
 - AI and Machine Learning; new partnership with Microsoft
- » Rebuilding of Experiment Station facilities in both east and west Kentucky and the addition of the Meats and Foods Industry Advancement Center (32,000 sq. ft.), which will all be completed by mid-2026.

EXTENSION

- » 3,500+ individuals reported learning new skills through Extension workforce development programming.
- » 1,100+ individuals trained in Question, Persuade, Refer training.
- » 1,400+ ag businesses retained or expanded operations after Extension programming.
- » 208,000+ youth enrolled in 4-H last year.
- » Kentucky 4-H has created the Beyond Ready Task Force to strengthen work and life readiness.

STUDENT SUCCESS

- » Enrollment growth up 7.1% since Fall 2023, including 4.3% undergraduate, 19.5% graduate, and 48.9% postdoctoral growth (92 UG, 64 G, 22 postdocs).
- » Confirms for Fall 2026 are up 13%, the highest in four years.
- » Expected completion of the Martin-Gatton Agricultural Sciences Building (66,000 sq. ft.) and renovated Scovell Hall (92,000 sq. ft.) by May 2026.
- » Nearly \$1.25 million in scholarships were awarded in 2025.
- » Dual-support student success model: Academic advisor + career mentor.
- » 26.9% of students are first-generation (26.3% undergraduate, 34.6% graduate).



University of Puerto Rico COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES
Dr. Raúl E. Macchiavelli, Dean and Director
Highlights from July to December 2025

AGRICULTURAL EXPERIMENT STATION RESEARCH PROGRAM

1. Outstanding Research Accomplishments: Food Security, Plants & Animal Systems (Plants)

Issues addressed:

- Research effort emphasizes the most important crop production constraints faced by our stakeholders in crops essential to our food security and the economic viability of local farming.
- Crop production is continuously threatened by pests and diseases that require effective management tools.
- Collaborative research and surveillance efforts of our current crops and farming systems are needed to respond to the increases in diseases, pests and weeds associated with warmer temperatures and changed rainfall and drought patterns, among other factors.

Accomplishments:

- Increased availability of disease-free cultivars and planting materials with better agronomic traits and resistance to major diseases and abiotic stresses.
- Continued registration and labeling of agricultural pesticides for use in crops grown in Puerto Rico while developing early detection protocols for the management of plant pathogens.

Results:

- Through germplasm introduction, evaluation and preservation we continue to develop improved cultivars and better management practices for our principal commodities that have helped them to become more productive and competitive.
- We have been able to incorporate new technologies that aid in the development of this program such as CRISPR/Cas-9 for insects and plants transformations and advanced pollen/seed preservation facilities at Isabela.
- As a result of this program, we have been able to improve local food security and set up an internet-based system where seeds can be easily checked for availability and purchase thus improving the distribution of seeds and planting materials.
- Improve pests and diseases management through the Pest and Plant Disease Clinic (PPDC) at Juana Diaz – part of the Southern Regional Plant Diagnostic Network (SPDN) lead by the University of Florida.
- The Center for Excellence in Quarantine and Invasive Species plays a crucial role in studies of prevention and preparedness for invasive species threats to US and Caribbean agriculture

- IR-4 project at Corozal – develops new pesticide and biopesticide registration of tropical specialty crops; identifies pests of economic importance and potential pesticides for local registration.

2. Outstanding Research Accomplishments: Animal Production Systems

Issues addressed:

- Research addresses the need for increasing the efficiency and productivity of livestock industries, both from the point of view of food security and of making a positive contribution to the mitigation of extreme weather impacts.
- Currently three main research focus: improving beef cattle production and marketing, and strengthening small ruminant production and profitability and the characterization of local slick haired dairy cattle

Accomplishments:

Continued progress in the characterization of Slick cattle vs Wild Type (WT) in different parameters: genomic, growth and performance, reproductive performance, and reproductive endocrinology, among others.

Results:

- New production and marketing strategies to add value to local beef have been devised and are being evaluated at our local beef cattle research farm.
- Puerto Rico lamb producers have adopted recommendations based on research results to enhance their operations, including animal management, carcass handling, and meat retail cuts production and marketing.

3. Outstanding Research Accomplishments: Extreme Weather, Natural Resources and Environment, and Sustainable Energy

Issues addressed:

Nutrient and water management issues related to soil quality and best management practices, mitigation of threats to water quality, micro-irrigation technologies for water conservation and improvement of crop productivity, establishment of forests, as well as the identification and protection of natural enemies of harmful insect pests.

Accomplishments:

One of the most important accomplishments is having established collaborative relationships with state government agencies and non-profit organizations for the development of research proposals with federal funds.

Results:

The AEXS is the only local institution with an active research program and lab facilities dedicated to evaluating the impact of nutrients on the integrity of surface waters and promoting environmentally sound management practices of nutrients in agricultural and natural landscapes.

Agricultural Experiment Station Challenges & Opportunities

- Continued lost of skilled management staff and the lack of resources to recruit replacements.

- Government of PR, and with it the UPR – AEXS, under the Fiscal Adjustment Plan by PROMESA Federal Law.
- High recruitment needs for researcher in areas of importance for Tropical Agriculture.
- General challenges for Puerto Rico in the past 5 years: UNEMPLOYMENT, INFLATION, PROMESA

AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SERVICE

Outstanding achievements of Extension Educational Programs

1. Experiential Education in Agriculture and Applied Sciences through 4-H in Puerto Rico

What is the issue?

Limited access to experiential learning opportunities in animal welfare, food production, and science, technology, engineering, Arts and mathematics (STEAM) represents a significant challenge for children and youth in Puerto Rico.

Target audience

Children and youth, 4-H participants, communities, and organizations engaged in youth development and STEAM education

Results

- 900 4-H students increased their knowledge of animal welfare
- 506 demonstrating the ability to identify basic animal care requirements
- 1,515 students gained foundational knowledge in food production
- 359 applied scientific skills related to the preservation of harvested foods
- 1,842 participants strengthened STEAM competencies
- 1,246 youth engaged in activities that enhanced literacy in agriculture.



2. Rescuing the Puerto Rican Criollo Cattle through Education, Collaboration, and Conservation

What is the issue?

Puerto Rican Criollo cattle (CcPR) represent a unique genetic resource shaped by centuries of natural selection and well adapted to Puerto Rico's climate and terrain. Historically, they supported agricultural systems through meat, milk, and draft labor.

Despite their cultural and agricultural value, CcPR populations have declined due to mechanization and the lack of coordinated conservation efforts.

Target audience

Ranchers, breeders, farmers, researchers, and Extension Agents

Results

- 69 researchers and livestock producers participated in a forum to increase awareness of CcPR conservation.
- 22 breeders received training from an international expert on establishing a CcPR association.
- A virtual communication network was created to strengthen collaboration, identify herds, and coordinate animal exchanges and sales.
- A census is underway, with 122 CcPR identified to date.

Ongoing Experiment Station research is conducting genomic characterization to support the breed's genetic uniqueness.



3. Comprehensive and Holistic Education for Health, Food Security, and Family Well-Being in Puerto Rico

What is the issue?

Obesity, chronic diseases, mental health problems, and financial stress represent critical public health challenges in Puerto Rico, affecting the quality of life, and emotional well-being of individuals, families, and communities.

Target audience

The program contributes to the broader population, with particular emphasis on families with children, youth, older adults, and community groups.

Results

In FY 2025, AES implemented a holistic educational initiative targeting vulnerable populations:

- 21,371 person participated in an educational initiative to strengthened their capacity to make informed decisions that promote overall well-being.
- 1,750 individuals gained knowledge of healthy eating, prepared safe and nutritious foods at home, selected healthy foods within their budgets, planned nutritious household pantries, improved attitudes toward healthy lifestyles, and adopted measures to prevent chronic and arboviral diseases.

- 684 individuals adopted preventive self-care practices that supported mental health, improved home health and safety, reduced financial stress, and strengthened financial management skills, contributing to improved family economic stability, and long-term quality of life.

Collectively, these findings underscore that holistic and synergistic educational approaches contribute to emotional, physical, and social well-being while reinforcing family resilience



4. Improvements in Sustainable and Organic Agriculture Practices through Education and Technical Assistance in Puerto Rico

What is the issue?

Agriculture in Puerto Rico continues to experience significant challenges related to environmental sustainability, declining soil health, effective management of natural resources, and the ability of farms to adapt to increasingly variable and adverse weather conditions. Although farmers broadly recognize the importance of integrating sustainable and organic practices into their production systems, many lack access to technical information tailored to local agroecological conditions.

Target audience

Farmers, agricultural professionals, Extension Agents, and individuals transitioning to organic farming.

Results

- An educational manual on sustainable agriculture in Puerto Rico was published
- A series of educational videos addressing sustainability and organic certification were developed, generating more than 500 downloads on YouTube within less than one year
- Over 200 farmers across seven municipalities participated in hands-on workshops focused on transitioning to organic farming certification.

Collectively, these efforts strengthened the capacity of Puerto Rico's agricultural sector to adopt sustainable and organic practices that enhance environmental stewardship, climate resilience, and long-term farm viability.



ACADEMIC PROGRAMS

Fall 2025 Enrollment Summary

Category	Total
Total Enrollment	1,176
Undergraduate Enrollment	989
Graduate Enrollment	187

Undergraduate Enrollment by Program

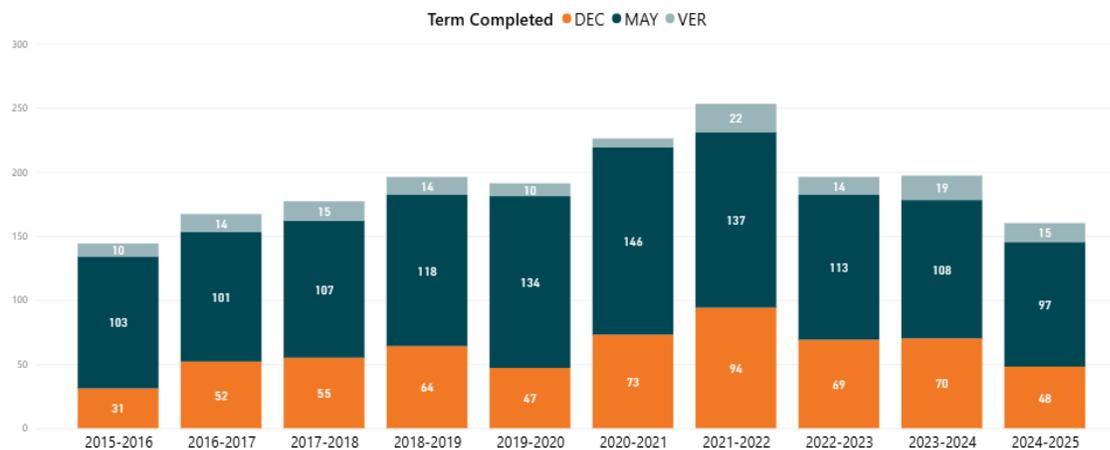
Program	Enrollment
Animal Science (BCA)	541
Agronomy (BCA)	116
General Agriculture (BCA)	79
Horticulture (BCA)	48
Agricultural & Environmental Systems (BCA)	47
Pre-Veterinary Program	38
Agricultural Education (BCA)	31
Agribusiness (BCA)	28
Food Science (BS)	21
Crop Protection (BCA)	11
Agricultural Economics (BCA)	13
Soil Science (BCA)	8
Agricultural Extension (BCA)	8

Graduate Enrollment by Program

Program	Enrollment
Food Science & Technology (MS)	31
Animal Science (MS)	29
Horticulture (MS)	18
Soil Science (MS)	17
Tropical Agriculture (PhD)	17
Crop Protection (MS)	15
Agricultural Extension (MS)	15
Online Agricultural Economics (MS)	14
Agronomy (MS)	11
Agricultural Education (MS)	10
Agricultural Economics (MS)	9
Food Science (MP)	1

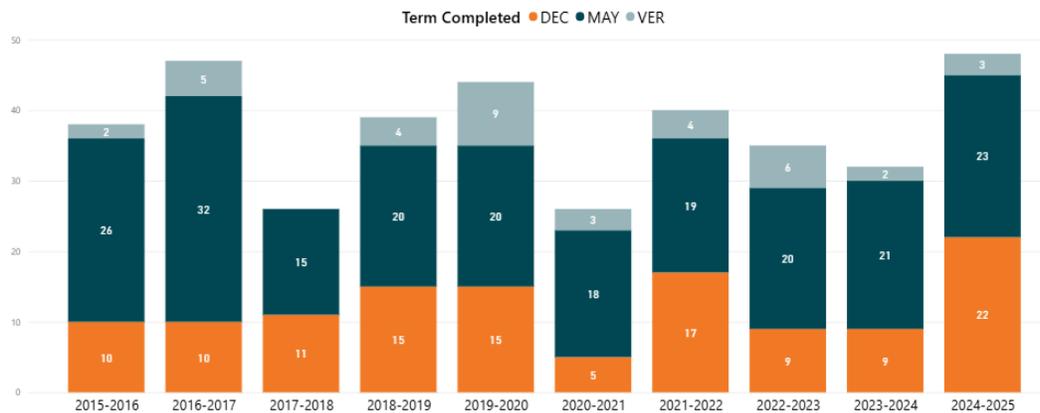
Undergraduate Degrees Granted

Total Degrees by Year, by Term - College of Agricultural Sciences, All Departments, All Programs



Graduate Degrees Granted

Total Degrees by Year, by Term - College of Agricultural Sciences, All Departments, All Programs



Top hiring Companies



Narrative Summary

Throughout the academic year, the College of Agricultural Sciences executed a comprehensive calendar of activities focused on student engagement, recruitment, outreach, academic recognition, and community involvement. These initiatives reflect the College's continued commitment to academic excellence, professional development, and institutional visibility.

The academic programs are being reviewed, and some undergraduate programs with low enrollment will be consolidated. The departments are studying this, and we will carry out the changes as soon as possible. We do not predict department consolidation for now (the last one was in 2007, then Horticulture, Crop Protection, and Agronomy and Soils merged to form the current Department of Crops and Agroenvironmental Sciences).

University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture Highlights

Leadership Additions/Changes

- Blake Brown, who has been serving UTIA as the director of AgResearch and Education Center at Milan for the past 28 years, was selected to serve as the UT AgResearch Associate Dean of Field Operations, effective Sept 1, 2025. In this role he will work closely with the directors of the ten statewide AgResearch and Education Centers to advance the programs of the centers and thus AgResearch mission.
- UT Extension has begun the national search for the 4-H State Director. On-campus interviews will begin in late February.

Infrastructure and Equipment Upgrades That Are/Will Be Transformative

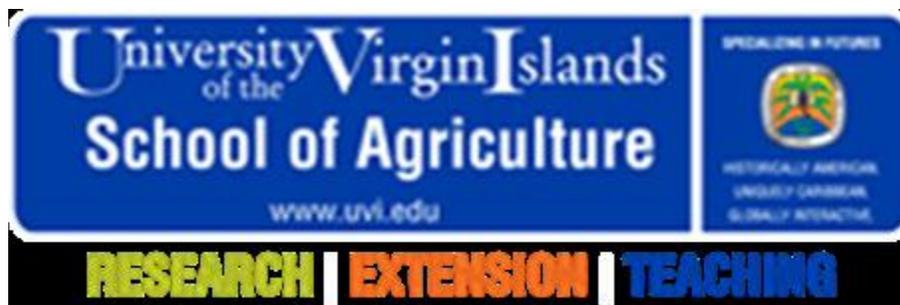
- Construction of the next-gen Broiler Innovation, Research and Demonstration (**BIRD**) facility at the Middle Tennessee AgResearch and Education Center in Spring Hill is ongoing. The BIRD facility consists of four commercial-scale broiler houses (54 ft x 600 ft ea.), a research laboratory and office building, and the auxiliary litter storage and water storage sheds.
- UT Extension/Tennessee 4-H Foundation received an historic \$45 million investment by the Tennessee General Assembly to construct STEM Centers at the four 4-H Centers across the state.

Global Impact

- A team of UTIA scientists are partnering with colleagues at the University College London (United Kingdom) to develop crops that will be more resilient, more productive and sustainable by employing synthetic biology. Funded by the UK Advanced Research + Invention Agency (ARIA) at \$11.9MM, the project uses potatoes as the model that will ultimately use a wide range of photosynthetic organisms to make biopharmaceuticals, biopolymers, and other bio-products. See [2025 UT AgResearch Annual Report](#) for more details.
- UT Herbert College had a record number of faculty-directed and undergraduate participation study abroad programs and launched a new 1st year study abroad experience for freshmen.

Updates and New Initiatives

- UT AgResearch hosted the inaugural Bioderived Materials and Chemicals in Circular Bioeconomy Systems (CBS) Conference in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, from September 3 to 4, 2025. The event aimed to promote the potential of advancing the CBS concept by diversifying sustainable products derived from the various renewable carbon sources available in the southern region. The central theme was identifying novel strategies to extend the lifetime and value of sustainably produced carbon in the marketplace while exploring workforce development needs and industry engagement approaches.
- UT Herber College had the largest number of applications ever and experienced a 14% growth in student enrollment over the past 4 years. The three largest majors are Animal Science, Construction Science and Management, and Wildlife and Fisheries.
- Herbert College launched new academic programs in Outdoor Recreation and Parks Management (School of Natural Resources), Agricultural Bioinformatics (Entomology and Plant Pathology) and Fermentation Sciences (Food Science and Plant Sciences) are currently being developed. Rebranding Environmental and Soil Sciences to Environmental Science and Animal Science to Animal and Veterinary Science.
 - Launched a new undergraduate research program titled Herbert Experiential Research Opportunities (HERO) in 2024 and awarded 16 grants to faculty to mentor undergraduates in their laboratories.
- UT Extension Farm MANAGE Specialists are working with Ag Lender partners to improve education around the changing lending environment and requirements to implement better risk protection.



Institutional Highlights

January 2026

I. Academic and scholarship Programs

First three bachelor of science degrees in agriculture students are expected to graduate in the upcoming spring 2026 commencement.

Five Agriculture students attended Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) Conference in Memphis, TN, April 2025.

II. Leadership and Personnel Changes

New Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs was hired. She started work July 1, 2025.

Two new faculty in horticulture and agricultural business/economics were hired last year.

New Student Recruiter has been hired in January 2026.

New Aquaponics Facilities Manage was hired in November 2025

III. Community Focused Activities

The *2025 World Food Day* observance, sponsored by the UVI School of Agriculture and the V.I. Department of Agriculture, was held on Sunday, October 19th. This year's theme, selected by the Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nation, for 2025 was "Leave no one behind: Hand in hand for a better life and a better future." The observance of World Food Day promotes awareness, seeks to highlight the challenges associated with poverty and world hunger, and encourages action to help feed less

fortunate people in the territory. Over 4,000 vegetable seedlings, along with descriptive crop production handouts, were distributed to the public between 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m. on the grounds of the University of the Virgin Islands' Albert A. Sheen Campus. The vegetable seedling distribution was intended to encourage and enable residents to grow some of their own food. The World Food Day Opening Ceremony began at 1:00 p.m. and was followed by educational workshops on passion fruit and sweet potato. (64 persons attended), passion fruit and (65 persons attended) and sweet potato.

Extension staff conducted a *Beginning Excel* class for farmers. Participants learned essential Excel skills including data entry, cell selection and formatting, and the use of functions and formulas. These skills support practical tasks such as budgeting, tracking loan payments, and performing various mathematical calculations.

On November 21, Extension staff displayed a series of *Creative Gardening in the VI posters*. These posters demonstrated techniques used in farming systems, as well as community and home gardens, that protect the environment and have the potential to increase productivity, including terracing and several types of container gardening. The event was hosted by the Seventh Day Adventist community.

Dr. Henry O. Awika of the Horticulture Program represented AES in a collaborative, multi-agency project aimed at managing water hyacinth obstructing the largest freshwater pond on St. Croix. Participating entities include the Virgin Islands Departments of Planning and Natural Resources, Agriculture, Public Works, St. Croix Teachers Science Teachers Farm, and the University of the Virgin Islands Agricultural Experiment Station. The project seeks to restore water availability for approximately 70 acres of riparian farmland.

Dr. Andrea Rios of the Animal Science Program conducted parasite tolerance testing on sheep and goats at Pedro Gonzalez Farm. The activity involved on-site sample collection and evaluation to support parasite management strategies in small ruminant production systems.

Dr. David Hensley of the Agronomy Program hosted a mini-workshop on sargassum composting and crop growth in St. Thomas on November 5, 2025, with participation from five community members.

Administrative

- Dr. Karl Rich appointed Head for Department Agricultural and Applied Economics (Jan 2026)
- Dr. Michelle Heck appointed Director of School of Plant and Environmental Sciences (Jun 2026)
- Dr. Steve Rideout appointed Director of Agricultural Technology Program (Dec 2025)

Leadership Searches

- Assistant Dean, Advancement (Finalist)
- Head, Department of Food Science (Finalist)
- Head, Department of Entomology (Starting Feb)

CALS Research

- FY25 research expenditures increased to \$88.6M, a 43% increase and 19% of Virginia Tech's total research expenditures.
- FY26 CALS Integrated Seed Grants were launched to stimulate cross college, interdisciplinary research, including four additional colleges, totaling more than \$650,000.
- College-wide research needs assessment synthesized faculty input into 11 cross-cutting themes to guide investments and proposal development.

Research Facilities:

- Planning complete for Eastern Shore AREC renovations; a legislative request has been submitted to support modernization and expansion.
- New Hampton Roads AREC greenhouse was completed as a collaboration with Old Dominion University to house their orchid collection. Construction underway on a second USDA-funded greenhouse at the Hampton Roads AREC.
- Initial planning completed for an education and outreach facility at the Shenandoah Valley AREC.
- Rehousing plans in progress for Tidewater AREC operations due to Batten Hall deterioration.

CALS Global

- Released 2025 [Global Agricultural Productivity \(GAP\) Report](#) at events in Chicago and Rome.
- Continued implementation of \$80M [Alliance to Advance Climate-Smart Agriculture](#) under USDA's Advancing Markets for Producers initiative.

- The initiative now includes > 2,000 farms across four states, covering 410,000 acres, with approximately \$25M distributed to producers.

CALS Academic Programs

2026 Admissions first time student

- 3,420 Early Action applications (7.3% increase from previous cycle)
- 57.9% offered rate
- 890 new students enrolled for Fall 2025
- Includes 45 associate, 102 transfer bachelor's, and 672 FTIC bachelor's students

2025 Enrollment

- Total CALS: 3,614 students
- Undergraduate enrollment: 3,003 students (continues to be steady with VT enrollment capped)
- Graduate enrollment: 611 students

2024–25 Graduates

- 39 Associate, 728 Bachelor's
- 141 Master's, 81 Doctoral

Student Program Fee Usage

- CALS awarded \$75,000 in professional development support for advisors and students.
- Opened the Discovery Lab, expanding hands-on, research-ready learning space for undergraduate and graduate students.
- Continued investment in student engagement and success initiatives across CALS programs.

CALS Extension

- Completed and launched a 10-year, stakeholder-informed [strategic plan](#) to guide the future of Virginia Cooperative Extension.
- Established a state Extension communications manager position to strengthen coordination, visibility, and impact reporting.
- Expanded workforce capacity through new partnerships including the creation of Extension Veterinarian position to support rural large-animal veterinary recruitment and practices.
- Implemented the Program Evaluation and Reporting System (PEARS) statewide.

Lincoln University

LEADERSHIP CHANGES

- Dr. Johnnie Westbrook began work as dean of the College of Agriculture, Environmental and Human Sciences on August 4. Westbrook comes to Lincoln from West Virginia State University, where he has served as associate dean and director for Extension Service since 2023. He replaces Douglas LaVergne, who left Lincoln to take a position at Alabama A&M University.

EXTENSION HIGHLIGHTS

- Dr. Safiullah Pathan, associate professor of crop science and researcher, served as a keynote speaker at the 7th International Nutrition Research Conference in Singapore. He will return in 2026 as a keynote speaker and serve on the conference's organizing committee.
- LUCAEHS hosted several hands-on learning and educational events on our farms, including the George Washington Carver Farm Field Day, Quinoa Field Day, Busby Farm Field Day, Integrated Pest Management and Crop Improvement Field Day, and Small Ruminant Field Day.
- Dr. Ye Su, associate professor of Ag Business, received a \$725,669 grant from the U.S. National Science Foundation for its project, *Excellence in Research: Translational Approaches to Strengthening Rural Resilience*. The four-year initiative will examine the social and economic dynamics of rural life and develop strategies to strengthen resilience and long-term prosperity for rural residents and businesses.
- A partnership between LU Cooperative Extension's Innovative Small Farmers Outreach Program (ISFOP) and Aetna CVS Health will bring fresh produce to food deserts and food-insecure communities across Missouri.
- More than 700 people attended the sixth "Monitoring Emergent Plant and Animal Diseases for Food Security in the Americas" symposium, hosted by LU and its international collaborators.
- LU has been awarded \$103,524 as part of the multi-institution NASA-funded project, which involves eight scientists across six institutions in Missouri, Delaware and Florida. The three-year project will send undergraduate interns to St. Louis and Florida for training in anaerobic digestion (AD).

- As part of the Train the Trainer series, more than 100 Missouri gardeners gathered for “Growth Through Gardening: Feeding our Future,” a 3-day event hosted on campus with community leaders and extension specialists to strengthen local food systems and address food insecurity statewide.
- Forty middle and high school students attended LU’s first 4-H Day. Students from around the state received hands-on experiences with chickens, aquaculture, cooking, and gardening with Extension Staff and youth development leaders.
- A Missouri Department of Agriculture specialty crops grant allowed LU’s Specialty Crops program to hold its first Ferntastic Fair with arts, crafts, and cooking demonstrations. This grant also supported fern identification and ecology workshops.

STUDENT SUCCESSES

- Graduate Student Prabesh Koirala earned the title of 2025 Borlaug Scholar from the National Association of Plant Breeders (NAPB). He is the only student from an 1890 land-grant institution selected for this year’s cohort. Koirala traveled to the NAPB Annual Meeting in Kona Island, Hawaii, to present his research on hemp and climate change.
- Recent LU graduate, now Integrated Pest Management Program employee, Gursewak Singh earned first place at CANVAS in the student poster competition for his project, “Weather Variability Impacts on Corn Production in Missouri Using ARDL Analysis.”
- LU graduate student Mohak Koirala earned second place in the graduate student poster competition at the 83rd Annual Professional Agricultural Workers Conference (PAWC), held Nov. 16–18 at Tuskegee University in Montgomery, Alabama.

ACADEMICS

- LU’s retention rate (first to second year) is highest in 27 years at 59.2%
- LU has 2,054 undergrad and graduate students (fall 2025)
- 14.1% total enrollment increase at LU (2024 vs. 2023)
- LU’s Inaugural initiation of undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, staff, and alumni to the Gamma Sigma Delta chapter of the Honor Society of Agriculture and Related Sciences took place on November 6, 2025.

GRANTS/FUNDING

- Total LU Economic Impact: \$94 Million – every \$1 spent by LU and its students generates \$1.34 for the local economy
- Lifetime earnings: \$891 million (2021 graduates) – 312 graduates can expect 60% more lifetime earnings with their degree
- Employment Impact: 935 jobs – Includes 464 on-campus jobs and 471 off-campus jobs. Each \$1million spent creates 13 jobs locally
- 1980 Agricultural Scholars Program - \$505,236.16
- Exploring the Feasibility of Replacing Fishmeal with Asian Carp Protein Hydrolysates in Largemouth Bass (*Micropterus nigricans*) Aquaculture in MO – Subaward -\$19,921
- Evaluation of agronomic traits, nutritional values, and promotion of quinoa as a climate-resilient forage for small ruminants - \$594,183
- Emerging Contaminants Impacts on Soil Enzymatic Activities and Removal/Mitigation Strategy by Thiol-Functionalized Biochar - \$599,996
- Influence to Postharvest Practices on Sweet Potato Storage Disease Occurrence - \$26,014.31
- Integrating Geospatial Artificial Intelligence (GeoAI) for Forest Health Early Warning System Development - 739,233

FACILITIES

- The \$10.1 million Meat Science Facility has been designed and is awaiting NIFA approval. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2026, with completion expected in 2027.
- The LU Aquaculture facility received electric upgrades of \$19,000. A building addition is also currently under design to add two offices and a washroom.
- The Charleston Outreach Center was renamed in honor of long-time employee and Program Assistant III, Sherryl Maxwell. Changes included:
 - Rededication of the building as the Sherryl Maxwell Impact Center
 - New signage, floor replacement, and painting have been completed
 - Information technology infrastructure upgrade - \$33,830.40
 - Environmental assessment is in progress - \$9,500
 - Office furniture was restored and refinished