

THE **AG**CENTER

# CHANCELLOR'S

REPORT

2022 | APRIL



**W O M E N   A R E**

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# DENNIS SHIELDS

SU System President-Chancellor elect Dennis Shields visits the SU Ag Center

Dennis Shields, the recently selected President-Chancellor of the Southern University System, met with stakeholders at the Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center on March 15, 2022.

During his visit, Shields also toured the SU Ag Center's Experiment Station, the site for the Disaster Relief Mega Shelter, the Center's Mobile Technology Unit, and met with the students and faculty of the College of Agricultural, Family and Consumer Sciences.

Shields will succeed current President-Chancellor Dr. Ray L. Belton before the Fall 2022 semester.



## THANK YOU!

The Southern University Agricultural Research and Extension Center (SU Ag Center) and the College of Agricultural, Family and Consumer Sciences (CAFCS) recognizes the members of our faculty and staff who are celebrating their 10, 20, 30, and 40 year anniversaries of employment. Your hard-working and dedication is greatly appreciated.





## Subramanyam Murthy

10 YEARS | Professor in the Environmental Toxicology Program  
College of Agricultural, Family and Consumer Sciences

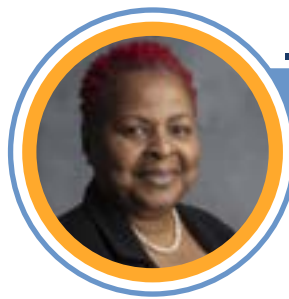
While at Tulane University School of Medicine, I was working with graduates from SUBR (among others). These included M.D. Ph.D. and Ph.D. students who went on to graduate and succeed in life. My association with postdoctoral fellows and some faculty at SUBR grew over the years. As a person directly affected by Hurricane Katrina, SUBR was one of my options but both work and the situation prevented me from exploring probable opportunities at that time. However, when I was presented with the possibility to teach at SUBR as an adjunct Professor in July 2012, I took it. I soon realized my teaching and research potentials were not only well recognized but also had scope to grow independently at SUBR while sincerely helping the student community in their career pursuits. I am highly passionate about teaching and research.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my assignment at SUBR. I have risen to the rank of a Full Professor with Tenure over the years. I was also able to obtain an IDeA Networks of Biomedical Research Excellence (INBRE)/NIH grant that lasted for 4 years. With this support, I assisted three graduate students in obtaining their Ph.D. degrees.

Apart from publishing some papers, my students have presented their research findings at various national and international meetings and won awards.

I have had the honor of serving departmental and other committees and am willing to do all I can for student learning and progress.

I was selected to work for the Department of Environmental Toxicology, and I have not moved from here as I believe I can better help students who opt for specialization in this field of study for their career prospects.



## Angela Jackson

20 YEARS | Administrative Assistant 4  
SU Ag Center

My decision to work at Southern University was my desire after pursuing certification in administration and secretarial skills. Southern University always was, in my opinion, a prominent educational entity in our community with a reputation second to none. I wanted to be associated and employed where there were opportunities for growth and financial stability. I believed Southern University's existence would allow me to excel if I worked hard. Overall, I wanted to work in a prestigious educational institution where I thought I could make a difference and be positively impacted by those I encountered.

During my tenure at Southern University, I have worked in numerous positions. My journey began in the Reading Department where I served as an Administrative Assistant. Currently, I am employed at the Southern University Ag Center where I began to fine-tune my career path. I was given the opportunity to work part-time with the Livestock Department in a secretarial role. I concentrated on extending my best self as I performed and met the needs of the Department. My efforts were recognized, and I was promoted to a full-time secretarial position. I dedicated myself to performing at high levels, meeting goals, exhibiting a positive attitude, and recognizing the needs of the Department as one of the members of the TEAM. This attitude and modus operandi provided me with a newfound status and additional growth opportunities. Within a two/three-year timespan, I was promoted to an Administrative Assistant to the Vice Chancellor for Extension.

Today, I am working as an Administrative Assistant IV where I serve as the support person to three state specialists and the state office for the Vice Chancellor for Extension. I have gained life skills, friendships, and professional associations that have afforded me a career that has enhanced my life. I am forever grateful and honored to be recognized as an employee of the University that I so dearly embrace and love. I trust that my encounter and work ethic have also positively impacted those that I serve.



## Rao Uppu

20 YEARS/ Professor in the Environmental Toxicology Program  
College of Agricultural, Family and Consumer Sciences

I joined the Environmental Toxicology (ENTX) Ph.D. program as an Associate Professor (Tenure-track) in January 2002. I earned tenure with a promotion as a full professor in 2007. All along, for the past 20 years, I remained in the same department. Research and teaching in environmental sciences were always fascinations of mine.

During my tenure at Southern University, I trained three (3) MS and 19 Ph.D. graduates as either a major or minor advisor. Also, I had the opportunity to serve on the adjudication committees of five (5) Ph.D./DSc graduates from India (International). While several of the Ph.D. graduates and postdocs trained by me went on to become faculty at prestigious universities like the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the King Saud University. Two of the Ph.D. graduates became Diplomates of the American Board of Toxicology.

It is truly gratifying to note that while working at Southern University, I was named the Fellow of three major international organizations (namely, the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Academy of Toxicological Sciences, and the Royal Society of Chemistry). Also, I earned board certifications from the American Board of Toxicology, National Environmental Health Association, and American Academy of Environmental Engineers and Scientists. Within the Southern University System, in addition to receiving the Southern University Business and Industry Cluster Award in 2011, I was named the Faculty Researcher of the Year in natural sciences in 2006 and 2007, Outstanding Researcher of the Year (University-wide; 2007), and Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching (University-wide; 2013).

With scores of publications and presentations, fellowships and board certifications, all earned or accomplished while working at Southern University, I am now recognized as one of a handful of experts in chemical toxicology around the world. I am truly grateful to Southern University as it provided the release time and resources for me to accomplish most of everything I mentioned here.



## Troy Collins

20 YEARS/ Research Farm Manager  
SU Ag Center

I chose to work for the Southern University Ag Center because I always had an interest in Agriculture. A position at the dairy farm became available and I applied for it and I have been employed with the Ag Center since then.

Agriculture is my passion.

I have held the positions of Farm Worker 1, Farm Worker 2, Farm Specialist 1, Farm Specialist 2, and I currently serve as the Farm Manager at the Ag Center.



## Christopher J. Rogers, Sr.

20 YEARS | Deputy CIO-Client Services  
SU Ag Center

I became employed at Southern University because I thought it was a golden opportunity to enhance my leadership skills.

I have worked a total of 30 years, the first 10 were in the John B. Cade Library where I started as an undergraduate assistant helping with the computer lab. While there, I served as a mentee in the media library and eventually became the media librarian at the library.

In 2002, I became the Director of Technology Services at the Southern University Ag Center. The Ag Center enabled me to enhance my leadership skills and utilize all my talents since the position integrated several jobs in one. It was the best fit for both the Ag Center and myself.

I held that position for 17 years. I currently serve as the Director of Technology and Communications Services at the Ag Center and Deputy CIO for the SU System focusing on client services.

My greatest joy has always been working with the people around me that have served as my mentors. These mentors taught me to take care of my staff, to have a listening ear, and to always provide them with the training they needed to be successful. I am thankful for the older individuals who have taught me how to be a professional.



## Yadong Qi

30 YEARS/ Professor of Plant & Soil Sciences  
College of Agricultural, Family and Consumer Sciences

I was hired as one of the original faculty to start the Urban Forestry B.S. degree program in the College of Agricultural, Family and Consumer Science at Southern University and A&M College (SUBR) in 1992. As the co-founder, I have been working in the Urban Forestry program (now the Department of Urban Forestry and Natural Resource) at SUBR for the last 30 years, moving up the rank from assistant professor (1992-1997), to associate professor (1998-2003), to currently serving as a professor (2004-present), helping build the Master and Ph.D. degree programs in urban forestry, and serving as a research scientist/project director of the SU Agricultural Research and Extension Center since its establishment in 2001.

I have been enjoying my time working at Southern University, conducting teaching, research, and outreach in urban forestry, mentoring and advising undergraduate and graduate students, serving as principal and co-principal project directors for grants and contracts, publishing and disseminating research results in scientific journals, even taking up the administrative challenges for serving as the urban forestry department chair and graduate program director for three years.

It has been a rewarding experience working at SU. It has enabled me to make impacts on minority education and leadership training in the field of urban and community forestry for the nation and around the world. I am thankful to be part of the SU community for the last 30 years and I am looking forward to continuing to make contributions to the University in the future.



## Milagro Berhane

30 YEARS/ Senior Research Associate  
SU Ag Center

I chose to be employed at Southern University because it gave me the opportunity to work in my field, chemistry, and at the same time work in sustainable agriculture research, it was a great experience to move from the private workplace to academia. I was hired as a Senior Research Associate in 1992 for the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, I currently work in the Research Division of the SU Ag Center.

I have kept the same position, but my work at Southern University has evolved so much. I have assisted on several projects related to sustainable vegetable production, pastured poultry, kenaf production, seed quality studies, multiple species research, developed community gardens for several communities around Louisiana, designed and established a historic garden for the River Road African American Museum in Donaldsonville, and established a community garden for the homeless in Opelousas just to name a few projects. On the teaching side, I have instructed Soil Sciences classes, taught commercial vegetable production, plant propagation and ornamental horticulture classes, and my Extension /outreach work includes serving as the SARE state co-coordinator for the state of Louisiana, instructor for the Sustainable Urban Agriculture Certification program, and teaching farmers about greenhouse production.



## Doris Trask Patterson

40 YEARS/ Program Coordinator in the Environmental Toxicology Program  
College of Agricultural, Family and Consumer Sciences

Being a graduate of Southern University, I still wanted to continue to be a part of it so I applied for employment after earning my degree. While I've held various positions in previous years, I have been affiliated with the Health Research Center since its inception in 1985, and have been with the Environmental Toxicology Ph.D. Program since its establishment in 2001.



## Charles Holiday

20 YEARS/ Research Farm Specialist I

\*Not Pictured



**Thirteen graduate students from the Department of Urban Forestry and Natural Resources presented papers at the 96th Annual Meeting of the Louisiana Academy of Sciences (LAS).**

The students submitted 14 abstracts to the Academy which was hosted by Louisiana State University, Alexandria on March 12, 2022. The students' abstracts were coordinated by Dr. Yaw Twumasi, Professor of GIS, Remote Sensing and Hydrology.

Graduate and undergraduate students competed in poster and oral presentations on their research during the event.

The 13 students presented abstracts on the following topics:

- **“Applying high-resolution satellite imagery to evaluate small water bodies – A case study of East Baton Rouge Parish”** – Matilda Anokye (MS Student).
- **“Ecosystem restoration: A case study of Louisiana State”** – Valentine Jeruto (MS Student).
- **“Wetland-watershed modelling and assessment along the Mississippi River in East Baton using satellite imageries”** – Julia Atayi (Ph.D. Student).
- **“The impact of deep decarbonization on public health and eco systems in Louisiana”** – Leah Njeri (MS Student).
- **“Impacts of climate change on aquatic fauna in urban freshwaters”** – Opeyemi Oladigbolu (MS Student).
- **“An assessment and modeling of land cover, and precipitation data changes for River Niger Delta region, Nigeria”** – Caroline Akinrinwoye (Ph.D. Student).
- **“How rise in temperatures may affect insect-plant interactions: impacts of climate change”** – Lidya Chala (Ph.D. Student).
- **“Flood Risk Assessment Along the Odaw River Basin in the Accra Metropolitan Area, Ghana”** – Judith Oppong (Ph.D. Student).
- **“Inventory and appraisal assessment of urban forest of F.G. Clark Activity Center, Southern University and A&M college”** – Temitope Dauda (Ph.D. Student).
- **“Planning and management of urban educational green space; Southern University and A&M College educational forest”** – Temitope Dauda (Ph.D. Student).
- **“Development of GIS mapping as a countermeasure against flooding in Baton Rouge – Louisiana”** – Lucinda Kangwana (MS Student).
- **“Analysis of forest waste management and recycling potential in Nigeria”** – Cynthia Ogbu (MS Student).
- **“Assessment of urban forest structure and function after Hurricane Ida in Livingston Parish, Louisiana”** – Miriam Makali (Ph.D. Student).
- **“Assessing the constraints of farmers to cocoa production in the Oti region of Ghana”** – Gabriel Ahoma (Ph.D. Student).



**Agribusiness students advanced to the final round in Agricultural Export Market Challenge**

Recently, Agribusiness students Brian Ardoin, Jefferson Blackmon II, Tyniqua Payne, and Clarise Preston presented their research findings and recommendations to judges at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service’s (FAS) virtual Agricultural Export Market Challenge on the topic of “Reducing the Global Carbon Hoofprint,” through U.S. Exports of Methane-Reducing Feed Additives.”

The challenge required teams to collect and analyze economic indicators for ten countries and choose the country with the greatest potential of becoming a successful export market for the feed additive, Clean Burp™. After selecting the export market, teams identified potential export barriers and determined how FAS could help to overcome these barriers. Thirteen teams were divided into Groups A and B and were evaluated based on their collective understanding of research, export strategy, and team communication.

Team Southern (Group A) presented on March 3, 2022 and received first place for an opportunity to present on March 4, 2022 in the finals. Team Southern finished second overall in the Challenge.

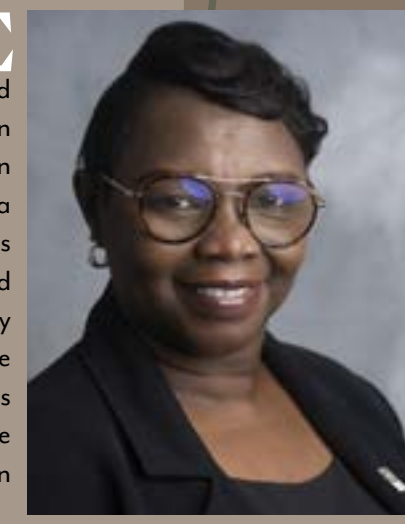
California State University, Chico won the overall Challenge.

# finding her voice in AGRICULTURE

## ZANETTA

## AUGUSTINE

Wife, mother of two, new grandmother, and nearly 30 years of service to the Southern University Agricultural Research & Extension Center is the best way to describe Zanetta Augustine. Her interest in agriculture was inspired by her mother, whom she watched matriculate through Southern University College of Agriculture during the same time that she would graduate high school. This was the only motivation she would need, to make the ultimate decision in pursuing a career in agriculture.



been here. Agriculture is deeply rooted in who we are as a people. My mother had a garden, my grandparents had a garden, and my great-grandparents were farmers. Although I am a city girl, however, I am familiar with visiting the country during the summer and spending time on the farm. For my family growing food and harvesting animals has always been a way of life.

“I knew I had to follow in her footsteps and do more. Her tenacity, grind, vigor, and raising three children all while working, I wanted to be just like her,” she said.

Initially, Zanetta did not realize that nutrition and agriculture were in the same department upon graduation, however, the pursuit was still relentless. She too, would go on to major in Agribusiness at Southern University and Agricultural & Mechanical College, and later land her dream career at her alma mater as a Specialist and Agricultural & Natural Resource Program Leader (ANR).

**What is one of the most important qualities a woman should have when pursuing a career in Agriculture?** If you have a mission to live in this world, eat clean food, breathe clean air, and you have an understanding that agriculture is the foundation for everything that we do, this is where you need to be. Just having a passion for people, and wanting to educate them, train them, and travel the world while doing so—just a good relationship with the environment in which you live in.

**Do you think women of color are represented equally in the Agriculture Industry?** No, but we have always

**Where do you see ANR ten years from now?** We will always produce food, but we are getting ready to see better use of technology. There is no secret, we are not getting more land so be prepared to see production move to warehouses and buildings—this is where the landscape is headed. We are doing it now in labs, and warehouses. You are going to see more hydroponics, more robots, but in my opinion, we will never replace growing in soil.

**What is one of your proudest contributions you have made in Agriculture?** Giving women a voice and pairing them with opportunities. Encouraging women to step to the forefront in running their own farms and writing their own grants for funding. The majority of new and beginning farmers are women, and this trend will continue because we are nurturers. I get excited when I see women coming to our workshops here at the Southern University Ag Center, buying land, inviting us to their farms, and becoming top producers in this industry. I do not mind going out on visits to show them how it's done.



**Sisters Together: Move More, Eat Better** is a six month health awareness program that encourages African American women ages 18 and older to reach and maintain a healthy weight by being more physically active and making healthier food choices. Louisiana ranks fourth for obesity among adults at 38.1%. (State of Obesity)

Kiyana Kelly, Associate Agent in Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS), instructed the program in East Baton Rouge Parish. The program began in August 2021 and culminated on February 9, 2022, with a final check-in meeting for participants. Participants met bi-monthly where they received six lessons, food demonstrations, weigh-ins, and physical activity instruction such as yoga with Kristin Brassette, Zumba with Dr. LaTonya Rounds, chair exercises, and Bodies in Motion with Mrs. Nena Verrett-Gipson.

Participants were able to sample a variety of dishes prepared by Chef Celeste Gill. Some recipes included: sauteed shrimp salad, shrimp bread, charcuterie/grazing board, cornbread dressing, sweet potatoes, macaroni and cheese, and gumbo.

With the use of the LLENA app participants received personalized nutrition guidance based on artificial intelligence. They were able to find healthy recipes, takeout, and delivery alternatives from restaurants and grocery stores. This app also helps manage some chronic diseases.

Through the Sisters Together program participants were able to increase their knowledge, skills, and modify their behaviors. Participants thoroughly enjoyed the program and stated that they would rejoin the program if it was offered again. A participant stated, "This has been an excellent program and it has helped me to feed my family better. I learned a lot of new ways to cook healthier versions of foods we already love." "It has helped me to make a lifestyle change," stated another participant.

For additional information about the Sisters Together: Move More, Eat Better program visit [www.suagcenter.com/page/sisters-together](http://www.suagcenter.com/page/sisters-together) or contact [Kiyana\\_Kelly@suagcenter.com](mailto:Kiyana_Kelly@suagcenter.com)



Participants enjoying a food demonstration from Chef Celeste Gill



Chef Celeste Gill preparing a healthier version of gumbo



Chair exercise with instructor, Mrs. Nena Verrett-Gipson

# HEART HEALTH SCREENING

## SU Ag Center co-sponsors an Employee Heart Health Screening Event

In February, the Southern University Ag Center's Public Health Division partnered with CareSouth to host a two-day employee heart health screening event on February 22 and February 24, 2022.

"February is a special month, it's not only Black History Month, but also American Heart Month," said Jasmin Plowe, Public Health Specialist, at the SU Ag Center. "It's an ideal time to educate our Black community on the importance of good heart health, and to bring awareness to contributing factors that may increase the risk for developing chronic conditions like heart disease. Southern University is the heart of the community. Our employees are the heart of campus, so this event was curated with employees in mind," added Plowe.

The employee heart health screening event included tobacco cessation resources, nutrition resources, and blood pressure and blood glucose screenings.

Plowe also serves as the Director for the Communities of Color Network, the statewide tobacco prevention and control program.

"As the first college system in Louisiana to become tobacco-free, we continue to prioritize the health of our campus community," expressed Plowe.

SU Ag Center nutrition educators, Sharnet Nixon and Evan Egana, offered nutrition education during the event.



CareSouth



"As a nutrition educator, we bring awareness to our community patrons about how the proper nutrition and physical activity choices can improve heart health and aid in the prevention of various chronic diseases," said Nixon.

"Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States. The foods we consume have a major impact on our health. The nutrition education I provide throughout the community is beneficial to helping them change their overall health. Treat your heart right and your heart will love you," echoed Egana.

CareSouth's Employee Wellness Clinic offers a comprehensive range of community-based medical, dental and behavioral health services to the employees of the Southern University Baton Rouge campus.

"Access to healthcare services can be a challenge for some, but the CareSouth Employee Wellness Clinic is a campus gem for our employees. It was a no-brainer to partner with the amazing and knowledgeable clinicians that take care of our staff and faculty daily," stated Plowe. "We encourage our employees and surrounding community members to be active participants in their health. Health screenings can detect disease before the appearance of signs and symptoms, so it is vital to stay on top of the recommended tests based on your individual factors," added Plowe.

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