



**STUDENT SUCCESS & WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT SYMPOSIUM**



Motivating, Educating, and Achieving for 135 Years

MAY 18-21 **FAMU**

1601 S. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR BLVD • TALLAHASSEE, FL 32307

Welcome MESSAGE



MESSAGE FROM DR. TIMOTHY L. BEARD



Timothy L. Beard, Ph.D.

INTERIM PRESIDENT, FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY

It is my distinct honor to welcome you to Florida A&M University for the 2025 Student Success and Workforce Development (SSWD) Symposium. We are delighted to host this convening at FAMU—an institution with a proud legacy of academic excellence, service, and unwavering commitment to student achievement.

This year's symposium comes at a pivotal time as we commemorate the 135th anniversary of the Second Morrill Act, a landmark in higher education that gave rise to the 1890 Land-Grant Universities. This historic milestone not only honors our past but inspires our present efforts to build a more equitable and empowered future.

Over the next few days, you will engage in meaningful dialogue, collaborative learning, and visionary planning—all centered on the shared mission of advancing student success and expanding workforce opportunities. The topics explored here will touch on emerging technologies, experiential learning, mentorship, and the essential role our institutions play in uplifting first-generation and underrepresented students.

I encourage each of you to take full advantage of the sessions, speakers, and networking opportunities this symposium offers. Your voice, your ideas, and your leadership are vital to the continued progress of the 1890 community and beyond.

Thank you for your participation, your partnership, and your ongoing commitment to transforming lives through education. Welcome to Tallahassee, welcome to FAMU, and welcome to the 2025 SSWD Symposium.

Warmest regards,

Dr. Timothy L. Beard

INTERIM PRESIDENT, FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY

MESSAGE FROM DR. DALE WESSON



G. Dale Wesson, Ph.D., P.E.

DEAN, COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SCIENCES, FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY

Dear Colleagues, Partners, and Friends,

It is with great pride that I welcome you to the Student Success and Workforce Development Symposium hosted by the College of Agriculture and Food Sciences at Florida A&M University. This year's theme, *Motivating, Educating, and Achieving for 135 Years*, pays tribute to our institution's founding under the Second Morrill Act of 1890 and our longstanding commitment to the land grant mission.

As an 1890 land grant institution, Florida A&M University has served as a beacon of opportunity—expanding access to higher education, promoting excellence in agricultural and technical fields, and preparing generations of leaders to meet the evolving needs of our workforce and communities. The legacy of the 1890 Land-Grant Institutions lives on through our continued focus on teaching, research, and extension that uplifts and advances economic progress.

This symposium brings together a diverse and dedicated community of educators, industry leaders, students, and stakeholders who share a vision of equitable student success and workforce development. Your presence here signals a shared commitment to empowering the next generation of professionals who will shape the future of agriculture, food systems, natural resources, and beyond.

I encourage you to engage fully in the conversations, collaborations, and innovations that will emerge during this meaningful gathering.

Thank you for being part of this celebration of history, progress, and purpose. Together, we honor our past and shape a future of continued achievement and impact. and welcome to the 2025 SSWD Symposium.

With warm regards,

G. Dale Wesson, Ph.D., P.E.

DEAN, COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SCIENCES | FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY

A Message from the **PLANNING COMMITTEE**



Welcome to the Student Success and Workforce Development Symposium!

Theme: Motivating, Educating, and Achieving for 135 Years

We're beyond excited to welcome you to the Student Success and Workforce Development (SSWD) Symposium, happening **May 19–21, 2025**, at the historic Florida A&M University!

This year marks a truly special occasion as we celebrate the **135th anniversary** of the Second Morrill Act of 1890—a milestone that honors the legacy and continued impact of the 1890 Land-Grant Institutions. For over a century, these institutions have been transforming lives through education, innovation, and community empowerment.

Get ready for three unforgettable days packed with inspiring sessions, interactive workshops, cultural excursions, and powerful conversations with changemakers from across the 1890 family and beyond. This is more than a symposium—it's a celebration of our collective commitment to student success and workforce advancement.

Thank you for being part of this journey. Let's learn, connect, and celebrate 135 years of excellence—together!

– The SSWD Symposium Planning Committee

Agenda AT A GLANCE



SUNDAY, MAY 18TH

5:30 - 5:45 PM	Depart Hotel HAMPTON/HYATT HOUSE/RESIDENCE INN
6:00 - 8:00 PM	Welcome Reception FAMU BLACK ARCHIVES
8:15 PM	Depart for Hotel HAMPTON/HYATT HOUSE/RESIDENCE INN

MONDAY, MAY 19TH

6:00 - 7:30 AM	Breakfast at Hotel HYATT/HAMPTON/RI
7:45 AM	Load Bus to FAMU Campus
8:00 AM	Registration GRAND BALLROOM LOBBY
9:00 AM	Opening Session GRAND BALLROOM
10:00 AM	Break/Poster Session GRAND BALLROOM LOBBY
11:00 AM	Objective 1: FAMU and VSU MULTI-PURPOSE LOUNGE <i>Student Session: Grand Ballroom</i>
12:00 PM	Objective 2: Lunch and Learn MULTI-PURPOSE LOUNGE <i>Student Session: Grand Ballroom</i>
1:30 PM	Objective 3: Tuskegee and Lincoln MULTI-PURPOSE LOUNGE <i>Student Session: Grand Ballroom</i>
2:30 PM	Objective 4: FAMU MULTI-PURPOSE LOUNGE <i>Student Session: Grand Ballroom</i>
3:30 PM	Break and Tour Breakout
5:30 PM	BBQ at Amphitheater FAMU CAMPUS
7:30 PM	Return to Hotel HYATT/HAMPTON/RI

TUESDAY, MAY 20TH

6:00 - 7:30 AM	Breakfast at Hotel HYATT/HAMPTON/RI
7:45 AM	Transportation to FAMU Campus
8:15 AM	Organizational Culture GRAND BALLROOM
9:15 AM	Better Mynd GRAND BALLROOM
10:15 AM	Civil Rights GRAND BALLROOM
10:30 AM	Depart for Downtown Tallahassee
11:30 AM	Proclamation Reading DOWNTOWN TALLAHASSEE
12:00 PM - 3:00 PM	Lunch and Tours of Tallahassee
3:15 PM	Return to Hotel
5:30 PM	Depart from Hotel to Campus
6:00 PM	Dinner: 135th Anniversary of the Second Morrill Act GRAND BALLROOM
8:15 PM	Depart for Hotel HYATT/HAMPTON/RI

WEDNESDAY, MAY 21ST

6:00 AM - 7:30 AM	Breakfast at Hotel HYATT/HAMPTON/RI
8:00 AM	Transportation to FAMU Campus
8:15 AM	Student Case Study Competition GRAND BALLROOM
11:00 AM	Closing Session and Wrap-Up GRAND BALLROOM
12:00 PM	Bag Lunch and Departure GRAND BALLROOM

Monday, May 19

TOUR OPTIONS



OPTION A: FAMU CAMPUS TOUR

Discover FAMU: A Guided Campus Tour Experience

Join us for an exciting and informative campus tour of Florida A&M University (FAMU), where you'll explore the heart of our historic campus and see firsthand what makes FAMU a premier institution for academic excellence, cultural richness, and student success. During this guided tour, you'll have the opportunity to visit key academic buildings, state-of-the-art facilities, and student-centered spaces that contribute to a dynamic college experience.

Our student tour guides will share insights into FAMU's history, traditions, and campus life, offering a unique perspective on what it's like to be part of the Rattler family. Whether you're exploring potential academic programs, learning about student organizations, or discovering resources available to support your journey, this tour will provide a comprehensive view of all FAMU has to offer. Don't miss the chance to envision yourself thriving at one of the nation's top Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)!



Get Ready for the Tour!

As you prepare for the FAMU campus tour, please note that this will be a walking tour. To ensure a comfortable and enjoyable experience, we recommend wearing comfortable shoes, bringing a water bottle, and packing a hat or sun visor to protect yourself from the sun. We look forward to showing you around our vibrant campus!

FAMU Campus Tour Schedule

3:30 PM – 3:35 PM	Welcome and Introduction
3:35 PM – 3:45 PM	FAMU History and Traditions
3:45 PM – 4:00 PM	Academic Buildings
4:00 PM – 4:15 PM	Student Life
4:15 PM – 4:30 PM	The Set and Dining Areas
4:30 PM – 4:45 PM	Library and Research Facilities
4:45 PM – 5:00 PM	Historic Landmarks
5:00 PM – 5:15 PM	Will Packer Amphitheater

Monday, May 19

TOUR OPTIONS



OPTION B: FAMU BLACK ARCHIVES

FAMU Black Archives Self-Guided Tour

Embark on a self-guided journey through the FAMU Black Archives, a significant cultural and historical landmark dedicated to preserving and sharing the stories of African Americans, particularly those from Florida A&M University and the surrounding community. The Black Archives is home to a vast collection of documents, photographs, and artifacts that showcase the rich legacy of African American history, culture, and achievement. As you explore, you'll gain insights into the profound impact of FAMU and its alumni on both local and national levels.

The self-guided tour allows you to explore the archives at your own pace, with informative signage and multimedia exhibits along the way. Learn about key figures in African American history, the civil rights movement, and FAMU's role in shaping the cultural landscape. Whether you're an art enthusiast, history buff, or just curious about the cultural roots of FAMU, this tour is a perfect way to connect with the institution's heritage.



Get Ready for the Tour!

As you prepare for your self-guided tour of the FAMU Black Archives, here are a few quick tips:

- Wear comfortable shoes for easy exploration.
- Bring a water bottle to stay hydrated.
- Take your time and enjoy the exhibits at your own pace.
- Engage with the displays to learn about FAMU's rich history and African American culture.

We look forward to you discovering the legacy of the FAMU Black Archives!

FAMU Black Archives Self-Guided Tour Schedule

3:30 PM – 3:35 PM	Welcome and Introduction
3:35 PM – 3:45 PM	Begin Tour – Introduction to the Archives
3:45 PM – 4:05 PM	The Civil Rights Movement and FAMU's Role
4:05 PM – 4:25 PM	Notable Alumni and Historical Figures
4:25 PM – 4:45 PM	African American Culture and Heritage
4:45 PM – 5:00 PM	FAMU's Cultural Legacy
5:00 PM – 5:15 PM	Conclusion & Reflection

Monday, May 19

TOUR OPTIONS



OPTION C: FAMU COMMUNITY GARDEN

FAMU Community Garden Tour Guided by Organic Farmer Dr. Jennifer Taylor

Explore the heart of sustainable agriculture at the FAMU Community Garden in Tallahassee, Florida—a vibrant, educational green space that promotes community health, environmental stewardship, and hands-on learning. This guided tour, led by renowned organic farmer and advocate Dr. Jennifer Taylor, offers an in-depth look at how organic and regenerative practices are used to grow fresh, nutritious food while supporting the local ecosystem.

Dr. Taylor, a leader in organic farming and food justice, will share insights into the garden's mission, methods, and impact—from composting and crop rotation to seed saving and food sovereignty. Visitors will have the opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions about sustainable food systems, culturally relevant farming practices, and the role of HBCUs in advancing equitable agriculture.

Whether you're a student, educator, or community member, this tour is a unique opportunity to connect with the land, learn from a national voice in organic farming, and discover how the FAMU Community Garden serves as a model for education, empowerment, and sustainability.



Get Ready for the Tour!

Get ready to explore sustainability in action! Wear comfortable shoes, bring a water bottle, and be prepared to be outdoors—a hat or sun visor is recommended for sun protection. This experience is both educational and inspiring, perfect for anyone interested in food systems, environmental science, or community development.

FAMU Community Garden Tour Schedule

3:30 PM – 3:45 PM	Depart FAMU Campus
3:45 PM – 5:00 PM	Arrive at FAMU Community Garden Guided Tour with Dr. Jennifer Taylor
5:00 PM – 5:15 PM	Depart Community Garden Return to FAMU Campus

Monday, May 19

TOUR OPTIONS



OPTION D: FAMU CENTER FOR VITICULTURE AND SMALL FRUIT RESEARCH

FAMU Center for Viticulture and Small Fruit Research Tour

6361 MAHAN DR, TALLAHASSEE, FL 32308

You will participate in a guided field trip to the FAMU Center for Viticulture and Small Fruit Research, a nationally and internationally recognized institution established in 1978 by the Florida Legislature under the “Florida Viticulture Policy Act” (Senate Bill No. 898). The Center provides leadership in research, extension, and development focused on warm climate grape production and is the only grape and wine research program among the 1890 land-grant universities.

As one of five USDA National Clean Plant Centers for Grapes, the facility maintains the world’s most extensive muscadine grape germplasm collection. It leads the nation in muscadine grape research and is a hub for experiential learning, student training, and industry collaboration. The Center’s recent accomplishments include the release of three patented American native grape cultivars: Floriana, Florida Onyx, and Blanc du Soleil.

This educational visit will offer students firsthand exposure to viticulture research, biotechnology, and agricultural innovation, enriching their understanding of plant science and the role of land-grant institutions in advancing sustainable agriculture.



Get Ready for the Tour!

We recommend wearing comfortable, closed-toe shoes suitable for walking outdoors, as portions of the tour will take place in research and vineyard areas. If you’d like to take notes during the presentations or discussions, feel free to bring a notepad or device. Most importantly, come prepared to engage, ask questions, and make the most of this unique experience. We look forward to your participation!

FAMU Center for Viticulture and Small Fruit Research Tour Schedule

3:30 PM	Depart from FAMU Campus
3:45 PM	Arrive at the Center; Welcome and Introduction
4:00 PM	Guided Tour of the Viticulture Facilities
4:30 PM	Presentation: Muscadine Research and Cultivar Development
5:00 PM	Q&A and Wrap-Up
5:15 PM	Depart from the Center
5:30 PM	Return to FAMU Campus

Tuesday, May 20

READING OF THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION



PRESENTED BY VISIT TALLAHASSEE TOURS

Step into history with the Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation, a powerful and moving experience offered by Visit Tallahassee Tours. Held at a historic site in Florida's capital, this event commemorates the moment on May 20, 1865, when the Emancipation Proclamation was officially read in Tallahassee—two years after it was issued by President Abraham Lincoln—marking the freedom of enslaved people in Florida.

Through a dramatic reading and guided interpretation, visitors will gain a deeper understanding of the significance of Emancipation Day in Florida's history and its lasting legacy in the ongoing struggle for freedom and equality. This experience provides a unique opportunity to connect with the past and reflect on its impact on present-day social justice efforts.



Get Ready for the Tour!

As you prepare for the Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation Tour, be sure to dress for the weather—this is an outdoor experience rich in history and reflection. Wear comfortable shoes, bring a water bottle, and consider a hat or sun visor for sun protection. This powerful tour invites you to step back in time and engage with a pivotal moment in Florida's history. Come ready to listen, learn, and reflect.

Cultural Tour Rotation Tentative Schedule

	BUS 1	BUS 2	BUS 3	BUS 4
11:00 AM-12:15 PM	Emancipation Proclamation at Knott House			
12:30 PM-1:00 PM	Lunch at Smokey Hollow			
1:00 PM-1:45 PM	Capitol	Historic Capitol	Cascades Park -Walking Tour	Smokey Hollow History/ Union Bank
2 PM-2:45 PM	Smokey Hollow History/ Union Bank	Cascades Park - Walking Tour	Historic Capitol	Capitol

Spring 2025 Symposium

CONFERENCE AGENDA



Sunday, May 18th

5:30 - 5:45 PM	Depart Hotel to FAMU Black Archives <i>Travel from the hotel to the historic Meek-Eaton Black Archives Research Center and Museum on the campus of Florida A&M University. Transportation will be provided.</i>	HAMPTON/ HYATT HOUSE/ RESIDENCE INN
6:00 - 6:45 PM	Welcome Reception and Self-Guided Tour <i>Enjoy light refreshments and a warm welcome as you explore the FAMU Black Archives. This will be a self-guided tour to experience the rich history and cultural contributions of African Americans, with a special focus on FAMU's legacy and impact.</i>	BLACK ARCHIVES
6:45 - 8:00 PM	Networking <i>Great opportunity to build relationships, exchange ideas, and foster collaborations in support of student success and workforce development across the 1890 land-grant institutions.</i>	BLACK ARCHIVES

Monday, May 19th

6:00 - 7:30 AM	Breakfast at Hotel <i>Breakfast served at your hotel.</i>	HYATT/HAMPTON/RI
7:45 AM	Transportation to FAMU Campus <i>Shuttle transportation will depart promptly from the hotel to the Florida A&M University campus. Please be on time to ensure a smooth arrival for the start of the program.</i>	
8:00 AM	Registration <i>Upon arrival at FAMU, you will check in at the locations for professionals and students. Refer to signage to proceed to the location.</i>	GRAND BALLROOM LOBBY
9:00 AM	OPENING SESSION Moderator DR. NEIL JAMES, ASSOCIATE DEAN <i>College of Agriculture and Food Sciences (CAFS), Florida A&M University</i> Welcome Remarks DR. TIMOTHY E. BEARD, INTERIM PRESIDENT, FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY <i>Official welcome, emphasizing the significance of collaborative academic leadership and innovation at Florida A&M University and beyond.</i> Welcome Remarks DR. ALLYSON WATSON, PROVOST AND VICE-PRESIDENT OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS <i>Florida A&M University Official welcome, highlighting FAMU's commitment to academic excellence, student success, and the importance of mentorship and collaboration in shaping future leaders.</i> Institutional Greetings DR. DALE WESSON, DEAN, CAFS, FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY <i>Highlight CAFS's commitment to excellence in research, education, and extension, and its role in fostering partnerships across the agricultural and environmental sciences.</i> Greetings from ARD DR. ALTON THOMPSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, ASSOCIATION OF 1890 RESEARCH DIRECTORS (ARD) <i>Greetings on behalf of the 1890 land-grant institutions, reinforcing their shared mission to promote research, capacity building, and innovation in historically underserved communities.</i> SSWD Project Overview and Welcome DR. SHIRLEY- HYMON PARKER, PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR, SYSTEMIC SUSTAINABLE WORKFORCE Development (SSWD) Project Overview of the SSWD initiative, detailing its national scope, strategic goals, and the importance of building sustainable career pipelines through academic and industry collaboration. Keynote Address DR. JENNIFER COLLINS, ASSOCIATE PROVOST FOR STUDENT SUCCESS, FAMU <i>Deliver the keynote address, focusing on student success as a strategic imperative. Her presentation will examine scalable practices for improving access, retention, and achievement in higher education, especially within land-grant institutions.</i>	GRAND BALLROOM

Spring 2025 Symposium

CONFERENCE AGENDA



Monday, May 19th (Cont.)

10:00 AM

Break/Poster Session

GRAND BALLROOM
LOBBY

Objective 1: Experiential Learning Opportunities

Institutions: FAMU & Virginia State University

Speakers: Dr. Neil James and Dr. Neil Brown

Initiatives providing K-16 experiential learning in FAHN sciences, STEM fields, and technology development, including research experiences.

MULTI-PURPOSE
LOUNGE

11:00 AM

STUDENT SESSION: CREATING COLLEGE AND CAREER READY STUDENTS THROUGH EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

Presenter: Dr. Eric Wood, Higher Education Leadership Executive, Apple, Inc.

Drawing from his experience as a former principal and tech leader at Apple, he highlights how integrating digital tools into learning builds essential skills, enhances access, and prepares students for the demands of the modern workforce.

GRAND BALLROOM

LUNCH AND LEARN – Mentor Collective

Objective 2: Recruit, Retain, Mentor, and Graduate First-Generation, Underrepresented Students

Institutions: North Carolina A&T, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, Tuskegee University

Speakers: Ms. Britnie McDonald, Mentor Collective and Dr. Nina Lyon-Bennett

Cover recruitment strategies, retention through mentoring programs, and initiatives like an 1890 Mentoring Program, newsletters, and Summer Scholars Mentoring for first-generation students.

MULTI-PURPOSE
LOUNGE

12:00 PM

STUDENT SESSION: MENTORSHIP: BUILDING A LEGACY OF SUPPORT AT HBCUS

Presenter: Dr. Levon Esters, Penn State University

Will share insights on the vital role of mentorship in higher education, with a focus on scaling culturally relevant, high-impact peer and alumni mentoring programs.

GRAND BALLROOM

Objective 3: Workforce Development Experiences for Students

Institutions: Lincoln University, Tuskegee University

Speaker: Dr. Olga Bolden-Tiller, Dean Tuskegee University

Explore workforce development initiatives such as the Employability Faculty Resource Center, Employability Student Certificate, and a Virtual Food and Ag Career Fair to enhance students' work readiness in Ag-STEM fields.

MULTI-PURPOSE
LOUNGE

1:30 PM

STUDENT SESSION: AM I A FIT? DECODING JOB QUALIFICATIONS.

Presenter: Dr. Stephon Fitzpatrick, Executive Director, Together We Grow

Am I a Fit? Explore how to assess workplace culture and values to determine if a role aligns with your goals.

GRAND BALLROOM

Objective 4: Integrating Emerging Technologies into the Academic Curriculum

Institutions: FAMU, Fort Valley State, University of Maryland Eastern Shore

Speaker: Jingqiu Chen

This session will focus on integrating instructional and industry technologies, including online education tools, advising systems, and emerging technologies like drones and precision agriculture, into academic programs.

MULTI-PURPOSE
LOUNGE

2:30 PM

STUDENT SESSION: BEYOND THE INTERVIEW: WHAT COMES NEXT?

Presenter: Dr. Stephon Fitzpatrick, Executive Director, Together We Grow

Beyond the Interview: What Comes Next? Learn what to do after the interview, from follow-ups to evaluating offers and preparing to start.

GRAND BALLROOM

Spring 2025 Symposium

CONFERENCE AGENDA



Monday, May 19th (Cont.)

PROFESSIONALS AND STUDENTS TOUR

Viticulture Center

Explore FAMU's state-of-the-art facility focused on grape and wine research, sustainability, and agricultural science.

FAMU Campus Tour

Discover the historic and academic highlights of Florida A&M University's campus.

Community Garden

Learn about FAMU's initiatives in urban agriculture, sustainability, and food security through a hands-on garden experience.

Black Archives

Visit the Meek-Eaton Black Archives to explore exhibits showcasing African American history, culture, and FAMU's legacy.

VITICULTURE CENTER

FAMU CAMPUS

COMMUNITY GARDEN

BLACK ARCHIVES

BBQ at Amphitheater

Casual and fun evening at the FAMU Amphitheater featuring a Southern-style BBQ dinner. Enjoy great food, music, and conversation in an outdoor setting that fosters community and connection among students, professionals, and institutional partners.

FAMU CAMPUS

Return to Hotel

Transportation will be provided back to the hotel. Please be ready for pickup during this time to ensure an efficient and timely return.

HYATT/HAMPTON/RI

Tuesday, May 20th

Breakfast at Hotel

Breakfast served at your hotel.

HYATT/HAMPTON/RI

Transportation to FAMU Campus

Shuttles will depart promptly from the hotel to Florida A&M University. Please be on time to ensure a smooth start to the morning's program.

HBCU Initiatives and Organizational Culture Presentation

Presenter: Eloris Speight, Executive Director, HBCU Initiative

Explore key initiatives impacting Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), with a focus on organizational culture and the importance of understanding generational differences in leadership, learning styles, and workplace engagement.

GRAND BALLROOM
(JOINT SESSION)

Mindfulness for Mental Health and Success

Presenter: Vanessa Ford, Better Mynd

Interactive presentation on mindfulness strategies tailored for students and professionals. Learn how to manage stress, improve focus, and support emotional well-being through practical mindfulness tools.

GRAND BALLROOM
(JOINT SESSION)

Tallahassee Civil Rights History Presentation

Presenter: Delaitre Hollinger

Noted historian and civil rights advocate, will share an inspiring look into Tallahassee's rich civil rights history. This session will connect past movements to present-day advocacy and leadership, offering powerful insights for today's changemakers.

GRAND BALLROOM
(JOINT SESSION)

Depart for Downtown Tallahassee

Transportation will be provided to downtown Tallahassee for the next portion of the day's events.

*Timely transitions are appreciated to ensure a smooth flow of events.

GRAND BALLROOM

Proclamation Reading

You will join local leaders and program participants for an official reading of a proclamation recognizing the contributions of 1890 Land-Grant Institutions and the enduring legacy of the Second Morrill Act.

DOWNTOWN
TALLAHASSEE

Lunch and Tours of Tallahassee

You will enjoy lunch in downtown Tallahassee followed by guided tours of key historical sites and landmarks that played a significant role in the city's civil rights and educational history.

DOWNTOWN
TALLAHASSEE

Spring 2025 Symposium

CONFERENCE AGENDA



Tuesday, May 20th (Cont.)

3:00 PM	Return to Hotel <i>Transportation will be provided back to the hotel for a short break and preparation for the evening program.</i>	
5:30 PM	Depart from Hotel to Campus <i>Shuttles will depart from the hotel to return attendees to campus for the evening celebration.</i>	
6:00 PM	Dinner: 135th Anniversary of the Second Morrill Act <i>Celebrate the historic legacy of the Second Morrill Act, which led to the establishment of 1890 Land-Grant Universities. This commemorative dinner will highlight the impact of these institutions on education, equity, and innovation.</i> Featured Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Jewel Bronaugh, President, 1890 Foundation and Former Deputy Secretary, USDA • Dr. Stephon Fitzpatrick, Executive Director, Together We Grow <i>This evening will honor the contributions of 1890 institutions and spotlight the future of inclusive excellence in higher education and agriculture.</i>	GRAND BALLROOM
8:15 PM	Depart for Hotel <i>Transportation will be provided back to the hotel. Please be ready for pickup during this time to ensure an efficient and timely return.</i>	HYATT/HAMPTON/RI

Wednesday, May 21st

6:00 - 7:30 AM	Breakfast at Hotel <i>Breakfast served at your hotel.</i>	HYATT/HAMPTON/RI
8:00 AM	Transportation to FAMU Campus <i>Shuttles will depart promptly from the hotel to Florida A&M University. Please be on time to ensure a smooth start to the morning's program.</i>	
8:15 AM	Student Case Study Competition <i>Student teams will present innovative solutions to real-world challenges related to the themes of student success, workforce development, and emerging technologies. This competition encourages critical thinking, collaboration, and communication, as students showcase their ideas before a panel of judges and peers. Winners will be recognized during the closing session.</i>	GRAND BALLROOM
11:00 AM	Closing Session and Wrap-Up <i>The final session will include a summary of key takeaways from the week, reflections from participants, and expressions of gratitude to partners, presenters, and attendees. This is a time to celebrate shared accomplishments and reinforce commitments to advancing student success across the 1890 land-grant system.</i>	GRAND BALLROOM
12:00 PM	Bag Lunch and Departure <i>Participants will receive boxed lunches for convenience as they prepare to depart. Safe travels and thank you for being part of this impactful experience.</i>	GRAND BALLROOM

*Thank you for being part of
this year's SSWD Symposium.*

We appreciate your engagement and collaboration. We look forward to continuing the momentum at next year's symposium—host university to be announced. See you there!

Spring 2025 Symposium

SPEAKERS



OPENING SPEAKER



Jennifer M. Collins, Ph.D.

ASSOCIATE PROVOST FOR STUDENT SUCCESS
PROFESSOR OF MANAGEMENT
FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY

Jennifer Collins currently serves as the Associate Provost for Student Success as well as Professor of Management at Florida A&M University. Previously, she served as the Assistant Dean of Accreditation and Assessment in the School of Business and Industry at Florida A&M University and the Quality Enhancement Plan Director for the University. She holds a Ph.D. in Management from Florida Atlantic University as well as a Master of Business Administration and Bachelor of Science in Finance from Florida State University. Her research interests include examining factors that influence student success outcomes, assessment of student learning outcomes, and innovative pedagogy in management education.

Prior to joining the faculty at Florida A&M University, Dr. Collins taught at Florida State University while completing her dissertation. She also worked for the State of Florida for 12 years in various capacities, including: serving as a Tax Auditor with the State of Florida Department of Revenue and the Quality Assurance Administrator for the Florida Commission for Transportation Disadvantaged, where she was responsible for the oversight of all federal and state funded transportation services for disadvantaged citizens in the state of Florida.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS: 135TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SECOND MORRILL ACT



Stephon Fitzpatrick, Ph.D. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR | TOGETHER WE GROW

Dr. Stephon Fitzpatrick, a non-traditional agriculture professional, has become a distinguished expert on organizational culture and change management, with a remarkable career dedicated to transforming agricultural and food industries. His innovative strategies and profound insights have significantly enhanced the efficiency and resilience of agricultural organizations and communities across the country.

Dr. Fitzpatrick serves as the Executive Director of Together We Grow where he leads a consortium made up of companies, non-governmental organizations, universities, and government agencies with a stake in American agriculture, food, and a commitment to building a modern workforce that reflects the communities in which we live and work.

A product of three Historically Black Colleges and Universities with almost two decades with MANRRS and as the Immediate Past President, Dr. Fitzpatrick continues to dedicate his life's work to advocating and uplifting the experiences, successes, and challenges faced by underrepresented populations throughout the agriculture industry.



Jewel Bronaugh, Ph.D. PRESIDENT AND CEO | THE 1890 UNIVERSITIES FOUNDATION

Dr. Jewel Bronaugh currently serves as President and CEO of the 1890 Universities Foundation. She is the second President and CEO in the Foundation's history. In 2021, Dr. Bronaugh was nominated by President Joe Biden to serve as the 14th U.S. Deputy Secretary of Agriculture. She was unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate on May 13, 2021, and assumed office on May 17, 2021. She is the first Black woman to serve in this position.

In 2018, Dr. Bronaugh was appointed by Governor Ralph Northam to serve as the 16th Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. In 2019, she served as the Virginia State Executive Director for the USDA's Farm Service Agency (FSA). Prior to her FSA appointment, Dr. Bronaugh was the Dean of the College of Agriculture at Virginia State University (VSU) where she oversaw Extension, Research, and Academic Programs, and served as the Associate Administrator

for Extension Programs. She was also a 4-H Extension Specialist.

In 2019, Dr. Bronaugh helped launch the Virginia Farmer Stress Task Force initiative to raise awareness and help assist farmers and ranchers in time of stress. In 2020, Dr. Bronaugh helped establish the Virginia Food Access Investment Fund Program, the first statewide program of its kind aimed at strengthening local food systems by investing in projects that improve access to fresh foods in historically marginalized communities.

Dr. Bronaugh received her Ph.D. in Career and Technical Education from Virginia Tech. She has dedicated her career to service and promoting youth leadership in agriculture. Originally from Petersburg, Virginia, Dr. Bronaugh is married to Cleavon, a retired U.S. Army Veteran.

Professional Session Descriptions

MONDAY, MAY 19



Expanding Experiential Learning: Empowering Students from K-16 for Future Success

This session will explore innovative strategies for developing and implementing experiential learning opportunities that support student growth from early education through college (K-16). Participants will examine ways to engage students in the Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Human (FANH) sciences, as well as broader STEM fields, through hands-on learning experiences that bridge classroom theory with real-world application. The session will emphasize the integration of soft skills development, including communication, collaboration, and emotional intelligence, alongside critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making exercises. Attendees will also learn how to design programs that enhance research competencies, foster international engagement, and encourage participation in academic conferences and professional presentations. Additional focus will be placed on leadership training and the development of technical and digital literacy skills that align with evolving workforce demands. Whether you're an educator, administrator, or program developer, this session will offer actionable insights for creating meaningful, career-aligned experiences that prepare students for lifelong success across a variety of academic and professional pathways.

Building Life-Changing Relationships: Enhancing Student Success with Mentor Collective

At Mentor Collective, we believe that relationships are at the heart of every student's journey through higher education. While some students naturally find support through faculty and advisors, many others face challenges in building the lasting connections that are key to their academic and professional success. In this session, we will explore how Mentor Collective works to bridge this gap by facilitating meaningful, life-changing mentor-mentee relationships that empower students to thrive both in and outside of the classroom.

Through partnerships with forward-thinking institutions, Mentor Collective helps to integrate personalized mentorship into the college experience, providing students with the guidance, resources, and support they need to succeed. Attendees will learn about the impact of mentoring on student retention, graduation rates, and career readiness, as well as the practical steps institutions can take to implement and scale mentorship programs. Join us to discover how intentional relationship-building can open doors and shape a student's future.

Strengthening the Pipeline: Strategies to Recruit, Retain, Mentor, and Graduate First-Generation and Underrepresented Students at 1890 Land-Grant Universities

This session will focus on innovative, evidence-based approaches to support the academic and professional success of first-generation and underrepresented students enrolled in 1890 land-grant institutions, particularly those pursuing studies in the Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Human (FANH) sciences. Participants will explore strategies for effective recruitment that leverage community partnerships, culturally responsive outreach, and early exposure to FANH career pathways. The session will also highlight successful retention practices such as cohort-based learning, academic support systems, and targeted scholarships and internships.

A central theme of the session will be the critical role of structured mentorship, peer networks, and faculty engagement in guiding students through their academic journey and into graduation. Attendees will learn how to design mentoring models that are sustainable, inclusive, and scalable across institutions. Emphasis will also be placed on program designs that are not only impactful but replicable across the broader 1890 land-grant system, allowing for shared best practices and institutional collaboration. Whether you are building a new support initiative or looking to enhance existing efforts, this session will provide practical insights and tools to ensure that underrepresented students thrive academically, socially, and professionally within FANH disciplines.

Building the Bridge: Workforce Development for Underrepresented Students in the FANH Sciences

This session will focus on designing and delivering impactful workforce development experiences that strengthen the pipeline for underrepresented students transitioning from postsecondary education into graduate programs and competitive careers—particularly within the Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Human (FANH) sciences. Participants will explore a range of strategies to create hands-on, career-aligned opportunities such as internships, fellowships, job shadowing, undergraduate research, industry partnerships, and leadership development programs. The session will emphasize how real-world experiences not only reinforce academic learning but also cultivate professional skills, confidence, and networks that are critical for long-term success. Attendees will examine models that incorporate career readiness training, mentorship, and exposure to graduate education pathways, with a focus on increasing participation. Best practices for equitable access, program scalability, and long-term tracking of student outcomes will also be discussed. Designed for educators, administrators, and workforce development professionals, this session offers practical guidance for building robust, inclusive pipelines that prepare underrepresented students for success beyond the classroom.

Integrating Emerging Technologies into Academic Pathways: Preparing Students for the Future of FANH Sciences

This session will explore forward-thinking strategies for integrating emerging technologies into the academic curricula of both secondary and postsecondary education, with a focus on enhancing instruction, advising, and industry alignment in the Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Human (FANH) sciences. Participants will examine how technologies such as drones, precision agriculture tools, geographic information systems (GIS), bioinformatics platforms, and big data analytics are transforming the FANH industries—and how academic programs can keep pace.

The session will also highlight the role of instructional and student support technologies, including online and distance learning platforms, virtual labs, advising software, and student management systems that can improve access, engagement, and outcomes for diverse learners. Emphasis will be placed on designing technology-enhanced learning environments that are inclusive, interactive, and industry-relevant, while also addressing faculty development and infrastructure needs. Attendees will leave with actionable strategies for modernizing curricula, expanding access to high-demand tech skills, and preparing students for technologically driven careers in FANH fields.

Student Session Descriptions

MONDAY, MAY 19



Innovating Your Future: Exploring Career Pathways and Innovation with Apple Inc.

Join representatives from Apple Inc. for an engaging session designed to inspire and inform students about the exciting opportunities available at the intersection of technology, creativity, and impact. This session will offer a behind-the-scenes look at Apple's culture of innovation, its commitment to diversity and inclusion, and the wide range of career paths across engineering, design, marketing, operations, and more.

Students will learn about Apple's internship and early career programs, discover how their academic background and personal passions can align with roles at Apple, and gain insights into the skills and mindsets the company looks for in future talent. Through interactive discussion and real-world examples, attendees will also explore how Apple uses cutting-edge technologies to solve complex problems, shape user experiences, and drive global change. Whether you're a tech enthusiast, creative thinker, or future leader, this session will help you imagine your place at one of the world's most influential companies.

Mentorship: Building a Legacy of Support at HBCUs

Join Dr. Levon Esters, Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Dean of the Graduate School at Penn State University, as he shares insights on the critical role of mentorship in higher education. Dr. Esters, a leading voice in the HBCU community, emphasizes that "Mentorship is about giving back and paying it forward. It's a thread that ties generations together and ensures a legacy of support." This session will explore how Mentor Collective, in collaboration with thirteen Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), is scaling culturally relevant, high-impact peer and alumni mentorship programs. These initiatives focus on enhancing student persistence, fostering a strong sense of belonging, and improving career readiness while easing the burden on staff with limited capacity. Participants will learn how mentorship can bridge generational gaps, support student success, and contribute to a legacy of lasting impact within the HBCU community.

Decoded and Defined: Finding Your Fit in Today's Workforce (Pt. 1: FAMU and VSU)

This session, students will be equipped with key tools to navigate the modern job market. They will learn how to interpret job descriptions effectively and identify the real skills that employers are seeking beyond generic requirements. The session will also guide students in understanding how their academic background, leadership roles, and personal life experiences can translate into workforce-ready competencies. Additionally, students will gain insight into current workforce trends, including both technical and soft skills that are most in demand. Finally, the session will introduce various experiential learning and professional development opportunities designed to enhance students' competitiveness in the job market.

Positioning Yourself for Workforce Success (Pt. 2: NCAT and UAPB)

This session, students will have a deeper understanding of how to effectively position themselves for long-term workforce success. They will be able to interpret job descriptions with greater clarity, uncovering what employers are truly looking for beyond surface-level qualifications. The session will highlight the unique strengths that first-generation and underrepresented students bring to the workplace, emphasizing how these identities contribute to diversity and innovation. Students will also learn to identify and leverage critical support systems such as mentors, sponsors, and professional networks that play a vital role in career growth. Finally, they will begin to craft a personalized success strategy that goes beyond having a polished resume—one that includes experiential learning, meaningful relationship-building, and alignment with their core values.

Owning Your Career Beyond the Interview (Tuskegee and Lincoln)

This session, students will understand the importance of workforce development experiences—such as internships, fellowships, and leadership programs—in building career readiness and professional confidence. They will gain insight into what to expect after the interview process, including onboarding procedures, navigating workplace culture, and understanding performance expectations. The session will also help students identify personal development opportunities that can serve as a bridge between graduation and securing full-time employment. Lastly, students will be guided in creating a strategic plan to pursue career-aligned experiences and mentorship opportunities before they graduate, empowering them to take ownership of their professional journey.

Joint Session Descriptions

TUESDAY, MAY 20



Bridging the Gap: Organizational Culture and Generational Differences at HBCUs

This dynamic session explores the intersection of organizational culture and generational diversity within Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). As institutions grounded in legacy, community, and resilience, HBCUs continue to evolve to meet the expectations of a multi-generational workforce and student body. Participants will gain insights into how differing generational values, communication styles, and workplace expectations impact organizational effectiveness, collaboration, and culture. Through case studies, interactive discussions, and practical strategies, this presentation will empower faculty, staff, and administrators to foster inclusive environments that honor tradition while embracing innovation. Whether you're a Gen Z student leader, a Millennial staff member, or a Baby Boomer administrator, this session will provide tools to enhance cross-generational understanding and strengthen institutional culture across all levels.

Mindfulness Matters: Cultivating Mental Wellness with Better Mynd

Join us for an engaging and restorative session presented in partnership with Better Mynd, focused on the power of mindfulness to support mental health, emotional balance, and academic success. In today's fast-paced, high-pressure environment, students, faculty, and staff face unique stressors that can impact well-being and performance. This presentation introduces mindfulness as a practical tool for managing stress, increasing focus, and fostering resilience. Participants will explore the science behind mindfulness, engage in simple guided practices, and learn how to incorporate mindful habits into their daily lives—both on and off campus. Whether you are new to mindfulness or looking to deepen your practice, this session offers accessible techniques to help you pause, breathe, and reconnect with purpose.

Joint Session Description

WEDNESDAY, MAY 21

Student Case Study Competition: Innovation in Action

The Student Case Study Competition is an exciting opportunity for students to demonstrate their analytical skills, creativity, and teamwork by tackling real-world challenges. Participants will work in teams to examine a complex case related to societal, institutional, or industry issues, develop strategic solutions, and present their recommendations to a panel of judges made up of professionals and faculty. This engaging event fosters critical thinking, public speaking, and collaboration, while also offering valuable exposure to leadership, mentorship, and networking opportunities. The competition serves as a platform for students to showcase their academic and professional potential, with top teams receiving special recognition and prizes. Whether competing or observing, this event highlights the innovation and excellence of student leaders.

Speaker **PROFILES**



Alton Thompson

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
ASSOCIATION OF 1890 RESEARCH
DIRECTORS

Dr. Alton Thompson is the Executive Director for the Association of 1890 Research Directors (ARD). As ARD's Executive Director, he provides leadership and coordination in representing the Association on developing multi-state and national research priorities and implementing a regional response for the 1890 region. Dr. Thompson promotes, articulates and advocates the priorities of the 1890 regional research agenda within the national framework of USDA- National Institute for Food and Agriculture, other federal agencies, and the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities. Prior to joining ARD in August 2016, Dr. Thompson served as Provost and executive vice president for Academic Affairs at Delaware State University for seven years. He is a tenured professor and dean and executive director for Agricultural Programs in the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences at North Carolina A&T State University for eight years and then served as interim provost and vice chancellor for Academic Affairs for two years. Thompson was inducted into the George Washington Carver Hall Public Service Hall of Fame in 2020 and the USDA/National Institute of Food and Agriculture Hall of Fame in 2008.



Britnie McDonald

MENTOR COLLECTIVE
PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Britnie McDonald is a dynamic, multi-talented professional based in Harrisonburg, Virginia, with a background spanning career coaching, sales, public speaking, and wellness. She currently serves as the Partnership Development Director at Mentor Collective and a Coach with Greenhouse Coaching, where she empowers individuals to achieve their personal and professional goals. With over a decade of experience at Rosetta Stone and roles in business development, media sales, and instructional leadership, Britnie brings a unique blend of strategic insight and motivational energy to every role. She's also a certified Zumba instructor, a dedicated wife and mom, and a former Army National Guard soldier, reflecting her commitment to discipline, service, and community. Britnie holds a Bachelor of Science in Communication Studies from James Madison University.



Delaitre Hollinger

CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
FLORIDA CIVIL RIGHTS MUSEUM, INC.

Delaitre Hollinger is a Tallahassee native, nonprofit executive, and small business owner. He has nearly 17 years of leadership experience in the nonprofit, state government, higher education, housing, and community service sectors, possessing an incredible resume of accomplishments. He is the Founder and Co-Executive Director of the Florida Civil Rights Museum, Inc., and formerly served as Director of Special Projects and Director of Museum Operations for the Tallahassee Urban League, Inc.



Levon T. Esters, Ph.D.

VICE PROVOST FOR GRADUATE
EDUCATION
DEAN OF THE FOX GRADUATE
SCHOOL
PENN STATE UNIVERSITY

Dr. Levon T. Esters was appointed dean of the Fox Graduate School and vice provost for graduate education at Penn State in December 2022, beginning his role on May 1, 2023. A nationally recognized scholar in mentoring, equity, and diversity in STEM-based agricultural and life sciences, his research centers on supporting Black graduate students, students at Historically Black Land Grant Universities, and graduate student development. He is also an adjunct professor at Cornell and a senior research associate at Rutgers. Previously, he served as associate dean at Purdue's Polytechnic Institute. Dr. Esters holds degrees from Florida A&M, North Carolina A&T, and Penn State.



Vanessa Ford

PARTNERSHIP ARCHITECT
AWARD-WINNING AUTHOR
AND EDUCATOR

Vanessa Ford is a career educator committed to advancing educational equity and dismantling systemic barriers to student success. Passionate about creating safe, inclusive learning environments, she collaborates with higher education leaders, state systems, and advocacy organizations to expand access, enhance mental health supports, and drive institutional change. Her work has been featured in outlets including The New York Times, The Washington Post, NPR, and Good Morning America. She is the co-author of Calvin (Penguin, 2021), a Lambda Literary Award-winning children's book, and The Advocate Educator's Handbook (Jossey-Bass, 2024). For more, visit www.jrandvanessaford.com or www.theadvocateeducator.com.



Nina Lyon-Bennett, Ph.D.

ASSISTANT DEAN FOR ACADEMICS
UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS
AT PINE BLUFF

Dr. Nina A. Lyon is the Assistant Dean for Academics in the School of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Human Sciences. She has served at three other Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs): Clark Atlanta University, her alma mater; the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, where she chaired the Department of Human Ecology; and Morgan State University, where she taught family and consumer sciences courses. Dr. Lyon earned her Ph.D. in Human Development and Family Studies from the University of Georgia and her B.S. and M.S. degrees in Sociology from Clark College and Atlanta University. Additionally, she holds graduate certificates in Social Gerontology, Women's Studies, and Family Financial Planning. She is a 2025 MSI Aspiring Leaders Fellow, a 2023 Fellow in the HBCU Executive Leadership Institute, and a 2014 Food Systems Leadership Institute (FSLI) graduate.

Speaker **PROFILES**



Neil James, Ph.D.

ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS
PROFESSOR OF FOOD SCIENCE
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SCIENCES
FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY

Dr. Neil James is Associate Dean for Academic Programs and Professor of Food Science in the College of Agriculture and Food Sciences at Florida A&M University. With over 30 years in higher education, he founded and leads FAMU's food science program, mentoring students and advancing research in food composition, nutrient retention, and safety. A native of Guyana, Dr. James holds a Ph.D. in food science from the University of Leeds and is dedicated to expanding student engagement in agricultural sciences and building industry partnerships that prepare students for real-world careers.



Eric Wood, Ph.D.

APPLE, INC.

Dr. Eric Wood is an award-winning educator and renowned speaker with a passion for educational technology. A product of an urban school system, educator, and former principal, Dr. Wood speaks on the urgent need for incorporating technology into instructional practices, and the importance of providing urban students with access to technology in the classroom. Dr. Wood currently serves as a Higher Education Leadership Executive with Apple, Inc. A versatile speaker, he presents at national conferences, professional development workshops and seminars for educators and leaders.



Neil Brown, Ph.D.

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY

Dr. Neil Brown is an Assistant Professor whose scholarship focuses on the intersection of livestock production, environmental sustainability, and agricultural innovation. He also serves as Special Assistant to the Dean for Academic Innovation at Virginia State

University (VSU). Dr. Brown has developed and led immersive, experiential learning programs in South Africa and Jamaica to support undergraduate students transition into higher education and also into the workforce. He currently spearheads VSU's agrivoltaics initiative, fostering interdisciplinary education at the convergence of agriculture and renewable energy. His work advances experiential education and the preparation of students for emerging careers in the agricultural sciences.



Eloris Speight, Ph.D.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
HBCU INITIATIVE

Eloris Speight is the Executive Director of the Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (SDFR) Policy Research Center at Alcorn State University. With a diverse background in leadership, strategic planning, and administrative management, she brings extensive experience in human resources, civil rights, operations, and organizational development. A strategic thinker and effective leader, Speight has served across multiple sectors, leveraging her expertise to advance equity and policy solutions for underserved agricultural communities.



Olga Bolden-Tiller, Ph.D.

DEAN, COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND NUTRITION SCIENCES
TUSKEGEE UNIVERSITY

Dr. Olga Bolden-Tiller is Dean of the College of Agriculture, Environment and Nutrition Sciences (CAENS) and 1890 Research Director at Tuskegee University, a role she assumed in January 2022. With a background in Animal Sciences and a Ph.D. from the University of Missouri-Columbia, she has served in leadership roles including professor, department head, and assistant dean. Her research experience spans institutions such as MD Anderson Cancer Center and the University of Chicago. A nationally recognized leader, Dr. Bolden-Tiller has secured grants totaling up to \$20 million and currently serves as president of the National Society for Minorities in Agriculture and on several national boards, advancing equity and collaboration across land-grant institutions.



Jingqiu Chen, Ph.D.

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR
BIOLOGICAL SYSTEMS
ENGINEERING PROGRAM
COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SCIENCES
FLORIDA A&M UNIVERSITY

Dr. Jingqiu Chen is an Assistant Professor in the Biological Systems Engineering Program at the College of Agriculture and Food Sciences in Florida A&M University (FAMU). She received her Ph.D. in Agricultural and Biological Engineering from Purdue University. Dr. Chen joined FAMU in August 2021. Her specific research interests include: using data analytics and integrated models to inform urban, agriculture, water, and coastal resources management; estimating storm water runoff as a function of urbanization and climate change; large scale hydrologic and water quality modeling; remote sensing applications; environmental system optimization with a focus on green infrastructure and urban sustainability; development of computer and internet-based applications for hydrology research/education such as locally adaptable web tools/phone apps.

Speaker **PROFILES**



Ryan D. Kornegay, M.S.

MAYOR, GREENVILLE, FLORIDA

Ryan D. Kornegay, M.S., currently serves as Mayor of the Town of Greenville, Florida, his home town. Elected in November 2024, Ryan brings a deep passion for community revitalization and a vision to uplift rural

areas through education, agriculture, and youth empowerment. His love for agriculture began in his great-grandmother's backyard farm and grew into a decade-long career with the USDA. As a Biological Science Program Specialist at the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), Ryan supports major nutrition and food safety grant programs and has earned national recognition for his research in agricultural education. He holds a B.S. in Food Science from Florida A&M University and an M.S. from Purdue University. In addition to his federal work, Ryan teaches college courses on food systems and environmental literacy. His leadership as Mayor is driven by a commitment to making Greenville stronger through innovation, opportunity, and utilizing community partnerships and resources.



Shirley Hymon-Parker, Ph.D.

INTERIM DEAN, COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES
N.C. A&M UNIVERSITY

Professor Emerita Shirley Hymon-Parker is Interim Dean of the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences at N.C. A&T, managing the college's \$45.8 million research portfolio, four departments and more than 1,100 students. She previously served as the college's associate dean for research from 2018 -2022. Her research activities include issues surrounding childhood obesity; the value of undergraduate research; and rural entrepreneurship. She has served as chair of the Experiment Station Committee on Organization and Policy for American Public and Land-grant Universities and the 1890 Association of Research Directors; served as director at large of the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences; and been a member of the Policy Board of Directors of the Board on Agriculture Assembly. She earned a bachelor's degree in home economics from North Carolina Central University; a master's degree in apparel design from Cornell University; and a doctoral certificate in gerontology, as well as her doctorate in education policy, planning and administration, from the University of Maryland - College Park.

Principal **INVESTIGATORS**

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR



Shirley Hymon-Parker, PhD

Interim Dean, College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences
N.C. A&M University

FAMU CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS



Neil James, PhD

Associate Dean for Academic Programs
Professor of Food Science
College of Agriculture and Food Sciences
Florida A&M University



Conchita Newman, M.S.

Associate Director of Extension
4-H Program Leader
Florida A&M University

Thank You to **OUR SPONSORS!**



MISSION:

Student Success for Workforce Development

The Student Success for Workforce Development (SSWD) initiative is dedicated to cultivating a dynamic and inclusive educational environment where students of all backgrounds are empowered to achieve their full potential. We strive to bridge the gap between education and employment by providing high-quality, relevant, and responsive learning experiences. Through academic support, career guidance, hands-on training, and strategic partnerships with industry, we prepare learners to enter and thrive in a rapidly evolving workforce. Our mission is to ensure that every student not only gains the skills needed for today's jobs but is also equipped to adapt and grow throughout their careers.

VISION:

Student Success for Workforce Development

We envision a future where all students have equitable access to transformative education and career opportunities that lead to meaningful employment and personal fulfillment. As a leader in workforce-aligned education, SSWD will drive innovation in teaching and learning, foster strong industry and community collaborations, and champion policies that support economic mobility. Our graduates will be lifelong learners, critical thinkers, and responsible citizens who contribute to resilient and prosperous communities. By placing student success at the core of workforce development, we will shape a more inclusive and agile labor market for the future.

FEDERAL LAW STATEMENT

Florida A&M University (FAMU) is committed to upholding all applicable federal and state laws, including Title IX, FERPA, HIPAA, and the GLBA. The University prohibits discrimination and harassment based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, religion, or sexual orientation and maintains a safe, inclusive, and equitable environment for all students, employees, and visitors. FAMU protects the confidentiality and integrity of personal information and expects all members of its community to act ethically and report any suspected violations of law or university policy through appropriate channels.





Thank You!

Thank You for Attending the SSWD Symposium!

MOTIVATING, EDUCATING, AND ACHIEVING FOR 135 YEARS

On behalf of the entire planning committee, thank you for joining us at the Student Success and Workforce Development (SSWD) Symposium at Florida A&M University! Your energy, insights, and engagement helped make this event a powerful celebration of the 135th anniversary of the Second Morrill Act and the enduring legacy of the 1890 Land-Grant Institutions.

Whether you attended sessions, led a workshop, participated in cultural experiences, or simply connected with fellow changemakers—you made an impact. We hope you left inspired, informed, and even more committed to the mission of empowering students and shaping a stronger workforce.

We're grateful for your presence and look forward to continuing this important work with you. Until next time—stay motivated, stay connected, and keep achieving!

- The SSWD Symposium Planning Committee

Wishing you safe travels as you return home—may the connections made and insights gained continue to inspire your work. Until we meet again next year, stay well, stay driven, and keep advancing student success in every space you serve.

See you at the next SSWD Symposium!

A Special Thank You to Our Incredible Subcommittees

We extend our heartfelt thanks to the dedicated members of each subcommittee for your hard work and commitment. To the Program and Content Committee, thank you for crafting meaningful and engaging content. To the Registration, Logistics and Operations Committee, your seamless coordination ensured everything ran smoothly. We appreciate the Food, Beverage and Sponsorship Committee for your thoughtful hospitality and key partnerships. The Cultural Events, Entertainment and Swag Committee brought vibrancy and creativity that made the experience memorable. And to the Technology and AV-Website Committee, thank you for providing the reliable tech and support that powered every moment.

Your collective efforts made this event a success—we are truly grateful!

2025 Student Success and Workforce Development *Symposium*



1890 Center of Excellence for Student Success and Workforce Development