

CAFS

MAGAZINE

SUMMER 2026



First Fruits,

A VISION ROOTED IN RESEARCH, STUDENT LEADERSHIP, AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

HEALTH

- >> GROWING A BETTER GRAPE
- >>> IMPROVING MUSCADINES FOR FARMERS AND CONSUMERS

OUTREACH

- >> COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
- >>> REVITALIZING NIMS MIDDLE SCHOOL GARDEN

RESEARCH

- >> FAMU ENTOMOLOGY
- >>> EXPANDS STUDENT OPPORTUNITIES

STUDENT SUCCESS

- >> BEYOND BORDERS
- >>> A FACULTY-LED EXPERIENCE STUDY TOUR IN PERU



MESSAGE FROM THE

dean

.....➔ G. DALE WESSON, PH.D., PE

Welcome to the 2026 edition of the Florida A&M University College of Agriculture and Food Sciences Magazine.

As I reflect on the accomplishments highlighted throughout these pages, I am reminded of the remarkable people who make our college a place of excellence, innovation, and impact. From groundbreaking research and transformative Extension programs to student achievements and global partnerships, CAFS continues to demonstrate why we proudly say, “We Put the A in FAMU.”

Agriculture plays a vital role in every aspect of our daily lives, providing the food we eat, the resources we use, and the innovations needed to address society’s most pressing challenges. Through teaching, research, and Extension, CAFS remains committed to advancing knowledge, serving communities, and preparing the next generation of leaders in agriculture, food systems, environmental stewardship, and natural resource management.

This past year has been marked by significant achievements. Our students have excelled in academics, research, internships, and leadership opportunities. Our faculty have secured competitive grants, produced impactful research, and developed innovative solutions to challenges facing agriculture and society. Our Extension professionals have strengthened communities across Florida through education, outreach, and service.

As one of Florida’s two land-grant institutions, CAFS plays a unique role in advancing the state’s agricultural economy while serving rural and underserved communities through research-based solutions and community engagement. This mission extends far beyond our campus and is reflected in every story featured in this magazine.

To our alumni, students, faculty, staff, partners, and supporters, thank you for your dedication and commitment to our mission. Your contributions continue to strengthen the legacy of this great institution.

As you explore these pages, I hope you take pride in the accomplishments showcased and find inspiration in the impact being made across Florida and beyond. The future of agriculture is bright, and we invite you to be a part of it.

"Come Grow With Us!"

G. Dale Wesson, Ph.D., PE

Dean and Director of Land-grant Programs
FAMU College of Agriculture and Food Sciences



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CAFS Magazine Summer 2026

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PG. 60 MUST READ IN THIS ISSUE featured

CAFS Shines at ARD 2026 Symposium

NEW ORLEANS, LA

"These accomplishments reflect the excellence, preparation and innovation that define our students and faculty," said G. Dale Wesson, Ph.D., dean and director of land-grant programs.



04

Aquaculture Program is Expanding

ADVANCING
AQUACULTURE
RESEARCH THROUGH
PUBLISHED STUDY,
THE INTERNATIONAL
STAGE AND ALUMNI
FOCUS



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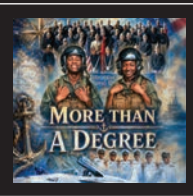
POWERED BY PURPOSE

RATTLER RENEWABLE
ENERGY CENTER
ADVANCES FAMU'S
LAND-GRANT MISSION

It is no secret that there is a common stereotype among the youth regarding agriculture. Their current image is that of people working in the field, an old man dressed in overalls with a plow, a job done by poor people with a low level of education, or a combination of all of the above. As a matter-



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More than a Degree PG. 38
NAVAL ROTC

more...

IN FULL BLOOM

A CONVERSATION WITH
PROVOST ALLYSON WATSON,
PH.D.



PG. 44

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ARD

ASSOCIATION OF 1890 RESEARCH DIRECTORS

RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM 2026



**INNOVATIONS IN FOOD, HEALTH & AGRICULTURE:
TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS,
ECOLOGICAL RESILIENCE AND ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY**

FAMU

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SCIENCES SHINES AT THE 1890 ASSOCIATION OF RESEARCH DIRECTORS 22ND BIENNIAL RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

The Florida A&M University College of Agriculture and Food Sciences (CAFS) made a strong impression at the **2026 Association of 1890 Research Directors (ARD) Research Symposium**, held March 28–31 at the Hyatt Regency in New Orleans.

The biennial symposium marked its 50th anniversary under the theme, “Innovations in Food, Health and Agriculture: Technological Advancements, Ecological Resilience, and Economic Sustainability.” The event serves as a national forum for collaboration, research sharing and partnership-building among 1890 land-grant institutions and international partners.

More than 1,800 participants attended, with over 500 oral and poster presentations across six key areas, including plant and animal sciences, food safety, community development and agricultural systems designed to foster collaboration and innovation.

The symposium also brought together leadership from 1890 land-grant institutions, including several university presidents. President Marva Johnson attended and represented Florida A&M University.

CAFS demonstrated strong academic engagement, with more than 80 student and faculty presentations.

Participants earned seven awards in competitive categories, including four in oral presentations and two in poster presentations. The honors included the B.D. Mayberry Young Scientist of the Year Award, two first-place finishes, two second-place finishes and two third-place finishes.

“These accomplishments reflect the excellence, preparation and innovation that define our students and faculty,” said G. Dale Wesson, Ph.D., dean and director of land-grant programs. “Our presence at the ARD Symposium reinforces FAMU’s leadership in advancing research that addresses global challenges in food, agriculture and sustainability.” ▶

CAFS students earned national recognition for research across multiple disciplines:

- **Lemaya Johnson**, an undergraduate student, earned first place in the oral presentation competition in food safety, nutrition and health for “Assessment of Total Polyphenols and Antioxidant Capacity in Muscadine Grape Components in Red and White Varieties,” under the supervision of Oluwatoyin Sangokunle, Ph.D.
- **Jacquez Daniels**, a graduate student, received second place in oral presentation in animal health and production and animal products for research on black soldier flies, under the supervision of Lambert Kanga, Ph.D.
- **Eryse White**, a graduate student, earned third place in oral presentation in plant health and production and plant products for research on wild yeast in muscadine grapes, under the supervision of Violetka Tsoleva, Ph.D.
- **Helena McAllister**, an undergraduate student, received third place in oral presentation in family, youth, community and economic development for research on consumer demand for intelligent packaging in beef retail, under the supervision of Ly Nguyen, Ph.D.
- **Monique Farquharson**, a graduate student, earned first place in the poster competition in animal health and production and animal products for research on the small hive beetle, under the supervision of Lambert Kanga, Ph.D.
- **Beatrice Obungu**, a graduate student, received second place in the poster competition in animal health and production and animal products for research on honey bee health, under the supervision of Muhammad Haseeb, Ph.D.

Dean Wesson had the honor of recognizing FAMU assistant professor of food science Oluwatoyin Sangokunle, Ph.D., who received the B.D. Mayberry Young Scientist Award, one of the symposium’s top honors.

The award is named for Dr. B.D. Mayberry, a longtime leader in teaching, research and administration who played a critical role in the early growth and legislative development of 1890 land-grant institutions.

“This recognition speaks to the strength of our research enterprise and the mentorship culture we are building within CAFS,” said Anthony Ananga, Ph.D., interim associate dean of academic programs. “Our faculty are not only producing impactful research, but they are also guiding students to compete and succeed on national platforms.”

The symposium provided students with opportunities to present research, engage with peers and experts, and build professional networks.

“Experiences like the ARD Symposium are transformative for our students,” said Shanteva Leonard, coordinator of transfer students and career developmental support. “They gain confidence, strengthen their communication skills and build connections that position them for success beyond the classroom.”

Tommeron Timmons, director of research programs and services (chief of staff), participated in a panel discussion alongside Theresa N. Cooper, Ph.D., assistant dean for collaborative initiatives in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Iowa State University; LaKisha Odom, Ph.D., scientific program director at the Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research

(FFAR); and Kwame Matthews, Ph.D., assistant professor and small ruminant specialist in the College of Agriculture and Related Sciences at Delaware State University.

The panelists shared their personal journeys in agriculture, offered career advice, and engaged with students by answering questions from those in attendance.

The event featured general and plenary sessions, student and scientist competitions, award programs, exhibits from universities and industry, and workshops designed to foster collaboration and innovation.

“The success of our students and faculty at this year’s symposium highlights the strength and impact of CAFS’ research enterprise and our commitment to excellence,” said Stephen Leong, Ph.D., associate dean of research.

The ARD Research Symposium continues to serve as a vital platform for showcasing research, strengthening partnerships and advancing solutions to global challenges in agriculture, food systems and environmental sustainability.

FAMU CAFS’ participation reflects its continued commitment to innovation, research excellence and community impact while preparing the next generation of leaders in agriculture. ■





STUDENT NEWS

ASABE Student Club at BSE/CAFS/FAMU

The FAMU ASABE Student Club is comprised of undergraduate students in the Biological Systems Engineering (BSE) Program within the College of Agriculture and Food Sciences (CAFS). The organization serves as the student branch of the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers (ASABE), providing students with opportunities for professional development, leadership, networking, and hands on learning experiences.

Members of the FAMU ASABE Student Club enthusiastically participated in the 2025 ASABE Southeastern Student

Rally, hosted by the Biological and Agricultural Engineering Department at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas, from March 28–30.

Representing FAMU at the rally were undergraduate students Dionne Jones, Janelle Thomas, Makailah Danzy, Jerri Brooks, Kendra Badger, Jordan Brown, and Deidre Lemoine.

The ASABE Southeastern Student Rally brings together students, faculty, and industry professionals from institutions across the southeastern United States. As one of ASABE's signature student

events, the rally provides valuable opportunities for academic growth, career development, professional networking, and collaboration with peers and industry leaders.

As members of the larger international ASABE organization, FAMU students support the society's mission to advance engineering for food, water, energy, fiber, and the environment. Student branches serve as the foundation of the organization, helping cultivate future leaders in agricultural and biological engineering.

During the rally, students participated in design challenges, industry and campus tours, workshops, panel discussions, team building activities, and networking opportunities focused on advancing knowledge and interest in biological and agricultural engineering. Students also attended a formal banquet featuring keynote speaker Shayla Rivera.

At the annual business meeting, club officers Dionne Jones, Janelle Thomas, and Makailah Danzy presented an outstanding report highlighting the accomplishments and activities of the FAMU ASABE

Student Club. Their professionalism and leadership reflected the strength of the organization and the impact of its members.

The club is especially proud to congratulate Kendra Badger, who was elected secretary of the ASABE Southeast Region for the upcoming academic year. Her election is a significant achievement and reflects her dedication to leadership and service within the organization.

The FAMU ASABE Student Club extends its appreciation to all participating

students for their exceptional contributions to the success of the 2025 ASABE Southeastern Student Rally. Their efforts showcased the talent, professionalism, and excellence of FAMU students on a regional stage.

The club also expresses sincere gratitude to the Student Government Association for providing 2025 Spring Special Allocation funding, which helped make participation in this valuable professional development opportunity possible. ■

A Faculty-Led Experiential Learning Study Tour in PERU

By Almando K. Morain, Ph.D.
Program Associate

with contributions from Harriett A. Paul,
Director, Global Agriculture Unit, CAFS, FAMU

The Global Agriculture Unit, in the College of Agriculture and Food Sciences (CAFS), is taking experiential learning to new heights through funding from the USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture, From Learning to Leading: Next Generation (NextGen) Program. Three upper-level undergraduate CAFS's Global Agriculture Scholars, including Ms. Janelle Thomas (Bio Systems Engineering Senior), Mr. Kaleb Paul (Food Sciences Junior), and Ms. Nana Ama Nsiah Aba (Food Sciences Senior) were selected to participate in a dynamic new Agro-tourism Experiential Learning Study Program in Peru at the end of the fall semester 2025.

"I was excited to experience agriculture in a completely different cultural and environmental context and to understand how those differences shape food systems and sustainability practices," said Janelle Thomas, senior in Biological Systems Engineering.

Held from December 13–23, 2025, the Peru Agro-tourism Experiential Learning program brought together faculty and students from a consortium of universities that competed and was awarded a \$10 million USDA NextGen grant, including Kentucky State University (KSU), the Peru activity leader, Florida A&M University (FAMU), Lincoln University (LU), and the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES), the consortium leader.

The study tour introduced CAFS students to Peru's diverse agricultural landscapes, where agricultural diversity, Indigenous agricultural knowledge, and food systems shaped by culture and the environment help strengthen Peru's food systems.

The CAFS's Global Ag Scholars, led by Harriett A. Paul, Instructor and Director of the Office of Global Agriculture Programs and the Center for International Agricultural Trade Development Research and Training, and Co-Principal Investigator in the USDA NextGen Program, connected classroom concepts to field-based learning about global food systems, environmental sustainability, and adapting agriculture to different environments and cultures.

"From the ancient agricultural terraces of Machu Picchu and Moray to specialty crop production systems in the Sacred Valley and community-based conservation initiatives near Cusco, students explored agricultural and food systems through the lens of environmental stewardship and cultural context," said Director Paul.

"They observed how sustainable practices help preserve agricultural diversity, and how Indigenous knowledge systems work alongside these practices to support food production in mountainous, rainforest, and rural lowland communities. By visiting Incan agricultural terraces and irrigation systems designed for

challenging environments, they gained insight into integrated approaches to water management, drainage, slope stabilization, and microclimate management," Paul explained.

"This experience showed me how agriculture is deeply connected to culture and the environment, and how traditional practices can still offer solutions to modern challenges," said Janelle Thomas, a senior in Biological Systems Engineering.

The agricultural learning experience extended beyond ancient systems into Peru's specialty crop industries and community-managed production systems. In the Sacred Valley, students participated in field modules focused on organic cacao, coffee, tea, medicinal plants, and coca cultivation within their historical and cultural context. These activities demonstrated how diverse farming systems can support both environmental health and rural livelihoods while preserving cultural traditions.

At El Mangal in Maranura, the students harvested cacao pods and coffee cherries, examined different crop varieties, observed fermentation and drying techniques, and roasted cacao using traditional tools. Through sensory activities, they compared aromas, flavors, textures, and brewing methods while learning how post-harvest handling practices influence product quality, sustainability, consistency, and market value. These activities ▶



transformed classroom concepts into practical learning experiences, revealing the connections between agricultural production, food processing, environmental responsibility, and consumer experience within global food systems.

“Seeing these steps in person helped me understand how important post-harvest handling is and how small changes in

the process can make a big difference in the quality of the final product”, said Kaleb.

The students also participated in native cacao tree planting activities while discussing the relationship between agricultural production, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable farming practices. In Huayopata, they explored medicinal plant systems and local

wellness traditions, learning how agricultural production can support community healthcare, cultural continuity, and growing a variety of specialty crops.

Another major aspect of the study tour was visits to Potato Park near Cusco, one of the world’s leading examples of community-led preservation of agricultural diversity. Farmers and local communities preserve

hundreds of native potato varieties through seed systems, agricultural calendars, land stewardship practices, and Indigenous knowledge passed down across generations. By preserving crop diversity in its natural environment, communities strengthen their capacity to respond to pests, diseases, climate variability, and changing market demands while sustaining cultural identity

and environmental health.

At Universidad Nacional Agraria La Molina (UNALM) in Lima, students visited laboratories and research facilities focused on soil science, agricultural mapping and spatial technologies, entomology, sustainability, and preserving agricultural diversity. The visit highlighted the role of research and innovation in understanding environmental

change, improving agricultural systems, and helping move toward more sustainable and resilient food production across different environments.

In Maras, participants explored community-managed salt ponds operating through cooperative family systems that have existed for centuries, illustrating how natural resources are

managed collectively for generations. In Chinchero, students observed value-added textile production using natural fibers and dyes, learning how agricultural products contribute to local economies, artisan traditions, and entrepreneurship. Cultural activities introduced students to regional cuisine, music, gastronomy, and traditions rooted in Peru’s coastal, highland,

and rainforest regions, reinforcing the idea that food systems are closely connected to local culture and communities.

Throughout the tour, the Rattlers encountered agriculture not simply as food production, but as culture, identity, environmental responsibility, entrepreneurship, and community. For many participants, the study ▶



tour became a defining or capstone experience in their academic and professional development. Students returned with expanded perspectives on sustainability, biodiversity conservation, food systems, environmental responsibility, and global agriculture. Many also described a stronger interest in international collaboration, applied research, community-centered agricultural systems, and leadership that values both scientific knowledge and local experience.

“Through experiential learning programs such as the Peru Study Tour, it affirms once again that learning in agriculture extends beyond classrooms and textbooks: it happens in the farms, fields, laboratories, and communities where students learn alongside farmers, conservation practitioners, and researchers. By facilitating such programs, “we are helping cultivate professionals who are prepared to work globally to protect

biodiversity, respect local knowledge, and design food systems that are not only productive but also resilient and long-lasting”, states Director Paul.

Together, these experiences reflect CAFS’ continued commitment to advancing global learning opportunities that prepare students to lead, innovate, and contribute to sustainable agriculture and food systems worldwide. ■

The FAMU Team at Machu Picchu. From left to right : Ms. Nana Ama Nsiah, Ms. Janelle Thomas, Director Harriett Paul, and Mr. Kaleb Paul



Display of freshly harvested cacao pods following a field-based learning experience at El Mangal in Maranura, Peru.



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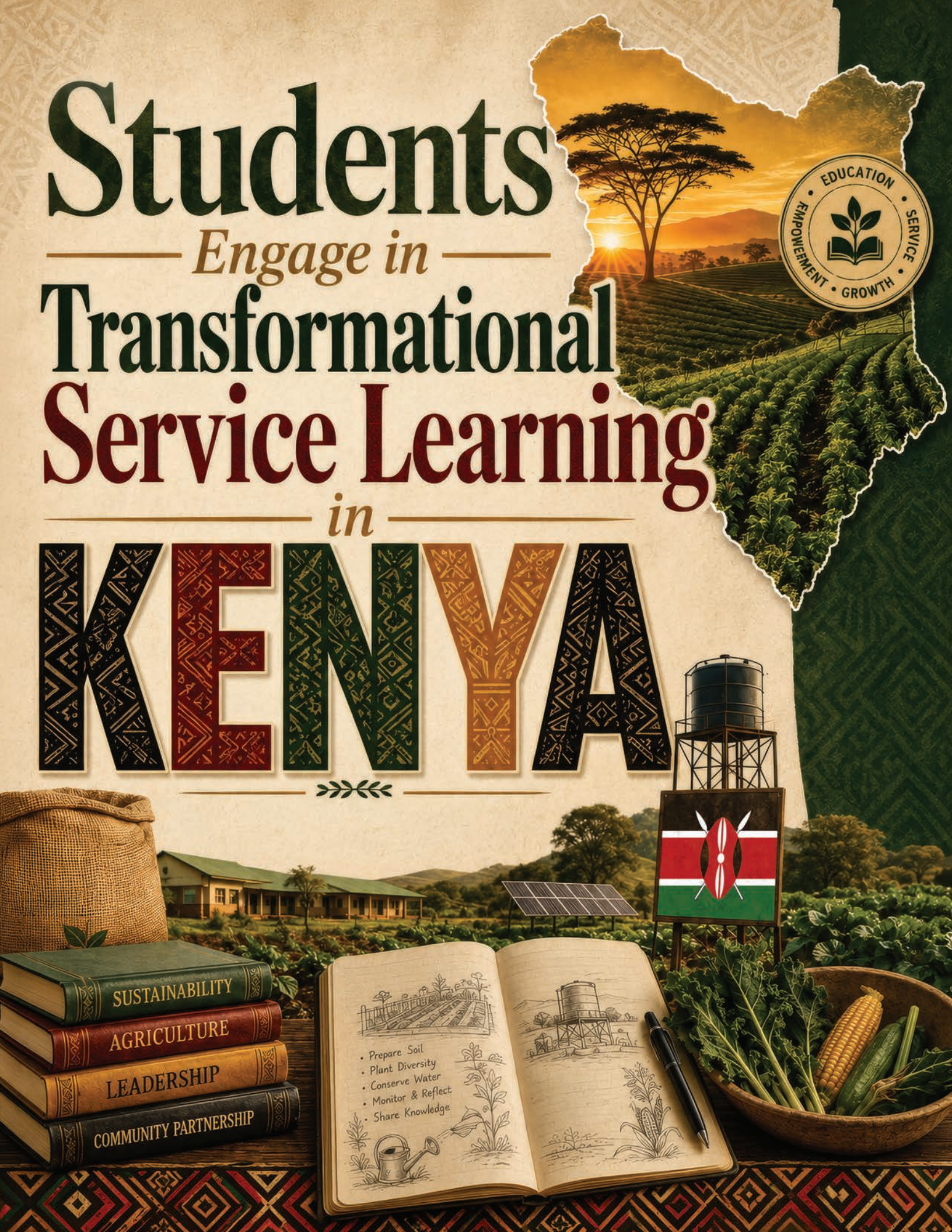
Students

Engage in

Transformational Service Learning

in

KENYA



The College of Agriculture and Food Sciences (CAFS) at Florida A&M University (FAMU) continues to lead in global agricultural education through innovative, student-centered programming that integrates academics, service, and international engagement. At the center of this effort is AGG 4952: Service Learning in International Agriculture, a signature course led by Harriett A. Paul, Director of the Office of Global Agriculture Programs and the Center for International Agricultural Trade, Development, Research and Training. Paul also serves as a Co-Principal Investigator for both the USDA 1890 Universities Center of Excellence in Global Food Security and Defense and the USDA NIFA NextGen Program, which provide funding support for this initiative.

In Spring 2026, 15 CAFS students participated in this immersive course, which combined rigorous classroom preparation with a transformative international experience in Kenya.

"This course is designed to move beyond traditional study abroad models. The course challenges students to apply agricultural knowledge in real-world settings while engaging meaningfully with communities, institutions, and professionals across the global agricultural landscape," said Paul.

Building a Strong Academic Foundation

Before traveling abroad, students were grounded in key concepts related to global agriculture, food systems, sustainability, biotechnology, service learning, community-based food systems, and international development. This theoretical preparation was strengthened through the contributions of a diverse team of CAFS faculty, including Satyanarayan Dev, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Biological

Systems Engineering; Anamika Sharma, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Entomology; and Mehboob Sheikh, Ph.D., Professor of Plant Biotechnology, along with members of his laboratory team. Together, they provided expertise across agricultural sciences, biosystems engineering, biotechnology research, and applied learning.

The course also benefited from collaboration with Stephan Tubene, Ph.D., Professor of Agricultural Economics at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore (UMES), a key partner through the USDA Global Food Security and Defense Initiative and the USDA NextGen Program. UMES provides leadership for the consortium in which the Global Agriculture Unit participates, working across both USDA NIFA programs.

This interdisciplinary preparation ensured that students were not only ready to travel but also prepared to analyze, engage, and contribute.

Global Engagement in Kenya: Learning in Action

Once in Kenya, classroom theory became lived experience. Students engaged directly with institutions, professionals, and communities that represent the diversity and complexity of East Africa's agricultural systems.

U.S. Embassy Nairobi: Diplomacy and Global Food Systems

At the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi, students gained a firsthand understanding of how agricultural development intersects with international policy, trade, and food security initiatives.

"Visiting the Embassy helped me see how agriculture connects to policy and global development. It made me realize

that agricultural careers can also exist in diplomacy and international service," said Brielle Elliott, a graduating senior in Agribusiness.

"This experience broadened students' perspectives on career pathways, demonstrating how agriculture plays a critical role beyond farms—in governance, global partnerships, and economic development," added Jakia Dickson, a senior majoring in Plant Science and Animal Science.

Egerton University: Research, Innovation, and Collaboration

At Egerton University, one of Kenya's premier agricultural institutions, students engaged with faculty and peers in discussions on research, education, and innovation in agriculture.

Through laboratory and farm visits, participation in Egerton's Biennial Symposium and Agricultural Technology and Innovation Trade Fair, and other academic exchanges, students explored:

- Sustainable farming systems
- Soil and crop management strategies
- Hydroponics and aquaponics production systems
- Resilient animal production systems
- Agricultural research approaches in developing contexts

"Interacting with students at Egerton showed me that while our environments are different, many of the challenges we face in agriculture are similar," said Dillon Ford, a second-year master's student in Agricultural Sciences.

"The hydroponics and aquaponics research and outreach underway at Egerton provided valuable insights as I complete my research on the assessment of microbial hazards and plant growth performance in low-cost indoor and outdoor hydroponic systems," Ford added. ▶

“This service-learning experience reinforced the value of international collaboration and the importance of shared knowledge in addressing global agricultural challenges,” wrote Noah Roberts, a fourth-year Agricultural Sciences student, in his reflective journal.

**Kilimo High School:
Inspiring the Next Generation**

A visit to Kilimo High School provided CAFS students with a unique opportunity to engage with younger learners and observe how agricultural education is introduced at the secondary level.

Students participated in discussions, field demonstrations, and knowledge-sharing activities, serving as both learners and mentors.

“It was inspiring to see how early students are introduced to agriculture. It reminded me of the importance of both applied and theoretical education in shaping future agricultural leaders,” reflected Adrienne Jones, a third-year Agribusiness major.

This experience highlighted the role of education in building agricultural capacity and fostering interest in agriculture from an early age.

**AIC Cheptebo Rural Development
Center: Community, Service, and
Sustainability**

At the AIC Cheptebo Rural Development Center, students experienced the core of the service-learning model by working within a community-focused agricultural system that integrates farming, education, and social development.

Students engaged with:

- Smallholder farmers
- Community development initiatives
- Sustainable agricultural practices
- Local food security efforts

“Working alongside farmers at Cheptebo helped me understand agriculture from a community perspective. It is not just about

production; it is about supporting livelihoods and empowering people,” noted Dickson.

This hands-on experience deepened students’ appreciation for community-based agriculture and the importance of culturally grounded solutions.

**Transforming Perspectives
Through Experience**

Throughout the program, students encountered agriculture as more than a technical discipline. They experienced it as a system shaped by culture, community, environment, and innovation.

Across each site visit and interaction, students developed:

- Greater global awareness
- Enhanced intercultural competence
- A deeper understanding of sustainable agriculture
- Practical insights into food systems and community development

“This experience changed how I see agriculture. It made it more real, more connected, and more impactful,” said Kaleb Paul, a third-year Food Science major.

The course challenged students to think critically about their role as future agricultural professionals—not only in the United States, but as contributors to global solutions.

**Advancing the CAFS
Global Vision**

AGG 4952 embodies CAFS’ commitment to preparing students for leadership in an interconnected agricultural world. Under Paul’s leadership, the Office of Global

Agriculture Programs continues to build pathways that integrate:

- Experiential learning
- International partnerships
- Academic excellence
- Workforce development in global agriculture

“Experiential learning is essential to developing the next generation of agricultural leaders,” said Paul. “Our students must be prepared to engage globally, apply their knowledge in real-world contexts, and lead with both technical expertise and cultural understanding.”

A Model for Global Impact

“The Kenya service-learning experience stands as a model for how teaching, service, and global engagement can come together to create meaningful and lasting impact,” said Anthony Ananga, Ph.D., Associate Professor and Interim Associate Dean for Academic Programs in CAFS.

“For CAFS students, AGG 4952 is more than a course—it is a defining experience that shapes their perspectives, strengthens their skills, and prepares them to lead in a global agricultural landscape,” said G. Dale Wesson, Ph.D., P.E., Dean and Director of Land-Grant Programs for CAFS.

As CAFS continues to expand its global footprint, programs like AGG 4952 reaffirm the College’s commitment to developing globally engaged leaders prepared to address the complex challenges of agriculture, food security, and sustainable development both at home and around the world. ■

GLOBAL CONNECTIONS, LOCAL IMPACT: FAMU Hosts International Entomology Scholar

The Center for Biological Control (CBC) and the Entomology Program in the College of Agriculture and Food Sciences (CAFS) at Florida A&M University (FAMU) recently hosted Marcus Soares, Ph.D., a Brazilian agronomic engineer and entomologist, for a week of academic, research, and cultural engagement. Soares is a professor and researcher at the Federal University of Jequitinhonha and Mucuri Valleys (UFVJM) in Diamantina, Minas Gerais, Brazil, where he has served since 2011. He earned his doctorate in entomology from the Federal University of Viçosa (UFV) in 2010. Over the years, Soares has built a distinguished career in integrated pest management, insect ecology, biodiversity, and biological control. He has also held important leadership roles at UFVJM, including Research Director and Postgraduate Director, and is affiliated with Brazil’s National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) and the Chamber of Agriculture of the Minas Gerais State Research Support Foundation (Fapemig).

During his visit, Soares presented a special seminar titled “UFVJM: Studies in Entomology and BioControl.” The seminar provided faculty, students, and administrators with an overview of UFVJM’s research programs and highlighted ongoing studies in entomology, biological control, insect biodiversity, and sustainable pest management. His presentation emphasized the importance of developing science based, environmentally sound strategies to manage agricultural pests while conserving beneficial insects and biodiversity. The seminar also created an important platform for discussing future collaboration between FAMU and UFVJM in research, teaching, extension, student training, and international exchange.

The visit began on April 20 with a full schedule of meetings and tours across FAMU and partner research units. Soares visited the Center for Biological Control, the Entomology Program, the Center for Water Resources, the Center for Viticulture and Small Fruit Research, the USDA Agricultural Research Service Center for Medical, Agricultural and

Veterinary Entomology (CMAVE), the CAFS leadership team, the University of Florida Research and Education Center, and the FAMU North Florida Research and Education Center. These meetings allowed him to interact with faculty and scientists, learn about FAMU’s research infrastructure, and identify areas of mutual interest in invasive species management, integrated pest management, biological control, and workforce development.

On April 21, Soares participated in the investiture ceremony of FAMU President Marva B. Johnson, J.D. He also attended a master’s student thesis defense and met with students, faculty, and administrators. These interactions provided students with valuable exposure to international research opportunities and helped strengthen academic connections between FAMU and Brazil.

The visit also included educational and cultural activities. On April 22, Soares toured FAMU and the Tallahassee Museum with Jessica Cabral, Ph.D., and Ahmed Ali, Ph.D. On April 23, he participated in an excursion to St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge and Wakulla Springs, where discussions focused on biodiversity, natural ecosystems, conservation, and Florida’s unique environmental resources. Later that day, he delivered his special seminar to the FAMU community. The week concluded on April 24 with additional activities at the Center for Biological Control and discussions on future collaborative research and exchange programs.

Soares’ visit was highly productive and meaningful. It strengthened the growing relationship between FAMU and UFVJM and opened new opportunities for collaborative research, student mentoring, faculty exchange, and international training in entomology and biological control. Through partnerships such as this, FAMU continues to expand its global engagement while advancing sustainable agriculture, protecting biodiversity, and preparing the next generation of scientists to address critical agricultural and environmental challenges. ■



FAMU Graduate Student to Present Florida Native Wine Yeast Research at International Grapevine Symposium in Croatia

Florida A&M University graduate student **Eryse White** has been selected to present her research at the 14th International Symposium on Grapevine Breeding and Genetics (GBG 2026) in Zagreb, Croatia. The prestigious international conference brings together scientists, grape breeders, and researchers from around the world to discuss advancements in grapevine genetics, biotechnology, breeding, and sustainable viticulture.

White, a graduate researcher at the FAMU Center for Viticulture and Small Fruit Research, will present her study, "Identification, Genetic Characterization, and Fermentative Assessment of Wine Yeast Endemic to Florida Muscadine Grapes." Her research focuses on discovering and preserving native wine yeast populations associated with Florida vineyards to support innovation within the state's growing grape and wine industries.

Through this project, White has helped establish a Florida native wine yeast biorepository, a curated collection of autochthonous yeast strains isolated from muscadine grapes. Her research has identified more than 250 yeast accessions representing diverse genera. These isolates are being evaluated for their potential to improve fermentation performance, enhance wine quality, and highlight the unique regional characteristics of Florida grown grapes.

White's selection for GBG 2026 follows her recent success at the 2026 Association of Research Directors (ARD) Research Symposium, where she earned third place in the Graduate Oral Presentation Competition for her research on Florida native wine yeasts.

The research is supported by the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS) Specialty Crop Block Grant Program and the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) Capacity Building Grant Program. These programs support efforts to advance specialty crop research, expand student training opportunities, and foster innovation in grape and wine sciences.

White's invitation to present at GBG 2026 represents a significant milestone for FAMU's expanding grape research program and highlights the impact of student led research in advancing sustainable viticulture and enology. Her participation also provides an opportunity to showcase Florida's contributions to grape and wine research on an international stage.

Congratulations to Eryse White on this outstanding achievement and for representing Florida A&M University and Florida grape research before a global audience.



FAMU ENTOMOLOGY

Expands Student Opportunities Through Research, Discovery and Outreach

Our Entomology Program partnered with the **Cooperative Extension 4-H Program** to host a week-long forensic entomology summer camp for high school students. The program, conducted under the direction of Sabrina Hayes, Ph.D. and coordinated by Mr. Jacquez Daniels, provided students with hands-on exposure to forensic science and entomology.

Throughout the camp, students learned about the use of insects in criminal investigations and postmortem analysis. Participants were introduced to forensically important flies and beetles and gained experience identifying key insect groups associated with decomposition. To simulate real-world forensic scenarios, students observed raw chicken in four conditions: wet environments, cloth-covered environments simulating clothing, open exposure, and moss- and grass-covered environments replicating forest or grassy habitats. These exercises allowed students to study insect succession, decomposition patterns, and environmental influences on colonization.

Students also reared flies and beetles in jars to observe insect development and life cycles firsthand while learning how insect evidence can be used to estimate postmortem interval (PMI). In addition to forensic applications, camp participants created insect collections and learned curation techniques, including specimen pinning, labeling, alcohol preservation, and resin embedding methods used in scientific collections and educational displays.

The camp provided students with an engaging blend of laboratory learning, scientific investigation, and hands-on activities while introducing them to career opportunities in entomology, agriculture, and forensic science. Through this collaborative outreach effort, FAMU Entomology and the Cooperative Extension 4-H Program helped inspire the next generation of young scientists and researchers. ■



Local Youth Showcase Culinary and Nutrition Skills at FAMU Food Challenge



On Feb. 28, 2026, FAMU Cooperative Extension, in partnership with the City of Tallahassee Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Affairs, hosted a Youth Food Challenge that showcased the culinary skills, nutrition knowledge, and teamwork of local youth participants.

The competition featured five teams across two age divisions, including two junior teams representing elementary school students and three intermediate teams representing middle school students. Participants demonstrated exceptional enthusiasm, creativity, and sportsmanship throughout the event, making it a memorable experience for everyone involved.

The teams were comprised of students from local community centers who participated in weekly lessons through the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP). The Youth Food Challenge served as the culminating activity for the program, allowing students to demonstrate the skills and knowledge they had gained throughout the year.

The challenge extended beyond cooking. Each team was presented with a mystery ingredient and tasked with creating either a side dish, main dish, or healthy dessert. During the 40-minute preparation period, students were evaluated on food preparation techniques, kitchen safety practices, teamwork, and overall execution.

Following the cooking portion of the competition, teams delivered five-minute presentations explaining their dishes. Students discussed the food groups represented, nutritional benefits, preparation methods, and the role of healthy eating in overall wellness.

The hard work and dedication students demonstrated throughout the EFNEP program were evident during the competition. Judges were highly impressed by the participants' understanding of nutrition concepts, confidence in the kitchen, and ability to apply what they had learned in a practical setting.

The Youth Food Challenge highlighted the impact of EFNEP in empowering young people with valuable life skills while promoting healthy eating habits, food safety awareness, and positive decision-making. ■



FAMU

AQUACULTURE PROGRAM IS EXPANDING ITS HORIZON

JONATHAN GILES ADVANCES AQUACULTURE RESEARCH THROUGH PUBLISHED STUDY

As part of advancing the Blue Transformation Agenda, FAMU Aquaculture continues to make significant progress in training the next generation of aquaculture professionals through undergraduate and graduate education. A major milestone was recently achieved by **Jonathan Giles**, a Tallahassee native and the program's first graduate, who has published his research in *Aquaculture Reports*, a respected peer reviewed journal published by Elsevier.

Giles' article, titled "Differential Microbial Compositions and Predicted Functional Pathways in the Distal Gut of Juvenile Bluegill (*Lepomis macrochirus*) Fed a Plant Supplemented Diet Compared to a Commercial Diet," explores the effects of diet on gut microbial communities and functional pathways in juvenile bluegill. The study contributes valuable knowledge

to the growing field of aquaculture nutrition and fish health.

The publication represents an important achievement for both Giles and the FAMU Aquaculture Program, highlighting the program's commitment to high quality research, student development, and innovation in sustainable aquaculture. It also demonstrates the impact of providing students with opportunities to engage in meaningful scientific research that addresses real world challenges in aquatic food production.

Congratulations to Jonathan Giles on this outstanding accomplishment and for helping advance FAMU's growing reputation in aquaculture research and education.

FAMU AQUACULTURE SHOWCASES RESEARCH EXCELLENCE ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE

The FAMU Aquaculture Program continues to make an impact on the national stage. **Omolola Betiku, Ph.D.**, recently served as Program Chair for the 2026 World Aquaculture Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada. The conference attracted more than 1,620 attendees representing 53 countries, bringing together researchers, industry professionals, and aquaculture leaders from around the globe.

During the conference, Betiku and graduate student Rayon Gayle delivered oral presentations highlighting FAMU aquaculture research. Their presentations were well received and generated significant interest and discussion among conference participants, further showcasing the quality and relevance of research being conducted at Florida A&M University.

Congratulations to Omolola Betiku, Ph.D., for her leadership and for representing FAMU with excellence on the international stage.

AQUACULTURE ALUMNI ON THE MOVE

The current graduate student and FAMU Alumni, **Rayon Gayle**, earned first place in the College of Agriculture and Food Sciences Graduate Oral Presentation Competition during the Spring 2026 semester. Gayle also presented his research at the Association of 1890 Research Directors' Biennial Research Symposium in New Orleans, showcasing the quality and impact of Aquaculture research on a national stage.

In additional exciting news, **Zynia Alvarez**, one of the first undergraduate students to complete experiential research in the FAMU Aquaculture Program, recently earned her Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree from the University of Minnesota. She will soon begin a residency in veterinary pathobiology in Texas, continuing her professional journey in animal health and biomedical sciences.



FAMU Food Safety Lab address food safety challenges in soilless agriculture using AI-enabled detection tools

The FAMU Food Microbiology and Food Safety Laboratory, led by Vijay Chhetri, Ph.D., is conducting research to better understand the behavior of foodborne pathogens and develop effective control strategies for controlled environment agriculture, particularly hydroponic and aquaponic production systems.

Hydroponics and aquaponics are rapidly expanding soilless agricultural systems that play an increasingly important role in global food production. According to Grand View Research, the global hydroponics market

was valued at approximately \$5 billion in 2023 and is projected to reach \$10.98 billion by 2030. Similarly, the global aquaponics market is expected to grow to \$2.29 billion by 2030. As these production systems continue to expand, ensuring their microbial food safety has become increasingly important.

Current hydroponic and aquaponic production practices present several uncertainties regarding microbial food safety risks, highlighting the need for science based standards and preventive control technologies. Recalls

involving hydroponically grown produce, as well as foodborne illness outbreaks associated with pathogens such as Salmonella, Escherichia coli O157, and Listeria monocytogenes, underscore the importance of addressing food safety concerns within these systems.

The research team is investigating the survival, persistence, and biofilm formation of foodborne pathogens within various components of hydroponic and aquaponic production systems. Researchers are also examining how factors such as water

quality, plant macro and micronutrients, and system design influence the behavior and transmission of human pathogens.

In addition, the laboratory is developing artificial intelligence enabled biosensing technologies for rapid microbial detection. These innovative approaches aim to improve pathogen monitoring and strengthen food safety practices throughout controlled environment agriculture systems, ultimately helping producers deliver safer, higher quality food products to consumers.



Dillon Ford, a second-year graduate student, designed affordable indoor and outdoor hydroponic systems. He is currently comparing plant growth and food safety risks between controlled-environment hydroponics and outdoor hydroponics.



Aaron Francis, a first-year graduate student, designed a 22-gallon tabletop aquaponic system, focusing his research on developing AI-enabled biosensing for contamination detection.



Victor Akao, a second-year graduate student, is working on co-planting strategies to reduce food safety risks. His research also assesses microbiome shifts resulting from changes in system inputs within hydroponic systems.

FAMU STUDENTS DEVELOPED NEW, INNOVATIVE FOOD PRODUCTS

Students in the FAMU Food Science Program developed several innovative food products as part of a Food Product Development course under the guidance of Vijay Chhetri, Ph.D. The product development process included ideation, market research, feasibility analysis, prototype development, and sensory evaluation. Through this hands-on experience, students applied food science principles to create products that address current consumer trends and market demands.

ProtoBites

ProtoBites is a savory, plant based snack that is high in protein and designed for busy college students and professionals seeking a convenient and nutritious option. The bite sized crisps are formulated with pea protein isolate, flour blends, and other carefully selected ingredients to deliver both flavor and nutritional value. The product aligns with growing consumer demand for plant based, high protein, and on the go snack options.

Fiber Crispy Bar

The Fiber Crispy Bar is a high fiber, protein enhanced snack inspired by the classic marshmallow cereal treat. Designed to maintain the familiar taste and texture consumers enjoy, the product also provides added nutritional benefits. Each bar contains approximately 4 to 6 grams of dietary fiber and 5 to 7 grams of protein, making it a functional snack option for health conscious consumers.

MycoWrap

MycoWrap, a mushroom based wrap designed as a potential alternative to traditional seaweed nori. Through multiple rounds of formulation and sensory evaluation, the team significantly improved the product's taste, aroma, texture, and overall consumer acceptance. The project demonstrates the potential of mushrooms as a sustainable and innovative ingredient for future food applications.



GROWING A BETTER GRAPE

By Nancy Henderson

FAMU RESEARCHERS WORK TO IMPROVE MUSCADINES FOR FARMERS AND CONSUMERS

When it comes to the southern muscadine, the bronze-to-purplish fruit generally doesn't rank at the top of the consumer appreciation list, compared to its "bunch grape" cousins. For one thing, its thick skin and large seeds make it harder to eat. And muscadine wine only lasts a few months.

But a team at Florida A&M University's Center for Viticulture and Small Fruit Research is working to develop new cultivars that could transform both muscadine quality and the state's grape-growing industry. "Bunch grapes can't be grown in this area because of a bacterial disease that kills the plant," says Mehboob Sheikh, professor and Center program leader. "The only grapes we can grow are the local domesticated grapes, the muscadines. And we're trying to explore options for them."

Established by the Florida legislature in 1978 and recognized internationally for its warm-climate grape studies, the Center for Viticulture leads the way in muscadine research in the U.S. It also holds three patents for native American varieties, two for muscadines, one for a white grape.

"We are the first in the nation to create the whole genome sequence for muscadine grapes," says Islam El-Sharawy, assistant professor of grape genetics and breeding at the Center. "Using this gene editing technology, we were able to interrupt the genes that are responsible for seed formation in muscadine grapes."

This could not only lead to the creation of seedless muscadines, but eliminate another barrier to mass consumption. "One of the problems with muscadine grapes is the leathery skin," Sheikh points out. "When people chew them, they spit out the skin. The bunch grapes have a crispy skin you can chew and swallow, and it is marketed as a table grape. To this end, we are working to develop a crispy skin."

Another research goal: improve the shelf life of muscadine wine, which, in contrast to other wines that get better with age, currently ranges from six to eight months.

One of the most important findings of the Center studies is the muscadine's role in fighting human ailments like obesity, aging, even cancers, especially those in the prostate, liver,

breast and skin. High numbers of the berries, which contain powerful, health-boosting phytochemicals, "have a strong potential to inhibit or even kill the cancer disease," says El-Sharawy. They have also been shown to minimize the side effects of chemotherapy.

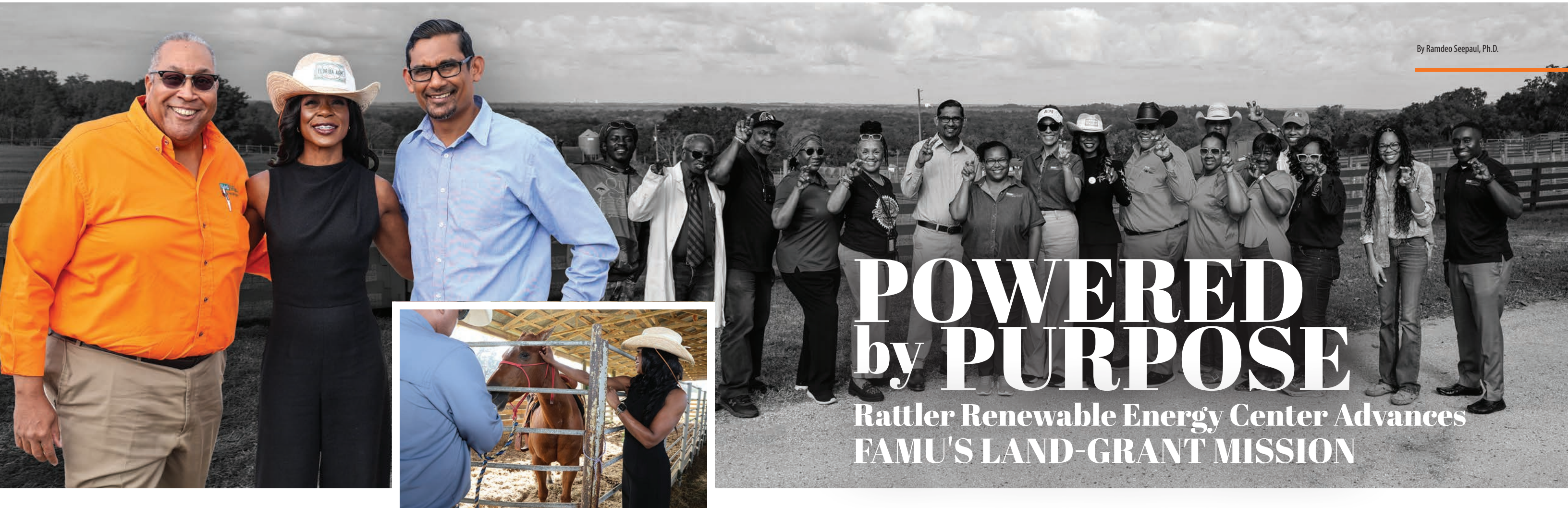
The scientists have so far developed nearly 20 muscadine-based supplements with various health benefits, from syrups to candies, and conducted taste tests at local festivals and other events. "Customers really like them and want to buy them," says Sheikh, whose hope is that a major manufacturer will license the products.

Ultimately, widespread consumption of muscadine grapes will help hard-working farmers earn more from such specialty crops. "We want to diversify the use besides fresh fruit and wine," says Sheikh. "The goal is to make it more distinct and more profitable for the industry." ■

“We want to diversify the use besides fresh fruit and wine”

Mehboob Sheikh
Professor and Center program leader





POWERED by PURPOSE

Rattler Renewable Energy Center Advances FAMU'S LAND-GRANT MISSION

The future of agriculture and energy came together in Hernando County as Florida A&M University's College of Agriculture and Food Sciences (CAFS) celebrated the opening of the Rattler Renewable Energy Center, a landmark partnership between FAMU and Duke Energy Florida that demonstrates how innovation, sustainability and responsible land stewardship can work hand in hand.

Located on 800 acres at FAMU's Brooksville Agricultural and Environmental Research Station (BAERS), the 74.9-megawatt solar facility features approximately 210,000 solar panels capable of generating enough renewable electricity to power nearly 23,000 homes annually. The project is expected to save Duke Energy customers an estimated \$250 million over its operational lifetime while providing Florida A&M University with a long-term, stable revenue stream through a land lease agreement.

The Rattler Renewable Energy Center represents far more than a solar installation. It showcases how an 1890 land-grant university can leverage its resources to support economic development, environmental stewardship and workforce preparation while maintaining ownership of the

land that has supported agricultural education and research for generations.

"This project demonstrates what is possible when innovation, stewardship and strategic partnerships come together," said G. Dale Wesson, Ph.D., P.E., dean and director of Land-Grant Programs for the College of Agriculture and Food Sciences. "The Rattler Renewable Energy Center strengthens our ability to fulfill our land-grant mission while creating new opportunities for student learning, research collaborations and long-term sustainability. It is an investment not only in renewable energy, but in the future of Florida A&M University."

The partnership between FAMU and Duke Energy dates back to 2018, when both organizations began exploring how the University's land could continue serving agriculture while also contributing to Florida's growing demand for renewable energy. Rather than replacing the University's agricultural mission, the project expands it—demonstrating that agricultural lands can support food production, research and clean energy generation simultaneously.

President Marva B. Johnson said the project embodies the University's commitment to serving future generations

through thoughtful stewardship and purposeful partnerships.

"This is what responsible stewardship looks like—using what we have wisely, building partnerships grounded in shared purpose and creating infrastructure that will serve this institution for generations," Johnson said. "The Rattler Renewable Energy Center reflects our commitment as an 1890 land-grant institution to educate, innovate and create opportunities that strengthen both our students and the communities we serve."

The ribbon-cutting ceremony brought together leaders from Duke Energy Florida, FAMU, Hernando County and the surrounding community to celebrate the completion of the facility. Congressman Gus Bilirakis praised the project as an investment that benefits both Florida's economy and its residents.

"They are helping expand reliable energy while generating significant long-term savings for Florida families and businesses," Bilirakis said.

The Brooksville facility is one of 12 new solar energy centers Duke Energy plans to build across Florida between 2025 and 2027, representing approximately 900 megawatts of additional renewable generation and an estimated \$3

billion in customer savings over the projects' lifetimes.

By 2033, Duke Energy plans to expand its Florida solar generating capacity from approximately 1,700 megawatts to more than 6,100 megawatts, reinforcing the company's long-term commitment to clean, reliable energy.

For BAERS, the solar center complements the station's longstanding role as a leader in agricultural research, Extension and community engagement. The facility serves as an example of how renewable energy infrastructure can coexist with agricultural operations while creating new educational opportunities.

"The Brooksville Agricultural and Environmental Research Station has always been a place where innovation meets agriculture," said Ramdeo Seepaul, Ph.D., executive director of BAERS. "The Rattler Renewable Energy Center expands that vision by demonstrating that working lands can support food and agricultural research while also contributing to Florida's clean energy goals. It creates a unique living laboratory where students, researchers and industry partners can explore the intersection of agriculture, sustainability and renewable energy."

The center also provides a valuable learning environment ▶



for students studying engineering, agriculture, environmental science and other STEM disciplines. With access to an operational renewable energy facility located on University-owned land, students gain firsthand exposure to clean energy technologies, infrastructure management and sustainability practices that are increasingly shaping the future workforce.

The celebration also highlighted the importance of education and opportunity through the story of Dr. Bennie Floyd-Peoples. During the ceremony, she reflected on her sister, Ethel Peoples, who earned a scholarship from Florida Power—Duke Energy Florida's legacy company—in 1961 after winning an essay contest titled "My Community's Future" against more than 900 entries.

The scholarship allowed Ethel Peoples to attend Florida A&M University and ultimately opened doors for her entire family.

"My family's strong belief in education, combined with that scholarship, made it possible for all four of us to attend

FAMU," Floyd-Peoples shared, illustrating how investments in education can create generational impact.

That story resonated with many in attendance because it mirrors the mission behind today's partnership, investing in opportunities that extend far beyond a single project.

As renewable energy continues to expand across the nation, the Rattler Renewable Energy Center positions Florida A&M University and the College of Agriculture and Food Sciences at the forefront of innovation. It demonstrates that land-grant institutions can lead not only in agriculture, but also in developing sustainable solutions that strengthen communities, create economic opportunity and prepare students for tomorrow's careers.

Powered by purpose and driven by innovation, the Rattler Renewable Energy Center stands as a lasting symbol of FAMU's commitment to transforming its land, partnerships and people into opportunities that will benefit Florida for generations to come. ■



More than 200 residents, volunteers and community partners gathered at the Coleman Park Community Garden for the fourth annual Grill in the Garden, an event celebrating healthy living, community engagement and sustainable gardening.

Hosted as both a community celebration and educational experience, the event brought neighbors together to enjoy freshly grilled food, tour the garden and learn how gardening can improve food access, environmental stewardship and overall well-being.

Visitors explored 11 active garden beds featuring seasonal vegetables, herbs and native plants while discovering practical ways to grow fresh food at home. A hands-on food demonstration showcased how to prepare fresh mango salsa using garden-inspired ingredients, and participants learned about the important role pollinators play in maintaining healthy gardens.

The event also encouraged residents to take the next step in their own gardening journeys. Twenty-three participants completed an educational garden scavenger hunt and pledged to start a home garden, while 38 youth and adults received garden grow kits to help them begin growing fresh produce and herbs.

Community collaboration was at the heart of the day's success. Twelve local organizations

partnered to support the event, and 10 dedicated volunteers contributed 43 hours assisting with setup, food service, activities and cleanup.

Grill in the Garden also served as an opportunity to unveil exciting plans for the future of the Coleman Park Community Garden. Existing raised beds will soon be replaced with larger, more durable beds designed to expand gardening opportunities for neighborhood residents. A future community build day will invite volunteers to help construct and plant the new beds, further strengthening community ownership of the garden.

The Coleman Park Community Garden continues to serve as a valuable neighborhood resource by promoting food access, environmental education and community engagement. Through strong partnerships with residents, volunteers and local organizations, the garden is helping cultivate healthier families, stronger neighborhoods and a more resilient community.

As Grill in the Garden continues to grow each year, it demonstrates that community gardens provide far more than fresh produce, they create opportunities to learn, connect and build lasting relationships.

Together, the Coleman Park Community Garden is growing more than gardens; it is growing community. ■



FAMU SHOWCASES LAND-GRANT IMPACT DURING LEGISLATIVE SPOUSES LUNCHEON



Florida A&M University President Marva Johnson, J.D., recently welcomed legislative spouses from across the state to the FAMU Center for Viticulture and Small Fruit Research for a special event designed to highlight the university's longstanding contributions to Florida agriculture, research, education, and community engagement.

While the luncheon provided an opportunity for fellowship and hospitality, the event's greater purpose was to showcase the impact of Florida A&M University as one of only two land-grant institutions in the state. For more than a century, FAMU has partnered with federal, state, and local stakeholders to address agricultural challenges, strengthen rural communities, support economic development, and prepare future generations of leaders.

Hosted at the Center for Viticulture and Small Fruit Research, the event gave guests a firsthand look at the

innovative work taking place across the university's agricultural enterprise. Through student-led laboratory tours and discussions with faculty and researchers, legislative spouses learned how FAMU's research and Extension programs are helping address issues that directly affect Florida's agricultural economy and quality of life.

Guests explored research focused on muscadine grape production, specialty crops, sustainable agriculture, and emerging technologies, including the use of artificial intelligence in agricultural systems. They also learned about FAMU's work supporting producers and communities throughout the state, particularly in rural and underserved areas where the university's Extension programs provide critical education, technical assistance, and workforce development opportunities.

"This event provided an opportunity to share the broader story of Florida A&M University's land-grant mission

and the impact it continues to have across the state," said G. Dale Wesson, Ph.D., P.E., Dean and Director of Land-Grant Programs. "As one of Florida's two land-grant institutions, FAMU plays a unique role in advancing agricultural innovation, supporting communities, and developing solutions that strengthen Florida's economy and natural resources. We were honored to share that story with our guests."

Legislative spouses also learned about several examples of FAMU's recent impact, including research addressing invasive pests that threaten agricultural production, studies focused on protecting water resources, innovations resulting in intellectual property and patents, and projects helping identify crops best suited for Florida's changing environmental conditions. These efforts demonstrate how university research translates into practical solutions that benefit producers, consumers, and communities throughout the state.

"The Center for Viticulture and Small

Fruit Research represents much more than grape and wine research," said Violeta Tsoleva, Ph.D., professor and director of the Center for Viticulture and Small Fruit Research. "It serves as a gateway for students, researchers, and stakeholders to collaborate on solutions that support Florida agriculture while creating opportunities for innovation and economic growth."

The event also reflected President Johnson's commitment to strengthening relationships with state leaders and increasing awareness of the university's contributions to Florida.

"Our objective was to curate an event that not only welcomed our guests but also highlighted Florida A&M University's unique contributions to the State of Florida," said Michelle Robinson, vice president for Government Affairs. "As an 1890 land-grant institution, FAMU has a longstanding mission of advancing

agricultural education, research, and extension. The luncheon provided a wonderful opportunity to showcase the exceptional work and resulting impact of the FAMU Center for Viticulture and Small Fruit Research—the only center of its kind in Florida—while strengthening relationships in support of the university's mission and future growth."

While guests enjoyed an elegant setting, live music from the FAMU quartet, and scenic vineyard views, the lasting takeaway was a deeper understanding of Florida A&M University's role in supporting agriculture, communities, and economic development across Florida. The event served as a powerful reminder that FAMU's land-grant mission continues to generate meaningful impact throughout the state while preparing future generations to address emerging challenges in agriculture and beyond. ■





G3 Life Applications

Growing Minds and Planting Seeds: G3 Applications & FAMU Extension's Spring Break Agriculture Camp Inspires Young Learners

By Maurice Collier

This past March, Florida A&M University (FAMU) Cooperative Extension, in partnership with the Brooksville Agricultural and Environmental Research Station (BAERS) and G3 Applications, launched a dynamic and engaging Spring Break Agriculture Camp. Designed as a five-hour daily program, the weeklong camp provided youth with hands-on learning experiences in agriculture, science, and nutrition within a fun and interactive environment.

Approximately 15 youth participated in the camp, with each day dedicated to exploring a different aspect of agriculture and its connection to everyday life. The program was thoughtfully structured to introduce foundational concepts while sparking curiosity through interactive lessons and activities.

The week began on Monday with a focus on soil and roots, highlighting the importance of a strong foundation for plant growth. Led by Onokpise Oghenekome, Ph.D. (Kome), soil scientist at BAERS, and Cheryl Danley, Small Farms Extension Agent, participants explored the critical role soil plays in agriculture. Youth were also introduced to the "Three Fs" of agriculture—Food, Fiber, and Fuel—gaining a better understanding of how agriculture supports daily life.

On Tuesday, the focus shifted to plant growth and nourishment. Participants learned about irrigation, planting techniques, and the essential needs of both plants and people. A highlight of the day included a hands-on planting activity at the G3 Applications site in Tampa, where youth planted corn under the guidance of Oghenekome and Ms. Daufe. This experience allowed participants to apply what they learned in a meaningful and practical way.

Wednesday's session explored ecosystems and the important role insects play in the environment. Led by Sabrina Hayes, Ph.D., entomologist and 4-H Extension Agent with FAMU Cooperative Extension, students discovered how insects contribute to ecological balance. The lesson concluded with a bug scavenger hunt that encouraged exploration and observation while making learning both active and enjoyable.

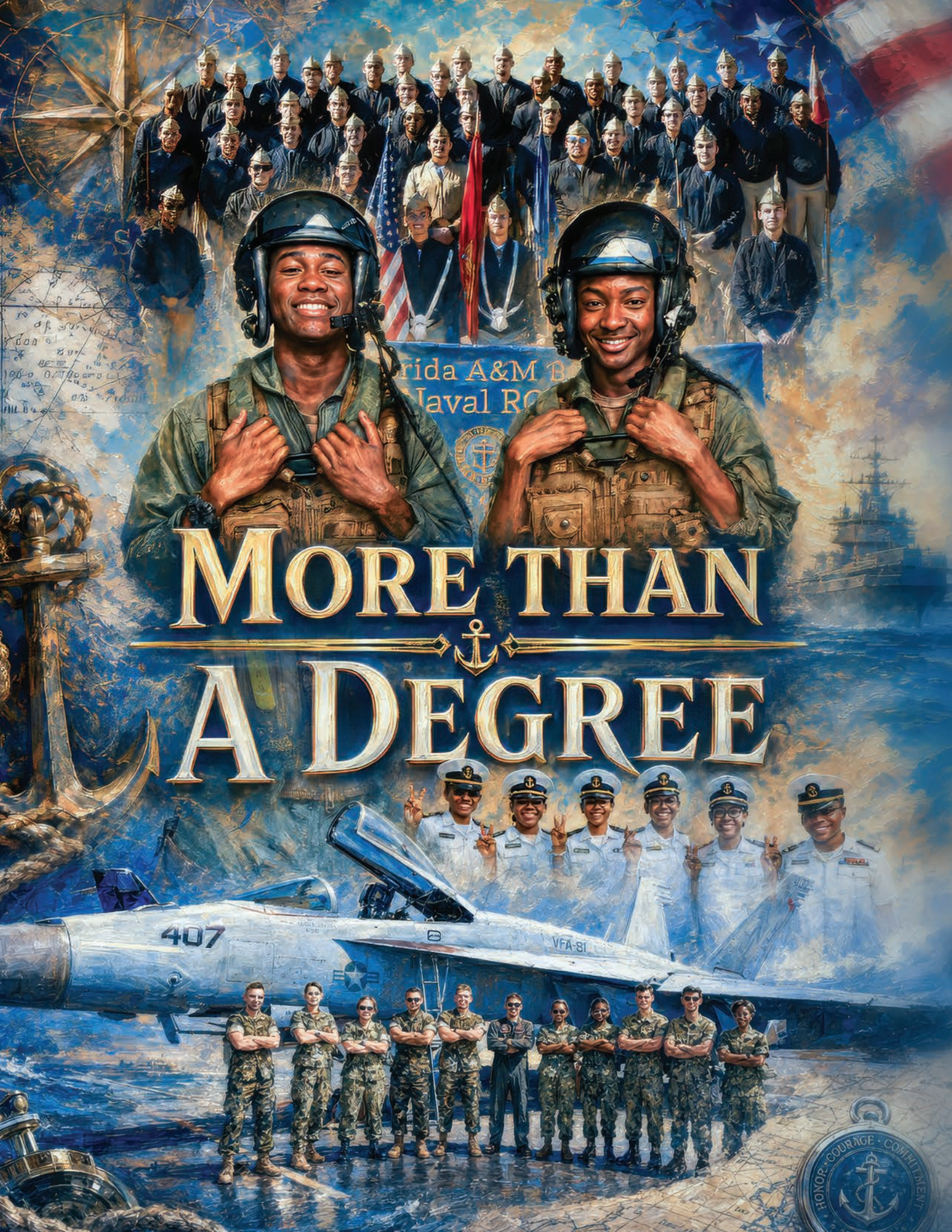
On Thursday, the focus turned to food, nutrition, and food science, led by Maurice Collier, Youth, Family, and Community Food and Nutrition Extension Agent. Participants learned about the importance of healthy eating and how food fuels the body. Activities included building balanced meals using MyPlate guidelines, conducting a science experiment demonstrating how gases cause bread to rise using vinegar and baking soda, and making

homemade ice cream in a zip-top bag to explore temperature changes and the science of matter.

These hands-on experiences blended science and nutrition in an engaging and memorable way.

The camp concluded on Friday with a Harvest Day Celebration and field day coordinated by Ronnie McCollough, Terrence Cole, 4-H, and the G3 Applications team. The day began with a beginner-friendly fishing lesson led by Cole, followed by a variety of outdoor recreational activities. The celebration provided participants with an opportunity to reflect on their learning while enjoying time outdoors with their peers.

Overall, the Spring Break Agriculture Camp was a tremendous success. Participants gained valuable knowledge about agriculture, developed a deeper appreciation for where food comes from, and engaged in hands-on experiences that will leave a lasting impact. Through collaborative efforts, FAMU Cooperative Extension and its partners continue to cultivate the next generation of informed and engaged learners, planting seeds of knowledge that will grow for years to come. ■



LEADERSHIP, ADVENTURE, AND OPPORTUNITY THROUGH NAVAL ROTC

If you want more out of college than just a degree—if you are looking for leadership experience, financial support, and opportunities to travel while making a meaningful impact—the Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps (NROTC) at Florida A&M University may be the perfect fit. Housed within the College of Agriculture and Food Sciences (CAFS), the program is designed for students who are willing to challenge themselves, embrace responsibility, and develop as leaders.

NROTC midshipmen are full-time students who are expected to maintain strong academic performance, complete Naval Science coursework, participate in regular physical training, and consistently demonstrate character and leadership within the battalion. This is not a passive program. Midshipmen are expected to contribute, take initiative, and lead from the moment they join.

Students are drawn to NROTC for three primary reasons: travel and adventure, financial support, and leadership development. The program provides opportunities to experience new places, participate in training beyond the campus environment, and become part of something larger than themselves. Financially, scholarships can cover tuition and provide monthly stipends, helping reduce the burden of student debt while offering a direct pathway to a professional career after graduation.

Perhaps the greatest benefit, however, is leadership development. While many college students are preparing for future leadership opportunities, NROTC midshipmen are already gaining real-world leadership experience. They plan events, lead peers, manage responsibilities, and are held accountable for meaningful outcomes. These experiences cultivate qualities that extend far beyond graduation, including leadership, discipline, accountability, resilience, global awareness, and a strong sense of purpose.

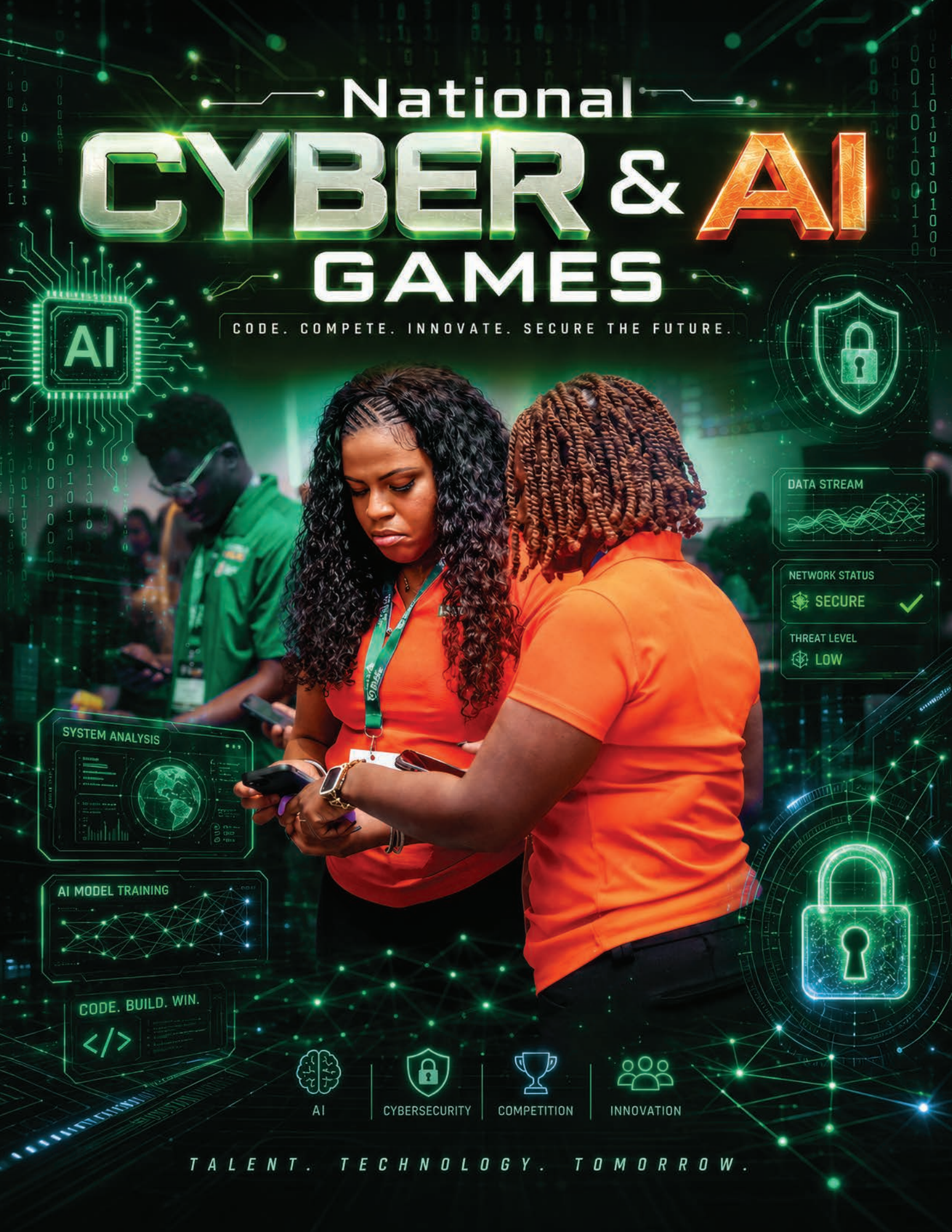
What makes the Florida A&M NROTC program unique is its ability to connect classroom learning with practical application. Students study leadership, ethics, and national security while developing the critical thinking and decision-making skills necessary for success. Outside the classroom, they apply those lessons through leadership laboratories, field exercises, and professional development activities. These experiences challenge students to make decisions under pressure, lead teams, and learn the difference between simply reacting and responding effectively. The result is a program that prepares students not only academically, but professionally and personally.

Not every student enters the program on scholarship. For those students, the College Program offers another pathway to success.

Similar to a walk-on athlete, College Program midshipmen train alongside scholarship students, participate fully in unit activities, and earn opportunities through dedication, performance, and commitment. These students meet the same standards and can compete for scholarships or advanced standing as they demonstrate their potential. Many College Program participants ultimately commission as officers in the United States Navy or Marine Corps.

In return for their commitment, NROTC provides a clear pathway to leadership and professional success. Upon graduation, students commission as officers and immediately assume leadership responsibilities. A newly commissioned officer (O-1) earns a competitive salary, along with housing and food allowances, comprehensive medical and dental coverage, and long-term retirement benefits. More importantly, graduates leave the program with experiences and skills that cannot be replicated through a traditional college experience.

The Florida A&M NROTC program is about more than preparing students for a career. It is about developing leaders who are ready to serve, make an impact, and succeed in an increasingly complex world. For those willing to embrace the challenge, the opportunity to lead begins today. ■



FAMU CAFS STUDENTS EXCEL AT NATIONAL CYBER & AI GAMES

HONORING 135 YEARS OF 1890 LAND-GRANT EXCELLENCE

Demonstrating the strength and versatility of their agricultural training, Florida A&M University's (FAMU) College of Agriculture and Food Sciences (CAFS) students secured an impressive second-place finish at the 1890 Universities Cyber & AI Games, held at the University of the District of Columbia on September 9, 2025, competing against 17 participating 1890 land-grant universities.

Representing FAMU were Shomar Bullen, Camryn Harper, Ryan Henry, Dionne Jones, Gopi Ananth K.S., and Khalfani Powell. All six are agriculture majors without formal computer science backgrounds. Their success underscores the adaptability and determination of CAFS students as they embrace emerging technologies and real-world challenges outside their primary field of study.

This year's Cyber & AI Games were held in celebration of the 135th anniversary of the Second Morrill Act of 1890, which established funding for historically Black land-grant universities. The event honored this legacy by demonstrating

how these institutions continue to innovate and prepare students for leadership in critical areas such as agriculture, technology, and national security.

"The 1890 Universities Cyber & AI Games are a powerful symbol of how our land-grant mission continues to evolve," said Dean G. Dale Wesson of CAFS. "In 1890, the Second Morrill Act provided access to education in agriculture and mechanical arts. Today, we are preparing students to defend our nation's food supply against digital threats. Placing second among 17 universities shows how far we've come — and how bright the future is for our students." ▶



By Patrick Burks

Growing Opportunity: FAMU Extension Helps Revitalize Nims Middle School Garden

At Nims Middle School in Tallahassee, Florida, a once-neglected garden has been transformed into a thriving outdoor learning space thanks to the dedication and vision of FAMU Extension Agent Patrick Burks and Lester Gaskins. Through hard work, collaboration, and a commitment to youth education, the pair successfully revitalized the school garden, creating an environment that benefits students, teachers, and the broader school community.

The Cyber & AI Games, organized by Katzcy PlayCyber, is a groundbreaking Capture the Flag (CTF) event designed to introduce university students to cybersecurity and artificial intelligence through agriculture-themed challenges. This year's theme, "Agriterrorism," challenged teams to tackle scenarios where malware, ransomware, and network intrusions could disrupt the U.S. food supply. Students engaged in more than 25 Jeopardy-style challenges in areas such as forensics, cryptography, and prompt engineering.

Beyond the main CTF competition, participants explored a Cyber Escape Room and Lock Picking Village, where two players from each team faced real-time problem-solving tasks. The event also featured keynote speakers, networking opportunities with sponsors and industry leaders, and a closing reception that celebrated the achievements of all teams. "This competition gave our students invaluable exposure to the kinds of cybersecurity threats facing today's agriculture industry," said Associate Dean of Academic Programs Neil James. "It's exactly the kind of experiential learning that equips our

students with critical thinking skills, teamwork, and industry readiness. They've proven that agriculture students can excel in any arena."

The FAMU team's accomplishment was particularly remarkable given that none of the six students have a computer science background. Instead, they relied on critical thinking, teamwork, and the ability to apply problem-solving skills learned in their agriculture courses to a new and complex field.

"The Cyber & AI Games give our students a chance to see how their classroom learning connects to real-world issues," said Team Coach Shanteva Leonard. "I am so proud of how they worked together under pressure, embraced new challenges, and represented FAMU with excellence."

Student competitor Khalfani Powell described the event as transformative: "This was my first time competing in a cyber-focused competition," Bullen said. "I've learned how critical cybersecurity is to agriculture and how much teamwork and quick thinking matter in these situations."

By blending agriculture and technology, the 1890 Universities Cyber & AI Games highlight the critical need for a diverse workforce trained to address emerging threats to the food and agriculture sectors. The event advances national cyber resilience, supports protection of vital infrastructure, and fuels the cyber talent pipeline by providing underrepresented students with hands-on training.

"This competition not only celebrates the legacy of the 1890 land-grant institutions but also builds a bridge to the future," Wesson said. "Our students are gaining the skills and confidence they need to lead in a world where agriculture and technology are inseparable."

The FAMU team's success at the Cyber & AI Games is a testament to the university's ongoing commitment to innovation, workforce readiness, and equity in education – values at the heart of the Second Morrill Act's legacy.

■

When restoration efforts began, the garden was overgrown and underutilized. Many of the original planting beds were no longer productive, weeds had overtaken much of the area, and the space had lost its effectiveness as an outdoor classroom. Rather than viewing these challenges as obstacles, Burks and Gaskins saw an opportunity to create something meaningful. With a shared commitment to hands-on education and environmental stewardship, they set out to restore the garden and renew its purpose.

The first phase of the project focused on cleanup and rehabilitation. Weeds were removed, soil was tilled and replenished, and damaged planting beds were repaired. Special attention was given

to rebuilding the garden's foundation and ensuring the soil was healthy enough to support future growth. Once the site was prepared, careful planning went into selecting vegetables, herbs, and other plants that would thrive in Tallahassee's climate while supporting educational activities.

As new crops were planted and began to flourish, the garden quickly transformed into a vibrant and productive space. What was once an overlooked area became filled with greenery, color, and life. Students and staff witnessed the transformation firsthand as seedlings emerged, plants matured, and garden beds flourished throughout the growing season. The revitalized space not only enhanced the campus

landscape but also renewed interest in the garden as a valuable educational resource.

One of the most significant outcomes of the project has been increased student engagement. The restored garden now serves as an outdoor classroom where students can learn about plant science, sustainability, nutrition, responsibility, and teamwork. By connecting classroom concepts to real-world experiences, the garden provides meaningful opportunities for experiential learning while fostering a greater appreciation for agriculture and environmental stewardship.

The success of the project also demonstrates the power of collaboration and community investment.

Through their dedication and consistent care, Burks and Gaskins showed how a shared vision can create lasting change. Their efforts have established a space that will continue to inspire and educate students for years to come.

Today, the Nims Middle School garden stands as a symbol of renewal, resilience, and opportunity. It reflects what can be accomplished when educators and community partners invest their time and talents into creating spaces that support student growth and development. Thanks to the commitment of Burks and Gaskins, the garden is once again flourishing and serves as a reminder that, with care, patience, and dedication, anything has the potential to grow. ■

In Full Bloom:

A Conversation with
Provost
Allyson
Watson, Ph.D.



For Florida A&M University Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Allyson Watson, Ph.D., gardening is more than a hobby—it's a source of peace, perspective, and personal growth. Inspired by memories of her great-grandmother's vineyard and nurtured through years of hands-on experience, Watson has developed a deep appreciation for the patience, perseverance, and care required to help something flourish.

In this special Q&A, Watson shares how her love of gardening began, the lessons it continues to teach her, and how tending a garden mirrors the work of cultivating a thriving academic community.

Q: When did your love for gardening begin?

WATSON: My love for gardening began when I was about two years old. My great-grandmother had a vineyard, and some of my earliest memories are of watching her pick grapes and gather fresh vegetables for our family. I can still remember the smell of the soil and the garden after a summer rain. One image that has stayed with me throughout my life is her gardening apron with the deep pockets she used to hold grapes as she worked. Those moments planted a seed in me that never went away.

Q: What does your current garden look like?

WATSON: My garden is filled with flowers and ornamental plants in shades of red, purple, magenta, green, and white. My favorite flower is the hydrangea. I've spent the last two years patiently working to get the soil just right, and this year I'm finally seeing the blooms I've been waiting for.

There's something incredibly rewarding about watching a plant thrive after you've invested time and care into it.

Q: What types of plants, flowers, vegetables, or herbs do you enjoy growing most?

WATSON: Right now, my focus has been on flowers and ornamental plants that create beauty and tranquility. Gardening has become a form of self-care for me. I enjoy

sitting among the blooms and simply taking in the colors and textures.

In the future, I'd like to expand into herbs and vegetables, but at this stage, my garden is more about creating a peaceful space than producing food.

Q: What has gardening taught you about patience, perseverance, and growth?

WATSON: Gardening has taught me a lesson I still work on every day: patience. I wouldn't describe myself as naturally patient, but gardening doesn't allow you to rush the process. You plant, nurture, and then wait.

It has also taught me perseverance. Gardens endure storms, intense heat, insects, and unexpected setbacks. There are days when you wonder if all your effort was worth it. Then new growth appears, flowers bloom, and you're reminded that growth often happens long before you can see it. That's a lesson that applies far beyond the garden.

Q: As Provost, do you see similarities between nurturing a garden and nurturing an academic community?

WATSON: Absolutely. A healthy garden and a healthy academic community both require intentional care. As Provost, I often think about creating environments where people can thrive. Just as plants need fertile soil, water, ▶



and sunlight, students, faculty, and staff need support, encouragement, resources, and opportunities to grow.

I've also learned that every plant has different needs, just as every person has different strengths and aspirations. Leadership isn't about forcing growth—it's about creating the conditions where growth can happen naturally.

Q: In what ways does gardening help you recharge from the demands of your professional responsibilities?

WATSON: Gardening gives me a chance to slow down and be present. Some of my favorite moments are sitting on the back porch with my husband, enjoying an ice-cold glass of water, watching the flowers sway in the breeze, and spending time with our pets.

In a profession that often moves at a very fast pace, the garden reminds me to pause and appreciate the simple things.

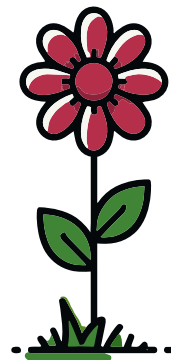
Q: Has your personal gardening experience given you a greater appreciation for the work being done by students, faculty, and researchers in agriculture?

WATSON: Without question. Gardening has given me a small glimpse into the knowledge, skill, and dedication required to successfully grow and sustain plants. It has deepened my appreciation for the incredible work our students, faculty, researchers, and Extension professionals do every day. Agriculture impacts every aspect of our lives, from food security and environmental sustainability to economic development and community health. Spending time in my own garden has helped me better understand and appreciate the science, innovation, and commitment that drive this important work.

Q: Are there any gardening goals or projects you're hoping to tackle in the future?

WATSON: One of my goals for this summer is to build a raised garden bed and begin growing more vegetables. I'd love to create a small kitchen garden with lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, and fresh herbs that I can use to make healthy salads for my family.

It feels like a natural next step in my gardening journey and a way to connect even more deeply with the process of growing something from seed to table. ■



From lessons in patience and perseverance to creating environments where growth can flourish, Watson's gardening journey reflects many of the same values she brings to her role as Provost. Whether tending hydrangeas in her backyard or helping guide the academic mission of Florida A&M University, she understands that meaningful growth takes time, care, and a commitment to nurturing potential.



Student-Authored Book Chapters Published from Fall 2025 Soil Chemistry Course

In Fall 2025, **Lucy Ngatia, Ph.D.** taught SWS 5405C Soil Chemistry, a writing-enhanced course. The final examination, a high-stakes assignment, was a book chapter writing assignment. The class was guided through the book chapter writing process step by step by Ngatia from the beginning of the semester to the end. The assignment entailed identifying a problem of global, regional, or local concern, identifying the drivers, repercussions, and solutions. Ngatia had assured the students that the best-written book chapters would be revised and polished, and that they would be considered for publication. Four students wrote the best book chapters, and their publication proposals were accepted for publication in different books. Three book chapters have already been accepted for publication, and the fourth book chapter is under review, as listed below.



SARKER T. AND NGATIA L.W., 2026.

Phosphorus Fixation in Soils: Challenges and Solutions for Paddy Fields. In the book: Agroecosystems Principles and Practices. IntechOpen.
ISBN 978-1-80631-673-1



LAIRD S. O. AND NGATIA L.W., 2026.

Influence of Southern Pine Beetles on Forest Health, Decomposition, and Soil Quality in Florida Pine Forests. In the book: Forest Science and Ecosystem Sustainability. IntechOpen. ISBN 978-1-80632-039-4



OLUWAYEMI S.O. AND NGATIA L.W., 2026.

Cadmium from Soil to Table: Implications of Contaminated Poultry Feed on Meat Quality and Human Health. In the book: Contaminated Soils and Sustainable Remediation Technologies. IntechOpen.
ISBN 978-1-80631-739-4



FAJANA S. and NGATIA L.W.,

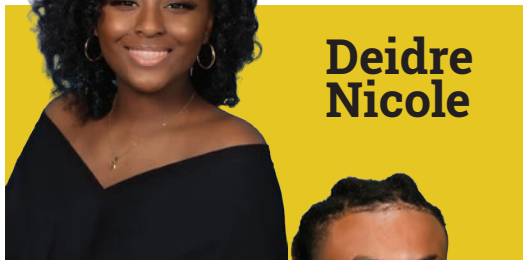
The potential of Industrial Hemp on Improving Soil Health and Ecological Resilience. In the book: Carbon Cycle - Science, Technology, and Innovation. IntechOpen. ISBN 978-1-80632-439-2

Shaping Food Policy Leaders:



Rattlers at the 2026 Model USDA Simulation

Food and agricultural policy does not emerge in isolation. It is shaped at the intersection of science, economics, stakeholder negotiation, and political feasibility. Preparing students to navigate this complexity requires more than classroom instruction. It requires immersive engagement in the institutions and negotiations that shape food systems governance.



From January 30 to February 1, 2026, the Global Agriculture Unit within the College of Agriculture and Food Sciences (CAFS) at Florida A&M University (FAMU) facilitated and coordinated the participation of four students in the national Model United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Simulation, hosted by Arizona State University (ASU), through funding from the USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture NextGen Program. This engagement was not simply attendance at a national program; it was the result of deliberate preparation, structured mentorship, and sustained institutional commitment in leadership development within food and agricultural policy.

The 2026 Simulation gathered nearly 200 students from 31 colleges and universities across the country. Participants assumed the roles of USDA agency officials and key food system stakeholders, including economists, nonprofit executives, policy advocates, and industry representatives, to address complex national policy challenges.

During three intensive days, students worked in cross-institutional teams to analyze pressing policy scenarios, negotiate competing priorities, and develop actionable recommendations under time, budget, and resource constraints. Through briefings, breakout strategy sessions, and a public open forum featuring final policy presentations, students experienced firsthand how agricultural policy balances data-driven decision-making with political realities and stakeholder interests.

The delegation was guided by Ms. Harriett Paul, Director of the Global Agriculture Unit, and Almando Morain, Ph.D., Program Associate, whose leadership ensured strong institutional representation throughout the simulation. Four Rattlers assumed influential federal and stakeholder roles. The Rattlers' performance was exceptional. They embodied the CAFS motto "Boldly Striking," reflecting the Global Agriculture Unit's sustained investment in cultivating confident, policy-ready leaders.

Notably, two of the students earned national recognition for their outstanding performance. Brielle Elliott received first place in Scenario C (Growing Urban Agriculture), while Asjah Nero earned second place in Scenario A (Healthy and Sustainable Dietary Guidelines for Americans). Furthermore, Jordan and Deidre have demonstrated their skills as rising leaders. Jordan played a critical connecting role throughout the simulation, serving as a key connector that helped align team perspectives, facilitate communication, and maintain strategic focus under pressure. His ability to bridge ideas and people reflects a strong foundation in collaborative leadership. Deidre demonstrated exceptional leadership potential through her analytical depth and ability to navigate complex policy discussions. Her contributions reflected a clear understanding of the intersection between sustainability, food systems, and public service. Together, they represent the next generation of undergraduate leaders in global agriculture and policy, complementing the accomplishments of graduating senior Brielle Elliott and Ph.D. candidate Asjah Nero.

As part of the Global Agriculture Unit's continued commitment to leadership development, Jordan and Deidre will be further supported and engaged as emerging leaders, serving not only as participants but also as mentors and guides for future cohorts. By sharing their experiences and supporting peer learning, they are positioned to help shape and strengthen the next generation of students entering the Model USDA program. In this way, they represent individuals who will continue to grow, influence, and contribute to advancing sustainable and equitable food systems.

Building Pathways to Policy Leadership

Our participation in the Model USDA Simulation strengthened pathways that connect academic preparation to meaningful policy engagement. It deepened students' understanding of how policy is shaped, how evidence informs decisions, how budgets constrain action, how stakeholder interests influence outcomes, and how effective leadership requires both technical knowledge and strategic negotiation. Experiences such as this serve as critical bridges between classroom learning and real-world decision-making. As Ms. Harriett Paul, Director of the Global Agriculture Unit, emphasized, "Our priority is to create meaningful pathways from the classroom to national policy conversations so that FAMU students can lead at every level of the food system."

The impact of that engagement is best reflected in the students' own words.

"Participating in the Model USDA Simulation facilitated the intersection of technical innovation and public leadership. This experience solidified my goal to build resilient, equitable food systems in my future career," said Jordan Brown.

Deidre Nicole Lemoine shared that "the simulation deepened my understanding of how food systems, sustainability, labeling policy, and public service are closely connected. The most impactful part of the simulation was realizing how much responsibility comes with protecting public trust."

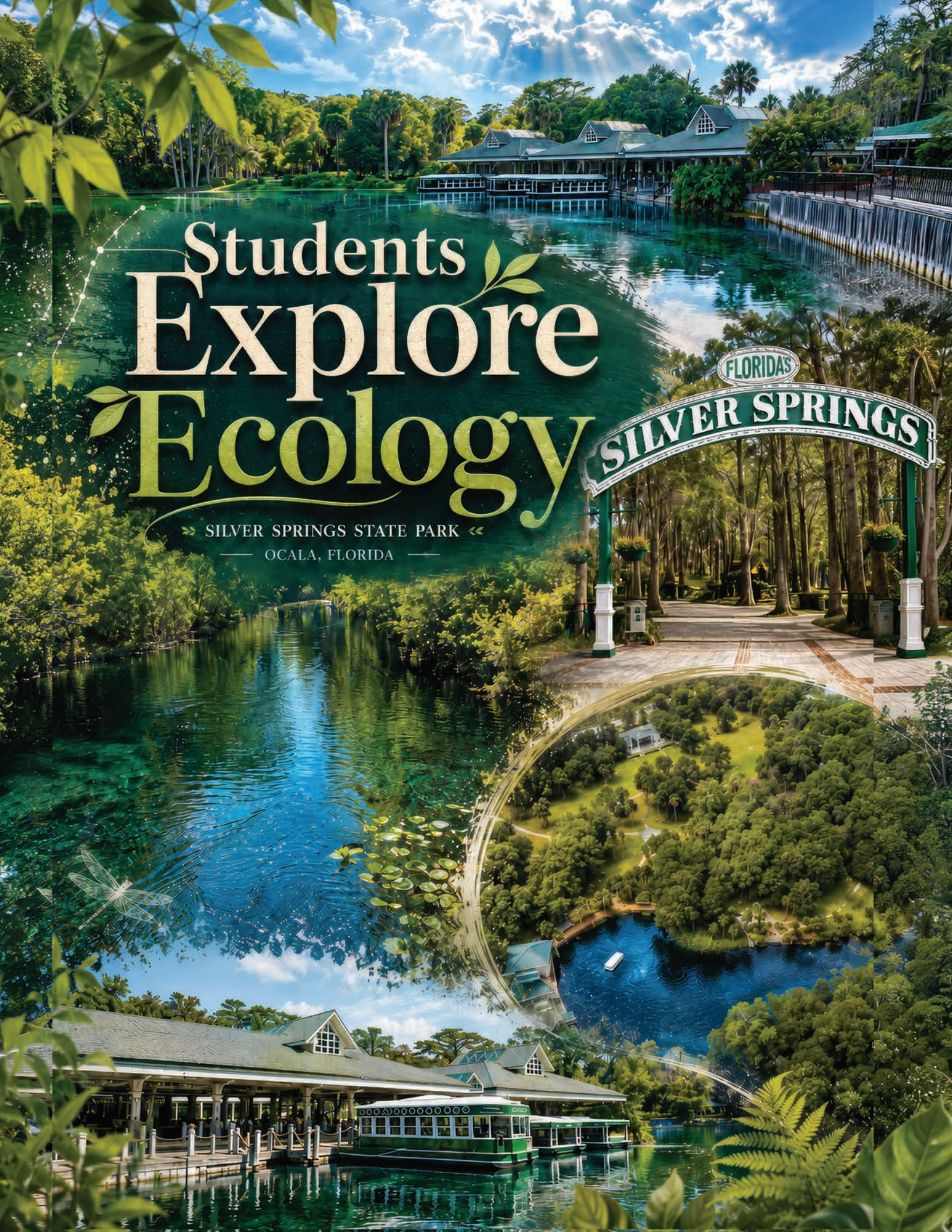
Brielle Elliott noted, "This experience was both challenging and incredibly rewarding. It taught me the necessity of inclusive and collaborative compromise, innovative critical thinking, and thorough preparation, especially in the field of agricultural policy, which impacts every living person."

Asjah Nero added, "The simulation strengthened my skills in policy analysis, cross-agency collaboration, professional communication, and systems thinking under real-world time constraints. It also deepened my understanding of how food systems, nutrition policy, sustainability, and economic feasibility intersect."

Collectively, these reflections illustrate the Global Agriculture Unit's deliberate investment in preparing Rattlers to lead within evolving food policy environments.

Looking Ahead: 2027 Cohort

As the Global Agriculture Unit continues to expand experiential leadership opportunities, preparation for the 2027 Model USDA Simulation is already on the horizon. Brielle Elliott captured the value of the experience best, describing the program as "an invaluable enrichment opportunity that equips students with the networks, knowledge, and leadership skills they will carry into their careers." Therefore, students interested in representing Florida A&M University are encouraged to stay engaged for upcoming application announcements, structured preparation sessions, and leadership development opportunities designed to cultivate policy fluency and strategic confidence. The future of agricultural policy demands informed, ethical, and adaptive leaders. At the Global Agriculture Unit, that preparation remains intentional and consistent. ■



Students and faculty from Florida A&M University, Florida State University, and Florida International University recently participated in an immersive, hands-on learning experience at Silver Springs State Park in Ocala, Florida. The trip was part of the Ecological Society of America's (ESA) Strategies for Ecology Education, Diversity, and Sustainability (SEEDS) program, which supports student success in ecology while promoting diversity, inclusion, and professional development in the environmental sciences.

The experience was guided by faculty mentors Rosny Jean, Ph.D., of Florida A&M University and Joshua Scholl, Ph.D., of Florida Atlantic University, both of whom serve as ESA SEEDS Chapter mentors. Additional support was provided by Linda Sapp, FAMU Extension Agent. Together, they offered leadership and mentorship throughout the trip, helping students connect classroom learning with real-world environmental challenges.

The multi-day excursion began on March 13 as students traveled from their respective campuses and arrived in Ocala later that afternoon. After settling into their accommodations, the group gathered for a welcome dinner and orientation session, where they were introduced to journal writing as a tool for documenting observations and reflections.

On the second day, students participated in a full schedule of field-based activities at Silver Springs State Park. The day began with an exploration of Florida's spring systems and the aquifer that supports them, emphasizing the importance of freshwater resources and environmental stewardship. Students also examined the relationship between tourism and wildlife through discussions about the park's rhesus macaque population, highlighting important issues related to invasive species management and conservation.

Participants were introduced to community science through the iNaturalist application, learning how to document biodiversity and contribute to real-world ecological data collection. Building on this experience, students explored plant functional traits and ecological sampling methods before designing and conducting their own mini research projects. These activities encouraged students to formulate research questions, test hypotheses, and collect field data.

Following a lunch break at Fort King Pavilion and a visit to the Silver River Museum, students continued their fieldwork and later returned to their accommodations to analyze data and prepare presentations. The evening concluded with student presentations showcasing their findings, followed by a SEEDS celebration recognizing their hard work, collaboration, and scientific inquiry.

On the final day, the group returned to the park for a discussion on career pathways in ecology and environmental science. Students also participated in a Plant Bingo activity before concluding the trip with a guided glass-bottom boat tour focused on aquatic ecosystems and biodiversity.

Overall, the experience provided students with a valuable opportunity to apply scientific concepts in a real-world setting while developing skills in research, collaboration, critical thinking, and environmental observation. Through this hands-on approach, participants gained a deeper appreciation for Florida's unique ecosystems and the importance of protecting natural resources for future generations. ■



A sabbatical is often described as a break from routine academic responsibilities, but for me, it became much more than that. My year-long sabbatical at Johns Hopkins University was a transformative journey of intellectual growth, professional development, personal reflection, and meaningful human connections. It was a period that challenged me, inspired me, and ultimately helped me gain a deeper perspective on both life and career.

In many ways, my previous training and mentorship prepared me well for this experience. The Harvard University course, Power and Influence for Positive Impact, along with the LEAD21 leadership development program and the invaluable guidance of my Ph.D. mentor and several other mentors, helped me better understand leadership, collaboration, communication, and the importance of building meaningful professional relationships. These experiences shaped my mindset before the sabbatical and enabled me to navigate a demanding academic environment with greater confidence, resilience, and clarity of purpose.

The sabbatical began with an intense schedule. Most weeks required between 80 and 100 hours as I immersed myself in learning cutting-edge applications of artificial intelligence while simultaneously supporting the research needs of my graduate students and managing responsibilities at my home institution. Although the pace was demanding, it was equally rewarding. Working under the guidance of my host, a leading researcher in artificial intelligence applications and an exceptional academic leader, exposed me to new ways of thinking about research, innovation, and collaboration. His mentorship demonstrated not only

scientific excellence but also the importance of vision, humility, and leadership in academia.

One of the most enriching academic experiences during my stay was auditing a course on decision making and risk analysis taught by a highly accomplished professor. Observing his teaching style, classroom interactions, and methods of engaging students provided valuable insights into effective pedagogy. The experience reinforced the idea that teaching is not simply the transfer of knowledge, but also the cultivation of curiosity, critical thinking, and confidence.

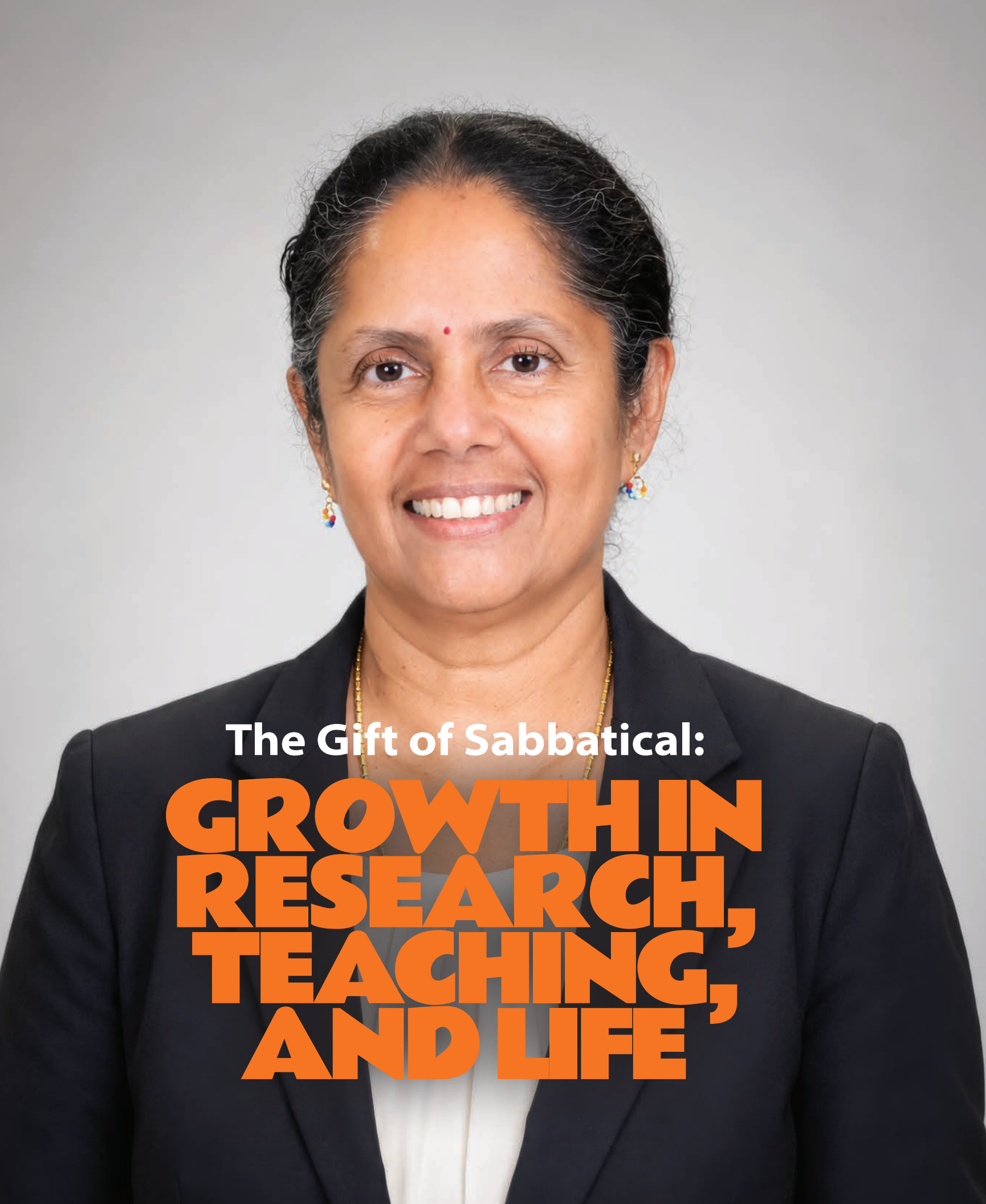
Equally memorable were my interactions with undergraduate and graduate students at Johns Hopkins. Engaging with students from diverse backgrounds helped me better understand the evolving aspirations, concerns, and learning styles of today's generation. These interactions broadened my perspective on mentorship and reinforced the importance of empathy, encouragement, and adaptability when guiding young scholars and researchers.

Beyond academics, the sabbatical provided a number of unique life experiences. Traveling to new places, meeting people from different cultures, and developing new professional and personal relationships made the

journey especially rewarding. At the same time, reconnecting with longtime friends and colleagues reminded me of the value of enduring relationships. Amid the demands of a busy schedule, I also found time for self-reflection, meditation, and service activities that helped me maintain balance and personal clarity.

This sabbatical was not merely a pause from routine work; it was an opportunity for growth, reflection, and renewal. It allowed me to reassess priorities, appreciate the broader purpose of academic work, and recognize the importance of balancing professional ambition with personal well-being. The experience strengthened my confidence as a researcher and educator while also helping me grow as an individual.

I remain deeply grateful to the university, administrators, staff members, students, and funding agency whose support made this remarkable journey possible. Their encouragement and trust created opportunities that will continue to shape my work and perspective for years to come. I sincerely hope that every academic professional has the opportunity to undertake a sabbatical during their career and uses it as a chance to grow not only in research and teaching, but also in life itself. ■

A portrait of Aavudai Anandhi, a woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a dark blazer over a white top, and a gold necklace. She is smiling and looking directly at the camera.

The Gift of Sabbatical: **GROWTH IN RESEARCH, TEACHING, AND LIFE**



Cultivating Excellence

**Tommeron D.
Timmons**

Named MANRRS Advisor of the Year

For more than a decade, Tommeron D. Timmons has served as a guiding force, mentor, and advocate for students within the Florida A&M University chapter of Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS). His unwavering commitment to student success, leadership development, and professional excellence has now earned him one of the organization's highest honors—MANRRS Advisor of the Year.

Known by students as the "rock of the chapter," Timmons has spent years building a culture of excellence that extends far beyond the classroom. Whether mentoring future agricultural leaders, encouraging students to pursue national leadership opportunities, or helping members navigate academic and professional challenges, his influence has left a lasting mark on generations of Rattlers.

"Tommeron D. Timmons is the definition of transformational leadership," said Ruth Fennell, a 2024

graduate of FAMU's Agricultural Sciences program. "He is an extraordinary advisor who never failed to show up for me, always offering unwavering support, guidance, and belief in my potential. I truly would not be the person I am today without his influence."

Timmons' relationship with MANRRS spans more than 15 years. He served as assistant advisor from 2009 to 2011 before becoming chapter advisor in 2012. A former MANRRS National Treasurer, he has dedicated his career to ensuring students are equipped with the leadership, communication, networking, and professional skills needed to excel in agriculture and related sciences.

Under his leadership, the FAMU MANRRS Chapter has experienced unprecedented growth. Membership expanded from approximately 10 students to nearly 120 active members,

creating one of the most vibrant and impactful student organizations on campus. Beyond numbers, Timmons has cultivated a chapter culture grounded in professionalism, service, academic achievement, and leadership.

His mentorship has also helped students rise to leadership positions at the regional and national levels. Numerous FAMU MANRRS members have gone on to serve as officers within the organization, reflecting both the confidence Timmons places in student leaders and the intentional mentorship he provides. His guidance helped the chapter achieve one of its greatest accomplishments when FAMU MANRRS was named National Chapter of the Year during the 2012-2013 academic year.

Aaron Francis, a Plant and Soil Science student and chapter leader, credits Timmons' dedication to students as one of his defining qualities. ▶





"I have seen him go above and beyond for students at the national and local chapter levels," Francis said. "He has a distinguishable attention to detail, and he cares for every student, day in and day out."

Students consistently describe Timmons as a mentor who sees their potential before they see it themselves. He challenges them to exceed expectations, pursue opportunities they once thought impossible, and become leaders within their professions and communities.

"Due to his organizational skills and enthusiastic demeanor, Mr. Timmons is an individual who drives his students toward success, leaving them with a lasting impact," said Lauryn Tellis, a Food Science student.

What distinguishes Timmons most is that his influence continues long after students leave FAMU. Former MANRRS members carry the lessons he instilled—integrity, service, excellence, and academic preparation—into graduate programs, professional careers, and leadership positions throughout the United States and around the world. His impact has multiplied through the success of the students he has mentored, creating a legacy that extends far beyond campus.

For Dillon Ford, a former chapter leader and graduate student advisor, Timmons represents the gold standard of mentorship.

"On behalf of the current and former FAMU MANRRS Chapter members, I highly recommend Mr. Tommeron Timmons as the MANRRS Advisor of the Year," Ford said.

As MANRRS celebrates 40 years of "Leadership to Legacy," Timmons embodies that theme through every student he mentors and every opportunity he creates. His dedication has strengthened the FAMU MANRRS Chapter, empowered future

agricultural leaders, and established a legacy of excellence that will continue for generations to come.

For the countless students whose lives he has impacted, the recognition is well deserved. Tommeron D. Timmons is more than an advisor—he is a mentor, a champion, and an enduring pillar of the FAMU MANRRS family. ■





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Twelve

agribusiness students successfully completed internships during the past year, gaining hands on experience with major corporations, government agencies, and entrepreneurial ventures across the agricultural and food industries.

The internships provided students with practical exposure to agribusiness operations, marketing, sales, supply chains, public service, and entrepreneurship, allowing them to apply classroom knowledge in real world professional environments.

“This milestone reflects both the strength of our agribusiness program and the dedication of our students,” said Daniel Solis, Ph.D., program leader for Agribusiness and coordinator of the Agribusiness Internship Program. “These internships equip our students with the skills and professional experience needed to confidently transition into careers in today’s global agricultural economy.”

Several students shared insights into how their internships enhanced their professional and academic development.

“My internship with Elanco Animal Health gave me a direct view of how agricultural business, animal health, and pharmaceutical sales intersect in everyday professional work,” said Antoine Cooper.

“My internship with the United States Department of Agriculture Farm Service Agency at the Statesboro Service Center provided a comprehensive and immersive introduction to the intersection of agriculture, finance, and public service,” said Brielle Elliott.

Isaak Martin added, “Courses in the Agribusiness Program, such as Food Supply Chain and Agribusiness Analysis, helped me adapt quickly to the tasks and responsibilities I had during my internship.”

The Agribusiness Program continues to emphasize experiential learning as a core component of student success, strengthening partnerships with industry leaders and public agencies to prepare graduates for diverse career pathways.

2025 Agribusiness Internship Participants

Antoine Cooper Elanco Animal Health	Brielle Elliott U.S. Department of Agriculture, Farm Service Agency	Delvin Everett Walmart, Marketing Unit	Crystal Gabriel Carrot Inc.
Romari Guy V.S. & Co.	Nadia Kreft Land O'Lakes, Inc. (Headquarters)	Isaak Martin Publix Super Markets	Edward Neequaye Regal Inc.
Daija Nickerson Reyes Beverage Group, Chicago	Kelsey Parker The Russell Group, Washington, D.C.	Arielle Renner BakedByAri	Jayden Woody Walmart, Online Sales



What began as a simple conversation between two student leaders has blossomed into a transformative vision for Florida A&M University's College of Agriculture and Food Sciences (CAFS).

For Dillon Ford and Aaron Francis, the creation of the "First Fruits" student-run campus garden represents far more than planting crops—it symbolizes faith, innovation, leadership, and a commitment to cultivating the next generation of agricultural scholars.

Ford, a second-year graduate student majoring in Agricultural Sciences with concentrations in Food and Plant Sciences, and Francis, a first-year graduate student majoring in Agricultural Sciences with a concentration in Plant Science, have long been recognized as impactful student leaders throughout the university. Together, they have served in leadership roles within FAMU MANRRS and other campus organizations while conducting interdisciplinary research in hydroponics, nutrient film technique systems, edible food coatings, microbiology, environmental biomonitoring, and bioanalytical techniques.

Their leadership journey took on a new purpose during their tenure on the FAMU MANRRS Executive Board for the 2023-2024 academic year. As students repeatedly approached them asking for opportunities to gain hands-on agricultural experience outside of the classroom, Ford and Francis recognized a need—and decided to answer the call.

"What started as a conversation became a mission," said Ford. "We wanted to create a space where students could learn, grow, collaborate, and reconnect with agriculture in a meaningful way."

Throughout the summer of 2025, the pair dedicated themselves to research, collaboration, planning, and physically building the garden space that would become "First Fruits." Guided by faith and gratitude, they chose the name as a tribute to God (YHWH) and as recognition of the opportunity to serve others through agriculture. ▶



Surrounded by blooming flowers, fresh greenery, and a growing sense of community, the garden now serves as a living classroom where students can gain practical agricultural experience while engaging with peers, faculty, and staff across the university.

“We envision First Fruits becoming a permanent part of the CAFS experience,” said Francis. “This is bigger than a garden—it’s about building community, showcasing student talent, and inspiring people to appreciate agriculture in a new way.”

Their vision for the future includes an Annual First Fruits Harvest Festival featuring student showcases, local growers and farmers, and expanded opportunities for collaboration throughout CAFS. They hope the initiative will become a signature event that highlights the innovation and excellence within the college while reminding the university community that CAFS proudly puts the “A” in “FAMU.”

The project also received strong support from university leadership and partners who believed in the students’ vision from the beginning.

“This initiative reflects the ingenuity, determination, and leadership we strive to cultivate within our students,”

said G. Dale Wesson, Dean and Director of Land Grant Programs. “Dillon and Aaron transformed an idea into a meaningful educational and community-centered experience that will impact students for years to come.”

Support from George Montgomery also played a significant role in helping the project take root.

“Dillon and Aaron demonstrated extraordinary initiative and vision from day one,” Montgomery said. “Their passion for agriculture, student development, and service created something truly special that will continue to benefit the university community.”

As the garden continues to grow, so does the impact of the students behind it. Ford plans to pursue a future as an entrepreneur and educator within the agricultural industry, helping teach future generations the importance of agriculture and sustainability. Francis intends to continue building his research portfolio before pursuing a graduate degree focused on plant biotechnology to improve plant and human health.

Together, they are cultivating more than crops—they are cultivating opportunity, purpose, and legacy at Florida A&M University. ■





The Florida A&M University College of Agriculture and Food Sciences (CAFS), through its Center for Viticulture and Small Fruit Research, welcomed hundreds of visitors, students, alumni, faculty, staff, and community members to its annual Grape Harvest Festival, transforming the university's vineyards into a vibrant celebration of agriculture, wellness, research, and community engagement.

Against the backdrop of ripening grapevines and Florida sunshine, attendees enjoyed a day filled with hands-on experiences, educational opportunities, live entertainment, and family-friendly activities that highlighted the importance of viticulture and agricultural innovation at Florida A&M University.

One of the festival's most anticipated traditions was grape picking, where guests had the unique opportunity to step into the vineyard and harvest fresh muscadine grapes directly from the vines. Visitors of all ages filled baskets while learning about grape production, sustainable farming practices, and the research being conducted by CAFS faculty and students.

The event also featured local vendors, delicious food offerings, educational exhibits, and a live DJ who kept the atmosphere energetic throughout the day. Adding to the excitement, Chocolate Waste Fitness led an interactive Move and Groove fitness session that brought festivalgoers together for a fun and engaging wellness experience. The session encouraged participants to stay active while

reinforcing the connection between healthy lifestyles and agricultural products grown within the region.

The festival attracted notable university leadership, including Florida A&M University President Marva Johnson, who joined other FAMU administrators, faculty, and supporters in celebrating the success of one of CAFS' signature outreach events. Their presence underscored the university's commitment to agricultural education, research, and community engagement.

"The Grape Harvest Festival represents the very best of what the College of Agriculture and Food Sciences has to offer," said G. Dale Wesson, Dean and Director of Land Grant Programs. "It brings together research, teaching, Extension, and community engagement in a way that allows people to experience agriculture firsthand. Events like this help connect our community to the important work happening within CAFS while inspiring future generations of agricultural leaders."

For many attendees, the festival served as both an educational experience and a celebration of the rich agricultural traditions that continue to thrive at FAMU. Children explored the vineyard for the first time, families learned about grape cultivation, and community members gained a deeper appreciation for the role agriculture plays in promoting health, economic development, and sustainability.

According to Violeta Tsoleva, professor and director of the Center for Viticulture and Small Fruit Research, the festival continues to serve as an important bridge between

scientific discovery and public engagement.

"The Grape Harvest Festival provides an opportunity for visitors to see firsthand the impact of our research and Extension programs," said Tsoleva. "Our goal is to educate the public about muscadine grapes and other small fruits while creating meaningful experiences that connect people to agriculture, nutrition, and the environment. It is rewarding to see families, students, and community members come together to celebrate the harvest and learn about the work taking place at FAMU."

Throughout the day, guests explored exhibits, connected with agricultural experts, supported local businesses, and enjoyed the festive atmosphere that has made the Grape Harvest Festival a beloved annual tradition. The combination of fresh grapes, community fellowship, educational demonstrations, and live entertainment created an experience that showcased the unique role CAFS plays in advancing agricultural research and outreach across Florida and beyond.

Building on the success of this year's event, CAFS and the Center for Viticulture and Small Fruit Research invite the community to mark their calendars for the 2026 Grape Harvest Festival, scheduled for August 22. We encourage alumni, students, families, and community members to join in this unique celebration of agriculture, wellness, and community engagement. ■



By Janeil Jackson

Sweet Success

FAMU MANRRS Celebrates First Watermelon Harvest with Student-Led Tasting Event

The Florida A&M University chapter of Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) recently celebrated a major milestone with its first successful watermelon harvest and tasting event, showcasing the fruits of months of hard work, collaboration, and agricultural innovation in the chapter's First Fruits Garden.

The event brought together students, faculty, staff, and supporters to enjoy fresh watermelon grown entirely by MANRRS students while learning more about the chapter's commitment to experiential learning, sustainable agriculture, and student leadership development.

The harvest represents a defining moment in the evolution of the First Fruits Garden, a student-led initiative designed

to provide hands-on agricultural experience outside the classroom. What began as a vision to create opportunities for practical learning has grown into a thriving educational space where students actively apply concepts learned in their courses to real-world agricultural production.

From soil preparation and planting to irrigation management, pest control, and routine maintenance, MANRRS members were involved in every stage of the growing process. Their efforts culminated in the successful harvest of watermelons that were shared during the tasting event, providing a tangible demonstration of the students' dedication and agricultural expertise.

"This harvest represents much more than growing watermelons," said Dillon Ford, a second-year graduate



student in the College of Agriculture and Food Sciences (CAFS) and one of the leaders behind the First Fruits Garden initiative. "It demonstrates what can happen when students take ownership of a project and commit themselves to learning through experience. The First Fruits Garden was created to provide opportunities for students to engage with agriculture in a meaningful way, and seeing our first major crop harvested and enjoyed by the campus community is incredibly rewarding."

Attendees at the tasting event sampled fresh watermelon while learning about crop production, food systems, and sustainable farming practices. The event also provided students with opportunities to discuss the importance of agriculture and the role that student-led initiatives can play in promoting food security awareness and community engagement.

For Aaron Francis, a first-year CAFS graduate student and longtime MANRRS leader, the harvest reflects the dedication and teamwork that have gone into building the garden from the ground up.

"The success of this harvest is a direct result of countless hours of planning, collaboration, and hard

work from our student volunteers," Francis said. "Every watermelon harvested represents lessons learned, challenges overcome, and a shared commitment to advancing agriculture at FAMU. We hope this project inspires more students to become involved and discover the many opportunities available within agriculture."

The Watermelon Tasting also served as an educational platform, encouraging student interest in agriculture through hands-on learning experiences and volunteer opportunities. Participants gained a deeper understanding of crop production, food sustainability, and the impact agriculture has on communities around the world.

Laurn Tellis, a Food Science student and active MANRRS member, emphasized the importance of connecting students directly to the food they consume.

"Events like the Watermelon Tasting help students better understand where their food comes from and the work that goes into producing it," Tellis said. "It creates a unique learning experience that combines agriculture, science, and community engagement while making the subject matter fun and accessible."

Beyond the harvest itself, the event highlighted the broader mission of the First Fruits Garden as a living laboratory where students can develop leadership skills, gain practical agricultural experience, and explore innovative approaches to sustainable food production. The project continues to serve as a cornerstone initiative for MANRRS, fostering teamwork, accountability, and professional growth among chapter members.

As the first major yield from the First Fruits Garden, the watermelon harvest sets a strong foundation for future crops and continued expansion of the garden's impact. The success of the project reinforces MANRRS' commitment to service, excellence, and agricultural empowerment while demonstrating the value of experiential learning in preparing the next generation of agricultural leaders. ■



Congratulations Fall 2025 Graduates! >>>>>>>>>>>>>>>

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE DEGREES

Armani Carlisle	B.S., Agri-Business
Kiyle Gardner	B.S., Agri-Business
Preston Loggins	B.S., Agri-Business
Jeylan McGhee	B.S., Agri-Business
Bianca Morris	B.S., Agri-Business
Nia Stevenson	B.S., Agri-Business
Tanner Walker	B.S., Agri-Business
Asia Armour	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Temitha Burkett	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Davidson Cowles	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Xena Echevarria	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Aaron Francis	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
DeZhana Lewis	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Kahlia Martin	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Devin Reddish	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Aaron Richard	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Rennie Rivera	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Amaya Thompson	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Brandon Young	B.S., Agricultural Sciences

BIOLOGICAL & AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS ENGINEERING

Akinseye Iyanu B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Makailah Danzy B.S., Agricultural Sciences

CONCENTRATION IN FOOD SCIENCE

A'marie King	B.S., Food Science
Gabrielle Leahr	B.S., Food Science
Nana Ama Nsiah Ababio	B.S., Food Science
Ari Patterson	B.S., Food Science

MASTER OF SCIENCE DEGREES

Jacquez Daniels	M.S., Ag Sciences
Maya Mangle	M.S., Ag Sciences
Stanley Northe	M.S., Ag Sciences
Wesly Saintilus	M.S., Entomology
Shomar Bullen	M.S., Ag Sciences
Gopi Ananth K S	M.S., Ag Sciences
Katie Light	M.S., Ag Sciences

Congratulations Spring 2026 Graduates! >>>>>>>>>>>>

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE DEGREES

Mikelanj Ajinaku	B.S., Agri-Business
Brielle Elliott	B.S., Agri-Business
Daija Nickerson	B.S., Agri-Business
Jayden Woody	B.S., Agri-Business
Niyah Abreu	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Jalia Adams	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Jordyn Ash	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Kennedy Bonds	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Mykhael Cleveland	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Anthony Cordero	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Mitchell Edmond	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Janae Evans	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Aaliyah Fonville	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Reagan Frink	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Znya Gibson	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Demi Howard	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Aaliyah Hudson	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Britney Jean	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Bianca Jean-Felix	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Samiyah Lee	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Isaac Louis	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Niobe Mims	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Mariyah Moore	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Ashanti Nunes	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Khalfani Powell	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Paige Rice-Forde	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Jasmine Robinson	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Monica Sandy	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Alexa Santiago	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Jaila Simmons	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Laila Smith	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Jazmine Taylor	B.S., Agricultural Sciences
Alexandrea Toombs	B.S., Agricultural Sciences

CONCENTRATION IN FOOD SCIENCE

Neriah Lee	B.S., Food Science
Madison Williams	B.S., Food Science

MASTER OF SCIENCE DEGREES

Sandreika Laird	M.S., Agricultural Sciences
Keonjah Martin	M.S., Agricultural Sciences
Taylor St. Vilus	M.S., Agricultural Sciences
Samuel Fajana	M.S., Agricultural Sciences



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