

ARD UPdates

ASSOCIATION OF 1890 RESEARCH DIRECTORS

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DR. VERNON JONES

Message from the Chair

Dr. Vernon Jones

I am always grateful when the Thanksgiving season approaches because this festive occasion gives me another opportunity to appreciate and express my gratitude to all of those who I have worked with and have had a fruitful association. I wish each of you a Happy Thanksgiving, a holiday that is shared by Ameri-

cans regardless of religious faith or background, and allows us to focus on the many freedoms and blessings that we enjoy. Let's use our blessings to continue to enhance transformational research in the food, agricultural and environmental sciences. I'm thankful for the 19 research directors together with the associate directors who make up ARD. I want you to know how much I enjoy serving you and how fortunate I am to serve as the ARD Chair. You have inspired me to work hard. I am grateful for your practical and visionary leadership and for maintaining an enabling environment by always working to create the best conditions to support innovation in the research and education enterprises.

The recent convening event in Atlanta on Oct. 28-29, was an excellent case in point. Briefly, in anticipation of the 1890 Centers of Excellence RFA being released by NIFA (the RFA was released on Nov. 5), ARD, AEA (Association of Extension Administrators), the Council of 1890 Deans of Agriculture and the 1890 Universities Foundation hosted a convening event in Atlanta to begin organizing consortia of 1890 universities to identify interest in a particular center(s) and to formulate specific goals, objectives and project ideas.

The array of talented faculty and staff

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NIFA Director Angle provides updates

I wanted to provide an update on our efforts regarding the Plan of Work (POW) integration project. This is a fresh start and new opportunities present themselves for ensuring that this is a collaborative effort. I appreciate your patience during the transition and look forward to working with everyone to ensure the continued success of this project.

The integration project results from a set of recommendations to NIFA from the Plan of Work Panel of Experts, convened in 2015 (for the full report, see [Panel of Experts Final Report](#)). NIFA agreed to streamline the Plan of Work reporting process and work toward one reporting system by integrating the Plan of Work into REEport. The agency also agreed to reduce the reporting burden for stakeholders and the reviewing burden for NIFA's National Program Leaders (NPL).

In early 2019, we launched a new Plan of Work platform, the "Institutional Profile," that LGUs used to submit their 2020 Plans. Based on feedback from LGUs and NIFA's NPLs, the level of effort needed to compile and review the reports was greatly reduced. Over the next few months, we will extend the Institutional Profile to include capacity-funded research projects, completing this first phase. We will notify users well in advance of this change and provide webinars and technical assistance to collect feedback and ease the transition.

Phase Two will focus on building out the reporting system for Extension projects and organizing for the next Panel of Experts. Over the next few months, the team will reconvene the Extension work groups to assist with the design and testing of the Extension module. Michael Litwack and Lynn Khadiagala will be the point people on these efforts and work with you to design a better reporting system. They will provide more information on these efforts shortly.

Concurrent to all of this was a simplified plan of work requirement in the 2018 Farm Bill. To help achieve this, I will be convening the next Panel of Experts soon, as early as possible in the coming months. The hope is that any new changes you suggest can be incorporated into changes under way. More on this shortly.

This has always been a collaborative endeavor. With your engage-

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Ag. Secretary Perdue visits TSU and SCSU

Ag. Secretary Sonny Perdue recently visited TSU to learn about the innovative research happening at the College of Agriculture, meet the USDA 1890s student scholars and motivate students to invest in themselves.

During his visit, Perdue had breakfast with TSU President Dr. Glenda Glover, Dr. Chandra Reddy, dean of the College of Agriculture, and eight USDA scholars, and toured the research labs in the Biotechnology Building stopping to talk to professors and students about their research.

Perdue listened carefully and asked pointed questions about some of the research the college is engaged, including a new program which is studying the properties of hemp and CBD oils.

Dr. Reddy expressed his pleasure with the visit and was proud to promote the college's research.

"This is awesome, because USDA supports a number of USDA scholars for us, and research and extension facilities at TSU," said Reddy. "This is an opportunity for the secretary to see firsthand how we are stewarding those resources they are providing."

Perdue, who grew up on a farm and became a veterinarian, spoke to an audience of 200 students, staff and faculty about his path to the No. 1 policy position within the USDA.

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ment, we will continue to work toward a streamlined system that collects essential data while reducing the reporting burden on our stakeholders.

Thank you again for your patience. I look forward to working with all of you as NIFA undertakes these important projects.

MAGILL NAMED ACTING DIRECTOR

Robert Magill will serve as the acting deputy director for the Office of

Grants and Financial Management. Magill has been with the ARS since Oct. 2001 and has served as the Research, Education, and Economics chief financial officer since Nov. 2012. He also serves as the director of the Financial Management and Agreements Division within ARS. Magill has worked closely with OGFM over the years and looks forward to assisting OGFM through the transition period

NATIONAL SCIENCE LIAISONS

NIFA's program portfolio and contact with stakeholders, partners, and collaborators will continue, uninterrupted, in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. This important function will be led by six science professionals, National Science Liaisons (NSLs), who will support the agency's national research, education, and extension portfolio; advance NIFA programs; and serve as expert resources. Go [here](#) for biographies and contact links.

"As a student at TSU, you have plenty of reason to take pride in the school you have chosen because literally, what's happening on the ground here and what you all are participating in is the building of knowledge and the building of solu-

tions for our future right here at TSU," Perdue said. "I believe that you folks sitting here could be the next heroes of solutions for the things that really plague us whether they are biotechnical issues or pharmaceutical issues or antibiotic issues or crop production issues or food safety."

Time was given for students to ask questions of the U.S. Secretary. Braxton Simpson, who has strong experience in Student Government and is majoring in agriculture and environmental sciences with a concentration in agribusiness wanted to know how Perdue migrated from veterinary practice to shaping agricultural policy.

Using an acronym based on his position and name, the U.S. Secretary told the students to "stand," be "steadfast," and "persevere (SSP)."

"As you stand, as you're steadfast to your vision, and persevere for the next cause, I know that you'll be successful," Perdue said. "TSU has invested in you, USDA has invested in you, now I want you to invest in you"



Above, Perdue, TSU President Glenda Glover, and College of Agriculture Dean Chandra Reddy. (Photo by Erynne Davis, TSU Media Relations). Below, Dr. Louis Whitesides, executive director of the SCSU 1890 Research and Extension Program, with Perdue. [See SCSU story here.](#)



Gene technology can boost agriculture on reclaimed surface coal mine land

Dr. Sanju A. Sanjaya, at WVSU is on a mission to leverage advances in plant biotechnology to revive West Virginia's economy.

His team at the WVSU Energy and Environmental Science Institute is using CRISPR/Cas9 gene-editing to alter a plant's genetic makeup to make it grow well on mountainous terrain, in poor soil (think reclaimed coal mine land), and even under drought conditions—while at the same time producing increased amounts of oil.

According to Sanjaya, using the proven CRISPR/Cas9 method will accelerate the path from basic discoveries made in his lab to commercial applications in crops. This acceleration is due partly to the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's lack of regulation of mutation-derived (e.g., knockout) traits generated via gene editing.

Sanjaya's mission includes workforce development: in the wake of the downturn in the energy industry, former coal miners and other out-of-work West Virginians can be retrained to take part in a new and potentially lucrative agricultural and bioenergy industry.

Another major focus of Sanjaya's research is using photosynthetic organisms to remove toxic compounds from wastewater produced during the electric power generation process. He believes this research holds significant potential for agriculture—and for the environment—in West Virginia and throughout the Appalachian region.

To support his research on seed storage compounds and bioenergy, Sanjaya has won grants valued at over \$2 million from the National Science Foundation, the Department of Defense, the Department of Energy and the USDA.

He also has local and regional support in place to turn



DR. SANJU A. SANJAYA

his basic and translational research into economic opportunity. WVSU hired Sanjaya to design and direct the university's Energy and Environmental Science Institute, where the focus is on enhancing the bioenergy, nutritional value, industrial compounds and phytoremediation of plants using genetic and molecular techniques. Support for the creation of the institute and Sanjaya's position came from corporate partners such as American Electric Power and the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission's Division of Science and Research.

In addition to leading the Institute, Sanjaya is a member of the WVSUBiology Department faculty. He is a named inventor on three issued U.S. patents, and he has shared his research outcomes in numerous peer-reviewed journals. Sanjaya earned his Ph.D. in applied botany from the University of Mysore, and prior to joining the WVSU faculty in 2014, pursued his research in bioenergy and biotechnology at several prestigious institutions across the globe.

In addition to leading a cutting-edge research program, Sanjaya enjoys teaching, mentoring and inspiring a diverse group of WVSU undergraduate, graduate and postdoc students.

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on our campuses is impressive. Seventy-six 1890 faculty and administrators, representing 18 universities, participated. I was impressed by the rich and active discussion, the thoughtful and innovative ideas and approaches and the cross-sector sharing of thoughts, viewpoints and priorities. I want to personally thank the participants in this convening event for the awesome work that will make a difference in the lives of our students and stakeholders.

The 1890 community of thought-leaders must continue to 'convene' face-to-face in a pre-competitive workspace to propose and vet ideas, initiatives and programs that will not only foster collaboration and multi-state projects, but will also make positive contributions to the perplexing problems confronting the people and communities in the 1890 region.

This past year has not been easy, but you all have contended with the demands before us and emerged with flying

colors. You have concentrated on moving ARD ahead instead of lamenting over the numerous challenges. You have worked well to support the 1890 research and education enterprises and help them grow and remain relevant.

I wish you and your families the blessings of health, happiness and success during the wonderful occasion of Thanksgiving. Again, I am grateful for your unending support that has helped ARD promote collaborative learning, discovery and engagement through the integrative threads of rural prosperity, economic development, globalization and sustainability. I am also thankful for the support, counsel and insight of our Executive Director, Dr. Alton Thompson. ARD is an awesome team. It is a joy for me to work with such dedicated and talented directors who have added value to the research enterprise in food and agriculture.

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1890 Land Grant Universities

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[West Virginia State University](#)

ARD Updates is published monthly by the Association of Research Directors. To suggest articles, contact Dr. Alton Thompson at athompson1@ncat.edu

ARD CALENDAR



APLU ANNUAL MEETING – Nov. 10-12, 2019 – San Diego, CA, Hilton San Diego Bayfront [Register today.](#)

The theme of the 2019 APLU Annual Meeting is *In Service*. The meeting session will examine how public universities can better serve their students, communities and country at a time when their work is more essential than ever. The meeting will also mark the 100th anniversary of Veterans Day and include a celebration of the veterans who have left an indelible mark on the institutions where they study and work. In addition, this year marks the 25th anniversary of the 1994 Morrill Act and certain sessions will honor the contributions of the 1994 land-grant institutions.

2019 NEW ADMINISTRATORS' ORIENTATION, Tuesday, Dec. 10 beginning at 2 p.m. and wrapping up on Thursday, Dec. 12 at 11 a.m.

This workshop is designed for individuals on the Board on Agriculture Assembly and their supporting administrators or faculty and USDA-NIFA personnel who have entered an administrative position since 2017 and any others who would like to learn more about APLU, the Land-Grant University System, BAA and USDA-NIFA. Information presented will be particularly useful to administrative heads, directors, associate/assistant directors and USDA-NIFA national program leaders and administrators. To learn more about this event [please click](#) here .

2020 JOINT AEA/ARD WINTER MEETING

Jan. 21-24, 2020, Westin Georgetown Hotel 2350 M. St., NW, Washington, D.C.

Reservation Process: A block of rooms has been reserved under the name of "AEA/ARD Joint Winter Meeting 2020." To make reservations, call 1888-627-8406 or online at:

[Book your group rate for AEA/ARD JOINT WINTER MEETING JAN 2020.](#)

The rate is \$184 per night plus a 14.95% tax per night. This rate will not be available after this date. The rate includes complimentary in-room internet access. For those persons who need to arrive early, there are some rooms available on Monday, Jan. 20, 2020. The cut-off date for the established room rate is Friday, Jan. 3, 2020. If you plan attend the meeting [register here](#).

USDA's 96th Annual Agricultural Outlook Forum
The Innovation Imperative: Shaping the Future of Agriculture
February 20-21, 2020 • Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel, Arlington, Virginia

2020 AGRICULTURAL OUTLOOK FORUM

Feb. 20-21, 2020, Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel, Arlington, VA

Registration is now open for the 96th annual Agricultural Outlook Forum (AOF), the largest annual meeting and premiere event of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The 2020 Forum, themed "The Innovation Imperative: Shaping the Future of Agriculture," will feature more than 30 sessions covering topics such as innovations in agriculture, global trade trends, food loss and waste, frontiers in conservation and the science of food safety. In addition, USDA chief economist will unveil the department's outlook for U.S. commodity markets and trade in 2020 and discuss U.S. farm income situation.

An exhibit hall will showcase resources from USDA agencies and private organizations.

As part of the Forum, USDA offers a pre-forum field trip for early arrivals. The 2020 pre-forum trip will focus on urban agriculture. It will feature a local urban farm enterprise and a visit with scientists who conduct research on microgreens, locally adapted fruit varieties and other urban farming topics at USDA Beltsville Agricultural Research Center. A nominal fee covers transportation and a boxed lunch.

Click on [this link](#) to register, reserve discounted room rates, join the pre-forum field trip, or apply for the USDA Future Leaders in Agriculture Program.

2020 AEA SYSTEMWIDE CONFERENCE

June 21-25, 2020, Renaissance Orlando at SeaWorld, Orlando, FL

The conference's goal is to provide a forum for Extension educators, specialists, administrators, research professionals, public and private partners to learn, share innovative ideas, best practices and explore collaboration opportunities for advancing impact-driven extension programs in the 1890 Extension System. Professional development workshops, exhibits and presentations on innovations and best practices will dominate the three-day conference.

