

# ARD Updates

ASSOCIATION OF 1890 RESEARCH DIRECTORS

August 2023, Vol. 14, Issue 8

## Message from the Chair DR. LOUIS WHITESIDES



Dear Friends and Colleagues:  
With multiple farm bill proposals being drafted, the land-grant system is in a critical period for influencing the appropriation of programs and other items for inclusion in the first drafts of the 2023 Farm Bill. As mentioned last month, the research directors, along with 1890 Deans of Agriculture and 1890 Extension administrators, have strategically partnered to communicate

to our policymakers and their staffers at the federal and state levels on major 1890 programs, research infrastructure and needed resources relative to the farm bill and FY 2024 and FY 2025 federal appropriations. I am thankful for the joint advocacy efforts of our directors thus far, and I encourage each of you to remain steadfast advocates.

We are in the final stage of the farm bill 'input' process. Currently, marker bills for many farm bill authorization amendments, reauthorizations and new programs were introduced late last month and were circulated in both chambers. Now, agriculture committee staff are busy this month preparing the farm bill's first drafts (one for the Senate and one for the House). While the first drafts are not the last opportunity for policy proposals to appear in the final farm bill, it is *far better* for our priorities to be included in the initial draft so that they do not have to be added as amendments later.

With the House now in recess and members heading to their home states and districts, now is an opportune time to reach out to representatives and senators to advocate for concrete support on farm bill priorities and agriculture research facilities at our institutions. Please take the appropriate steps to ensure that you coordinate with your governmental affairs or appropriate administration personnel at your respective institutions. To

1890s

*Celebrating 133 Years*

process. Currently, marker bills for many farm bill authorization amendments, reauthorizations and new programs were introduced late last month and were circulated in both chambers. Now, agriculture committee staff are busy this month preparing the farm bill's first drafts (one for the Senate and one for the House). While the first drafts are not the last opportunity for policy proposals to appear in the final farm bill, it is *far better* for our priorities to be included in the initial draft so that they do not have to be added as amendments later.

## Torres Small sworn in as deputy secretary

Xochitl Torres Small has been sworn in as the USDA Rural Development's deputy secretary, making her the first Latina and second woman of color to hold the No. 2 spot at the agency.

The former New Mexico congresswoman was tapped by President Biden in 2021 to serve as undersecretary for rural development at USDA, the branch of the department that oversees infrastructure, utilities and healthcare across rural communities. Now in a higher-ranking position, she takes on the role as the administration, and Democrats are looking to strengthen their footprints in rural areas.



DR. XOCHITL TORRES SMALL

"To get to be deputy secretary and in charge of the backend of the shop is really exciting because we impact people's lives in so many ways," Torres Small told NPR ahead of her swearing-in ceremony at the USDA headquarters in Washington, D.C. "I'm the granddaughter of farm workers, and of course, that's a way that it has impacted my life. But my parents were educators. And when it comes to thinking about the kids they're teaching, making sure that those kids have healthy, nutritious food to help them learn is crucial."

Torres Small has been promoted when the department is undergoing changes to address [historical discrimination across its lending](#) and other programs. Late last year, the [department began making payments on loan cancellations](#) for some farmers and providing them before Jan. 2021.

"One of my favorite things about serving as undersecretary at rural development was that rural America is a lot of different things and a lot of different places, and it's incredibly diverse," Torres Small told NPR. "Yes, it's a farmer on a tractor, and it's also a rural [fishing village] in Alaska and it's also Indian country."

Some of these responsibilities now fall on Torres Small, including looming department staffing shortages. Torres Small has previously raised concerns that nearly half of the employees she oversaw in [rural development were eligible to retire](#), even as demands for the agency have increased — a concern she carries into

See Whitesides on Page 3

See Torres Small on Page 6

Visit us online at [www.umes.edu/ard](http://www.umes.edu/ard)





Congress approved the Evans-Allen Act of 1977 to provide capacity funding for food and agricultural research at the 1890 land-grant universities and Tuskegee University (the 1890 Institutions) similar to that provided to the 1862 universities under the Hatch Act of 1887. Research conducted under the Evans-Allen Program has led to hundreds of scientific breakthroughs of benefit to both the unique stakeholders of the 1890 institutions and the nation as a whole. The Evans-Allen Program has been extremely important in allowing the 1890 institutions to attract top-notch scientists to their campuses, conduct high-quality and innovative research and become more fully integrated within the land-grant system.

Below is an example of impacts from the 1890 research program submitted by scientists at Virginia and West Virginia State universities.

### Early research shows essential oils may improve fruit shelf life

Several methods have been studied to prolong the shelf life of strawberries. These include postharvest treatments and storage conditions, which have been shown to increase storability and firmness. Low-temperature storage and application of fungicides are

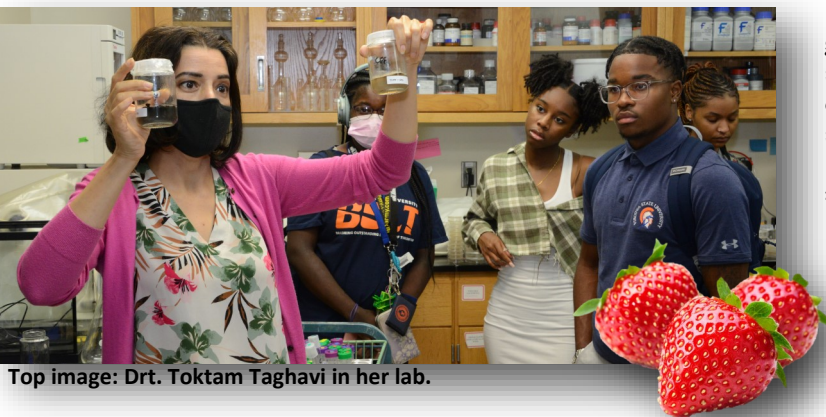
various potentially beneficial plants, is one method being studied. Essential oils have been produced and used mainly for medicinal purposes, but with the antioxidants they possess; they are now being tested to prolong fruit storage.

Virginia State University researchers are examining the gene expression of several genes that regulate fruit firmness in essential oil-treated strawberries. Different essential strawberries treated with essential oils were compared with non-treated (control) strawberries.

Gene expression was measured at different points in time after exposure to essential oils. One type of gene involved in fruit firmness is pectin methylesterases or PME. PMEs play a critical role in cell wall remodeling in many physiological processes. The quantitative polymerase chain reaction (qPCR) results revealed that PMEs are differentially expressed across essential oil treatments and that expression is also affected differently at different points in time, be it two, four, six or eight days after incubation. At day six, an increase was observed in the expression of PME39 exposed to several essential oils.

The first year of the project is underway. Only one strawberry variety, 'AllStar', has been tested so far, so other varieties should also be subjected to the same essential oil treatments because different varieties may respond differently. Additionally, another round of qPCR analysis should be conducted to validate the initial qPCR results.

Want to know more? Contact [Dr. Toktam Taghani](#).



Top image: Dr. Toktam Taghani in her lab.

common practices to prolong the shelf life of fresh fruits. However, they can also cause undesirable sensory and nutritional changes. Other post-harvest technologies, such as treatment with 1-methylcyclopropene, ultraviolet light and chitosan, have been studied to prolong the shelf life of strawberries but are genotype-dependent with limited efficiency and costly.

Overall, food safety and fruit quality are the major concerns for consumers, with many people especially concerned about chemical residues on fresh produce. Consequently, safer alternatives are being studied and developed. Using essential oils extracted from

### Grafting watermelon with bottle gourd rootstock improved fruit quality

Watermelons are a popular dessert fruit enjoyed across the United States. However, they are highly susceptible to soil-borne diseases like Fusarium Wilt (FW), a major concern for farmers and consumers alike, as these diseases can significantly impact the yield and quality of the fruit. In addition, there are concerns about heavy metal contamination in watermelons, particularly in areas with a mining history, such as West Virginia. Heavy metals can enter the plant and accumulate in the edible fruit, posing a risk to human health, including causing various forms of cancer.

To investigate this issue, West Virginia State University researchers Dr. Umesh K. Reddy and Dr. Padma Nimmakayala and their colleagues conducted a recent study to uncover the molecular mechanisms involved in different tissues of heterografted watermelon over bottle gourd plants.

The results showed that grafting with bottle gourd rootstock increased watermelon fruits' size and rind thickness. Furthermore, grafting has been shown to have other benefits for watermelon plants, such as improvement of fruit size, flesh quality and sweetness. Additionally, grafting with a rootstock produced watermelon fruits with higher total soluble solids and thinner rinds. The study also revealed that genes related to ripening, softening, cell wall

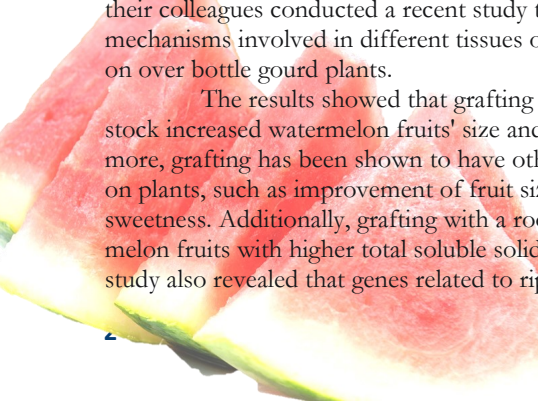
strengthening, stress response and disease resistance were expressed differently in watermelon fruits, depending on the rootstock used.

This research proved that grafting watermelon onto *Lagenaria*, a type of gourd, butternut squash or pumpkin, can help reduce the risk of FW and heavy metals, preventing them from entering the plant. It also shows how epigenetic changes can help watermelons withstand diseases when grafted.

In conclusion, grafting has proven to be a sustainable alternative for growing watermelon in fungus-infected soils. With the help of this study, scientists now have a better understanding of the molecular mechanisms involved in grafting.

(NOTE: This research is supported by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture's Exploring Wild Germplasm for Introgression and Grafting to Combat Biotic and Abiotic Stress for Watermelon project, grant #2021-38821-34598. The USDA has not formally disseminated the findings and conclusions in this preliminary study and should not be construed to represent any agency determination or policy).

For more information, contact **Dr. Umesh Reddy**, West Virginia State University Agricultural and Environmental Research Station, at [ureddy@wvstateu.edu](mailto:ureddy@wvstateu.edu)



# After USDA stint, Bronaugh returns home to Virginia State

Dr. Jewel Bronaugh, former USDA deputy secretary, has returned to Virginia State University (VSU) after five years to assume the role of senior advisor to the dean for land-grant initiatives at the College of Agriculture.

Bronaugh's homecoming signifies a pivotal moment for the university as she leverages her immense expertise to advance the strategic goals of strengthening partnerships and cultivating the next generation of leaders by executing the vision of leading a new center of transformational leadership and community impact.

"I am excited for this new chapter at VSU's College of Agriculture," said Bronaugh. "Returning to VSU, where my leadership journey and career in agriculture began, is an incredibly gratifying 'full circle moment' for me.

Alongside Interim Dean

Robert N. Corley, III, and President Makola Abdullah, my vision for the Center of Transformational Leadership and Community Impact is to spearhead a transformative movement that empowers communities and cultivates the leaders of tomorrow, with the College of Agriculture paving the path towards excellence."

During her USDA tenure, she held a prominent leadership role overseeing a department comprising 29 agencies and a workforce of over 100,000 employees nationwide. Additionally, Bronaugh led international agricultural trade missions in the United Kingdom and East Africa, playing a vital role in strengthening export and trade relationships for U.S. farm businesses and organizations.

Her firsthand experience and knowledge of the domestic and international agricultural industry will be instrumental in her

new role. Bronaugh will draw upon this expertise to forge partnerships, facilitate collaborations and advance the strategic goals of the College of Agriculture. Her contributions will help guide the community transformation and change envisioned by the college.

"We are happy to have Dr. Bronaugh at the forefront of our efforts,"

said Corley.

"The Center for Transformational Leadership and Community Impact will be vital in cultivating

our communities' next generation of

leaders. By fostering innovation and embracing a community-focused approach, we are confident this center will shape a brighter future in our backyard."

Bronaugh's connection to VSU runs deep. Growing up in Petersburg, she began her agricultural journey as a 4-H Extension specialist with Virginia Cooperative Extension at VSU. She later served as the dean of the College of Agriculture for five years, overseeing Extension at VSU, the Agricultural Research Station and three academic departments.

As Dr. Bronaugh returns to her roots at VSU, the campus and the next generation of leaders eagerly anticipate her positive impact in shaping the future of agriculture and community development.



DR. JEWEL BRONAUGH

*"Returning to VSU... is an incredibly gratifying 'full circle moment' for me."  
Dr. Jewel Bronaugh*

## Whitesides . . . From page 1

provide support in this area, please anticipate receiving several "Calls to Action" to help you and your institution remain engaged with elected representatives.

As we pound the pavement to secure our future by ensuring that we collectively receive the necessary funding to continue our important work, we are nearing the period of our history in which we all can reflect on the significant contributions we have made to advance agricultural research, prepare a qualified workforce and improve quality of life through public service. On Aug. 30, the land-grant community will celebrate the 133rd Anniversary of the Morrill Act of 1890, which created the 19 1890 historically black land-grant universities.

The Second Morrill Act was successfully shepherded through Congress on Aug. 30, 1890, by then-U.S. Senator Justin Smith Morrill of Vermont.

Under the conditions of legal separation of the races in the South, African Americans were not permitted to attend the original land-grant institutions established by the Morrill Act of 1862. Although the Morrill Act of 1862 authorized "separate but equal" facilities, only Mississippi and Kentucky established institutions for African Americans under this law, only Alcorn State University was designated as a land-grant institution and only

Alcorn received land.

Our nation's 1890 land-grant universities are important in improving the critical teaching, research and Extension necessary to ensure American agriculture produces the safest, most abundant and affordable food supply and fiber worldwide. These universities, established initially to support the education of Black students, continue to bridge the gap in underserved communities, diversifying American agriculture and developing the pipeline of talented minds joining our food and agriculture workforce. As the industry takes on major challenges, investing in 1890 land-grant universities will be important to advance the leadership and competitiveness of the American food and agriculture industries.

During this month, the ARD membership reflects on the brilliance of the land-grant vision and mission. It will celebrate the 1890 land-grant universities' influential role in continuing the development of that vision and mission, particularly for low-income, underserved or marginalized individuals, families and communities. At the same time, the 1890s must be proactive in identifying ways in which we evolve and expand to meet future challenges.



A collection of news media releases shared by USDA and its multiple agencies.  
For complete stories, click on the various links.

## USDA ANNOUNCES \$33 MILLION TO SUPPORT CAPACITY BUILDING PROGRAM



The USDA has announced an investment of more than \$33 million to support capacity-building efforts at 1890 land-grant universities. This investment, administered through USDA's NIFA, will support 82 research, Extension and education projects across the nation's 19 historically black colleges and universities designated 1890 land-grant universities.

These projects are part of NIFA's 1890 Capacity Building Grants Program, designed to build capacity for teaching, research and Extension activities. Eligible institutions are receiving funding for a range of activities, including curriculum design, materials development, faculty development, student recruitment and retention and Extension program development support. Research investments will strengthen the quality and diversity of the nation's higher-education workforce, bolster research and knowledge delivery systems and equip 1890 land-grant universities with resources needed to address emerging challenges better and create new opportunities.

"The work these universities will take on as a result of this funding have ripple effects far beyond the walls of their laboratories and classrooms," said Agriculture Deputy Secretary Xochitl Torres Small. "Through this investment, the Biden-Harris administration is helping deliver real-life, applicable solutions to make our food system stronger while at the same time inspiring the next generation of students and scientists who will help us meet tomorrow's agricultural challenges."

Additionally, USDA welcomed 100 scholars earlier this month through the USDA/1890 National Scholars Program. This program provides full tuition, employment, employee benefits, fees, books and room and board each year for up to four years to selected students pursuing a bachelor's degree in agriculture, food science, natural resource science or a related academic discipline at one of 19 designated 1890 land-grant universities and Tuskegee University. These USDA/1890 National Scholars will be placed at USDA agencies and offices to encourage pathways for careers in agriculture, nutrition, food, development and at USDA.

[Read full story here.](#)

## DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION EXPANDS 1890 INFRASTRUCTURE FUNDING



The USDA launched two grant programs to expand research infrastructure in our nation's HBCUs, Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCCUs) and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) and to increase completion and retention rates among underserved students.

The grants, which will provide nearly \$100 million for transformational infrastructure investments and evidence-based strategies for improved student outcomes for underserved students, follow more than \$25 billion in funding to HBCUs, MSIs and TCCUs through the department since President Biden took office.

Specifically, this consists of \$7.3 billion in cumulative investments for 98 HBCUs, \$474.5 million to 35 TCCUs and \$18.1 billion to support MSIs.

"At a time when diversity in higher education is under attack, it's never been more important to invest in our nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Minority-Serving Institutions, community colleges, and other inclusive institutions," said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona. "These grant programs represent opportunities for our nation's most inclusive and diverse colleges and universities to expand their capacity to drive research and innovation and strengthen evidence-based support to help underserved students complete their degrees and build brighter futures. The Biden-Harris Administration will continue working to raise the bar for excellence and equity in higher education and invest in institutions committed to helping students of all backgrounds and income levels reach their potential and pursue their dreams."

[Read full story here.](#)

## FIRST TRANSDISCIPLINARY WEBINAR SLATED



The first webinar in the Transdisciplinary Approaches webinar series, [Transdisciplinary Approaches: What They Are and Why They're Important](#), will examine what transdisciplinary approaches are and why

they matter. The session will be held on Aug. 30, at Noon EDT. Participants will hear from researchers engaged with transdisciplinary work, institutions that support research that transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries, and funding opportunities for transdisciplinary programs.

**The speakers are:** Alison Meadow, associate research professor in the Office of Societal Impact at the University of Arizona. Meadow; Dan Ferguson, director of the [Climate Assessment for the Southwest \(CLIMAS\)](#) program and assistant professor of Environmental Science at the University of Arizona; Doug Steele, Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU); and Amy Ganguli, national program leader within the Institute of Bioenergy, Climate, and Environment, providing leadership for sustainable agroecosystem management.

[Read the full announcement here.](#) [Register here.](#)

## USDA ACCEPTS APPLICATIONS FOR FARMERS WHO EXPERIENCED DISCRIMINATION



The USDA announces the opening of the financial assistance application process for eligible farmers, ranchers, and forest landowners who experienced discrimination in USDA farm lending programs prior to January 2021. Section 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) directs

USDA to provide this assistance. Since the law's passage, USDA has worked diligently to design the program in accordance with significant stakeholder input.

[Read the full story here.](#)

## Tuskegee uses \$5 million grant to enhance meat and poultry processing

Tuskegee University College of Agriculture, Environment and Nutrition Sciences (CAENS) is part of the USDA's Meat and Poultry Processing Capacity- Technical Assistance Program (MPPTA), which ensures that participants in USDA's Meat and Poultry Supply Chain initiatives have access to full-range technical assistance (TA) to support their project development and success.

According to the USDA, these supply chain initiatives--including the Meat and Poultry Inspection Readiness Grant (MPIRG) Program and the Meat and Poultry Processing Expansion Program (MPPEP), the Local Meat Capacity Grant (LocalMCap) and the Indigenous Animals Grant (IAG) – support the growth of domestic processing capacity and the ability of independent facilities to serve more customers in more markets.

Veronica Royal, MBA, TU MPPTA project manager/coordinator stated how much of the \$25 million the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) invested to establish a nationwide MPPTA network.

“We were awarded \$5,000,000 to assist with the Meat Poultry Processing technical assistance program (MPPTA) here at Tuskegee,” said Royal. “And we have a complete team, which includes: Dr. Olga Bolden-Tiller, Dr. Derris D. Burnett, Dr. Clarissa Harris, Dr. Ellene Kebede, Dr. Youssouf Diabate, Mrs. Kalyanna Williams, Mr. Miles Robinson and myself, Ms. Veronica Royal.”

CAENS four scopes of technical assistance are:

- **Federal Funding:** consists of processes and procedures, from pre-award applications processes through post-award grant management compliance;
- **Agricultural Business Development:** consists of financial planning, business and financial planning resources, market intelligence and project/concept feasibility analyses;
- **Meat and Poultry Processing:** consists of advice and resources to support the operational needs – including workforce development – of processing plant development and use; and
- **Supply Chain Development:** consists of support for developing and maintaining successful supply chain and marketing relationships—between suppliers, processors, distributors and customers.

The scopes are part of the USDA's mission to assist as many diverse stakeholders –

including family-owned, rural, minority-owned, Native American and Tribal-owned businesses and other underserved entities – seeking to build or expand meat and poultry processing and supply chain capacity to receive assistance through the MPPTA network.

They also focus on one-on-one advising, including project and proposal reviews tailored to the specific needs of diverse stakeholders, from small and very small processors and new enterprise startups to organizations developing regional concepts and estab-

lished mid-sized processing companies.

Due to consolidation, the meat packing and processing industry has left the U.S. meat supply vulnerable to sporadic and unforeseen disruptions that impact the availability and pricing of meat products for consumers. U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack said the recent pandemic and other supply chain issues have exposed “a food system that was rigid, consolidated, and fragile.”

Therefore, the Biden-Harris administration appropriated \$1 billion to expand meat and poultry processing capacity so that farmers, ranchers and consumers have more choices in the marketplace. To meet the critical need to build the future meat production and processing pipeline, the USDA will provide technical assistance and training to build a capable workforce to innovate and operate the supply chain and ensure the success of these marketing outlets. As these new and retrofitted facilities come online, Tuskegee University will serve a pivotal role in training this new workforce and remaining at the cutting edge of research to ensure the success of these operations.

In addition to providing training and assistance programs through the four technical support initiatives, Tuskegee University will provide a critical need in the meat production and processing industry. In late 2019, CAENS started the construction of the meat and poultry processing building, but due to COVID-19 campus was interrupted by shutdowns, campus closures and supply chain disruptions during 2020 and 2021. Initially, it was expected to take about 24 months to complete, but now construction is ex-



Illustration image.

pected to restart this year and be completed in 2024.

Recently, Emma Johnston, legislative assistant to Sen. Tommy Tuberville (R-AL), requested a tour of Tuskegee University, where she met with Dr. Olga Bolden-Tiller, dean of the CAENS, and her team for the tour. The tour came after a listening session held by Congressman Roger Moore with Alabama farmers and ranchers. In the listening meeting, some of the ranchers expressed their concerns about not having the accessibility to get to meat processing facilities.

During the tour, Johnston visited the meat and poultry processing building at TU and offered to provide additional funding to TU to complete the building because of all the benefits it can offer to the ranchers and farmers in Alabama and surrounding states.

The MPPTA program primarily addresses the needs of the participants in the Alabama Black Belt Region and throughout the greater Southeastern U.S. Specifically, the states are Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, Louisiana, Arkansas and West Virginia, and other 1890 land-grant institution (LGI) states, including Texas, Ohio, Missouri, Delaware and Oklahoma.

For more information about the program and to participate, contact Veronica Royal, MBA, TU MPPTA Project Manager/Coordinator at [MPPTAinfo@Tuskegee.edu](mailto:MPPTAinfo@Tuskegee.edu).

## Langston launches new master's program

Langston University Sherman Lewis School of Agriculture and Applied *Sciences* has launched a master of science program in 'Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security' that will begin in fall 2023.

The new graduate program will give the university a unique opportunity to provide the next generation of leaders and practitioners with in-depth interdisciplinary training in sustainable agriculture from production through consumption. The program will capture and train more professionals from all socioeconomic circumstances in an age when the global food and agriculture systems have become complex and continue to evolve rapidly.

Dr. Wesley L. Whittaker, dean and director of land-grant programs, said, "The program caters to all qualified students and will be a fertile ground for advanced training of talented underserved populations. The new Langston University MS program will broadly boost the land-grant mission of academics, research, Cooperative Extension and public service and fill the critical void of additional new work-ready college masters graduates in agriculture and related areas."

For more information, contact **Dr. Wesley L. Whittaker** at [whwhittaker@langston.edu](mailto:whwhittaker@langston.edu) or (405) 466-6155.

## Torres Small . . . From Page 1

her larger position.

"One of the things I would lose sleep over at rural development was the percentage of our employees who are eligible to retire in this fiscal year," she said. "I'm excited to delve into that work and make sure that we are looking towards the future when it comes to succession planning."

Torres Small served in the House from 2019 to 2021 after winning an open seat race in New Mexico's 2nd Congressional District held by Republican Steve Pearce since 2011. But Torres Small, a Congressional Hispanic Caucus member, lost the seat the following cycle in 2021. That district has since swung between Republican and Democratic control.

She is also promoted as farmers, food advocates and lawmakers are gearing up for the renewal of a farm bill. The 2018 bill expires on Sept. 30, and Torres Small assured lawmakers during her confirmation hearing that the views of farmers and stakeholders would be communicated from the department.



Wilberforce Twinamatsiko



Malcolm Bilal

## Two 1890 students nab Kirchner Fellowships

Two of the three students selected for the 2023-2024 Kirchner Fellowship HBCU cohort represent 1890s land-grant universities. The fellowship is part of a \$1 million collaboration between the [Kirchner Impact Foundation](#) and the [Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research](#) (FFAR) over five years to increase diversity within the venture capital industry by training HBCU students to become agriculture technology venture capitalists. Kirchner HBCU fellows invest capital in early-stage food and agriculture companies applying ground-breaking technologies to provide sustainable solutions to address global food challenges.

Students selected from 1890s institutions include:

- **Malcolm Bilal**, North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University - Bilal is pursuing a bachelor's degree in computer science. He has interned at Fifth Third Bank's Decision Sciences Group and Enterprise Data Office and at Beacon Partners commercial real estate agency. He also previously worked for the student-run hedge fund BLK Capital Management. "I was interested in joining this program because it provided me with the unprecedented opportunity as an undergraduate student to have full discretion over the investment of real capital that could potentially have a positive impact on lives all around the globe," added Bilal. "Having this large amount of responsibility may be daunting to some, but for me working in that area of unfamiliarity is where I will be able to experience the most growth both personally and professionally."
- **Wilberforce Twinamatsiko**, University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff - Twinamatsiko is pursuing a master's in computer science and technology. He is researching food and nutrition education and empowerment in local underserved communities. He has worked as a drug manufacturing quality analyst and has been involved in United Nations Populations Fund and World Bank public health projects. "Coming from a non-business background, at the same time being interested in entrepreneurship and innovation, this fellowship is a great opportunity for me to get exposure and training in the investment and business world," said Twinamatsiko.
- The third student is **Zaire Dartz**, *Morgan State University*.

"We are pleased to continue our five-year partnership with the Kirchner Impact Foundation, which supports FFAR's mission to invest in scientific workforce development and address big food and agriculture challenges," said Dr. LaKisha Odom, FFAR scientific program director for Soil Health. "We're particularly excited that this opportunity focuses on HBCU students to build exposure to and diversity and inclusion in the industry."

"The third year of our program introduces an incredibly talented group of fellows attending HBCUs nationwide. These new collaborations allow us to expand our reach and engage with diverse institutions," stated Hattie Brown, Kirchner Impact Foundation co-manager. "This is extremely important given the unfolding events around diversity, equity and inclusion in the higher education system in the U.S. and the significance of HBCUs in this environment."

The Kirchner Fellowship HBCU program is made possible through the support of the [Kirchner Group](#), a leading values-based traditional merchant bank and partners such as the [Foundation for Food & Agriculture Research](#) and [Burrroughs-Wellcome Fund](#), as well as individual donors.



## ARD OFFICERS

**Louis Whitesides**  
(Chair)

South Carolina State University  
Email: [lwhitesides@scsu.edu](mailto:lwhitesides@scsu.edu)

**Mohamed Ahmedna**  
(Chair-Elect)

N.C. A&T State University  
Email: [ahmedna@ncat.edu](mailto:ahmedna@ncat.edu)

**Ami M. Smith**  
(Secretary)

West Virginia State University  
Email: [smitham@wvstateu.edu](mailto:smitham@wvstateu.edu)

**Jose Ulises Toledo (Treasurer)**

Southern University  
Email: [jose\\_toledo@suagcenter.com](mailto:jose_toledo@suagcenter.com)

**Olga Bolden-Tiller**  
(Member-at-Large)

Tuskegee University  
Email: [oboldentiller@tuskegee.edu](mailto:oboldentiller@tuskegee.edu)

**Chandra Reddy**  
(Immediate Past Chair)

Tennessee State University  
Email: [creddy@tnstate.edu](mailto:creddy@tnstate.edu)

### Non-Elected

**Alton Thompson (Exec. Director)**

Email: [athompson1@ncat.edu](mailto:athompson1@ncat.edu)

**Lisa Williamson (Exec. Asst.)**

Email: [lmwilliamson1@ncat.edu](mailto:lmwilliamson1@ncat.edu)

### 1890 Land Grant Universities

- [Alabama A&M University](#)
- [Alcorn State University](#)
- [Central State University](#)
- [Delaware State University](#)
- [Florida A&M University](#)
- [Fort Valley State University](#)
- [Kentucky State University](#)
- [Langston University](#)
- [Lincoln University](#)
- [North Carolina A&T State University](#)
- [Prairie View A&M University](#)
- [South Carolina State University](#)
- [Southern University and A&M College](#)
- [Tennessee State University](#)
- [Tuskegee University](#)
- [University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff](#)
- [University of Maryland Eastern Shore](#)
- [Virginia State University](#)
- [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](mailto:athompson1@ncat.edu)



## JOB OPPORTUNITIES

**UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EASTERN SHORE, School of Agriculture and Natural Resources.**

[Assistant or Associate Professor: Bioinformatics and/or Biostatistics](#)

[Assistant or Associate Professor: Precision Agriculture](#)

[Assistant Professor of Biology: Cell Biology/Immunotoxicology/ Metabolism](#)

[Assistant or Associate Professor: Fashion Merchandising and Textiles Program](#)

[Assistant or Associate Professor: Nutrition and Dietetics](#)

[Assistant Professor and Agribusiness /Resource Economist Specialist](#)

[Chair, Department of Agriculture Food Resources Science](#)

**PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY, College of Agriculture and Human Sciences**

[Research Associate Professor \(Ruminant Nutritional Physiology\) \(myworkdayjobs.com\)](#)

[Business Operations](#)

**UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT PINE BLUFF, School of Agriculture, Fisheries and Human**

[Dean/Director](#)

[Assistant Professor – Ag Economics](#)

[Assistant Professor – Ag Engineering](#)

[Assistant Professor – Animal Science](#)

[Extension Specialist III – Horticulturist](#)

[Extension Specialist II – Project/Program Manager/Communications Director – School of Agriculture,](#)

[Fisheries and Human Sciences](#)

**WEST VIRGINIA STATE UNIVERSITY, WVSU Research & Development Corporation, [Associ-](#)**

**PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY, College of Agricultural Sciences, [Senior Associate Dean](#)**

**FOUNDATION FOR FOOD & AGRICULTURE RESEARCH (FFAR), [Scientific Program Director](#), Next Generation Crops**

**USDA FOREST SERVICE, SOUTHERN RESEARCH STATION, [Research Economist](#) or [Research For-](#)  
[ester](#) to conduct research in in economics and policy focused on wildfire and other forest-based disturbances. This is a permanent, full time position at the GS-12 level or the GS-13 level.**



## CALENDAR

[agINNOVATION/ESS/SAES/ARD FALL MEETING](#) |

Sept, 24-25, Grand Rapids Michigan | Catalyzing Solutions to Climate Change Impacts on Food Security through Partnerships, Hosted by Michigan State University

[81ST ANNUAL PROFESSIONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS CONFERENCE](#) | Oct, 29-31, 2023, Renaissance Montgomery Hotel and Spa

[APLU ANNUAL MEETING](#) | "Innovation for Impact" | Nov. 12-14, Seattle, WA

**SAVE THE DATE**

**SEPTEMBER 21 – 23, 2023**

Planned events include:  
*All events will be held on campus, unless otherwise noted.*

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21**  
College of Agriculture and Family and Consumer Sciences Student Dinner

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 22**  
Farmers' Forum  
SC State 1890 Ag Partners Dinner  
Camp Harry E. Daniels, Elloree, SC | Invitation Only

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 23**  
College of Agriculture and Family and Consumer Sciences Alumni Breakfast  
Invitation Only  
Ag and Land-Grant Celebration Showcase  
SC State Bulldogs v. Citadel Bulldogs  
6:00 p.m. Kickoff

The full event schedule and other details are forthcoming.

Email [scstate1890@scsu.edu](mailto:scstate1890@scsu.edu) for more information.

**SC State**  
PUBLIC SERVICE & AGRICULTURE  
Innovate. Educate. Elevate.