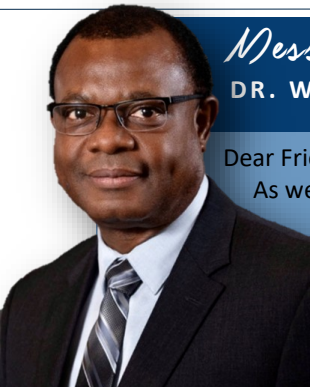




HAVE A MERRY CHRISTMAS & A HAPPY NEW YEAR

THE ASSOCIATION OF 1890 RESEARCH DIRECTORS

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Message from the Chair

DR. WESLEY WHITTAKER

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

As we stand on the threshold of the new year, I want to extend my warmest wishes of joy, peace and abundant happiness to each of you—during this holiday season and throughout the year ahead. May 2026 bring renewed vigor, meaningful opportunities and blessings that enrich your personal and professional lives.

DR. W. WHITTAKER

Looking forward, my utmost hope is that the unwavering support of ARD members will continue to guide and strengthen our collective efforts. Your dedication has been the cornerstone of our success, and I remain profoundly appreciative of the unity, resolve and shared purpose that define our community.

During this season of gratitude and reflection, I extend my sincere appreciation to all who contribute to ARD's work and impact: our dedicated members, exceptional researchers, steadfast supporters and advocates, devoted friends and the 1890 Universities Foundation. Each of you plays a vital role in advancing ARD's vision, mission, goals and values. Your tireless work not only elevates our universities but also empowers the people and communities we serve across the 1890 region.

Thank you for your leadership, your partnership, and your belief in the transformative power of our work. May the coming year be filled with purpose, progress and continued success for us all.

At the APLU Annual Meeting in Philadelphia, the 1890 Universities Foundation held its annual business meeting, which was well attended and highly engaging. The Foundation extends its sincere appreciation to APLU for its continued support and collaboration, which helps make these important gatherings possible. The meeting's primary focus centered on refining and strengthening our programs and initiatives to ensure alignment with the evolving landscape shaped by numerous recent Executive Orders. This work is essential as we position the Foundation and the broader 1890 community to respond proactively to national priorities and emerging opportunities

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Scott continues historic HBCU donations

Philanthropist and author MacKenzie Scott made a series of historic and often record-breaking contributions to HBCUs, including the 1890 land-grant universities. Individual institutions received between \$20 million and more than \$100 million, with over \$740 million total directed to HBCUs nationwide. These investments are one of the most significant philanthropic commitments in the history of higher education. Nearly 60% of this investment has been directed to nine 1890 land-grant universities.



MACKENZIE SCOTT

In addition to these direct gifts, Scott has made a substantial contribution to the United Negro College Fund (UNCF), an organization that supports the long-term financial stability of its 37-member private HBCUs. Through this support, Scott's giving extends beyond individual institutions to strengthen the broader ecosystem of historically Black higher education.

What distinguishes Scott's philanthropic approach is her emphasis on large, unrestricted grants. By providing institutions with flexible resources, she empowers them to address their unique needs and pursue innovative initiatives that drive meaningful change. Central to her strategy is a commitment to advancing equity and justice, investing in HBCUs that have long been underfunded and ensuring they have the capacity to cultivate opportunities, foster leadership and impact generations to come.

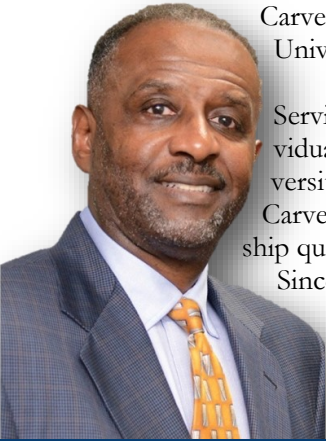
In short, Scott's gifts are not just large donations—they are **transformative investments** that empower the 1890 land-grant universities to innovate, grow and fulfill their mission of educating and uplifting individuals, families and communities within and beyond the 1890 footprint.



Visit us online at www.umes.edu/ard

McKinnie inducted into G. W. Carver Hall of Fame

Dr. M. Ray McKinnie, associate dean and administrator for Cooperative Extension in the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences at North Carolina A&T State University, was inducted into the George Washington Carver Public Service Hall of Fame at Tuskegee University on Nov. 18.



DR. M. RAY MCKINNIE

The George Washington Carver Public Service Hall of Fame is given annually to individuals affiliated with the 1890 land-grant universities over a career and who exemplify Carver's public service philosophy and leadership qualities.

Since 1979, McKinnie has been active in Extension and program development within the land-grant universities and 1890 universities systems. McKinnie's academic specialty is animal sciences with a major concentration in reproductive physiology and a minor in nutrition. His research has resulted in 17 Extension publications,

refereed and non-refereed journals and 65 abstracts, reports and conference presentations.

His Extension and research focus centered on the effects of nutrition, environment and management upon puberty, ovarian function and reproductive efficiency in swine, small ruminants and commercial rabbit production and management and the relevance of Cooperative Extension. McKinnie has been the principal investigator or co-principal investigator of projects totally more than \$22.6 million in extra-mural funds.

As associate dean and Extension administrator in the CAES for 13 years, McKinnie is a resource generator and in leading program development. He worked closely with many corporate executives and brought external corporate funding (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, Z. Smith Reynolds, Golden LEAF Foundation), Southern SARE, USDA/NIFA, Southern Rural Development Center and Farm Service Agency of approximately \$3.6 million to support the college.

Extension, as led by Dr. McKinnie, established itself as a participating partner to position N.C. to develop programs and initiatives that benefit the rural community, particularly those individuals and families who are low income, underserved or marginalized, to receive equitable funding and input into decision-making. Specifically, the Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS), Ways to Grow – Small Farmers Academy and the CAES Pavilion and Urban and Community Food Complex were established to advance environmentally sustainable farming practices and make a positive impact on rural communities, with a strong emphasis on supporting small-scale and socially disadvantaged farmers.

At the national level, McKinnie has served as a panelist and panel chair to evaluate the education portfolio of programs in the food and agricultural sciences in terms of relevance, quality and performance. Between 1991 and 2017, McKinnie evaluated over 100-plus grant proposals for the USDA/Cooperative Research, Education and Extension Service and Southern SARE.

McKinnie earned his bachelor's degree at N.C. A&T, a master's degree from The Ohio State University and a Ph.D. from North Carolina State University.

FSLI seeks new cohorts

FSLI is accepting applications for the next Cohort of Fellows. FSLI is designed for those currently serving as department heads or chairs (or equivalent titles) or higher and looking to advance their leadership skills and future career goals.



FSLI provides our Fellows with strategies to handle future leadership challenges and opportunities.

The experience develops or reinforces a series of core leadership competencies identified by a team of top-level leaders including university presidents and chancellors and leaders from industry and the non-profit sector who understand the requirements of food systems leadership. These professionals offer a wealth of understanding about leadership and the food system to help the Fellows better understand their leadership potential.

The two-year FSLI experience includes three week-long residential sessions, personal leadership coaching, mentoring, individual leadership projects, a personal development plan and distance learning activities.

[Apply here.](#)

APLU accepts award applications

APLU Food Systems annually recognizes a leader who has made an extraordinary impact on the food system through leadership and service and who exemplifies the core principles established by the Food Systems Leadership Institute (FSLI), including personal leadership, organizational leadership and food systems leadership. The award also recognizes the leadership, innovation, engagement and service that APLU promotes through its programs.

The APLU Food Systems Leadership Award will be presented at its annual meeting in November. The recipient will be invited to address the current cohort of FSLI Fellows during one of the webinar sessions.

The award's criteria, the directions for submitting it and the nomination form can be found on the [FSLI website](#). To get a sense of the caliber of the person who would be competitive for this award, you can visit the [FSLI website](#).

The deadline for submittal is Feb. 27, 2026. Don't hesitate to contact [Dr. Sarah Kotzian](#), FSLI program manager, with any questions.

LEAD21 seeks new groups of ag leaders

The LEAD21 program is accepting applications for the next group of leaders. Individuals from land-grant, NAR-RU institutions and USDA are encouraged to participate.

Program goals are for participants to:

- Enhance the application of skills and knowledge learned in four core leadership development areas (change, conflict, communication and collaboration).
- Develop a peer leadership network to enhance personal leadership practice, collaboration and diversity of per-

spective.

- Develop and implement an individual leadership development process.

Three on-site sessions will be held -

Session I: June 7-12, 2026, Chicago, IL; Session II: Oct. 5-8, 2026, Denver, CO and Session III: Feb. 22-26, 2027 – Atlanta, GA.

For more information and to apply online, the link is [here](#).



Whittaker . . . From Page 1

In addition, the meeting emphasized the importance of deepening our partnerships and expanding our engagement efforts as we navigate a growing number of programmatic investments within the 1890 ecosystem. These discussions underscored our ongoing commitment to strategic collaboration, enhanced capacity-building and sustained support for the 1890 Universities, their faculty, students and the communities they serve. Overall, the gathering reinforced the Foundation's dedication to advancing impactful initiatives and fostering strong, results-driven relationships that will continue to elevate the 1890 mission.

As highlighted in last month's edition of *ARD Updates*, Dr. Felicia M. Nave has officially succeeded Dr. Jewel Bronaugh as president and CEO of the 1890 Universities Foundation. During the annual business meeting, Nave delivered an exceptional, forward-looking presentation that sparked a robust and insightful dialogue among board members. Her remarks centered on strengthening the Foundation's funding base, enhancing its future relevance and expanding both its reach and impact within and beyond the 1890 community.

This dynamic discussion naturally evolved into a thoughtful examination of the Foundation's name and identity—what it conveys, whom it resonates with and how it might be refined to attract a broader and more diverse array of funders, partners and supporters. Board members engaged deeply on how best to preserve the Foundation's core purpose while positioning it for expanded opportunities in a rapidly changing landscape.

What emerged was a shared commitment: to maintain the Foundation's clear and unwavering focus on supporting the 1890 Universities and their mission, while thoughtfully widening the aperture to strengthen access, relevance and participation. This balanced approach will ensure that the Foundation remains rooted in its heritage while boldly embracing strategic evolution that amplifies its impact for years to come.

In alignment with Nave's leadership, Dr. Ericke S.

Cage—president of West Virginia State University, newly elected chair of APLU's Council of 1890 University Presidents and Board Chair of the Foundation—expressed his full support for the Foundation's new direction. He reaffirmed his commitment to advancing the mission that has guided the 1890 land-grant university system for more than 135 years.

In a letter to the 1890 community, President Cage emphasized that he is "confident that through our shared commitment, tenacity and collective wisdom, we will continue to uplift our students, empower our communities and demonstrate the enduring value of the 1890 land-grant mission of education, research and outreach."

As leaders across the three mission areas continue to collaborate in serving individuals, families and communities

"... confident that through our shared commitment, tenacity and collective wisdom, we will continue to uplift our students, empower our communities and demonstrate the enduring value of the 1890 land-grant mission of education, research and outreach."

Dr. Ericke S. Cage
Chair, 1890 Council of Presidents,
On the Council's future.

within and beyond the 1890 footprint, ARD and AEA will again co-host a joint meeting with the 1890 Council of Deans of Agriculture. This event is scheduled for January 27-29, 2026, at the Westin New Orleans. If you have not yet registered, I encourage you to do so today.

As we look toward a new year, I pray that 2026

brings you peace, prosperity and abundant blessings, along with those you hold dear. We also hope that 2026 ushers in a new Farm Bill and increased appropriations that will strengthen our programs, enabling us to better serve the people of the 1890 region and beyond. We also pray that 2026 brings policies that empower farmers, investments that nurture research, innovation and programs that uplift the people we serve, inspire us to act with purpose, serve with integrity and work together for abundance, resilience and hope.

In closing, I extend my warmest wishes for a joyous and meaningful holiday season, one filled with the love, laughter and companionship of family and friends. May this special time of year offer moments of rest, renewal and reflection as we prepare to welcome all that lies ahead.

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Lisa Williamson (Exec. Asst.)

Email: 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

ARD 2026 Symposium deadlines, links and upcoming dates

REGISTRATION

[Symposium Registration](#) Registration is now closed. Record-breaking interest has exceeded the Hyatt Regency's capacity, and this step ensures a safe, well-managed, and rewarding symposium experience for all attendees.

HOTEL REGISTRATION

The Symposium room block at the Hyatt Regency is sold out. A list of nearby, walkable hotels will be provided on the ARD webpage.

EXHIBITS

Each 1890 campus is invited to display one university exhibit FREE. Additional exhibits and non-1890 exhibitors must pay the fee of \$3,000 by Feb. 6, 2026. All exhibitors, including the 1890s, must submit the Exhibit Registration Form by the deadline. To become an Exhibitor: [Attached Form](#)

MORRISON-EVANS, MAYBERRY HILL, & MAYES AWARDS

The application deadlines for the Morrison-Evans Outstanding Scientist Award and the B.D. Mayberry Young Scientist Award, the Walter Hill Distinguished Service Award and the McKinley Mayes Mentoring Award is Jan. 16, 2026. External reviewers, i.e. NIFA National Program Leaders will evaluate the applications. Access the [applications here](#) and criteria information.

For additional information contact: Alton Thompson, ARD Executive Director; (336) 285-2955 or athompson1@ncat.edu or Orlando F. McMeans, Symposium Steering Committee Co-Chair (225) 771-4310 or orlando_mcmeans@suagcenter.com

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM, Department of Agricultural Sciences and Technology, [Assistant/Associate Professor of Agricultural Economics](#).

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EASTERN SHORE, School of Agricultural and Natural Sciences, Department of Agriculture, Food and Resource Sciences, [Associate Professor of Agricultural Economics and Associate/Assistant Professor of Agricultural Economics](#).

PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY, College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, [Director, Center for Sustainable Farms and Urban Agriculture](#).

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EASTERN SHORE, School of Veterinary Medicine, [Associate Dean for Research](#), School of Veterinary Medicine, [Associate Dean for Academic and Faculty Affairs](#).

ALCORN STATE UNIVERSITY, School of Agriculture and Applied Sciences, [Alcorn State University Employment Opportunities | Chairperson, Human Development and Family Science](#)

[Farms for a New Generation Director](#), American Farmland Trust

SOUTH CAROLINA STATE UNIVERSITY, CAFCS, Department of Agriculture, [Assistant/Associate Professor in Animal Science](#), [Assistant/Associate Professor in Natural Resource Management](#).

ALCORN STATE UNIVERSITY, College of Agriculture and Applied Sciences. Associate Director of Extension, [Alcorn State University Employment Opportunities | Associate Director for Extension](#)

CALENDAR

SAVE THE DATES

AEA-ARD Joint Winter Meeting | Jan. 27 – 29, 2026, The Westin New Orleans, New Orleans, LA

2026 SRSA Annual Conference: "Distilling Change: Rural Roots and River Currents in the New South. Feb. 1-2, 2026, at the Omni Louisville.

CARET/BAA | Feb. 22 – 25, 2026, Grand Hyatt Hotel, Washington, DC

