

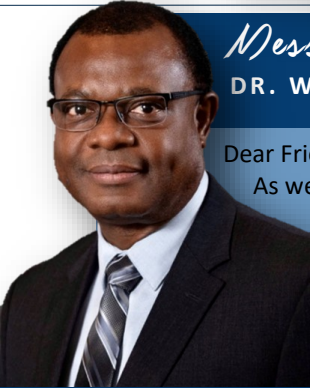


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ARD UPdates

THE ASSOCIATION OF 1890 RESEARCH DIRECTORS

November 2025, Vol. 16, Issue 11



DR. W. WHITTAKER

Message from the Chair

DR. WESLEY WHITTAKER

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

As we approach this season of gratitude, I extend my warmest wishes to each of you for a safe, meaningful and joyful Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is a uniquely American tradition that transcends faith, background and region. It reminds us to pause and reflect on the many freedoms and Blessings we enjoy—privileges that call us to serve with purpose and integrity.

As we give thanks, let us also reaffirm our shared commitment to advancing transformational research and innovation in the food, agricultural and environmental sciences—work that strengthens communities, sustains our planet and uplifts future generations.

I am profoundly grateful—

- For the privilege of living in a nation where freedom is safeguarded by our Constitution and upheld in our daily lives.
- For the many blessings bestowed upon the Association of Research Directors and the 1890 research community.
- For the visionary and steadfast leadership of our research directors.
- For your continued efforts to foster environments that inspire creativity, innovation and academic excellence.
- For your success in cultivating partnerships that expand our reach and amplify our impact.
- For the collaboration and shared purposes we enjoy with our colleagues in agInnovation South and those in agInnovation Northeast, agInnovation North Central and agInnovation West.
- For the financial investment and enduring support provided, particularly by NIFA.
- And for the capable, motivated students whose passion and promise ensure a vibrant future for agricultural research.
- I am also profoundly thankful for the vision and support of the Council of 1890 Presidents and Chancellors, who hold a distinctive place within the land-grant system. Their

See Whittaker on Page 4

A&T researcher receives prestigious NIH grant

Can plant-rich diets become the newest weapon in the fight against cardiovascular disease? That's a question that Dr. Shengmin Sang, distinguished professor of functional foods in North Carolina A&T State University's College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences (CAES), and a research team that recently received NIH's most competitive grant will investigate.

Sang will conduct a controlled human feeding study and analyze data collected from that study. This project is funded by a five-year, \$3.2 million grant from the NIH's National Heart Lung and Blood Institute. A&T will receive \$1.4 million, the award's largest portion.

"We know that plant-based foods are good for human health and are linked to a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, but the internal mechanisms of how they work are still unclear," said Sang. "For this project, we want to provide scientific evidence that links plant-based food to the prevention of cardiovascular disease."

See NIH grant on Page 4



Dr. Shengmin Sang in his functional foods research lab on the N.C. Research Campus.



Visit us online at

Rep. Adams keynotes N.C. A&T's 135th Second Morrill Act celebration

U.S. Rep. Alma Adams, D-NC, recognized and celebrated the 135 years of land-grant HBCUs, commonly referred to as 1890 Institutions, at North Carolina A&T State University's 135th Legacy Dinner on Friday, Oct. 24.

"As our state's 1890 Institution, NC A&T has provided world-class education, research and programming to its students and community for 134 years," said Adams, adding that the university has been awarded more than \$180 million in research grants over the last six years, has helped more than 4,400 small-scale agriculture producers improve their operations and for the 12th year in a row, is the largest HBCU in the country.

"1890 Institutions are personal to me," Adams added. "When I first started college, I wasn't fully prepared for the rigors of higher education, but A&T met me where I was and helped me become who they always knew I could be. I left A&T a student and came back a congresswoman, and it was the education, culture and leadership they instilled in me that helped me succeed."

Congratulations to our 1890 Institutions on 135 years of academic excellence.

"I look forward to seeing the continued lasting impact you provide your students, your schools and your community," Adams concluded.

1890 Institutions friend and A&T alum, U.S. Rep. Alma Adams spoke at A&T's 135th Anniversary celebration.



Future ag jobs will require employees with wide-ranging skills

The USDA–Purdue University national report, *“Employment Opportunities for College Graduates in Food, Agriculture, Renewable Natural Resources and the Environment – United States, 2025–2030,”* has been released. This report is the authoritative resource that examines future workforce needs, degree production and demographic trends shaping the agricultural, food and environmental sciences sectors across the United States.

The new study projects approximately 104,766 annual employment opportunities for graduates between 2025 and 2030. These positions span a wide range of disciplines, with the following distribution:

- 41% business and management.
- 21% science and engineering.
- 19% food and biomaterials production.
- 19% education, communications and governmental services.

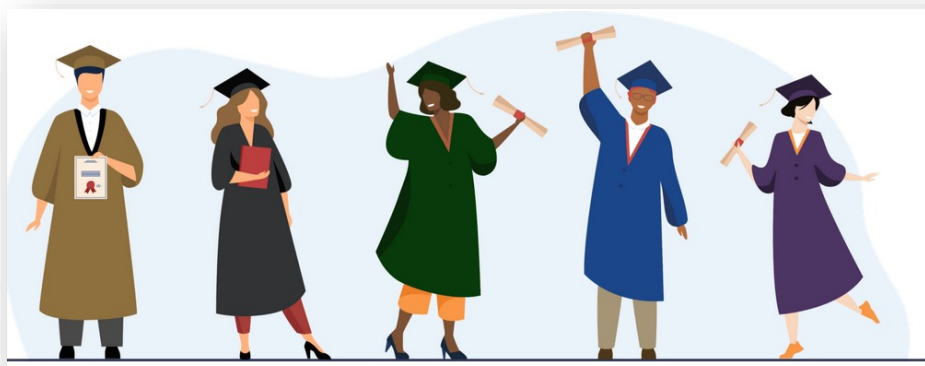
Unlike earlier editions, this report provides expanded

coverage across all educational levels —from associate degrees through Ph.D. and DVM programs —recognizing the critical role of technical colleges, four-year universities and graduate institutions in preparing the agricultural workforce.

The analysis also includes demographic data that underscores the importance of advancing diversity, equity and inclusion within our national food and agricultural systems.

To view the full report, [click here](#).

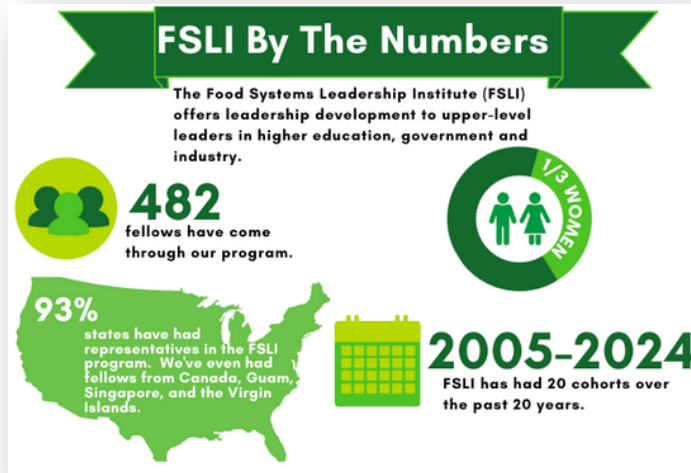
This report serves as an important resource to guide institutional planning and strategic decision-making, and provides valuable insights and data that can be used to strengthen grant proposals, inform student recruitment strategies and support national discussions on workforce development and alignment. The report's information is relevant not only to the 1890, 1862, and 1994 land-grant institutions, but also to non-land grant colleges and universities committed to advancing agricultural education, research and innovation.



FSLI accepting applications for new Cohort of Fellows

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.](#)

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 perspective.
- 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.](#)

Upcoming Dates/Information for 2026 ARD Symposium

REGISTRATION

[Symposium Registration](#) No refunds. Substitutions will be accepted until March 26, 2026. (Note: Credit card users will need to pay processing fees.)

Early Registration: Sept. 12 – Nov. 30, 2025 - \$900; Regular Registration: Dec. 1, 2025 – Feb. 28, 2026 - \$1,000; Late Registration: Mar. 1 – 27, 2026 - \$1,100; On-Site Registration: Begins Mar. 28, 2026 - \$1,200

HOTEL REGISTRATION

[Hotel Booking Link](#) Single and Double Occupancy: \$249 + taxes. Deadline to book: March 5, 2026

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 Ex-

hibit 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@suaqcenter.com

NIH grant . . . From Page 1

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Roughly one out of every three deaths in this country is attributed to heart disease, which amounts to more than \$400 billion annually in health care costs, medicine expenditures and lost productivity.

Researchers previously have discovered that high levels of triglycerides and cholesterol can increase the risk of cardiovascular disease. Sang and his colleagues will seek to identify another potential biomarker of heart disease — carbonyl stress — that will help individuals monitor their health. They'll do that by investigating whether flavonoids, which are compounds with antioxidant properties commonly found in fruits and vegetables, can reduce carbonyl stress, the overload of harmful compounds in the body that can induce cardiovascular disease and other chronic health conditions.

At his functional food lab at the Center for Excellence in Post-Harvest Technologies at the N.C. Research Campus in Kannapolis, Sang will oversee a three-week trial in which a group of people will consume apples, blueberries, soy milk, green tea as flavonoid-rich foods.

He will then collect and analyze blood and urine samples to measure the time and dose the effects of diets high and low in flavonoids, and levels of certain molecules and compounds formed when reactive carbonyl species in the body bind to proteins, fats and DNA. This data will be used to examine the relationships between flavonoid metabolites and carbonyl and oxidative stress biomarkers.

During the study's second phase, researchers will examine the relationships between flavonoid metabolites, carbonyl and oxidative stress biomarkers and the risk of heart disease in three large epidemiological studies that represent a diverse cross-section of Americans.

Sang is one of three multi-principal investigators on the project, along with Frank B. Hu, Ph.D., Fredrick J. Stare Professor of Nutrition and Epidemiology at Harvard University's T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and Qibin Qi, Ph.D., professor of epidemiology and population health at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York City. Hu is the project's contact principal investigator.

The project is funded by a Research Project Grant (R01), the NIH's most competitive grant program for biomedical and health-related research. Sang has won four previous R01 awards, including one in 2022 to fund related ongoing research into possible connections between flavonoids and the risk of type 2 diabetes.

"Sang is recognized as a leading expert in the study of functional foods — that is, foods that improve health beyond meeting basic nutritional needs. His participation on this project . . . could unlock crucial biological mechanisms and further advance our knowledge into the relationship between nutrition and the prevention of cardiovascular disease," said Radiah C. Minor, Ph.D., CAES interim dean. "We are grateful that NIH continues to support Sang's research."

Whittaker . . . From Page 1

mature and contemporary leadership is vital to addressing today's challenges in the food and agricultural sectors.

Similarly, I am grateful to the 1890 Universities Foundation for uniting and strengthening the 1890 system's impact by securing and distributing resources and developing strategic alliances that broaden access and amplify the results of our collective efforts.

I am continually inspired by the remarkable faculty and staff across our campuses. Thank you for the dedication and excellence you demonstrate each day in shaping the lives of our students and serving our stakeholders. Your work embodies the spirit of innovation, collaboration and impact that defines the 1890 community.

As we look ahead, we must continue to press toward new horizons—pioneering where others hesitate—and strengthen interdisciplinary and transdis-

ciplinary programs that foster collaborative learning, discovery and outreach. Our collective efforts, woven through the threads of economic development, globalization and sustainability, position us to address the most pressing challenges of our time.

Best wishes to each of you for a joyful and healthy holiday, whether spent with family, friends, or those you hold dear. I am deeply grateful for all your support and guidance during my first year as ARD Chair—it has meant a great deal to me.

Finally, on behalf of ARD and the broader land-grant university community, I extend our deepest gratitude to all **veterans** for their selfless service and unwavering dedication to our nation. Your courage, sacrifice and commitment to protecting freedom embody the very principles that guide our work in education, research and service.

SAVE the DATE



2026 ARD RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM

MARCH 28-31, 2026

Hyatt Regency New Orleans • 601 Loyola Ave.
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

The goal of the Symposium is to provide a forum for interactions, knowledge sharing, building networks for expanded partnerships and to showcase the talents and achievements of the 1890 community.

The Association of 1890 Research Directors (ARD) is the federation of the nineteen (19) autonomous 1890 land grant universities that provides coordination of research initiatives among member 1890 institutions in cooperation with federal, state and private partners.

[Click to view ARD Symposium Info.](#)

ARD OFFICERS

Wesley L. Whittaker
(Chair)

Langston University

Email: wesley.whittaker@langston.edu

Gregory Goins
(Chair-Elect)

Email: ggoins@ncat.edu

Ami M. Smith
(Secretary)

West Virginia State University

Email: smitham@wvstateu.edu

Jose Ulises Toledo (Treasurer)

Central State University

Email: jtoledo@centralstate.edu

Olga Bolden-Tiller
(Member-at-Large)

Tuskegee University

Email: oboldentiller@tuskegee.edu

Louis Whitesides
(Immediate Past Chair)

South Carolina State University

Email: lwhitesides@scsu.edu

Chandra Reddy
(agInnovation Chair-elect)

Email: creddy@tnstate.edu

Non-Elected

Alton Thompson (Exec. Director)

Email: athompson1@ncat.edu

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

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

[PROFESSIONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS CONFERENCE](#) | Nov. 16 – 18, Renaissance Montgomery, Montgomery, AL.
Strengthening Our Legacy & Advancing the Land-Grant Mission: Innovations in Research, Education, & Extension

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



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