

SC STATE PSA (210)

House Ways & Means

Economic Development Subcommittee Budget Hearings

January 17, 2024

1. Presentation

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SCState

1890 RESEARCH & EXTENSION

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FY 2024-25 Budget Hearing

Alexander Conyers, President

Louis D. Whitesides, DBA, Vice President and Executive Director

January 17, 2024

Agency Attendees

- **Alexander Conyers**, President
- **Dr. Louis D. Whitesides**, Vice President for Public Service & Agriculture and Executive Director for 1890 Research & Extension
- **Dr. Edoe Agbodjan**, Associate Extension Administrator
- **Dr. Lamin Drammeh**, Associate Vice President for Public Service & Agriculture
- **Michael Coaxum**, Director for Finance
- **Delbert Foster**, Associate Director
- **Tokmeco James**, Director for Grants and Compliance Administration
- **Elizabeth Mosely-Hawkins**, Senior Director for Strategic Communications



Alexander Conyers, President



Louis D. Whitesides, Vice President and Executive Director

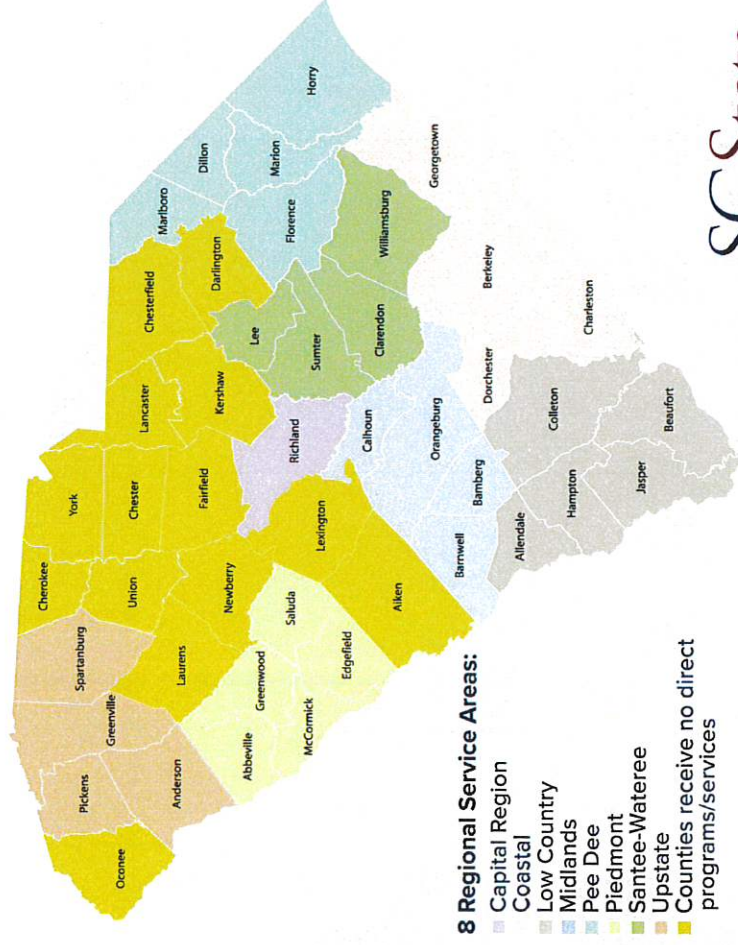
Agency Information

- SC State PSA innovates and educates to improve the quality of life and raise the standard of living for all South Carolinians.
- From methodical research for the betterment of traditional and controlled environment agriculture to technological innovation, business enterprises and promoting family wellness in limited- resource communities across South Carolina, SC State PSA constitutes an enormous portion of the university's outreach activities for more than 120 years.
- SC State PSA is part of a national system of over 100 land-grant colleges and universities which provides education, research and outreach services for the benefit of their respective states, the nation and global communities. The cooperative work is done in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the state departments of agriculture.

Agency Information cont.

Extension

- Through outreach programs and services, SC State PSA addresses quality of life opportunities for underserved and socially disadvantaged minority communities and entrepreneurs.
- 7 Regional Service Areas: **Coastal, Low Country, Midlands, Pee Dee, Piedmont, Santee-Wateree and Upstate.**
- Shaded counties receive no direct programs/services.



Agency Information *cont.*

Extension

- 5 Outreach Priorities:
 - 4-H Youth Development
 - Community and Economic Development
 - Education Innovation and Support
 - Family Nutrition and Health
 - Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resources



Agency Information *cont.*

Research

- At the core of its mission, SC State PSA's research seeks to identify scientific solutions that would positively impact current and emerging food and agricultural issues at local, state, national and global levels.
- 5 Research Focus Areas: **K-12 Education Research, Data Science for Food and Agricultural Systems, Food Safety and Health, Social Science in Agriculture, and Urban, Indoor and Emerging Agriculture.**



Accomplishments

Climate-Smart Commodities

- A collaboration between SC State and Clemson universities with \$70 million funded by the USDA-NRCS Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities.
- Pilot project designed to increase the acreage and number of farmers using cover crops, prescribed grazing, reduced tillage and other conservation practices that will reduce greenhouse gases and increase the productivity and well-being of our greater farming and foresting communities across the state.
- Recognized as the largest single award from a federal agency for both universities.



"As a life-long farmer, the Climate-Smart Commodities program is giving me better insight into learning how to farm with a new and unique technique." – Bryant Harrison, H&G Produce

Accomplishments

Regenerative Climate-Smart Agriculture

- A \$4.6 million grant awarded to SC State PSA and funded by the USDA-NRCS Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities.
- Project focuses on regenerative agriculture and its potential in climate-smart commodities to enhance the sustainability of underserved limited-resource farmers in South Carolina by educating producers and providing technical assistance, as well as financial incentive opportunities to farmers specializing in leafy greens and cover crops.
- Recognized as SC State PSA's first public-private partnership: Mixon Seed, LLC and South Carolina Black Farmers Coalition.



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Accomplishments

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Visit

- SC State University welcomed U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Thomas Vilsack and Director of the White House Office of Public Engagement Steve Benjamin to campus for a stakeholders meeting on Nov. 30.
- Nearly 350 small, underserved farmers and producers, as well as SC State friends and supporters attended the forum, which included a panel discussion of farmers whose operations have been directly impacted by the services and programs offered through USDA.
- The visit also featured an intimate conversation with Secretary Vilsack and nearly 50 SC State 1890 Agriculture Innovation and USDA 1890 National scholars.



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Accomplishments

New Research Centers

- Center for Food Safety and Health
 - Dr. Willette Crawford '02, global food safety expert, serves as senior scientist and director.
 - Awarded a combined total of \$2.35M for food safety, hyperspectral imaging and bacteriophage research from USDA-NRCS, USDA NIFA and SC State PSA Evans-Allen.
 - Food safety scientist expected, March 2024.
- Center for Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Sustainable Agriculture
 - Dr. Joe Mari Maja, pioneering AI research scientist and inventor, joined the agency January 2024 to lead the center.



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Accomplishments

AgrAbility

- SC State and Clemson collaborated to help make agriculture accessible for people with disabilities. The partnership is funded through USDA-NIFA to begin an AgrAbility program in the state.
- The South Carolina AgrAbility team will hold workshops, resource development, activities for online education, networking and site visits, as well as consultations and business planning. The team also will educate farmers, ranchers and laborers, and others about services and resources available to accommodate disabilities in the farming environment.



Accomplishments

4-H Youth Development

- Provided over 800 youth from across South Carolina who participated in traditional residential camping to day camp experiences,
- Hosted nearly 60 students to participate in Bulldog Ag Immersion, a summer camp experience held in partnership with the South Carolina Governor's School for Agriculture at John de la Howe.
- Summer 2023 marked the return of the USDA AgDiscovery summer experience. Sixteen participants from South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, Washington, D.C. and Arizona discovered careers in agriculture by attending presentations led by ag industry professionals and enjoying on-site field experiences.



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Accomplishments

Community & Economic Development (CED)

- Hired state program leader for Community & Economic Development, Dr. Sandra Thompson.
- The CED Program has participated in several workshops to provide relevant and actionable information on Heirs' Property, the leading cause of land loss for African Americans in the United States.
- Launched the Minority Family and Small Business Bootcamp, held in the Coastal Region (Charleston, S.C.) and the Pee Dee Region, in which nearly 40 entrepreneurs received hands-on training on small business ownership principles. Upon completion participants gained access to a \$1500 benefits package to include logo and website development, assistance with a business plan and guidance on developing a social media presence.
- Launched the Youth Entrepreneurship Express, an eight-week business program where 20 high school students created businesses, developed business plans, and managed their businesses.



Accomplishments

Education Innovation and Support

- Helping 61 scholars shape their future in agriculture:
 - 14 new Agriculture Innovation scholars, bringing the total to 56 Ag Innovation Scholars
 - 8 USDA 1890 National scholars
- Hosted over 300 youth on campus this summer to expose young scholars and increase their interest in college.
- Helping Youth Pursue Education (HYPE) Afterschool program operates in 11 South Carolina high schools and provides nearly 300 students invaluable access to career-and college-readiness information, as well as field experiences to colleges and industry.



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Accomplishments

Family Nutrition and Health

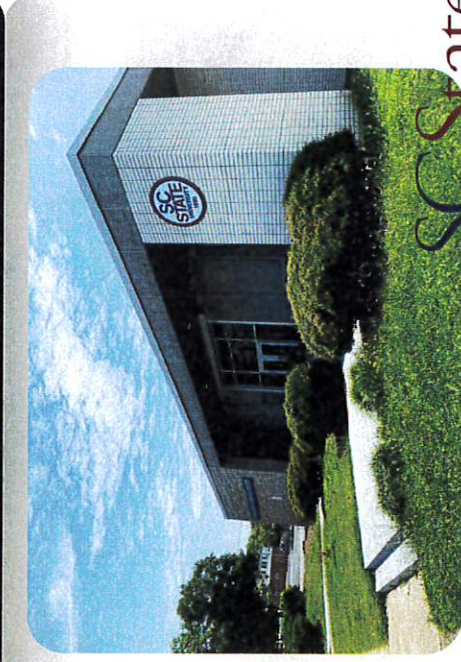
- Dr. Rhea Bentley joined SC State PSA as the state program leader.
- Provided hands-on activities and nutrition education to seniors in the Pee Dee Region, in partnership with Marlboro County Council on Aging.
- Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program, *on-going*.



Accomplishments

Facilities

- Renovations for the Pee Dee Region Research & Education Center are underway; completion anticipated April 2024.
- Upstate Region Research & Education Center received its Certificate of Occupancy.



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Budget Priorities

Recurring

Priority 1 - \$2.8M – Statewide Extension Agribusiness Development and Expansion Support

- Requested funding will allow SC State PSA to expand its programs and services to South Carolinians in 4-H Youth Development, Community and Economic Development, Family Nutrition and Health, Sustainable Agriculture and Natural Resources and Education Innovation and Support by increasing the number of temporary grant funded-positions (2 in each priority area).



Budget Priorities

Recurring

Priority 2 - \$1.3M - Agriculture Innovation Research

- Requested funding will allow SC State PSA to identify scientific solutions that will significantly impact South Carolina's emerging and specialty crops, healthy food production and increase crop yields.

Dr. Brandon Huber, controlled environment research scientist, uses innovative grafting techniques with gourd plants to enhance watermelon performance and heighten disease resistance. Huber grew a 236 lbs. award-winning watermelon, garnering first place at the SC State fair and Best in Show and Best Overall at the Orangeburg County Fair.

Current and Planned SC State PSA Emerging and Specialty Crops

- Chickpeas
- Peanut aflatoxins
- Swift-wet additive
- Mushrooms



Budget Priorities

Non-Recurring

Priority 3 - \$525,000 – Business Development Training and Assistance

- Requested funding will be used to assist beginning and existing small business entrepreneurs improve operations and enhance business models that will boost profitability by focusing on the application of digital technology. Small agribusiness entrepreneurs will receive technical assistance, training and education to ensure efficiency, spur job creation and spark growth.



"This was an opportunity of a lifetime. It [the bootcamp] allowed me to gain experiences and also be able to gain resources that I need to be successful in implementing a business." – **Sabrina Edwards, Coastal Region Entrepreneur**

Budget Priorities

Non-Recurring

Priority 4- \$600,000 – New Farmer Assistance

- Requested funding will support immersive training experiences that will combine curriculum with hands-on learning at our Research & Demonstration farm, as well as with our partners.



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Budget Priorities

Non-Recurring

Priority 5 - \$250,000 – Future Farm Planning

- Requested funding will be used to assist farmers in four areas related to: Beginning farmers applying new farming technologies to grow food closer to consumers; seasoned farmers expansion; generational wealth planning and farm diversification through agri-tourism.



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Budget Priorities

Non-Recurring

Priority 6 - \$425,000 – Health Quad Initiative

- Requested funding will be used to educate South Carolinians on various cardiovascular and mental health disorders that disproportionately affect underserved and limited resources communities.

- **Diabetes** – S.C. ranked 8th in the nation with highest prevalence of diabetes among adults, *SCDHEC 2018*.
- **Heart Disease** - Recognized as the leading cause of death in South Carolina and ranks 10th in the nation for deaths, *SCDHEC 2019*.
- **Obesity** – S.C. is the 12th state with the highest adult obesity rate in the nation, *Trust for America's 14th annual State of Obesity: Better Policies for a Healthier America*.
- **Mental Health** – S.C. ranks 45th in the nation for prevalence of mental illness in adults and 48th in the nation for prevalence of mental illness in children, *2019 State of Mental Health in America*.

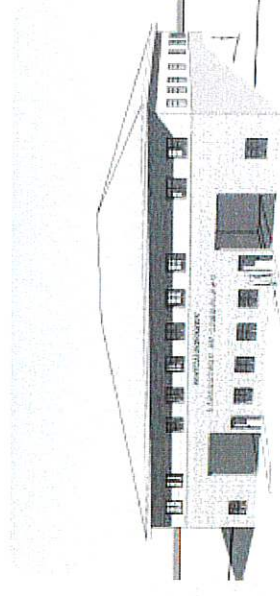
Budget Priorities

Capital Request

Priority 7- \$3.5M – Construction of the South Carolina Limnology Research Center

- The S.C. Limnology Research Center will explore complex issues of the state's freshwater systems, including freshwater management, water policy, remote water sensing image analysis and other technological innovations. The center is planned to be located a few yards from the banks of Lake Marion at Camp Harry E. Daniels in Elloree, South Carolina.

\$4M has already been funded.



Budget Priorities

Capital Request

Priority 8 - \$6M – Camp Daniels Health and Wellness Center

- Requested funding will support the construction of a health and wellness center through which recreational activities and nutrition education will be provided to promote physical activity and encourage healthy eating habits.



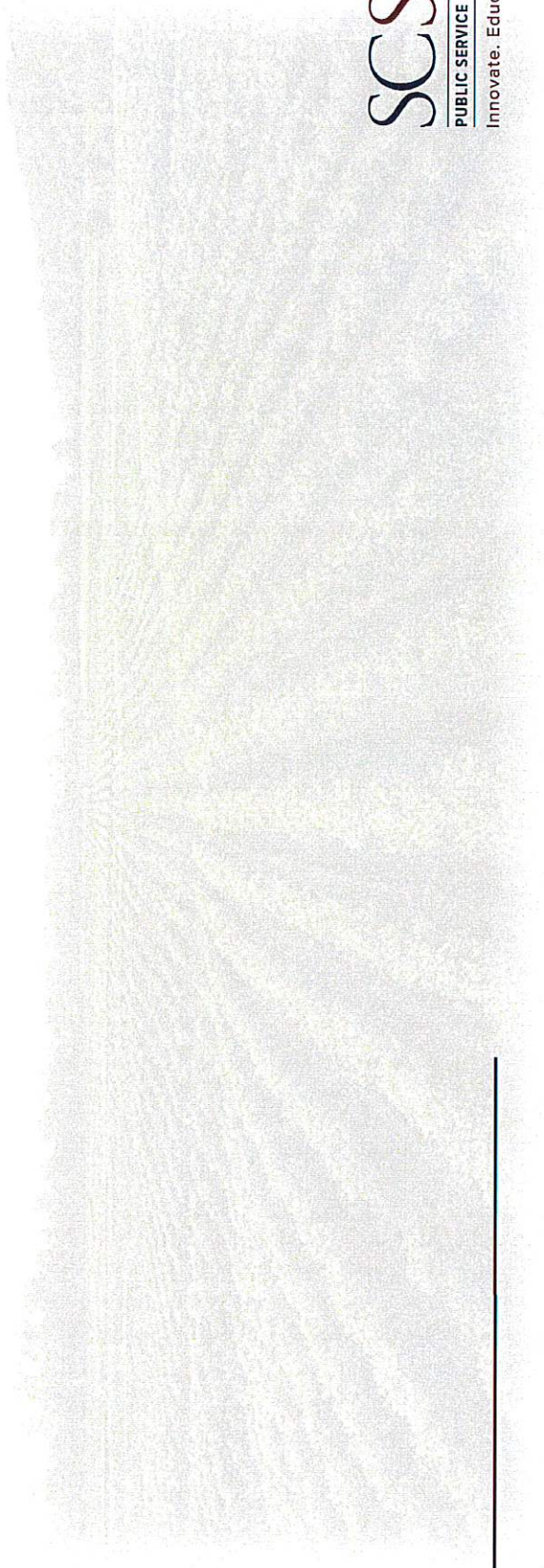
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Proviso

N/A



Financial Update

Fiscal Year	Budget	Actual General	Actual Federal	Carry Forward	Total
FY 2022-23 (Prior Year)	\$12,749,992.00	\$8,803,711.00	\$4,166,397.00	\$0.00	\$12,970,108.00
FY 2023 – 2024 (July-Present)	\$13,917,161.00	\$4,240,570.00	\$2,045,503.00	\$0.00	\$6,286,073.00

Full-time Equivalent

P210 – SC State PSA	Authorized	Filled	Vacant
Total FTE	74	21.75	52.25

In Support....

SC Department of Agriculture

"SC State University PSA is indeed a forward-thinking organization, whose contributions add significant value to farmers and agribusinesses across this state." - *Hugh Weathers, Commissioner*



SC Farm Bureau

"South Carolina farmers and other agricultural entrepreneurs and businesses value community and understand the important roles they play in the lives of families who rely on them to keep them fed and clothed. Likewise, SC State University PSA shares the same understanding and works tirelessly to ensure SC farmers have the necessary resources and access to educational opportunities that positions them to better serve South Carolinians." - *Harry Ott, President*



Clemson University Public Service and Agriculture

"For many years, Clemson PSA and SC State PSA have been working in tandem to improve the well-being of South Carolinians. As the state's designated land-grant universities, we continue to provide an important service on behalf of the state by translating research into actions that help strengthen individuals, families, and communities. - *Dr. George Askew, Vice President for Clemson University Public Service and Agriculture*



Palmetto Agribusiness Council

"SC State University PSA is a valuable resource that seeks to address local issues as well as strengthen individuals, families and communities throughout the state of South Carolina." - *Ronnie Summers, Executive Director*



FY 2024 - 2025 Budget Request												
SC State PSA												
BUDGET REQUESTS				FUNDING					FTEs			
Priority	Request Type (recurring, non-recurring, capital)	Request Title	Brief Description	General - Recurring	General - Nonrecurring	Other	Federal	Total	State	Other	Federal	Total
1	Recurring	Statewide Expansion Agribusiness Development & Support	The funding request will allow SC State PSA to train and educate staff and South Carolinians in the areas of 4-H Youth Development, Community Economic Development (CED), Family Nutrition & Health, Sustainable Agriculture and Education, Innovation and Support (EIS).	2,800,000.00				2,800,000.00				0.00
2	Recurring	Agriculture Innovation Research	The funding request will allow SC State PSA program the ability to identify scientific solutions that would significantly impact South Carolina's emerging and specialty agriculture crops including chickpeas, peanut, aflatoxins, swift wet additive, mushrooms, healthy food production and increase crop yields.	1,300,000.00				1,300,000.00				0.00
3	Non-recurring	Business Development Training and Assistance	The budget request will be used to assist "Small business by improving operations and enhancing business models that will boost profitability by focusing on technology infusion, planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling business operations in existing businesses as well as start-ups. Small agribusiness entrepreneurs will receive technical assistance, training and education to ensure efficiency, job creation and growth.		525,000.00			525,000.00				0.00

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MEDIA ADVISORY

February 14, 2023

SC State PSA Food Safety Expert: Reminds Consumers to Toss Foods Linked to Possible Listeria Contamination

Crawford notes illness could surface two to three weeks after eating Listeria-contaminated foods

ORANGEBURG, SC – Dr. Willette M. Crawford, director of the SC State University Public Service and Agriculture new Center for Food Safety and Health, strongly encourages South Carolina families to check their refrigerator and toss all ready-to-eat food products that were recalled due to possible Listeria contamination. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced the recall on [Feb. 3](#).



Dr. Willette Crawford, director of the Center for Food Safety and Health at SC State University PSA.

More than 400 food products, many of them breakfast items, were recalled by Baltimore-based Fresh Ideation Food Group LLC for possible listeria contamination. South Carolina is among the nine states impacted by the recall for products sold from Jan. 24 - Jan. 30. Food items include sandwiches, salads, snacks, yogurt, wraps and other related products.

Consuming foods contaminated with listeria can cause flu-like symptoms, headache, diarrhea, and vomiting, and it could take up to two to three weeks before a person experiences symptoms.

“Unfortunately, the symptoms mimic the flu, so people often don’t seek medical attention before symptoms become severe,” says Crawford. This could be potentially serious for immune-compromised individuals, the elderly and pregnant women; severe infection could develop and

result in meningitis or cause miscarriages or stillbirths for expecting mothers,” Crawford further explains

Although the sell-by or fresh-through dates - Jan. 31 - Feb. 6 - have passed, Crawford urges consumers to clear their refrigerators of any foods that fall under the recall.

"With our busy schedules, sometimes we may not be aware of food recalls, or we may overlook certain food items in our refrigerators, freezers or pantries that have gone past the fresh-by dates. By disseminating this reminder, SC State 1890 Research & Extension wants to make sure that South Carolinians are empowered to make well-informed choices that may impact their personal health and wellness or that of their family members," said Crawford.

ABOUT DR. WILLETTE M. CRAWFORD: Dr. Willette M. Crawford is a leader in food and agriculture as a food microbiologist with a unique combination of hands-on industry and regulatory experience as a subject matter expert for the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), where she developed the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) regulations. She earned her doctorate in food science from Purdue University, a Master of Public Health degree from East Tennessee State University and Bachelor of Science degrees in chemistry and biology from SC State University. Her work has included research with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Energy, collaboration with the U.S. Department of Agriculture on *Listeria monocytogenes* in ready-to-eat foods and the Department of Homeland Security.

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SC State University Public Service & Agriculture

The SC State Public Service & Agriculture Program, the cornerstone of the historical land-grant status of SC State University, assists diverse rural and urban limited-resource audiences in South Carolina by conducting research that seeks to address the problems affecting state residents and offering lifelong learning opportunities through its many outreach programs.



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Press Release

February 13, 2023

SC State 1890 Bolsters Sustainable Agriculture Program with New Controlled Environment Agriculture Research Scientist

Dr. Brandon Huber to institute indoor farming to help small, underserved farmers increase profits

ORANGEBURG, SC – To launch its controlled environment agriculture program, SC State 1890 Research & Extension adds Dr. Brandon Huber to its research program. Huber, who joined the organization Jan. 2023, will serve as the controlled environment agricultural research scientist.



Dr. Brandon Huber, new SC State 1890 controlled environment agricultural research scientist, shown inside the newly installed high tunnels at the SC State 1890 Research & Demonstration Farm in Olar, SC.

Huber specializes in controlled environment agriculture research, including optimizing indoor farming production.

"Indoor farming offers the capability to replicate and control outside environmental elements like sunlight and water, which are needed for crops to grow [indoors] and allows for higher yields of return by maximizing these environmental conditions," said Huber. "One of the main advantages of indoor farming is that harsh environmental factors, like fluctuating temperatures, droughts, storms, animal or insect infestations are eliminated since production is indoors."

Huber noted the types of controlled indoor farming programs that will be administered through research and extension programs include vertical farming (crops that are stacked and grown on levels above each other), hydroponic farming (crops that are grown without the use of soil but with nutrient solutions mixed with water) and the use of high tunnels.

"We want to use these vehicles as a way to bring value-added options to farmers and make them more marketable and able to supply their products year-round to local grocery and community stores and not have to get their products from other states like Florida or Georgia," said Huber.

Huber joins SC State 1890 in wake of the program's historic \$70M Climate-Smart Commodities partnership grant with Clemson University, awarded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) in October 2022.

The climate-smart commodities project focuses on various agricultural products, including peanuts, beef cattle, forest products and leafy green vegetables.

"Leafy greens are the model crops for indoor and vertical farm and high tunnel farm systems in South Carolina from mustard greens, collards, turnip greens and much more, and allows for farmers to grow year-round and have continued income," said Huber.

"We are excited for Dr. Huber to bring his wealth of knowledge and experience on controlled environment agriculture to SC State [1890]," said Dr. Louis Whitesides, vice president and executive director for 1890 programs. "As issues of food security increase and food costs continue to rise, controlled environment farming is one possible solution to address these challenges. Dr. Huber will use his expertise in this area to develop and deploy controlled environment agriculture best practices to the state's small, minority and underserved farmers and producers. The various indoor farming methods will be beneficial to our farmers, helping them to receive the best return on investment as it relates to farming crops indoors."

Huber earned his Ph.D. in controlled environment horticulture and a master's degree in plant breeding at NC State University (Raleigh, NC). He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in ornamental horticulture at Temple University (Philadelphia, PA).

Huber has experience in the greenhouse production industry as a greenhouse manager with the Pennsylvania Horticulture Society.

Prior to joining SC State 1890, Huber taught vegetable production at NC State University and provided consulting work in controlled environment agriculture.

Click [here](#) to watch Huber discuss the benefits of hydroponics at Brookdale Elementary School (Orangeburg, SC) with WLTX News 19.

For more information on the industrial hemp program, contact Dr. Brandon Huber, at bhuber@scsu.edu.

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Press Release

March 28, 2023

Soil scientist to lead high tunnel production, chickpea research at SC State 1890 Research & Demonstration Farm

Dr. Nana Kusi named Extension agronomist

ORANGEBURG, SC - SC State University 1890 Research & Extension adds soil scientist, Dr. Nana Kusi as the program's Extension agronomist to help cultivate the sustainable agriculture and natural resources environment program (SANRE). Kusi will research various emerging crops to expose marginalized farmers to sustainable growing measures and best practices that will enrich soil and crop production.

"Great things are coming [to 1890] and great things are coming from 1890," Kusi stated. "1890 is currently building a team of research scientists that will help to grow the future of agriculture in South Carolina and I am happy to be a part."

As an agronomist, Kusi will coordinate efforts that support farm sustainability and



Dr. Nana Kusi, Extension agronomist, inside of newly constructed high tunnel at SC State 1890 Research & Demonstration Farm in Olar, S.C.

production. As the interest in high tunnel production among small farmers increases, Kusi will assist in the construction of high tunnels at the university's Research & Demonstration Farm in Olar, S.C. With two high tunnels constructed and three additional ones expected to be added, Kusi will look at production methods that support season-long production for farmers. The information will be transferred through Extension agents throughout the program's seven regions.

"Dr. Kusi has done an excellent job of securing funding and resources that will support our small farmers," said Dr. Joshua Idassi, state program leader for sustainable agriculture and

natural resources. "It is imperative that we have someone to investigate the nature and quality of the soil and provide us with information that can help growers produce a valuable product free from diseases and other toxins."

In addition to high tunnel production, Kusi will conduct chickpea research to discover how the crop can be grown and used to help benefit economic growth in South Carolina. According to Kusi, chickpeas are in high demand in the United States, and he believes South Carolina farmers have an opportunity to meet that demand.

"Chickpeas are mainly grown in the Middle East and India; however, chickpea production in those countries are slowly declining," Kusi stated. "The U.S. is a major consumer of chickpeas, a delicious and nutritious legume. By tapping into such a lucrative industry, I trust that South Carolina will be ahead of the game; however, research is necessary."

Prior to joining SC State PSA, Kusi completed his post-doctorate studies at Virginia State University, where he gained a newfound interest in land-grant institutions. While conducting research on soil health, Kusi quickly discovered his passion for assisting minority farmers.

"HBCUs and land-grant universities opened my eyes to the opportunities available to minorities in agriculture who make up less than two percent of the ag industry. Because of this steady decline of Black producers in ag, I wanted to mentor marginalized farmers and introduce them to ways to invest in such a profitable industry," he said.

The Ghana native received his Ph.D. in soil sciences from Texas Tech University, a Master of Science in agronomy and crop science from the University of Wyoming, and a bachelor's degree in general agriculture from Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology in 2011.

Kusi and the SANRE team are in the process of planting fruits, vegetables and leafy greens such as collards and lettuce inside of the high tunnels. Kusi says he is looking to do future studies on peanuts, watermelon, and sweet potatoes, which are of high interest to farmers across the Palmetto State.

For more information on soil science and agronomy, contact Dr. Nana Kusi, Extension agronomist, at nkusi@scsu.edu.

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PRESS RELEASE

September 14, 2023

SC State to Celebrate Land-Grant Roots with Ag-focused Outreach Events

ORANGEBURG, SC – SC State University will recognize its rich land-grant roots with the debut of the inaugural Ag and Land-Grant Celebration, September 20 – 23, with a series of planned events.

The events will emphasize the impact of SC State's ag programs and bring awareness to the institution's land-grant mission of improving the quality of life for individuals, families and communities through research, teaching and outreach.

SC STATE UNIVERSITY INAUGURAL AG AND LAND-GRANT CELEBRATION



The celebration is spearheaded by the university's Public Service and Agriculture division (PSA); full event details are available at 1890.info/3L8x1r1.

"The roots of our land-grant heritage run deep," SC State President Alexander Conyers said. "The Ag and Land-Grant Celebration provides a platform for the university to showcase its past accomplishments and educate South Carolinians on the institution's impact of providing relevant services and programs that empower communities."

"We also will reveal plans that will continue to fulfill the land-grant mission by offering access to affordable, high-quality education to all people; driving research and innovation; increasing the profitability of small and minority farms; and delivering research-based services to underserved and hard-to-reach populations," Conyers said.

Kickoff

The celebration will kick off with student-only events, beginning Wednesday, Sept. 20, and will feature a dinner for students on Thursday, Sept. 21, in which Ada A. Bacetty, Ph.D. a 2001 alumna, will serve as the guest speaker. Bacetty, a distinguished microbiologist and plant pathologist, leads the U.S. Defense Threat Reduction Agency's Biological Threat Reduction Program as department chief.

Friday events

- On Friday, Sept. 22, at 9 a.m., SC State PSA will host its farmers forum with several panel discussions on such topics as diversity, equity and inclusion in agriculture; the U.S. Department of Agriculture's 22007 Discrimination Financial Assistance Program; and USDA state-level programs and service.
- Later that evening, an invitation-only partners dinner will be held, featuring Dionne Toombs, Ph.D., associate director of programs for USDA National Institute for Food and Agriculture, who will deliver the keynote address, and South Carolina Commissioner of Agriculture Hugh Weathers, who will bring greetings.

Saturday events

- At 8:30 a.m. on Saturday, Sept. 23, SC State PSA will welcome alumni for a breakfast, where attendees will hear from administrators on university developments, including the progress of SC State PSA.
- From 1-4 p.m., a showcase highlighting SC State Extension programs with cooking and drone demonstrations, horseback riding, a petting zoo and other activities will be held on campus at the football practice field. To experience the showcase, attendees will need to purchase a game-day ticket.
- The celebration will conclude with the 6 p.m. home opener game between the SC State Bulldogs and the Citadel Bulldogs at Oliver C. Dawson Stadium.

"We are excited about the Ag and Land-Grant Celebration and having the opportunity to raise awareness of the land-grant programs and services. We invite all to join us and discover how SC State PSA works for all South Carolinians," said Dr. Louis Whitesides, vice president for Public Service and Agriculture and executive director of SC State 1890 Research & Extension.

SC State University is one of two South Carolina land-grant universities and belongs to a national system of more than 100 land-grant colleges and universities.

As the state's only public Historically Black College or University, SC State is recognized as an 1890 land grant, along with 18 other institutions. The date references the year the 2nd Morrill Act was enacted to expand access to higher education to Americans, not previously included in the initial passage of the 1862 Morrill Act.

MEDIA CONTACT:

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Press Release

October 30, 2023

SC State 1890 Ag Program Awarded \$500K Precision Technology Grant **States' small farmers to receive drone training**

ORANGEBURG, SC – South Carolina small and minority farmers will soon have a bird's eye view of their farmland and woodlots with the help of a new precision technology grant awarded to SC State 1890 Research & Extension.

Awarded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the \$500,000, three-year grant will feature training small and minority farmers on how to incorporate digital technology, such as using drones to collect data to implement data usage into their farming practices and operations, which can result in better efficiency, higher yields, increased profits and gain knowledge on the value of their woodlots.

Led by Dr. Joshua Idassi, state program leader for the sustainable agriculture & natural resources (SANR) program at SC State 1890 Extension, Idassi believes implementing drone technology for small farmers and woodland owners will prove beneficial and sustainable for their future generations.



SC State 1890 Extension SANR will offer drone pilot lessons to small and minority farmers as part of the precision technology grant.

"Drones are able to map a farmer's entire farmland and woodlots, especially the areas that are not easily accessible," said Idassi. "Having aerial imagery (3-D models) captured from drones can be used to diagnose crop health, detect crop diseases, identify irrigation challenges and inclement weather damages. Farmers can save money by being able to identify potential crop damage in its early ages."

Idassi stated the use of drones in farming, particularly large-scale commercial farms, have increased significantly in the past years, and that small-scale farmers face many barriers,

including cost and using traditional farming practices as a challenge for implementing the technology to farmers.

"Farmers are sometimes hesitant when it comes to trying new farming methods, especially ones that have high costs associated", said Idassi. "With drone technology still being new in the farming industry, we must build a farmer's trust that while, yes, buying a drone will cost money, it is an investment that will allow them to improve decision making, and can also increase the value of their products."

Idassi stated that the precision technology grant will focus on small-scale, area-mapping drone technology, with hopes to integrate and introduce large-scale drones (pesticide and crop spraying and seeding fields) and also use them as a tool to evaluate the value of timber small woodlots in the future.

"Drones and precision technology are the driving force in agriculture today", said Dr. Edoe Agbodjan, associate administrator for 1890 Extension. "Drones and digital technology are powerful tools that farmers can use to improve their efficiency, productivity and profitability. The grant award will provide the 1890 SANR agents and students with the proper drone pilot training and knowledge on how to use digital technology to collect data on a farm properly."

SC State 1890 SANR Program held a Drones for Agriculture Masterclass on May 9, which included training from Rose Funja, owner of MD Agrinfo Company Limited, a drone company in Tanzania, Africa. The masterclass also featured hands-on training with SANR agents and students operating small commercial drones.

For more information on the precision technology grant award, contact Dr. Joshua Idassi, state program leader for sustainable agriculture & natural resources, at jidassi@scsu.edu.

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About SC State Public Service & Agriculture:

The SC State Public Service & Agriculture Program, the cornerstone of the historical land-grant status of SC State University, assists diverse rural and urban limited-resource audiences in South Carolina by conducting research that seeks to address the problems affecting state residents and offering lifelong learning opportunities through its many outreach programs.



1890 RESEARCH & EXTENSION

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Press Release

July 3, 2023

31 USDA/Ag Innovation Scholars Secure Paid Summer Internships

Summer internships empower scholars to grow future in ag

ORANGEBURG, SC - As the academic year draws to a close and students return home for the summer, SC State 1890 Research & Extension is proud to announce a total of 31 SC State University Agriculture Innovation and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) 1890 National Scholars will strengthen their skills outside of the classroom through various unique summer internship opportunities.



1890 Agriculture Innovation Scholars (1st – 3rd Cohort) and USDA 1890 National Scholars.

Promoting academic excellence and bridging pathways to grow a career in agriculture, SC State 1890 offers two scholarship opportunities – the USDA 1890 National Scholarship and the Agriculture Innovation Scholarship - both of which require students to complete an internship as part of the scholarship expectations. Twenty-seven Ag Innovation Scholars and four USDA scholars have accepted internships with

various agencies, businesses and organizations across the country.

“We are proud of our scholars for fully investing in their academic success and securing internship opportunities that will elevate their skillsets beyond the

classroom," said Dr. Derrick Wise, who manages the scholarship programs. "I am especially proud of the four freshmen for taking advantage of the opportunity so early in their academic careers, which allows them to transfer their skills inside of the classroom bringing a new perspective to their peers."

"I believe the earlier you start gaining experience, the better you become," said Avery Franklin, freshman agribusiness major. "As a freshman, it is important for me to take advantage of internship opportunities because it will better equip me with the skills needed to align with a career path that is right for me."

With internship acceptances varying from SC State 1890 Research & Demonstration Farm, University of Georgia Cooperative Extension, Trane Technology, Brenden J. Law Firm, USDA-Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service, District Department of Transportation and the Thurgood Marshall College Fund USDA Summer Internship, scholars will gain valuable research, clinical and/or field experience when combined with personal interests that will empower them to become future leaders in agriculture.

"Internships play a crucial role in shaping one's career and are steppingstones toward bonus opportunities that allow our scholars to gain a competitive edge when applying to graduate school or entering into the workforce," Travis Johnson, USDA/1890 program liaison, stated. "Not only will our scholars stand out amongst other applicants, but they will have access to executive mentorship and valuable resources that can offer several benefits, including higher salaries."

Students in the USDA 1890 National Scholars program have a unique internship experience that carries them throughout their undergraduate tenure. Each summer, scholars return to the USDA to build upon their skills in their respective fields, preparing them for a full-time position once they graduate.

Jaylen Roberts, sophomore, civil engineering major, returned to Wisconsin to continue his internship as a civil engineering trainee with the USDA National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS).

"My internship experience with the USDA-NRCS program has forced me out of my comfort zone and helped me to become more independent," said Roberts.

“The USDA has a critical need of engineers, and my internship experience has helped me develop foundational technical skills that will be successful in the engineering field. By operating various software applications and articulating design plans with landowners and colleagues, I gained valuable hands-on experience.”

SC State 1890 recognizes the following scholars on their internship acceptance:

	Ag Innovation Scholars 1st Cohort	
Keshauna Davis	Kansas State Research Fellowship	Manhattan, KS
Candice Govan	Scansource	Greenville, SC
Jessica Haynes	College of Charleston Upward Bound	Charleston, SC
Trinity Jackson	University of Lincoln, NE Summer Research	Lincoln, NE
MaKayla Long	District Department of Transportation	Washington, DC
Morgan Mack	1890 Research & Extension	Coastal Region
Nicola Scott	USDA, NRCS Choice Summer Camp	Campus
Bryce Scott	USDA Pathways Loan Specialist	Orangeburg, SC
Marc Wardlaw	Trane Technology	Georgia
Ahmorae Wilmore	USDA – Farm Service Agency and Risk Management Agency	Richmond, VA
Marquez Wortham	University of Georgia Cooperative Extension	Athens, GA
	Ag Innovation Scholars 2nd Cohort	
Miniyah Campbell	Brendan J. Law Firm	Columbia, SC
Skyla Dillon	1890 Research & Extension	Campus
Barry Fogle	Claflin University Upward Bound	Orangeburg, SC
Jasmine French	1890 Research & Extension	Coastal Region
Ariana McCree	Boys and Girls Club of Chester	Chester, SC
Randall Pickering	USDA - Farm Service Agency and Risk Management Agency	Jackson, MS
Chloe' Rorie	1890 Research & Extension	Pee Dee Region
Jayvion Snow	1890 Research & Extension	1890 Research & Demonstration Farm

Ag Innovation Scholars 3rd Cohort		
Alonda Adgerson	1890 Research & Extension	Orangeburg, SC
James Dunmore	1890 Research & Extension	Midlands Region
Avery Franklin	1890 Research & Extension	1890 Research & Demonstration Farm
June Highsmith	1890 Research & Extension	Orangeburg, SC
Tyler Hutchinson	USDA - <u>Natural Resources Conservation Service</u>	Vermont
Jaquez Perry	1890 Research & Extension	1890 Research & Demonstration Farm
Kevin White	USDA - Farm Service Agency and Risk Management Agency	Richmond, VA
Penelope Fennell	USDA – NRCS Soil Conservation	Honolulu, HI
	USDA 1890 National Scholars	
Jaylen Roberts	USDA - <u>Natural Resources Conservation Service</u>	Wisconsin
George Ulmer, III	USDA - Farm Service Agency and Risk Management Agency	Orangeburg, SC
Arabia Williamson	USDA - Agricultural Research Service (ARS)	Baltimore, MD
Kailyn Wrighten	USDA - Farm Service Agency and Risk Management Agency	Orangeburg, SC

To learn more about the Agriculture Innovation Scholarship, contact Dr. Derrick Wise, state program leader for education innovation and support, at dwise5@scsu.edu.

For more information about the USDA 1890 National Scholarship, contact Travis Johnson, USDA liaison, at johnson.travis@usda.gov.

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1890 Extension Efforts Supporting Nutrition, Health and Wellness of Individuals, Families and Communities

July 10, 2023



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GUEST AUTHOR

Wendi Williams, Alabama A&M University; Troy Darden, Delaware State University; Sonya Moore-Davis, Langston University; Latasha Ford, Fort Valley State University

The 1890 Land-grant Universities shape a brighter future for their communities through their Cooperative Extension programs that are providing families with the information they need to make healthy lifestyle choices. Supported by USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Extension programs at 1890 Land-grant Universities are changing lives. Learn more about their impact and their importance to the communities they serve with these highlights from three 1890 Institutions.

This article was first published as part of the ["1890 Extension Transforming Lives Report"](#) and is republished here with permission.

The **Delaware State University** Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) educates individuals and families in Kent County, Delaware, on how to make informed decisions about wise food choices, safety and budgeting. Working with the peer support and resource center, Brandywine Counseling & Community Services Inc. (BCCS), participants not only learned basic nutrition but also how to make healthy snack choices and achieve the goal of consuming five fruits and vegetables each day. In addition, clients learned the importance of physical exercise.

In 2022, EFNEP held five BCCS adult sessions once a week over a six-week period. Each session enrolled 25 to 30 participants. Based on evaluation results, the adults decreased their consumption of refined grains, fats and sugars. They also increased their fruit, vegetable and water intake and exercise habits by more than 90% before exiting the program.

The United Way of Anderson County in South Carolina revealed that 65% of local adult residents are either overweight or obese and that at least 18% of the county's residents lack health coverage. This presents a problem as insurance rates continue to increase. Additionally, the National Institute of Aging emphasized that making smart food choices and maintaining a healthy diet links directly to decreased obesity-related diseases, such as diabetes and hypertension in aging adults.

To combat obesity and other health issues, **South Carolina State University** 1890 Research & Extension's Upstate Region Family Life, Nutrition and Health Program operates the Comparing Food Options Across the Community project. The program provides senior residents of the Anderson Housing Authority with nutrition education to help families adopt healthier food choices and budget-friendly techniques to use when shopping. Results show that 100% of the participants learned the importance of reading food labels, being healthy, reducing salt intake, buying fresh fruits and vegetables, having a balanced diet and selecting healthier fat options.

The American Heart Association recommends that consumers eat no more than 2,300 milligrams of salt daily, while adults limit sodium intake to 1,500 milligrams daily. Unfortunately, Americans consume more than 3,400 milligrams of sodium daily with 70% coming from eating packaged, prepared and restaurant food. Reducing salt intake to 1,000 milligrams daily is enough to improve blood pressure and heart health.

To combat this problem, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) experts at the **University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff** taught seniors at St. John Alexander Tower's apartment complex how to prepare healthy meals using herbs and spices to season food. They also learned how to control food portions and the importance of physical activity. As a result, one resident successfully reported, "By not using salt, I went from taking two blood pressure medications a day to one and lost 30 pounds as well."

TOPIC: [Food and Nutrition Security](#)

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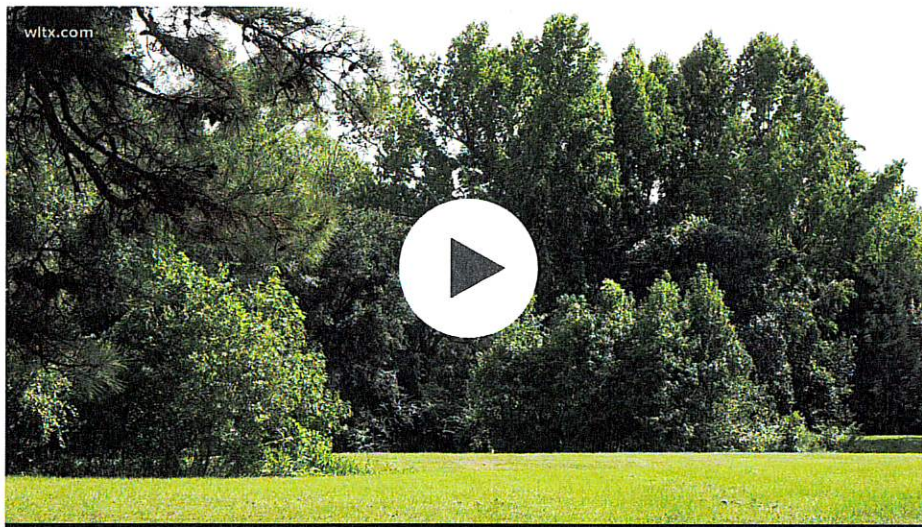
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STREET SQUAD

South Carolina State University partners with US Department of Agriculture to create more green spaces in the Midlands

The university plans to use the five million dollar grant to plants trees in Orangeburg, Bamberg and Calhoun counties.



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Author: Victoria Samuels

Published: 1:01 PM EDT September 25, 2023

Updated: 7:02 PM EDT September 25, 2023



ORANGEBURG, S.C. — A grant from the [U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forestry Service](#) will help [South Carolina State University's Department of Agriculture & Public Service](#) to improve green spaces in some underserved communities.

South Carolina State University (SCSU) says they will use the five million dollars to plant trees in Orangeburg, Bamberg, and Calhoun counties over the next five years.

By partnering with these counties, SCSU hopes to reap benefits beyond providing shade. Some of the trees will be edible and healthy food resources in the community.

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Dr. Lamin Drammeh, Associate Vice President for the [Department of Agriculture & Public Service](#) said, "In an urban setting, where you don't have a lot of trees, you have heat deserts and you have heat islands which impact your health, your behavior, your psyche, everything. So by planting trees -- and not only trees, but edible trees -- it will always improve the quality of life and be able to enhance the environment."

South Carolina State University plans to plant the first tree in early 2024.

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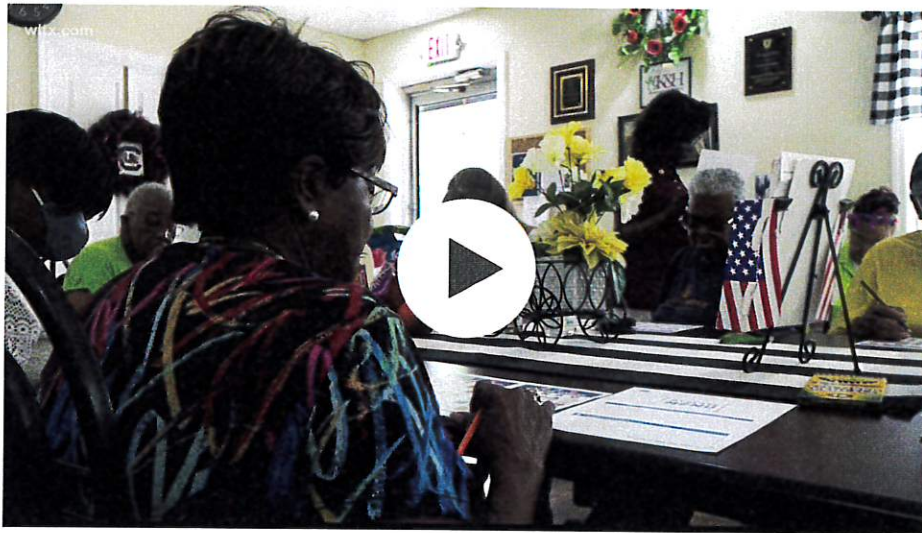
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COMMUNITY

Retired teacher uses 401(k) to restore abandoned building for community center

Kathleen Lawson Gibson opened K&H Resource Center to connect her community with local resources from resume writing tips to health and wellness sessions.



Author: Sam Perez

Published: 4:37 PM EDT September 1, 2023

Updated: 9:58 PM EDT September 3, 2023



SUMMERTON, S.C. — A Summerton woman is working to serve her community through a resource center. [K&H Resource Center](#) connects residents with organizations and help throughout the area.

"I love what I do," Kathleen Lawson Gibson said. "I'm passionate about what I do."

Gibson is spending her retirement as the founder and executive director of K&H Resource Center in Summerton after spending 40 years working in the [Clarendon County School District](#), beginning right when she graduated high school. Gibson says she started as a teacher's assistant and continued to fill multiple roles for the district before going to the University of South Carolina to get her degree years later.

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"I worked in the district for many years, but nothing is synonymous to doing what I do now," Gibson said. "This is powerful. This was an abandoned building, and I took my 401(k) and I restored it. And I want to bring resources to the community."

She's serving people like Deloris Brown and Emma Thomas.

"We love it! Love it," Brown and Thomas said. "So many people come here for information. It is so awesome."

The resource center helps residents with topics from applying to college programs, writing resumes, and teaching seniors about nutrition.

"They give us so much information, what we need to eat, how to eat it because sometimes we be eating the wrong thing and eating too much of it so we need," Brown said.

Gibson said she wants to meet the needs she sees in her community.

"How do I go back to school? How can I find a good job? How can I do things off my record? How can I write a resume? How can I do whatever...the answers are here at the center. I gave the children 40 years of my life, and whatever is left is going to go to my precious seniors," Gibson said, smiling. "When people ask me what I do or what's going on inside this building, I ask them, 'What do they want to see inside this building?' Because I have my hands in so many things. Whatever the needs are, if I don't have the answers, I know how to find answers."

She said working with older people is a mission Gibson feels particularly passionate about because of her mother.

"My mom died with [Alzheimer's] and so did her mom, and so I want to keep brain activation and brain stimulation going on with the older folks, so we do so much stuff," Gibson said.

K&H partners with local resources like the [South Carolina State University 1890 Research and Extension Program](#). Expanded Food Nutrition Education Program Educator Inetta Cooper Fulton comes to the center every Tuesday at noon to host a free health and wellness session.

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"K&H Resource Center is a catalyst for information and educational tools. Miss Gibson is tireless. She loves Summerton, she loves her people," Fulton said. "She is an extension of the extension! Because she is just, I mean, she's so energetic, you know, she's so...has a heart for the people. The people know her and love her as well. So to have her as was South Carolina State 1890 Research Extension, we are the ones that are fortunate."

Fulton explains that the extension program takes educational tools out to rural areas throughout the state to help address health disparities. Fulton is with the Santee Wateree Region with an office in Sumter, although the program serves the entire state with free programs.

"It's the lack of resources that causes [rural residents] to have, you know, stroke, heart attack, high blood pressure," Fulton said. "And its lack of education."

Gibson said she's fortunate to live out her passion: serving the community and inspiring others.

"Through my work, I've got so many awards, but they don't mean nothing to me. I want to be rewarded when I go to heaven. So the reward is so important. Awards are nice for people to think of me, but I want to be rewarded that I've done a good job helping people to be better people," Gibson said. "I'd love for my philosophy to be passed on to someone else. Each one reach one and pick one up. If that could just resonate in this community, aw man, what a world this would be if everybody would have the helping and the giving spirit. Our motto is to give you hope, and then we give you help."

This passion for serving the community comes from her father, who's responsible for the 'H' in the K&H Resource Center.

"I hope he's looking down at me smiling because I'm real serious about this," Gibson said.

"Really, really serious."

For more information on how to access the resources provided by the center, message [K&H on Facebook](#). To contact South Carolina State University's extension program, visit [SCSU.edu](#).

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ALERT **FEATURED** **EDITOR'S PICK**

S.C. State grant to make area greener; USDA provides \$5 million for trees

Dionne Gleaton

Sep 26, 2023



South Carolina State University announced its receipt of a \$5 million grant from the U.S. Forest Service's Urban and Community Forestry Program during a press conference held Saturday morning. Pictured at the press conference, from left, are SCSU President Alexander Conyers; Homer Wilkes, the USDA's undersecretary for natural resources and environment, and Dr. Louis Whitesides, executive director of the SCSU 1890 Research and Extension Program and vice president of the SCSU Public Service and Agriculture department.

Dionne Gleaton

South Carolina State University is poised to expand access to trees and green spaces across The T&D Region and beyond with the help of a \$5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

The grant was awarded through the Urban Community Forestry Program of the U.S. Forest Service, a program of the USDA. Under the federal Inflation Reduction Act, the program received \$1.5 billion to support urban tree planting, urban forest planning and management and related activities, particularly in disadvantaged communities.

The grant announcement was made during a press conference that the S.C. State Public Service and Agriculture department held Saturday morning at Sulit Luxe Affairs in Orangeburg.

“The award allows us to partner with counties to plant urban forests, to plant trees within the counties’ areas within the underserved communities. So in our region, it will be Orangeburg, Calhoun and Bamberg counties we will partner with to plant a specific amount of trees once we work out the details of how many trees it will be,” said Dr. Louis Whitesides, vice president of the S.C. State Public Service and Agriculture department.

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S.C. State was among more than 800 applicants from across the nation that applied for the grant.

Whitesides, who also serves as executive director of the university's 1890 Research and Extension Program, said he is excited about the grant and the opportunities it will create to not only help reduce carbon emissions, but provide a greener environment.

Memory Café: Monthly gatherings bring together those with dementia and caregivers
Dionne Gleaton

"Our home counties will be direct beneficiaries, along with counties across the state that we will work with to make sure that we have those trees planted in the right places. So we will be working with landscape architects that will work with the counties and us to design the tree canopies and the urban forests in those particular areas and work with the counties to get those planted. We'll provide the funding for the counties to plant the trees and do other things," he said.

Whitesides continued, "I'm very, very excited. These programs are going to help change and hopefully reverse global warming. For us to be a part of it and actually work with our local counties—Orangeburg is where I'm from—is excellent."

By working with state partners and community tree groups, the Urban and Community Forestry Program makes investments to improve the nation's more than 140 million acres of urban and community forest areas.

“The intent was this: to make sure that there was equal access to a tree canopy, to make sure that there was easy accessibility to nature. One of the things that we haven’t had the benefit of, and particularly in an urban area, is that tree canopy,” said Homer Wilkes, USDA’s undersecretary for natural resources and environment.

Wilkes was among the USDA officials on hand at Saturday morning’s press conference to announce the university’s grant award.

He said trees serve an important purpose in not only improving water quality, but giving off oxygen and suppressing carbon emissions, which he says have contributed to global warming.

“It’s just unnatural for some of the temperatures that we actually have now,” Wilkes said. He praised S.C. State’s leadership team and its commitment to serve its students and the surrounding community.

“It’s so important that universities like this exist. These are the lighthouses for the citizens that are in this state. If they didn’t have a South Carolina State to go to, where would they go? ... Everyone’s not going to provide those services that this university provides. So we need to do all we can to make sure that they stay in existence,” he said.

Dr. Lamin Drammeh, associate vice president of S.C. State Public Service and Agriculture, said the university will be seeking more grants to create sustainable, healthy communities.

“We have 47 partners across the state. We meet people where they’re at. We have regional offices. We have extensive leaders in the community. We know the problems of our area. We know that better than anybody. ... The uniqueness about this is that while we are enhancing the environment, that we produce healthy produce out of it,” Drammeh said.

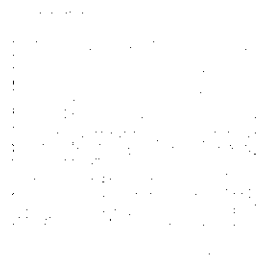
He said the grant will also provide for the planting of fruit trees.

Dr. Ralph Noble, the dean of the university's newly established College of Agriculture and Family and Consumer Sciences, also spoke during the press conference.

"We'll be bringing resources to help both the rural and urban community to attempt to address the greenhouse gas emissions and global warming problems," Noble said.

S.C. State President Alexander Conyers said Noble brought the expertise the university needed to bolster its College of Agriculture, which has been nonexistent at the university since 1971.

"He comes to us as a former dean of the College of Agriculture and Family and Consumer Sciences at Fort Valley State University. He's worked at North Carolina A&T. He's a graduate of Tuskegee (University). So he has the exact background that we need to stand up this College of Agriculture," Conyers said.



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He also said the university will be putting a focus on research, including pursuing a path to make S.C. State an R-2 university. Higher education institutions are classified as R-2 if they graduate about 20 doctoral students each year and spend approximately \$5 million a year on research activities.

"I believe South Carolina State can get there, but to do that we must be intentional. Until we're in a position to hire a standalone vice president of research, I've tapped Dr. Louis Whitesides to serve as the vice president of research in addition to his current duties," Conyers said.

The president continued, "He will map out a blueprint for the university to follow, which includes spending additional money in research, graduating more students with PhDs and perhaps identifying another program where we can offer a PhD."

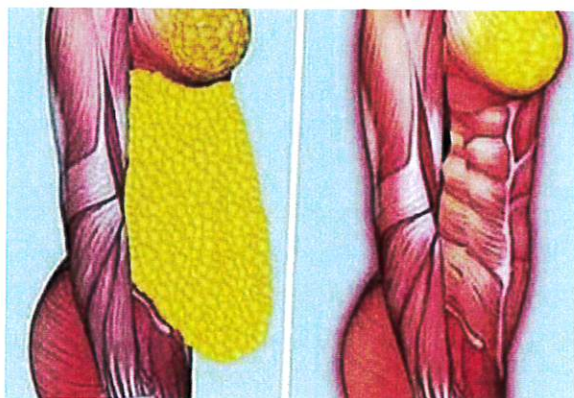
“I would like to offer another PhD that will help us maintain the minimum of 20 doctoral degrees that must be awarded each year. Currently we only offer a doctoral degree in education, and we hover around the 20 mark every year. However, we need another program that will shore up those numbers in the event there’s an off year and we don’t graduate 20 doctoral candidates in education,” he said.

In the meantime, he said he is happy about the partnerships the university has made to fulfill its service mission, including the valued partnership which S.C. State has made with the USDA.

“We often talk about the great things that we do here at South Carolina State University. We certainly could not do these great things alone. We know that for us to be great, to be our very best, it takes partnerships and collaboration,” Conyers said.

Contact the writer: dgleaton@timesanddemocrat.com or 803-533-5534. Follow “Good News with Gleaton” on Twitter at @DionneTandD

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