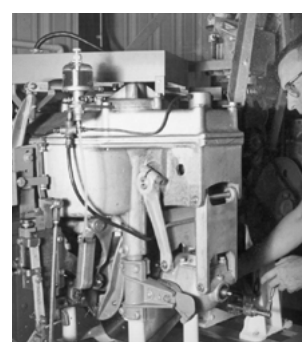
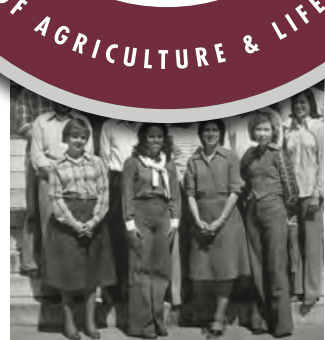


2022-2023

INFLUENCE

Alumni Newsletter

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE & LIFE SCIENCES
MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY



INFLUENCE

2022-2023

Alumni Newsletter

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
Mississippi State University

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Keith Coble Vice President, DAFVM

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Darrell Sparks Associate Dean

Cory Gallo Interim Assistant Dean

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Sean Fox Agricultural Economics

Christy Bratcher Animal & Dairy Sciences

Daniel Peterson (interim) Biochemistry, Molecular Biology,
Entomology & Plant Pathology

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On the cover: University archival footage of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, which celebrates 120 years

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Letter from the Dean

GREETINGS from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) at Mississippi State University.

This year the college celebrates 120 years of growing agricultural leaders. The School of Agriculture informally began in 1892, twelve years after the first students were enrolled in Mississippi A&M. At that time, students could study agriculture or mechanical arts/engineering.

In 1903, the School of Agriculture was formally established. The next year the Department of Dairy Husbandry was the first department in the school to offer degrees. At the time, Oktibbeha County had over 800 small dairy farms, earning the county the nickname of “Little Wisconsin,” and “Milk Pitcher of the South.”

As enrollment grew, so did majors, buildings, and faculty within the college. And today, 120 years later we continue to evolve and grow. You will find more information about our 120 years in this newsletter. And while we are celebrating twelve decades, we continually look forward to new opportunities and new growth.

Our student enrollment has remained steady over the last two years at around 2,500 students. We awarded 571 degrees in the 2021-2022 academic year and 657 degrees in the 2022-2023 academic year. To expand our enrollment, we continually develop new online offerings to assist our alumni around the globe in advancing their education while managing family and careers. New master’s and doctoral programs are now available in agronomy, horticulture, and weed science. We also have a new Master of Science in agriculture with a concentration in engineering technology.

We have new leadership in the college. I took the helm in 2022 and assembled a leadership team that includes Dr. Darrell Sparks, associate dean, and Mr. Cory Gallo, interim assistant dean. Sparks is

a professor in the Department of Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, Entomology and Plant Pathology. He formerly served as interim state chemist and director of the Mississippi State Chemical Lab. Gallo is a landscape architecture professor. New leadership was also been added to the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station (MAFES). Dr. Angus Catchot, extension professor in the Department of Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, Entomology and Plant Pathology is the new associate director for MAFES operations. Dr. Jamie Larson, professor in the Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences, is the associate director of MAFES research.

We also have new heads in several departments. Dr. Sean Fox became the new head of Agricultural Economics and Dr. Jeff Gore became the new head of the Delta Research and Extension Center, both on November 1. Dr. Ken Macklin is the new Poultry Science department head, joining the department in February. Dr. Christy Bratcher began leading the Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences in July.

We have many construction projects ongoing. Ballew Hall, the former meat laboratory, is being remolded with an expected completion date of 2025. Ballew will become the administrative building for CALs and MAFES. Dorman Hall is also being remodeled. Dorman houses Plant and Soil Sciences and Biochemistry. We have several projects on the farms including a new greenhouse on North Farm and a new Livestock Assessment Facility on South Farm.

Our alumni and friends continually provide for our faculty and students with gifts to the college. We received over \$9.4 million in gifts to CALs and MAFES. We awarded 627 scholarships totaling over \$754,000 during Fall 2022-Spring 2023, an increase of over \$258,000. We



are grateful for your support of student scholarships, faculty development, new construction, and so much more. In this issue of Influence, we highlight a few gifts including the creation of the LandLab by Michael and Rebecca Bogan. The Bogans, both landscape architecture alumni, created the LandLab, a multi-dimensional “print” facility to bring student designs to life. We also feature Charlie Weatherly, alumnus and long-time fundraiser for the college.

Fitting for our 120 celebration is a feature on Dr. Bill Fox, former dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

These are just a few of the many features in this issue of Influence. We are always excited to present features on a few of the 18,000 alumni in our college. Our alumni community continues to lead in agriculture, life sciences, and every realm of society.

I hope that you enjoy reading this issue of Influence. We hope to see you at CALs events during the Fall including the 2023 Homecoming social when we will celebrate 120 years of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Thank you for all you do for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. I hope to see you soon. *Hail State!*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott Willard". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Scott Willard
Dean

2022 DISTINGUISHED FELLOWS

IN 2018, THE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES developed the Distinguished Fellows award program to recognize outstanding alumni in nine different departments. In 2022, Distinguished Fellows are recognized as alumni who demonstrate significant professional accomplishments and have shown a commitment to Mississippi State University. By choosing Fellows who possess excellent qualities and traits, we hope to instill these characteristics in our current students. These alumni are active in the Mississippi State community and help provide direction for the future of both the departments and the college.

The Distinguished Fellows program acknowledges outstanding alumni in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences as well as exposes students to the rich tradition of service and dedication found within our alumni base.



Brian Neal Atkins

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL & BIOLOGICAL ENGINEERING

Mr. Brian Neal Atkins (Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Engineering Technology and Business 1995, and Master of Science in Agricultural Information Science 1997) has 25 years' worth of experience in the agricultural industry. The Hamilton, Mississippi native has championed peanuts as a Midsouth agricultural commodity for 15 years, obtaining a \$1 million grant in 2009 from the State of Mississippi Legislature to build infrastructure for the advancement of peanuts in the state. He also obtained an industry initiative package to locate a buying point in Arkansas and collaborated with Birdsong Peanuts to secure funds and tax incentives to build a new facility in Portia, Arkansas. As owner of the Mississippi Peanut Supply & Equipment Company, he manages 20 employees with \$6 million of annual sales. He also owns Peanut Express Trucking Company. As buying point manager and procurement officer for Birdsong Peanuts for the last 15 years, Mr. Atkins oversees the purchase of more than 30,000 tons of peanuts at the Aberdeen Buying Point, managing seven full-time and 30 part time employees. Prior to that, he spent 10 years as Lowndes County director for the MSU Extension Service. He and his wife Misti have been married 24 years and have three daughters.



Hunter H. Moorhead Jr.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

Mr. Hunter H. Moorhead Jr. (Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Economics 1997) is Senior Partner at Crossroads Strategies (CRS), a bipartisan, multi-disciplinary federal relations, advocacy, and advisory firm in Washington, D.C. In 2014, Crossroads Strategies' partners created Public Policy Holding Company, a grouping of similar government affairs and public relations entities. Through monitoring and impacting the legislative process, Moorhead works to secure federal funds for specific programs and impact the legislative process. Due to years of exceptional client service, he retains clients across the agricultural, financial services, health, and telecommunications policy arenas. Previously, Moorhead served in the Mississippi Congressional delegation offices of Congressman Mike Parker and U.S. Senator Thad Cochran. In addition, he spent nearly six years as staff for the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations. He also served on staff for the White House National Economic Council (NEC). As Special Assistant to former President George W. Bush, he provided policy oversight and direction for agricultural and energy policy and helped develop the Administration's 2008 Farm Policy proposals and "Twenty in Ten" energy policy. The Oxford, Mississippi native and his wife, Amanda, reside in his hometown and have two young sons.



Keylon Gholston

DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL & DAIRY SCIENCES

Mr. Keylon Gholston (Bachelor of Science in Animal Science 1978) has spent 44 years in agriculture. He is currently CEO of Gholston Consulting, LLC, and Gholston Farms, LLC. He served as Cotton Product Manager for Bayer U.S. and Monsanto for a combined 15 years. He oversaw the Delta & Pine Land Co. as Vice President of the Eastern Division for 10 years. Prior to that, he held leadership roles for Paymaster Cottonseed and Northrup King Seeds. He is past president of both the Mississippi Seedsmen Association and the Mississippi Agriculture Industry Council. He is the recipient of numerous awards including the Bayer Crop Science Commercial Impact Award in 2020, the Bayer Crop Science Spirit of Collaboration Award in 2019, and the Monsanto Company Above and Beyond Award in 2018. Gholston and his wife, Teresa, whom he met while attending MSU, live in Baldwyn and have four children and 12 grandchildren. All their children are MSU graduates, and the couple looks forward to their grandchildren attending MSU as well.



John C. Rabby

DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMISTRY,
MOLECULAR BIOLOGY, ENTOMOLOGY
AND PLANT PATHOLOGY

Mr. John Rabby (Bachelor of Science in Entomology 1977 and Master of Science in Integrated Pest Management 1979) has more than 30 years' experience in global agribusiness development. In 2011, he founded RE LLC, a global agribusiness consulting firm, which is actively engaged in agricultural projects around the globe. From 2013-2019, he became president and CEO of AgBiome Innovations, a North-Carolina based biotechnology company. He is currently on AgBiome's board of directors. Prior to that, Rabby had various leadership roles in agricultural companies including ADAMA Ltd., a global crop protection company, where he was president and CEO of the North American Business Unit and a global director on the executive board. Prior to that, he spent more than 20 years in leadership roles with American Cyanamid Company and BASF, which purchased American Cyanamid in 2000. He is currently the elected chairman of the North Carolina Biotechnology Center's Board of Directors, a state funded non-profit focused on life sciences startups in North Carolina. The Wiggins, Mississippi native is married and has three children and one grandchild and resides in Wake Forest, N.C.



Mike Lewis

DEPARTMENT OF FOOD SCIENCE, NUTRITION
AND HEALTH PROMOTION

Dr. Michael Lewis (Bachelor of Science and Master of Science in Animal Science 1974, 1977) received his Ph.D. in Animal Science from the University of Nebraska in 1988. At Cargill, Lewis built a dynamic team that successfully managed a large animal feed business within Cargill's Corn processing business. Serving feedlots, dairies, and global aquaculture industries, the team built complex systems of integrated product, supply chain, and marketing systems supported by innovative technologies and brands that substantially changed the markets they served. They provide millions of tons of unique animal feed products through just-in-time logistical systems utilizing multi-mode transit systems. Lewis credits MSU for instilling valuable technical knowledge as well as teaching him to think deeply, challenge everything, and to see things others don't see. He credits his development as a leader and innovator at MSU as foundational to his business success. The Starkville native; his wife, Patricia; and four of their five children attended MSU. After spending over 30 years of life in the Midwest, the couple now enjoy the serenity of their small farm back in Mississippi. They also enjoy watching the MSU Bulldogs.



Martha Ray Sartor

SCHOOL OF HUMAN SCIENCES

Dr. Martha Ray Sartor (Bachelor of Science in Home Economics Education 1980) currently serves as the Associate Vice President for Family and Consumer Sciences and 4-H Youth Development with the University of Arkansas, Division of Agriculture, Cooperative Extension Service. After earning her bachelor's degree at MSU, she continued her education at the University of Mississippi where she received a Master of Secondary Education and a Ph.D. in Educational Administration while working for the MSU Extension Service in the Mississippi Delta. Her career with the MSU Extension Service spanned 26 years where she served as an agent in four Delta counties, an area financial management specialist in Greenville, 4-H specialist on campus, and as a district administrator in Hattiesburg. In Arkansas, she has served 14.5 years as a district and state administrator. She currently is responsible for the \$15-million-dollar Arkansas 4-H Center, working with the Arkansas 4-H Foundation that manages a \$9.5 million portfolio, and 4-H/family and consumer sciences programs that garner \$8-\$10 million in grants and contracts annually. Sartor resides in Little Rock, but often returns to her childhood home in Ripley, Mississippi, where she plans to retire.



Glenn LaRue Smith

DEPARTMENT OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Mr. Glenn LaRue Smith (Bachelor of Landscape Architecture 1975) is principal and co-founder of PUSH Studio, LLC in Washington, DC. He earned his Master of Landscape Architecture at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. His 40-year career focuses on cultural landscape and urbanism. His projects range from urban waterfronts, community redevelopment, and memorial design. His academic work includes chairmanships in landscape architecture programs at Florida A&M University and Morgan State University, both HBCUs. In 2012, Smith founded the Black Landscape Architects Network (BlackLAN), a nonprofit organization that supports, mentors, and helps increase the number of Black designers in the profession. As BlackLAN president, he spearheaded the establishment of the Edward Lyons Pryce FASLA scholarship program. This role has allowed Smith to mentor the next generation of Black landscape architecture professionals for fifteen years. Currently, the 21-year resident of Washington, D.C. is working with the Hillside/Barry Farm Historic Preservation Committee, to preserve five buildings remaining from a former public housing development. He is also a member of the Trust for the National Mall and the Beyond Granite Steering Committee, which is developing a model for temporary commemorative works in Washington, D.C. Smith continues to work for cultural equity in landscapes through his work on memorial and monument design and environmental justice.



Joe Bouton

DEPARTMENT OF PLANT AND SOIL SCIENCES

Dr. Joseph H. Bouton (Bachelor of Science in Agronomy 1972) also earned a bachelor's in physical education from MSU in 1970 and his master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Florida, in 1974 and 1977, respectively. The Washington County native grew up on a family farm in the Mississippi Delta where his family farmed cotton and soybeans. He served as a crop and soil sciences professor at the University of Georgia for 27 years. Bouton's academic and research efforts focused on crop breeding, genetics, and forage management. In 2004, he became founding director of the Forage Improvement Division and senior vice president at the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation (now Noble Research Institute) in Ardmore, Oklahoma. In 2012, he founded Bouton Consulting Group, LLC to review private and public forage research programs nationally and internationally. He sought to help farmers by developing better forage and bioenergy varieties, releasing 30 varieties, with 12 still in commercial production. He and his wife, Mary Jeanne, also a MSU alumnus, created the Mary Jeanne and Joseph Bouton Endowed Scholarship in 2018. The Boutons have three children and six grandchildren. They are avid supporters of MSU's College of Agriculture and Life Science, College of Education, and M-Club Alumni Association.



Sherman Miller

DEPARTMENT OF POULTRY SCIENCE

Mr. Sherman L. Miller (Bachelor of Science in Poultry Science 1997) serves as the President and COO of Cal-Maine Foods, the largest producer and distributor of fresh shell eggs in the United States. With more than twenty-five years of service at Cal-Maine Foods, Miller is a widely recognized protein industry expert who inspires more than 3,200 colleagues in their efforts to provide high-quality food choices that nourish a growing global population. As president, Miller leads the company's longstanding commitment to operating excellence, sustainable food production, and scalable innovation. Miller launched his career with Cal-Maine Foods at its flagship Edwards, Mississippi operation in 1996. He earned roles of increasing responsibility and scope at the company and has served as president since 2018 and COO since 2011. He was elected to the Cal-Maine Foods Board of Directors in 2012. He is considered a thought leader in the poultry and egg industry and offers his expertise and service to notable profit and not-for-profit boards. His current and prior board service includes his contributions to the United Egg Producers, the U.S. Poultry and Egg Association, and the Mississippi State University Department of Poultry Science Advisory Board, among others. 🐾

No Place Like

H O M E

CALS landscape architecture
alumni return to roots to
create a sense of place

BY VANESSA BEESON

AFTER PURSUING OPPORTUNITIES in places far from Mississippi in both distance and design, oftentimes, MSU alumni return home to reinvest in the Magnolia State. Three landscape architecture alumni did just that. From constructing projects in Harvard and Houston, Abbey Franovich is now back in Starkville. Odie Avery created landscapes in the Upper Midwest before returning to his hometown of Eupora. Travis Crabtree, who studied post-industrial urbanism in Detroit, is now in Jackson, where he grew up.

CREATIVITY MEETS ENGINEERING

ABBEY FRANOVICH planned to play music for a living but found her calling constructing physical spaces while teaching the next generation of landscape architects how to create a sense of place.

The '17 Bachelor of Landscape Architecture alumna was all set to be a flutist, playing from age seven and attending a prestigious fine arts academy. Right before college, however, a change of heart led her to landscape architecture.

"Ultimately, I didn't see playing flute as financially stable so the July after my senior year, I explored other options in Mississippi," Franovich said.

The Madison native enjoyed engineering and psychology, considering both as majors, but also wanted to create.

"My mom suggested landscape architecture, which checked all the boxes," she said. "It blended the sociology of how people behave in spaces along with engineering and creativity. Looking back, it was the perfect degree."

After graduating MSU, she studied urban design at the Graduate School of Design at Harvard with a small, diverse cohort of students from across the world.

"I learned so much about the world and diverse cultures. It was an extraordinarily rich experience and living in a big city was something new for me," she said.

A professor there asked if she planned to return to Mississippi to practice rural design.

"At the time, I didn't think I would but looking back, my professor was on to something. She saw the huge need for design investment in our communities," Franovich remembered.

After Harvard, she worked in a national urban planning and design firm in Houston that designed corporate campuses; healthcare facilities; parks; mixed use, retail, and revitalization projects.

"At first, I was an assistant designer focused on campus design and mixed-use development revitalization planning then I took a management role focused on mixed use and park design," she said.

The opportunity to make an impact in Mississippi compelled her to apply to MSU.

"I always wanted to return to academia.

I was interested in MSU because there were things I learned at Harvard and in practice I wished I had learned as an undergrad. I felt like there was a unique skillset in design and fabrication I wanted to bring to the program," she said.

Franovich also sought to be a female role model for students.

"Nationally, landscape architecture female students outnumber males, but in our program, 75 percent of our students are male, and 25 percent are female. I wanted to help create an environment where women have someone they can look up to and see what they can do in landscape architecture while helping to increase our female and minority enrollment," she said.

Franovich helped bring fabrication capabilities to the department.

"At Harvard, we made things all the time. If we had an idea, we had to create a three-dimensional model. I struggled with that because I didn't really have that experience in undergrad. My biggest mission was creating a fabrication space here where students can test out their ideas in three dimension and see how things come together and are built," she said.

Thanks to a donation from Michael and

Rebecca Bogan, two landscape architecture alumni, Franovich's idea for a land lab, with laser cutters, CNC routers, and 3-D printers, where students can easily build tactile models, became a reality.

"It's exciting for our students to make things and see the benefit of making things, and for the future of our program," she said.

Franovich also seeks to increase food access for Mississippi residents. As an undergrad, she helped design the MSU Community Garden, developing an interest in sustainable systems and food security.

"Food is something that's always talked about in Mississippi. We have this rich fertile land and agriculture, yet we're the most food insecure state in the nation," Franovich said.

In 2021, Franovich oversaw the building and installation of a blues-themed learning garden in the Delta, which was the state's third MSU learning garden.

"We're investing in schools in low income,

low resource areas, identifying schools that would benefit from a learning garden" she said.

Future plans include a grant in collaboration with the Department of Food Science, Nutrition and Health Promotion and the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences to identify missing links in the food system in Starkville.

Whatever the community needs, Franovich is interested in finding design solutions to address them while teaching students of all ages.

"I want to educate children and youth about our profession and engage local communities, whether that's collaborating with a high school wood shop class on a design build project or teaching community members trade skills on a community project," she said.



Abbey Franovich (photo by Robby Lozano)

SMALL TOWN, BIG POSSIBILITIES

ODIE AVERY, '13 Master of Landscape Architecture alumnus, sits in his 1909 folk Victorian home in Eupora, Mississippi. The house has a gabled roof, bay windows with beveled glass, and a wrap-around porch. Original beadboard runs along the wall in what will become the living room. In other rooms, the board has been removed to be refurbished then reattached. Stacks of spindles, boards, and hardware await to be restored and reused. As Avery restores this home, he also works to improve the town where he grew up. As director of public works since June 2022, he's helping reshape the town that helped shape him.

"My experience in urban and city planning, project management, and community engagement is a good fit here, especially since leadership and community organizers have already been moving things forward. I oversee the street department and the water and wastewater department while managing the duties of the building official code enforcement officer, and planning and zoning administrator. It sounds like a lot, but I'm loving every minute of it," he said.



Odie Avery (photo by Vanessa Beeson)

He's excited about the community's growth and momentum.

"It's wonderful to see people who I grew up with have moved back and new people who make their home here. We have great leadership in our Mayor and Board of Aldermen. We also have engaged citizens who want to see our city reach its full potential," he said.

Avery is focused on updating the city's water infrastructure. The team has a project designed and shovel ready that will address the older parts of town once funding is approved. Street improvement is also planned with \$700,000 allocated in funding.

Avery also serves on the mayor's economic development committee.

"Through the economic development committee, the city has received several grants that have been used for community events, police department resources and supplies, and improvements to our parks and playgrounds. The city also passed a rental housing ordinance and has revised many of the processes and procedures for how day-to-day operations are managed for greater efficiency," he said.

Prior to his current role, Avery worked for the City of Starkville as assistant city planner.

"I went to MSU with the city planner who has been an exceptional mentor. He understood the opportunity in Eupora wasn't something that came along every day, and he knew in my heart I wanted to be involved in the day-to-day in my hometown," Avery said.

Before the smaller towns of Eupora and Starkville, Avery was in urban planning in big cities in the Upper Midwest, designing and planting gardens across Detroit and designing high-end residential landscape projects in Chicago's North Shore along Lake Michigan.

"The experience of designing large-scale projects in Chicago helps me in my role here. Everything seems manageable because I have experience organizing and managing very large, multifaceted projects," he said.

After Chicago, Avery designed school gardens in Detroit's urban core.

"I was project manager for a non-profit focused on empowering students in schools to grow their own food. I utilized my experience in landscape design to help create unique spaces and outdoor classrooms where students could learn and grow," he said.

In all, he designed and helped build 54 gardens in Detroit and supported gardens in Chicago and Indianapolis, building a total of eight in those vicinities while helping with nearly 125.

He said seeing how communities take care of each other gives him inspiration and ideas for Eupora as well.

"You don't have a strong town unless you have a strong community. Across the country we've gotten so disconnected from our communities. Seeing how people took care of each other in Detroit and the surrounding communities offered great insight into a system of grass roots, mutual aid, community building I had never experienced," he said.

The house is Avery's first historical restoration.

"When I moved back, I didn't intend to buy a historic property that needed a full renovation, but I've always wanted to restore an old house and I've watched this house since I was young. Also, an excellent group of preservationists in our community have inspired me to take on this project," he said.

In some ways, renovating a house is like working to improve a city, Avery notes.

"You make plans and know the direction you want to go in, but you must spend time strengthening the foundation. That's where we are in Eupora. We have plans and are developing more ideas as projects come to fruition but we're also doing the legwork now so when big projects begin, things move quickly," he said.

Avery said one of his favorite aspects of his hometown is its sense of community and place.

"Growing up here, I realized how important a sense of place is for helping a community thrive. As a landscape designer, I am always thinking about physical spaces I can help create to bring the community together," he said.

IMPACT INVESTING

TRAVIS CRABTREE, '15 Bachelor of Landscape Architecture alumnus, continued his design education in Detroit, Michigan. He was interested in learning how to rebuild cities that once thrived but succumbed to divestment, deindustrialization, and suburbanization. He entered the University of Michigan's Master of Urban Design program, which concentrated on critical thinking and creative design solutions within post-industrial settings such as Detroit and other Rust Belt cities. His time spent there inspired him to return to Jackson, a place that was experiencing similar challenges.

Crabtree practices urban design and adaptive reuse architecture in Jackson. He is an urban planner for the city, a nonprofit project manager, an urban design consultant, and a real estate developer. The Plant is one of the projects that keeps him busy.

Crabtree purchased and renovated the formerly abandoned pipe warehouse to function as a business incubator space and event venue. Located in the industrial park west of the fast-growing Fondren neighborhood, the project aims to exhibit sustainable design strategies like reducing energy consumption, capturing stormwater runoff, producing food onsite, and sequestering carbon using native landscape.

"Our goal was to provide a venue that could showcase sustainable design solutions for our region," he said.

He explained the building's stormwater runoff is captured in a cistern, which irrigates the building's plants. Excess stormwater is stored in an onsite constructed wetland to demonstrate ways to help mitigate Jackson's flooding problems. Additionally, the building is

designed to be passive in its energy use.

"Windows face north to avoid direct sun, so the temperature stays cooler, and the building is white to reflect light instead of absorbing it," Crabtree explained.

The facility has evolved in how it functions as a business based on local challenges like the Jackson water crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic. The space has cycled through providing office space, a local makers market, and more.

"Today much of the focus is centered around helping to host public and private events," Crabtree said.

The Plant is a small fraction of Crabtree's efforts in the Capital City. From 2018-2020, working for the City of Jackson Planning Department as director of long-range planning, his efforts helped secure more than \$2.5 million in funding for public space projects. The projects range in type, scale, and location. He co-developed the concept and secured funding for The Oneline Project, a transit-oriented development corridor that extends five miles along Main Street from the Fondren neighborhood through Downtown to Jackson State University. Also, while working with the city, Crabtree co-founded the Fertile Ground nonprofit, a public art and space initiative, supported by the Bloomberg Philanthropies Public Art Challenge, which addresses food accessibility issues in Jackson. With several collaborators, including MSU's Department of Landscape Architecture and the Department of Art's graphic design students, they deployed an edible learning garden that served as an outdoor classroom. Local Jackson artists painted murals and created public art installations across the city highlighting themes that reflected Jackson's food accessibility issues. The project was accompanied by food-focused events and virtual workshops. The team also produced a documentary titled *Fertile Ground*, addressing Mississippi food insecurity, which won a Southeastern Emmy.

Today, Crabtree consults with local developers and organizations under his company TREE. Recent projects include working with Mississippi writer John T. Edge and philanthropist Ray Neilsen, to lead the master planning effort for



Travis Crabtree (photo by Ansley Morgan)

Greenfield Farm, a proposed retreat-style writers' residency, set on a 20-acre mule farm once owned by William Faulkner in Oxford, Mississippi. Crabtree also has been assisting in the design of the Museum Trail, a multiuse trail and greenway that connects Jackson's public space amenities and the Capital Arts District, a one block area in downtown where the arts institutions are located.

Crabtree took an interest in landscape architecture early on.

"I started landscape contracting work at age 15 through college, developing a passion to create landscapes. I knew I wanted a degree in landscape architecture," he said.

Crabtree noted his MSU experience opened a world of opportunities for him.

"The BLA program defined how I approach architecture today. My mentors pushed the theory of using design as a creative problem-solving tool. I owe a lot to them, particularly Professor **Cory Gallo**," says Crabtree. "Today I apply that methodology in Jackson."

Crabtree says Jackson's biggest challenge is retaining residents.

"Many people are leaving the city and the state for better employment opportunities and access to more livable communities. If some of my projects can incrementally move the needle toward making Jackson a more livable place where people want to live, grow, and invest, I will feel like I have created an impact." 🐾

THE JEAN FITS

CALS alumna assists with national made-to-measure jean company

BY TREY BARRETT

WHAT STARTED as a young girl creating clothing for her many dolls eventually turned into an active career in fashion design for Franklin, Tennessee native **Michelle Jean**. The 2019 MSU fashion design and merchandising alumna always knew she had this passion for fashion.

“Fashion design had always excited me and was something that I could see myself doing for a while,” Jean said.

Jean’s love for fashion led her to Mississippi State, majoring in fashion design and merchandising with a product development and design concentration.

As an undergrad, Jean sought opportunities to expand her knowledge and experience. In 2017, she studied abroad in France and Italy while taking a class about historic costumes. The following summer, she secured her first internship as a production intern with Isoude, a Boston-based retail luxury company that creates custom collections for women.

“I was a part of the product development side of the company, meaning I helped test fabrics, make patterns, and create product books,” Jean said.

Jean secured the internship with the assistance of **Dr. Catherine Black**, a professor in the fashion design and merchandising program at MSU. Black steered her toward opportunities that complimented her career ambitions.

“Dr. Black was our internship placement teacher, so she was really helpful with suggestions, locations, and connections when I needed an

internship during my junior year,” Jean said.

It was during one of Black’s courses, computer-aided design (CAD) that Jean found her future employer, unbeknownst to her at the time. Blue Delta Jeans representatives were guest speakers for the course.

The Tupelo, Mississippi-based company produces made-to-measure fitted jeans that are handsewn. Each jean is made with raw denim, the purest form of denim that remains untouched after the dyeing and sanitation process, creating a durable pair of jeans.

“While looking for a job after graduation, I remembered Blue Delta had come to my CAD class in the spring, so I decided to reach out,” Jean said. “Company representatives were in Nashville for an event, near where I live. They interviewed me and I got the job.”

Jean has worked with Blue Delta Jeans since July 2019. Initially a design intern, Jean later became a pattern maker that same month. In this role, Jean worked with new fabrics to create contemporary patterns for jeans tailored to individual customers.

“It is cool to see all of the differences I can make with every new fabric and every discovery that can emerge with each new style,” Jean said. “I even have a custom pattern I can pair with different fabrics to create new styles and stains.”

After a customer orders a pair of Blue Delta jeans, they are first measured by tailors to create a custom pattern. Sixteen measurements, including

waist and inseam, are gathered to make the one-of-a-kind denim pants. The information is then loaded into CAD where Jean designs the pattern for the sewing team to create the jeans.

“Since I make the patterns, I can go in and tweak it to create a new pattern to test things out,” Jean said. “I’ve tested my pattern on skinny, bootcut, and flare jeans. This makes it easy to explain these patterns and styles to clients since I’ve had experience making them.”

In January 2022, Jean became the director of design and alterations. She works closely with alterations based on customers’ needs. Blue Delta’s customer service team gathers information from each client. Jean then decides how to remedy each alteration for each client and give it to the staff to fix.

Since Jean started at Blue Delta, the company has grown its audience from local Tupelo and Oxford residents to celebrities and professional athletes.

“At first I made patterns for local residents, and then suddenly it’s for a professional football player, country singer, or an actor,” Jean said. “I love our ability to reach a wider clientele who are all coming together for this great fitting pair of jeans.”

Even with the company’s national fame, Jean said she still enjoys working with the team she’s grown to love.

“As the team grows, we continue learning from each other. It’s a team I am happy to be a part of,” Jean said. 🐾

Michelle Jean (photo submitted)



MAKING A HEALTHY IMPACT

CALS alumna aims to positively impact familial health

BY TREY BARRETT

WHEN JE'KLYNN STEEN first arrived at Mississippi State University as a first-generation undergraduate in 2015, she had her heart set on becoming a family doctor or pediatrician. The Memphis, Tennessee native grew up seeing many illnesses in her community, sparking a passion for health and helping others as a doctor.

However, Steen quickly realized she would find more fulfillment and make a greater impact working with families to better their health through education rather than becoming a medical doctor.

“After I learned how the health care system works, I knew I was not going to be able to make the impact that I wanted to make as a doctor. I found the human development and family science major and it incorporated child and youth development, risk and resilience and family interactions—all areas I wanted to better understand,” Steen said.

As a human development and family science major, Steen was able to translate her love for her family to other families.

“As I got further into the department, my interests were less about directly treating families and addressing health issues. Instead, I wanted to learn how families

function and how health beliefs and behaviors can stem from families,” Steen said.

Steen wanted to explore how she could make a positive impact on families and their health in addition to her classroom learning. She found the answer when she heard **Dr. David Buys** speak at a seminar. Buys is an associate professor in the Department of Food Science, Nutrition and Health Promotion and MSU Extension state health specialist.

“The very first day I met with Dr. Buys, he helped clarify what my specific interests were and how he could help facilitate those interests. I initially asked to shadow him, but he thought a more hands-on experience would be better,” Steen said. “He suggested the Junior Master Wellness Program, which provided me an opportunity to collaborate with the outreach program.”

The Junior Master Wellness Program, a community health education and volunteer leader training program through the MSU Extension 4-H Program, was Steen’s first internship while in the department.

The program is a collaboration in partnership with the University of Mississippi Medical Center (UMMC) and the UMMC/Myrlie Evers-Williams Institute.

“The program trains high school students to become peer health educators. I had the opportunity to create new interactive materials for the students,” Steen said. “I helped create an anti-bullying module describing what bullying is, while creating new activities and editing existing ones. I also helped introduce topics like substance use within the curriculum with the help of Reagan Moak, a community health intern and former biochemistry pre-medicine student at MSU.”

Steen earned her bachelor’s at MSU in 2019 before continuing as a graduate research assistant to pursue a master’s in health promotion that same year. As an assistant, Steen was also involved with the PROMISE Initiative, aimed at preventing opioid misuse across the Southeast.

“When I started working on my graduate degree, I was primarily leading youth and adult mental health first aid trainings. We traveled to places all over Mississippi to train counselors, teachers, and other individuals,” Steen said.

The eagerness to educate people on health issues and the hands-on nature of both projects gave Steen the confidence to continue her studies as a Ph.D. student at Auburn University.



Je'Kylynn Steen (photo by Molly Bartels, Auburn University)



“The more I learned, the more I realized that health outcomes are a systemic issue as well as an education issue. This knowledge motivated me to continue in my studies to make a bigger impact,” Steen said.

Buys and Mary Nelson Robertson, an assistant professor in the School of Human Sciences, were influential in helping Steen recognize her potential to make an impact as a health specialist.

“Dr. Buys was instrumental in connecting me with other professionals who helped me navigate certain spaces

as a Black woman and first generation student. At times, I was insecure being underrepresented in certain spaces, but he and Mary Nelson helped me realize my background was not something to be ashamed of,” Steen said. “They reinstated the aspect of the lived and professional experiences I have and helped me translate that in my academic pursuits. I want to build a bridge between the university and the community.”

Steen has continued to sharpen her skills as an educator through the Alabama Youth Relationship Education

project, bridging research with the community, while at Auburn. After college, she has the desire to become either an extension specialist or work for a federal health organization.

No matter where she goes, however, Steen will always recognize the impact her Mississippi State family has had in her life.

“No matter what the future holds, I know my State family will always uplift me,” Steen said. “They mean so much to me and have a lot of love for what I have accomplished.” 🐾

LEADERS *from* AGRICULTURE

CALS alumni serve
the world while staying
true to their roots

BY MEG HENDERSON



EACH YEAR, we profile CALS alumni who are leaders in their respective fields. Our leaders from agriculture this year have made substantial marks on the national and global agricultural industry, but they all credit their achievements to their educational experiences at MSU. **Michael Maxey**, a retired four-decade USAID employee with numerous directorships over his career, has led large-scale community development efforts from Latin America and the Caribbean to the Middle East. **Robert Hosford**, Executive Director of the North Carolina Agricultural Finance Authority, has managed government projects and policy on behalf of farmers in the U.S. and abroad. **Josh Moore's** 20-year career with Cal-Maine Foods, Inc. has taken him from the processing floor to Vice-President of Operations for Ohio and Kentucky. Although she is relatively early in her career, **Rachel Lee** is assisting Louisiana farmers as USDA-FSA County Executive Director.

LOCAL SOLUTIONS, GLOBAL IMPACT

GRENADA NATIVE MICHAEL MAXEY attended MSU, majoring in agronomy. He had read about Brazil as the last frontier and in his classes was able to meet Brazilian students. Curious to experience the country himself, he joined the Peace Corps and was assigned to Brazil as an agriculture extension agent for two years. He returned to MSU and completed a master's degree with some of the same Brazilians – this time, speaking with them in Portuguese and better understanding the challenges they faced in strengthening their national agriculture sector. Peace Corps showed Maxey the importance of listening to local farmers to better understand their constraints and aspirations.

This international experience preceded a long career that would take him back to Latin America and the Middle East. Maxey began his nearly four-decade career with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) in 1978,



Michael Maxey (photo submitted)

serving as an agronomist managing a national seed production program in Guinea-Bissau, West Africa. He later became a commissioned foreign service officer and a career USAID agricultural specialist. His assignments included nine countries—Barbados, East Caribbean, Honduras, Costa Rica, Peru, Nicaragua, Iraq, Gaza, and Yemen. Throughout his career, Maxey focused on helping local communities in a way that could be scaled to a higher level for maximum impact.

This focus on local solutions was evident in Maxey's tenure in Peru as director of the USAID Alternative Development Program. His work found legal and economically sustainable crop alternatives for Peruvian coca farmers to replace the plant used in cocaine production.

Based on an agricultural survey of the coca production areas, large expanses of heirloom varieties of Arabica coffee were discovered. Teaming with Jim Stewart, Seattle's Best Coffee founder, a gourmet coffee program was launched to provide small-scale farmers access to premium markets and higher returns for their production. This work directly linked Peruvian farmers to the U.S. gourmet sectors for the first time and resulted in the design of a global coffee strategy under an agreement between USAID and the specialty coffee industry signed in 2000. Based on this agreement, coffee projects were funded in Colombia, Guatemala, Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda, Laos, and other countries.

"That was the first time Peru had been on the map in the gourmet coffee sector," Maxey said. "Now it's readily available at any Starbucks or Whole Foods."

After Peru, Maxey served in different countries but always with a focus on finding ways to help small-scale farmers create a better life for themselves and their families.

Maxey's service was meaningful and important, but it took him to dangerous places. While serving in Lima, he faced a near-death experience while attending an event at the residence of Morihisa Aoki, then the Japanese ambassador to Peru. On December 17, 1996, he was taken hostage, along with over 600 others, by the Movimiento Revolucionario

Tupac Amaru (MRTA), a Peruvian Marxist guerilla group. Maxey spent five days in a small room with 27 colleagues and foreign diplomats. He endured gunfire, tear gas, heat, and constant fear.

"When I was released, I wanted to leave immediately, but my family and I ended up staying for the next six years," he said.

Assignments followed in Nicaragua and Washington D.C. with Maxey retiring in 2007 only to be reappointed the following year as a foreign service officer assigned as USAID Representative on an Embedded Provincial Reconstruction Team (ePRT) in Iraq. During this 10-month counterinsurgency operation, his team established economic development programs including job training, small business financing, infrastructure improvements, and expanding schools, health clinics, and a regional fish farm. As a result of investing in local communities, violence against U.S. forces decreased. The ePRT team leader, Howard Van Vranken, described Maxey as a "rain-maker" who could deliver logistical solutions to address large-scale problems.

Recalling a comment by General David Petraeus during a briefing in which Maxey was explaining the community development programs his team had put in place, Petraeus said, "If you can give the people just a glimmer of hope about the future, they can change the world." This approach flowed from lessons that Maxey learned growing up in Mississippi, attending MSU, and working with small-scale farmers on four continents.

Today, Maxey resides with his family in Fairfax, Virginia and focuses his efforts on his family's foundation, which provides scholarships to Hispanic youth in Fairfax County for higher education or vocational training.

Looking back on the start he got at MSU, Maxey encourages students to investigate all the opportunities a university offers.

"Be intentional about what you do during those years," he said. "Also, the early years after graduation are a time to take risks and do things that you might not get to do later. Those choices could change the course of your life."

HELPING FARMING FAMILIES GROW STRONG

BORN INTO A FARMING family in Natchez, **Robert Hosford's** Mississippi roots run deep. While today, he resides in North Carolina with his daughter, his family was one of the first to settle Adams and Jefferson counties in the 1700s, and the family still lives on the property in Jefferson County. His grandfather, Joe Bullen, lived in Old Main and graduated from MSU. He was a USDA employee for over four decades and raised beef cattle and row crops on the family farm in Canton.

After graduating from MSU in Agricultural Communications, Hosford moved to Washington, D.C. to work for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association as associate director of agricultural policy.

"Going into that role, I thought I knew something because I grew up on a ranch," he said. "But I quickly learned that what went on in D.C. affected my family and neighbors, and it felt good to play a role in advocating on their behalf."

In the late 1990s, Hosford moved to Fort Worth, Texas to direct government relations and public affairs for the Texas and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association, a three-state organization with 20,000 members.

"I found myself leaning heavily on what I learned at MSU when I began this job since I was constantly working with media outlets, congressional delegations and state legislatures in Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and Washington, D.C.," he said.

While in Texas, Hosford began taking on private clients in industries including transportation, energy, and agribusiness interests but returned to Washington D.C. when he received a presidential appointment in the George W. Bush administration. For the next five years, Hosford served as Chief of Staff for the USDA's Farm Service Agency. His last four years at USDA were spent working for then



Robert Hosford (photo submitted)

Undersecretary for Farm and Foreign Agriculture Service (USDA/FFAS) Dr. Mark Keenum.

"As a policy maker, administrator, and statesman for American agriculture, Dr. Keenum embodies a life of service and leadership. Mississippi State is in great hands under his leadership" Hosford said.

At the end of the Bush administration, he was offered a position with the North Carolina Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services working with their international marketing staff. He traveled the globe with North Carolina agricultural producers, opening new markets in 29 countries.

"This was an incredible opportunity because I had seen the farming and policy sides of the industry, but then, I was looking squarely at the international market," Hosford said. "I learned how to work with other cultures and how markets and supply chains vary in different countries and regions."

One of the greatest challenges of Hosford's career came during his tenure, when he was appointed by the Trump administration as State Director of USDA's North Carolina Rural

Development Agency, where he led a team of 200 professionals and oversaw more than \$4 billion in state projects.

"When the pandemic hit, it presented my team with a number of challenges because most of our projects are infrastructure-based," he said. "However, we were able to complete projects in rural communities, such as rural hospitals, fire stations, police headquarters, town halls and schools in 80 out of the 100 counties in the state of North Carolina. I feel like that job brought me full circle because it often took me into rural communities like the one I grew up in."

Today, Hosford serves as Executive Director of the North Carolina Agricultural Finance Authority, where he manages all financial operations for state-based farm loans.

Looking back to his days at MSU, Hosford brings decades of perspective and sound advice for today's students.

"Find opportunities to volunteer through 4-H and FFA, but also seek out an internship over the summer. You're already building your network and your relationships," he said. "Who you know can be just as important as what you know."

LEARNING A BUSINESS FROM THE GROUND UP

JOSH MOORE grew up surrounded by agriculture in his hometown of Laurel. In high school, he was active in his high school's Future Farmers of America club and worked for his uncle's custom lumber cutting business. After receiving his associate degree in forestry from Jones County Junior College, Moore transferred to MSU's forestry program, ready to follow in his uncle's footsteps.

Moore studied forestry for a year, but at the time, the job market in that industry was tight. No longer certain about his career path, Moore went home and worked the next semester, hoping to refocus and return to school.

"A friend of mine encouraged me to enroll in the poultry science program with him. Although I did not know much about the industry, I knew that it was large in Mississippi and was confident that I could find a job in the field," Moore said.

Moore enrolled in the poultry science program and enjoyed his classes, especially those related to bird health and husbandry. He graduated with a bachelor's in poultry science, becoming the first in his immediate family to earn a college degree.

"While I enjoy all aspects of my job, my original enjoyment of the field began with my classes that focused on bird health and husbandry and then working in live bird production, caring for the flock, and overseeing their wellbeing," he said.

After graduation, he began taking graduate level courses in the poultry nutrition program. However, when

he heard that a fellow MSU alumnus was hiring interns at Cal-Maine Foods' Edwards, Mississippi facility, Moore was eager to start working and took the job.

"I started with Cal-Maine in 2001, and it's been the only job I've had ever since," he said. "Even though we have many locations across the country, it's a close-knit company that truly feels like a family."

After taking various roles in processing and supervising production, Moore was promoted to production manager in 2002. Six years later, he and his wife, also an MSU graduate, moved to Lake City, Florida to take a promotion to general manager. In 2013, he took another promotion to general manager of the Rossburg, Ohio facilities, and in 2019, he moved into his current role as vice-president of operations for the Ohio and Kentucky egg laying and processing facilities.

"I've done everything from picking up and packing eggs to sweeping chicken houses to high-level sales," Moore said. "It was good to start at the ground level because I understood the daily operations of the people I would later supervise."

Looking back on his 21 years at Cal-Maine Foods, Inc., Moore said that one of the greatest rewards of his career has been watching young people begin their careers with the company.

"Seeing young people enter the industry and grow is one of the most enjoyable parts of my career," he said.

Moore encourages today's students to think broadly and not limit their options when it comes to applying their degree to a career.

"A lot of students don't understand how their degree can prepare them to work in many different industries," he said. "Explore your opportunities, and don't limit your choices. You might end up working in an industry you had never considered before."



Josh Moore (photo submitted)

EXPLORING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE FARMERS

AN ALUMNA of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences in both her undergraduate and graduate degrees, **Rachel Lee** serves as the county executive director of Madison Parish, Louisiana, a position with the United States Department of Agriculture.

Lee is from Macon, a rural community just down the road from Starkville. While her parents were not farmers, she grew up surrounded by farming and agriculture. As a high school student, she did not have a particular career path in mind but had an opportunity to shadow a regional manager who worked with her mother at the local Farm Bureau office.

“I really enjoyed the shadowing experience and getting a deeper look at the management aspect of agriculture,” Lee said.

Another formative experience during those years came with volunteering for the MSU Extension Service in Noxubee County.

“I enjoyed working with the community, especially the children,” she said. “I think those combined experiences influenced me to become more involved in agriculture and helped me find my focus.”

Lee wanted to become an extension agent, and her degrees in agricultural information science and agriculture and extension education would have provided a solid foundation for that career track. However, a move to Louisiana for family sent her in a different but equally impactful direction.

She took a job as a program specialist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service. In this cooperative program, Lee worked with organizations such as the Louisiana Farm Bureau and Louisiana Cotton and Grain Association to educate local cotton producers and persuade them to participate in protocols to market and ensure the sustainability of cotton to retailers and consumers.

Two years later, Lee began her



Rachel Lee (photo submitted)

current position, where she manages the application of ad-hoc and permanent farm bill programs and policies within her parish (county).

“I bridge the gap between the USDA and farmers,” she said. “This job allows me to study USDA policy and put it into action.”

Looking back on her time at MSU, Lee felt that her classes gave her invaluable preparation for her current job.

“My classes helped me find my passion, but they also helped me understand the larger impacts of agriculture, from the global economy down to everyday people,” she said.

Lee’s study abroad experience in Guatemala during her last semester of graduate school solidified her appreciation for agriculture as a global industry. The Extension-based program included a

creative component, and Lee focused on educating children about the nutritional aspects of the foods growing in their backyards.

“I gained new perspectives on the industry and impacts of agriculture,” she said. “This program changed my life, and I would highly encourage students to do a study abroad program through MSU.”

As a young professional who has risen quickly to a leadership position in her field, Lee advised current students to take advantage of the opportunities within their university or community.

“Seek out opportunities to learn new things and find how you can use them as experience for your future career,” she said. “MSU has opportunities to learn, prepare, and try that you won’t have at any other time in your life.” 🐾

BUILDING GLOBAL CITIZENS

MANRRS student chapter celebrates
over two decades at MSU

BY LILY GRADO

THE MISSISSIPPI STATE STUDENT CHAPTER of Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences, or MANRRS, celebrated its twentieth anniversary in 2021 and is poised to take on the next 20 years as a leader in the professional advancement of minority students.

The MANRRS organization was originally founded in 1982 at Michigan State University. Its main goal is to elevate minorities in the fields of agriculture, natural resources and other related sciences by providing them with academic and professional opportunities at local, regional, and national levels.

Dr. Derris Devost-Burnett, associate professor in MSU's Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences and the university's MANRRS faculty co-advisor, serves as part of the national executive committee team which consists of professional officers, student officers, and the MANRRS national office.

"MANRRS provides access to careers, training, and networking opportunities that students may not otherwise be exposed to," said Devost-Burnett. "The national level of MANRRS looks at international components of the organization and helps build global citizens that are ready to hit the ground running."

Burnett was originally a member of

the George Washington Carver Chapter of MANRRS at Tuskegee University in 2001. Currently, he serves as the co-advisor of the MSU Chapter, a position he has held since 2015. He has held several MANRRS positions including student member, co-advisor for both Kansas State University and Mississippi State University, national secretary, Region III vice president, and currently as national president.

Burnett was inducted as the president of MANRRS' national organization and took on presidential duties in early May of 2023. He hopes that his position, working alongside other governmental agencies and partners, will help set the policies for minorities in agriculture and promote national recognition and exposure for the MSU chapter.

"Despite a smaller number of participants in comparison to other chapters, MSU students are very engaged in the organization. In addition to competing in national competitions and achieving competitive accomplishments, we have also had national representation," Burnett said. "I like to call the MSU Chapter 'small but mighty.'"

Burnett reflected on how the organization has changed since he joined, revealing that in the past, people were

volunteered to fill leadership positions. Now, according to Burnett, students have become much more interested and involved in filling these administrative roles and taking on more responsibility for the organization and how it is run.

Burnett notes that one of the organization's goals is to help eliminate imposter syndrome, or the feeling of being incapable or not as competent as one might appear.

"We try to dispel imposter syndrome by putting students in the room with stakeholders and professionals. This allows them to build both their confidence and competence," Burnett said.

Dr. Shecoya White, an assistant professor in the Department of Food Science, Nutrition and Health Promotion and co-advisor of MSU's MANRRS chapter, helps students gain leadership opportunities to utilize in their workplace.

"I encourage all of the students to apply for scholarships," White said. "We want to make sure that the students are exposed to as much as possible prior to graduating from Mississippi State."

MANRRS aims to offer students different outreach opportunities as well as provide experiences involved with community engagement such as volunteering at various local events.

MSU MANRRS officers with co-advisor Dr. Shecoya White (left), Dean Scott Willard (center), and co-advisor Dr. Derris Devost-Burnett (right). (photo by David Ammon)



White discussed how MANRRS works to support local organizations including getting involved with volunteer opportunities in the community such as the Boys and Girls Club, an after-school program for children, along with events like the Harvest Festival, an annual community celebration catered to children involving festive fall-related activities. The organization also gives students a chance to gain more experience preparing for interviews for future job opportunities.

“MANRRS is particularly focused on helping the students to understand their strengths and weaknesses during the interview process,” White said. “By knowing internally what questions interviewers are going to ask and knowing how to answer them, it helps prepare students.”

By providing students with more access to these important opportunities like interview training, resume and CV revisions, the MANRRS program has allowed students in the MSU

Chapter the chance to participate in events such as panels and competitions as well as serve in national positions. Several MSU students were the recipients of research and business pitch awards at national competitions.

Mya Dixon, a senior undergraduate student at MSU double majoring in animal and dairy sciences and biological sciences, serves as the MSU Chapter’s president. She first gained her position of vice president in 2020 and became the chapter’s president in May of 2021. Working to promote minority students in the field of agriculture, Dixon encouraged students who felt as though they didn’t have a place elsewhere, to join the MANRRS student chapter.

“MANRRS helps open the door for students to have leadership development while also helping the community by performing service,” Dixon said.

Both graduate and undergraduate students serve as national representatives from one of six different geographical regions throughout the U.S.

Currently, Kenisha Gordon serves as the graduate vice president for region 4 of MANRRS. Gordon, an international doctoral student from Guyana, has been a member of MANRRS since 2017 during which she was working toward her master’s degree at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. Acting as a liaison between the national office and chapters, she assists in letting students know what opportunities are available for them.

“MANRRS helps to give students a sense of belonging outside of the major or concentration they are studying,” Gordon said.

She encourages students to join MANRRS so that they can both step outside of their comfort zone while also having opportunities for both jobs and networking.

“With MANRRS, you have the opportunity to attend a regional cluster and a national conference and network with not only your peers but also professionals within the areas you want to get involved in,” Gordon said. 🐾

Student
INTERNS

CALS interns achieving locally
and abroad

BY KATHLEEN FORMAN

STUDENTS in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences are achieving great things across the board and the map. From the coast of Mississippi to the natural state of Arkansas and even across the pond in Wales, CALS students Courtney Storey, Madelyn Hunter, Jaylea Douglas, and Alex Speak interned with top-notch agricultural programs and brought back their knowledge to Mississippi State University.

Courtney Storey (top), Madelyn Hunter (bottom). (photos submitted)

COURTNEY STOREY AND MADELYN HUNTER

COURTNEY STOREY, senior animal and dairy sciences major, and **Madelyn Hunter**, junior biochemistry major, traveled to Mississippi's coastline to work hands-on with the Mississippi Aquarium. Each day brought a unique learning experience for Storey and Hunter. They shadowed exotic animal veterinarians, assisted in animal husbandry, educated aquarium visitors, and collaborated on a research project. While they both have an interest in pursuing veterinary medicine, this internship was pivotal in defining their individual passions.

After assisting with animal urgent care, Storey, a Tupelo native, has decided to pursue emergency and critical care veterinary medicine. She enjoyed the fast pace of emergency situations and the rewarding feeling of helping an animal in need.

"A typical day in this internship could be anything from catching up



on paperwork to watching procedures or running to prepare four different animals for procedures," said Storey. "There was never a dull moment."

Hunter, a student from Florence, Alabama, discovered an interest in veterinary radiology for exotic animals.

"This internship solidified my desire to become a radiologist when I found out that there is no data bank for exotic

animal radiographs," said Hunter. "Building a data bank would help veterinarians to better understand and care for hurting exotic animals."

Throughout their internships, Storey and Hunter worked on a joint research project examining the aquarium's Hoffman two-toed sloth. This species of sloth has a sense of smell stronger than a bloodhound, and the pair ran experiments to determine if the sloth has a preference for scents. They prepared extract scents such as rose and vanilla at different points of the sloth's enclosure and ran a statistical analysis on his behavior. Their research showed that the sloth did not have a preference, but both students appreciated the opportunity to develop a scientific experiment and the research skills needed for their future careers.

"This internship has taught me that anyone who believes something is out of their reach should continue to try," said Storey. "I was not accepted into the program my first year and used the resources given through Mississippi State to better prepare myself. If anyone feels a goal of theirs is unattainable, keep working toward it."



Jaylea Douglas (photo submitted)



JAYLEA DOUGLAS

JAYLEA DOUGLAS of Magee, Mississippi had already earned a degree before discovering her calling in agriculture and traveling to her neighboring state of Arkansas for the summer. After graduating from the University of Mississippi with a bachelor's degree in psychology, Douglas spent one summer shadowing her uncle who works as a private crop consultant. That summer led her to enroll at Mississippi State and pursue a degree in agribusiness with a minor in agronomy and a concentration in production. At Mississippi State, Douglas found a supportive community of faculty and students dedicated to helping her succeed. With the help of **Dr. Michael Cox**,

plant and soil sciences professor; **Dr. Randy Little**, retired professor in agricultural economics; and **Dr. T.J. Bradford**, former instructor in plant and soil sciences; Douglas applied to Helena Agri-Enterprises' competitive internship program. Douglas was accepted and stationed at Helena's Bay, Arkansas Retail Branch where she spent the summer collecting soil samples, learning AGRIntelligence—Helena's precision agriculture program—and consulting with customers.

"When I first started this internship, I was still unsure of what exactly I wanted to do with my agribusiness degree," said Douglas. "As a woman, it was intimidating attempting to join a male-dominated field. After this internship, I know that this was the type of work I wanted to do, and

I now have the confidence to pursue it."

To conclude her internship, Douglas presented her research on the benefits of Helena's AGRIntelligence Solutions Whole Farm initiative. This program provides farmers with a "start to finish" approach to incorporating precision agriculture on farms. Douglas compared the yield difference and economic benefits of Whole Farm customers before and after implementing the program. Douglas presented her findings and was later awarded the 2021 Southern Business Unit Intern of the Year Scholarship Award for her work.

"This internship helped me to make connections and grow my network in the agriculture industry," said Douglas. "I found that the industry feels like a small community because everyone is working together for a common goal."

ALEX SPEAK

FROM HER HOMETOWN of West Memphis, Arkansas to Aberystwyth, Wales, junior animal and dairy sciences major **Alex Speak** spent her summer in the hills of the United Kingdom. Speak has always been an ambitious student and earned accolades such as acceptance into the early-entry veterinary program, a study abroad trip to Guatemala, and the Shackouls Honors College's Delta Scholars Program. It was during her time in the Delta Scholars Program that Speak was encouraged by her fellow scholars to explore additional prestigious fellowship opportunities. Through searching online, Speak discovered the Fulbright United Kingdom Summer Institute program and was accepted into this prestigious cohort of eight students.

The three-week program focused on studying sustainable food production and maximizing land use in agriculture. Each week focused on a different subject area, with the first week consisting of lectures from resident professors on common agricultural practices in the United Kingdom. This week laid the groundwork for the following weeks of traveling to various farm sites, identifying problem areas in the region's agricultural system, and crafting the students' final projects. During her travels, Speak also had the opportunity to attend the biggest agricultural fair in Europe, the Royal Welsh Show, and experience livestock agriculture in a different culture.

For her final project, Speak investigated and worked to formulate a solution to the United Kingdom's heat stress

issues in dairy cattle. The UK's normally cool climate is ideal for dairy cows, however, as climates change, dairy farmers are looking for ways to keep their herds comfortable during heat waves. Speak presented the quality issues that occur when dairy cows experience heat stress and suggested management practices and even breeding tactics to lessen heat stress. Through this program, Speak, who is pursuing an international agriculture minor, experienced firsthand the importance of viewing agriculture on a global scale and was able to bring her new found knowledge back to Mississippi.

"We, as people in agriculture, need to be investigating ways that we can help the industry succeed," said Speak. "There are many upcoming global challenges such as

climate change and food insecurity, and having this experience abroad showed me that the challenges in other developed countries are very similar to our own."

While these students came from different majors and had unique internship experiences, all credit Mississippi State and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences with equipping them with the skills and knowledge necessary for their work. These students' real-life application of their education at MSU is helping to provide better care for animals, increase farmers' crop yields, and combat arising issues in the agricultural industry. After their internships, all four students returned to Starkville, to continue their studies with a clearer view of their respective fields and exciting futures. 🐾



Alex Speak (photo submitted)

A SIX-DECADE PERSPECTIVE ON "THE PEOPLE'S UNIVERSITY"

Key innovator shapes department and college

BY MEG HENDERSON

SIXTY YEARS AGO, WILLIAM R. "BILL" FOX stepped onto the campus of Mississippi State University as a newly hired assistant professor in the agricultural engineering department. During his impressive four-decade career at MSU, Fox not only witnessed many changes university-wide but also played key roles in advancements within his own department and college.

In 1954, Fox enrolled in the College of Agriculture at the University of Tennessee. Attending on a scholarship from Alcoa, an aluminum company, he chose agricultural engineering as a major. He assisted in the lab as undergraduate student worker, and his professor encouraged him to enroll in the graduate program and assist with designing solar powered chicken houses, a project that was decades ahead of its time. In 1960, he and his wife, Mary, also a Sevier County native, moved to Iowa State University so Fox could pursue his doctorate. Two years later, he accepted a faculty position in the agricultural engineering department at Mississippi State, and he and his wife have remained in Starkville since.

"When I arrived on campus, I discovered excellent facilities, progressive administrative leadership, competent

faculty and staff, and outstanding students, who were always curious, intelligent, and hardworking," Fox recalled.

During his first years, enrollment in agricultural engineering was declining both at MSU and at other universities around the country. The department, founded in 1905 by Jesse W. Fox (no relation), needed a new focus. Fox and his colleagues began to explore these challenges and propose solutions.

"We discovered that the major was tied to industry rather than an academic discipline, and we proposed biological engineering as an appropriate independent discipline that also could serve as preparation for medical school," he said.

Fox thus led the task of creating the nation's first biological engineering curriculum accredited by the Engineering Council. During his tenure as department head from 1967-1989, every biological engineering graduate who applied to medical school was accepted, a point of pride for Fox.

"We increased student enrollment and diversity in our department during those years, and I attribute that to an inclusive and dedicated faculty who recognized the talented students who were available to us," he said.

In addition to charting unfamiliar territory in his academic department, Fox also played an integral role in founding MSU's chapter of Gamma Sigma Delta, the honor society of agriculture, in 1964. Three years later, he served as chapter president.

In 1989, he was invited to serve as dean of the then College of Agriculture and Home Economics. The following year, Fox and his colleagues formed the School of Human Sciences and renamed the college to the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

"We believed that the new school and name better reflected the college's mission and role at the university," Fox said. "As a result of these changes, including establishing the CALS internship program, the college increased enrollment, and job placement for graduates was near 100 percent."

Since retirement, the professor and dean emeritus has remained active in his home department and in the university community. His post-career honors include being named a fellow of the American Society of Agricultural Engineers (ASAE), being selected for the ASAE/Mississippi Section's Distinguished Service Award, and receiving the 2010 Brahm and Sudha Verma

Dr. William "Bill" Fox (photo by David Ammon)



Lifetime Visionary Award from the Institute of Biological Engineering.

In 2007, Dr. Vance Watson, then vice president of the MSU Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine, established the William R. and Mary Fox Endowed Scholarship through the MSU Foundation. The scholarship honors Dr. Fox's many years of dedicated service and is open to CALS students who meet financial, academic, and leadership requirements. That same year, the William R. Fox student lounge was dedicated in the newly constructed Agricultural and Biological Engineering building. In 2017, he was invited to be the keynote


speaker at the university's Extension annual conference.

"It's a privilege to be welcomed back to the department and college on a regular basis," he said. "I've been invited to visit with colleagues and to speak at various meetings and share my experiences with students and faculty."

From his years of experience, Fox has gained valuable insights leading him to write a set of aphorisms he calls "Fox's Laws." The laws shared with his students from days past are still relevant today: "Always keep your moral compass centered on the truth, and do the right things the right way. Expect every

day to be a full day, and give a full day's work for a full day's pay. Have a contingency plan. Be inquisitive and creative with your critical thinking. And be faithful and loyal in your personal and professional relationships."

Looking back on his four decades of service and six decades of presence, Fox reflected on how he saw the university fully realize its time-honored mission.

"During this time, MSU became a place of opportunity for every person, regardless of gender, social status, or national origin, to have an opportunity to excel," he said. "It has truly become 'The People's University.'" 

Celebrating 120 YEARS

1800s-early 1900s

- 1878** Mississippi A&M College established
- 1880** Frank A. Gulley, first professor of agriculture and horticulture, hired
- 1882** Department of Horticulture established
- 1901** Department of Rural Engineering established
- 1903** **School of Agriculture founded**
W. L. Hutchinson, Dean
- 1904** Department of Dairy Husbandry established
- 1907** Department of Animal Husbandry established
- 1910** Department of Rural Engineering renamed
Department of Agricultural Engineering
- 1912** J.C. Roberts, acting Dean
- 1913** Department of Markets and Rural Economics
established, later renamed Department of
Agricultural Economics
- 1925** James N. Lipscomb, Dean
- 1931** Lloyd-Ricks building constructed
- 1932** Department of Agronomy, Crops division
established;
J. R. Ricks, Dean;
Name changed to Mississippi State College
- 1935** Department of Agronomy, Soils division
established
- 1936** Department of Agricultural Administration
established
- 1939** E. B. Colmer, Dean;
Bedenbaugh Hall constructed

Mid-1900s

- 1945** Department of Poultry Husbandry
established
- 1947** Frank Welch, Dean;
Moore Hall constructed
- 1949** Department of Agricultural Forestry
established
- 1951** Clay Lyle, Dean
- 1954** School of Forestry established and
moved out of College of Agriculture
and Home Economics
- 1958** Name changed to Mississippi State
University
- 1961** Louis Wise, Dean
- 1962** Department of Entomology established;
Ballew Hall constructed
- 1965** Department of Plant Pathology and
Weed Science established;
Dorman Hall constructed
- 1966** Norman Merwine, Dean;
Hill Poultry building constructed
- 1967** James H. Anderson, Dean;
Department of Agricultural Engineering
renamed Department of Agricultural and
Biological Engineering
- 1968** Department of Landscape Architecture
established;
- 1969** Department of Agricultural Chemistry
renamed Department of Biochemistry
- 1970** Charles E. Lindley, Dean;
Herzer Dairy Science building constructed
- 1971** Clay Lyle building constructed
- 1974** Ammerman-Hearnsberger Pilot Plant
constructed
- 1989** William Fox, Dean

Present-day

1990

College of Agriculture and Home Economics becomes College of Agriculture and Life Sciences;

School of Human Sciences established;
Department of Animal Industries established;
Department of Food Science and Technology established

1993

Department of Plant and Soil Sciences established;
Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology established

1997

Department of Biochemistry renamed to Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology

1998

Dorman Greenhouse constructed

2000

J. Charles Lee, Dean

2001

Garrison Sensory Evaluation Lab constructed

2002

Vance Watson, Dean

2003

Landscape Architecture complex constructed

2007

J. Charles Lee Agricultural and Biological Engineering building constructed

2008

Melissa Mixon, Dean

2010

George M. Hopper, Dean;
Lloyd-Ricks building renamed Lloyd-Ricks-Watson building;
Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology renamed Department of Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, Entomology and Plant Pathology

2018

Meat Science and Muscle Biology Laboratory constructed

2019

Animal and Dairy Sciences building constructed

2020

Poultry Science building constructed

2022

Scott Willard, Dean



120 years of training agricultural leaders. Many agricultural advancements have occurred over the last 12 decades. And technology will impact agriculture in the future. Today's agricultural professionals must be knowledgeable in precision technologies, data analysis, and artificial intelligence, to name a few. These advancements are necessary to feed and clothe a growing population. Throughout our history, the college has prepared the next generation of agricultural leaders. We listen to professionals and adjust our curricula and majors to meet the needs of an ever-changing industry.

Help us continue to excel in training tomorrow's leaders with your gift to the 120-year fund. Funds donated will be used to further enhance student, faculty, and staff development. Scan the QR code to make your gift today.



Development

MSU scholarship honors former director of campus landscape

Charles Scoggins four decade work to beautify campus

By Trey Barrett

AN ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP at Mississippi State honors the legacy of the late alumnus, **Charles Scoggins**.

Scoggins received both his bachelor's and master's degrees in science from the university. In June 1970, Scoggins was hired as director of campus landscape for the university, a position he held until his retirement in 2002.

The Charles G. Scoggins Memorial Endowed Scholarship was created by the Scoggins family in October 2022 and will support students within four majors: agronomy with a golf and sports turf management concentration, landscape architecture and landscape contracting within the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and marketing with a PGA golf management concentration in the College of Business.

Charlie Weatherly, retired development director of the Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine, shared how passionate Scoggins was

about giving MSU a beautiful landscape.

"He concentrated on making our campus landscape what it is today," Weatherly said. "Somebody had to plan all of the trees, shrubs, and landscaping on campus, and he was the guy who initiated a lot of that."

Near many roots under MSU's vibrant greenery, plaques memorialize past MSU students and faculty members. Weatherly said that Scoggins and his longtime friend and associate, Sam Hogue, began these memorialization efforts in the 1970s that continue to this day.

"Ten years ago, I counted about 120 memorial trees planted on campus. There are more now, yet there still seems to be the perfect tree for the perfect location," Weatherly said.

Martha Hill, general manager of Earthscape Supply in Madison, knew Scoggins for 43 years. She first met him as a student in the Department of Landscape Architecture at MSU.

Hill said she respected Scoggins

for his work on MSU's campus landscape environment due to his vision for an attractive campus for students, faculty, staff, and their families.

"He understood the entire landscape of all disciplines involved to make the campus beautiful. He led a team from all disciplines to create the continued college environment at MSU," Hill said.

The scholarship alternates yearly between the four majors. Hill said her goal for the scholarship is to see it grow.

"If we can raise more money to further endow this scholarship, we can rotate it between majors faster," Hill said. "I know there are a lot of different people in Scoggins' life who would love to participate, so we want to ask for their support in order to grow the scholarship for MSU students."

To contribute to the Charles G. Scoggins Memorial Endowed Scholarship, please contact Lacey Gordon at 662-325-6312 or at lgordon@foundation.msstate.edu.



@CALSDDevelopment
@MSU Properties
@BulldogForest

Tulips grace the campus in early spring with large trees planted by Scoggins. (Photo by Megan Bean)



Inspired by the past, designing for the future

*Landscape Architecture alumni
enhance departmental technology and resources*

By Meg Henderson

MICHAEL AND REBECCA (BOWEN) BOGAN, both 1987 graduates in landscape architecture, have given a generous gift to their home department to upgrade resources and expand opportunities for students and faculty.

Michael is CEO of LandCare USA, based in San Diego, California. He began his career in the Washington, D.C. area and in 1989 joined The Brickman Group, a commercial landscape business. Over the next 23 years, he served in many roles in the company, including branch manager, regional vice president, and executive vice president.

After leaving Brickman, Michael formed Monterey Pine Advisors, a consultancy serving the green industry. In 2014, he joined the commercial landscape services business LandCare USA, where he rebranded, expanded, and led a management buyout of the company. Today, the \$300 million company employs 4,000 team members with offices in 25 states.

During their 37 years of marriage, while work has taken Michael and Rebecca from the East Coast to the West Coast, their

hearts remain in Mississippi, and especially with Mississippi State University.

Their five-year gift, established in 2020, includes \$100,000, the majority supporting enhancements of the department's studios, facilities, and outdoor spaces. A portion of that gift established a lecture series, bringing in guest speakers with varied expertise in the field to broaden student perspectives on the role and contributions of landscape architecture and contracting. The Bogans gifted an additional \$50,000 to fund the LandLab, a multi-dimensional "print" facility to bring designs off the page.

"The LandLab will further advance the ability of MSU's talented and committed faculty to educate future landscape professionals that will design, build, and maintain the spaces that make our world a better place to live," Michael said.

The Bogans believe that one of the program's most valuable characteristics is its dual focus, combining landscaping architecture and landscaping contracting. The landscape architecture program at MSU gives students a theoretical and practical

education in design, and because it is connected to landscape businesses nationwide, graduates have a large number of employment opportunities.

"We are grateful to have a small role in supporting the program that helped prepare us for our careers," Rebecca said. "We believe that a top-notch education with state-of-the-art facilities at a public institution sets students up for a successful career, and we want to help support those opportunities at MSU."

Abbey Franovich, assistant professor in landscape architecture and an alumna of the program, began helping the Bogans with ideas for the LandLab when she joined the faculty in the fall of 2021. She came in with the vision of updating the department's resources and infrastructure to allow students to create physical models of their designs. That October, coincidentally, the Bogans contacted the department, asking if there were any needs they could help furnish.

"This felt like the perfect opportunity to speak with them about our vision for the LandLab," Franovich said. "A team

Sadik Artunç, department head; Abbey Franovich, assistant professor; Rebecca and Michael Bogan; and Cory Gallo, interim assistant dean and professor. (Photo by David Ammon)



from our department put together a proposal, and they immediately said ‘yes.’”

To create the LandLab, a makerspace tailored to the needs of landscape architecture students, updates were made to existing lab space to accommodate the new machines and make the space more accessible for students. The upgraded space was then furnished with laser cutters, 3-D printers, machines that create various types of small models, and updated printers.

“The new equipment allows students to create physical models of the real-world landscapes they’re designing, just on a

smaller scale,” Franovich said. “The models help students understand scale, proportion, and details of their designs, and they give a better understanding of what it feels like to be in these spaces compared to working with computer models alone.”

In addition to enhancing the academic experience of current students, Franovich noted that the lab, which opened in the fall semester of 2021, is an excellent recruiting tool. Potential future majors have been excited to visit the department and see the cutting-edge technology MSU has to offer.

“As a teacher, I greatly appreciate the

Bogans taking interest in and supporting what I’m doing in the classroom,” Franovich said. “For them to continue to trust that our requests for assistance will have a direct impact, and then showing them that it does, is exciting. It makes me proud of the work we’re doing in our department.”

For more information about the Department of Landscape Architecture, visit www.lal.msstate.edu.

Cultivating a legacy

Charles Weatherly's MSU roots run deep

By Vanessa Beeson

CHARLES WEATHERLY '59 Mississippi State alumnus and longtime employee, has cultivated many things at his alma mater from helping shape the university's alumni relations, to mentoring the next generation of development officers, to helping establish the MSU Veteran's Memorial Rose Garden and more. The Ripley native grew up with a passion for agriculture and his connection to the land inspired him to spend more than 60 years striving to make Mississippi State a better, more beautiful place.

"I grew up learning about agriculture with a close association to the land, thanks to my dad," Weatherly said. "We had a small 40-acre farm with about five acres of sweet corn in the bottom land, and 20 acres of cotton on the high land. We had a truck patch where we grew and harvested lima beans, crowder peas, squash, tomatoes, green pole beans, watermelons, and cantaloupe. We learned more than we wanted to know about farming but looking back on the experience, I would not take anything for that knowledge we gained from our dad, who was the MSU Extension assistant county agent for Tippah County at that time," he said.

Weatherly, who came to the university in 1954 to play football, ultimately built a steadfast legacy investing more than 60 years in his beloved alma mater. MSU became a family affair—he met his wife Ellen at MSU, where she went on to earn a bachelor's and master's in Elementary Education. All three of their children

attended and graduated from MSU.

He became the first fulltime field representative for the MSU Alumni Association in 1962 and was instrumental in creating alumni chapters, being promoted to executive secretary—later known as director—of alumni affairs in 1967.

"As alumni executive secretary, I directed and installed several new programs that are continued in some way today including the Alumni Officers Conference and the Faculty Awards Program," Weatherly said.

In 1987, he became coordinator of special projects for the Alumni Association and the MSU Foundation.

"At that time, I became the first development officer employed in our newly established constituency-based development program for the MSU Foundation. My first project in that role was to direct a \$1 million fund drive for furnishing and equipping the new School of Forest Resources later known as Thompson Hall, which was successfully completed in 1990," he said.

Being the first development officer employed when the MSU Foundation began constituency fundraising, Weatherly assisted in the recruitment and training of several new professionals who were employed for this new approach to the advancement at MSU.

Weatherly then served as director of development for the Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine (DAFVM) until his retirement in 1997.

"As director of development, I was

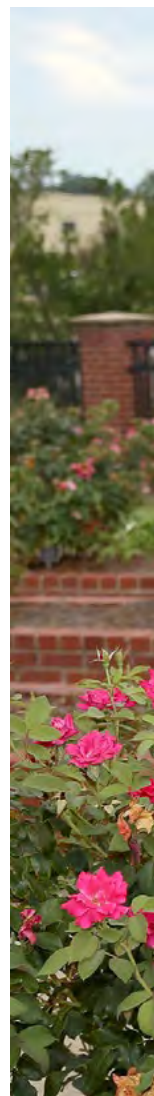
privileged to hire Jack McCarty, now executive director of development and foundation board secretary, to join me in DAFVM and assisted in hiring the first director of planned giving for the MSU Foundation. Sometime later, development officers were hired for the separate units of the division—the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, the College of Forest Resources, and the College of Veterinary Medicine—and the other colleges followed suit in hiring their own separate development officers. I worked closely with all of them," he said.

Weatherly's fundraising efforts continued long after his retirement as he worked as senior development director emeritus for the division until 2021.

"Being a development officer during the first ever Capital Fund Drive, a successful mission that raised \$143 million and exceeded our goal of \$78 million was incredibly significant for the whole team," he said.

He was named MSU's National Alumnus of the Year in 2005 and inducted into the MSU Sports Hall of Fame in 2021, both of which he considers career highlights. During his long tenure at MSU, Weatherly served under eight MSU presidents and cultivated relationships with some of MSU's most distinguished alumni including Senator John C. Stennis and Congressman G.V. Sonny Montgomery.

A passion for roses developed later in life when Weatherly again focused on cultivating the land.



Weatherly in Rose Garden. (Photo submitted)



“After I became a Master Gardener Volunteer in the Class of 2003, I developed an interest in rose growing and rose culture. The farming and gardening experience I learned from my dad served me well during this time,” said Weatherly, who joined the Oktibbeha County Rose Society and was invited to become a member of the Gardens Committee of the American Rose Society.

When the MSU Veteran’s Memorial Garden was planned and installed in 2006, Weatherly was instrumental in its development and success.

“I was involved in the rose garden project from the start and was responsible for obtaining the first roses that were planted,” he said.

Weatherly worked with a CALS

horticulture alumnus who was a sales manager for one of the largest rose growers in the U.S. and a contact that grew Fortuniana root-based roses, a common winner at rose shows.

“Initially, there were about 120 roses donated for the MSU Rose Garden, and most of them were hybrid teas,” he said.

The garden flourished and grew with raised and bricked rose beds and arbors added later.

“Many additional roses of all kinds were added—old garden roses, climbing roses for the arbors, and numerous shrubs, and easy grow and landscape roses. Also, turfgrass varieties developed at MSU were donated and installed there. The magnolias and other trees used in the project were donated by plant nurseries

in South Mississippi,” Weatherly noted.

While Weatherly’s mark on MSU is indelible, from how MSU Foundation conducts business down to the roses that bloom along Highway 182 at the entrance of North Farm, Weatherly’s legacy continues to help CALS students today.

Michael Hatcher, ’82 landscape contracting graduate recently established a gift to initiate the Charles E. “Charlie” Weatherly Annual Scholarship in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Robert “Bob” Sisk, a classmate of Weatherly’s, also contributed to the scholarship fund. To contribute to the fund, contact Will Staggers, CALS director of development at wstaggers@foundation.msstate.edu or by calling 662-325-2837.

Keeping an Heirloom

Protecting a storied tree with MSU roots

By **Sasha Steinberg**

BEFORE DEPLOYING for the U.S. Navy during World War II, Mississippi State horticulture graduate **Billie Henry “Bill” Fowlkes** planted two camellia trees in his mother’s yard in Becker—but not just any camellia trees. Turns out these trees are rooted deep in MSU history, like Fowlkes.

In fall 1937, Fowlkes entered then Mississippi State College, studying horticulture and working as caretaker for the department’s greenhouse.

In fall 1939, he befriended and later began dating Natalie Traxler, a McComb native who was attending what is now Mississippi University for Women. During a visit to Traxler’s home, Fowlkes told his future mother-in-law Susie of his plans to start a landscape nursery in Becker upon graduation. She gave him some rooted camellia cuttings, which Fowlkes took back to MSU’s greenhouse.

Fowlkes grew the potted camellias to a larger size. Upon graduation in May 1941, he took one white and one pink camellia back to Becker and planted them at his mother’s house, part of a 256-acre farm purchased during the Great Depression.

When Fowlkes returned from World War II in 1946, the two camellias were still standing. The white camellia ultimately died in 2003, but the pink one survived.



Upon Fowlkes’ death in 2011, his daughter Patsy Fowlkes and son-in-law Steve Brandon—both graduates of MSU’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences—bought out the remaining heirs to the Becker farm property and renovated the farmhouse to use as a vacation and game day home.

In 2020, Patsy and Steve decided to enlarge and update the farmhouse. Unfortunately, the then 12-foot-tall pink camellia was within the footprint of the farmhouse expansion. Patsy and Steve contacted MSU Professor of Horticulture Richard Harkess and told him the story of the pink camellia.

Harkess visited the property and took numerous cuttings back to MSU. Thanks to Harkess’ hard work and expertise, there are over 100 surviving new pink camellia plants, which Harkess fittingly named Bill Fowlkes Camellias.

Brandon said he and Patsy appreciate MSU—and Harkess in particular—for

helping to preserve a piece of Bulldog history.

“We would love for an offspring of this camellia tree to be on the Mississippi State campus,” Brandon said. “It’s a very important family treasure, and we think it would be a special tribute to Bill and his love and support of the university.”

Patsy and Steve, longtime MSU supporters, have invested generously across campus, including in athletics, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and student scholarships. The Chattanooga, Tennessee couple recently created the Steve and Patsy Fowlkes Brandon Presidential Endowed Scholarship to support the recruitment of elite students to their alma mater.

In 2005, they also made a gift to name an auditorium in the student union. The Fowlkes Auditorium pays tribute to Patsy’s father and his brothers, Tom and Hal, who were 1935 and 1938 Mississippi State graduates, respectively.

Commemorative marker on the MSU campus. (Photo submitted)



Commemorating a Legacy

Chen family honors father, longtime MSU professor with campus tree

By Vanessa Beeson

THE FAMILY OF DR. LUNG HUA CHEN, retired professor of agricultural and biological engineering in MSU's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the Bagley College of Engineering, planted a tree to memorialize Chen, who died January 19, 2022. The America fringetree, a flowering

ornamental native to the Southeastern U.S., is planted outside of the Howell Building, where Chen's office was formerly located. Chen was an MSU professor from 1976 to 2000. He and his wife were longtime supporters of the university, establishing the Drs. Lung-Hua and Liza M. Chen

Endowed Scholarship in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences in 1999. The scholarship helps fulltime agricultural engineering technology and business, horticulture, and biological engineering majors who have demonstrated academic achievement, leadership ability, and financial need.

College News

MSU announces leadership updates in agriculture teaching, research units

DR. SCOTT WILLARD, dean of Mississippi State's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and director of the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station, announced several new CALS and MAFES administrative assignments.

Dr. Darrell Sparks now is serving as CALS associate dean with **Mr. Cory Gallo** as interim assistant dean. **Dr. Jamie Larson** is associate director of MAFES research, while **Dr. Angus Catchot** is associate director of MAFES operations.

Sparks, professor in the Department of Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, Entomology and Plant Pathology, brings a wealth of academic experience to the college having worked as an undergraduate coordinator; a curriculum committee representative at the department, college, and university levels; and is well-versed in policy, procedures, and accreditation processes.

Gallo, landscape architecture professor, has been named interim assistant dean working halftime in administration and halftime in his academic home. Gallo leads the CALS Living-Learning Community, several cross-college collaborative outreach and student engagement



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP-LEFT: Darrell Sparks, Cory Gallo, Jamie Larson, Angus Catchot. (MSU File Photos)

projects, and works with MAFES on facilities/building projects on- and off-campus.

Larson comes from a research and teaching background, as well as roles in research regulatory compliance as chair of the MSU Radiological, Chemical, and Laboratory Safety Committee, and is well-versed in graduate student education and research processes.

Catchot, Extension professor in the Department of Biochemistry, Molecular

Biology, Entomology and Plant Pathology, brings perspective from his Extension role into a MAFES position where he is facilitating MAFES farms, research support, and retail operations. He has extensive research, outreach, and industry stakeholder engagement experience, along with an exemplary ability to manage teams and support research agendas.

Gordon joins MSU Foundation fundraising team

LACEY GORDON is the new assistant director of development for Mississippi State University Extension and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. She began her role on Dec. 1.

Gordon is a third-generation Bulldog who earned a bachelor's degree in kinesiology with an emphasis in communication in 2018. The Saltillo native served as an orientation leader, assisted with athletics department media relations, and was a member of the MSU Diamond Girls during her time as a student. She worked in the furniture industry prior to joining the MSU Foundation development staff.

In addition to MSU Extension and CALS, Gordon's role also will encompass fundraising and development duties for the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station. She joins veteran fundraiser and fellow alumnus Will Staggers in securing gifts for the three areas.

"Lacey's experience will be an asset to her involvement with alumni and philanthropy on behalf of the university. I believe her diverse skill set will transfer well into development, and we are proud to welcome her to our team," said Jack McCarty, executive director of development for the MSU Foundation.

Gordon can be contacted at (662) 325-6312 or lgordon@foundation.msstate.edu.



Lacey Gordon. (Photo by Robby Lozano)

Department News

AGRICULTURAL AND BIOLOGICAL ENGINEERING

MSU's Thomasson named president-elect of national ag science, technology organization

THE HEAD of Mississippi State's Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering is the 2022-23 president-elect for the Council for Agriculture Science and Technology.

J. Alex Thomasson officially assumed his responsibilities as president-elect at the conclusion of CAST's fall board meeting in October 2022. In 2023-2024, he will become the 51st president of the organization, a singular honor and responsibility dating back to 1972, when Charles A. Black

and Norman Borlaug, along with other committed scientists, spearheaded the movement to "bring science-based information to policymaking and the public."

CAST membership is composed of scientific and professional societies, universities, companies, nonprofits, libraries and individuals. According to the organization's website, "The wide distribution of CAST publications to non-scientists enhances the education and understanding of the public. At a time when the internet has made it more difficult to separate accurate and inaccurate information, it has never been more critical for reputable sources to deliver trusted, non-partisan information from authorities in their respective fields." For more, visit www.cast-science.org.

Thomasson's vision for CAST includes maintaining scientific objectivity so

position papers are viewed as informed and credible.

"Within CAST's position as a scientific authority on agricultural matters, modern means of communicating critical ideas to the public should be explored and adopted where appropriate," Thomasson said.

Thomasson said he wants to grow CAST's membership. He believes with the growth of agricultural technology in the last decade, it is critical CAST expand its academic, nonprofit and corporate membership with emphasis on technologies. He hopes to do so by engaging young members and increasing their opportunities for involvement, while encouraging lifetime membership.



J. Wes Lowe operates the precision planter. (Photo by David Ammon)

MSU assesses industry precision tools for planting, better crops, grower success

MISSISSIPPI STATE is conducting research with global precision agriculture company Ag Leader to assess the functionality of planting technology for more defined crop growth.

Assistant Professor **J. Wes Lowe** in the university's Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering, along

with researchers in the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, is conducting research on the performance of advanced planting technology at multiple sites with geographically different soil types.

While the technology is widely used and adapted to farming and soil types in the Midwest, Lowe and his team—all scientists in the university's Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station—aim to test the adaptability and the precision of the tools for the range of soil types in the South.

"Planting is one of the most important aspects of a crop; a mistake can drastically drop the crop's maximum potential. These advanced planting tools give us the ability to place our seed exactly where we want in the ground, which can create a sense of security in the planting process and pave a more optimum path for crops to grow and flourish," Lowe said.

The team is assessing corn, soybean, and cotton crops that were planted using SureForce hydraulic down force and the SureSpeed high accuracy metering and delivery system, precision technologies produced by Ag Leader.

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

DR. ALEX THOMASSON co-organized the inaugural conference, "Envisioning 2050 in the Southeast: AI-driven Innovations in Ag," on the use of computing power and big data in agriculture. A joint effort of all land-grant universities in the Southeast, the University of Florida was the lead institution for the event, which was held in spring 2022 at Auburn University and funded by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

MSU Department of Agricultural Economics names Fox as new head

MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY has a new leader in the Department of Agricultural Economics.

Sean Fox, an expert in applied research in consumer economics, agricultural marketing and experimental economics, began his new position Nov. 1 as the department head.

Fox comes to MSU from the University of Illinois, where he was professor and head of the Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics.

He earned a bachelor's degree in agricultural science from University College Dublin, Ireland, and his doctoral degree in agricultural economics from Iowa State University.

In addition to his most recent position, he also has served as director of graduate studies at Kansas State University and as a research assistant at ISU.

"Dr. Fox brings three decades of academic experience to the Department of Agricultural Economics," said Scott Willard, dean of MSU's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, and director of the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station. "I am confident in his ability to lead this department in continuing to train future leaders in agribusiness and environmental economics and sustainability. His research expertise in agricultural markets will be a great benefit to stakeholders in Mississippi."

As a comprehensive department, agricultural economics includes two majors in agribusiness, and environmental economics and sustainability. The department also offers a Master of Agribusiness Management, available online and on



campus, as well as a Master of Science in Agriculture with an agricultural economics concentration.

Research and extension focus areas include agricultural policy, risk and insurance; agribusiness management and marketing; big data economics and precision ag data analytics; commercial agriculture management and finance; economic development, entrepreneurship and financial education; environmental and natural resource economics; food systems and specialty crop economics; health economics and food policy and water resources, drinking water and irrigation management.

"The Department of Agricultural Economics provides valuable services to our stakeholders, from annual crop budgets to understanding commodity markets and the Farm Bill," said Steve Martin, interim director of the MSU Extension Service. "Dr. Fox will provide leadership as we move forward with service initiatives such as interpreting big data, including precision ag data, as well as agricultural policy."

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

FACULTY & STAFF



DR. KEITH COBLE, vice president of MSU's Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine and professor in Agricultural Economics, was named a Fellow of the Agricultural and Applied Economics Association.

DR. LIANQUN SUN, a postdoctoral fellow in applied economics and big data, was selected to participate in the Southeastern Conference's Emerging Scholars Program.

STUDENTS

MCKENZIE L. CARVALHO, an agriculture/ag economics master's student, received second place at the MSU Graduate Research Symposium in the agriculture and life sciences master's student oral presentation.

JAYLEA DOUGLAS, senior agribusiness major, is the Helena Agri-Enterprises, LLC 2021 Southern Business Unit Intern of the Year Scholarship Award winner.

JOSIE NASEKOS, junior environmental economics and management major, placed third as a 2022 George Hopper Excellence in Undergraduate Research Award winner.

ANIMAL AND DAIRY SCIENCES

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS



LTY & STAFF

DR. DERRIS DEVOST-BURNETT, associate professor, assumed

the role as national president for the Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences, or MANRRS. The organization promotes academic and professional advancement by empowering minorities in the fields of agriculture, natural resources and related sciences.



DR. AMANDA STONE, assistant professor, was elected to serve as the American Dairy Science Association Southern Branch

Vice President.

STUDENTS

TARA GRANT, animal and dairy sciences major and MSU Belle mascot, earned the American FFA Degree, the highest honor awarded to FFA members.

Four students were among only 30 chosen nationwide to participate in a recent training conference for college students entering the meat science industry. The MSU students traveled to Smithfield, Virginia, for the Smithfield Foods INTEGRATE program. Students included **JOSEPH MANGANO**, animal and dairy sciences major; **MALIQ HOLMES**, animal and dairy sciences major; **CHELSIE DAHLGREN**, animal and dairy sciences major; and **VIRELL TO**, food science, nutrition, and health promotion major. Dahlgren also received the MAFES Research Support-Undergraduate Student Award.

HUNTER GOODSON, animal and dairy sciences major, was recently accepted into the National Pork Board Pork Scholars.

MSU animal and dairy science postdoc receives early career award

A **MISSISSIPPI STATE** postdoctoral associate in the Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences is one of only 12 individuals nationwide recognized with the 2022 Young Scholar Award from the American Society of Animal Science.

ASAS, the largest and oldest animal science organization in the country, honored **Zully E. Contreras-Correa** at the 2022 ASAS-CSAS Annual Meeting and Trade Show for her outstanding contributions in the field.

The Young Scholar Award program recognizes the accomplishments of recent Ph.D. graduates and current Ph.D. students in advanced stages of their program. At the meeting, Contreras-Correa delivered a presentation on her latest research involving fetal programming

to an audience of academic and industry professionals.

After earning a bachelor's in biology and master's in animal science from the University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez, Contreras-Correa came to Mississippi State to pursue her doctoral degree in animal and dairy sciences, researching melatonin supplementation to beef cattle during compromised pregnancies. Her current work focuses on examining potential treatments to negate the impact of elevated ambient temperatures in livestock using three-dimensional organoid models. Additionally, she has published six peer-reviewed journal articles and 22 scientific abstracts, and she teaches and mentors undergraduate students in the Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences.



MSU's Pittman among country's youngest livestock judging coaches

AFTER ATTENDING a local animal show, 5-year-old **Alexandra Pittman** asked her mother and stepfather to buy her a piglet. Twenty years and numerous 4-H-related events later, she is now one of the youngest college livestock judging team leaders in the country.

At 25, the Petal native now leads the Mississippi State Livestock Judging Team after graduating with an undergraduate degree in Animal and Dairy Science in 2019 and a Master of Science in Agriculture degree with a concentration in Animal Science two years later. She originally intended to enroll in MSU's vet school after completing her undergraduate degree, but her experiences as a livestock judging team member and as a member



of the Collegiate Cattleman's Association changed her academic trajectory.

Now Pittman brings her passion to the livestock judging team and the classroom, along with her academic knowledge and real-world experience.

Dating back to the 1920s, the Livestock Judging Team has a longstanding tradition at the university. Compared to other extracurricular clubs, the team is a major time commitment, with members practicing most days and spending an average of 36 weekends traveling to competitions annually.

Gore named center head of MSU's Delta region

A LONG-TIME Mississippi State University entomologist and researcher has been named head of the MSU Delta Research and Extension Center.

Jeff Gore assumed the role on Nov. 1. He has served as interim center head since Nov. 16, 2021. As an entomologist with the MSU Extension Service and a researcher with the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station, he has been based at the Stoneville station since 2007.

The center focuses its research and Extension activities on cotton, rice, soybean, corn, and catfish production. Its primary goal is to increase yields of the region's producers while preserving and protecting the Delta's environment and natural resources.



The 4,700-acre center has a network of laboratories, offices, greenhouses, research facilities, and engineering and maintenance shops, as well as a comprehensive library. It employs more than 20 research scientists and more than 100 support personnel.

It is one of four regional centers in the state and serves as the hub of operations for 19 Extension offices in northwest Mississippi.

MSU's DeYoung named Fulbright finalist

A MISSISSIPPI STATE BIOCHEMISTRY alumnus is the university's ninth Fulbright finalist in the last six years.

Tanner DeYoung, who minored in political science, received a Fulbright U.S. Student Program award for the 2022-2023 academic year from the U.S. Department of State and the Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board.

The Clinton resident studied the history of politics and society abroad at Utrecht University in Utrecht, Netherlands, through the Fulbright Program after graduating from MSU in May 2022. Recipients of Fulbright awards are selected in an open, merit-based competition that considers leadership potential, academic or professional achievement, and record of service.

DeYoung's honor marks the sixth-straight year MSU has produced at least one Fulbright finalist. His award



reflects how the university develops students who are competitive for one of the nation's top post-graduate scholarship programs, said MSU Fulbright Program Advisor David Hoffman.

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

FACULTY & STAFF



KATHY BRELAND, administrative assistant I, received the CALS/MAFES Outstanding Support Staff Award.



DR. NATRAJ KRISHNAN, associate professor, received the CALS Excellence in Teaching—Upper Division Award.



Mississippi Entomological Museum research technician and science illustrator **JOE MACGOWN** is part of a team that created a groundbreaking map of global ant biodiversity. MacGown also created the cover illustration for the Aug. 5, 2022, issue of the journal, *Science Advances*.



DR. SAMUEL WARD, assistant professor, received the CALS Excellence in Teaching—New Faculty Award.

MISSISSIPPI BUG BLUES TEAM received the CALS/MAFES Team Diversity Award.

STUDENTS

SARAH BROADAWAY, junior biochemistry major, placed first and **DUTTON DAY**, senior biochemistry major, placed second as 2022 George Hopper Excellence in Undergraduate Research Award winners.

AMANDEEP KAUR, a life sciences doctoral student, placed second in the doctoral student poster presentation. In the master's student competition, **AFSOON SABET** placed first and **ERIN SAYLOR** placed third in the student oral presentation at the MSU Graduate Research Symposium.

FOOD SCIENCE, NUTRITION AND HEALTH PROMOTION

MSU Food Science Product Development Team placed nationally with PogYog

MEMBERS of the MSU Food Science Product Development Team were one of the top six finalists for the National Dairy Council product development competition. They developed an innovative, yogurt-based energy drink called PogYog. The drink has protein, collagen, and caffeine and is marketed based on a created flavor profile called wazzleberry, which the team said is sweet, creamy, tart, and reminiscent of blue raspberry.

The Food Science Club College Bowl team placed third in the International Food Technologists Student Association Southeast competition. Team Members included **Bennet Pope, Lauryn Heidelberg, Kenisha Gordon, and Lucy Meehan.**



PogYog, a yogurt-based energy drink was developed by students in the Food Science Product Development Team. (Photo Submitted)

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

FACULTY & STAFF



DR. WEN-HSING CHENG, professor, received the

CALS Teacher of the Year and CALS Excellence in Teaching-Graduate Award.



DR. MANDY CONRAD, assistant clinical

professor, received the CALS Excellence in Teaching-Lower Division Award.



DR. ANTONIO GARDNER, associate professor,

received the CALS/MAFES Faculty Diversity Award.



DR. RAMAKRISHNA NANNAPANENI, research professor,

received the MAFES Outstanding Publication Award for an article which describes research on changing tolerance levels of food-borne pathogens to commercial cleaning products.



DR. SHECOYA WHITE, assistant professor,

received the CALS/MAFES Outstanding Faculty Service Award.



DR. WES SCHILLING, professor, received

the Mississippi Land Bank-sponsored MAFES Excellence in Research Faculty Award and the Regions Bank - MSU Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine Superior Faculty Research Award.

STUDENTS

ANGELICA ABDALLAH-RUIZ, a doctoral student, placed first in the agriculture and life science doctoral student oral presentation and **JACINDA LEOPARD**, a master's student, placed second in the agriculture and life sciences master's student poster presentation at MSU Graduate Research Symposium.

KENISHA ODESSA GORDON, a doctoral student, and **ZONIA ELIZABETH CARO CARVAJAL**, a master's student, were two of 15 students nationally to receive the 2022 Food

Marketing Institute Foundation Food Safety Auditing Scholarship. The \$3,000 scholarship is accompanied by an educational travel grant to the SQF Unites Global Conference, an interactive event for the global food safety and quality communities.

NICOLE REEDER, a doctoral student, was inducted into the MSU Graduate Student Hall of Fame.

HUMAN SCIENCES



Dr. Caroline Kobia and Dr. Charles Freeman (Photos by Beth Wynn)

Kobia and Freeman receive international recognition for small business retail research

DR. CAROLINE KOBIA, associate professor, and **Dr. Charles Freeman**, associate professor, both in fashion design and merchandising in the School of Human Sciences, were recognized with the Best Track Paper in the Local and Global Retailing and Entrepreneurship at the 2022 American Collegiate Retailing Association. The paper, selected for Best Track Paper in the Local and Global Retailing and Entrepreneurship, was also awarded as the conference overall best paper for 2022 by the International Journal of Retail and Distribution Management.

“I am excited and thankful for the recognition the paper has received. There is a lot of disruption going on in the retail industry, especially in rural areas like

Mississippi, so I want to focus research where it can impact and help small businesses adjust and continue to thrive,” Kobia said. “The core of who I am wants to help impact local communities, so most of my classes focus on community engagement. This way we’re helping small businesses, which are a vital part of the retail industry.”

Louisiana State University collaborated on the paper. In addition to this accolade, Freeman also received an innovation award at the TechConnect World Innovation Conference and Expo. Freeman and a team of colleagues developed two diverse ways to synthesize cottonseed oil-based polymers. The novel polymers can be used as the base for synthetic materials, making products more biodegradable.

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

FACULTY



DR. JULIE PARKER, associate professor in human development and family sciences, received the 2022 Professional Research Recognition Award by the Association of Child Life Professionals (ACLP).

STUDENTS

Four human sciences students are among only 17 selected nationally for participation in a recent prestigious professional development symposium. The senior agricultural education, leadership and communications majors in MSU’s School of Human Sciences are **KATHERINE BERRYHILL**, **CARSON LITTLETON**, **CURT TODD**, and **KALLIE WALLACE**. They attended the Future Agriscience Teacher, or FAST, Symposium in Lexington, Kentucky

ALEXIS JACKSON, a doctoral student in human development and family studies, was recognized as Graduate Service Assistant of the Year by the MSU Graduate School.

ABIGAIL NICHOLAS AND CECELIA TURNER, fashion design and merchandising majors, placed third in the New Product Division I competition of the MSU Center for Entrepreneurship and Outreach Annual Startup Summit.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

New MSU learning garden celebrates local flora, culture in Leflore County

MISSISSIPPI STATE FACULTY and Leflore County leaders celebrated the installation of a blues-themed learning garden at Leflore County Elementary School in spring 2022.

MSU faculty and students built and installed the state's third MSU learning garden using an award-winning concept called The Living Room: A Free-ware Learning Garden Focused on Health, Food, and Nutrition Education. The model was developed by faculty and students in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the College of Architecture, Art and Design architecture and graphic design programs. **Abbey Franovich**, assistant professor of landscape architecture, co-led the project with **Suzanne Powney**, associate professor of graphic design.



Cory Gallo, Landscape Architecture professor and interim assistant dean, assists a student with planting. (Photo submitted)

MSU students earn awards, scholarships during national landscape competition

MISSISSIPPI STATE STUDENTS were award winners in a spring national landscape and horticulture competition celebrating 45 years since its inception at the university.

Students were recognized in numerous categories and received multiple scholarships during the National Collegiate Landscape Competition. MSU had two first-place finishers, seniors **Makahla Holloway** and **Robbie Cummings**, and the university's team finished 7th overall out of 45 participating schools.

In addition to Holloway and Cummings, winners and scholarship recipients included: **Sage Smith**, junior landscape contracting and management major; **Dominic Fava**, senior landscape



Landscape contracting and management students attended the National Collegiate Landscape Competition at North Carolina State University. (Photo submitted)

architecture and landscape contracting and management major; **Hannah Sanderson**, senior landscape contracting and management and landscape architecture major; **Emily Duncan**, senior landscape

architecture and landscape contracting and management major; **Jared Nelson**, senior landscape contracting and management major; and **Dylan Rushing**, senior landscape contracting and management major.

PLANT AND SOIL SCIENCES



Drs. Brian Baldwin and Jesse Morrison in a switchgrass field at the MAFES W. B. Andrews Agricultural Systems Research Farm. (Photo by David Ammon)

Mississippi State-bred switchgrasses hit the market

MISSISSIPPI STATE SCIENTISTS have developed switchgrass varieties that are waking up the industry with exceptional germination rates and are ready for commercial use in the Deep South.

Switchgrass is used for biofuels, soil and water conservation, and carbon sequestration.

The university is working with the Upton, Kentucky-based Roundstone Native Seed Co. to deliver the “Robusto,” “Espresso,” and “Tusca” switchgrass varieties, developed by MAFES scientists. In addition, Plant Variety Protection—like a patent for newly bred varieties—has been awarded for Espresso and is in review for Robusto. Tusca is protected by a utility patent and officially released by MAFES.

Dr. Brian Baldwin, professor; **Dr. Brett Rushing**, associate extension and research professor; **Dr. Jesse Morrison**, assistant research professor, have co-developed these varieties over the last 15 years to increase germination rates and reduce seed dormancy.

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

FACULTY & STAFF



DR. GARY BACHMAN, extension/research professor, received the

2022 Dr. Mark Keenum Outstanding Extension Faculty Award from the MSU Extension Service.



DR. JASON BOND, Mississippi farmer Gary Bailey, along with

independent consultant Tim Sanders are the 2022 recipients of the Mid-South Farm and Gin Show’s Ag Achievement Award. Bond, research and extension professor at the Delta Research and Extension Center, worked with Bailey and Sanders on herbicide resistant weeds.



DR. COLE ETHEREDGE, assistant professor, received the American Society for Horticultural Science Professional

Early Career Award. He also received the Education Publication Award, which recognizes the author of the outstanding paper on horticultural education, published in the previous year’s issue of *The Journal of the American Society for Horticultural Science*. That award was for his article “Comparative Analysis of Generation Z Era Students’ Overall Grades and Course Satisfaction of a Basic Floral Design Course Taught Fully Face-to-face versus an Online Hybrid Format.”



DR. DREW GHOLSON, assistant professor at the Delta Research and

Extension Center and coordinator of the MSU USDA-ARS National Center for Alluvial Aquifer Research, is the Irrigation Researcher of the Year, awarded by the Conservation Systems Conferences. The conference includes the National Conservation Systems Cotton and Rice, Southern Corn and Soybean, Delta States Irrigation and Southern Precision Ag. Gholson also received the 2022 Leopold Award for Excellence in Extension Programming from the MSU Extension Service.



DR. JASON KRUTZ, professor and director of the Mississippi

Water Resources Research Institute, was named a Fellow by the American Society of Agronomy.



DR. ROCKY LEMUS, extension/research professor,

received the 2022 Outstanding Extension Professional Award from the MSU Extension Service.



DR. PAUL TSENG, associate professor, received

the 2022 Outstanding Early Career Weed Scientist Award from the Weed Science Society of America.

STUDENTS

JOSIANE ARGENTA, graduate student, placed third in the agriculture and life sciences doctoral student oral presentation at the MSU Graduate Research Symposium. Argenta also placed first for graduate oral presentation at the Mississippi Academy of Sciences annual meeting.

KARINA BENETON, undergraduate, placed first for undergraduate oral presentation at the Mississippi Academy of Sciences annual meeting.

MARTIN IGNES, graduate student, received the Chris Stiegler Memorial Travel Award from the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA International annual meeting.

TABATA OLIVEIRA, graduate student, placed third for poster presentation at the American Society for Horticultural Science.

JAKE PATTERSON, graduate student, received the Outstanding Ph.D. student award from the Mississippi State University Row Crop Short Course.

SETH PERMENTER, graduate student, received the Outstanding M.S. student award from the Mississippi State University Row Crop Short Course.

SADIKSHYA POUDEL, graduate student, placed first in the graduate poster competition at the Mississippi Academy of Sciences.

POULTRY SCIENCE



Poultry Science welcomes new head

AN EXPERIENCED POULTRY PATHOGEN SPECIALIST is the new head of Mississippi State's Department of Poultry Science.

Illinois native **Ken Macklin** has joined the department after serving as a research professor and Extension specialist at Auburn University. He has over 25 years' experience researching diseases that affect poultry and specializes in genetics, immunology, and bacteriology. Macklin is a member of the Alabama Poultry and Egg Association, Southern Poultry Science Society, and Poultry Science Association; a board member of the Southern Conference of Avian Disease; and until his move to MSU served as treasurer for the AU chapter of Sigma Xi.

Macklin's current research involves determining the effect of feed additives on

common foodborne bacteria and pathogens in poultry. He is also exploring management practices that will reduce both poultry and food pathogens in poultry houses, since reducing these pathogens will improve bird health and performance and reduce the incidence of the pathogens entering the human food chain.

At Auburn, Macklin had a 50% Extension appointment, and his programs were aimed at educating both the commercial poultry industry and small flock producers in the areas of biosecurity, poultry health, food safety, and environmental issues.

Macklin received his Ph.D. in poultry science from Auburn University in 2003 and his master's and bachelor's degrees in biology from Northern Illinois University in 1995 and 1992, respectively.

NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

FACULTY & STAFF



TANNAH CHRISTENSEN, program coordinator, received the CALS/MAFES Outstanding Professional Staff Award.



DR. ANURAJ THERADIYIL SUKUMARAN, assistant professor, received MAFES Most Impactful Publication Award.

STUDENTS

Poultry Science majors **SAMANTHA PLOCHER** and **MARISSA POWELL** were recognized at the International Poultry Scientific Forum and International Production and Processing Expo. Plocher received the Don R. Sloan Undergraduate Award and Powell received the Graduate Student Award of Excellence.

Alumni News

DANA OSBORN PORTER (Ph.D. agricultural engineering, '93) was elected president of the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers for 2023-24. She joined the society's board of trustees in 2022 rotating through a three-year term in which she will serve as president elect, president, and past president. She is a professor and associate head of the Department of

Biological and Agricultural Engineering at Texas A&M.

JONATHAN A. HUFF (B.S. agricultural science, '05; M.S. and Ph.D. agronomy, '07, '10) was named North American sales leader for Nouryon, a global specialty chemical company based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Prior to joining the company, the Forest

native spent 12 years with Corteva Agriscience, formally Dow AgroSciences, serving in various capacities within the research and development and sales and marketing units.

MAGGIE EDWARDS (B.S. agricultural education, leadership, communications, '22) was named ag communications specialist for the Alabama Farmers Federation.

OBITUARIES

DR. LUNG-HUA CHEN (retired faculty) 81, Irvine, California – A native of Taiwan, he was a professor emeritus in Mississippi State's Department of Agricultural and Biological Engineering. An endowed scholarship at MSU was established in honor of Chen and his wife Liza. — Jan. 19, 2022

THEODORE "TED" WILLIAM PREUSS (B.S. animal science, '60; retired Extension agent), 82, Monticello – The Kentucky native and 4-H participant graduated from Provine High School in Jackson. He was part of MSU's Block and Bridle club and livestock judging team. He was named an MSU Patron of Excellence by MSU for his support. Following graduation, he was an Extension agent in Lawrence County. He also owned River Road Ranch, a well-known Angus farm, and was known for his hybridized daylilies, which are sold all over the world. — Oct. 5, 2021

DR. WILLIAM BRYAN "BILL" TUCKER SR. (B.S., M.S. animal and dairy sciences, '82. '84) 62, Holmesville – He was vice

president of physical resources for Southwest Mississippi Community College. Tucker graduated from Parklane Academy before coming to MSU. After MSU, he earned a doctorate from the University of Kentucky. Tucker taught dairy science at Oklahoma State University and MSU and managed his family's dairy farm. For the past 12 years, he served SMCC. — Feb. 25, 2022

DR. RONSHEKA ARSHAE PALMER (B.S., Food Science, Nutrition and Health Promotion, '05) 40, Coahoma County – Palmer was born August 19, 1981, in Mound Bayou, MS to Ms. Artie M. Palmer and Mr. Ronnie Thomas. Palmer served as Chief Operating Officer (COO) at Delta Health Center. In 2014, she joined the organization as Family Nurse Practitioner quickly rising to Clinical Quality Officer and ultimately COO. Palmer was critical in the center's successful expansion to Hollandale, Mayersville, Rolling Fork, Leland, seven school-based clinics in the Sunflower County Consolidated School District, and most recently, Mississippi

Valley State University. Under her leadership, they completed the Health and Human Services Administration (HRSA) required Operational Site Visits with perfect scores since 2015. She leaves an exemplary legacy of servant leadership in community health care. — August 1, 2022.

DR. SORINA POPESCU (faculty) 53, Starkville – Dr. Sorina Popescu was born on March 4, 1969, in Brasov, Romania to Elisabeta and Lazar Cristea. She earned her master's in biology at the University of Bucharest, where she later joined the faculty. She earned her Ph.D. in plant molecular biology from Rutgers University in 2003. She led a flagship NSF program on plant protein microarrays at Yale as a post-doctorate and was a faculty member at Cornell University before joining Mississippi State, where she mentored eight graduate students and advised many undergraduate and graduate students. A key passion was providing STEM opportunities for women. At MSU, she led two nationally competitive NSF projects and advanced research directions in plant-pathogen interaction and

microbial communities. She was a frequent NSF and USDA panelist, grant reviewer for national and international agencies, and editor for *Molecular and Cellular Proteomics*, *MPMI*, and *Current Plant Biology*, while serving as a reviewer for numerous other journals. Despite a three-year struggle with breast cancer, Popescu never gave up on herself, her ability to heal, or her ability to meaningfully contribute to the field of plant biology. She continued to run her lab, teach classes, and mentor her students, passionate about her work and the lives she touched. She is survived by her sister, Luminita Cristea; her mother, Elizabeta Cristea; her son and daughter, Nicholas and Medeea Popescu; and her husband, George. Memorial donations may be made to the Dr. Sorina Popescu Memorial Annual Scholarship in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, MSU Foundation, P.O. Box 6149, Mississippi State, MS 39762. To make an online gift, www.msufoundation.com and designate the Dr. Sorina Popescu Memorial Annual Scholarship (#403663). – December 19, 2022



2022 ALUMNI FELLOW

Ted H. Kendall IV

TED H. KENDALL IV of Bolton is a fifth-generation farmer and second-generation Bulldog who earned a bachelor's degree in agricultural economics in 1982. After graduation, he returned home to begin his career in the family business, where he serves as president and co-owner of The Gaddis Farms, a family-owned, diversified row-crop, beef cattle, wildlife management and timber farming operation in Hinds County. Throughout his career, Kendall has invested his time and resources in a variety of areas that help advance Mississippi's agricultural industry. An entrepreneur, community leader, farmer

and advocate, Kendall has held and continues to serve in numerous leadership positions, including vice president of the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation, delegate and chairman for the state of Mississippi on the National Cotton Council and member of the boards of directors for both Southern Farm Bureau Casualty Insurance Co. and Merchants and Planters Bank, among others. He also served as chairman of the USDA Farm Service Agency State Committee for Mississippi and is currently serving as vice chairman of the board of directors for the Mississippi Food Network.



2022 ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR

Daniel B. “Dan” Batson

DANIEL B. “DAN” BATSON of Perkinston is a third-generation Bulldog and horticulturist who has used his skills to become a recognized leader in his industry. He completed both his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in ornamental horticulture in 1980 and 1982, respectively. The following year, Batson and his wife Kathy established GreenForest Nursery in Perkinston. Serving as president and CEO, he has positioned GreenForest Nursery as one of the most progressive green industry businesses in the country. Batson is an avid leader in his profession and community and has received numerous awards throughout his career, including being named the 2010 Swisher Sweets Mississippi Farmer of the Year and the 2013 Nursery Management Magazine Grower of the Year.



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