

Preparing for the
FUTURE

CALS departmental
reorganization enhances
capacity for growth and
research

BY VANESSA BEESON

IN 2023, the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Mississippi State University celebrated 120 years of agricultural education and innovation. In the spirit of continuing our traditions while remaining on the forefront of agricultural technology and innovation, the college embraces the future with an exciting strategic reorganization of its departments. **Dr. Scott Willard**, dean of CALS and director of MAFES, spearheads this initiative aimed at enhancing our capacity for growth and interdisciplinary research.



Students prepare a meal as part of their Quantity Food production course. (Photo by David Ammon)

STRUCTURAL ENHANCEMENTS AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

DEPARTMENT OF BIOCHEMISTRY, NUTRITION, AND HEALTH PROMOTION: Uniting the strengths of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology with Food Science, Nutrition, and Health Promotion, this new department promises to maintain the integrity of our existing programs while opening doors to innovative interdisciplinary collaborations. **Dr. Daniel Peterson** is the interim head of the newly created department.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCE AND PLANT PROTECTION: This newly formed department will integrate

the expertise of the Entomology and Plant Pathology faculty and includes the Agricultural Science B.S. degree program. This new department is poised to explore new interdisciplinary opportunities that may pave the way for further expansion. **Dr. Fred Musser** is the interim head of this department.

FOOD SCIENCE INNOVATION HUB: Funded, in part, by Reed Food Technology, this cutting-edge interdisciplinary hub will catalyze pioneering instruction and outreach across food science and safety research sectors. **Dr. Wes Schilling** is the director of the Food Science Innovation Hub and was recently named the Reed Family Endowed Professor.

BLENDING TRADITION WITH INNOVATION

IN A SYMBOLIC merging of traditions, the historic University Florist, an MSU staple for 90 years, now shares space with the MAFES Sales Store, another iconic part of our university's heritage for 85 years. This new arrangement not only offers grab-and-go floral bouquets and popular MSU merchandise but also features McCarty's Pottery, enhancing

the shopping experience at 925 Stone Blvd. The florist's delivery services continue from their new base at the MAFES A.B. McKay Enology Laboratory on 205 Technology Blvd.

These strategic changes affirm our commitment to advancing the fields of agriculture and life sciences while preserving and celebrating the rich traditions that define Mississippi State University. Join us as we continue to innovate and lead into the future, honoring our past and embracing new possibilities.

Macy Hartsell, florist manager and graduate student Lauren Baskin, and Ciana Thompson, all horticulture majors, pose with flowers at the MAFES A. B. McKay Enology Laboratory, overlooking the MAFES R. R. Foil Plant Science Research Center. (Photo by David Ammon)



Ballew Hall. (Photo by David Ammon)



RESTORATION OF BALLEW HALL APPROACHING COMPLETION

THE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND Life Sciences has completed the historic restoration of Ballew Hall, the headquarters for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) and the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station (MAFES) administration. This revitalized 25,000 square foot facility will enhance our educational and administrative capabilities significantly.

The renovated Ballew Hall features state-of-the-art student spaces, including versatile teaching areas and conference rooms designed to foster innovation and learning. Additionally, the building hosts the administrative offices for CALs and MAFES, a recruitment suite to welcome potential students, a development suite to

engage with our supporters, and a spacious auditorium for events and presentations.

There has been an outpouring of support for the landmark building that once housed the meat laboratory and animal and dairy sciences classes. In 2023, Susanne Boyd Purvis and her husband, David Purvis, along with her mother, Dr. Catherine Boyd, named the Ballew Hall auditorium after their father, father-in-law, and husband, respectively—Dr. Leroy H. Boyd. Boyd, an Ellis County, Oklahoma, native served as a faculty member in the animal husbandry department, in what is now the Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences, for 38 years. He was among the first occupants of the newly constructed building, which opened in 1962. From 1963 until his retirement in 2001, Boyd focused on ruminants and taught classes about sheep, horses, western equitation, and livestock judging, which was his lifelong passion. The Robertson Development Suite, named in memory

of Warren P. Robertson, a former graduate student of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, was gifted by his parents, Chris and Martha Robertson. A gift from the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation is making its mark on the renovated building through the naming of the recruitment suite. Likewise, Southern Ag Credit named the downstairs conference room. Both Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation and Southern Ag Credit are ardent supporters of agriculture, expressing their commitment through the advancement of teaching and research in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

Opportunities to contribute to this landmark project through naming are still available. For more information on how you can be a part of this exciting phase in our history, contact Will Stagers, director of Development for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, at wstagers@foundation.msstate.edu. 🐾