

# THE Stateley Oak

## PRECISION AGRICULTURE

A PROMISE THAT CAN REVOLUTIONIZE FARMING PRACTICES

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# THE Stately Oak

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The LSU AgCenter and LSU provide equal opportunities in programs and employment.

## LSU AGRICULTURE: WINNING FOR LOUISIANA



— **Matt Lee**  
Vice President for Agriculture and  
Dean of the LSU College of Agriculture

As I reflect on the past few years, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to work alongside such talented and passionate individuals — students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends alike. The LSU AgCenter and College of Agriculture have experienced remarkable growth, and our momentum continues to build as we serve the great state of Louisiana.

Together, we have embraced our land-grant mission, playing a pivotal role in shaping a brighter future for Louisiana through teaching, research and extension. I am committed to fostering collaborative teams that build on each other’s successes, expanding access to world-class education, driving innovation and nurturing thriving communities across our state.

Our cover story highlights precision and digital agriculture, a focal area I have been dedicated to expanding, showcasing how our work at the AgCenter and College of Agriculture directly benefits our state. The LSU agricultural enterprise is on a trajectory of success, bolstered by partnerships with companies, families, donors and stakeholders that drive world-class research and outreach for the benefit of Louisiana.

In this magazine, you will find details on several exciting new partnerships, campus events, upgraded facilities and exemplary achievements of our students.

Thank you for your unwavering support and commitment to our shared mission. For more information on how to reach our office or collaborate with us to achieve our common goals, please visit [www.LSUAgCenter.com/vp](http://www.LSUAgCenter.com/vp).

Together, we are building teams that win for Louisiana.

*Geaux Ag*



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The legacy of Geoffrey Beene is celebrated in the exhibition, “Coming Home: Geoffrey Beene,” at the LSU Textile and Costume Museum.

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Precision and digital ag tools and techniques offer a lot of promise to farmers, and the LSU AgCenter is aiming to make that promise a reality through new hires, innovative projects and strategic investments. Spotlighted are soybean stand counts, insect control on strawberries, rural connectivity infrastructure and drone satellite imagery for sugar yields. To read about it, as well as the Bubenzer family’s contributions to advancing precision agriculture, see **Pages 18-23**.

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# FROM HAYNESVILLE TO HIGH FASHION

Geoffrey Beene's journey celebrated in LSU exhibit

By Tobie Blanchard

**G**eoffrey Beene's story starts with polka dots, but it unfolds into a tapestry of innovation, craftsmanship and an indelible mark on fashion history.

In the small town of Haynesville, Louisiana, Beene found his creative spark in an unlikely place — a fabric lining his aunt's hope chest. His aunt removed the fabric and gave it to Beene. At just 10 years old, he transformed that polka-dot fabric into his first garment using a Simplicity pattern, setting the stage for a remarkable journey from a quaint Southern upbringing to the heights of American fashion design. ▶

**Above:** A stunning gown made with lurex, an innovative fabric at the time the gown was created, with metallic thread and sable cuffs. **Far right:** Garments in the Fashioning a Southern Heritage section show Geoffrey Beene's southern influences, including his love of flowers of the South that he inherited from his mother, a florist. Photos by Kevin Duffy

At left: Geoffrey Beene cocktail dresses from the 1990s.







**Above:** Images of Sylvia R. Karasu, M.D., outfitted in Geoffrey Beene designs, are displayed on a wall at the exhibit. Photo by Emma Reynolds

**Right:** Polka-dot garments greet visitors at the entrance to the LSU Textile and Costume Museum and are a nod to Geoffrey Beene's first garment he created when he was 10 years old. Photo by Kevin Duffy

**Below:** A grouping of garments titled the Language of Lace is displayed at the museum. Photo by Kevin Duffy



**Above:** A plaid taffeta skirt on a gown is lifted slightly to reveal the petticoat underneath, which helps give the gown structure and volume. Beene was known for these details. Photo by Kevin Duffy



**Left:** A jacket from Geoffrey Beene's circus collection includes Venetian glass buttons, magenta and copper trim, and a hand-beaded tiger. It was one of the first items Sylvia R. Karasu donated to the museum. Photo by Kevin Duffy

His fascination with fabrics and patterns, nurtured by his florist mother, laid the foundation for a career that would captivate the fashion world and one woman in particular who became the foremost collector of Geoffrey Beene garments, fabrics, sketches and ephemera.

The legacy of Geoffrey Beene is celebrated in the exhibition, "Coming Home: Geoffrey Beene," at the LSU Textile and Costume Museum. It features garments collected and donated by Sylvia R. Karasu, M.D, clinical professor of psychiatry at Weill Cornell Medicine in New York City.

Since 1991, Karasu has worn and amassed thousands of Beene's creations, donating 254 pieces to the museum, 92 of which are on display at either the LSU Textiles and Costume Museum or were on display at a smaller exhibit at the LSU Museum of Art.

"She doesn't have normal run around clothes like you and I," said Michael Mamp, director and curator of the LSU Textiles and Costume Museum. "She only wears Geoffrey, every day since 1991."

The donation is the largest gift the museum has received and is appraised at \$241,000.

Mamp said the collection was a coup for the museum, with curators from across the country eager to see and obtain the garments.

"For whatever reason, she and I connected. I think we understood each other culturally," Mamp said. "She was very eager for me to take things that first time I met her."

One of the first garments he took on that initial visit was an exquisite jacket with a tiger that was part of Beene's circus collection, and apropos for the start of a donation to an LSU museum.

"It is fabulous," Mamp said, describing the jacket which is on display with two other jackets from the circus collection. "It has the hand-beaded and embroidered tiger. The buttons are handblown Venetian glass. The trim around the edge are strips of magenta and copper bias tape that have been stitched together to make the trim. These are just beautifully made."

An extreme attention to detail, unparalleled craftsmanship, and "little surprises just for the wearer," as Mamp called them, are the calling cards of a Geoffrey Beene garment.

Visitors to the museum can marvel at the fabrics, the trims, the beading and the luxury that spans from the late 1960s to the early 2000s. When they enter the lobby of the museum, they will be greeted by eight garments that display Beene's love of polka dots and represent his start in fashion.

Inside the museum's main exhibit space, visitors can view the garments in groupings. Mamp and his students took their time deciding which pieces to display, how to display them and how to group them.

On some pieces, mannequins' hands hold the hem of a dress to show the lace and petticoat underneath. Some of the garments are displayed on original Geoffrey Beene dress forms.

"Towards the end of his life he got tired of doing fashion shows," Mamp said of Beene. "He was kind of ahead of his time in that regard. They're very expensive, and it's over in 20 minutes. So, he would set up his showroom with forms covered in fabrics that matched his collection."

Mamp bought 19 of those forms at auction for the exhibit. He also bought new mannequins and risers for the show. He received a Research and Creative Activity Support grant from the LSU Provost's Fund for Innovation in Research and secured donations from community members —John G. Turner, Jerry G. Fisher, Mindy and Greg LaCour, Pat Alford, Lubna Culbert, and Joshua Holder of Time Warp Boutique — to stage the show.

The museum held an opening reception on May 5. Karasu attended along with Russell Nardoza, former vice president of Geoffrey Beene LLC, and Stephen Wellman, one of Beene's nephews.

The show will run until Jan. 24. A new exhibit, "Color Me Fashion," will take its place, opening March 16, 2025, and will explore over 100 years of fashion history arranged by color.

Mamp said this collection brings the museum and its holdings into a new stratosphere.

"We have a fabulous museum. We house thousands of pieces dating across a wide period of history. But these garments (Beene collection) at the time were the most expensive, most exclusive in the marketplace. So, this really elevates the designer component of our collection and puts us on par with other leading institutions." ■

Sylvia Karasu, M.D. and Michael Mamp, museum director, at the opening reception of the "Coming Home: Geoffrey Beene" exhibit at the LSU Textile and Costume Museum on May 5. Photo by Emma Reynolds



# LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP

## Pete deGravelles' impact on agriculture lives on

By Tobie Blanchard

**P**ete deGravelles' legacy is deeply intertwined with agriculture, community service and leadership. Throughout his life, deGravelles had a strong commitment to nurturing future leaders, not only in the agricultural sector but for all organizations in which he was involved.

Two of his daughters, Renée DeMoss and Diane Trull, are honoring their late father by establishing the Pete deGravelles Ag Leadership Endowment to support the LSU AgCenter's Ag Leadership Development Program.

"Leadership was extremely important to him. He believed in developing leaders," DeMoss said.

Regarding his passion for leadership, the sisters said they view their father's life in three phases — his time farming, his time leading the American Sugar Cane League and his retirement.

DeGravelles was first a sugarcane farmer. He farmed with his father, Percy deGravelles, in Franklin, growing his father's farm from 120 to 5,000 acres as his involvement in the sugarcane industry also grew. During this time, he was heavily involved as a volunteer for the American Sugar Cane League, lobbying at a state and federal level.

After a successful farming career, he sold his farming operation to several employees upon his retirement.

In 1988, deGravelles was elected president of the American Sugar Cane League and served as the general manager of the league until his retirement in 1993. At that time, Louisiana Sen. J. Bennett Johnston read a proclamation on the floor of the U.S. Senate recognizing deGravelles' achievements.

"Those who know Pete have deep respect for his thorough knowledge of the intricacies of sugar production and processing," the proclamation declared. "Pete's hand has been at the helm during some of the most difficult debates on our national sweetener policies, but his leadership and foresight have helped us develop the strong program we now have."

Like the proclamation, DeMoss listed off a multitude of her dad's accomplishments. He served as president and member of the board of directors of the St. Mary Sugar Co-Op, he was selected as the Man of the Year in Service to Louisiana Agriculture ►



Pete deGravelles, left, on the farm with his father, Percy deGravelles, in Franklin.

by Progressive Farmer magazine in 1978. He was president of the Louisiana division of the American Society of Sugar Cane Technologists. He served as director of the First Commercial Bank of Franklin, on the advisory council to the Federal Reserve Bank in Atlanta and for two years as a member of the Business Advisory Council to the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System.

He also was King Sucrose XXXV of the Louisiana Sugar Cane Festival in 1976.

In 2000, he was inducted into the LSU Alumni Hall of Distinction, being the first person who had not graduated from LSU to receive that honor.

"Dad had gone to LSU, but when World War II broke out, he was called back home to farm," Trull said.

Upon his retirement from the American Sugar Cane League, deGravelles and his wife, Jane, moved to Lafayette where he remained active in the community. He served on the board of directors of the Acadiana Symphony Orchestra, International Trade Development Group of Le Centre International de Lafayette, University of Louisiana at Lafayette Foundation Board, board of trustees of the Louisiana Public Facilities Authority, The Shadows on the Teche and the Acadiana Arts Council Board. He served as a board member of the Greater Lafayette Chamber of Commerce, serving as chairman of the board in 2000. He was also active in the American Diabetes Association.

The sisters' donation will help keep their father's legacy in agriculture alive.

"He is still impacting agriculture in Louisiana by being the impetus for the Ag leadership program," DeMoss said.

Bobby Soileau, director of the LSU AgCenter Ag Leadership Development Program said the gift will help support the participants of the program in the future.

"It honors the enormous contribution of Mr. Pete deGravelles Jr.," Soileau said. "He was a leader who saw a need to establish this program. We are grateful his family has continued that tradition with their generous contributions to help sustain ag leadership."

The sisters are proud of all their father's accomplishments. "He was a great dad. We are still all very influenced by him, even though he's been deceased for 18 years. We talk about him often and what a blessing it was to be his daughters," Trull said.

DeMoss and Trull have three other sisters. "He was our king, and we were his princesses," DeMoss said of her dad. ■

**"Those who know Pete have deep respect for his thorough knowledge of the intricacies of sugar production and processing. Pete's hand has been at the helm during some of the most difficult debates on our national sweetener policies, but his leadership and foresight have helped us develop the strong program we now have."**



Pete deGravelles at his retirement party pictured with his daughters and his assistant at the American Sugarcane League.



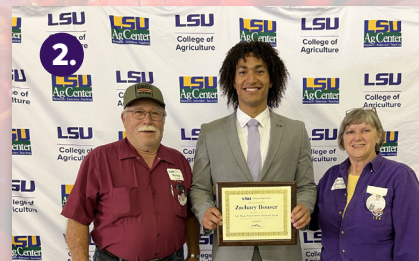
The deGravelles family celebrate Pete's induction in the LSU Alumni Hall of Distinction in 2000. Pictured are Diane Trull, Renée DeMoss, Carol Williams, Pete deGravelles, Jane deGravelles, Roane Risher and Judith Boutte.

Photos provided by the deGravelles Family.



# CRAWFISH BOIL BRINGS COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE ALUMNI TOGETHER FOR FAMILY FUN, AWARDS

Story & Photos  
By Annabelle Lang



In April, the College of Agriculture alumni and their families gathered with faculty and staff for the annual Ag Alumni Association Crawfish Boil. This event featured fresh crawfish donated by Richard Farms and ice cream from the LSU Dairy Store.

A standout moment was the presentation of the K.C. Toups Memorial Les Voyageurs Award by board member Erica Harding to Sophie LeBlanc and Zachary Bonser, recognizing their leadership and service to the college.

This wonderful event would not have been possible without the generous contributions from this year's sponsors. Their support allows the Ag Alumni Association to continue hosting this complimentary gathering for our alumni and friends, fostering a strong sense of community and shared pride in the College of Agriculture.



1. Students, staff and alumni volunteers, including Les Voyageur Raina Washington, make the day a success.

2. The K.C. Toups Memorial Les Voyageurs Award is presented to Zachary Bonser by Toups family members Randy and Deborah.

3. Over 1,000 pounds of crawfish, donated by Richard Farms and the Ag Alumni Association, were boiled.

4. The LSU AgCenter and College of Agriculture development cohort includes, from left, Tracy Evans, John Tillery, Alexis Jones, Claire Francois and Hannah Gambrell.



5. The K.C. Toups Memorial Les Voyageurs Award is presented to Sophie LeBlanc by Toups family members Randy and Deborah.

6. Olivia and Mary Frances Christopher.

7. The Ag Alumni Crawfish Boil connects alumni, faculty, staff students and future students.

# Dean's Circle Membership

American Sugar Cane League	Paula and Harold Lambert
Candace and William G. Bain	Laura Leach
Debbora Bain	Mimi Singer Lee and Matt Lee
Deborah and Sterling Bain Jr.	Louisiana Division of
Georgia and William L. Bain	American Society of Sugar
Jill and Roger Bain	Cane Technologists
Mary T. Benson	Elizabeth and David Means III
Jo and A.J. Burns Jr.	Anne and Tom Meek
CGB Enterprises Inc.	Abiodun Okemakinde
Jan and Gerald Dill	Kelley and Michael Olinde
Gina Eubanks	Catherine and Hollis O'Neal
Lamar and Tracy Evans	Amy and Ashley Peters
Adrienne and John Frierson	William Richardson Jr.
Karen and William Gleason	Debra and John Roesch
Ann and Leo Guedry	Susan and William Sheetz
Lee and Patrick Harrison	Linda and Richard Sturlese
Ann Reiley Jones	Anita and George Thibodeaux
Bettye and C. Wayne Jordan	Susan and Thomas Webb
Ann and Thomas Laborde	Erica and Kenneth West II
Sonja and Luke Laborde Jr.	Elaine and Richard Zuschlag





# INAUGURAL LSU AG TAILGATE FEATURES FOOD, FUN, FELLOWSHIP

By Gabrielle Bellelo

LSU Vice President for Agriculture and College of Agriculture Dean Matt Lee hosted his inaugural LSU Ag Tailgate on Sept. 21 before the Tiger football team took on the UCLA Bruins. A crowd of more than 300 faculty, staff, alumni, ag supporters, ag stakeholders and their family and friends joined in the festivities before the big game.

The presenting sponsor was Zen-Noh Grain Corporation. Other sponsors included the LSU College of Agriculture Alumni Association, Sugarfield Spirits, John Deere and Sunshine Quality Solutions, the American Sugar Cane League and First South Farm Credit. Lee delivered an inspiring speech recognizing the outstanding work and remarkable individuals that comprise the LSU AgCenter and College of Agriculture. He also drew a couple of lucky raffle winners, each receiving a bottle of purple vodka, donated by Sugarfield Spirits. Attendees enjoyed a buffet, Dairy Store ice cream, LSU ag swag and live music by Swampland Revival.



**1.** State Rep. Troy Romero, from left, and wife Emily visit with Ashley Mullens, LSU AgCenter director of governmental relations. Photo by Frankie Gould. **2.** The band Swampland Revival. Photo by Andrew Rasco. **3.** Leaders of Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation and their families, from left: Marty Wooldridge, with wife Crystal and son, Tripp; Rhonda and Richard Fontenot; and Ashley and Burch Pierce. Photo by Frankie Gould. **4.** Matt Lee, LSU vice president for agriculture and dean of the College of Agriculture, speaks at the LSU Ag Tailgate. Photo by Gabrielle Bellelo.

## ZEN-NOH GRAIN IS PRESENTING SPONSOR OF INAUGURAL LSU AG TAILGATE



The Zen-Noh Grain Corporation team joined Matt Lee, LSU vice president for agriculture and dean of the College of Agriculture, for a photo. Photo by Frankie Gould

The fastest export elevator in the world stands near Convent, Louisiana, on the Mississippi River. This facility can simultaneously load and unload 150,00 bushels of grain per hour and exports 2.2 million bushels a day.

This state-of-the-art facility was constructed by Zen-Noh Grain Corporation. Zen-Noh Grain Corporation (ZGC) was established in New Orleans in 1979. ZGC has the goal of establishing a safe and stable supply of U.S. foodgrains and soybeans for the production of compound feed by Zen-Noh's feed mills in Japan.

The LSU AgCenter was honored to have Zen-Noh Grain Corporation as the presenting sponsor for the inaugural LSU Ag Tailgate on Sept. 21. ZGC supports the LSU College of Agriculture with one of its largest endowed scholarships. They provide tours of their facility to students, ag leadership classes and faculty.

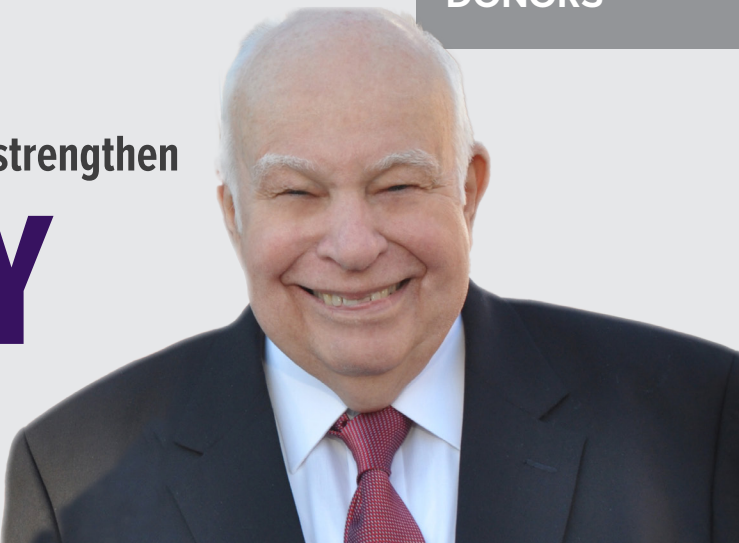
"ZGC employs many LSU ag graduates who hold key positions in the corporation. It is a privilege to be a part of this inaugural event," said Chris Gehret, ZGC general manager.

"LSU Ag is thrilled that Zen-Noh Grain Corporation could be a partner in our inaugural tailgate," said Matt Lee, LSU vice president for agriculture and dean of the College of Agriculture. "This event brought together family, friends and alumni of the LSU AgCenter and College of Agriculture to enjoy food, fun, music and network before the LSU vs. UCLA game."

LSU launches graduate certificate program to strengthen

# FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS

By Tobie Blanchard



A long-held vision of Don Welge is now a reality. LSU has unveiled a new online graduate certificate in agribusiness designed to strengthen the resilience and efficiency of the national food supply chain.

The late Welge saw this as a need for the food industry. Welge earned a degree from LSU in agricultural economics and was the CEO and president of Gilster-Mary Lee Corporation — a private-label food manufacturing company. Welge's family and friends started the Welge Food Beyond the Farm Certificate Fund to get the program started at his alma mater.

This certification, spearheaded by LSU College of Agriculture and the LSU E. J. Ourso College of Business, aims to equip professionals with advanced skills critical for navigating challenges within the food industry.

The program's inception is rooted in Welge's commitment to fortifying food systems. Welge's son, Tom Welge, said this initiative was a true passion for his father.

"He recognized the need for a program such as this, even before COVID-19," Tom Welge said. "The pandemic demonstrated that while our food system is strong, it certainly is not immune from failures."

The graduate certificate in agribusiness program was developed by industry professionals who have a deep

understanding of the challenges facing the agribusiness industry today. The program will integrate rigorous coursework from both colleges' faculty, leveraging

More information about the certification can be found here: [bit.ly/LSUAgribusiness](https://bit.ly/LSUAgribusiness).

cutting-edge research and practical insights to prepare graduates for leadership roles in agricultural management, supply chain logistics and food system resilience.

The comprehensive curriculum concentrates on the competencies essential for success in food processing and supply chain management and blends the worlds of business and food sciences, offering a unique and valuable skill set.

Matt Lee, LSU vice president for agriculture and dean of the LSU College of Agriculture, said this certification adds another component to the career-readiness the college is doing in agribusiness and food sciences.



LSU has launched a new online certification in agribusiness supported by the Welge Food Beyond the Farm Initiative in honor of the late Don Welge, pictured. Welge was the CEO and president of Gilster-Mary Lee Corporation and envisioned a program to help food industry professionals advance their knowledge and strengthen the food supply chain. Photos provided

"The Food Beyond the Farm program addresses a critical need in our supply chain systems. By training professionals in food supply logistics, we enhance system resilience and adaptability. This thoughtfully designed program prepares individuals to meet the future challenges of the supply chain head-on," Lee said.

The program is flexible, so professionals in the food industry can take advantage of the online certification. The comprehensive curriculum equips students with a unique blend of skills that are in high demand within the field of agribusiness. Graduates of the program will be well-positioned to contribute to the growth and sustainability of local, national and global food systems. Jared Llorens, dean of the E. J. Ourso College of Business, said his college was excited to be part of this interdisciplinary program.

"With this team approach, we can meet a critical workforce need in the food industry by equipping students with essential food sciences and business skills," Llorens said. "This program will have a lasting impact on the industry. I cannot think of a more fitting way to celebrate Don Welge's legacy and vision."

Before his death in 2020, Don Welge worked to gather support for the program from industry representatives who agreed that this was a missing piece in advanced workforce education.

"Seeing this program move forward at LSU is not only a very meaningful tribute to him, but a way to help support and protect our food industry into the future," Tom Welge said.



## OUR LADY OF THE LAKE HEALTH FUNDING HELPS TO KEEP DAIRY STORE CHURNING INTO ITS SECOND CENTURY

By V. Todd Miller

Earlier this year, LSU broke ground on the Our Lady of the Lake Health Interdisciplinary Science Building, a four-story, nearly 200,000-square-foot structure that will be home to five education focus disciplines and one near-100-year-old campus tradition – the LSU AgCenter Dairy Store.

The Dairy Store, which began in 1925 as the campus creamery, had been in operation on the corner of South Stadium Drive and Tower Drive since 1956. It was renamed in 1972 and sold ice cream, cheeses, milk and other dairy products in that location until it relocated earlier this year to a temporary store front in the LSU Food Science Building. All dairy products used for production come from the AgCenter Southeast Research Station in Franklinton.

Our Lady of the Lake Health put up a \$15 million investment and, along with \$10 million from LCMC Health, \$43 million from LSU donors and \$105 million from the state of Louisiana, the new building will be home to astronomy, biological sciences, chemistry, geology and geophysics, mathematics and physics students and faculty as well as the new Dairy Store once construction is completed in late 2025. It will be located at the same South Stadium/Tower Drive location as the now razed original Dairy Store.

Charles “Chuck” Boeneke, an AgCenter dairy science professor who manages production at the Dairy Store, has worked there for more than 35 years, starting out as a graduate student. He was a bit nostalgic about the old location for obvious reasons.

“I met my wife here when she was a student worker, and we’ve been married for 30 years now,” Boeneke wistfully recalled.

Current Dairy Store manager Nick Uzee sees a bright future for the new Dairy Store in its new location due to the funding.

“Dr. Chuck and I are excited about the increased capacity and potential that the newly completed Dairy Store and creamery location will bring to our operations and experiences for students,” Uzee said. “And it was largely made possible through the generous support of Our Lady of the Lake.”

According to Uzee, the new facility will allow students and student employees the opportunity to explore creamery operations at a whole new level, with ice cream production capacity doubled, the cheese production facility renovated for ergonomic functionality and a milk bottling line with dramatically increased capabilities.

“The dairy processing building additionally has a large focus on student success both in the production space and classroom due to an emphasis on technology adoption and support spaces that allow for tremendous student growth,” he said.

Matt Lee, vice president for agriculture and dean of the College of Agriculture, said the funding for the new state-of-the-art facility will not only keep campus visitors happy during the scorching Baton Rouge summer months, but will also bolster academics.

“The LSU AgCenter Dairy Store has been a cherished campus staple for decades, and it’s been more than just a storefront to get ice cream. It serves as a hands-on learning tool for students mastering the art of food processing,” Lee said. “With this modernized facility, we secure the preservation of this creamery for the next generation of students coming to LSU.”

## Louisiana Lights debuts at Windrush Gardens

It began as a simple wish to make Baton Rouge a holiday tourist destination for families and friends to make memories that would last a lifetime. Now, as Louisiana Lights: Where the Holidays Shine debuts, that wish is coming true.

The immersive, multnight light show illuminates the historic Windrush Gardens at Burden Museum & Gardens. The natural beauty of the gardens will dazzle the senses through artistic uses of light to create a winter wonderland.

The event invites residents and visitors to take an hourlong stroll through interconnected garden rooms that are exquisitely lit for the holidays, celebrating a garden where the past and present shine as one.

Louisiana Lights was made possible through a collaboration with Visit Baton Rouge.

LSU AgCenter Botanic Gardens resident director Jeff Kuehny praised the dreamlike quality of the experience, emphasizing how unique it is to have it take place in a metropolitan city like Baton Rouge.

“It beckons guests to embrace the harmony of nature and artistry of light, transporting them into the serene oasis designed by Steele Burden in the heart of urban life,” he said.

Louisiana Lights is held every Thursday through Sunday from Nov. 29 to Dec. 29. Each night’s first session will begin at 5:30 p.m., and the last will start at 8:30 p.m. Onsite parking will be \$10.

Visit [DiscoverBurden.com/LaLights](https://DiscoverBurden.com/LaLights) for more information on ticket sales.

*Discover a new holiday tradition!*



**Louisiana Lights**

WHERE THE HOLIDAYS SHINE



Experience the magic of the season as you stroll through the beautifully illuminated historic Windrush Gardens.

NOV. 29-DEC. 29 | **Get tickets at [DiscoverBurden.com/LaLights](https://DiscoverBurden.com/LaLights)**

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# PRECISION AND DIGITAL AGRICULTURE

**A promise that can revolutionize farming practices**

By Tobie Blanchard



**I**t's the promise of less time spent walking the field. It's the guarantee of pinpointing water or nutrients needs in a field. It's the hope of saving money, time and resources.

Precision and digital ag tools and techniques offer a lot of promise to farmers, and the LSU AgCenter is aiming to make that promise a reality through new hires, innovative projects and strategic investments.

Precision ag and digital agriculture encompasses alternative uses of GPS, drone technology or autonomous robots combined with the application of artificial intelligence (AI) to analyze comprehensive data sets for improved farm-level decision making including projects like the ones detailed here that the LSU AgCenter is prioritizing. ►

Drones fly over a sugarcane field at the LSU AgCenter Sugarcane Research Station. Photos by Olivia McClure



Dulis Duron, LSU College of agriculture graduate student, is working with sugarcane farmer Keith Dugas to test digital ag tools that will help predict sugarcane yields on Dugas' farm.



## Seeing more clearly what the eye cannot

Two-spotted spider mites are a top concern for strawberry farmers. These tiny insects attack plants, causing leaf cells to collapse and die.

The bugs grow less than a millimeter in length, but accurately counting the pests can help farmers decide the optimal method for controlling them.

“Most people — at least me — can’t identify them without a magnifying lens,” said Congliang Zhou, who joined the LSU AgCenter this summer as an assistant professor for research and extension.

As a doctoral student at the University of Florida, Zhou used his experience with artificial intelligence and geographic information systems to develop a

smartphone application that counts the mites on strawberries.

Zhou’s work in the AgCenter School of Plant, Environmental and Soil Sciences focuses on precision agriculture to make agricultural operations more efficient. He will work with agricultural producers statewide to improve their use of these technologies and develop new tools based on their needs.

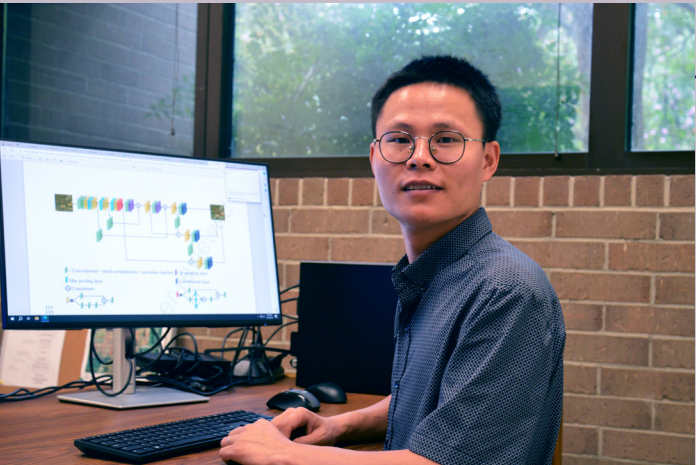
Precision agriculture has increased the efficiency of farms worldwide over the past 40 years, and Zhou sees a greater need for labor-saving technologies in the future.

“The labor shortage is a major issue for the modern farming system,” he said. “We cannot find enough people, especially in the United States.”

In his work with the AgCenter, he envisions many additional uses for the smartphone program and plans to collaborate with entomologists and pathologists to broaden its applications.

“It can also be adopted for other things in our department, for nutrient estimation, water stress detection, monitoring, these kinds of things,” he said.

While Zhou has experience with drones using remote sensing technology and has developed smartphone applications, he also sees new frontiers for technology in agriculture. Over the past few years, he has begun developing a robot that can crawl through fields and take multiple measurements that are important to producers.



Congliang Zhou developed an app that can help strawberry farmers estimate the number of certain insects affecting their crop. Photo by Kyle Peveto

At the AgCenter, Zhou will work in an extension role along with his research. He plans to meet agricultural producers and learn what needs they may have and then develop tools to make their operations more efficient.

“I like to listen to people, talk to people and then bring the precision agriculture technology to the people,” he said. “I really like to listen to them, talk to them, communicate with them and then help.”

## Standing out with soybean stand counts

Stand counts are an important part of ensuring optimum soybean yields. Farmers often repair or replant areas where stand counts are below a certain threshold. Getting an accurate stand count can be labor intensive.

“How do people do stand counts? Basically, they look around to see if there are any patches in the field,” said Thanos Gentimis, LSU AgCenter assistant professor and statistician. “They walk the fields, maybe for six hours.”

Instead of walking a field for hours, farmers can fly a drone overhead and get a more accurate — and literal — picture of the situation.

LSU graduate student Bhawana Acharya worked under the direction of Tri Setiyono, LSU AgCenter assistant professor in precision agriculture, and Gentimis on a project to improve the ability to get stand counts using precision and digital agriculture tools. Acharya trained the YOLOv8, a computer vision model, to detect the number of soybean plants emerging at certain vegetative stages with high accuracy.

“Just throwing out the hula hoop and counting the plants by hand in a large field can be very time consuming and labor intensive, so we needed an alternative,” Acharya said.

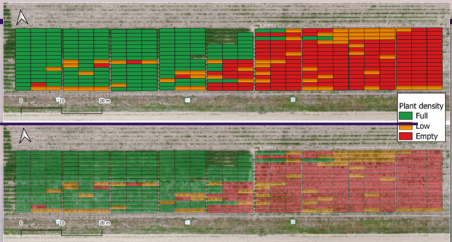
Her work is aimed at helping farmers create replanting or repairing maps in their field following damaging rainstorms. She uses images taken with handheld cameras and drones.

“In my project, I created some categories like full, low and empty plant density in the field and in the images, and based on the result, I made a map for replanting purposes.”

The color-coded maps will show areas that have no damage, some damage or heavy damage and allow farmers to make decisions on whether a replant or a repair is necessary to maintain desired yields.

After heavy rainfalls that damage plants, farmers need to make replanting decisions. With AI imaging analysis, maps can be created quickly and accurately. This saves farmers time and can save them money in the long run.

Acharya said the research will continue over multiple locations in Louisiana to fine-tune the intelligence. “Now you fly the drone for 30 minutes and you come back, and you know exactly where to plant,” Gentimis said.



Precision replanting map based on YOLOv8 result for the LSU AgCenter Doyle Chambers Central Research Station in Baton Rouge in 2023. Image made in QGIS

## Lowering the learning curve

Helping to create a better understanding of precision and digital agriculture is an aim of the AgCenter. In Louisiana, adoption rates of precision and digital agriculture tools and techniques are low. However, Gentimis sees a high desire among farmers, extension agents and students to use and learn more about these tools.

He estimates that around 45% of the farmers have smart equipment on their machines. “They just don’t use it yet,” Gentimis said.

He said new farmers want (or are forced) to buy equipment such as tractors that are fully outfitted with digital ag tools.

Gentimis joined the AgCenter in 2018. He said then many farmers and extension agents weren’t talking about drones. Now they are putting together workshops to teach farmers about drone usage including the legal and ethical issues and eventually how to use data collected from them.

A recent cluster hire at the AgCenter, which included Congliang Zhou, is aimed at improving efforts to advance precision and digital agriculture in Louisiana.

Part of that effort is to beef up broadband in rural areas of the state. Programs are in the works to improve connectivity infrastructure which would allow producers to leverage precision and digital ag tools. Once connectivity is in place, the AgCenter would be the educational force behind farmers understanding these tools.

LaCADIAN, the Louisiana Climate and Digital Ag Network, is another program that would harness the powers of precision agriculture to benefit farmers. Vinit Sehgal, another recent hire who is an assistant professor in the School of Plant, Environmental and Soil Sciences, is spearheading this effort, which is funded through the efforts of U.S. Rep. Julia Letlow and the National Resources Conservation Service. LaCADIAN will be a statewide distributed network of automated field observatories and sensors to record critical zone water, energy and carbon fluxes for monitoring, modeling and management of Louisiana’s agriculture, energy, biodiversity, soil health and water resources.

“I’m expecting to see a lot more projects in this area,” Gentimis said. ►

### THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE CONDUCTED A STUDY ON THE ADOPTION OF PRECISION AGRICULTURAL TOOLS ON U.S. FARMS. THE STUDY FOUND:

■ **A MAJORITY OF ROW CROP ACREAGE IS MANAGED USING AUTO-STEER AND GUIDANCE SYSTEMS:** Auto-steer guidance systems were used on only 5.3 % of planted corn acres in 2001, growing to 58% in 2016.

■ **ADOPTION RATES VARY BY FARM SIZE:** At least half of relatively large row crop farms rely on yield maps, soil maps, variable rate technology and/or guidance systems. Meanwhile (except for cotton), less than 25% of smaller farms use any of these four technologies.

■ **DIGITAL AG (DA) TECHNOLOGY ADOPTERS USE DATA, ACQUIRE CROP MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS AND EMPLOY TECHNICAL/CONSULTANT SERVICES AT HIGHER RATES THAN DA TECHNOLOGY NONADOPTERS:** DA technology adopters are more likely than nonadopters to download public data for use in decision-making, though overall adoption remains uncommon.

■ **FARMERS ARE LIKELY TO USE PRECISION AGRICULTURE TECHNOLOGIES FOR A VARIETY OF REASONS:** As technological capabilities continue to evolve, so have farmers’ rationales for their use. For example, corn and winter wheat farmers tend to rely on yield monitors to track crop moisture content. By contrast, yield monitors are primarily used to help determine chemical input use in cotton, soybean and sorghum production. Many precision agriculture technologies are used in combination with other precision agriculture technologies.

Thanos Gentimis.  
Photo by Eddy Perez



## Embracing the future

On Keith Dugas' sugarcane farm in Napoleonville, drones fly over fields every few weeks. The drones are capturing images — images that provide data that can drive decisions on Dugas' farm.

Dugas doesn't shy away from change. He signed up to work with the LSU AgCenter to test out GreenSeeker crop sensor technology nearly 15 years ago to pinpoint fertilizer applications in his fields.

"If there is something out there that works better, I want to try it," Dugas said. "Someone has to be the first one to try it."

His work with GreenSeeker determined he could use less fertilizer on some areas of the field and see his sugar yields go up.

Now Dugas is collaborating with LSU College of Agriculture graduate student Dulis Duron and his adviser Setiyono, to use drone and satellite imagery to predict sugar yields on his farm. Accurate yield predictions can allow farmers to plan their harvest dates — they don't want to start too early or

too late — and help sugarcane mills approximate the amount of cane they will process that year to determine when their grinding season officially starts.

"Before it was kind of a shot in the dark and mainly using historical averages to predict yields," Dugas said.

Duron's research at Dugas' farm involves creating computer models that can take the images and look at sugarcane stalk width, how the crop covers the soil, the color of the leaves and other data points.

In addition to the satellite data, Duron also incorporated weather data such as precipitation and cumulative solar radiation through growing degree days which measures heat accumulation in the crop.

These are run through advanced AI-based modeling programs run on Python and R — two programming languages — which can identify nonlinear patterns and increase the prediction accuracy.

Researchers have been training the model for three years and have seen accuracy improve over time.

"We can make final yield predictions, and the results are really good," Duron said. "There is enough data to apply the model to the 2024 harvest."

Duron has an undergraduate degree in agriculture but didn't know much about precision and digital agriculture before coming to LSU. He is part of a cohort of agriculture students on the cutting edge of these new technologies.

He said he is able to apply tools such as R, Python and artificial intelligence that he learned in the School of Plant, Environmental and Soil Sciences and in Gentimis' digital ag class to the work he is doing with Dugas.

Duron is just beginning his journey into precision ag, but Dugas has seen its benefits for the past decade and said he continues to be amazed by the advancements in agriculture.

"I never thought drones could be as useful as they are now — flying chemical and ripeners over the field. These images get better and better, and the predictions become more reliable," Dugas said. "I don't know where it is going to be next, but it is amazing." ■

Tri Setiyono, left, works with graduate students in a test plot of corn at Central Research Station. Students, from left, include Dulis Duron, Rejina Adhikari, Bhawana Acharya and Farner Rontani. Photo by Olivia McClure



# FROM LOG CABINS TO CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY

## BUBENZER FAMILY'S SUGARCANE LEGACY

By Tobie Blanchard

Christian Bubenzer was a German immigrant, a Civil War Union soldier, a prisoner of war, a prison of war escapee and a sugarcane farmer. It was during his escape from a war prison in Sabine Parish that he wandered through the Avoyelles Parish area. He walked clear across Louisiana, eventually ending up in Vicksburg, Mississippi, and linking up with another regiment.

Bubenzer made his way back to what is now Bunkie after he was discharged from the war, forgoing returning to Indiana where he had been recruited into the army. He settled there and found work in mills and eventually in farming.

His descendants have been farming on that land ever since.

"He purchased land in 1889 and then bought more in 1901 and set up his family in an old antebellum home," Grady Bubenzer said of his great-grandfather Christian.

Christian could not have envisioned the farming practices Grady, his brother Kemper, and Grady's son Fletcher and Kemper's son Harvey are using today at their farm, B & A Cane Inc. He likely would have been impressed by the sugar yields these modern farmers get from their crops and would have found himself in awe of the technology and the equipment they use.

"I don't see how they could envision much when they lived in a log cabin," Grady said.

Grady also has a hard time wrapping his head around the advances that are coming in agriculture. He joked that he likes to stick to the tried-and-true methods he has used for decades, while his son and nephew eye new tools that can revolutionize the way they farm.

But you can't stop progress, so Grady and Kemper want their family to help usher it in.

The brothers are establishing an endowment with the LSU AgCenter to fund the Bubenzer Family Professorship in Precision Agriculture. The professorship will help support an AgCenter faculty member working in precision agriculture.

"This will allow us to be able to talk to someone in the organization with expertise in precision agriculture and to see what new ideas are out there and where things are going," Kemper Bubenzer said.

The brothers farm about 2,400 acres of sugarcane in Avoyelles and Rapides parishes — an area that is the northernmost point in the world where sugarcane is grown. They said they rely heavily on the LSU AgCenter to help them farm.

"The variety development at the AgCenter is our lifeblood," Kemper said. "In the area we farm, we need cold tolerance."

During the 2023 drought, LSU AgCenter engineer Randy Price flew a drone over the Bubenzer's cane fields to help them pinpoint irrigation needs. The brothers recognize that these precision ag technologies are helping them use resources more efficiently and improve their production practices and the AgCenter can lead the way for Louisiana producers.

"Without the Extension Service, I don't think we would be in the cane business," Grady said.

With their donation, the Bubenzer family is paving a way for their descendants to see success in sugarcane the way they and their ancestors did. He said farming will always be a challenge, but Kemper said it's a good life and all they have ever known.

And now it's what their sons know, and their sons also know the future will look very different.

"They are way more savvy than we were," Grady said. "I imagine they will be interested in autonomous equipment and more use of infrared technology. They will see things in the field that we couldn't."

"The variety development at the AgCenter is our lifeblood."

— Kemper Bubenzer



# PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN LSU AGCENTER, HORIZON AG TO BENEFIT RICE INDUSTRY

By Tobie Blanchard



Tim Walker, CEO of Horizon Ag. Horizon Ag is partnering with the LSU AgCenter to initiate a new rice breeding program focused on varieties for southern rice-producing areas. Photo provided

The LSU AgCenter is partnering with Horizon Ag, a seed marketing and variety development company, to initiate a new rice breeding program focused on varieties for southern rice-producing areas, which include Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Missouri and Texas.

This partnership will give Horizon Ag access to the AgCenter's elite rice breeding germplasm and result in collaborative breeding efforts.

LSU AgCenter rice breeder and director of the AgCenter H. Rouse Caffey Rice Research Station Adam Famoso said the partnership offers tangible benefits to the two partners — the rice industry and rice producers.

"The contract research activities will be leveraged to support our existing and future station research and breeding efforts and will enable expanded testing within the LSU breeding program," Famoso said. "The AgCenter will provide contract research services such as field testing and evaluation of Horizon's breeding materials."

The initial agreement is set for five years, beginning this year. Horizon Ag will hire a rice breeder and support staff who will be housed in an independent lab at the H. Rouse Caffey Rice Research Station. New varieties released by Horizon will be in addition to the AgCenter's breeding activities.

Horizon Ag's CEO Tim Walker said the company saw decreasing financial support for rice breeding programs in the southern rice-growing region and sees this partnership as a way to invest in the LSU AgCenter's breeding program while working alongside it for the betterment of the rice industry.

"We see this as an opportunity, a need and a mutual benefit," Walker said. "The industry will be better having more breeders working towards a common goal of improving grain yields and quality, both of which are very important to southern USA rice farmers."

The AgCenter will receive royalties from varieties released by Horizon Ag, helping sustain the size and scale of its rice research efforts.

The AgCenter's rice breeding program also will have the opportunity to test its experimental lines in wider geographies and environments through additional testing networks that Horizon Ag will establish. ►

LSU AgCenter rice breeder Adam Famoso working in the greenhouse of the H. Rouse Caffey Rice Research Station. Famoso will collaborate with Horizon Ag on a new rice breeding program. LSU AgCenter file photo



"We are excited for this groundbreaking public-private partnership with Horizon Ag. This collaboration is a first-of-its-kind initiative designed to enhance the sustainability and competitiveness of the Louisiana rice industry, bringing substantial benefits to our rural communities," said Matt Lee, LSU vice president for agriculture. "It is designed to bolster economic development through employment and the local procurement of materials and supplies. Together, we are poised to lead in agricultural innovation and research, establishing new benchmarks for success and sustainability in the rice industry."

While this partnership is unique, Horizon Ag has worked with the AgCenter before.

"We worked closely with LSU and our partners when we really revolutionized the industry with Clearfield rice. Then we did the same thing launching the important Provisia technology, and they were both launched as LSU varieties," Walker said. "This is the evolution of that relationship and a unique and innovative step for the rice industry."

The LSU AgCenter has long been a leader in rice breeding, releasing 63 varieties through its program at the Crowley station, the world's oldest rice research station. Groundbreaking technologies developed at the station have been pivotal in combating weedy rice, enhancing crop yields and sustainability.

John Denison, chair of the Louisiana Rice Research Board, offered his support of the agreement.

"As the costs of research continue to rise, I am excited to see additional investment into the rice breeding program," Denison said, "Louisiana's breeding program and our Rice Research Station have been world-renowned for decades, in large part because of the investment from our Louisiana growers through our checkoff. We hope this partnership complements the breeding program overall and continues to yield advancements and new varieties in the market that help keep Louisiana rice farmers successful and sustainable." ■



# INAUGURAL LSU AGEXCELLENCE AWARDS CEREMONY

## HONORS DIFFERENCE MAKERS | *By Annabelle Lang*

The LSU AgCenter and College of Agriculture hosted the inaugural AgExcellence Awards Ceremony in April, led by Vice President and Dean Matt Lee and emceed by Avery Davidson from the Louisiana Farm Bureau Federation. The event recognized leaders whose contributions have significantly advanced the AgCenter's mission in public policy, industry, community partnerships and academia.

The ceremony kicked off with the Vice President's Awards, which recognized individuals and organizations that have played a pivotal role in advancing agricultural and environmental sciences in Louisiana.

The Public Policy Leader Award honored former state Sen. Bret Allain for his advocacy in agricultural legislation, and Clay Schexnayder, former speaker of the Louisiana House, for his leadership in agricultural development and education.

A. Wilbert's Sons was recognized with the Industry Leader Award for their commitment to education and innovation in agriculture. The company has enhanced agricultural education through partnerships with the LSU AgCenter, establishing endowed professorships, sponsoring internships and funding the new Precision Agriculture Graduate Scholars Program. ▶

Photos by Olivia McClure



Casey Stannard, associate professor in the Department of Textiles, Apparel Design and Merchandising, received the Emerging Faculty Leader Award.

Klein Kirby, center, recipient of the Outstanding Alumni Award, was honored for his enduring support and leadership within the agricultural sector, notably through his role as Chairman and CEO of A. Wilbert's Sons.



The Early Career Outstanding Alumni Award was given to Noah Harper, center, recognizing his innovative contributions to agriculture in Louisiana.



Brenda Sommers, center, was honored with the Friend of the College of Agriculture Award for her long-standing volunteer work and support of the college.

### Join the College of Agriculture Alumni Association



The LSU College of Agriculture Alumni Association, founded in 1987, is a dynamic auxiliary organization that connects alumni with the College of Agriculture and each other.

As a member of the Ag Alumni Association, you'll play a crucial role in supporting initiatives focused on student success. Your contributions enable us to provide funding for student organizations, travel, professional development and scholarships, including the Ag Alumni Association Endowed Scholarship.

Membership also offers exclusive benefits, such as invitations to social events like our spring crawfish boil and fall LSU Ag tailgate, priority access to athletic tickets and a subscription to our agriculture publications and e-newsletters.

Join us in supporting the future of agriculture at LSU. Together, we can make a lasting impact on student success and alumni engagement.

The Patrick F. Taylor Foundation received the Community Partner Award for its role in enhancing community prosperity and well-being. Their collaboration with the AgCenter has advanced its mission in teaching, research and extension services, particularly through substantial funding for the model farm project.

Patty and Carl Newton's philanthropic endeavors were celebrated through the presentation of the Champions Award, recognizing their significant contributions to the College of Agriculture. Their philanthropy encompasses the establishment of an endowed scholarship fund and a sugarcane variety development professorship at LSU, dedicated to advancing agricultural education and research.

The LSU College of Agriculture Alumni Association presented Klein Kirby with the Outstanding Alumni Award for his continued support and leadership within the agricultural sector. The Early Career Outstanding Alumni Award was given to Noah Harper, recognizing his innovative contributions to agriculture in Louisiana. Brenda Sommers was honored with the Friend of the College of Agriculture Award for her long-standing volunteer work and support of the college.

The ceremony also highlighted academic excellence, awarding Phil Stouffer the Legacy Educator Award, Casey Stannard the Emerging Faculty Leader Award, Nila Pradhananga and Lauren Lansdell the Outstanding Graduate Student Awards, Mattie Thrasher the Outstanding Undergraduate Student Award, and Zachary Bonser the Outstanding Student Leader Award.

The event honored LSU faculty who secured significant grants, boosting research in environmental conservation, agricultural

sustainability and public health. Terry Tiersch received the Funding Catalyst Award for securing more than \$15 million in extramural funding and advancing aquatic research over his career.

Notable grant recipients included Rodrigo Diaz for his work on Roseau cane dieback, Jeff Kuehny for projects on nutrient reduction in urban stormwater and stormwater litter and plastics management for Capitol Lake, Jim Wang for climate-smart sugarcane and rice production, Brenda Tubaña for her efforts with Patrick F. Taylor Model Farms, Carol Friedland for natural hazard risk assessment through LaHouse, and Denise Holston for her work on healthy access behaviors and communities.

The ceremony also acknowledged patent recipients for their contributions to agricultural and environmental management, including Steven Linscombe, Adam Famoso and Xueyan Sha for the CLJ01 rice cultivar; Witoon Prinyawiwatkul, Jimmy Xu and Yixiao Shen for water-soluble, high-molecular-weight chitosan powders; Glen Gentry, John Pojman and Baylen Thompson for feral hog toxicants; and Steve Harrison for the LA10044 oat variety and LA 16020 wheat variety.

Vice President Lee extended deep gratitude to the sponsors — Consolidated Grain and Barge Company, Elizabeth and David Means, the American Sugar Cane League and Erica and Ken West — for their support of the AgExcellence Awards.

He also thanked the participants, whose contributions ensured the ceremony's success. This inaugural event not only spotlighted the exceptional achievements of its honorees but also established a benchmark for future contributions to agriculture and environmental stewardship. ■

The AgExcellence Awards have established a new tradition at LSU, celebrating those who inspire and lead the agricultural community, fostering growth and innovation for a sustainable future.



# Campus Career Closet fund honors the legacy of ASHLEY GRANT

Story & Photos  
By Annabelle Lang

In 2021, the LSU College of Agriculture launched the Ag Career Closet as part of its continued efforts to support students in their professional development journey. The mission of the closet is to make finding professional attire more accessible, affordable and sustainable for students.

The Ag Career Closet was spearheaded by the late Ashley Grant, former assistant director of Professional Development, Internships and Career Services for the College of Agriculture. The initiative began as a one-day pop-up shop and became an annual event during Ag Career Prep Week.

Assembling the closet was a labor of love for Grant. Throughout the summer, she accepted and sorted donations of gently used work attire to create the pop-up shop. The event quickly became a favorite among students in the College of Agriculture, with hundreds finding professional attire to help them make a strong first impression.

The foundation laid by the Ag Career Closet continues through the Olinde Career Center, which transformed the concept into a year-round, campus-wide resource. After nearly two years of planning, a newly renovated space to house the center's Career Closet opened in the fall of 2024.

Located on the third floor of the Student Union, the space has a boutique feel, complete with a changing room and organized display racks of professional attire in various sizes and styles. Blake Winchell, senior administrator for the Olinde Career Center, emphasized the importance of having a designated space for the Career Closet to make students feel welcome and confident.

"With the rack design, waiting room space and changing room space, it feels like more than just a closet," Winchell said. "We achieved a space that will make students feel confident to enter and feel appropriate to go into."

The Olinde Career Center accepts clothing donations year-round and will put out calls for needed items throughout the year. To contact the Olinde Career Center, email [career@lsu.edu](mailto:career@lsu.edu).

The Ashley Grant Career Closet Fund was established to support the center's Career Clothing Closet. The fund provides supplies such as hangers, clothes racks, mirrors, dressing room essentials and inclusive clothing sizes. The fund allows the center's team to purchase less common clothing items, helping to eliminate barriers to access. Ensuring access for all students was important to Grant and inspired the original pop-up shop. Monetary donations can be made to the Ashley Grant Career Closet Fund through the LSU Foundation at <https://bbis32491p.sky.blackbaud.com/give-now>.

**Above:** Inside the dressing room for the Olinde Career Center's Career Closet located on the third floor of the Student Union.

**Left:** The 2022 Ag Career Pop-up Shop had 177 College of Agriculture students attend the one-day event, where more than 700 items of gently used professional attire found new homes. The annual effort was led by the late Ashley Grant, left, former assistant director of Professional Development, Internships and Career Services for the College of Agriculture.

# SUPPORT EXCELLENCE ACROSS THE COLLEGE OF AG

Join us in fostering the next generation of agriculture leaders by supporting the **Dean's Excellence Fund**. Your contributions are essential for recruiting top students, enhancing educational experiences and addressing immediate needs. Last year, the fund enabled students to travel to the Agriculture Future of America (AFA) conference, where students connected with industry leaders and built leadership skills. It also supported the LSU chapter of Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS), leading to its quiz bowl championship win and the election of the first LSU student as a national vice president. The fund further provided study abroad scholarships, allowing students to return to Mendel University in the Czech Republic.

Your donations  
directly  
support:



**Clockwise from top left:** LSU MANRRS president Jerica Ledet, left, is presented with an award from Dean Matt Lee. Photo provided by Gina Eubanks. Abbygail Davis, third from left, received a stipend to attend the Agriculture Future of America conference. Photo provided by Abbygail Davis. Nine LSU students spent spring break on a study abroad trip to the Czech Republic and Austria. Photo provided by Andy Schade. MANRRS members attended the national conference in Chicago. Photo provided by Gina Eubanks.



Scholarships that open educational opportunities for students.

Stipends for travel and conference attendance, broadening academic and professional horizons.

Recruitment and retention of top faculty and student talent.

Classroom enhancements with new technology and essential equipment.

Advancement of cutting-edge research through necessary funding.

Discretionary funds for the dean to address immediate needs and seize emerging opportunities.

Make a tangible impact on agriculture education by contributing to the Dean's Excellence Fund today.





## Bonser named to

# 2024 TIGER TWELVE CLASS

By Maddison Jarveaux

**Z**achary Bonser, who graduated from the LSU College of Agriculture in May, was chosen as one of LSU Tiger Twelve Class of 2024. Bonser is from Tyrone, Georgia, and majored in agricultural and extension education. He describes his experience as transformational, focusing on promoting inclusivity and sustainability within the College of Agriculture and the agricultural industry at large.

Receiving recognition through the LSU Tiger Twelve award is a profound honor for Bonser, highlighting the acknowledgment of his efforts in making a positive impact on campus and beyond. He credits his involvement in student organizations such as the College of Agriculture Les Voyageurs; Tigers for Cultivating Change; Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS); Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow; Geaux Planet; Black Student Union and the Refuge Leadership Team for enriching his college journey.

“Being recognized in this capacity is such an honor, especially with the other recipients being so exceptional,” he said. “I’m incredibly grateful that all the work I’ve put in at LSU is being acknowledged in this way.”

Throughout his four years, Bonser found inspiration and guidance from professors and mentors who made a significant impact on his experience at LSU.

After graduation, he joined Corteva Agriscience's Early Career Development Program in Des Moines, Iowa, where he will be rotating through various company departments and returning to LSU to recruit future Ag Tigers.

“Even from the time I was a prospective student, LSU took personal interest in me and my success,” he said. “From professional conferences and studying abroad to playing Frisbee on the Parade Ground, the opportunities I’ve been afforded have changed my life immeasurably; for that, I will always be grateful.”

The Tiger Twelve is an esteemed program that celebrates a group of exceptional undergraduate seniors who have made significant contributions to campus life at LSU and have had a positive impact on the Baton Rouge community.

Being selected for the Tiger Twelve is a great honor, and it reflects on the student’s hard work, dedication and achievements in leadership, service and commitment throughout their time at LSU.

## A legacy honored with endowed graduate student award

By V. Todd Miller

**T**he Louisiana agriculture industry lost one of its greatest champions when Ray Young died in January after more than half a century of service to the farming community. Yet his legacy lives on through the Ray and Dorothy Young Endowed Graduate Student Award in Field Crop Integrated Pest Management. The 2024 recipient of the award, David Galo, was honored at the Louisiana Agricultural Technology and Management Conference hosted by the Louisiana Agricultural Consultants Association.

Galo is a doctoral candidate in plant pathology and crop physiology. The author of several research articles and abstracts, Galo is studying under the mentorship of LSU AgCenter nematology researcher Tristan Watson.

Galo said his goals are to “embark on a career as a research scientist in the agriculture industry, aiming to bridge the gap between scientific knowledge and practical application by farmers, and to bring efficient, environmental and sound solutions that benefit everyone.”

Michael Salassi, AgCenter executive associate vice president and director of the Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station, presented Galo with the award, worth \$10,000.

A native of Honduras, Galo was born on a farm, which shaped his love for agriculture. His current research focuses on nematode management. Nematodes are microscopic roundworms that are particularly harmful to sweet potatoes because they feed on their root system.

“I feel honored to be the recipient of this award,” Galo said. “And I want to acknowledge the recent passing of Ray Young. He will be missed.”

Young built an agriculture consulting business from the ground up, serving producers in northern Louisiana and advocating for the state’s agriculture industry in Washington, D.C.

Doctoral candidate David Galo, center, with Dorothy Young and Michael Salassi. Photo by V. Todd Miller



Thanks to you, we raised  
\$104,692!

# THANK YOU

On March 27, 2024, thousands of LSU alumni, students, faculty, staff, friends and families united to celebrate and strengthen LSU during our sixth annual

## LSU GIVING DAY.

Please join us for LSU Giving Day on March 19, 2025.

THESE FUNDS BENEFIT STUDENT SCHOLARSHIPS, HELP ENHANCE STUDENT EXPERIENCES, STRENGTHEN LOUISIANA 4-H PROGRAMS AND HELP ADVANCE AGRICULTURE ACROSS THE STATE. **THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY.**

**LSU**  
College of  
Agriculture



# CHAIRS & PROFESSORSHIPS

LSU AgCenter and College of Agriculture

Name of Endowed Position	Type	Recipient
American Sugar Cane League Chair in Sugarcane Production	Chair	Kenneth Gravois
Chalkley Family Endowed Chair in Agriculture	Chair	Matthew Lee
Gordon D. Cain Endowed Chair of Agriculture	Chair	Qinglin Wu
Jack Hamilton Regents Chair in Cotton Production	Chair	Daniel Stephenson
Louisiana Rice Research Board Chair for Rice Research	Chair	Kurt Guidry
Louisiana Rice Research Board Chair for Rice Variety Development	Chair	Adam Famoso
Pennington Chair for Wildlife Research	Chair	Lane Foil
A. George and Mildred G. Caldwell Endowed Professorship in Agronomy and Soils	Professorship	Jim Wang
A. Wilbert's Sons Professorship in Agriculture and Natural Resources #1	Professorship	Michael Salassi
A. Wilbert's Sons Professorship in Agriculture and Natural Resources #2	Professorship	Michael Salassi
Adrienne Gravois Brazan Professorship in the School of Human Ecology	Professorship	Achyut Adhikari
Albert E. and Karen W. Kirby Professorship in Agriculture	Professorship	To be assigned
American Cyanamid Professorship for Excellence in Plant Biotechnology, Molecular Biology and Crop Pest Management	Professorship	Zhiyuan Chen
American Cyanamid Professorship for Excellence in Plant Genetics, Breeding and Variety Development	Professorship	To be assigned
Andrew P. Gay Professorship	Professorship	Collins Kimbeng
Andrew Price Gay Jr. and John Fleming Gay Professorship in Sugarcane Variety Development	Professorship	Michael Pontif
Ann Armstrong Peltier Professorship	Professorship	Georgianna Tuuri
Arlene and Joseph Meraux Professorship	Professorship	Jeb Fields
ASSCT-Denver T. Loupe Sugar Heritage Professorship	Professorship	Kenneth Gravois
Austin C. Thompson Distinguished Endowed Professorship in Entomology	Professorship	Jeffrey Davis
Benjamin L. Legendre Sr. Sugar Heritage ASSCT Professorship	Professorship	Albert Orgeron
Bryant A. Bateman Professorship in Forestry, Wildlife and Fisheries	Professorship	Allen Rutherford
Bubenzer Family Professorship in Precision Agriculture	Professorship	To be assigned
Crosby Land and Resources Company Professorship in Forest Sector Business Development #1	Professorship	Richard Vlosky
Crosby Land and Resources Company Professorship in Forest Sector Business Development #2	Professorship	Richard Vlosky
Daniel Ivy Dupree Endowed Professorship	Professorship	Kenneth Bondioli
Donald E. Welge Endowed Professorship	Professorship	Rex Caffey
Doris Lasseigne Carville and Jules A. Carville Jr. Endowed Professorship	Professorship	Chuanlan Liu
Doyle Chambers Distinguished Professorship	Professorship	To be assigned
Doyle Chambers Professorship in Animal Science	Professorship	Richard Cooper
Dr. Alma Beth Clark Professorship in the School of Human Ecology	Professorship	Denise Marie Holston
Dr. D.L. Evans Professorship in Dairy Science	Professorship	Cathleen Williams
Dr. William H. Alexander Endowed Professorship	Professorship	Matt Fannin
Durwood Joseph Newton Professorship in Sugarcane Variety Development	Professorship	Collins Kimbeng
F.A. Eugene, Marcel and James Graugnard Professorship in Sugarcane Research at the Sugar Research Station	Professorship	Kenneth Gravois
F. Avalon Daggett Professorship in Rice Research #1	Professorship	Herry Utomo
F. Avalon Daggett Professorship in Rice Research #2	Professorship	Roberto Neto
F. Avalon Daggett Professorship in Rice Research #3	Professorship	Jong Hyun Ham

LSU AgCenter and College of Agriculture

Name of Endowed Position	Type	Recipient
F.O. Bateman Distinguished Professorship	Professorship	John Andrew Nyman
Floyd S. Edmiston Sr. Professorship in Agriculture and Natural Resources Management	Professorship	To be assigned
G & H Seed Company Endowed Professorship	Professorship	Michael Salassi
George William Barineau Jr. Professorship in the College of Agriculture	Professorship	Michael Kaller
Gerald A. Simmons Professorship in Animal Sciences	Professorship	To be assigned
Gilbert J. Durbin Endowed Professorship	Professorship	To be assigned
Grace Drews Lehmann Professorship in Human Ecology	Professorship	To be assigned
H. Rouse Caffey Endowed Professorship	Professorship	Adam Famoso
Harry Clayton Sanders Sr. Professorship in Extension Education	Professorship	Richie Roberts
Horace J. Davis Endowed Professorship in Food Science and Technology	Professorship	Witoon Prinyawiwatkul
J.C. Floyd Endowed Professorship in Agriculture	Professorship	Michael Burnett
J. Nelson Fairbanks Endowed Professorship in Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness	Professorship	Matt Fannin
Jack E. and Henrietta Jones Professorship	Professorship	Brenda Tubaña
John B. Baker Professorship for Excellence in Weed Science	Professorship	Donnie Miller
L.D. Newsom Professorship in Integrated Pest Management	Professorship	Fangneng Huang
Louisiana Farm Bureau Professorship in Agricultural Policy I	Professorship	Kurt Guidry
Louisiana Farm Bureau Professorship in Agricultural Policy II	Professorship	Michael Deliberto
Louisiana Soybean and Feed Grains Research and Promotion Board Distinguished Professorship	Professorship	To be assigned
Lucien and Peggy Laborde Endowed Professorship	Professorship	Don La Bonte
Luella Dugas Chambers Distinguished Professorship	Professorship	Gina Eubanks
Martin D. Woodin Endowed Professorship in Agricultural Business	Professorship	Jerrod Penn
Mary Sandefur Tobin Professorship	Professorship	Subramaniam Sathivel
Mayeux-Hebert Family Professorship in Applied Beef Cattle Research	Professorship	To be assigned
Meraux Foundation Supreme Champion Livestock Professorship	Professorship	Toby Lepley
Meryal Newsom Annison Professorship in Agriculture	Professorship	To be assigned
Mosaic Company Professorship	Professorship	To be assigned
Mr. and Mrs. Herman E. McFatter Endowed Professorship in Animal Science	Professorship	Philip Elzer
Ola Cook Holmes Professorship in Horticulture	Professorship	Jeff Kuehny
Paul K. Adams Professorship in Urban Entomology	Professorship	Claudia Husseneder
R. Chabreck Professorship in Coastal Wildlife Research Management	Professorship	To be assigned
Ralph and Lela Boulware Professorship	Professorship	Xing Fu
Ray and Dorothy Young Professorship in Agricultural Sciences	Professorship	To be assigned
Roy A. and Karen Pickren Endowed Professorship in Extension Water Resources	Professorship	To be assigned
Roy O. Martin Sr. Professorship in Composites and Engineered Woodproducts	Professorship	Qinglin Wu
Sterling C. Bain Professorship in Sugarcane Production	Professorship	Blake Wilson
Tom and Martha Burch and Delta and Pine Land Company Endowed Professorship in Cotton Production or Genetics	Professorship	To be assigned
Walker T. Nolin Professorship	Professorship	Steve Harrison
Warner L. Bruner Professorship in Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness	Professorship	Naveen Adusumilli
Weaver Brothers Endowed Professorship for Excellence in Forestry	Professorship	Sabrina Taylor



## Louisiana 4-H Foundation names new executive director

By V. Todd Miller

Jon Carr is serving as the executive director of the Louisiana 4-H Foundation.

A former director of development for the LSU Foundation as a fundraiser for the College of Engineering, Carr brings years of experience and ingenuity to a position encompassing multiple responsibilities, including serving as managerial leader, primary fundraiser and chief development officer for the 4-H Foundation.

Carr said he is eager to hit the ground running on securing the tools and capital necessary to serve the youth of Louisiana.

"I'm excited to work with the supporters of 4-H to further advance the mission of youth development in Louisiana," he said. "This work is critical to secure funds in order to advance the amazing initiatives that create future leaders through 4-H."

Carr's work includes helping with devising strategy, providing visionary leadership, offering guidance, ensuring coordination and overseeing all tiers of contributions to the foundation.

Carr said he applied for the position in no small part due to his wife, who was involved in 4-H in central Louisiana for nine years.

"It really shaped her, and that is why the role resonated with me," Carr said. "I simply want to be a conduit in which those passionate about 4-H can generously support our youth and see the impact of their gift."

## Louisiana 4-H Foundation board welcomes two new members

By Kyle Peveto

The Louisiana 4-H Foundation Board of Trustees welcomed two new members — a longtime 4-H volunteer from Tensas Parish and the CEO of one of the state's largest agricultural equipment companies.

Kristen VandeVen, a technology consultant from Newellton, joined the board in October 2023, and Rob Richter, the president and CEO of Sunshine Quality Solutions Inc. from Baton Rouge, joined in January.

"They are willing, and they have a passion for 4-H — Louisiana 4-H in particular — and this is very important to the board," said Ruby Miller, the chair of the 4-H Foundation Board of Trustees.

The 4-H Foundation board acts as fundraisers for several funds held within the LSU Foundation and as stewards for more than \$4 million in endowments.



Carr

These funds augment 4-H youth development activities statewide, bolstering the financial health of the program while helping 4-H'ers take educational trips, participate in developmental programs and attend camps.

"When you know what 4-H does and you see their mission, and you see what they're trying to do in the communities, it just aligns with us so well," Richter said.

The mission of Louisiana 4-H aligns well with the goals of Sunshine Quality Solutions, a tractor and agricultural implement and machinery dealer with locations throughout south Louisiana. Sunshine Quality Solutions also collaborates with 4-H and Louisiana FFA for the Sunshine 4-H and FFA Leadership and Career Development Academy, an internship opportunity for students.

"These are kids that want to be out there linked to the land, and we want to match their passion with standing behind them and supporting them," Richter said. "That means donating our time."

Richter grew up on a farm in Ash Grove, Missouri. His family raised dairy cattle and eventually transitioned to beef cattle. He filled his days with sports and farm chores while growing up and never joined 4-H, but he always saw the benefits of the organization.

"Rob has a lot of insight into agricultural machinery and agriculture in general, and he can help to advise on the development of programs we provide for the future," Miller said.

VandeVen grew up in Monterey, Louisiana, in Concordia Parish, and participated in 4-H from fourth grade through high school.

"It allowed me to see that there was a world outside of Concordia Parish, and I'm very grateful," she said.

VandeVen learned that 4-H could help develop all young people, not only those who raised animals or won cooking contests. After graduating from the University of Louisiana Monroe and starting a career in electronic banking and information technology for Cross Keys Bank, VandeVen began volunteering for 4-H in Tensas Parish before her children could join.

"It didn't matter where you were from," she said. "They took you in, and you learned, and it gave you opportunities. Whenever I moved here, that's why I started volunteering. And I was so excited when my children enjoyed it so much."

VandeVen now serves as a technology consultant and the technology coordinator for Tensas Academy. Her experience will be valuable to 4-H as the organization continues to educate Louisiana youth in the science, engineering and technology sectors, Miller said.

Louisiana 4-H Foundation Board of Trustees members serve three-year terms. Founded in 1978, the foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.



Richter



VandeVen

To learn more or to make a tax-deductible donation, visit the LSU 4-H Foundation webpage at [https://www.lsuagcenter.com/topics/kids\\_teens/contribute/foundation](https://www.lsuagcenter.com/topics/kids_teens/contribute/foundation).

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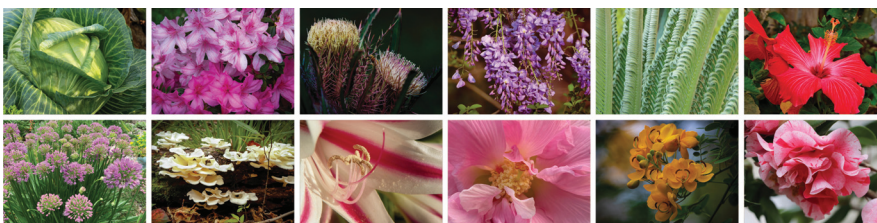




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