

INFLUENCE

2018

Alumni Newsletter

COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE & LIFE SCIENCES
MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY



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2018

Alumni Newsletter

College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
Mississippi State University

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What's Inside

- 03** Letter from the Dean
- 04** Outstanding Alumni
- 06** Distinguished Fellows
- 10** Sculpting Communities
- 14** This is Our Turf
- 16** MSU Livestock Judging
- 18** Rodeo Royalty
- 20** Leaders in Agriculture
- 26** Life as a Forensic Scientist
- 28** Development
- 34** Department News
- 44** Alumni News
- 48** Alumni Breakfast

On the cover: College of Agriculture and Life Sciences' alumna Taylor
McNair is Miss Rodeo America 2019. (Photo by David Ammon)

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Letter from the Dean

ONE OF THE BEST PARTS OF MY JOB IS SEEING AND sharing all of the great things happening in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) and the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station (MAFES). Our enrollment is climbing, our students and faculty continue to excel nationally and internationally, and our alumni are recognized as leaders in agriculture and life sciences. I know you will agree that it is great to be a bulldog.

In fall of 2018, we had 2,479 students enrolled in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Programs and initiatives in the college, including the Undergraduate Research Scholars program, Study Abroad, and Professional Experience, are preparing the next generation of leaders. We had 412 students participate in Professional Experience during 2018. Additionally, our students studied abroad in Guatemala, Colombia, Italy, New Zealand, and Thailand.

I am pleased to report that three of our programs were re-accredited in 2018. The Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board re-accredited the bachelor's of landscape architecture. The didactic program in dietetics, including the nutrition concentration, and the dietetic internship program, both in Food Science, Nutrition and Health Promotion, were re-accredited by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics.

Your support allowed us to award 558 scholarships for the 2017-18 school year. In fact, fiscal year 2018 was a banner year for giving in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences with over \$13 million in gifts. These gifts fund student scholarships and support, faculty enhancements, building renovation, plus much more. Thank you for supporting the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

We continue to grow our alumni base by offering new on-line degree options. We have three new programs offered through the Center for Distance Education: a Master of Agricultural Business Management in the Department of Agricultural Economics, a Master of Science in Agriculture with a concentration in Animal and Dairy Science, and a Master of Science



in Early Intervention in the School of Human Sciences. We are also offering a new pre-health professions undergraduate concentration and a new graduate certificate in Clinical Health Promotion and Wellness Coaching, both in the Department of Food Science, Nutrition and Health Promotion.

We have also entered into agreements with Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis, Nebraska, and Alcorn State University to provide courses in poultry science to undergraduates at these institutions.

Faculty have moved into the new Meat Science and Muscle Biology Laboratory and the new Animal and Dairy Sciences building, located on the corner of Stone Boulevard and Blackjack Road. The Poultry Science building, located in the same complex, will be completed early 2020.

Of course, none of our accomplishments would happen without the support of our alumni and friends. We are grateful for the infinite impact you make in the lives of students and at Mississippi State. Please stay involved with us, your financial support is critical to our future. Thank you.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of *Influence* and discovering the incredible impact our alumni and students make each and every day and into the future. *Hail State!*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George Hopper". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

George M. Hopper

Dean and Director



2018 ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR

Alfred "Al" Rankins, Jr.

A RESIDENT OF MADISON, MISSISSIPPI, DR. ALFRED Rankins, Jr. received his master's and doctorate, both in weed science, from MSU in 1996 and 1999, respectively. The Greenville native currently serves as commissioner of the Mississippi Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning. He previously served as the 19th president of Alcorn State University, where he completed his undergraduate degree. Rankins began his career at MSU as an assistant professor in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and a specialist with the MSU Extension Service. Rankins also served as acting president of Mississippi Valley State University.



2018 ALUMNI FELLOW

Brenton S. "Brent" Brasher

BRENTON S. "BRENT" BRASHER EARNED BACHELOR'S and master's degrees, both in agricultural economics in 1985 and 1991, respectively. He leads Charleston, Mississippi-based Kengro Corporation as president, having earlier served as vice president of the company that manufactures Kengro Biosorb, a leading product used to absorb and bioremediate hydrocarbons made from kenaf, a plant native to east-central Africa grown for food and fiber. Of his success, Brasher acknowledges he could not have developed his business without the continued research partnerships with MSU. Earlier in his career, Brasher was employed at MSU as a research associate, and now he is also self-employed as a farmer.



2018 NATIONAL ALUMNUS OF THE YEAR

R.L. Qualls

A MISSISSIPPI NATIVE OF BURNSVILLE, DR. R.L. QUALLS earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from MSU in agricultural economics in 1954 and 1958, respectively, and completed doctoral work at Louisiana State University. He was awarded the Doctor of Laws degree from Whitworth College and received a Doctor of Business Administration degree (*honoris causa*) from the University of the Ozarks.

During his tenure as president and CEO of Baldor Electric, an NYSE company and member of ABB Ltd. of Zurich, Switzerland, the company reported 27 straight quarters of both increased earnings and sales growth. Baldor also twice was selected as one of the 100 Best Companies to work for by Fortune Magazine. Qualls joined Baldor in 1986 as executive vice president of finance and planning, was elected president in 1990, served as CEO from 1992-1997, and was vice chairman until 2000. Before Baldor, Qualls held senior-level positions with Bank of America, including chairman and CEO of one of its banks.

Qualls currently serves as co-chairman of Taylor Companies, an investment banking mergers and acquisition firm with offices in Washington, D.C.; Paris; and Stockholm. He is a former presiding independent director of the Bank

of the Ozarks (NASDAQ), 1997-2016. From January 1979 to July 1980, Qualls was director of the Department of Finance and Administration in the administration of Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton, as well as cabinet secretary.

Qualls also enjoyed a distinguished career in education. He served for five years as president of the University of the Ozarks and recently completed a term as chairman of the board of trustees. Early in his career, Qualls was an assistant professor of finance at MSU with a joint appointment as economist and director of research at First Federal Savings and Loan Association in Jackson. His resume includes appointments at Louisiana State, Rutgers, Southern Methodist, St. Gregory's and Vanderbilt universities and University of South Alabama. Qualls has published a number of books and articles, including "Entrepreneurial Wit and Wisdom" (UCA Press, 1986) and "Strategic Planning for Colleges and Universities: A Systems Approach to Planning and Resource Allocation" (Trinity University Press, 1979).

At MSU, Qualls serves on the College of Business advisory board and the MSU Foundation board of directors. He and wife, Nancy, are avid MSU supporters.

2018 DISTINGUISHED FELLOWS

IN 2018, THE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE AND LIFE SCIENCES developed the Distinguished Fellows award program to recognize outstanding alumni in its nine departments. Distinguished Fellows are alumni who have exhibited significant professional accomplishments and also shown a personal commitment to Mississippi State. Each year, the departments choose Distinguished Fellows from amongst their alumni who have demonstrated qualities and traits the college works to instill in its current students. These alumni visit with students and interact with administrators and advisory boards to provide direction for the future of the college and its departments.

The Distinguished Fellows program is an opportunity to recognize outstanding alumni in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and expose students to the rich tradition of service and dedication found within the alumni base.



Margaret Applewhite

DEPARTMENT OF FOOD
SCIENCE, NUTRITION &
HEALTH PROMOTION

The San Antonio, Texas resident currently serves as a senior program manager for Choctaw Staffing Solutions, a Native American company that specializes in managing healthcare contracts for the Department of Defense.

Colonel Applewhite received a Bachelor of Science in Foods and Nutrition from MSU in 1976. Upon graduation, she was selected for the U.S. Army Dietetic Internship at Walter Reed Army Medical Center and commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Army Medical Specialist Corps.

She enjoyed a 25-year military career in nutrition and dietetics that took her on many U.S. military installations, including a three year assignment in Germany. She also served as a U.S. Army War College Senior Service College Fellow for one year splitting the time between the Institute of Medicine; National Academy of Sciences; and at the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Department of Health and Human Services.

While at MSU, she was a member of the Zeta Tau Alpha sorority. Being from out of state, her sorority sisters quickly became her extended family since her parents were assigned to Fort Benning, Georgia. Colonel Applewhite's father is a Mississippi State graduate while her mother graduated from Mississippi College for Women.

In 2010, she and her husband, Larry, established the Colonel Margaret P. Applewhite endowed scholarship in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences with priority given to those studying in the food and nutrition field.



Boyd Dingus

DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL
AND DAIRY SCIENCES

West Point, Mississippi native, Boyd Dingus, resides in Weatherford, Texas with his wife, Linda. He is general manager of Estrotect, Inc. Dingus received a Bachelor of Science in Animal Science from MSU in 1972.

After graduation, Dr. Charles Lindley set up an apprenticeship for Dingus at Dahomey Plantation. From there, he joined Bass Pecan Company as herdsman and later became district then regional manager for the Curtiss Breeding Service's Southeastern operation. He also served as director of animal health for MFC Services and later as feed ingredient manager for Universal Cooperatives, the company's new name upon merger. He retired from Universal and was asked to take over management of Estrotect, Inc. to globally market the company's heat detectors, now used in more than 50 countries. He has traveled to 22 countries working with livestock producers on reproduction.

While at MSU, he was a member of the Block and Bridle, served as American Quarter Horse Association show manager, and was initiated in Alpha Zeta and Gamma Sigma Delta.

Dingus credits several mentors for his success including Dr. Gordon Hazard of West Point; Dr. Bernard Jones, former VP at Curtiss Breeding Services; and Leverette Hayes and Steve Parker at MFC Services.

He and his wife have six grandchildren in Texas and Colorado.



Patsy Fowlkes

DEPARTMENT OF
BIOCHEMISTRY,
MOLECULAR BIOLOGY,
ENTOMOLOGY, AND PLANT
PATHOLOGY

Chattanooga, Tennessee resident, Patsy Fowlkes, spent most of her career in pharmaceutical sales. Fowlkes received a Bachelor of Science in Biochemistry from MSU in 1974. She conducted postgraduate research at the College of Medical Sciences, University of Tennessee at Memphis, where she was student body president, and at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory.

A large portion of her career was spent at Schering Plough until its acquisition by Merck, she spent time at Quintiles' as national sales director for the Johnson and Johnson team launching Zyrtec OTC. She recently retired from The Medicines Company as an engagement partner, managing the sales of hospital-based antibiotics. In 2008, Fowlkes was recognized as a "Rising Star" by the Healthcare Businesswomen's Association.

Fowlkes and her husband, Steve Brandon, support Mississippi State University in both athletics and academics. They are recognized by the MSU Foundation at the J. Charles Lee Society Level and by the Bulldog Club at their Champions Level. Their donation to the renovation of Colvard Student Union led to the naming of Fowlkes Auditorium honoring her father and uncles who were MSU graduates. For their support of women's athletics, they were honored with the naming of The Brandon Press Box at Nusz Park. They also endowed a scholarship in the general scholarship fund.

Fowlkes currently serves on the advisory boards for MSU Department of Biochemistry, Molecular Biology, Entomology, and Plant Pathology and the MSU Department of Chemistry.



Morgan Gulledge, Jr.

DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURAL
ECONOMICS

Greenwood, Mississippi native, Morgan Gulledge, Jr., has owned and operated Gulledege Capital, LLC and Portadown Land Company, LLC for more than 30 years. Prior to that, he worked for First Guaranty Bank and Federal Land Bank, both in Greenwood, Mississippi.

Gulledge received a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Economics in 1977. He went on to attend Louisiana State University School of Banking and the University of Georgia School of Executive Development.

He is very active in the Greenwood community currently serving as treasurer of Montgomery Island Timber Company, a member of Aircraft Owner and Pilots' Association, and a board member and audit committee member of Mississippi Land Bank. He's also a life member of the Mississippi Cattlemen's Association and a member of the Mississippi Forestry Association and the MSU Bulldog Club. Previously, he's served as commissioner of the Greenwood Leflore Hospital, president and campaign chairman of Leflore County United Way, and on the Deposit Guaranty National Bank advisory board, among other organizations.

In 2004, Gulledge and his wife, Pat, established the Lucile B. Gulledge Endowed Scholarship in the School of Human Sciences at Mississippi State University in honor and memory of his mother.



Martha Hill

DEPARTMENT
OF LANDSCAPE
ARCHITECTURE

Clinton, Mississippi native, Martha G. Hill, has been an educator for more than 30 years, as faculty and department chair of landscape management technology at Hinds Community College in Raymond, Mississippi. Prior to that, she was a landscape architect in Mississippi, Illinois, and Pennsylvania.

Hill received a Bachelor of Science in Landscape Architecture from MSU in 1983. In 2000, she earned a Master of Science in Systems Management at MSU. Hill was designated as 2017 Mississippi Nursery and Landscape Association Nursery Person of Year and received the 2017 Hinds Community College 3E award. The 3E, which stands for Emphasis on Excellence and Enrichment, is the highest honor awarded by the institution. She also received the 2014 Lawn and Landscape Leadership Award and the 2013 Mississippi State Landscape Architecture Department Alumna of the Year, among other accolades. She has procured 12 scholarships for landscape management majors including three named and endowed scholarships.

Active in numerous professional organizations, she is a member of the National Association of Landscape Professionals serving on several boards and committees including the organization's Foundation Board. She is also a member of the American Society of Landscape Architects and the National Association of Agriculture Educators. She is also a member of the Mississippi Nursery and Landscape Association, the Mississippi Turfgrass Association, and more.

In 2016, the Martha Hill Endowed Scholarship was established in the Department of Landscape Architecture at Mississippi State University in appreciation for all that Hill has done for the industry and various programs over the years. Martha and her husband, Donnie, have generously contributed to this scholarship.



Sue Ann Hubbard

DEPARTMENT OF POULTRY
SCIENCE

Mount Olive, Mississippi resident, Dr. Sue Ann Hubbard, currently serves as a senior account manager and technical service veterinarian for Merck Animal Health's poultry unit. She is also a member of Merck's global team.

Hubbard received a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Science in Poultry Science in 1990 and 1993, respectively. She earned a Master of Science in Avian Medicine and a Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine concurrently in the College of Veterinary Medicine in 1997.

Hubbard worked for MSU College of Veterinary Medicine for 18 years. Her career has consisted of working closely with various commercial poultry companies in the areas of hatcheries, broiler and breeder production and processing. She began working with Merck Animal Health as a private consultant in 2007. In 2014, she left MSU as a full clinical professor to work full-time for Merck Animal Health. Hubbard has published in many scientific journals and lectured and presented at many universities and statewide, national, and international meetings. She is an active member in several organizations including the Farm Bureau Federation where she serves on her county board of directors and on the American Farm Bureau Issue Advisory Animal Welfare Committee. She is also the president of the MSU Simpson County Alumni Association.

Hubbard remembers her time at MSU as a former resident assistant and athletic tutor fondly. She especially treasured the one-on-one interactions she had with many of her professors which she tried to recreate working with students during her time on faculty.

Hubbard is married to a long-time farmer, Lyle Hubbard. They have two children.



Sykes Sturdivant

DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURAL AND
BIOLOGICAL ENGINEERING

Glendora, Mississippi resident, Sykes Sturdivant, is a corn, soybean, and cotton producer and currently serves as president of Sturdivant Brothers Flying Service, Inc., an agricultural flying corporation. He is also a partner and marketer for Due West Grain, Co., a 1.7 million bushel corn elevator.

Sturdivant received a Bachelor of Science in Agriculture and Business from MSU in 1977. Upon graduation, he went on to receive a Master of Business Administration from the University of Texas at Austin in 1979.

Sturdivant is an engaged leader of the community. He is the elected past president of the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta Levee District, serving with that organization for several years. Within his role there, he was part of a team that mobilized first responders in the aid and clean-up of Waveland, Mississippi following Hurricane Katrina. He was also appointed as one of the original commissioners and former chairman of the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta Water District and spent 15 years on the executive committee of the Mississippi Valley Flood Control Association. He has also been a member of the National Cotton Council DuPont Sponsored Cotton Leadership Program, Sumner Rotary Club, Tallahatchie County Farm Bureau, and the West Tallahatchie Habitat for Humanity.



ZonaDale Lyons Taylor

SCHOOL OF HUMAN
SCIENCES

New Albany, Mississippi native, ZonaDale Lyons Taylor resides in Collierville, Tennessee.

Ms. Taylor received a Bachelor of Science in Home Economics from MSU in 1961. After earning a Master of Education in Counseling from McNeese State University, she joined the home economics department at MSU as an assistant professor. She then worked as an assistant professor and later as head of the Department of Home Economics at McNeese State University. After moving to Pittsburgh, she became manager of consumer and public affairs with GlaxoSmith-Kline.

She also worked at Mississippi Power Company and then joined The Progressive Farmer magazine as an editor. While there, she became one of the founding editors of Southern Living magazine. She is a past president of American Association of University Women and has been alumna of the year at Northeast Mississippi Community College. In 2014, she received one of MSU's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Alumni Achievement awards. She is a life member of the Mississippi 4-H Advisory Council and has served on the MSU Foundation Board of Directors.

Taylor and her husband Charles (Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering '66 and MBA '71) provide numerous scholarships to Mississippi State University, Northeast Mississippi Community College, the University of Memphis and the 4-H Club Foundation of Mississippi. They were major contributors to the Mississippi 4-H Learning Center and Museum having a wing of the facility bearing their name.



Phillip Watson

DEPARTMENT OF PLANT
AND SOIL SCIENCES

Lexington, Mississippi native, Phillip Watson, is an author and horticulturist educating national audiences about garden design. Watson received a Bachelor of Science in Horticulture in 1976.

While attending MSU, he worked in the campus greenhouses and was a member of Phi Kappa Alpha fraternity and R.O.T.C.

After one term of graduate school at UGA, where he managed the greenhouses of Flowers, Inc., he moved to New York City, signed with a modeling agency, and started his own business, Phillip Watson Designs, Inc., where he began designing rooftop gardens.

After that, he owned a rare plant nursery in Fredericksburg, Virginia, living there for over twenty years while designing gardens and lecturing throughout the country. During this time, he was hired as a spokesman for Alabama-based Cottage Farms to promote their plants on QVC. He began his twentieth year on air in 2017 and was nominated for the QVC Excellence Award.

He has published two books, *Pleasure Gardens* (2010) and *Garden Magic* (2015), which chronicle garden design projects and tell stories about Mississippi. For the past six years, he has resided in West Chester, Pennsylvania, where QVC is located. During these years, he has judged The Philadelphia Flower Show and The International Rose Trials at Biltmore. He is also on the Garden Advisory Panel for Stratford Hall, Robert E. Lee's childhood home. He continues to design gardens, primarily in Greenwich, Connecticut, and still enjoys speaking engagements and book signings.

Some of his notable garden designs include designs for Tommy Hilfiger, Jim Barksdale, singer Brenda Lee, the Freer Gallery of Art in D.C., and Essex House Hotel in NYC.

SCULPTING COMMUNITIES

CALS alumnus at intersection of urbanism and art

By Vanessa Beeson

GLENN LARUE SMITH is a natural born artist. His medium, however, extends beyond a traditional canvas, encompassing whole landscapes in cities across America.

The 1974 landscape architecture alumnus has enjoyed an expansive career in both private and public practice. He's also a well-respected academic and Harvard Fellow. Now as a principal of Washington, D.C.-based PUSH studio, Smith shapes urban landscapes in the Capital City and beyond, all while helping mentor the next generation of African American landscape architects.

The Vicksburg, Mississippi native is a first-generation college student along with his five siblings. He said early visits to big cities spurred his love of urban landscapes.

"My older sister was the first to attend college and later she practiced law in Detroit, Michigan. We would visit her during the summer. It was during these visits and also visits to St. Louis, Missouri to see my older brother that I grew to understand the city as a much more diverse landscape than my hometown," he said.

While Smith was inclined toward art and architecture, he chose engineering at the behest of his parents since there

wasn't an architecture program yet available in Mississippi. After a year studying engineering, however, Smith realized the profession wasn't a fit.

"I combed through the MSU program catalogue until I found landscape architecture, which I had never heard of before. It was the many art option courses and welcoming discussions with the program director and faculty that convinced me to join the program," he said.

While he says that the work study jobs and 15-hour credits per semester to make up for the lost engineering semester were difficult, he pointed out that it was a welcoming environment where fellow students readily accepted and included him, despite the racial tensions prevalent at the time.

After graduation, Smith worked for the Vicksburg District of the United States Corps of Engineers before pursuing a Master of Landscape Architecture at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

It was there that he delved into the principles of urban design, writing a thesis about how pedestrians interact with an urban environment and how designers should design to accommodate physical movement and optical perception.

Smith, who has worked on projects across the country and in different parts

of the world, said his experience as a minority greatly informed his vast and varied career.

"My diversity of work experience was not only based on my curiosity but also because as an African American, I always had to prove my skills and worth. Although over the past twenty years, my portfolio and confidence has diminished this need to 'prove or be proven' as a professional," he said.

Internationally, Smith worked on such diverse projects as an amusement park in Seoul, Korea; cemetery in Chile; and hotel plaza and courtyards in Singapore. Stateside, he's designed numerous parks and recreational master plans in California and championed environmental justice in New York, among many other endeavors. He notes his tenure as project manager for the Southbank Riverwalk in Jacksonville, Florida as a significant turning point in his career. He helmed the design and build of the iconic boardwalk while working for a New Orleans, Louisiana-based firm.

"It was a great confidence builder to be involved in the design of every space, nut, and bolt in collaboration with multiple allied professionals for a 1.1 mile boardwalk project completed in 1985," he said.

In the public sector, Smith said his time as acting deputy director of the



Glenn Larue Smith in his office. (Photo by Kevin Assie)



Prince George's County Redevelopment Authority in Maryland taught him a lot.

"I managed a staff of thirteen planners on multi-million dollar development projects," he said. "It taught me the value of team work, listening, support of staff needs, and honesty in all interactions."

Smith also served in various academic positions throughout his career. He was chair of the landscape architecture department in the School of Architecture and Planning at Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland. He also served as the interim director of the landscape architecture graduate program in the School of Architecture at Florida A&M University in Tallahassee, Florida. He's held visiting or adjunct professorships at Rutgers, Virginia Polytechnic University, and Columbia University, among others.

While he began his career in academia at his graduate alma mater, the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, he said his love of all things urban took him to New York City where he taught at the City College of New York.

"While teaching at City College, I worked on various community-based projects in Harlem with the City College Architectural Center, a non-profit within the school," he said.

A Van Alen Institute Projects in Public Architecture Grant allowed a group of professors, including Smith, to work with students in a special seminar course centered on environmental justice. Their efforts culminated in a publication, "Environmental Justice Is," and an exhibition at the Van Alen Institute.

"Environmental justice empowers

underserved communities of color with the knowledge of good design alternatives for housing, open space, and play areas," Smith explained. "By knowing the right questions to ask related to design, these communities can ask for the maximum in terms of upgrading their neighborhoods instead of the minimal investments."

It was at City College that Smith learned about the Loeb Fellowship in Advanced Environmental Studies in the Harvard Graduate School of Design. His work in environmental justice became the topic of his application and he was selected as a 1996-1997 Loeb Fellow.

Smith said the fellowship provided a year of study and enrichment including opportunities to audit any Harvard course and participate in weekly seminars all while working on a project that culminated





TOP: Derryck-Anderson
Brownstone Garden in
Harlem, NY, 2008 (Photo by
PUSH Studio, LLC)

BOTTOM RIGHT: Stafford
Memorial Armed Services
Memorial in Stafford
County, VA, 2017 (Photo by
Peter Vanderwaker)

BOTTOM LEFT: Stafford
Memorial Armed Services
Memorial in Stafford
County, VA, 2017. (Photo by
PUSH Studio, LLC)

in a one-day symposium he organized titled “Environmental Justice Is.”

“My time was spent attending workshops and lectures at the Kennedy School, art and film theory courses, and African American history and literature courses under Cornell West and Henry Louis Gates,” he said.

One aspect of the fellowship Smith particularly enjoyed were the weekly dinners, part of a longstanding tradition of the program, in which the fellows hosted notable academics, professionals, and dignitaries as guests.

“My most memorable dinners included Michael Dukakis, Julia Child, and John Kenneth Galbraith,” Smith remembered. “Another highlight was receiving a letter of congratulations on the fellowship from then-Mississippi State University President Donald W. Zacharias during my first month at Harvard.”

Now, as principal of **PUSH** studio, Smith stays focused on various community and sustainability initiatives.

One of those community projects centers around memorials.

“We won a competition to design the Stafford County Armed Services Memorial located in Stafford County, Virginia, which required our team to incorporate elements of six preliminary designs done by local high school students. This requirement, while challenging, helped enrich the memorial with a local spirit,”

he said.

PUSH studio also completed a centennial monument for the Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity International founded at Howard University in 1914, which resulted in a current project to construct the Zeta Phi Beta International centennial monument, to be unveiled on the Howard University campus in June 2020.

On the sustainability front, Smith said the firm has been involved in competitions that marry passive energy sources and art installation through the Land Art Generator Initiative (LAGI).

“Our first competition entry in 2014 was a design for a site in Copenhagen, Denmark, which was one of fifty out of three hundred entries selected for publication in a competition book titled: *New Energies: LAGI Copenhagen*. In 2017, **PUSH** studio was short listed as one of three teams to design an energy-generating sculptural park project for Willimantic, Connecticut as part of the LAGI competition,” he said.

The firm also recently designed twelve roof terraces for small residential buildings and commercial projects as part of the Washington D.C. Green Area Ratio (GAR) program.

“The program requires developers to meet a GAR score based on zoning district designation with green infrastructure such as green roof, green screen, living vertical walls, and permeable paving. We

are currently looking into how the firm can tract these various project green roof systems in terms of their impact on water sustainability and wildlife corridors,” he said.

In addition to a lustrous career as both a professional and an academic, Smith has made a point to serve as a mentor. He founded the Black Landscape Architects Network (BLAN), which is a LinkedIn Social platform for black landscape architecture students and professionals to communicate.

“Because the black population in landscape architecture remains less than one percent, it was important to organize a platform that allowed a way for black landscape architects to communicate,” Smith said. “The network has just over 110 members, which also includes international members based in Africa. We often work in conjunction with ASLA to share ideas regarding recruitment efforts within the academic and professional sectors.”

Smith currently mentors four African American students and young professionals. His major advice to students is to find their core passion, seek mentors early, and take chances.

“Often students hinder themselves because of doubts as to how they can achieve goals. Not taking chances can be a great loss in building a career. I try to instill in them the confidence to work toward attaining their ultimate goals,” he said.

THIS IS OUR TURF

CALS turfgrass alumni are a cut above

By Vanessa Beeson

FROM THE COAST of Mississippi to the coast of Japan, the roots of Mississippi State's turfgrass program reach far and wide.

Housed under the agronomy major in the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, the golf and sports turf management concentration has been around for more than 50 years. In that time, it has become nationally known for its rigorous curriculum and innovative research, which has produced unique varieties of turf used on lawns and athletic fields across America.

Established in 1965, the degree program includes 10 turf courses and requires three semesters of cooperative education. Assistant professor **JAY MCCURDY** said this comprehensive education makes Mississippi State alumni highly sought after in the field. He estimates there are nearly 500 Bulldogs working in the industry around the world.

"Our graduates are diverse in background and experience," McCurdy said. "The opportunities in turf management go far beyond golf courses. We have alumni working in areas like municipal turf, lawn care operation, and sports field management. Our motto is 'stay in the game.' While many high school athletes will not have the opportunity to play at the collegiate or professional level, this concentration allows them to still be involved in sports by managing the field of play."

For more about the golf and sports turf management concentration in the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, visit www.pss.msstate.edu/students/gstm.php.

Melodee Fraser

MELODEE FRASER grew up on a golf course and thought she'd be a golf superintendent like her dad. Instead, this former Bulldog golfer went from reading greens to breeding them.

Fraser came to MSU in part because she wanted to play golf year-round. She graduated as the first woman in the turfgrass program in 1985, then stayed to study turf breeding as she earned a master's. She said her plan was to manage a golf course, but graduate school showed her a different path.

"I felt that I could do more for golf courses if I was developing new varieties of turf," Fraser recalled. "That's what turf breeders do—we look for improved traits in different species and cultivars."

After earning a doctorate in turfgrass breeding from Rutgers in 1991, Fraser joined Pure Seed, a global seed-breeding company headquartered in Oregon. She was hired to lead the company's



then-brand-new eastern testing facility—a 25-acre research farm in Rolesville, North Carolina.

More than 25 years later, she's helped lead the development of over 120 varieties of turfgrass. Her focus is on improving the summer performance of cool-season grass and breeding warm-season grasses, including tall fescues with improved summer performance.

"It's very rewarding to talk to people who have used the varieties you've developed and been successful with them," Fraser explained. "When a variety has a long life, has traits that make it successful and that people like, that's rewarding to see."

Andrew McDaniel

IT TOOK 21 HOURS FOR ANDREW MCDANIEL to get to his final turfgrass internship. Though he'd never flown before, he didn't let the distance keep him from a semester-long stint at a golf course in Japan, more than 7,000 miles away from Mississippi State University.

The 2001 Mississippi State graduate is now celebrating 18 years in Japan, where he is superintendent of Keya Golf Club and begins each day walking the 18-hole course with his dog, a Rhodesian Ridgeback named King.

"When I accepted the full-time job after I graduated, I never dreamed I'd be in Japan as long as I have," explained McDaniel, who hails from Alabama. "But once you pick up the language, life gets easier, things change, other opportunities arise and, next thing you know, it's been 18 years."

McDaniel has been with Keya for seven years. The 55-year-old family-owned enterprise in Fukuoka City hugs the coastline of the Itoshima Peninsula and

is best known for its zoysiagrass greens.

"Japanese greens were traditionally zoysia because it's a native species. Over time, however, superintendents started switching to bentgrass and bermudagrass greens, which tend to have a better ball

roll," McDaniel explained. "We kept it classic. Now, when people think of Keya, they think of zoysia grass greens. They like the challenge, and we've built a reputation on keeping the tradition."

Keya is a stop on the Japan Golf Tour, and McDaniel said the unique turf gets him time in the spotlight.

"When the tournament rolls around, I get to talk about turf on national television," McDaniel said. "It's good for the industry because it helps the general

public see golf course maintenance from a different perspective."

McDaniel has even been featured as a character in a local golf-themed manga—a Japanese comic book. He said he'd like to get more young people engaged with turfgrass in Japan, which he says doesn't have programs like the one found at MSU.

"I hope to collaborate with one of my mentors to create a turf academy at Keya to train the younger Japanese generation on turf management," McDaniel said.



Keair Edwards

AS SUPERINTENDENT TURF MANAGER of the Gulfport Sportsplex, **KEAIR EDWARDS** says he's always on call.

Thanks to internships at the facility and insight from his predecessor—who also happens to be his dad—he had some understanding of the job's demands. Still, he said there was an adjustment period when he took the reins in 2017.

"My first day on the job, my dad handed me the cellphone, and the next thing I knew, it was constantly ringing. I thought, 'Wow, what have I gotten myself into?'" Edwards recalled with a smile.

The 2016 Mississippi State graduate grew up watching his father, Ken, manage turf at the 250-acre Gulfport Sportsplex and nearby 15-acre Goldin Sportsplex. But Edwards said he didn't realize it was something he could study until he was in high school.

"My dad was on the board for the Mississippi Turfgrass Association with

a lot of Mississippi State alumni," Edwards recalled. "That kind of set things in motion for me to follow in his footsteps. Now, I'm actually on the board, too."

All told, Edwards oversees nearly 30 fields, each hosting an estimated 880 games annually at the sportsplex alone. He is also the head groundskeeper for high school and college sporting events at Biloxi's MGM Park.

Edwards said he looks forward to carrying on the work his father put into the facilities, which earned a certification from the Sports Turf Manager Association for environmentally responsible management. The same organization honored the father-son duo for

their efforts with the award for Softball Field of the Year in the Schools and Parks Division.

"My dad built this facility, so his were pretty big shoes to fill," Edwards said.



 THEN AND NOW

MSU Livestock Judging

A LOOK BACK AT A TIMELESS PASTIME

By Alaina Dismukes

LIVESTOCK JUDGING IS a timeless extracurricular activity at Mississippi State University. From year to year, the players change, but the sport itself keeps with tradition. And the skills learned by team members continue to set it apart from other clubs and organizations.

As individuals diligently judge sets of four animals from the meat animal species which includes cattle, hogs, goats, and sheep, team members categorize and place the animals accordingly, and then they present their reasons for their animal placements to judges.

Being on the competitive team is a huge time commitment as the team often spends 36 out of 52 weekends a year on the road traveling across the country to

practice and compete, but for its members, livestock judging means connecting with others and becoming better equipped in a skill they are passionate about.

Established in the 1920s, the MSU's Livestock Judging team stretches far back into Mississippi State history. The team became dormant in the mid-90s, but was re-established in 2013 when Brett Crow, instructor in the Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences, joined the department and reinvigorated the new judging team.

W. G. Griffin, member of the 1962 team, spoke about his experience judging livestock at MSU.

"My experience was outstanding. It was just like being on a football team with how

we practiced just about every afternoon and on weekends," Griffin said. "There were some challenging aspects, though, like verbally describing and placing two similar animals in the same class."

For Griffin and his team, all of the hard work was well worth it.

"It was quite a learning experience. The travel was eye opening and beneficial to us country boys from Mississippi. Competing was fun, and whenever you performed well at one of the competitions it was incredibly rewarding," he said.

Griffin's core team consisted of five men who were all Mississippi natives – Bill Harris, Charles Axley, Clayton Swayze, and Larry Kitchens. Individually, they each won separate categories in different contests throughout the year.

Dr. Jim Newsome, who coached the team from 1983–1989, provided a coach's perspective on MSU livestock judging. Before coming to coach in Starkville, Newsome was a student on the livestock judging team at the University of Florida. He then took over the livestock judging team as a graduate student at Mississippi State after Dr. Howard Miller, judging team coach from 1972 to 1983.

Newsome emphasized MSU's rich history of livestock judging.

"I think it goes back to Mississippi State's roots of maintaining its reputation of being a serious land grant institution. A lot of land grants have moved away from that core function, so I'm glad



that Mississippi State, among others, has not,” he said.

Newsome’s claim to fame as a judging coach was that every team he coached had the thrill of winning at least one competition, if not more.

“One of the most enjoyable parts of it was the lifelong relationships I built with students and teammates during my career in livestock judging,” he said.

Newsome said he often coached teams that were novice to livestock judging which, while challenging in the beginning, turned out to be surprisingly beneficial to the team’s overall growth.

“The main challenge was that we had to start from ground zero in the spring, but a positive aspect was that the team members only knew what I taught them so there were no bad habits to break,” he remembered. “They judged and presented their reasons the way that I taught them, and then by the time we got to the fall semester, they were a competitive team. It’s like coaching any activity or sport in that you have to do what your coach tells you to do. That’s the only way it really works.”

Abigail Jenkins, a 2018 judging team member and MSU’s winner of the “All American” title at the National Contest in Louisville, Kentucky, enjoyed her time on the team and the lasting benefits gained from the experience.

For junior animal and dairy science major Jenkins, the commitment has taught her essential life skills. She has not only learned about judging livestock, a skill that will assist her in selecting the best animal in production systems, but she has also learned more about the livestock industry which will assist her in her future career. Most importantly, she has developed life-long friendships with those pursuing a common passion.

“This experience has given me valuable



connections with people in the industry, taught me time management, and equipped me to be able to judge junior livestock shows in the future,” she said. “I’m glad I had the opportunity to be a part of the team.”

In contrast to the 1962 all-male team Griffin was a part of, the 2019 class is all females. Crow said it has been the only all-female livestock judging team at MSU that he is aware of. The 2019 team members are Logan Whipple from Mississippi, Julia Tate from Texas, Madalyn Jennings from Louisiana, and Kirsta Murphree and Cassidy Catrett who are both from Alabama.

Crow emphasized the team is open to anyone regardless of major or past experience.

“The team attracts students from all walks of life. Some students raise livestock growing up, and others are introduced to the livestock industry through 4-H or through a number of other avenues,” he said.

For each team member, Griffin, Newsome, and Jenkins, when asked about how they would describe their experience in livestock judging, all seemed to be filled with nostalgia as they tried to put into words what being involved in livestock

judging meant to them personally. It is clear that each members’ experience has meant a great deal to each individual, but Griffin may have summed it up best.

“Being a member of the judging team was one of the most rewarding things that I was able to be a part of while I was at Mississippi State University. Nothing took the place of it,” he said.

Livestock judging through the years has changed at MSU as coaches and team members have come and gone, but the activity remains at the heart of an institution that believes in the importance of agriculture. In years past and present at MSU, livestock judging was and continues to be an important milestone in the lives of its team members.

TOP: 2019-2020 Livestock Judging Team (left to right) Front row: Logan Whipple, Madalyn Jennings, Kirsta Murphree, Julia Tate, Cassidy Catrett. Back row: Coach Brett Crow.

LEFT: 1962 Livestock Judging Team (left to right) Front row: W. G. Griffin Jr., L. W. Kitchens, C. C. Axley, W. E. Harris, F. L. Passbach Jr. Back row: C. C. Swayze, J. A. Loomis, Coach C. J. Christians, R. E. Gardner, M. S. Knowlton

Rodeo Royalty

CALS ALUMNA CROWNED MISS RODEO AMERICA

By Janiece Pigg

"BELIEVE YOU CAN and you're halfway there," is **TAYLOR MCNAIR'S** motto. The recent agribusiness policy and law graduate soared to royal status after completing her degree in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Mississippi State University.

In December 2018, McNair was crowned Miss Rodeo America 2019. This hardworking cowgirl is the third Miss Rodeo Mississippi to achieve the honor of wearing the coveted Landstrom's Black Hills Gold crown.

As a Learned, Mississippi native, McNair grew up an avid 4-H member and flourished around the livestock show ring.

"From the age of nine to 18, I was a junior livestock exhibitor in 4-H. Nothing made me more proud than driving a hog, bracing a lamb, and sticking a steer," McNair said. "My life revolved around getting my project animals ready for our county, district, and Dixie National Junior Livestock shows. Throughout my years of showing, not only did I learn a lot about responsibility, but a lot about myself and who I wanted to be."

McNair's experience in 4-H and livestock showing is what led her on the path of becoming Miss Rodeo America. She started her pageant training in 2011 at 15 years old and quickly rose to become rodeo famous far and wide in Mississippi.

"As a little girl, I dreamed of nothing more than becoming Junior Miss Dixie National. I would joke and say the Dixie National was my favorite holiday," she remembered.

While McNair didn't win her first rodeo pageant queen competition, she was determined to be a pageant queen.

"While I didn't win that first year, I think the Lord had better plans for me because I ended up having the grand champion market steer here at the Dixie National. I had such a whirlwind of a year," she said.

The next year, she won Junior Miss Dixie National 2012.

"I came back and won—from not even placing the previous year to winning the whole pageant," she said.

From there, she was Teen Miss Rodeo of the Mid-South 2013, Miss Dixie

National 2014, Miss Crossett PRCA Rodeo 2015, Miss Rodeo of the Mid-South 2016, and Miss Rodeo Mississippi 2018 before capturing the national title of Miss Rodeo America 2019.

As Miss Rodeo America, McNair is the official spokesperson for the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association, spending her time promoting rodeo, agriculture, and the western lifestyle throughout the United States. She'll travel more than 100,000 miles and attend over 100 rodeos speaking at schools, keynoting large events, and meeting one-on-one with fans throughout the year.

"Growing up on a farm, I know the importance of agriculture and our western heritage and I'm happy to share that," she said. "We need to show people of all ages across the U.S. where their food, fiber, and fuel comes from."

After her reign as Miss Rodeo America is complete, McNair plans to pursue a career as a lobbyist for an agricultural organization. She has a strong passion for the policies that surround the industry. She said much of that passion was fostered



Taylor McNair at the Dixie National Livestock Show and Rodeo in Jackson, MS. (Photo by David Ammon)



during her time in the agricultural economics department at MSU.

“The agricultural economics department at Mississippi State University is second to none. It’s truly a family that supports and cares about your future. The degree afforded me the opportunity to combine my love of agriculture and business,” she said.

During her time at Mississippi State, McNair was highly involved in organizations and clubs throughout campus. She was a member of Block & Bridle, the Equestrian Team, and the Rodeo Team. She was also a member of campus-wide

organizations, such as Chi Omega Sorority, Foundation Ambassadors, Freshman Council, and Toastmasters. While McNair was certainly busy during her time at MSU, she always kept her pageant training in the forefront of her mind.

Through her work as Miss Rodeo America, McNair will get to be a representative for the entire sport of rodeo and the agricultural industry, as a whole. She loves her position because no two days are the same.

“One morning I may be waking up at 3 a.m. to get ready for my 6 a.m. flight or I may just be feeding horses. You just

never know,” she said.

No matter what McNair may be doing any given day, she knows her biggest job is to educate the next generation while honoring those who came before her.

“Miss Rodeo America, as an exceptional young woman who possesses horsemanship, communication, poise, and grace, is a role model for all ages,” McNair explained. “My personal goal is to carry on the legacy of the incredible women who wore the Landstrom’s Black Hills Gold crown of Miss Rodeo America before me and inspire those who will serve after.”

LEADERS IN Agriculture

CALS ALUMNI
HELP FEED,
CLOTHE, AND CARE
FOR THE WORLD

By Vanessa Beeson

EACH YEAR we profile CALS alumni who are leaders in agriculture. While their work and influence span a variety of industries, their passions are the same—to help farmers prosper so they can better feed and clothe the world. Brandon Gibson, an ag business management alumna, is a senior advisor to the Governor of Tennessee, focused on improving the state's rural communities. Michael Ledlow, entomology alumnus, oversees the Mississippi Plant Bureau, which protects farmers from plant pests. Abbott Myers, a long-time farmer and agricultural engineering technology and business alumnus, serves as chairman of the board of Mississippi Land Bank, helping farmers gain better financial footing. Sherman Miller, as Cal-Maine's COO, ensures the largest table egg company in the country provides quality protein for America. This year's CALS leaders in agriculture all strive to improve agriculture in their communities, their state, and beyond.



1. Abbott Myers, a long-time farmer and chairman of the board of Mississippi Land Bank
2. Michael Ledlow, director of the Mississippi Bureau of Plant Industry,
3. Sherman Miller, Cal-Maine's Chief Operating Officer
4. Brandon Gibson, swearing in as senior advisor to the Governor of Tennessee



BACK TO HER ROOTS

CALS alumna focused on Tennessee's rural communities

BRANDON GIBSON grew up on a soybean farm. She's now returning to those roots as senior advisor to newly elected Governor Bill Lee of Tennessee where one of her focus areas will be the governor's rural renewal initiative.

The Dyersburg, Tennessee native lives in Gadsden, in Crockett County—just one county over from where she grew up.

She said the governor's roots are rural as well.

"Governor Lee lives on a farm and raises Hereford cattle. His mother still sells the beef they raise at the local farmer's market so he's very invested in agricultural communities," Gibson said.

One of her goals is to reduce the number of distressed counties in the state. Currently, the Appalachian Regional Commission has designated fifteen of Tennessee's counties as distressed.

"We will focus on aspects such as economic development, building on initiatives similar to what Governor Haslam has already done to get broadband access to rural communities," Gibson explained. "We also want to make sure our rural schools provide the necessary education to students and that those students have plenty of access to post-secondary education, whether that's vocational or technical training, community college, or a four year institution."

She says this next step in her career—which she describes as a winding journey—is a bit full circle for her. As an attorney at Pentecost & Glenn, Gibson worked with many of the communities she will now serve.

"Not only am I able to return to my agricultural roots, I also get to connect again with all of those counties I represented in West Tennessee in a completely different way now," Gibson said.



Gibson was the fourth generation to grow up on the family farm back in Dyersburg.

"We raised soybean, wheat, Angus cattle, and alfalfa hay. My dad worked in a factory and my mother was a school teacher and we had the farm as well. We didn't have many summer vacations because we were too busy working the fields. While it was a wonderful childhood, it was also a lot of work," Gibson recalled.

When it was time to pursue a degree, Gibson stuck with what she knew and chose to pursue an agricultural degree.

"At the time that I majored in ag business, there weren't a lot of women in the field so I suspected it was a good opportunity. The professors were wonderful. Their energy and love for the topic were infectious," Gibson said.

After earning her bachelor's in 1996, she remained at MSU earning a master's in ag business management in 1997. From there, she decided to attend law school at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas, earning her degree in 2000.

"My ag business degree helped inform me about agriculture and business across the spectrum. It was a good base of knowledge that's helped me throughout my career," Gibson said.

After practicing law for several years, Gibson was appointed to the Tennessee Court of Appeals in 2014. As one of twelve judges, she served as the court's only woman, writing approximately 60

opinions per year, addressing a range of issues from employment disputes to divorce and child custody issues to healthcare liability cases and more.

Gibson also volunteers as the national director for the Tennessee High School Rodeo. She and her husband, who received a bachelor's in agronomy and a bachelor's and master's in agricultural economics from MSU, have one daughter—a high school sophomore—who competes.

"I volunteer as Tennessee's representative of the National High School Rodeo because I love my daughter and I love the other kids," Gibson said. "It's funny because my job as an appellate judge was similar to my role as the national director of the Tennessee High School Rodeo because I'm the rule enforcer."

In her role for Governor Lee, in addition to rural renewal, she will focus in the criminal justice arena.

"We are in a unique place where we can see Tennessee move forward in the nation. The opportunity to be involved in helping our rural communities is thrilling for me," Gibson said. "The ability to come full circle from growing up on a farm in a rural area to the education I received at MSU to implementing my law degree and being able to help advise our governor on both rural and legal issues is beyond exciting."

PROTECTING PLANTS FROM SEED TO SOW

CALS alumnus oversees Mississippi's Bureau of Plant Industry

MICHAEL LEDLOW, director of the Mississippi Bureau of Plant Industry, might cover anything from agricultural aviation to apiaries on any given day. The '88 entomology alumnus oversees the regulatory and service division of the Mississippi Department of Agriculture and Commerce.

The Flora, Mississippi native manages nearly 40 employees across four departments, all tasked with protecting the agricultural and horticultural interests

of the state from the introduction and spread of destructive plant pests.

"The bureau administers state and federal laws, regulations, and programs that deal with plant pests, pesticides, honeybees, plants, professional plant and pest control services, animal feeds, seed, fertilizer, lime, and amendments or additives to soil and plants," explained Ledlow, who pointed out that the bureau also maintains agreements with the Environmental Protection Agency and the USDA in administration and enforcement of state and federal laws.

Ledlow has spent his career with the organization, serving 26 of those years in the south Delta as a district entomologist. In 2014, then-agricultural commissioner Cindy Hyde-Smith appointed him to the position of state entomologist. In 2017, she appointed him director of the bureau as well.

"Our job is to protect our producers, who are on the front line of protecting the environment," Ledlow explained. "We hear from producers, stakeholders, and people in the industry about the issues that are impacting them and once they determine a regulatory need, I present the findings to our advisory board that will in turn adopt, amend, or deny regulations as they see fit."

Recent regulations adopted include restrictions on the use of Dicamba and 2, 4-D auxin herbicide technologies.

"When these technologies were released a few years ago, former Commissioner Hyde-Smith put together a task force to determine effective regulations. From there, our advisory board adopted regulations requiring training, setting a 10-mile per hour wind restriction and making these products state restricted use," Ledlow said. "While we still had our fair share of issues in the state, we were ahead of the curve. The next year the federal government implemented similar regulations nationally."

Ledlow said that while his career has covered all aspects of agriculture, his entomology degree has come in handy at times.

"In the field, we conduct termite inspections and occasionally a complaint would come in when a producer expected herbicide drift but it was actually damage caused by insects," Ledlow said.

He said his degree has influenced his life outside of work as well.

"I married into a farming family and have served as the farm's agronomist for my father-in-law's operation for years," Ledlow said.

That operation encompasses 7,500 acres of row-crop production across Yazoo, Madison, and Holmes counties.

"I make decisions on insecticide, fungicide, herbicide, fertility, and variety choices of the different crops," he said.

As far as his job is concerned, Ledlow said he likes the variety the role affords.

"In this position, you never know what a day is going to bring. It can be challenging because we cover such a range of issues. In the long run, though, to help the state's agriculture and its producers makes it all worthwhile," he said.



PERSISTENCE IN POULTRY

CALS alumnus helps lead country's largest table egg producer

SHERMAN MILLER'S work ethic dates back to his days growing up in Ethel, Mississippi, where he helped raise cattle on his family's farm. The tenacity served him well during his collegiate years, first at Holmes Community College, then at Mississippi State where he graduated summa cum laude with a bachelor's degree in poultry science in 1997.

A Cal-Maine Foods internship his junior year was all it took for Miller to find his place.

"I recognized that Cal-Maine was an innovative company with high expansion potential," said Miller, who began his career as processing plant supervisor for the company's facility in Edwards.

Miller said that the company began the intern program in 1995.

"I was the second intern in 1996. We have since expanded this internship program for fifteen to twenty students each summer," Miller explained. "It is a great way for students to see our industry through hands-on experience. Many of these students graduate and take on leadership roles in our company with many of our general managers and vice presidents having started with our company through a summer internship."

Now chief operations officer for Cal-Maine Foods Inc.—the country's largest producer of table eggs—Miller's journey in the poultry industry has spanned more than two decades.

Within two years of moving up to processing plant manager, he was dispatched to a new facility in Delta, Utah. When that was operational two years later, he became the general manager for the company's Kansas facility. Miller spent the next 10 years in the Sunflower State, and during that time, he was promoted to vice president of

operations for Kansas, Ohio, and Utah.

In 2011, Miller was asked to return to Mississippi to serve as chief operations officer at the company's Jackson-based headquarters. He is now part of an executive team that oversees operations that include 38 million laying hens across 14 states. The company has 40 million layers, two hatcheries, 44 processing facilities, and 22 feed mills.

Beyond Cal-Maine, Miller has helped lead the industry as a whole. He is past chairman and current member of the board for the U.S. Poultry and Egg Association. He is also a member of both the Board of United Egg Producers and the American Feed Industry Association.

Miller says it's important for students to be involved as well, encouraging them to consider summer internships to find the fit for an ideal career.

"Twelve weeks during the summer is a great way to determine which segment of the industry best meets particular passions and goals for a life-long career,"

said Miller, who pointed out the poultry industry employs several professions including accountants, lawyers, nutritionists, and veterinarians in addition to poultry scientists, just to name a few.

"While any career in agriculture is rewarding since agriculture provides the basic needs for a population, I personally love the poultry industry," Miller said. "I can truly say that one of the best decisions that I have made was walking in the doors of the Hill Poultry Science Department building and meeting Dr. Tim Chamblee, the poultry science advisor. He assured me that the industry had jobs waiting on graduates. I believe that this is even truer today."

Miller said he is proud to help produce a product that helps feed the world.

"I believe that eggs are an extremely valuable food item that will nourish people for generations to come," Miller said. "Many people in the world rarely have access to high-quality protein. I think egg production will continue to expand as an efficient means of filling this void."





OPTIMIST, FARMER, COMMUNITY LEADER

CALS alumnus builds upon tradition in the Delta

ABBOTT MYERS is both a third generation farmer and a third generation bulldog. His son, Abbott Ransome Myers, Jr., continues in his footsteps in farming. The father and son work alongside each other day in and day out farming more than 7,500 acres of row-crops near Tunica, Mississippi. Now, Abbott's grandson, also his namesake, has taken an interest in the land. Abbott, Sr. says building upon this family legacy is the driving force in his life's work.

Abbott's grandfather started the family farm with land in Helena, Mississippi after he graduated from Mississippi State University as an agriculture major in 1915. Myers' father graduated in 1943 as an engineering major, before heading off to fight in World War II. After that, he returned home to work on the farm. Abbott, a '72 agricultural engineering technology and business alumnus, also had a knack for engineering, originally setting out to become an aerospace engineer. During his sophomore year, however, his father suffered a detached retina, which brought Abbott home early that summer to help out on the farm. That

decision changed his life's trajectory.

"To be honest, I hadn't planned on farming and that summer I made the biggest mess on the farm. But each night, I was able to talk with my father and he'd tell me what to do. After that I found I enjoyed making the decisions and being the boss," Abbott said.

Once he returned to MSU, he switched majors to agricultural engineering technology and business.

"Mississippi Land Bank loaned me money and I bought a little piece of ground when I was in college," said Abbott, who raised his first crop in 1971 before he graduated from MSU in 1972.

After college, he returned to farming full-time, raising 33 crops with his dad. Now he's raised about 17 crops with his son. Much of the farm is dedicated to rice.

"While we grow corn and soybeans, rice is our largest business. Everything is bought, planted, and developed around rice. We began with 60 acres of rice in 1979 and we harvested 2,250 acres last year," he said.

Myers also said he's spent his farming life working to make the land better

and acquiring more of it when he could.

"It doesn't make a difference whether you rent or buy, you pay for the land you occupy so it's better to own it. We've been able to buy land when we could and make it more productive," he said. "We land-formed all of this land ourselves at different grades during different times. I have the farm now just about like I want it."

He attributes much of that land acquisition to his relationship to the Mississippi Land Bank.

"Mississippi Land Bank has been one reason we've been so blessed. They've stuck by me and encouraged me to buy land," Myers said.

As a way to give back to the organization, Myers became chairman of the board of the financial institution.

"Banking is totally different than anything I do and is something I enjoy. Mississippi Land Bank's business is agriculture and they've been mighty good to me. I'm just trying to pay back what they've done for me," Myers said, who explained that the board's job is to set policy and hire the CEO.

Myers is also the chairman of the board at Coahoma Electric Association and an elder at the Tunica Presbyterian Church. In the past, he's served as president of the Tunica Academy, Rotary Club, Soil Conservation District, and served on various councils and boards including the Delta Council, the Rice Council, and the Yazoo Mississippi Delta Joint Water Management District.

Myers makes it clear his greatest joy is family. In addition to his son, Ransome, Myers and his wife, Sheryl—married nearly 50 years—have a daughter Katie, two grandsons and one granddaughter. He also says it's a blessing to work with his son.

"He shows up for work before I do and is always in a good mood, which makes me in a good mood," he said.

Myers said it's important to remain an optimist as a farmer but it's also important to save for the tough times.

"You have to be an optimist to farm. We have good and bad years and my father taught me that if you make a good crop, you better save that money because you are going to need it."

LIFE AS A FORENSIC SCIENTIST

*CALS alumna and student solve mysteries
in science career*

By Alaina Dismukes

THANKS TO TV SHOWS like *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* and *Criminal Minds*, the study of forensic science has become more popularized in the last two decades.

The TV show *CSI* began in 2000 and quickly became a number one television series. Enjoying 15 seasons, the crime scene show began in Las Vegas and quickly branched out to Miami and New York, and even into the military with NCIS.

By shining a light on this profession and the use of scientific techniques and tools such as DNA sequencers and scanning electron microscopes, forensic science is now a growing field with several career options like forensic DNA analyst, computer forensic specialist, or trace analyst just to name a few.

While these shows opened the world of forensic science to many, they can also portray the profession a little more glamorously than the actual career.

According to forensic scientist and CALS alumna **ALISON DEBEAORD**, the field entails a lot more than what you see on TV.

“While the science depicted on those shows is usually sound, the process they portray is not what the vast majority of forensic analysts experience. It can be a rewarding job, but you are exposed to the worst that people are capable of and that is pretty challenging,” she said.

DeBeaord, a 1999 biochemistry alumna, became intrigued by forensic science while working in a microbiology research lab after she graduated from MSU.

“A coworker always shared job openings

he had found in forensic science or interesting stories he had read in the news,” DeBeaord said. “His constant flow of information about the field helped me realize that forensic science was a great way to use my scientific knowledge and lab skills to have a direct influence on the lives of others.”

The Cherokee, Alabama native worked for the Alabama Department of Forensic Science (ADFS) for 13 years in the DNA databank unit. There she processed samples from convicted offenders and arrestees to input their DNA profiles into the National DNA Index System (NDIS).

“In 2015, I left ADFS and joined a large biotech company, Qiagen, as a forensic application scientist,” she said. “I now travel to forensic labs—primarily in the Southeast—to assist with instrument implementation, process validation, and training staff on new methods.”

Since DeBeaord is no longer in a fixed laboratory position, she said that every day is different, which is her favorite aspect of the position. Some days she works from home analyzing data, writing reports, or corresponding with labs to troubleshoot an issue they are having. Other days, she’s in a forensic lab running samples for a validation project, so that the lab can implement a new instrument, assay, or chemistry into their workflow.

“I loved working at ADFS and processing samples in the lab on a daily basis, but I also love now being able to share my knowledge and experience with other forensic labs,” she said enthusiastically. “And meanwhile, I’m still able to be in the

lab processing samples from time to time.”

Another aspect of forensic science is the field of forensic entomology. Forensic entomologists use what they know about insects in order to help determine the rate of decomposition of a corpse.

Different insects can provide insight into how long a corpse has been decomposing. For instance, the black blow fly is one of the first insects to come onto the scene, so determining when the black blow fly arrived helps forensic entomologists determine time of death for a particular body. While it is well known how the black blow fly relates to the decomposition of a corpse, much less is known about the role fire ants play in the process. That’s why **GRANT DE JONG**, MSU doctoral student in forensic entomology, is on the case to answer just this question.

“A general observation that people have made is that if there is a corpse in the Southeast, it’s not long before fire ants will get on it,” De Jong said.

This is a fairly recent phenomenon since these types of fire ants were not introduced to North America until about the 1930s or 1940s, but their presence on carrion was not reported until the 1980s. Now, they are considered a normal part of the fauna that gets on carrion.

“There have been theories on why they may be there but not any absolute answers, so part of my research is finding out why they are there in the first place,” he said.

With this research, forensic pathologists and forensic entomologists will be able to better assess a corpse that has fire ants on it and understand whether





the fire ants may have accelerated or slowed down the decomposition rate by their activities.

De Jong is both student and teacher. He juggles coursework as both an MSU doctoral student and an instructor at Pensacola Christian College, where he teaches general biology, zoology, entomology, and parasitology, a branch of zoology that focuses on parasites.

He said that pursuing a Ph.D. has been a goal for a while, but he was in search of a program most aligned with his research interests.

"When I first started considering a Ph.D., I worked at GEI Consultants, Inc. in Colorado, working mainly in aquatic ecology," he said. "I wanted to eventually get a Ph.D., but at the time, it just wasn't feasible."

After working at that company for 22 years, he and his family moved to Pensacola, Florida, where he began teaching at PCC. That is when he renewed his search for a doctoral program. De Jong contacted Dr. Jeff Dean, professor and head of the Department of Biochemistry, Molecular

Biology, Plant Pathology and Entomology at MSU, who connected him with Dr. Jerome Goddard, an extension professor in entomology. Goddard believed De Jong could pursue the degree while still keeping his teaching position in Pensacola.

Goddard recognized that De Jong's research project would have a molecular biology component, so he reached out to Dr. Florencia Meyer, associate professor and molecular biologist in the department, about being De Jong's co-advisor.

"We developed a plan for me to be able to be a part of MSU's graduate program, but to still be able to live and work in Pensacola," said De Jong, who travels to Starkville once or twice a month.

He began his doctoral program in the spring of 2018, just a few months after his initial contact with the university.

"My interest in forensic entomology started back during my undergraduate days at Colorado State where I was getting a degree in bio-agricultural science with an entomology concentration. My major professor worked with forensic entomology to a small degree and working with him whetted my appetite for the subject," he said.

De Jong went on to earn a master's in entomology at the University of Nebraska, where his thesis was on forensic entomology. His earlier research in entomology inspired him in his current project on how fire ants are factored in when it comes to the decomposition rate of a corpse.

De Jong says the process of discovery drives him.

"Research has always been something I enjoyed doing," said De Jong. "To be able to participate in forensic entomology at MSU is exciting, and I'm looking forward to seeing where it takes me."



TOP: Alison DeBeord is a forensic application scientist for Qiagen. (Photo Submitted)

LEFT: Grant De Jong analyzes an insect sample at the Clay Lyle Entomology Complex at Mississippi State University. (Photo by David Ammon)

Development

Going the Distance

Lloyd-Ricks-Watson Classroom dedicated to Richard Charles and Edna Ree Twitty

By Vanessa Beeson

THE LEGACY of longtime bulldog **Richard “Charles” Twitty** and his wife **Edna** has been memorialized in a classroom in Lloyd-Ricks-Watson, which houses both the Department of Agricultural Economics and the School of Human Sciences. Charles, a longtime bulldog and two-time graduate of the university—earning his bachelor’s degree in agricultural and extension education in 1955 and master’s degree in school administration in 1971—dedicated much of his life to agriculture. First, he served as the Lee County Extension agent, and after retiring from the MSU Extension Service, he embarked on a second career in agricultural sales.

Barry Aycock, founder and president of AgXplore, pledged the donation in the Twittys’ honor. Aycock said Charles took a chance on him when he first started AgXplore.

“I’ve known Charles half my life and when I started AgXplore in 1999, Charles took a chance and ended up spending nearly 15 years helping us grow the company,” Aycock said.

Aycock said AgXplore, which manufactures and markets nitrogen management aids, specialty fertilizers, adjuvants, and micro-nutrients, had just two employees



From left to right: Richard Twitty, Russ Twitty, Barry Aycock and Michelle Aycock. (Photo by Jud Skelton)

when Charles came on as a sales manager. Since then, the company has grown to 80 employees worldwide with distribution in 40 states and 14 countries.

“We grew from a zero dollar company to a \$50 million company and Charles is a big reason why. He possessed honesty, integrity, and was the best cold caller I’ve seen in my life. He was a great mentor to everyone in our company,” Aycock said.

Aycock said one of the only things Charles appreciated more than agriculture was Mississippi State sports, noting that the Twittys were true maroon, attending as many games as they could.

Charles died October 30, 2018 and his wife, Edna, passed away just two weeks later.

Aycock said he hopes the couple’s legacy will live on through learning at Mississippi State. The **Richard Charles and Edna Ree Twitty classroom** will

impact MSU students far and wide, with proceeds from the endowment being used to advance distance education technology interfaces and facilitate conversion of College of Agriculture and Life Sciences courses into distance education formats to reach more students studying agriculture.

“Through MSU alumni and students, the legacy of Charles and Edna will live on for future generations. This gift ensures they are remembered for the work they have done on behalf of agriculture and Mississippi State, because those were the two things they loved besides their family,” Aycock said.

The Twittys have two sons, seven grandchildren, and one great-grandchild. Their daughter, Ree Twitty Hester, died in 2014.



@CALSDDevelopment
@MSU Properties
@BulldogForest

A career well-spent

MSU poultry science pioneer memorialized by endowed scholarship

By Vanessa Beeson

OFTENTIMES, when someone is at the top of their game, it isn't their successes that define their greatness. It's the grueling hours and late nights of practice, patience, and perseverance that led them to the apex of their accomplishments. **Dr. J. Paul Thaxton** is an example of an underdog who became a top dog—a man whose talents changed an industry and the lives of hundreds of students over the course of nearly 50 years.

Fortunately, the story of J. Paul Thaxton, who died in 2007, lives on through an endowment that helps future bulldogs excel in their academic pursuits and beyond. A recent commitment by **Dr. Yvonne Vizzier-Thaxton** fully endows the J. Paul Thaxton Endowed Scholarship, established by friends and family in 2007. Yvonne has endowed the scholarship and established the J. Paul Thaxton Annual Scholarship for deserving students in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences in memory of her late husband.

The scholarship will provide support to full-time poultry science undergraduate students who demonstrate leadership ability and financial need.

According to Yvonne, J. Paul, a Starkville native, understood firsthand the challenges undergraduates can face when navigating a collegiate academic environment for the first time.

"My husband was the first student from Starkville High School to attend the University of Mississippi on a football scholarship," she said. "Everyone had big expectations for him. Once he arrived at Ole Miss, however, he realized he wasn't prepared for college."

She explained that while J. Paul could read, he had trouble comprehending what he was reading. After a year of struggling at Ole Miss, he returned to Starkville with the resolve to properly prepare for college.

"He took a job as a night watchman at the Borden Milk Plant and spent the summer reading the classics with a notepad and dictionary," she said. "When he came across a word he didn't know, he wrote it down."

After that summer, with guidance from MSU faculty such as Dr. Roy Ruby, J. Paul was able to enroll in Mississippi State where he earned a bachelor's degree in entomology in 1964. He went on to earn a master's degree in poultry science in 1966 from MSU, and a doctoral degree in poultry science from the University of Georgia in 1971. In between his master's and Ph.D., J. Paul taught at Northeast Louisiana University, where Yvonne said he fell in love with teaching.

"J. Paul said there are two things you have to have to be a good teacher. You have to know your subject matter and you have to love students," she said, noting that her husband inspired her to eventually teach as well.

From 1964 until his death, J. Paul taught at the collegiate level, including nearly 22 years at North Carolina State University before coming to his alma mater for another 22 years.

In addition to dedicating his life to teaching, J. Paul co-founded one of the poultry industry's first biotechnology firms. As vice president of research and development of North Carolina-based Embrex, Inc., Thaxton was central in



J. Paul Thaxton

the commercialization of in-ovo technology that led to vaccination of chicks still in the egg. Yvonne pointed out the techniques and processes commercialized by Embrex in the mid-1980s are employed in every commercial hatchery to this day. This work led J. Paul to receive the Award of Entrepreneurial Excellence in 1987, presented by then-North Carolina Governor, James G. Martin. In addition to teaching and industry, J. Paul, who was well-known for his research in physiology, held eight patents and produced more than 260 publications. He was inducted into the Mississippi Poultry Hall of Fame in 2010.

After 30 years in the industry where she served in various roles including a position as vice president of Marshall Durbin Food Corporation, Yvonne joined the faculty at MSU in 1999, serving alongside J. Paul and collaborating with him on teaching and research.

"One of the reasons I want to support Mississippi State is because of the department's focus on supporting the industry. At MSU, they are training qualified people to go right into the industry," she said.

Alumnus bequest establishes professorship

Gift benefits MSU work in agricultural real estate

By Alaina Dismukes

A MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY alumnus has made plans to establish an endowed agricultural real estate professorship, creating an infinite impact through the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. With a bequest in his will, **John M. Dean** creates the John M. Dean Jr. Endowed Professorship in Agricultural Real Estate.

A 1966 agribusiness graduate, Dean is owner and operator of Leland, Mississippi-based Landmart: A Dean Land & Realty Company. He was also named an Alumni Achievement award winner in 2016 by the MSU College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

"We are grateful to Mr. Dean for his bequest which will strengthen the Department of Agricultural Economics well into the future," said George Hopper, dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

Will Staggers, assistant director of development for the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences added that an endowed professorship dedicated to agricultural real estate will further enhance student learning.

"This is a niche area that is extremely relevant for future graduates," Staggers said. "Our students are exposed to tax evaluation analysis for farm land, agriculture real estate, as well as resource land use economics."

Keith Coble, professor and head of the Department of Agricultural Economics, noted the importance of what this gift means to the department.

"This endowment for a professorship is of enormous value to the department. This gift will help retain and attract a faculty member with expertise in this area," Coble said. "It will also support teaching and extension efforts related

to agriculture finance and real estate. All of Mississippi agriculture will benefit."

John Dean said he began to realize a few years after he graduated the unique benefits and contacts that were made possible through his educational experience while at Mississippi State.

"I made the decision then to give back financially to the university at the appropriate time when my career would allow. I felt the need to designate my gift toward enhancing an undergraduate course concentration for careers related to aspects

of agricultural real estate," he said.

Dean consulted with the MSU Foundation to make the bequest in his will which allows him to leave a lasting legacy at Mississippi State University.

"I cannot say enough about the helpful guidance and professionalism exhibited by staff in the Mississippi State University Foundation, who helped me through this process," Dean said. "They are, and will continue to be, a credit to the university and its success."



John M. Dean (Agriculture, 1966) received an alumni achievement award from CALS Dean George Hopper at the CALS Alumni breakfast on April 8, 2017. (Photo by Karen Brasher)

MAIC memorializes long-time member

Robert J. “Butch” Alpe Endowed Scholarship honors long-time champion of Mississippi ag

By Vanessa Beeson

THE ROBERT J. “BUTCH” ALPE ENDOWED SCHOLARSHIP honors the late Butch Alpe, longtime champion of Mississippi agriculture.

The scholarship was established by the Mississippi Agricultural Industry Council, or MAIC, in 2013 and named in Alpe’s honor in 2017, a year before he died.

The longtime Starkville resident was involved in the council for nearly 35 years, first as a general member, then six years on the board, and 14 years as secretary/treasurer. Alpe’s career spanned private and public industry.

Dr. Tim Walker, current president of MAIC, said Alpe spent his life as a supporter of Mississippi agriculture and an integral member of the MAIC family.

“Butch has meant so much to our council. He worked year in and year out to help grow our organization to one of the largest of its kind. He also strived to grow Mississippi’s agricultural industry as a whole,” Walker said.

Walker said Alpe always had his finger on the pulse of Mississippi agriculture.

“Butch was incredibly knowledgeable about the issues Mississippi agriculture faced. He had relationships with policy makers and stakeholders and did a good job of helping to build a consensus so that, regardless of the ultimate decision on any given issues, he was sure Mississippi agriculture had a voice in the discussion,” Walker said.

George Hopper, dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences added, “Butch Alpe was a special person that cared about students and the future of agriculture.”

Recent Robert J. “Butch” Alpe



The recent Robert J. “Butch” Alpe Endowed Scholarship recipients are Christina Griffith, Ember West, and Wes Neel. (Photo by David Ammon)

Endowed Scholarship recipients discussed how the scholarship has made a difference in their lives.

Horn Lake, Mississippi native, **Cristina Griffith**, is a sophomore agribusiness and agricultural engineering business technology double major.

Griffith chose to study agriculture because of its importance to the world.

“Everything we eat or wear comes from agriculture; gas and medicine stem from agricultural products,” Griffith said, who has studied abroad in Colombia. “I would like to eventually work internationally to introduce and implement more technology into farming systems.”

Griffith said the scholarship has been critical in her academic pursuits.

Sumrall, Mississippi native, **Ember West**, is a poultry science junior.

West, who grew up on a farm, said the scholarship meant a lot in helping her along in her academic pursuits.

“By receiving this scholarship, I have been able to further my education and promote the field of agriculture while doing it,” she said. “This is especially

important to me because agriculture is such a big part of my family and now my future.”

Flora, Mississippi native, **Wes Neel**, is an agribusiness major. The junior who is pursuing a management concentration said the scholarship has been a blessing.

“Paying for college is a worry for a lot of people so getting a scholarship is a huge help,” he said. “I am very grateful to be a Robert J. “Butch” Alpe Endowed Scholarship recipient.”

MAIC membership represents a broad cross section of the agricultural industry from chemical, seed and fertilizer companies to regulatory groups, academia, governmental agencies, ag media, and growers. Their mission is to represent all segments of the state’s agricultural industry and to provide opportunities for education, problem solving, and communication to ensure the viability of agriculture at every level. The Robert J. “Butch” Alpe Endowed Scholarship is one of many scholarships established by MAIC.

Building a Bulldog legacy

Murphy cements love of MSU, furthers impact with bequest

By Amy Cagle

BECKY ESSIG MURPHY of Dallas, Texas, believes she's destined to return to her native Starkville as a permanent resident one day—to reaffirm her Bulldog roots and strengthen ties she cultivated earlier in her life. In fact, she's making plans to cement her legacy as a Bulldog through her generous financial support of the university.

Murphy grew up with the MSU campus as her backyard—surrounded by a growing community of Bulldogs as passionate as she was about the university. She attended MSU and graduated in 1983 with a bachelor's degree in home economics from the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. After graduation from MSU, Murphy began her career in the technology industry when she joined IBM, holding various leadership positions in sales over the next 20 years. The last six years of her time there, she serviced one of IBM's top partners, Sirius Computer Solutions Inc. And in 2007, she joined the Sirius company, where she continues to serve as a senior vice president of sales.

In tribute to her alma mater, Murphy has structured a planned gift through the MSU Foundation. The \$1.5 million bequest from Murphy will further a previously-established scholarship endowment and create a second scholarship endowment, both in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. She also created an endowment benefiting the new MSU-Oktibbeha County partnership school through the College of Education. Furthermore, the bequest will allow Murphy to establish her own personal legacy at Mississippi State through her giving.

In the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, the Werner and Alice Essig Graduate Endowed Scholarship was initially established by Murphy's parents, longtime MSU employees who are the namesakes of the financial award. Murphy's dad, Werner Essig, was a 40-year heralded veteran of the Department of Animal and Dairy Sciences, who retired in 1997.

Murphy's mother, Alice Essig, spent some 28 years with the John C. Longest Student Health Center on campus. She was director of nutrition services and had an office in the infirmary where she worked for Dr. John C. Longest, longtime leading physician for which the clinic is named.

The Essigs met at the University of Arkansas, where the two natives of that state earned degrees. Alice, of Parthenon, earned a bachelor's degree in home economics, and Werner, of Paragould, earned bachelor's and master's degrees. He later earned a Ph.D. from the University of Illinois and served the United States Army in the Korean War. In 1959, Werner began his career with Mississippi State College as professor of animal and dairy sciences, just as the land-grant institution became a full-fledged university. He was recognized with the Faculty Award for Research for his career efforts. At the time of Werner's death in 2015, the Essigs had been happily married for 62 years.

Murphy recalled of her father, "He had a quiet manner, and he particularly loved teaching graduate students. He had a great involvement in the university and

a strong external reach by consulting in the beef industry."

Murphy fondly remembers attending annual picnics at Ballew Hall for the families of MSU faculty and staff and attending the annual Lyceum Series that showcases national artists in a variety of performance areas, ranging from music, drama and dance. She loved being engaged with the university community.

"My parents loved MSU and wanted to raise their family in a small town with a university," Murphy said. "In Starkville, they had the best of both worlds and were drawn into a team of people at the university and into a community where they had enjoyed rewarding careers and they never wanted to leave. The scholarship bearing their names enables them to always be a part of what became their beloved university."

For Murphy, her bequest also links her name perpetually with Mississippi State. Future recipients of the Becky Murphy Endowed Scholarship will be full-time undergraduate or graduate students in CALS with demonstrated academic achievement of at least a 3.0 GPA, along with leadership ability and financial need.

Beyond scholarships, Murphy's bequest also extends to the MSU-Starkville Oktibbeha County School District Partnership School. The Becky Murphy-Partnership School Endowment for Excellence will assist the university's College of Education and the new school currently under construction. Slated to open for students in the spring semester



Becky Murphy with her mother Alice Essig. (Photo by Megan Bean)



of 2020, the school will serve as an opportunity to perform research on rural education and serve as a demonstration model for students within the MSU College of Education as well as educators throughout the state and region.

Murphy has been a champion for education during much of her lifetime—a trait stemming from what her parents encouraged in her. In Texas, she has been a part of Communities in Schools in Dallas for 16 years and dedicated time serving that organization's board. The

organization focuses on keeping at-risk students in school.

"I know from the values my parents instilled in me and in my brother, Steve, that as a responsible individual you should consider how you can do your part and positively touch the lives of others and look toward the future," said Murphy.

She continued, "Mississippi State is who I am and remains a large part of my life. I was born and raised a Bulldog and making this bequest seems the right way to make a greater impact beyond my

lifetime," said Murphy.

For Murphy, coming home to Starkville is an appealing plan—and as with the bequest, she feels it is the right plan for her future.

"This place has always been home and I want to do my part in ensuring its future. Whether you're raised a Bulldog after birth like me or become a Bulldog later in life by association, the university will always welcome you home," said Murphy.

Department News

AGRICULTURAL AND BIOLOGICAL ENGINEERING

Linhoss named to leadership role

DR. ANNA LINHOSS, associate professor in agricultural and biological engineering and MAFES researcher, was named assistant director of the university's Northern Gulf Institute and Geosystems Research Institute. Linhoss's work has been recognized by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine; National Fish and Wildlife



Federation; and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, among others. She has received 18 competitive research grants totaling \$4 million.

Outstanding teachers



DR. LASHAN SIMPSON, assistant professor, won the CALS Teacher of the Year and Excellence in Teaching Award, Upper Division. Simpson

advises graduate students, undergraduate researchers and high school students conducting research in her lab. She regularly seeks funds for student support, including a grant from the Center for the Advancement of Service Learning. She helped charter the BEAM student chapter on campus, an undergraduate chapter component of the Biomedical Engineering Society, and has mentored two NSF Graduate Fellowship recipients.



DR. JOEL O. PAZ, associate professor, received the CALS/MAFES Excellence in Teaching Award, Lower Division. Paz serves as the agricultural engineering

technology and business undergraduate coordinator, advising 37 undergraduate students including a number of transfer students. Paz is credited with employing real-world examples and helping prepare students for the jobs they will have upon graduation.

AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS

Keith Coble named to international agricultural economics board



DR. KEITH COBLE, head of MSU's Department of Agricultural Economics, was recently named incoming president-elect for the Agricultural and

Applied Economics Association's (AAEA) executive board. The AAEA includes 2,500 members across more than 60 countries and addresses topics including the economics of agriculture, international and rural development, resources and the environment, food and consumer issues, and agribusiness.

Award Winners

CHLOÉ D. HENSON, an agricultural economics master's student, placed first in the master's student oral presentations, social and behavioral sciences category in the MSU Graduate Student Research Symposium competition. She also is an MSU summa cum laude agribusiness/policy and law bachelor's graduate.

DR. MATTHEW INTERIS, associate professor, won the Teaching Award of Merit from Gamma Sigma Delta.

REBECCA D. KEEFER, a senior agribusiness/policy and law major, placed third in the thesis research competition sponsored by the MSU Graduate School. Keefer is advised by Amanda Stone, assistant professor of animal and dairy sciences.

KAYLEE K. WELLS, an agricultural economics master's student, placed second in the master's student visual displays, social and behavioral sciences category in the MSU Graduate Student Research Symposium. She also is an MSU summa cum laude environmental economics and management bachelor's graduate.

ANIMAL AND DAIRY SCIENCES



Brandi Karisch, Milton Sundbeck and department head John Blanton. (Photo by David Ammon)

MSU professorship focuses on beef cattle production in the Southeast

A NEW MISSISSIPPI STATE University professorship focuses on advancing beef cattle production in the state and the Southeast. **DR. BRANDI KARISCH**, an associate extension and research professor, is the inaugural Milton Sundbeck Endowed Professor in Southeastern Cattle Management.

Established by Milton Sundbeck, founder and owner of West Point-based Southern Ionics Incorporated, the new endowment will facilitate getting research into the hands of producers.

Karisch, a scientist in the university's Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station, addresses these concerns by researching techniques that producers can apply to their own practices.

Award Winners

REBECCA HUMPHREY, an undergraduate student in animal and dairy sciences from Sarah, placed first for her undergraduate poster at the 82nd Mississippi Academy of Sciences annual meeting.

BRANDI KARISCH, associate extension/research professor, is the Mississippi Young Farmers and Ranchers State Excellence in Agriculture Winner, awarded by the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation.

ABIGAIL JENKINS, an undergraduate student in animal and dairy sciences, became Mississippi State's first "All American" team member in Livestock Judging.

EMILI MCCLURE, a senior animal and dairy science major, received the undergraduate student award of merit scholarship from Gamma Sigma Delta.

KATE E. PARSONS, a senior animal and dairy sciences major from Columbia, Tennessee, received the Charles E. Lindley Leadership in Agriculture Award. Since 2016, she has served as a College of Agriculture and Life Sciences ambassador and as president of Circle K International at MSU, a collegiate organization of the Kiwanis International service club.

MAGGIE L. TU, a senior animal and dairy sciences major from Smithville, Georgia, tied for third place in visual displays in the biological sciences and engineering category at the MSU Spring 2018 Undergraduate Research Symposium.

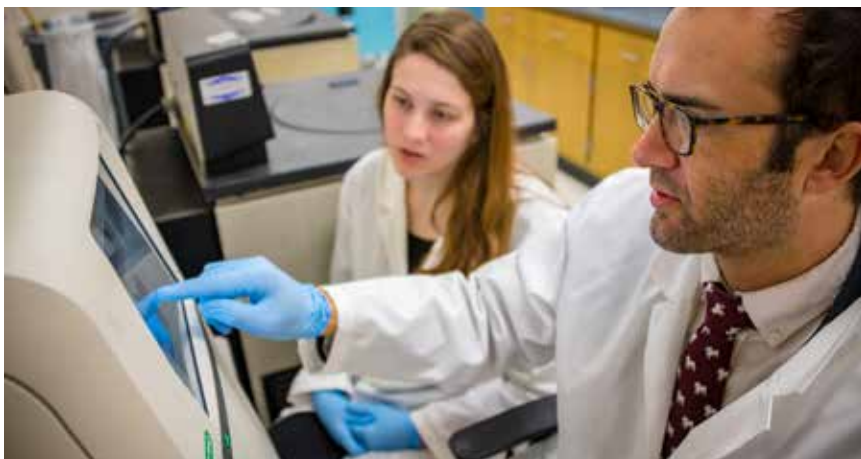
ZHONGYOU YANG, a master's student from China, placed third in oral presentation at the 82nd Mississippi Academy of Sciences annual meeting.

BIOCHEMISTRY, MOLECULAR BIOLOGY, ENTOMOLOGY AND PLANT PATHOLOGY

Partnership between MSU, EMCC opens door for future medical researchers

A PARTNERSHIP between Mississippi State University and East Mississippi Community College is providing a path into advanced degree programs for transfer students interested in the biomedical and behavioral research fields.

The partnership is possible through a \$1.1 million grant from the National Institutes of Health Research Education Program, called an R25, which focuses on training a future workforce to meet the nation's biomedical, behavioral and clinical research needs. Called "Bridges to Baccalaureate," the program provides paid research opportunities for undergraduate students transferring from EMCC to MSU.



Jonas King works with a graduate student in the laboratory. (Photo by David Ammon)

BIOCHEMISTRY, MOLECULAR BIOLOGY, ENTOMOLOGY AND PLANT PATHOLOGY (CONT.)

Award Winners

SKYLAR BALDWIN, a biochemistry major, took home the \$2,000 grand prize scholarship from the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation fourth annual Collegiate Discussion Meet. Baldwin will compete in the 2019 American Farm Bureau Young Farmers & Ranchers Collegiate Discussion Meet in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

JORDAN A. COGGINS, a senior biochemistry/pre-medicine major, placed second in the biological sciences and engineering category at the MSU Summer 2018 Undergraduate Research Symposium.

WHITNEY CROW, life sciences/entomology major, was one of seven graduate students university-wide selected as a Graduate School Student Hall of Fame Scholar. The scholars all have made significant contributions to the growth of MSU through their exemplary leadership abilities and research or teaching skills in their chosen fields of study.

TANNER S. DEYOUNG, a biochemistry/pre-MBA major, received the prestigious Provost Scholarship. The annual honor includes an academic scholarship, as well as funding for study abroad. Grants for research or creative discovery and an optional travel grant to attend a conference also are included.

AMANDA B. HARPER, an agricultural life sciences/biochemistry master's student, placed first in the master's student visual display, life and biomedical sciences and engineering category in the MSU Graduate Student research competition. She also is an MSU summa cum laude biochemistry bachelor's graduate.

DR. JEFFREY HARRIS, assistant research and extension professor in entomology, won the Extension Award of Merit from Gamma Sigma Delta.

VICTORIA A. JEFFERSON tied for third in the doctoral student visual displays, life

and biomedical sciences and engineering category of the MSU Graduate Student Research Symposium. Jefferson is a molecular biology doctoral student also pursuing a master's in agricultural life sciences/biochemistry. She also is an MSU summa cum laude biochemistry/pre-medicine bachelor's and agricultural life sciences/biochemistry master's graduate.

JUSTIN JONES, a doctoral student in bioinformatics, was selected to join the Dr. Harold Grier Doctoral Scholars Program at Mississippi State University. As a selected participant of this program he will have the opportunity to receive additional financial support, quality mentoring, and professional development opportunities. Additionally, this initiative is part of the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) which connects scholars all across the U.S. As a part of this larger consortium, he will have the opportunity to attend the Institute of Teaching and Mentoring, meet one-on-one with recruiters who represent colleges and universities from across the nation, and network with like-minded peers.

ELEANOR M. MOEN, an agricultural life sciences/entomology master's student, placed third in the master's student oral presentations, life and biomedical sciences and engineering category of the MSU Graduate Student Research Symposium. Moen also received the award for Best Master's Oral Presentation at the Southeastern Branch of the Entomological Society of America.

JOSEPH NOONAN, an agricultural life sciences/biochemistry master's student, received the 2017-2018 College of Agriculture and Life Sciences – North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (CALs/NACTA) Graduate Teaching Award of Merit – M.S. Division.

ERIN E. RUSHING and **CHRISTOPHER W. "CHRIS" NUTTER** tied for third in visual display in the

biological sciences and engineering category of the MSU Spring 2018 Undergraduate Research Symposium. Rushing is a junior biochemistry/pre-medicine major. Nutter is a senior biochemistry/pre-medicine major.

DR. SEAD SABANADZOVIC, MAFES researcher and plant pathology professor, won the MAFES Outstanding Publication Award. Sabanadzovic collaborated on a study that was published in the Journal Nature Reviews Microbiology titled "Virus Taxonomy in the Age of Metagenomics," which presented a conceptual revolution and paradigm shift in how viruses will be classified in the future given modern molecular methods. Sabanadzovic also was appointed to the international body responsible for virus taxonomy.

CIARRA SMITH, a senior biochemistry major, was accepted to take part in a National Science Foundation (NSF) funded Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) in Summer 2018 at Northwestern University. Smith worked under the direction of Dr. Antonio Sanz-Clemente, exploring the molecular mechanisms behind learning and memory.

DR. CARRIE VANCE, assistant research professor in biochemistry, molecular biology, entomology and plant pathology, won the MAFES Grantsmanship Award, which recognizes the scientist who garners the most in extramural grant funds.

FOOD SCIENCE, NUTRITION AND HEALTH PROMOTION



MSU president Dr. Mark Keenum; Schilling; Dr. Greg Bohach, former Vice President for the Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Veterinary Medicine; and Dr. David Shaw, executive vice president and provost; present the honors. (Photo by Beth Wynn)

Wes Schilling earns Ralph E. Powe Research Excellence Award

DR. WES SCHILLING, a food science professor and MAFES researcher, received the 2018 Ralph E. Powe Research Excellence Award. The accolade recognizes outstanding, nationally recognized and competitive researchers with a distinguished research career and active research program. Since joining the MSU faculty in 2003, Schilling has served as the graduate

student advisor for 34 students, with 28 graduate degrees conferred to these students to date. Schilling has secured more than \$2.8 million in funding for his laboratory, while working in conjunction with administrators and scientists in securing over \$6 million. He has published more than 125 peer reviewed journal papers and 15 chapters in textbooks.

MSU offers new academic program to improve health outcomes

A NEW GRADUATE CERTIFICATE PROGRAM at Mississippi State University is promoting healthier lifestyles and wellness for Mississippians. The university's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and the Division of Student Affairs collaborated on the new initiative, funded

through the Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Mississippi Foundation.

The Graduate Certificate in Clinical Health Promotion and Wellness Coaching includes hands-on learning in the Longest Student Health Center and a field-based internship in a Blue Primary Care Home clinic in the region. The program may be completed as part of the master's degree in food science, nutrition and health promotion with a concentration in health promotion or as a stand-alone certificate.

Award Winners

JAMES "JAY" MCCLELLAND, dairy process production manager for the MAFES Custer Dairy Processing Plant, received the CALS/MAFES Outstanding Professional Staff Award.

NITIN DHOWLAGHAR, a postdoctoral associate from India, placed first in outstanding journal publication and third place in oral presentation at the 82nd Mississippi Academy of Sciences annual meeting. Dhowlaghar earned his doctoral degree in food science, nutrition and health promotion.

DR. TEREZIE MOSBY, food science, nutrition and health promotion assistant professor and dietetic internship director; received the CALS/MAFES Diversity Faculty Award. As the dietetic internship director, Mosby has expanded efforts to recruit greater diversity in the dietetic internship program and established a broader array of dietetic internship rotations, including the addition of the Choctaw Indian Reservation.

LURDES SIBERIO-PEREZ, a doctoral student, received the 2017-2018 College of Agriculture and Life Sciences - North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture (CALS/NACTA) Graduate Teaching Award of Merit - Ph.D. Division.

The master's degree is available on campus and also through the university's Center for Distance Education. However, the certificate program will require classroom instruction on campus at the outset.

Upon completion of the certificate program, students then will take steps to become certified as wellness coaches through an entity such as the International Consortium for Health and Wellness Coaching or Wellcoaches School of Coaching.

HUMAN SCIENCES

Michael Newman named to lead national association

DR. MICHAEL NEWMAN served as president-elect in 2018 and began his term in spring 2019 as president of AAAE, a national society focused on social science scholarship in food, agriculture, and natural resources. Newman also was one of two senior fellows honored recently by the AAAE's Academy of Fellows at the organization's annual conference.

A professor and graduate coordinator of agricultural education, leadership and communications within the school, Newman is a 1996 recipient of the John Grisham Master Teacher Award, a tribute to classroom and instruction excellence that is named for the MSU alumnus and internationally recognized author who provided funds to endow the award.



Newman joined the American Association of Agricultural Education as a student and was recognized as an outstanding young member in the 1990s. In 2016, he served as Distinguished Lecturer, keynoting the organization's national conference.

MSU senior named New Orleans Fashion Week Top Designer



JACOB F. BURKETT, fashion design and merchandising major in Mississippi State University's School of Human Sciences, recently took home

the top prize in New Orleans Fashion Week's 2018 Top Design Competition.

The senior from Columbia, concentrating in design and product development, was named the overall winner at the annual runway competition that challenges emerging fashion designers to showcase unique garments in a city renowned and celebrated for its style.

"New Orleans Fashion Week Top Design Competition is an opportunity for young designers to take their craft to the next level and truly showcase their talent," said Tracee Dundas, NOFW founder. "So many talented designers competed this year and showcased different looks. Jacob Burkett really embraced this concept and showed our judges cutting-edge designs."

I am so proud of this competition and the priceless opportunities it offers young designers like Jacob."

Through a partnership between NOFW and New Orleans Entrepreneur Week, this year's competition provided Burkett and nine other designers with a business-focused platform to prepare for the transition from runway to retail.

As the Top Design Competition winner, Burkett received a prize package that includes a Project Runway sewing machine courtesy of AllBrands.com; retail placement with a trunk show at Hemline Boutique in Metairie, Louisiana; photo shoot with fashion photographer Gustavo Escanelle with makeup service provided by Midori Tajiri-Byrd; features in "New Orleans Living Magazine" and "Moi Digital Magazine;" design, development, and production consultation with Jessica Osborn of Privy Label; and an exclusive invitation to return to NOFW 2019 as a featured designer with a three-day pop-up boutique in Luxe Marketplace.

Award Winners

CECILIA BROOKS, a human development and family science doctoral student, placed first in the doctoral student visual displays, social and behavioral sciences category in the MSU Graduate Student Research Symposium.

DR. LORI ELMORE-STATON, assistant professor, received the CALS Excellence in Teaching Award, Graduate Level. Elmore-Staton has taught more than a dozen different courses, developed three new courses and updated two courses since she joined the university in 2012. She advises about 27 undergraduate students and six graduate students each year.

LAURA GREENHAW, assistant professor, received the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture Jack Everly Journal Award.

CARLA JAGGER, assistant professor, received the North American Colleges and Teachers of Agriculture Jack Everly Journal Award.

NESMA O.A. OSMAN, an agricultural and extension education master's student, placed second in the master's student oral presentations, arts and humanities category of the MSU Graduate Student Research Symposium.

BRITTANY RADFORD-CLARK, a graduate student in MSU's School of Human Sciences, was a recipient of a 2018 MSU Diversity Award. With a focus on youth development, Radford has based her research on the connection between faith and race relations within the Christian church.

CHRISTIEN RUSSELL, agricultural science doctoral student, won CALS/MAFES Diversity Student Award. Her doctoral research is focused on cultural competency with the lens of understanding the experiences of minority and majority populations on campus as it pertains to culturally responsive teaching.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Gallo recognized by national council

THE COUNCIL OF EDUCATORS in Landscape Architecture honored Associate Professor Cory Gallo, with the 2018 CELA Faculty Award of Excellence in Service Learning, Junior Level. Winners are selected by a jury of the Council of Educators in Landscape Architecture. The service-learning award honors a faculty member's accomplishments in the area of outreach and service-learning education at the junior faculty level with three to 10 years of teaching experience. Student-centric service-learning projects led by Gallo have garnered numerous national and regional awards in recent years. In 2017, the MSU raingarden, funded by a \$20,000 U.S.



Environmental Protection Agency grant, won a national award from the American Society of Landscape Architects in the student collaboration category.

The MSU Community Garden kicked off its first official season

ON OCTOBER 15, 2018, members of the university and Starkville communities gathered to celebrate the first official season of the MSU Community Garden.

Spearheaded by Cory Gallo, the garden is located adjacent to the EPA-funded MSU raingarden at the landscape architecture complex on Stone Boulevard. It includes eight accessible planters and 19 large raised planters, two farming robots, and two rain water cisterns. The garden is a cross-campus collaboration between several academic entities, two administrative units and three student organizations. Student organizations include MSU Student Association, MSU Graduate Student Association and Students for a Sustainable Campus. Academic units include the departments of Landscape Architecture; Plant and Soil



A farming robot waters plants in the community garden. (Photo by Megan Bean)

Sciences; Food Science, Nutrition and Health Promotion; Art (graphic design concentration); Building Construction Science; and the School of Architecture. Administrative units include the Office of Planning Design and Construction Administration and the Department of Health Promotion and Wellness. Additionally, MSU Facilities Management and the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station volunteered their time and expertise while the MSU Extension Service contributed funds.

Africatown Connection Blueway Kayak Trail Plan announced

LOCATED THREE MILES NORTH of downtown Mobile, Alabama, Africatown has always held historical significance since it was formed by a group of 32 West Africans, who in 1860 were included in the last known illegal shipment of slaves to the U.S.

A number of improvements are being made to revitalize Africatown and the surrounding area. The Africatown Connection Blueway Kayak Trail Plan was a spring 2018 project for Mississippi State University Department of Landscape Architecture design students in a class taught by Bob Brzuszek and Chuo Li.

Students conceived how they could improve community use and potential tourist visitation.

Award Winners

JOHN-TAYLOR G. CORLEY, senior Landscape Architecture major, placed first in visual displays in the arts and humanities category of the MSU Spring 2018 Undergraduate Research Symposium.

CORY GALLO, associate professor, received the Starkville Volunteer of the Year Award for his efforts over the last 10 years at the Oktibbeha Heritage Museum.

PETE MELBY, former faculty, was honored by the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution Conservation Committee with a certificate citing "outstanding achievement for environmental awareness." A faculty member in the university's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Melby concluded a 35-year landscape architecture career in 2013.

PLANT AND SOIL SCIENCES

MSU doctoral student receives prestigious NASA fellowship

SHANDREA STALLWORTH, a weed science doctoral student, received a NASA/Mississippi Space Grant Consortium Graduate Research Fellowship. The \$20,000 award is designed to help produce engineers and scientists of the future. The fellowship will provide support for Stallworth's research and academics, as well as a K-12 outreach project. Stallworth was also one of five students selected nationally to attend the American Seed Trade Association Annual Policy & Leadership Development Conference in Washington, D.C. The inaugural meeting focused on how research impacts the seed production industry. Stallworth earned



her bachelor's degree in plant science and biotechnology from Fort Valley State University in Fort Valley, Georgia, and a master's in plant breeding and genetics from Auburn University. She currently serves as the national graduate president of MANRRS, or Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences.

"Sweet Potato Innovation Challenge" wins MSU Excellence in Community Engagement

THE CHALLENGE was selected as winner in the community-engaged teaching and learning category. The award included \$5,000 to further community engagement within MSU's trifold mission of teaching, research and service and honors examples of successful engagement by faculty, staff and students. Submitted by **STEPHEN MEYERS**, assistant extension/research professor and sweet potato extension specialist, the project was in partnership with the Mississippi Sweet Potato Council. The Sweet Potato Innovation Challenge yielded more than 80 novel ideas for new sweet potato products.

MSU grad students tackle food security at Borlaug Summer Institute

TWO MISSISSIPPI STATE GRADUATE students in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences recently were among only 40 worldwide selected for a training and leadership program focused on global food security at Purdue University.

CHARLES "HUNT" WALNE and **CHATHURIKA "CHATHU" WIJEWARDANA** attended the Borlaug Summer Institute on Global Food Security at the West Lafayette, Indiana, campus. Part of the U.S. Borlaug Fellows in Global Food Security program, the training is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development, or USAID, under the Feed the Future Initiative.

Fifteen graduate students from Bangladesh, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Guatemala, Kenya, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, and Sri Lanka joined 25 students



from the U.S. at the two-week program.

Walne's and Wijewardana's team won the student competition and traveled to the World Food Prize and Norman E. Borlaug International Symposium in Des Moines, Iowa, in October 2018.

Wijewardana, a native of Sri Lanka

who graduated from the University of Kelaniya and earned a master's degree in agronomy from MSU in 2015, also was the recipient of the \$5000 Nelson Yield-Limiting Factors Graduate Student Scholarship. She earned her doctorate in agronomy in December 2018.

Award Winners

FIRAS ALSAJRI placed second in the visual display competition, doctoral category of the 82nd Mississippi Academy of Sciences annual meeting.

LEE ATWILL, doctoral student, placed first for his oral presentation at the American Society of Agronomy.

DR. BRIAN S. BALDWIN, professor of plant and soil sciences, received the MSU Alumni Association's Graduate Teaching Excellence Award.

ERIC D. BILLMAN, an agronomy doctoral student, tied for second in the doctoral student oral presentation, life and biomedical sciences and engineering category of the MSU Graduate Student Research Symposium. He also placed first for his paper in the American Forage and Grassland Congress Emerging Scientist Competition.

GIOVANNI CAPUTO, undergraduate exchange student from Brazil, won the Weed Science Society of America Undergraduate research award.

SHANE CARVER, master's student, placed first for his poster presentation and second for his oral presentation at the American Society of Agronomy.

SAVANA DAVIS, master's student, placed second for her oral and poster presentation at the Beltwide Cotton Conference.

CHASE FLOYD, master's student, placed third for his oral presentation at the American Society of Agronomy.

LUCAS FRANCA, doctoral student, placed second for his poster presentation at the Beltwide Cotton Conference.

LEAH E. GANN, a junior horticulture/fruit and vegetable production major, placed first in the biological sciences and engineering category

of the community engagement research track of the MSU Spring 2018 Undergraduate Research Symposium.

DR. RICHARD HARKESS, professor, won the CALS/MAFES Outstanding Faculty Service Award. Harkess was also the recipient of the Irvin Atly Jefcoat Excellence in Advising Award.

BETH HATHCOCK, business manager for the Department of Plant and Soil Sciences, won the Zacharias Distinguished Staff Award.

SALAH H. JUMAA placed first in the doctoral student visual displays, life and biomedical sciences and engineering category of the MSU Graduate Student Research Symposium. Jumaa also received the Honor of Excellence in Biomedical Sciences representing the Mississippi IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence scholars at the 82nd Mississippi Academy of Sciences annual meeting.

RIYADH MOHSIN tied for third in the doctoral student visual displays, life and biomedical sciences and engineering category of the MSU Graduate Student Research Symposium.

NAQEE BULLAH placed third in oral presentation and visual display, doctoral category, at the 82nd Mississippi Academy of Sciences annual meeting. He also placed third for his poster presentation at the American Society of Agronomy.

MICHAEL NATTRASS, a plant and soil sciences/agronomy doctoral student, was named this year's Grand Champion of the MSU Three-Minute Thesis competition. With a research talk titled "Phytoremediation: Plants Improving Water Quality," Nattrass represented MSU in the Conference of Southern Graduate Schools Three Minute Thesis Regional Finals in Knoxville, Tennessee. He graduated cum laude with an MSU bachelor's degree in agricultural sciences and a master's degree in plant and soil sciences with a concentration

in agronomy. Nattrass also placed third for his oral presentation at the American Society of Agronomy.

MICHAEL PLUMBLEE, doctoral student, placed first for his oral presentation and his poster presentation at the Beltwide Cotton Conference. He placed second for his oral presentation at the Weed Science Society of America.

DR. RAJA REDDY, MAFES research professor, won the Mississippi Land Bank-sponsored MAFES Excellence in Research Faculty Award. He was also the recipient of the faculty research award presented by the Office of Research and Economic Development and the Division of Agriculture, Forestry, and Veterinary Medicine. Reddy, who has been with the university 29 years, has published 138 refereed publications. His other publications and abstracts exceed 400. As director of the Soil-Plant-Atmosphere Research unit, Reddy has conducted more than 125 research projects, served as major professor for eight doctoral students, eight master's students, and two undergraduate research scholars. Additionally, he has hosted 17 visiting scientists and 35 postdoctoral scientists.

CHASE SAMPLES, doctoral student, placed third for his poster presentation at the Beltwide Cotton Conference.

BHUPINDER SINGH received the doctoral graduate student award of merit scholarship from Gamma Sigma Delta. Singh also placed second in oral presentation, doctoral category, at the 82nd Mississippi Academy of Sciences annual meeting. Singh also received the Gerald O. Mott award from the Crop Science Society of America.

SWATHI SHRESTHA, master's student, received the master's award of merit scholarship from Gamma Sigma Delta. Shrestha also placed second in the master's student oral presentations, life and biomedical sciences and

PLANT AND SOIL SCIENCES (CONT.)

engineering category of the MSU Graduate Student Research Symposium.

DR. ERIC STAFNE, associate extension/research professor stationed at the Coastal Research and Extension Center in Biloxi, won the MAFES Most Impactful Publication Award. Stafne was part of a team that published the first peer-reviewed publication addressing drupelet disorders in blackberries. The article titled "White Drupelet Disorder on Three Blackberry Cultivars in South Mississippi" was published in HortTechnology. The scientists investigated environmental effects like temperature and rainfall and found best management practices can be employed by growers to minimize the issue.

DR. TE MING PAUL TSENG, assistant professor, won the CALS/MAFES New Faculty Teaching Award. Tseng began teaching at MSU following a post-doctoral associate position at Purdue University. His peers and students point out his use of virtual reality as a tool for understanding specific organelle functions inside a plant cell.

Master's student **HUNT WALNE** placed first in oral presentations at the 82nd Mississippi Academy of Sciences annual meeting. Walne also placed first in the visual

display competition. Walne also received the MAFES Excellence in Research Award, Undergraduate Category.

JOEY WILLIAMS, master's student, placed first for his oral presentation and third for his poster presentation at the American Society of Agronomy.

BRADLEY WILSON, master's student, received second place for his oral presentation at the Beltwide Cotton Conference.

Doctoral student **CHATHURIKA WIJewardana** placed first in the oral presentation and visual display competition. She also won the second-place award for graduate-level overall competition at the 82nd Mississippi Academy of Sciences annual meeting. She also received the Honor of Excellence in Biomedical Sciences representing the Mississippi IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence scholars and the MAFES Excellence in Research Award, graduate category.

XIAOJIE ZHAO, doctoral student, received the 2018 Krezdorn Excellence in Doctoral Research and Writing from the Southern Region American Society for Horticultural Sciences.

POULTRY SCIENCE

MSU and Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture develop poultry partnership

ADMINISTRATORS from Mississippi State University and the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture signed a cooperative agreement Feb. 7 designed to train workforce entrants for the midwestern state's burgeoning poultry industry.

The newly developed program includes three semesters in Nebraska and a semester in Mississippi State University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Upon completion of the program, students will earn an Associate of Applied Science in Animal Science degree from the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture, with a concentration in poultry science.

There are currently no academic undergraduate poultry science degree programs in Nebraska. Mississippi State's program is one of only six nationally that offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in the discipline.

Nebraska currently produces about one million broilers per year. At full operation, the industry expects expansion will allow production of more than 100 million broilers per year. In Mississippi, poultry is the No. 1 commodity with more than 746 million broilers produced in 2017 across 1,430 farms. The production value of the industry in the Magnolia State tops \$2.8 billion.

Upon completion of the associate's degree, students can enter the workforce in management positions throughout the industry. Students also have the option to further their education at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln animal science department or in Mississippi State's poultry science department.

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Wamsley recognized by national association

THE POULTRY SCIENCE ASSOCIATION recognized **DR. KELLEY WAMSLEY**, assistant professor in poultry science, with the 2018 PSA Early Career Teaching Award. Accompanied by a \$1,000 stipend,

the award spotlights the achievements of poultry science members within the first six years of their careers in four categories—teaching, research, extension and industry.

Cage-free unit added to MSU poultry department

A NEW CAGE-FREE FACILITY at MSU gives university researchers and students opportunities to compare cage and cage-free egg production and quality, as well as bacterial diversity between these housing types. A total of 200 hens are divided between 12 new dual pens, with each about 12 by 5 feet inside and 24 by 5 feet outside with outdoor access. The new structure adds to the current simulated commercial poultry laying house situated on the H. H. Leveck Animal Research Center, also known as South Farm, with hens in both conventional and enriched colony cages.

FORMER POULTRY FACULTY HONORED WITH GOLDEN GOOSE AWARD

A FORMER FACULTY MEMBER in poultry science was honored with the 2018 Golden Goose award for his research in immunology. **DR. BRUCE GLICK** sought to discover the role of a gland in the anatomy of a goose. The gland, bursa of Fabricius, was thought to show little effect on the bird when removed. However, further study showed that removal of the bursa of Fabricius inhibits antibody production, a key biological function to defend against viruses and disease. Additional work in the Glick laboratory and other research facilities over the years revealed several structures or “bursa equivalents” or fundamental immune mechanisms in mammals, including humans.

Glick’s fundamental and applied research related to the bursa of Fabricius had a significant impact not only on understanding immune responses, but also on how to develop vaccines and how to treat disease.

Alumni News



HARRY MARTIN (B.S. agricultural economics, '48) created two scholarship endowments for 4-H students. As a youth, Martin distinguished

himself in 4-H activities. In 1942, at the age of 15, he enrolled in then-Mississippi State College on a 4-H scholarship. He worked for several years for the MSU-ES as the Lee County youth director, establishing an outstanding dairy cattle program, before accepting a position with the Community Development Foundation of Tupelo in 1956. Under his 52-year tenure with the foundation, 44 of which he served as president, 50 Fortune 500 or nationally recognized companies and 226 manufacturing plants located to Lee County. Since his retirement, the Tupelo-businessman has worked alongside his daughter, Janet, at Martin JH Select Properties in commercial real estate.



SEBASTIÃO BARBOSA (M.S. entomology, '73) was named president of the Brazilian equivalent of the U.S. Department of Agriculture—the Brazilian Agricultural Research Corp., or EMBRAPA. Barbosa was granted an honorary Doctor of Science degree in 2014 because of his work in worldwide food security issues.



RON ALLEN (B.S. agricultural economics, '77) is now executive vice president, chief credit officer for Madison-based BankFirst Financial Services.



JOHN CLARK (B.S., M.S. horticulture; '78, '80) was named to the Arkansas Agricultural Hall of Fame. A distinguished professor at the University of Arkansas, he is considered one of the country's preeminent experts in the field of fruit crop genetics and breeding.



TRACY L. HARRIS III (B.S. animal science, '79) was promoted to vice president of sales for professional brands with Central Life Sciences. He has been with the company for more than 16 years, most recently serving as senior director of sales for the Professional Agricultural Products division.



TED KENDALL IV (B.S. agricultural economics, '82) was named by Agricultural Secretary Sonny Perdue as chairman of the Farm Service Agency State Committee. The group helps administer agricultural conservation, production adjustment, price support, and livestock programs in the state.



SCOTT HUTCHINS (M.S. entomology, '83) was appointed Deputy Under Secretary for Research, Education and Economics for the U.S. Secretary of

Agriculture. Hutchins will oversee the Office of the Chief Scientist, with Dr. Chavonda Jacobs-Young continuing to serve as Acting Chief Scientist. In his new role, he will oversee the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Economic Research Service, National Agricultural Statistics Service, and the Agricultural Research Service.



TRAVIS B. MOORE (B.S. agricultural economics, '84, BBA banking and finance, '84; agricultural economics, '86) has been appointed to serve on the advisory board

of Virginia College in Biloxi. The regional president of the Citizens Bank in Biloxi, he also serves on the boards of directors for the Mississippi Better Business Bureau and the Kiwanis LaMsTn District Foundation, is a deacon at First Baptist Church of Gulfport, and was selected as one of the "Leaders in Finance" by the Mississippi Business Journal in 2015.



SUKANT MISRA (M.S., Ph.D. agricultural economics; '86, '89) was named vice provost of international affairs at Texas Tech University. He served in numerous positions since joining the university in 1993, most recently as associate dean for the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources. Prior to joining Texas Tech, he worked at the University of Georgia.

DEBRA LYNN MILNE (B.S. home economics, '94; M.S. food science, nutrition and health promotion, '12) of Greenville, South Carolina, earned gold in her age bracket at the USA Cycling National Championships in Augusta, Georgia. A board-certified sports dietitian, she is part of the Papa John's Trek Racing team and has accumulated more than 180 wins, including four Master's National Championship Road titles.



JOHN ROUNSAVILLE (B.S. agribusiness, '97; Master of Agribusiness Management, '98) was named Mississippi's director of USDA Rural Development by U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue. He previously served as state director during the administration of President George W. Bush. He has two decades of experience in economic and community development, infrastructure planning and public policy.



JOSHUA R. MOORE (B.S. poultry science, '00) was named vice president of operations at Cal-Maine Foods, Inc. He will oversee all of the company's production and processing facilities in Ohio and Kentucky.

JOANNA KING (B.S. agribusiness, '15) was recognized with the President's Volunteer Service Award from Winrock International. She was recognized for more than 120 hours of volunteer work in Senegal with the Farmer-to-Farmer for Agriculture Education and Training Program and a Senegalese Association of Farmers.



Two CALS alumni received the Mississippi Rural Physicians Scholarship, valued at \$30,000 per year for medical training at the University of Mississippi School of Medicine. They are **JORDAN JACKSON** (B.S. biochemistry, '17) of Wheeler and **HALEY HOBART (PICTURED)** (B.S. biochemistry, '17) of Hollandale.

OBITUARIES

JOHN ROBERT ARNOLD (B.S., Agriculture, 1944) 94, Starkville – He was active in ROTC and a member of the football team while at Mississippi State. Following his graduation, he joined his family's dairy and farm, which raised cattle and cotton. In the 1960s, he turned to manufacturing and under the brand names of Howard Furniture, Herschede Hall Clocks, and Motor Guide; produced family-room furniture; floor, wall, and mantel clocks; and electric trolling motors. These companies merged under the umbrella of Arnold Industries in 1973. – Aug. 23, 2017

JAMES COOKE ROBERTSON (B.S. horticulture, '47) 94, Indianola – His time at State was interrupted by service in WWII. He graduated from the Officer's Candidate School at Ft. Benning and was assigned to the Infantry under Gen. George Patton's command. He landed on Omaha Beach with his division in 1944 and they moved across Europe participating in the Battle of the Bulge. He was awarded the Purple Heart, Bronze Star, French Legion of Honor and the Combat Infantry Medal. He was recalled to active duty during the Korean conflict where he served as an aide to Gen. Galla Paxton. He then returned to Holly Ridge where he joined the family farming business. – March 27, 2018

DAVID YOUNG JR. (B.S. entomology, '48; M.S. entomology, '49; Ph.D. entomology, '65) 94, Ridgeland – He volunteered for the Navy Medical Corps and received an honorable discharge in 1945. Following his graduation from Mississippi State, he served as district entomologist with the State Plant Board in Tylertown until 1955. He then joined the Extension Service as assistant entomologist, and in 1970 was promoted to leader of Extension Entomology. He earned the MSU Alumni Association Faculty Achievement Award in 1970 and the Governor's Outstanding Mississippian Award in 1973, in addition to many other honors throughout his career. – Nov. 25, 2017

WEBB PRUITT LEE (B.S. agriculture, '48) 95, Louisville – In his early career, he was a salesman for Taylor Machine Works's Agricultural Division. He owned and operated Lee Tractor and Equipment Company for 25 years. He was a decorated B-17 bomber pilot based in England with the 8th Air Force during WWII. He survived 29 bombing missions over Germany, including the crash of his heavily damaged bomber during his final outing. – March 14, 2017

ALVIN TED PULLIN (B.S. agricultural economics, '51; M.S. agricultural economics, '68; retired Extension agent) 89, Polkville – He taught mathematics at Taylorsville School before starting a 30-year career with the Mississippi State Extension Service as a county agent and 4-H mentor in Lawrence County and later a fruit and vegetable marketing specialist based in Jackson. – Dec. 30, 2017

DENNIS E. JOHNSTON (B.S. animal science, '52; M.S. animal science, '56) 88, Memphis, Tennessee – He was raised in Starkville and served as a 2nd lieutenant in the Air Force during the Korean War. He spent his career with the Upjohn Company. – Jan. 6, 2018

WILLIAM F. JONES (B.S. agronomy, '33; Ph.D. agriculture and life sciences, '77; emeritus professor) 86, Starkville – Following his graduation from MSU, he spent 40 years on the faculty, where he not only served as a classroom instructor but also participated in field crop research. He was a charter member of Emmanuel Baptist Church where he served as a Sunday school teacher and director, and deacon. – Jan. 17, 2018

HAROLD BURNETT BLALOCK (B.S. agriculture, '34) 86, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma – He played basketball as a student at State. He served in the U.S. Army and retired from the Army Reserves as a lieutenant colonel. He worked for the Farmers Home Administration and retired as a community loan specialist. – April 3, 2018

JOHN MILES JOHNSON (B.S. agriculture and extension education, '54) 87, Starkville – He was a veteran and lifelong member of the Freemasons, Scottish Rites and Shriners – Feb. 22, 2018

JOE CLEMENT DOUGLASS (B.S. animal science, '55) 83, Columbus – He was a member of Kappa Alpha fraternity, Alpha Zeta Honorary Agriculture Fraternity and the agriculture judging team, as well as ROTC. He served in the Air Force and the reserves until 1967 when he was honorably discharged as a captain. He owned Douglas Farms in Lowndes County. – July 26, 2017

HAROLD GLEN LEWIS (B.S. agriculture and extension education, '55) 84, Philadelphia – He served in the Mississippi National Guard and the U.S. Army. He worked in banking and finance in Clarksdale before moving back to Philadelphia to help open Peoples Bank of Mississippi where he served as branch president. He later worked with W. W. Dungan where they were partners in oil exploration, timber, land development, and home building. – May 8, 2018

CHARLES WESLEY SAPPINGTON SR. (B.S. dairy sciences, '55; M.S. sociology, '67; retired Extension agent) 84, Zachary, Louisiana – He was involved in ROTC at State and began active military service following his graduation. He served in Germany until 1957 and upon returning stateside spent nine years in the Army Reserve and Mississippi Army National Guard. He earned a doctoral degree from Florida State then returned to Starkville where he began working with the Extension Service. He served as state leader of 4-H Youth Development in 1970. He retired in 1989. – Jan. 29, 2018

ERNEST VETRANO (B.S. agricultural engineering, '55) 85, Ridgeland – An insurance sales professional until he retired in 1999, he was a passionate tennis player and elected to the Mississippi Tennis Hall of Fame in 2008. – March 23, 2018

WILLIAM BUCY BYNUM (B.S. agronomy, '56; M.S. soils, '59) 82, Williamsburg, Virginia – A retiree of the Federal Highway Administration, he was active in the Walnut Hills Baptist Church and performed several volunteer assignments with the Jamestown Foundation and Faith In Action. – Aug. 17, 2017

MILLIE SELLARS (B.S. horticulture '57) (retired staff) 82, Starkville – She came to Mississippi State with a pre-veterinary focus, but soon changed to horticulture before moving to Germany with her husband, who was in the military. Upon returning to Starkville in 1973, she held teaching positions at both Starkville High School and Starkville Academy before joining the staff at MSU, ultimately retiring as business director of the Bagley College of Engineering Dean's Office. – Jan. 4, 2018

HAROLD A. MAYO (B.S. dairy science, '58) 85, Table Rock Lake, Branson West, Missouri – While at State he was a member of Alpha Zeta Honorary Agricultural Fraternity and the dairy judging team, earning a spot on the 1958 list of Outstanding Young Men of America. He worked with Kraft Foods for 32 years, receiving the J. L. Kraft Ring for outstanding service. He earned a master's degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, served in the Army and was an ordained deacon in the First Baptist Church of Tucker, Georgia. – Oct. 6, 2017

JOHN D. YORK (B.S., animal husbandry, '59) 85, Cary, North Carolina – He was a native of Coffeetown and was retired from Valent Chemical Company. – June 2, 2017

GEORGE W. GARRISON JR. (B.S. animal science, '64) retired Extension agent) 75, Greenwood – He was a state and national 4-H Swine Record winner in 1961 and a 4-H achievement record winner in 1963. While at MSU he was a member of the Farm House Fraternity, Alpha Zeta Fraternity, 4-H and Block and Bridle. He began his career with Extension in 1965 as a 4-H livestock

agent in Leflore County. He received the Dixie National Livestock Show premier exhibit award 15 years in a row, in addition to numerous other honors for his work. – Nov. 30, 2017

GUY BROWN SPRINGER (M.S. animal nutrition '69; retired Extension agent and faculty) 76, Pontotoc – A native of Florence, Alabama, he spent more than 27 years with Mississippi State University, beginning as an Extension agent and retiring as the state equine specialist and professor. He worked extensively with 4-H and was a longtime member of the Mississippi Quarter Horse Association, where he served as vice president and president in the late 1990s. He served as Ring Master for Dixie National for more than 20 years. – Nov. 3, 2017

KENNETH L. COOK (M.S. ag and extension education, '72) 84, Starkville – He retired from the Extension Service as interim state leader for 4-H Youth Development and went on to serve six years as the Oktibbeha County District Four election commissioner. He served in the National Guard. – May 26, 2018

CAROLYN VINSON NESPOLI (B.S. landscape architecture, '77) 63, Rossville, Tennessee – She was a charter member of the Beta Mu Chapter of the Tri-Delta Sorority. A longtime member of St. Andrews Episcopal Church, she was also a member of Carnival Memphis, Grand Krewe of Ra Met and was queen of Ra Met in 2011. – May 31, 2017

JO ANN SHARBROUGH (B.S. horticulture, '85) 59, Vicksburg – She began her college career at the University of Southern Mississippi where she chaired Earth Day activities in Hattiesburg. She then transferred to Mississippi State where, as a horticulture major, she was in charge of interiorscaping, maintaining the indoor plants on campus. Following her graduation, she worked for several years at a national nursery in Portland, Oregon. She then moved to Colorado and became town clerk of Nederland before

becoming secretary of the public defender's office in Boulder. – April 1, 2018

DAVID ANTHONY COODE (B.S. landscape architecture, landscape contracting; '88) 56, Nashville, Tennessee – He was a principal and senior vice president of Lose Associates before joining Kimley-Horn where he led the land-planning team in the Nashville office. He was a member of the Knights of Columbus, a registered landscape architect and was certified through the American Institute of Certified Planners. – April 22, 2018

RICK LYNN NOFFSINGER (M.S. agricultural and extension education, '10; retired staff) 63, Starkville – A native of Princeton, Kentucky, he worked in the newspaper industry for 20 years. From 1977-97, he was the publisher of eight newspapers in West Virginia, Indiana, Virginia, Colorado and Mississippi, where he put out the Starkville Daily News. He then transitioned into the digital world as director of information for East Mississippi Community College and then web producer for Mississippi State's Office of Agricultural Communication. – March 1, 2018

LYLE E. NELSON (Faculty) 96, Starkville – He disrupted his education to serve in the Army during WWII before returning to North Dakota Agricultural College to earn a bachelor's in agriculture. He later earned a doctoral degree from Cornell. Following time on the faculty at Mississippi State, he joined Cornell on a project in the Philippines meant to develop rice farming to help feed the country's growing population. He continued to participate in similar projects in the Philippines and India sponsored by Cornell, Mississippi State, and the federal government. He had a career spanning 35 years as a researcher and professor of soil science in the agronomy department at MSU. – July 27, 2017

Super Bulldog Weekend

April 21, 2018

1. Terry Dulaney (*Agricultural Economics*, 1973), co-founder of Dulaney Seed, is recognized by CALS Dean George Hopper.



2. Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith addresses the breakfast crowd



3. Louie Thompson (*Home Economics*, 1980), of Harvest Select Catfish receives an alumni award from CALS Dean George Hopper, and MSU president Mark Keenum.



4. CALS ambassadors pose with Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith.



5. Dr. Mark Keenum, MSU president and CALS alumnus, updates attendees on MSU growth and achievements.



Homecoming

November 3, 2018



1. Mississippi Farm Bureau President Mike McCormick receives the Dean's Award from MSU President Mark Keenum and CALS Dean George Hopper.

2. CALS ambassadors serve as host of the annual breakfast.

3. Walt Stephens (Agribusiness 2007), Vice President of Regions Bank receives the Young Alumnus Award from MSU President Mark Keenum and CALS Dean George Hopper.

4. Jack McCarty, executive director of development for the MSU Foundation, is honored with a Dean's Award from MSU President Mark Keenum and CALS Dean George Hopper.



5. MSU President Mark Keenum poses with the Homecoming Court.





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