



Items of Interest

SRDC Welcomes New Administrative Assistant, Kerry Yang



The Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC) is excited to welcome Kerry Yang as our new Administrative Assistant, officially joining the team on August 3, 2026.

With a diverse background in education, digital media, and Chinese literacy, Kerry brings a fresh perspective to SRDC. Her knowledge, skills, and dedication will support the Center's work and contribute to its continued success.

SRDC is thrilled to have Kerry on board and looks forward to the energy and dedication she brings to her new role!

Ten Students Explore Community Development Through the Delta Scholars Program



Ten undergraduate students from seven universities participated in the June 2026 Summer Research Institute as part of the Delta Scholars Program (DSP). DSP is an academic and community development initiative for college students interested in leadership and cultivating change. Delta symbolically implies change, but also, the multi-state Delta Region is a learning space where our scholars experience community development in action.

Scholars participate in a Summer Research Institute and complete a capstone innovation brief, taking what they learn from readings, presentations, and experiences, and connecting that with real-world initiatives that have broader implications to inform policy or benefit community/regional partners. The students also participate in experiential site visits in the Mississippi Delta.

The program is based at the Shackouls Honors College at Mississippi State University, with many partner academic institutions, as well as the Southern Rural Development Center and the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi.

A quote from a 2026 scholar:
"Today's sessions made me think about how much goes into making a community successful. The seven community capitals framework revealed that thriving communities are built not only through financial resources, but also through strong relationships, cultural identity, leadership, and the ability to invest in people and place."

New Release: 2026 Southern Region Indicator Summary



The 2026 Southern Region Indicator Summary is now available, highlighting the measurable impact of Land-Grant Universities and Extension professionals across the Southern region. The indicators capture the collective impact of community and economic development efforts at the local, state, and national levels.

[View the 2026 Southern Region Community Development Extension Impacts](#)

CD 101 National Team at the Community Development Society Annual Conference



Pictured **left to right**: Sreedhar Upendram, Aaron Wilcher, Dr. John Green, Grace Langford, Dan Kahl, and Kara Salazar

SRDC's Grace Langford and the Community Development (CD) 101 National Team presented a pre-conference workshop at the Community Development Society Annual Conference in Savannah, Georgia. Building on last year's introductory session, this year's workshop focused on practical tools for Asset-Based Community Development, Data Applications, and Facilitating Dialogue for Community Decision-making.

The presentation team included Dan Kahl, Grace Langford, Sreedhar Upendram, and Aaron Wilcher. The team was also recognized with the Community Development Society's Outstanding Program Award for their exceptional work through CD 101.

Congratulations to the CD 101 National Team on this well-deserved recognition!

SRDC and MSU Extension Attend 2026 SR-PLN Joint Meeting

SRDC and MSU Extension joined colleagues from across the southern region in New Orleans, Louisiana, for the 2026 Southern Region Program Leadership Network (SR-PLN), AEA & ASRED Joint Meeting, held August 17–20. The meeting brought together Extension and program leaders for opportunities to connect, share ideas, and strengthen collaboration across the region. Featured speakers included Dr. Bill Hoffman of APLU, Dr. Andra Johnson of ASRED, Christina Laridaen of Lewis-Burke, Dr. Matt Lee of Louisiana State University, Dr. Orlando F. McMeans of Southern University, Dr. Raymon Shange of AEA, and Dr. Jaye Hamby, Director of USDA NIFA.



Langston University Extension Supports Route 66 Centennial Beautification Initiative

Building Stronger Communities Along Oklahoma's Historic Mother Road

Since November 2025, communities across Oklahoma have been preparing for the [Route 66 Centennial celebration](#). Langston University (LU) Extension's Community Resource Development (CRD) Program is supporting this effort through beautification projects, educational outreach, and community partnerships.

Route 66 stretches approximately 400 miles across Oklahoma, connecting small towns, Tribal communities, and rural landscapes that reflect the state's rich history and culture. As Oklahoma celebrates the highway's 100th anniversary this year, communities are enhancing public spaces to welcome residents and visitors. Beautification efforts include planting trees, flowers, and landscape beds that showcase community pride and create attractive gateways.

LU Extension's Role

In partnership with the Oklahoma Route 66 Association, LU Extension provides educational programming and technical assistance on plant selection, establishment, and maintenance. Extension personnel have conducted trainings and demonstrations for municipalities and community organizations on maintaining flowers, trees, and ornamental landscapes.

LU Extension has also provided plants and flower seedlings to communities along the Route 66 corridor. To date, approximately \$8,000 worth of plants and seedlings has been contributed to support local beautification projects.

Community and Economic Impact

The initiative has helped communities improve public spaces, strengthen civic pride, and enhance visitor experiences. It has also expanded LU Extension's relationships with municipalities, community organizations, and residents while introducing new audiences to Langston University's educational programs and resources. Several community members and leaders connected through the initiative have subsequently visited the university to learn more about its facilities, programs, and services.

Extension Leadership and Outreach

Special recognition is extended to Mr. Joshua Davis, CRD Educator, whose leadership and coordination have contributed significantly to the initiative. His work in developing community relationships, coordinating educational resources, and facilitating the distribution of plants and seedlings has expanded LU Extension's reach along the Route 66 corridor.

The Route 66 Centennial Beautification Initiative demonstrates how partnerships, education, and strategic investments can strengthen communities while supporting local economic and community development. Through this collaboration, Langston University Extension continues to help create vibrant, welcoming, and resilient communities along Oklahoma's historic Route 66 corridor.



A picture of Mr. Joshua Davis handing flowers and plants to Brian Price, City Administrator of Vinita

Job Postings

Post Doctoral Associate -Rural Economic Resilience & Food Systems

The Postdoctoral Associate will conduct applied economic and community-engaged research jointly supporting two related research programs under the supervision of Dr. Andrew Van Leuven. Approximately 60% of the position's effort will support an NSF EPSCoR project focused on rural climate resilience, which examining how severe weather, extreme heat, and harmful algal blooms affect rural labor markets, downtown business activity, and recreation economies. The remaining 40% will support UVM Food Systems Research Institute-funded work examining climate effects on rural food business dynamics (e.g., restaurant and grocery entries and exits) and rural food systems infrastructure, building on ongoing FSRI-supported research. The postdoc will help with leading in-person and virtual interviews with New England business owners, municipal officials, and consumers; conducting causal-inference analysis of high-frequency foot-traffic, consumer-spending, and satellite-derived environmental data; and contributing to manuscript preparation, presentations, and public-facing outputs. Applications will close October 31, 2026. Contact [Dr. Andrew Van Leuven](#) for questions.

[View more information and apply for the Post Doctoral Associate Position](#)

Associate Dean and Assistant Director, Human Sciences Extension at Auburn University

The College of Human Sciences (CHS) at Auburn University and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) are seeking to fill the position of Associate Dean for Extension and Assistant Director for Human Sciences Extension Programs to begin no later than Fall 2026. This 12-month administrative position will fit within the organizational structures of CHS and ACES.

The Associate Dean/Assistant Director position reports jointly to the CHS Dean and the ACES Director. The position is classified as tenure track faculty with a joint CHS and ACES administrative appointment. The Associate Dean/Assistant Director provides vision and leadership in how Extension, research, academic programs, and other allied programs develop synergy to enhance collaborative research and evidence-based outcomes. The position is responsible for the coordination and integration of Extension programs that engage Alabama citizens in evidence-based programming and research to support the well-being of individuals, families, and communities.

Contact the search committee co-chairs: Drs. [Casey Mull](#) and [Elaine Moliason](#) for questions.

[View more information and apply for the Associate Dean/Assistant Director position at Auburn University.](#)

Conferences, Workshops, Trainings

The Survey of Rural Challenges

[ACCESS SURVEY](#)

Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA) Summit East

In-person: September 15-16, 2026, IALR Conference Center, Danville, Virginia

[ACCESS SUMMIT INFORMATION](#)

Forestry Forward Summit

In-person: September 23-24, 2026, Holiday Inn Texarkana Arkansas Convention Center, Texarkana, Arkansas

[ACCESS SUMMIT INFORMATION](#)

National Goat Conference

In-person: September 28-30, 2026, Hilton Garden Inn & Conference Center, Edmond, Oklahoma

[ACCESS CONFERENCE INFORMATION](#)

Understanding Heirs' Property at the Community Level, Train-the-Trainer

In-person: October 28-29, 2026, Embassy Suites, Hilton Montgomery Hotel & Conference Center, Montgomery, Alabama

[ACCESS TRAINING INFORMATION](#)

National Association of Extension Program and Staff Development Professionals (NAEPSDP) Conference

In-person: November 3-6, 2026, Embassy Suites, Omaha at Downtown Old Market, Omaha, Nebraska

[ACCESS CONFERENCE INFORMATION](#)

The Southern Rural Development Center at Mississippi State University is an equal opportunity institution.
This material is based upon work supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture.
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