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Welcome

M. Ray McKinnie
Interim Dean/1890 Extension Administrator
Virginia State University College of Agriculture

Virginia State University welcomes M. Ray McKinnie, Ph.D., who has been named Interim Dean of the College of Agriculture. McKinnie earned his bachelor’s degree in animal science from North Carolina A&T State University in 1976 and holds a master’s degree and Ph.D. in Animal Science/Reproductive Physiology from The Ohio State University (1978) and North Carolina State University (1987), respectively. He held a number of teaching and administrative positions at North Carolina A&T from 1980 until joining VSU’s College of Agriculture in June 2015.

Congratulations

Jewel Hairston Appointed Director of Virginia FSA

Effective July 26, 2015, Jewel Hairston, Ph.D., began her appointment as Director of Virginia Farm Service Agency (FSA). In this role, Hairston will be responsible for planning, organizing, implementing, coordinating, and directing FSA programs, policies and practices. She also will serve as the Virginia representative for the national FSA Administrator and Secretary of Agriculture on matters related to FSA programs.

As Dean of the College of Agriculture at VSU, Hairston lead the development of the strategic vision and plan for the Extension and Research divisions and the academic departments of Agriculture, Family and Consumer Sciences, and Hospitality Management. She developed robust partnerships with other universities; local, state and federal agencies; and organizations across Virginia to offer competitive educational programs to students and diverse stakeholders.

“I am very excited about all that we have accomplished during my tenure as Dean,” Hairston says. “It has been both an honor and privilege to serve the students, staff and faculty of VSU and the citizens of Virginia these last few years. Thank you for that opportunity. And I look forward to learning about all the good work that is yet to be accomplished, as, like you, I read future issues of Extension Connection.”

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ON THE COVER: Duron Chavis, Project Director, checks on one of the hydroponic growth chambers constructed at the Harding Street Urban Agriculture Center.
1890s Land-Grant University Celebrations Boost College of Agriculture Fundraising

Throughout this year Virginia State University is celebrating the 125th Anniversary of the signing of the Second Morrill Act. This Act was introduced by Vermont U.S. Senator Justin Smith Morrill and sought to correct discriminatory practices by southern and border states that denied African Americans admission to the public land-grant universities created by the First Morrill Act of 1862. Known informally as “the 1890s,” these 19 historic, mostly public institutions are spread across 18 states and continue to be guided by Senator Morrill’s vision of “Providing Access and Enhancing Opportunity.” On this, the 125th anniversary of the signing of this act, we celebrate our history – “Building on Yesterday” – our present – “Funding Answers Today” – and our future – “Preparing for Tomorrow.”

Each 1890s institution across the Southeast celebrated this year in unique ways. VSU held a campus-wide celebration on March 17 and joined all the 1890s in a run/walk event, which VSU held on April 18. The celebration continued in Washington, D.C. in July, where each of the 1890s institutions presented exhibits and participated in a wide range of celebratory events.

A 125th anniversary fund-raising gala at VSU on April 23 raised more than $20,000 for College of Agriculture scholarships. As a result of enhanced fundraising efforts tied to the 125th anniversary, TowneBank Richmond, a new presence in the Richmond area and one of the largest banks headquartered in Virginia, committed $125,000 over a five-year period to College of Agriculture scholarships.

Alumna Brenda Stith-Finch also generously supported the College of Agriculture with a $10,000 endowment for student scholarships, and Josephine Samuels, a graduate of the College’s Family and Consumer Science’s (FCS) Department, made a planned gift pledge of $150,000 to that department this past spring.

The College of Agriculture wants to thank these generous donors and all the others who have made charitable gifts this year and in years past. Each contributor to student scholarships ensures that a deserving student will realize his or her dream of a college diploma and a chance to make a difference in the world.
Virginia State University takes the lead in identifying and solving this growing problem.

VSU puts a Face on the Food Desert Dilemma

First, Virginia Cooperative Extension conducted a comprehensive study commissioned by the Virginia General Assembly that confirmed the existence and uncovered the magnitude of food deserts in the state. Food deserts are areas where residents have limited access to healthy, nutritious food, which can result in chronic and debilitating diseases.

“Nearly 1.4 million Virginians live in food deserts that are located in every county, city and area in the state,” said Jewel E. Hairston, former dean of VSU’s College of Agriculture. “There are food deserts all around us, and even though we may not notice them, they affect how people eat.”

To create greater awareness of this growing epidemic, VSU publicly unveiled its food desert documentary in March during the International Film Festival at the Byrd Theatre in Richmond. Hairston said this helped “put a face on this issue” and connected those impacted with others seeking solutions to the problem.

First Lady Dorothy McAuliffe, who served as a panel member for the post-premiere discussion, said agriculture is the state’s major industry where healthy food is plentiful but, somehow, this food is not being distributed to those needing it the most. Hairston said the Virginia Food Systems Council will take the lead to address food desert concerns and serve as an information and research repository. Meanwhile, VSU will continue to create awareness, focus on healthy food preparation and nutrition, support urban food
production projects, work with local and state legislators, and continue to forge partnerships for pooling resources.

“VSU’s College of Agriculture remains at the forefront of this issue, and we’ll play a role in helping to alleviate it,” Hairston said.

Residents in one of Virginia’s most impoverished urban areas will soon have some relief from the food desert they live in. According to the Robert Wood Foundation, the city of Petersburg is considered the unhealthiest place in the state. With the help of a $1.5 million USDA grant, researchers from Virginia State University are transforming a former 1930s YMCA and community recreation center into an innovative resource site for fresh fruits and vegetables.

The Urban Agriculture Center - Harding Street project will distribute fresh produce grown on site and other foods from local farmers who will deliver their products to a newly built walk-in cooler in the center. A novelty for the residents in this community, this easily accessible fresh food will also be distributed through a mobile unit made possible by the grant.

“This is the future of farming. I believe that indoor farming coupled with traditional, outdoor methods is the wave of the future,” said Duron Chavis, VSU’s Indoor Farm Project Director.

In addition to produce, the center’s former basketball court will feature hydroponic and aquaponic growing units where aquaculture tanks provide protein for consumers in the form of fresh tilapia, as well as irrigate and fertilize the indoor crops. Other parts of the building will be used for nutrition and cooking seminars, 4-H classes and other community outreach efforts.

—continued on page 6
**Food Deserts, continued**

Solar panels will generate up to 40,000 kilowatts of energy to power the LED light fixtures that will replace the hot and expensive lights typically used to grow crops indoors.

The city of Petersburg boasts several grocery stores, but they all exist on the fringes of the city. Inner city residents, like those on Harding Street, often find it difficult to get to those stores and as a result have little to no access to healthy, fresh food.

"There are numerous goals for this project," said Marcus Comer, VSU Cooperative Extension Specialist, who applied for the grant. "It’s part research facility to develop the best ways to grow food indoors, but since we’re embedded in a food desert, it’s also a framework for a local food system."

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**Veggie Van Study for City of Suffolk**

Cooperative Extension agent, Marcus Williams and VSU Cooperative Extension Specialist Theresa Nartea, have been awarded a $25,000 planning grant to work with community partners to collaboratively address healthy food access in the City of Suffolk’s low income communities by establishing a mobile farmers market, the Veggie Van. The project involves identifying farmers in the community who can accept USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits and are willing to grow and sell healthy fresh produce directly to residents in food insecure neighborhoods.

The proposed project aims to develop a plan to help residents in the area learn how to buy, cook, and eat healthy, locally grown produce and livestock products to help prevent obesity and other health issues.

The Veggie Van pilot program will be conducted in the City of Suffolk’s Zip Code Zone of 23434, which has 7,063 residents living below poverty with an identified 2,081 households currently accepting USDA Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. The goal of this project is to develop a self-sustaining educational food distribution program for the City of Suffolk that includes the innovative use of a combined mobile farm stand and food preparation unit (think food truck with a produce display) for increasing access to locally grown fruits and vegetables for those living in food deserts.

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[“The project is] part research facility to develop the best ways to grow food indoors, but since we’re embedded in a food desert, it’s also a framework for a local food system.”

–Marcus Comer, VSU Cooperative Extension Specialist
USDA/FSA Borrower Certification Benefits Farmers

Virginia State University’s Small Farm Outreach Program (SFOP) predicts it can save at least 300 farmers seeking operating loans nearly $240,000 in fees alone.

“The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) may require some borrowers to complete a borrower-training course as a condition for loan approval,” explains Michael Wooden, SFOP program assistant. Wooden adds that until recently, farmers had been paying anywhere from $300 to $600 to take a borrower training course online.

Now, with a three-year $581,000 grant from USDA, farmers can attend one of the two-day, on-site borrower certification training courses offered by SFOP. Instructors include faculty from VSU’s College of Agriculture and College of Business, as well as Farm Credit officials.

Wooden says the coursework provides necessary fundamental and basic training on finance and lending issues all farmers need to know. It is especially important for new farmers, he adds. Lectures combined with on-site farm demonstrations cover business plan development, record keeping, business risks, production and financial management, budgeting and estate planning. As a bonus, farmers will learn successful presentation techniques for interacting directly with lenders.

Classes are limited to 20 participants, and the $50 enrollment fee covers all course materials and lunch during the two-day sessions. Registration will open in October for upcoming courses. See the Calendar of Events on page 18 for a list of scheduled courses and locations.

Contact Michael Wooden at mwooden@vsu.edu or call (804) 691-3263 for more information or visit the College of Agriculture’s Calendar of Events page at www.agriculture.vsu.edu.

Aquaculture Specialists Receive Prestigious CFSAN Award

Each year the Food and Drug Administration’s Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition (CFSAN) presents awards to selected professionals whose efforts and accomplishments have made significant contributions to achieving the center’s goals.

VSU Extension Specialists Brian Nerrie, David Cosby, and Chris Mullins are among those select few to receive the 2014 CFSAN Outstanding Customer Service Award for outstanding contributions made to the FDA and CFSAN.

Assuring the safety of the United States food supply is one of the most important tasks of government. The VSU aquaculture team was part of a group that provided multiple “Best Aquaculture Practices” workshops to producers, regulatory agencies and other stakeholders.

CFSAN is one of six centers within the FDA. Its major responsibility is ensuring that food is safe, nutritious and wholesome. CFSAN, in conjunction with the agency’s field staff, is responsible for promoting and protecting the public’s health by ensuring that the nation’s food supply is safe, sanitary, wholesome, and honestly labeled, and that cosmetic products are safe and properly labeled.
Catfish Tacos with Citrus Slaw (Serves 4)

Ingredients:
- Catfish fillets (4 each, 6 ounce size)
- Flour or corn tortillas, soft taco size (4)
- Lime wedges, fresh lemon or lime juice (1 Tbsp)
- Canola oil (1 Tbsp)
- Creole seasoning (1 Tbsp)
- Cumin (1 Tbsp)
- Garlic powder (1 Tbsp)
- Onion powder (1 Tbsp)
- Cilantro leaves (optional)

Method of preparation:
1. Mix all the ingredients for the citrus slaw in a bowl and toss gently. Cover the bowl and place in refrigerator.
2. In a small bowl, mix dry seasonings, oil and lime juice. Brush mixture over both sides of fillets. Arrange fillets on a baking sheet coated with cooking spray.
3. Place into a 450°F oven. Bake 6 - 8 minutes on each side until the fish flakes easily with fork.
4. Slice the fillets and place sliced catfish on tortilla. Top with citrus slaw. Squeeze fresh lime over the slaw and garnish with cilantro.

Citrus Slaw:
- Seasoned rice vinegar (2 Tbsp)
- Canola oil (2 Tbsp)
- Vertically sliced red onion (1/2 c)
- Thinly sliced red bell pepper (1 c)
- Diced orange sections (1 c)
- Prepared cole slaw mix (2 c)

Small Farm Berry & Vegetable Field Day
A SHOWCASE FOR USDA AND VSU AGRICULTURE PROGRAMS

More than 400 visitors came out to Randolph Farm on June 16 to learn from VSU Extension Specialists, USDA and Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation representatives, and other natural resource agencies about what's new in small farm berry and vegetable production.
S. Africa Partners With VSU For Mutual Agricultural Benefits

Agricultural leaders from South Africa’s Province of the Eastern Cape learn from Brian Nerrie, VSU assistant professor and Extension Specialist, about aquaculture at VSU’s Randolph Farm.

In May, VSU hosted a delegation from South Africa’s Province of the Eastern Cape. Leaders from the country’s Department of Rural Development and Agrarian Reform (DRDAR) learned from our Academic, Research and Extension departments how each works together with the other, with other institutions and with the public.

When asked what they thought of their jam-packed day at VSU, the head of the delegation replied, “We learned more than we had expected. Our visit more than exceeded our expectations.”

Four months later, on September 24, the delegation returned to VSU, this time to sign a Memorandum of Understanding that recognizes the mutual benefit to be gained through collaborative interactions between VSU and the DRDAR. The MOU states that “partnerships that facilitate international educational exchange and the participation in joint academic and educational ventures provide opportunities to enhance each institution and promote cross-cultural understanding.”

The MOU is initially valid for five years. Partnership opportunities that will benefit both universities are now being developed.
Creating and Sustaining Small Farmers and Ranchers

Virginia Beach Convention Center
Virginia Beach, VA

- Learn about strategies for creating and sustaining small farmers and ranchers for enhanced farm income and improved quality of life.
- Hear success stories from small farm activities.
- Discover innovative ideas in research, extension and outreach to strengthen collaboration and partnership among state specialists who work to ensure that small farmers and ranchers not only survive but thrive in today’s economy.

The 7th National Small Farm Conference will also serve as a forum to discuss the results of research geared toward addressing challenges facing small farmers and ranchers. Short courses, presentations, exhibits and educational tours within the Virginia Beach region, the Chesapeake Bay region and North Carolina are being planned.

Don’t miss this exciting opportunity to learn and network with local and national experts in agriculture and farming practices!

Hosted by
Virginia State University
College of Agriculture
and U.S. Department
of Agriculture

Registration will open in early 2016.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
Call (804) 524-5626
or email
NSFC2016@vsu.edu

When Akira Harris transferred to VSU as a sophomore, she was certain she wanted to be a veterinarian. But after six months of working with associate professor Michelle Corley in the Animal Molecular Immunogenetics Lab at the Agricultural Research Station, now she’s not so sure. Akira says of her work isolating goat RNA from blood, “It has opened my eyes to other horizons,” introducing her to new ideas about what she might do with her future.

Each year, VSU’s Ag Research Station employs 20 to 25 students to support faculty research. They work in laboratories, at Randolph Farm and in the field. They tend crops and livestock, collect and test samples, and compile and analyze data. Many of the students are Ag majors, but the station also employs students from other departments including biology, chemistry, and even business.

These students receive valuable training that prepares them for the job market or further education after graduation. Arrieyana Cartier, a sophomore with a double major in biology and family and consumer science, works with associate professor Yixiang Xu in the Food Processing and Engineering Lab. Xu works closely with Arrieyana to solve problems in the lab and write scientific papers, skills which will help her as she goes on to graduate school. Arrieyana enjoys the hands-on part of her job in the lab, saying that the work “demonstrates what I learned in class,” helping reinforce and enrich her classroom experience.

Sheanell Burton, a newly-minted M.S. graduate, started working in the lab as a senior and continued on, completing her research for a master’s degree under the mentorship of Xu. Over four years at the lab, Sheanell learned to work independently, managing projects from start to finish, and now feels confident she’s prepared to pursue her doctorate degree in pharmacy.

—continued on page 12
Corn is an all-around expensive crop these days. Livestock farmers across the country rely on it heavily for feed, but because of its wide use in biofuel production, demand is up, and the cost of the crop has risen dramatically. Corn is also expensive to grow because it needs a lot of fertilizer and water. As corn prices continue to rise and droughts become more frequent, VSU’s Agricultural Research Station is looking at sorghum as an alternative crop.

Assistant professor Maru Kering is running variety trials at Randolph Farm, looking into field management conditions and yield potential for several different sorghum varieties.

There are two types of sorghum, grain and sweet sorghum, and each has different uses. Grain sorghum is a cereal crop like corn, making it a good source of animal feed. Sweet sorghum is primarily grown for its juice, which is made into sorghum syrup. The high sugar content of the juice also makes it highly fermentable and thus perfect for bioethanol production.

Beyond feed and fuel, sorghum also has applications in the production of alcoholic beverages. Sweet sorghum can be used in the production of spirits such as rum, and grain sorghum is used in beer production all over the world. Although not yet a popular beer ingredient in the U.S., grain sorghum has a lot of potential as an alternate ingredient for small brewers interested in using new products.

Although sorghum has much in common with corn in terms of its uses, it has one great advantage over the popular crop. According to Kering, sorghum “is a good substitute for corn because it’s cheap to grow.” Sorghum requires much less nitrogen fertilizer than corn, leading to lower input costs for farmers who grow it. It is also drought tolerant, making it a fitting crop to turn to as weather patterns become more unpredictable and drought conditions become more common.

Though we may not ever eat sorghum dogs or pour ourselves a big bowl of sorghum flakes for breakfast, given its production adaptability and wide range of uses, sorghum has a lot of potential to become a lucrative crop for farmers in Virginia and elsewhere.

Back in the immunogenetics lab, Akira Harris keeps learning from her work with Dr. Corley. She knows she wants to work with animals, and, now that she’s learning about options aside from being a vet, “things are a little more confusing.” But Akira is glad to have all the information she can get, and she will continue to consider all the possibilities before her. Still, she says, “I can’t wait to get out to Randolph Farm and get my hands on some goats!”

Hands-on research has been especially helpful to Emmanuel Atiba, a graduate student from South Sudan. Emmanuel works in the Small Ruminant program with assistant professor Adnan Yousuf to study the interactions between nutrition, intestinal parasites and carcass quality in goats. The program at the University of Juba, Atiba’s home institution, is more theoretical, so he appreciates the practical focus of his work with the goats here. He believes his experience can be useful when he returns to South Sudan.

Research Experience, continued
The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has awarded Virginia State University a competitive international grant of $748,465 for the project “Biological Control of the Invasive Weed *Parthenium hysterophorus* in East Africa.” The project will be implemented in four East African countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda with partners from South Africa and a gender specialist from Virginia Tech, through November 2019.

Wondi Mersie, Associate Dean and Director of Research at VSU’s Agricultural Research Station and the project’s principal investigator, says the aim of the research project is to reduce the adverse impact of the weed on humans, crops, livestock and plants. *Parthenium* is an invasive weed that releases toxic chemicals harmful to other plants, some of which could be sources of valuable medicinal or industrial compounds. It reduces the yield of all major crops, taints the milk and meat of domestic animals that consume it, and causes severe dermatitis and respiratory ailments in humans.

In Africa, small-scale, subsistence farmers control parthenium by hand weeding, a task which primarily falls to women and children. Any management system that can control parthenium will reduce the workload on women and school-age children and allow them to engage in more productive activities. Despite its aggressiveness, parthenium is successfully managed in Australia and India using biological agents such as insects, pathogens and competitive smother plant species.

The goal of this VSU-led project is to build on the accomplishments of previous USAID-IPM IL-funded parthenium projects to abate the spread and impact of the weed in East Africa. Specific objectives of the proposed project are to: 1) scale-up the rearing and release of the two approved bio-control agents, the leaf-feeding beetle *Zygogramma bicolorata* and the stem-boring weevil *Listronotus setosipennis* in parthenium-infested areas of Ethiopia; 2) evaluate the establishment and impact of these released agents on parthenium, crops and biodiversity; 3) evaluate new parthenium bio-control agents for their safety to non-target plant species under quarantine and, if specific to the weed, seek a permit for their release; and 4) scale-up the release and monitoring of *Zygogramma* beetles in Tanzania and obtain the necessary permits for field release of the beetles in Kenya and Uganda; and release *Listronotus* weevils and other natural enemies (evaluated in Ethiopia) in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

Fifteen scientists from six countries will collaborate to implement the project. This team includes entomologists, weed scientists, agronomists, a plant pathologist, an agricultural economist, a botanist, a plant ecologist, a land use management specialist, a crop protection specialist, and a gender specialist.
FCS Student Amanda Brooks Wins National Scholarship

Amanda Brooks, a senior in the Family and Consumer Science Dietetics Program and president of VSU’s Food and Nutrition Club, was one of nine college students nationwide selected to receive an Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Foundation/ConAgra Foods Food Safety Student Challenge Scholarship. The $4,500 award is augmented by an additional $500 stipend for the purchase of supplies to execute her proposal.

Brooks wrote her award-winning essay proposing a plan to promote food safety on campus. Her plan includes a relay race on campus with components that cover the four main food safety tips promoted by the Home Food Safety program.

According to Brooks, “There would be four components to the relay race: ‘Wash Hands Often’ is a water event with sprinklers; ‘Separate’ consists of team members who compete on two different short courses; ‘Cook to Proper Temperatures’ is a trivia game where students toss rings onto the correct cooking temperature for a selected food; and ‘Refrigerate’ finishes the race with an ice bucket challenge. Open to all students on campus, the entry fee for teams who want to participate in the competition is a donation of a non-perishable item for FeedMore, Richmond’s area food bank.”

Wynn Lands Prestigious Board Appointment

Assistant professor Crystal Wynn has been selected by the Accreditation Council for Education in Nutrition and Dietetics board to serve a three-year term as an ACEND® Program Reviewer. ACEND® is the accrediting agency for the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics for educational programs preparing students for careers as registered dieticians or dietetic technicians. She will visit and evaluate programs and make recommendations on accreditation to the ACEND® board.

Wynn is a faculty member in the Family and Consumer Sciences Department at VSU’s College of Agriculture.

“VSU’s College of Agriculture provided me the networking and hands-on experience I needed to reach my goal of landing a job after graduation where I could be directly involved with the production and marketing of locally grown produce. Shortly after graduating, I became the market manager for the new Hopewell Farmers Market. Since this is a new startup market, I mainly work to recruit vendors, but also must plan all the logistics with my team, such as determining where and when the market will take place, reviewing vendor applications, obtaining sponsorships, maintaining the website, and planning special events. Once the market opens, I will manage it to be sure everything runs smoothly, and I will enforce our policies and regulations. Because of the experience I gained working in the fields and high tunnels at VSU’s Randolph Farm, helping to manage VSU’s Farm Stars farmers market, and attending local agriculture conferences and field days sponsored by the College of Agriculture, I feel confident and prepared to help the City of Hopewell meet their expectations for the new market.”

REAL WORLD EXPERIENCE

MELISSA THONER, ’14
Individualized Studies, Agriculture concentration

“...”
Most American high school students today take for granted they’ll always be able to chow down on a hamburger at a fast food restaurant, buy a bottle of water from a vending machine and afford fresh produce like strawberries and bananas. However, with predictions for world population at 8.3 billion in 2030 and 9.1 billion in 2050, this unprecedented rapid growth may increase food demand by a staggering 70 percent long before these teenagers hit retirement age. The main challenge facing the agricultural sector is not so much finding ways to grow almost twice as much food in 40 years, but in getting that food from the farm to the table.

That’s why college graduates with expertise in food, agriculture, renewable natural resources and the environment are essential to our ability to address the priorities of food security, sustainable energy and environmental quality. Graduates in these professional specialties not only are expected to provide answers and leadership to meet these growing challenges in the United States, but they also must be global leaders in providing sustainable food systems, adequate water resources and renewable energy in a world where population growth and climate change are the norm. Perhaps the biggest challenge right now is figuring out how to get high school students, the majority of whom have never stepped foot on a working farm, to be interested in careers in agriculture.

Students learn from experts at VSU through field and lab activities, in workshops and on field trips. The week-long program also provides these students an opportunity to experience college life by staying in one of the campus dormitories. As an added bonus, two $1,000 scholarships may be awarded to participants who eventually enroll in VSU’s Department of Agriculture.

VSU also hosts a summer AgDiscovery program, sponsored through a USDA grant and open to all high school students. In its fifth year, this two-week program introduces students to the disciplines of animal science and food science through hands-on work with small ruminants, farmed fish, on-farm processing and field and laboratory research. Field trips and guest speakers provide exposure to agricultural production and research, as well as to a variety of related professions. Like the Summer Enrichment Program, this program is free, and students stay in campus dormitories.

Ultimately, the goal of both programs is to stimulate interest in the field of agriculture among high school students by demonstrating the wide variety of careers within the field—from working hands-on with soil or livestock, to government or communications jobs, to research and teaching—as well as new employment opportunities they can look forward to over the coming decades.

For more information on the 2016 Summer Enrichment Program in Agriculture and Environmental Science, contact Dr. Christopher Catanzaro at (804) 524-5672 or ccatanzaro@vsu.edu.

For information on the 2016 AgDiscovery Program, contact Roz Stein at (804) 524-1533 or rstein@vsu.edu.
According to a January 2015 article by USA Today, careers in agriculture and natural resources are among the top five for wage earners.

- **2015 projected average starting salary:** $51,220
- **Average lifetime earnings:** $2.6 million

“These grads can earn much more than the average grad, raking in an average starting salary of over $51,000. Again, those who work their way up to management positions generally earn the highest earnings over a lifetime — around $800,000 more than the typical college grad.”

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**TAMM Student Pays it Forward to Richmond City Youth**

*Story adapted from Growing 4-H Science, a monthly newsletter from the City of Richmond Cooperative Extension office.*

Kristen Scott ’15, is a portrait of success. Raised in Richmond City and a 2012 graduate of Armstrong High School (with AP Honors), Kristen was surrounded by the encouragement of her family, community, and teachers. She completed her bachelor’s degree in Family Consumer Science at Virginia State University with a concentration in Textiles, Apparel, and Merchandise Management (TAMM). Kristen’s accomplishments while at VSU included graduating in three years summa cum laude and being named one of the top twenty student designers in the Cotton, Inc. 24 Hour Design competition.

Virginia State University’s TAMM program has a textile project where former band uniforms are repurposed to create unique items such as the formal dress for the cover of the TAMM magazine (pictured at right). Kristen, then a senior, volunteered her efforts to design, model and construct the dress. The bodice was made from a band jacket, the waist from a cape, and the skirt was made from two pairs of pants.

Kristen began studies at North Carolina State’s Master of Science and Textiles program this fall, but she is still remembered for her dedication to Richmond City youth. The Growing 4-H Science STEM Institute was fortunate to have Kristen as its textiles instructor for the last two years. Her knowledge, patience, and attention to detail truly benefitted the girls and boys in her class.

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**Big Payoffs for Hospitality Students at National Conference**

Tarian West, a freshman in the VSU College of Agriculture’s Hospitality Management Department, attended the National Society of Minorities in Hospitality (NSMH) National Conference in Pittsburgh, Pa., with 29 other VSU Hospitality Management students and came home with a prize.

“During the conference, I visited a Sodexo company workshop where I met with many of their recruiters and secured an interview with the company for the following day,” West said. “During the NSMH final awards ceremony, I was awarded a scholarship with Sodexo.”

“The NSMH National Conference was by far the most enjoyable yet resourceful event I have ever been to,” she adds. “As a freshman, it has opened my eyes to so many opportunities in my field.”
VSU Hosts Summer 4-H Intermediate Congress

Boys and girls ages 11-13 attended Virginia State University’s annual 4-H Intermediate Congress in July to develop and strengthen their leadership skills, make new friends, build confidence, become contributing citizens in their communities and lead 4-H into the future.

4-H is the comprehensive youth development program of Virginia Cooperative Extension, which is jointly managed by VSU and Virginia Tech. Young people ages 5–18 engage in hands-on learning experiences under the guidance of 4-H agents and trained adults or teen 4-H volunteers. Registration for VSU’s 4-H Intermediate Congress was limited to 60 attendees and included meals, lodging, workshop supplies and a t-shirt.

For information about the VSU 4-H Intermediate Congress to be held in 2016, contact 4-H Specialist Albert Reid, areid@vsu.edu, or call (804) 524-5495.
Joel Koci, Urban Forestry Extension Associate at VSU, not only sees the forest through the trees, he’s bent on ensuring everyone knows what a vital role those trees play in our lives. On April 24, in celebration of Arbor Day, Koci organized the planting and dedication of a sycamore tree on Martin Luther King Boulevard on the Virginia State University campus. He said the tree pays homage to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and others who gathered in 1965 beneath a sycamore in preparation for the historic, Freedom March from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama to register black voters.

The event also served as a backdrop for VSU to officially be recognized by the Arbor Day Foundation as a member of its Tree Campus USA, a program that helps colleges and universities establish and maintain healthy community forests. VSU is one of only three colleges and universities in Virginia that has been acknowledged as meeting the rigorous standards established by the non-profit conservation and educational organization whose mission is to inspire the planting, nurturing and celebration of trees.

“Trees are beneficial to the environment because they provide shade and wind protection, clean the air, prevent soil erosion and waterway pollution, and reduce storm water runoff,” explains Koci. “Trees also provide habitats for benign insects,” he adds.

Urban forestry, Koci explains, is associated with the planning, planting and maintenance of woody plants to promote a sustainable environment. At VSU, the program’s aim is to increase urban forestry awareness among students, staff and citizens in surrounding communities through service projects.

For more information on VSU’s urban forestry initiative, contact Joel Koci at (804) 524-5758 or email jkoci@vsu.edu.
Online Giving at
www.giving.vsu.edu

Enter the amount you wish to give and in the "Designation" drop down menu, then select one of the following funds:

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- Hospitality Management General Support Fund
- Agriculture Department General Support Fund

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VSU Cooperative Extension culinary expert, Wanda Johnson (right), demonstrates to Greg McQuade and Tracey Sears of WTVR's Virginia This Morning how to take the season's ripe eggplants and make a healthy roasted eggplant dip.