

SAAESD Spring Meeting

Speakers and Workshops Program

The Mill Conference Center

Mississippi State University

April 17 – 20, 2023

Keynote Speaker

Tuesday, April 18, 2023

1:00 – 2:00 pm

The Gallery

Harnessing Interdisciplinary Science to Tackle Grand Challenges in Agriculture



Dr. Adrian Percy is the inaugural Executive Director of the NC Plant Sciences Initiative (N.C. PSI) at North Carolina State University. The NC PSI aims to exploit inter-disciplinary science and technology through public private partnerships to advance the plant sciences to the benefit of growers, consumers, and other food chain stakeholders. With more than 30 years of experience in the agricultural sector, Dr. Percy is an advocate of the need for and benefits of modern agriculture. He is also a strong proponent of the development and adoption of new agricultural and food technologies that support global food

security while conserving the environment and supporting rural community development. He also is a Venture Partner at Finistere Ventures LLC, a technology and life sciences venture capital investor, focused on transforming the food value chain. Adrian serves on the board of directors of BioLumic, HiFidelity Genetics, and Evogene. He is a member of the science and technology boards of Oerth Bio, Terramera, Biotalys and Rothamsted Research and hosts the AgTech360 podcast on behalf of NC State's Center for Excellence in Regulatory Science in Agriculture (CERSA). Prior to joining NC State, Adrian served as the Chief Technology Officer of UPL Ltd a major crop protection company that is a leader in global food systems. He was also the Head of Research and Development for the Crop Science division of Bayer and part of their executive committee. In that role, he had responsibility for internal and open innovation activities in the areas of crop protection chemistry and biologicals, as well as seeds and traits. During his 25-year tenure at Bayer and its legacy companies, he also held numerous positions in agricultural research and development in France, Germany, and the United States.

Communications Workshop

Wednesday, April 19, 2023

8:00 – 10:00 am

The Gallery

Session 1. Seeking Success with Stakeholders

Summary: *Research conducted at our Agricultural Experiment Stations addresses the complex, multifaceted challenges in agriculture, the environment, and the life sciences. Our challenge is to develop effective communications and marketing strategies that reach audiences who need to hear our messages, especially policymakers and advocates who influence research funding. The panel will explore the question: what do these stakeholders need to know and how do they need to hear it?*

Format: Moderated interactive panel discussion that actively engages the audience of communicators and directors.

Panel Moderator

Lyndall Stout, Director of Agricultural Communications Services, Oklahoma State University

Panelists

Dennis Reginelli, Executive Director, Mississippi Soybean Promotion Board

Marty Fuller, Senior Consultant, Cornerstone Government Affairs

Jon Kalahar, Communication Coordinator, MS Farm Bureau Federation

Session 2. Communications and Media Training: Am I prepared to meet the press?

Summary: *Directors are part of a mission-critical executive team in our colleges who must convey the importance of science and its applications to the public, often in times of crisis. Communicators play an essential role in collaborating with the directors to enable them to create meaningful and appropriate messaging.*

Format: Interactive mini-training session on how to prepare and practice interacting with the media in crisis situations. Small group exercises.

Sidney “Sid” Salter, Director of Public Affairs at Mississippi State University

Overview – Executive Public Relations During a Crisis - Planning for the Crisis

1. Scenario for each table
2. Strategy session: communications risk management plan (pre-crisis plan)
3. Report outs



Lyndall Stout is Oklahoma State University's director of agricultural communications services, which includes a team of more than 20 professionals focused on integrated communications and marketing. Together, they are increasing output and helping usher in a new era of visibility for OSU Agriculture. An Association of Communications Excellence member since 2011, she and the team have been recognized several times in the organization's Critique & Awards program over the years for video production, marketing campaigns, social media, promotions and more. This month, Lyndall hits a career milestone: 25 years in broadcast television. She is also host and executive producer of SUNUP, which airs statewide each week on PBS. She is a former news anchor and reporter, working in Texas, Arkansas, and Pennsylvania. Stout has a master's degree in mass communication from Louisiana State University and a bachelor's degree from Arkansas Tech University in journalism and speech communication.



Dr. Dennis Reginelli currently serves as the Executive Director for the Mississippi Soybean Promotion Board. Born and raised in Bolivar County, while claiming Shaw, Mississippi as his hometown. He completed his high school career at Shaw High School and then finished two years of education at Mississippi Delta Community College with a major in Farm Management Technology. Transferred to Mississippi State University and completed his BS degree in Agronomy, MS in Agronomy and Ph.D. in Seed Technology. His work career started in 1985 at the Pontotoc Branch Experiment Station and later transferred to the North MS Branch Station in Verona, MS. In, 1991, Dennis started his MSU Extension career in Noxubee County as the County Agriculture Agent. Later became the Area Extension Agent covering 8 counties and just specializing in Agronomic Crops and then became the Regional Extension Specialist for those same counties. In 2018, Dennis took on the interim role of Agronomist at the North MS Research and Extension Center while also serving as the Regional Specialist until he retired from Mississippi State University in 2019. Dennis completed 34 and 1/4 years of service with MS State and worked his entire career in East Mississippi. Dennis assumed the Executive Director position in July 2019 with the MS Soybean Promotion Board.



Dr. Marty J. Fuller a Senior Consultant with Cornerstone Government Affairs. He has a Ph.D. in agricultural economics with expertise in the economics evaluation of alternative crops and value-added products. Marty also serves as the President and CEO of Federal Solutions, LLC, representing a wide range of clients ranging from Fortune 500 companies to universities and technology firms. Prior to this role, he served as the director of federal relations for Mississippi State University (MSU), substantially increasing the federal portfolio of the University.

Marty also served previously as the associate director of the Mississippi Agricultural and Forestry Experiment Station (MAFES) and as an Emeritus Professor in the Department of Agricultural Economics at MSU. He received his B.S., M.S., and Ph.D. degrees in Agricultural Economics from MSU. In addition to his business activities, Marty serves as a Director on the Board of First South Farm Credit, a \$2 billion rural lending firm with a three-state territory. As chairman of the Audit Committee, he leads the effort to ensure the Board is fulfilling its oversight responsibilities related to the quality of financial reporting and internal controls.



Jon Kalahar is the communications and public relations coordinator for the Mississippi Farm Bureau Federation. He is a Brandon native where he graduated from Brandon High School. Jon graduated from Mississippi State University with a Bachelor's in Communication. He worked ten years in television before moving to public relations. Jon came to Mississippi Farm Bureau from The Salvation Army where he served in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Jon has earned his accreditation in public relations. He sees his most important role as telling the story of Farm Bureau's membership and bringing those stories

to new audiences. Jon and his wife Samantha live in Madison and have three sons and two daughters...one has graduated from Mississippi State, one currently attends MSU, and one will attend in the fall.



Sidney L. "Sid" Salter is Chief Communications Officer and Director of the Office of Public Affairs at Mississippi State University. In that role, he leads a team of marketing and communications professionals in producing award-winning print, broadcast, and digital content designed to advance MSU's reputation as a nationally prominent research university. Salter is also the university's spokesman and the administrator of both the University Television Center and campus radio station WMSV-FM. MSU's 2004 National Alumnus of the Year, Salter has enjoyed a unique career as an award-winning journalist,

columnist, television commentator, talk radio host, author, educator, and university administrator. He was a John C. Stennis Scholar in Political Science as a student at MSU. The Washington Post has listed him as "one of the nation's best state political reporters." He is a member of the Miss. Press Association's Hall of Fame. His syndicated columns have been published in Mississippi and several national newspapers since 1978. He formerly served as MSU's first journalist-in-residence and was the inaugural holder of the Kelly Gene Cook Chair in Journalism at the University of Mississippi, where he served on the Journalism faculty in the 1990s.

Growing CEA Enterprises in Your State

Wednesday, April 19, 2023

10:30 - 12:00

The Gallery

Summary: *Controlled Environment Agriculture (CEA) is an advanced form of intensive agriculture in which plants grow in highly controlled environments to optimize cultivation practices. CEA systems require a unique combination of plant science, engineering, and technology to efficiently and cost-effectively regulate environmental factors that impact plant growth and productivity. Commercial CEA operations are increasing across the Southern region, creating opportunities for research scientists, engineers, and educators to engage with industry through partnerships to grow CEA operations in our states.*

CEA: Opportunities for Colleges of Agriculture

Kaylee South, Assistant Professor of Controlled Environment Agriculture, Virginia Tech

Partnerships to Develop CEA as an Economic Engine

Michael Evans, Director, School of Plant and Environmental Science, Virginia Tech

Research Addressing the Needs of the CEA Industry

Amit Dhingra, Professor and Head, Department of Horticultural Sciences, Texas A&M University

Interactive Panel Discussion – Growing CEA Enterprises in Your State

Gary Thompson, Moderator



Dr. Kaylee South is an Assistant Professor from Virginia Tech's School of Plant and Environmental Sciences based in Danville at the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR). Dr. South joined as a member of the Controlled Environment Agriculture Innovation Center at the end of 2021. Her research is on the improvement of crop performance in indoor vertical farms and greenhouses and specializes in using beneficial microbes to improve overall crop health and quality. Dr. South also holds an extension appointment where she will collaborate with the Virginia controlled environment agriculture industry to identify and solve problems, as well as share research-based information through various avenues. In her role, Dr. South will advise graduate students and postdoctoral researchers. Her past research experience includes improving greenhouse production of floriculture crops through the application of beneficial bacteria for both biocontrol of plant pathogens and improving nutrient uptake. Before her role at Virginia Tech, she completed a B.S. in Horticulture at the University of Georgia and a Ph.D. in Horticulture and Crop Science at The Ohio State University.



Dr. Michael Evans is the director of the School for Plant and Environmental Sciences, which combines three former departments — horticulture; crop and soil environmental sciences; and plant pathology, physiology, and weed sciences — under one administrative roof. He conducts research in controlled environment agriculture. With a focus on the production of crops such as lettuce, herbs, medicinal plants, and strawberry in soilless and hydroponic systems in greenhouse, factories and vertical farms. Dr. Evans previously worked at the University of Arkansas, where he was an interim associate dean in the Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food, and Life Sciences. Prior to Arkansas, he was a professor at Iowa State University. At both institutions, he was a horticulture faculty member, teacher, and researcher who focused on controlled agricultural environments, such as greenhouses, and how to use hydroponic techniques to increase yields of food crops. He started his career as a researcher at the Gulf Coast Research and Education Center with the University of Florida where he conducted research and Extension programs related to greenhouse crops and ornamental plants.



Dr. Amit Dhingra is a Professor and Head of the Department of Horticultural Sciences at Texas A&M University. He conducts a research program in genomics and biotechnology. Prior to joining Texas A&M, he served as graduate faculty in four programs at Washington State University - Horticulture, Molecular Plant Sciences, NIH Protein Biotechnology Training Program, and MS in Agriculture. He received his BS in Botany (Honors) from Delhi University, India (1991) followed by an MS in Botany (Honors) from Agra University, India (1993). He earned his Ph.D. at the University of Delhi, India, and Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, supported by The Rockefeller Foundation pre-doctoral fellowship (2000). His professional preparation included post-doctoral positions at Rutgers, the University of Central Florida, and the University of Florida. He joined Washington State University as an Assistant Professor in 2006.

Luncheon Speaker

Wednesday, April 19, 2023

12:30 - 1:15

The Gallery

Update from the USDA-NIFA Southern Regional Aquaculture Center



Dr. Jimmy Avery received his undergraduate degree from the University of Mississippi, his M.S. from Delta State University, and his Ph.D. from Louisiana State University. From 1985 through 1999, Jimmy worked as LSU Extension Specialist in catfish, crawfish, alligators, and turtles. He joined Mississippi State University as Extension Professor and Extension Aquaculture Leader in 1999 and is housed at the Thad Cochran National Warmwater Aquaculture Center. Since 2012, Dr. Avery has also served as director of the USDA NIFA Southern Regional Aquaculture Center. Much of Dr. Avery's outreach efforts have

focused on national issues affecting the U.S. farm-raised catfish industry. He has had leadership roles on the technical team advising government and industry about the USDA FSIS Catfish Inspection Program and on the national extension team providing training for the USDA Trade Adjustment Assistance for Farmers Program. He is a past President of the World Aquaculture Society and the United States Aquaculture Society.

Advancing Knowledge About Climate Resilience and Population Change: Roles for Social Sciences in Experiment Station Research

Wednesday, April 19, 2023

1:00 - 1:45

The Gallery

Summary: *Climate resilience and population change (e.g., net-migration, mortality, aging, and population growth or decline) are impacting rural communities and agricultural enterprises across the Southern region. These issues are of increasing concern to community and organizational leaders. Advancing knowledge at the intersection of climate and population change requires multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary research to be conducted and has direct application for education, outreach and extension, and policy initiatives. Social scientists have been active in these arenas, providing basic insights and practical applications. This workshop will frame the need and potential roles for social scientists to work within Experiment Stations; provide illustrative examples of such work that is taking place; and offer insights from social scientists shared at the annual meeting of the Southern Rural Sociological Association/Southern Association of Agricultural Scientists. Participants will then be engaged in dialogue for input from Experiment Station leaders on opportunities and examples of social scientists currently involved in SAES research activities.*



Dr. John J. Green (PhD in Rural Sociology, University of Missouri) is Director of the Southern Rural Development Center (SRDC), an organization focused on building capacity among the 30 Land-Grant institutions located in the region. It is one of four Regional Rural Development Centers in the nation authorized under the Rural Development Act of 1972. He also serves as Professor in the Mississippi State University Department of Agricultural Economics and Affiliated Faculty in the Department of Sociology. Prior to this, he worked with the University of Mississippi Center for Population Studies/State Data Center and the Delta State University Center for Community and Economic Development. John has more than 20 years of experience working with community and regional development organizations on asset mapping, needs assessment, program implementation, and research/evaluation. John is President of the national-level Rural Sociological Society (2022-2023) and Editor of the *Journal of Rural Social Sciences*, affiliated with the Southern Rural Sociological Association.