

2020 Urban Forestry and Natural Resource Department Highlights

The year 2020 is filled with exciting news and achievements. In mid - March, the Urban Forestry and Natural Resources Department successfully hosted and passed the Society of American Foresters (SAF) accreditation site review of the Urban Forestry B.S. Degree Program. It is the result of the collaborative teamwork of the faculty, staff, and students. It is also because of the strong support of the urban forestry alumni, as well as the administrators of the College of Agricultural, Family and Consumer Sciences, the SU Ag Center, and Southern University.



Urban Forestry alumni, students, employers, and administrators of the Department, College, SUBR Academic Affairs, and SU Ag Center with SAF accreditation site review team.

On March 1, 2020, Dr. Zhu Hua Ning became the new Chair of the Department and the Ph.D. Degree Program Leader. For shared governing, she spearheaded the establishment of a Departmental External Advisory Committee, as well as nine new departmental committees - Curriculum, Strategic Planning and Assessment, Admission and Scholarship/Assistantship/Stipend, Recruitment and Student Life, Retention, Tenure and Promotion, Experiential Learning, Seminar, and Benevolence. The Department also has Dr. Kamran Abdollahi as the B.S. Degree Program Leader and Dr. Yadong Qi as the Master Degree Program Leader.

To enhance the departmental program assessment, six specific program learning outcomes (PLOs) are established in adherence to the SAF accreditation standards. The department conducted an overall self-evaluation and assessment of all three-degree programs - B.S., M.S., and Ph.D., and prepared a 2020-2025 strategic plan.

To increase the enrollment and retention, a student recruitment plan and a retention plan have been put forward with the collective work of the departmental administrator, faculty, recruitment committee chair Dr. Chris Chappell, and retention committee chair Dr. Yename.

To support students' education, research skill training, and career readiness, faculty members secured 1.23 million dollars of new external funding and initiated 6 new projects in 2020. In addition to the new projects, Dr. Ning's NASA funded competitive project provided \$36,000 graduate assistantships to students for research training in 2020. Her USDA NIFA CBGP funded competitive project provided undergraduate students with \$10,000 stipends as participant's support. Dr. Veronica Manrique's projects supported her three graduate students in the amount of \$17,000. Dr. Yaw

supported four undergraduate students (\$4,900) and four graduate students (\$5,800) on the Spatial Mapping Project.

The faculty has made a significant contribution in research. Dr. Yaw published 11 peer-reviewed journal articles and co-authored 3 articles in two books. Dr. Kamran Abdollahi's biochar research was recognized and featured by the Louisiana Department of Environment Quality in its publication. He also published a research article in *Arboricultural Consultants*. Dr. Vanessa Ferchaud published a peer-reviewed journal article co-authoring with Dr. Yadong Qi. Dr. Yemane is conducting a project which focuses on using agriculture as a fast track vehicle for change through experiential learning. Dr. Manrique continued her field research funded by the external agency, despite the COVID-19 caused difficulties. Dr. Ning's NASA funded project yields research results that are being used by a doctoral and a master's degree student toward their dissertation and thesis publications.

The faculty members provide leadership through their services to professional organizations and communities. Dr. Abdollahi serves in the leadership role of the newly created 1890's LGI Wildland Fire Consortium based at Alabama A&M University and partnering with SU, Tuskegee University and Florida A&M University. He is an elected officer of the Society of American Foresters (SAF) Louisiana State Chair and executive committee chair. He has also been selected as Chair of the executive committee of the Urban Tree Growth and Longevity of the International Society of Arboriculture's Arboriculture Research and Education Academy. Dr. Ning is selected to serve on the Advisory Board of the Davey Resource Company's TreeKeeper University. She also serves on the Board of the Baton Rouge Botanic Garden Foundation and collaborates with the Baton Rouge main library in delivering virtual Garden Discovery Series to the community. Dr. Qi serves as the executive committee member of the Louisiana SAF and the Louisiana Forestry Association.

For more information, please contact Dr. Zhu Hua Ning, Department Chair, at 225-771-6292 or zhu_ning@subr.edu

2020 External Funded New Research and Education Projects Reached 1.23 Million

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-  Dr. Yaw Twumasi is the SU lead person for a LSU-SU joint project titled "Satellite-Assisted Forecasting Environment for Improving Oyster Safety (SAFE Oyster)" funded by the NASA EPSCoR Program in the amount of \$750,000.
-  Dr. Chris Chappell obtained \$299,822 from the USDA-NIFA Capacity Building Grants Program for a project titled, "Quantifying the Performance of an Artificial Peat Wetland Structural Soil (JAG Soil) in Constructed Urban Wetlands to Reduce Flash Flood Risk."
-  Dr. Zhu Ning and Dr. Renita Marshall are the lead persons for "Charting a New Course: Elevating the Urban Forestry and Natural Resources Department to a New Height in a New Era" - a \$68,500 project funded by the USDA Forest Service Southern Region.
-  A \$50,000 project "UF Career Readiness Campaign - Virtual/Onsite Speaker Series" led by Dr. Christopher Chappell is funded by the USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry - Cooperative Forestry.

 Dr. Yaw Twumasi is the PI of a project titled “Using Geospatial Technology to Enhance Southern University Students’ Experiential Learning and to Boost Limited Resource Farmers, Veterans, Beginning Farmers and Ranchers’ Economic Benefits” funded by 1890 Land Grant University Foundation in the amount of \$35,000.

 Lead by Drs. Zhu Hua Ning and Renita Marshall, a \$25,000 “Career Readiness through Urban Forest Management and Leadership Skills Training” project is funded by the USDA Forest Service State and Private Forestry - Cooperative Forestry.