

FORESTS & PEOPLE

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE LOUISIANA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION

Learning
to care for
urban forests
at Southern University



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You can manage your backyard
to be a fine habitat for your fine
feathered friends.

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Our Cover

An area of Southern University and A&M College that was to be a parking lot has been set aside for the Urban Forestry program to use to study different tree species. (Photo by Jeff Zeringue)

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Urban Forestry at SU.Page 4

The urban forestry program at Southern University and A&M College has expanded over the years to offer bachelors, masters and doctorate degrees. It is one of two universities to offer a Ph.D. in urban forestry and the only one to offer all degrees at three levels.

2018 Champion Tree ListPage 11

A Montezuma cypress tree breaks into the Louisiana Champion Tree list this year after arborist notes the new champion on the campus of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

Peter KochPage 15

Peter Koch came on the scene of the U.S. Forest Service in the 1960s and his impact on the utilization of wood in the South has left a long-enduring mark with equipment and numerous patents.

Working Lands for Wildlife: Pine snakePage 31

The Natural Resources Conservation Service has developed a Working Lands for Wildlife program for the Louisiana pine snake, which could be listed as a threatened species in the Endangered Species Act.

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Southern University and A&M College is the only school in Louisiana, and one of only two in the United States, that has urban forestry degrees in bachelor, master and doctoral levels. (Photo by Jeff Zeringue)

Southern leads in urban forestry in U.S.

By Jeff Zeringue

Urban and forests might not seem to go together, but just like good forestry practices make sure rural forests are healthy, urban forestry does the same for trees and landscapes planted in cities large and small.

Students in Louisiana who want to stay close to home have only one place to go if they want to major in urban forestry: Southern University and A&M College.

Urban Forestry is a relatively new field of study for Southern; it began only about 25 years ago, considerably more recent given the university was founded 138 years ago.

Yet this program has already expanded, becoming only one of two urban forestry programs in the country to include bachelor, master and doctoral degrees.

"Right now, our program is considered the most comprehensive higher education urban forestry program in the nation because we offer all three layers of degrees," said Dr. Yadong Qi (pronounced CHEE).

Qi arrived in Baton Rouge in 1992 when the Urban Forestry program started at Southern. It was her first collegiate teaching job.

"So I didn't expect to stay long," Qi said. "I expected to get some experience then move someplace else."

Twenty-five years later, the professor of Urban Forestry is



Dr. Yadong Qi is department chairwoman and director of the Urban Forestry Graduate Program at Southern University.

now department chairwoman and director of the Urban Forestry Graduate Program at Southern University. She and 10 other professors and professionals each year help on average about 100 undergraduate and graduate students work toward their degree.

Qi said the idea is to show that urban forestry is essential to society, adding value to city dwellers' living by caring for the trees in urban areas.

Southern's program tries to offer a diverse experience for students to become marketable for jobs in their chosen field. That includes internships with federal agencies

and private companies. An example she gives is with the USDA Forest Service in firefighter training. One student used his experience to gain employment researching wildfires.

Companies offering internships to students in the Southern University Urban Forestry program include big corporations

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such as Davey Tree Expert Co., which has offices in nearby Houston, Charlotte, North Carolina, and Kent, Ohio, and Weyerhaeuser. Students also intern at government agencies like the Forest Service and Natural Resources and Conservation Service, as well as small non-for-profit organizations like Baton Rouge Green and Greening Detroit.

For Oscar Paul, a 24-year-old senior and president of Southern's chapter of Society of American Foresters, he worked an internship with the Forest Service in California. There he used many of the things he learned about in the urban forestry program.

Deciding on tree species and planting them were part of the internship, but he also got to use some of the equipment he's learned about.

"It's a lot larger variety of equipment (used during his internship) and they go a lot more in-depth," said Paul, who hopes to return to California to work in his field.

Cornelius Jackson, 21, interned with Monsanto and learned a lot about its seed production. He said learning how important trees are in an urban setting and how cities benefit from their oxygen production and carbon absorption was what got him interested in the field.

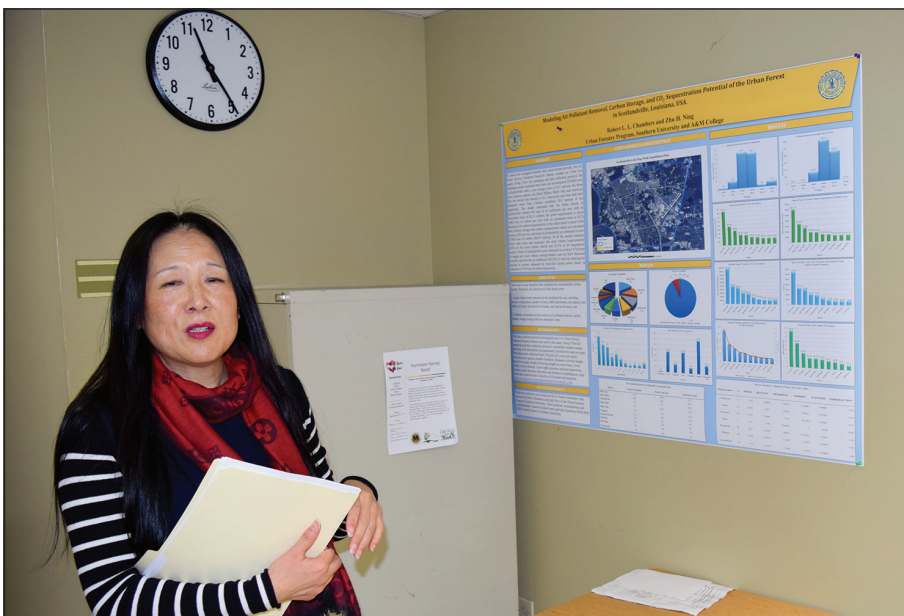
D'Michael Lucas, a 22-year-old senior from New Roads, interned with Davey Tree Expert Co. in Houston. He hopes to secure a job with the company after he graduates in December.

Making sure more students find out about the urban forestry program is important, said Chyanna McGee. The 21-year-old is president of the Urban Forestry Club at Southern University. The club does a lot of community service, she said, but primarily its goal is to

Continued on page 6



Veronica Manrique, assistant professor of Urban Forestry who teaches entomology, is pictured in the lab with graduate student Dora Sevor. (Photos by Jeff Zeringue)



Dr. Zhu Ning talks about her research of modeling air pollution removal and carbon storage potential in Scotlandville.



Students and faculty of the Urban Forestry program at Southern University are pictured at the College of Agriculture's experimental facility.

Continued from page 5

help get more students interested in Urban Forestry.

"We graduate a lot of students, so recruiting is important," the junior from Baton Rouge said. "We talk a lot about the importance of trees and the environment."

McGee works in tandem with 20-year-old Asija Rice, a junior from New Orleans who serves as vice president of the Urban Forestry Club. Rice said he likes to focus on recruitment of high school students.

Rice said she didn't know about the opportunities in urban forestry until it was suggested by a high school teacher and Southern professors introduced the program to her. Last year, she completed an internship with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. She learned about

reforestation and helped at a site, planting longleaf and loblolly pines as well as water oaks.

"I got to work with foresters and replant the trees," she said.

Qi said students who graduate in urban

forestry often pursue jobs in the public sector as urban foresters, city arborists, urban forest coordinators or program managers for cities. They also can pursue jobs at the Forest Service and NRCS, such as forest technicians, foresters or natural resources managers, for example. Their training, however, is broader than for urban forestry.

Other graduates become certified arborists or entrepreneurs and start their own companies, such as Urban Tree Care Co., which is based in Baker, she said.

The urban forestry program, however, also exposes students to scientific research. Dr. Zhu Ning is the James & Ruth Smith Endowed Professor at Southern.

"I am proud of contributing to the education, research, professional services, recruitment and advancement of the Urban Forestry Program at Southern University," Ning said.

The research she is particularly proud of deals with the assessment of Gulf Coast ecosystems. One such study involves the periodic flooding to which Louisiana is prone and elevated carbon dioxide levels.

"We graduate a lot of students, so recruiting is important."



Leading the Urban Forestry Program at Southern University Agricultural Land-Grant Campus are: Dr. Dawn Mellion-Patin, vice chancellor of Extension, from left; Allison Johnson, USDA liaison to Southern University; Dr. Retia Walker, vice chancellor for Academic & Student Support Services; Dr. Bobby R. Phills, chancellor-dean, Southern University Agricultural Land-Grant Campus; Dr. Andra Johnson, vice chancellor of Research and Technology; and Dr. Yadong Qi, professor, department chairwoman of Urban Forestry and Natural Resources and Graduate Program director.

Students used tanks in a greenhouse to study saplings response to the stress from those two events. She hopes the results will be beneficial to cities.

"The project has yielded valuable results on tree species selection for flood tolerance and urban forest management

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in a changing climate,”
according to Ning’s re-
search.

Not only does it pro-
vide good data for urban
foresters in cities, the re-
search also was a beneficial
learning tool for students.

“Students told me that
their active participation
in research and inter-
national collaboration
helped them in develop-
ing scientific curiosities
and interests in learning,”

Ning said. “It also enhanced their skills,
competitiveness, workplace readiness,
global competency, professional network
and marketability.”

Dr. Bobby Phillips was appointed chan-
cellor of SU Ag Center and dean of the
College of Agriculture in 2016. A gradu-
ate of Southern University, he was happy
to return to his alma mater and, with his
background in horticulture, is a big pro-
moter of the university’s urban forestry
program.

“The benefits are multiple, the big-
gest one is exposure of our students, even

*“Students told me
that their active
participation in
research ... helped
them in developing
scientific curiosities
and interests in
learning.”*

our faculty, to new hori-
zons in Urban Forestry
and Natural Resources,”
Phillips said, touting the
program’s leading role na-
tionally, with the expec-
tation it will continue to
improve.

Some of that improve-
ment that faculty say will
benefit students in its ur-
ban forestry program is
working toward accredi-
tation through the Soci-
ety of American Foresters.

“Initially it was pretty
much dismissed (a specialized accredita-
tion in urban forestry),” said Dr. Kamran
Abdollahi, who teaches arboriculture and
ecosystem assessment, “but then it took
its own life and the pressure got to the
point that the Society of American Fore-
sters established a new accreditation, a spe-
cialized accreditation for urban forestry.”

Abdollahi said the curriculum used at
Southern for urban forestry was initially
used for the basis of SAF accreditation for
urban forestry programs. At present, only
one urban forestry program is accredited
through SAF: Virginia Tech University.

Although accreditation for the program
at Southern has been delayed because of
cuts in state funding for higher educa-
tion, Southern expects to become accred-
ited through SAF this year.

In addition to the program’s affiliation
with SAF, several faculty members also
are members of the Louisiana Forestry
Association.

The importance of urban forestry is
growing as more than 80 percent of the
United States population lives in urban
and suburban areas. Towns and cities in-
clude green areas for environmental and
ecological benefits, including enhancing
water and air quality.

Maintaining these urban forests has
a real cost. According to a USDA For-
est Service assessment from 2000, urban
areas have an estimated 3.8 billion trees.
Their value, based on replacement costs
alone, is more than \$2 trillion.

Value exists in sustainable forests, be
they in rural or urban areas. Qi said the
science for one is the same as the other.

“They learn urban silviculture, they
actually learn silviculture; they take urban
forest ecology, they learn forest ecology,”
Qi said. “We train them so that their job
opportunity will be diversified.” 🌲

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