



Land-Grant Universities

*Southern Region*  
**MINI LAND-GRANT MEETING**

June 9-12, 2025 | Fayetteville, Arkansas



**UofA**  
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE  
RESEARCH & EXTENSION  
*University of Arkansas System*



UNIVERSITY  
*of* ARKANSAS  
AT PINE BLUFF  
1873

  
UNIVERSITY OF  
ARKANSAS  
Dale Bumpers College of  
Agricultural, Food and Life Sciences

S-AHS: Southern Administrative Heads  
S-CARET: Southern Council for Agricultural Research,  
Extension and Teaching  
ASRED: Association of Southern Region  
Extension Directors  
AEA: Association of Extension Administrators (1890)  
S-APS: Academic Programs Section – Southern Region  
SRCC/PLN/1890 Comms: Southern Research Communicators Consortium/  
Southern Region Program Leadership Network /  
1890 Land-Grant Communications Committee  
ARD: Association of 1890 Research Directors  
agInnovation South: Southern Association of Agricultural  
Experiment Station Directors

# SOUTHERN REGION MINI LAND-GRANT MEETING

June 9-12, 2025 | Fayetteville, Arkansas

All conference sessions will take place at the Graduate Hotel. Registration and all meeting rooms are located on the second floor with the exception of Spoofer's Stone, Levon Helm, and Glenn Campbell.



## *Schedule of Events*

### MONDAY, JUNE 9

- 1:00-6:00 PM **Registration Open** (2nd Floor)
- 3:00-5:00 PM **Multistate Research Committee** (AI Green Boardroom, 2nd Floor)
- 5:45-8:15 PM **Shuttle Bus Service to/from the Welcome Reception** (Hotel Lobby)
- 6:00-8:00 PM **Welcome Reception**, UA Fayetteville Campus  
Don W. Reynolds Razorback Stadium, Diamond Club,  
Gate 1 - south endzone (parking in Lot 201)
  - University of Arkansas System President Jay Silveria
  - University of Arkansas Chancellor Charles Robinson
  - University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture VP Deacue Fields
  - University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff Interim Chancellor Andrea Stewart

### TUESDAY, JUNE 10

- 6:30-8:00 AM **Breakfast** (Brodie Payne, 2nd Floor)
- 7:00 AM-5:00 PM **Registration Open** (2nd Floor)
  - 8:00 AM **Welcome to Arkansas!** (Spoofer's Stone, 1st Floor)
- 8:05-10:00 AM **Plenary Session I** (Spoofer's Stone)  
**Strategically Communicating the Land-grant Mission in the 21st Century**
- 10:00-10:30 AM **Break** (2nd Floor)
- 10:30 AM-Noon **Separate Sessions** (2nd Floor unless otherwise noted)
  - S-AHS (Brodie Payne, AB)
  - S-CARET (Levon Helm, 1st Floor)
  - ASRED (Brodie Payne, CD)
  - AEA (Johnny Cash)
  - S-APS (AI Green Boardroom)
  - SRCC/PLN/1890 Communications (Glenn Campbell, 1st Floor)
- Joint Session** (2nd Floor)
  - ARD & agInnovation South (Trammel)
- Noon-1:30 PM **Lunch and Joint Sessions** (2nd Floor unless otherwise noted)
  - S-AHS, ASRED & S-CARET (Brodie Payne, AB)
  - ARD & agInnovation South (Trammel)
  - SRCC/PLN/1890 Communications (Glenn Campbell, 1st Floor)
  - General Lunch for All Others (Brodie Payne, CD)

- 1:30-3:00 PM **Separate Sessions** (2nd Floor unless otherwise noted)
- ASRED (Brodie Payne, CD)
  - S-AHS (Levon Helm, 1st Floor)
  - AEA (Johnny Cash)
  - SRCC/PLN/1890 Communications (Glenn Campbell, 1st Floor)
- Joint Sessions** (2nd Floor)
- ARD & agInnovation South (Trammel)
  - S-APS & S-CARET (Brodie Payne, AB)
- 3:00-3:30 PM **Break** (2nd Floor)
- 3:30-5:00 PM **Lewis Burke and NIFA Updates** (Spoonfer's Stone, 1st Floor)
- Evening **Dinner on Your Own** (See local restaurant list on conference website)

## WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11

- 6:30-8:30 AM **Breakfast** (Brodie Payne, 2nd Floor)
- 7:00-2:00 PM **Registration Open** (2nd Floor)
- 8:00-10:00 AM **Plenary Session II** (Spoonfer's Stone)  
**Growing Together: Faculty Recruitment and Retention Strategies for Advancing Land-Grant Missions**
- 10:00-10:30 AM **Break** (2nd Floor)
- 10:30 AM-Noon **Separate Session**
- S-APS (Levon Helm, 1st Floor)
- Joint Sessions with Communicators** (2nd Floor)
- S-AHS & S-CARET (Brodie Payne, AB)
  - agInnovation South & ASRED (Trammel)
  - ARD & AEA (Brodie Payne, CD)
- Noon-1:30 PM **Lunch and Joint Sessions** (2nd Floor)
- S-AHS, agInnovation South, & S-CARET (Brodie Payne, AB)
  - General Lunch for All Others (Brodie Payne, CD & Trammel)
- 1:30 PM **Board Buses for Afternoon Tours & Dinner** (Hotel Lobby)
- 2:15-4:15 PM **Tour the Center for Arkansas Farms and Food (CAFF) and the Market Center of the Ozarks**
- 4:00 PM **Board Bus at Hotel for only the Crystal Bridges Museum and Dinner** (Hotel Lobby)
- 4:45-6:00 PM **Visit Crystal Bridges Museum** (self-tour)
- 6:00-7:30 PM **Dinner at Heartland Whole Health Institute of the Museum** (Event Halls A & B)
- 7:30 PM **Board Buses and Return to Hotel**

## THURSDAY, JUNE 12

- 6:30-8:00 AM **Breakfast** (Brodie Payne, 2nd Floor)
- 8:00-10:00 AM **Plenary Session III** (Spoonfer's Stone, 1st Floor)  
**AI in Agriculture and the Environment**



- 10:00-10:30 AM **Break** (2nd Floor)
- 10:30 AM-Noon **Separate Session** (2nd Floor)
- S-AHS (Brodie Payne, AB)
- Joint Sessions with Communicators** (2nd Floor)
- ARD, AEA & S-CARET (Brodie Payne, CD)
  - agInnovation South & S-APS (Trammel)
- Noon **Lunch on Your Own and Farewell!**

## *Tours*

### **Center for Arkansas Farms and Food and the Market Center of the Ozarks**



### **Crystal Bridges Museum and dinner at the Heartland Whole Health Institute**



# Plenary Session Details

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## TUESDAY, JUNE 10 – 8:00 AM

(Spoofers Stone, 1st Floor)

### **Strategically Communicating the Land-grant Mission in the 21st Century**

This session blends inspiration with practical insights to enhance strategic communication during uncertain times. The session opens with a keynote on leveraging innovative communication to advance institutional goals, followed by a panel discussion where expert communicators share strategies for engaging diverse audiences across generations. It concludes with an interactive workshop where participants, guided by communications professionals, engage in scenario-based discussions to develop agile, forward-thinking strategies. This collaborative approach will capture a wealth of insights and best practices, creating a valuable resource to strengthen the land-grant mission in today's complex communications landscape.

**Moderator:** Marianne Smith Edge, CARET, Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment, University of Kentucky

### **Keynote Presentation Advancing Your Mission Through Strategic Communications**

Blake Woolsey, Chief Communications & Development Officer, Heartland Forward

### **Facilitated Panel Communicating Across Generations**

**Panelists:**

- Kelli Russell, Assistant Extension Professor, Agricultural Economics & Rural Sociology, Auburn University

- Latasha Ford, Research Communications Manager, College of Agriculture, Family Sciences and Technology, Fort Valley State University
- Nick Kordsmeier, Director of Communications, Arkansas Agricultural Experiment Station, University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture

### **Interactive Session Build Your Team to Effectively Communicate Impact**

## WEDNESDAY, JUNE 11 – 8:00 AM

(Spoofers Stone, 1st Floor)

### **Growing Together: Faculty Recruitment and Retention Strategies for Advancing Land-Grant Missions**

Faculty are essential to advancing the core mission of land-grant universities, from teaching and research to community engagement. However, like many industries, universities face challenges in hiring and retaining exceptional talent. For agricultural stakeholders, effective faculty recruitment and retention are key to sustaining university-industry partnerships, driving necessary research, and ensuring a steady pipeline of skilled graduates ready to enter the workforce. This session will engage industry and university administrators in exploring strategies to attract and retain top faculty.

**Moderator:** Carmen Agouridis, Senior Associate Dean in the Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment and Extension Professor of Ecosystem Protection and Restoration in the Department of Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering at the University of Kentucky

**Topics:**

### **Overview of Challenges for Institutions**

Deacue Fields, Vice President for Agriculture, University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture

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### **Creating a Supportive Environment for Faculty Retention**

Chancellor Randall Woodson,  
North Carolina State University

### **Table Discussions and Report Outs**

#### **A View from Industry on Attracting and Retaining Top Talent**

- Kim Beatty, VP of People Operations, Tyson Foods
- Vaden Spurlock, VP of Talent Management, Tyson Foods

### **Table Discussions and Report Outs**

**Moderators:** Carmen Agouridis and Deacue Fields

## **THURSDAY, JUNE 12 – 8:00 AM**

(Spoofers' Stone, 1st floor)

### **Artificial Intelligence in Agriculture and the Environment**

The overall objective of the session is to provide an update on how artificial intelligence (A.I.) is currently being incorporated into research, Extension, and academics at our Land Grant Universities. A.I. application in workforce development and continuing education will also be discussed. This session will feature 2 segments. The first hour features three speakers focusing on research and Extension, including a Q&A opportunity. The second hour will be a panel discussion focusing on academia and workforce development.

**Moderator:** Alton Thompson, Executive Director, Association of 1890 Research Directors

### **Keynote Presentation**

#### **Farms, Images and Diagnosis**

Olga U. Bolden-Tiller, Dean for the College of Agriculture, Environment and Nutrition Sciences (CAENS) at Tuskegee University (TU), and 1890 Research Director

### **Keynote Presentation**

#### **AI and Specialty Crops**

Dana Choi, Assistant Professor of Precision Ag and Agricultural Robotics, Department of Ag and Bio Engineering, Gulf Coast Research and Education Center, University of Florida

### **Keynote Presentation**

#### **Extension Bots and More Complex Decision-making Tools**

David Warren, AI Program Leader, The Extension Foundation and Senior Director of Integrated Digital Strategies, Oklahoma State University

### **Facilitated Panel**

#### **Academics and Workforce Development**

**Moderator:** Rich Bonanno, Executive Director, Association of Southern Region Extension Directors

#### **Panelists:**

- Bruce Erickson, Agronomy Education Distance and Outreach Director, Purdue University
- Robert Gilbert, Dean for Research and Executive Director for Academic Affairs, University of Florida
- David Warren, AI Program Leader, The Extension Foundation and Senior Director of Integrated Digital Strategies, Oklahoma State University



