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2025



SETTING THE STANDARD

Agriculture educator serves students, administers policy.



COLLEGE of
AGRICULTURE,
FAMILY SCIENCES
and TECHNOLOGY



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FULFILLING THE MISSION

FVSU alumna makes history, emerges as leader

By Latasha Ford

Dr. George Washington Carver notably said, “Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom.”

A scientific pioneer, Carver transformed the agricultural economy and paved the way for future scientists and educators like Clarissa Harris, whose path led to Tuskegee University.

The Montezuma, Georgia, native grew up in a small town but quickly learned the significance of education, research and service – the core principles of the land-grant university mission – as she advanced through secondary school and higher education. Several of her relatives graduated from Fort Valley State University (FVSU), including her father, who earned a degree in education.

Harris first attended Georgia Southwestern State University to pursue a bachelor’s degree in biology but then decided to continue the family tradition at FVSU. She transferred to the historically Black university in 2007.

“I wanted to be a medical doctor,” Harris said. “In high school, I was involved in FFA and 4-H. I knew it was beneficial, but I didn’t know what direction and how.”

While at FVSU, she discovered new possibilities like the Peach State Louis Stokes Alliance Program, which broadened her perspective on agricultural research. She earned a bachelor’s degree in biology and then became interested in the food sector. She recognized that a master’s



Dr. Clarissa Harris was named to the Meat Institute’s Class of 2025 Emerging Leaders.

degree in biotechnology aligned with her career goals to be a scientist and educator.

“I did an internship at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Richland, Washington,” Harris said. “I was paired with a scientist. One thing that stuck with me was he said with research, he can stop at one point and can always pick up where he left off on the next day.”

Harris observed the scientist’s joy in the work that he had done, which greatly influenced her research efforts. In addition to this collaborative opportunity, she said FVSU offered an amazing learning experience. She joined the National Society for Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS) chapter and learned that there is more than meets the eye with agriculture.

Working with her adviser, Dr. Ajit Mahapatra, Harris studied using spray washing solutions to reduce bacteria in goat meat.

“That project helped open that door to go into animal science for food safety,” she said.

After earning her master’s degree in 2013, Harris worked for a year as an Extension assistant under



The reward is knowing that I can guide students to their passions and going into the meat industry sector. Some of them now work for different companies, and I have students interested in pursuing their master's in meat science.



Dr. James Brown, program leader for FVSU's Agriculture and Natural Resources Extension Program.

"He introduced me to Extension. I'm glad that I was able to work professionally in that setting, doing outreach with constituents in the community and planning events," Harris said.

Brown also encouraged her to pursue a doctorate by telling her that she was capable. Believing in herself, she decided to continue her education at the University of Florida (UF) in the spring of 2015.

The knowledge she gained at FVSU prepared her for this rewarding endeavor, where she organized the graduate student symposium and helped with the beef cattle Extension short course.

She earned her Ph.D. in animal science in 2020 – the second African American to graduate from the UF program. Helping to pave that path like the person before her, Harris shared that another FVSU alumna came behind her to earn a Ph.D. in the same program.

Her message to students is to be open to all opportunities, and with a good support system, they can overcome any obstacle. Her supporters

are family, professors and UF adviser Dr. Sally Williams.

"She was the only African American faculty member in the Department of Animal Science at UF," Harris said. "She was the first African American graduate of the food science Ph.D. program at UF."

The FVSU alumna made her way to Tuskegee University in 2021. She is a research Extension assistant professor in the Department of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences. Honoring the land-grant mission, Harris is a researcher, educator and Extension professional. She teaches two courses – meat and meat products and advanced meat sciences. Her outreach and education efforts include offering a fabrication workshop on studying different cuts of meat and serving as a MANRRS adviser. Her research interests are food safety and microbiology. She also plans to visit FVSU, which has a meat judging team, to learn more about establishing a team at Tuskegee University.

"The reward is knowing that I can guide students to their passions and going into the meat industry sector. Some of them now work for different companies, and I have students interested in pursuing their master's in meat science," she said.

In 2024, the Meat Institute selected 24 participants for its 2025 Emerging Leaders Program, which promotes and develops future meat and poultry industry leaders. Harris was among this esteemed group. Sponsored by Cryovac Brand Food Packaging, this program provides the leaders with complimentary access to networking events, exclusive leadership programming including an advocacy trip to Washington, D.C., a personal industry mentor to guide them on their leadership journey, and access to Meat Institute board meetings for better understanding of broad industry initiatives and priorities.

Harris said she could not have imagined she would be where she is today.

"I have a picture of my sister and me with my grandfather standing beside a deer that we were getting ready to process," she described. "I never in a million years thought I would be doing some of the same things."

The Emerging Leader said her greatest reward is knowing she has helped others.

ROOTED IN AGRICULTURE, DRIVEN BY PASSION



FVSU graduate gives back through teaching and research

By Latasha Ford

Surrounded by farming, Aftab Siddique's childhood in India was deeply intertwined with agriculture. This early exposure sparked a keen interest that would ultimately shape his future.

"My grandfather was a government employee, but he loved farming," he said. "I remember he had a piece of land with dairy cattle, goats and sheep."

A visit to his uncle's house with his younger brother and sister also included learning how

to care for the farm animals.

These enjoyable experiences stayed with Siddique as he pursued a bachelor's degree in biotechnology in India and later decided to continue with graduate studies. Due to limited options, he looked for institutions known for small ruminant (goats and sheep) research in the United States.

"I landed on Fort Valley State University's (FVSU) website and applied to the animal science program," Siddique said.

As the oldest sibling, this was monumental because he was the first in his family to attend college.

"When I expressed that I wanted to study abroad, they did not think it was possible because we were not that well-established in terms of

Dr. Aftab Siddique works with Dr. Thomas Terrill to develop an app to help farmers.

finances,” he said. “Plus, when you have a farm, you don’t know when things are needed.”

He decided to take a chance to follow his passion for agriculture and technology. When he received an acceptance letter from FVSU, it filled his family with joy and confidence in his future.

“It was a great feeling,” Siddique said, smiling.

While at FVSU, his area of study focused on developing iron-fortified goat milk cheddar cheese.

“I learned a lot of instrumentations and worked with electron microscopy, fortification and textual analysis,” he said. “That helped me a lot when I went to Auburn University for my Ph.D.”

The FVSU graduate earned his degree in animal science in 2017 and completed his doctorate in food sciences (poultry) in 2023. He was pleasantly surprised to see his parents, wife and other family members joining the Zoom call for his dissertation defense presentation.

“My professor didn’t tell me,” Siddique said, recalling the touching moment. “They popped up on the screen, and in the middle of my presentation, I started to cry.”

He added it’s also special that his wife, Dr. Sanower Warsi, is a FVSU and Auburn graduate. She earned both degrees in entomology and is an FVSU postdoctoral researcher. Like his wife, Siddique returned to his alma mater in 2023

as a postdoctoral researcher in the College of Agriculture, Family Sciences and Technology.

He said he knew that he wanted to return to FVSU not only to do research but also to teach. He experienced the impact of educating students on artificial intelligence (AI) and big data analytics when studying for his Ph.D. and while at FVSU.

“I want to take all that I have learned and empower our young people or instill those same skill sets within them,” Siddique declared. “I have always wanted to come back to Fort Valley to work. I fell in love with this place.”

He noted the importance of teaching AI because of the knowledge gap.

“I want to fill that knowledge gap by developing these types of courses and educating students about what the industry wants. This will give them an extra edge that will set them apart from others,” he said. “Our undergraduate students have that potential. I saw this potential when I was a master’s student.”

Siddique said AI is a technique, but there is always a chance for error.

“You can never replace a human counterpart,” he said. “If you have a human, you can make the processing 100% accurate. It’s like ketchup – it makes your food tastier, but it does not replace your whole food.”



“

I want to take all that I have learned and empower our young people or instill those same skill sets within them. I have always wanted to come back to Fort Valley to work. I fell in love with this place.

”

In addition to teaching, Siddique values the freedom to explore and implement innovative ideas through his research.

“I take every day as a challenge to be first. I want to put FVSU first in everything,” he emphasized.

He commended his supervisor, Dr. Thomas Terrill, an animal science professor, for his support. The duo is developing an app to benefit farmers growing sericea lespedeza, a high-tannin forage, in Georgia and beyond. Their research involves AI to manage invasive plant weed species through advanced image recognition technologies. The app will give farmers a simple way to use their cell phones to take pictures and identify if a plant is a weed or sericea lespedeza.

Siddique has also published more than 10 abstracts, and his involvement as an FVSU student researcher included presenting at various conferences and winning awards.

Reflecting on his journey, he shared that his motivation comes from not wanting his students to face the same challenges he experienced

in India, where there was a lack of capable instructors.

“Biotechnology started in 2007 in India. There was only one college that offered an engineering degree in biotechnology. What I have observed over there is that it’s a booming field, but not a whole lot of people are there to teach it,” he said.

For this reason, Siddique wants students to learn from his experiences.

“I love teaching,” he said. “When I was a senior in high school, I tutored students just for fun. Even during my second year of college, I tutored first-year juniors in organic chemistry and modern analytical techniques.”

These encounters further fueled his passion for academia as he strives to inspire and cultivate the next generation of scientists.

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Siddique pilots a drone to inspect a Georgia farmer's land from above.





INSECTS INSPIRE INCREDIBLE CAREER

Plant science graduate becomes entomology researcher

Cleveland Ivey's first encounter with entomology came from a love for cicadas and their serenading cadence on the porch of his parents' house in the small south Georgia town of Coolidge.

Initially afraid of anything that crawled, Ivey grew fascinated by these tiny creatures.

"It's probably one of the earliest insects I was exposed to," said the Fort Valley State University (FVSU) graduate.

His paternal grandmother, Delma Ivey, would come to the rescue and pick the exuviae off the pecan and pine trees for Ivey to admire in a jar.

Recalling his childhood, he chuckled and said, "One of the things my grandma used to call me growing up was motormouth. I have a tendency, unfortunately, to talk a bit loud. I also look at cicadas as loud. I love the way they look and the fact that they're able to produce those sounds."

Ivey's captivation with insects grew as he joined the Wildcat pack. Already familiar with the historically Black university, he comes from a long line of family members who graduated from FVSU, including his parents, Steve and Stacey Ivey. His younger brother, James Ivey, is currently enrolled as an agricultural engineering technology major.

FVSU summer programs led by Dr. Mohammed Ibrahim and the late Jackie Whitehead sparked his interest in agriculture, but he never expected that entomology was a career option. A chance meeting with entomologist Dr. George Mbata in the hallway inspired Ivey to enroll in his biology course and join his laboratory.

"I call him my second father. It's been a blessing. We still check in with each other," Ivey said.

Experimenting in Mbata's lab became a monumental experience for Ivey as his exposure to entomology expanded. Among those lessons was learning why the work in this field is important.

"I remember Dr. Mbata saying that the work we do is not for fame or status. It's to be able to give back and help," Ivey said.

Mbata acknowledged that Ivey's undergraduate research on corn and the maize weevil was published in *Biological Control*, a highly rated entomology journal. He expressed that this is a great accomplishment for an undergraduate.



Dr. Cleveland Ivey works with peach seedlings.

"Right from the first time I set my eyes on Dr.

Cleveland Ivey, I knew he would become a great entomologist," Mbata shared.

Ivey admitted he did not have any aspirations for a certain career while in high school. "I just knew I needed to get an education and a job. I fell in love with it (entomology)," he said.

While at FVSU, Ivey continued to flourish. He attended his first entomology conference in 2017 in Memphis, Tennessee, where he presented a poster on his research. This event was the bridge to furthering his education. He connected with a couple, Drs. Greg and Amanda Hodges, from the University of Florida (UF) and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Plant Industry.

After graduating from FVSU in 2018 with a bachelor's degree in plant science, he moved to Gainesville, Florida, to start graduate school at UF, working with Drs. Amanda Hodges, Norman Leppla and Joe Eger. He soon earned a master's degree in entomology in 2020 and transitioned into UF's Ph.D. program in entomology in 2021.

"Think about food security. Think about the way we view and make predictions. Insects are excellent bioindicators. They have laid claim to every facet of our lives. Give them a chance," Ivey encouraged.

Looking back on his time at FVSU, he said he earned more than a degree — he gained a passport, coming from a small town with just one stoplight. He saw some resemblance to his FVSU community when he moved to Balm, Florida, where he began working at the UF-Gulf Coast Research and Education Center with Drs. Hugh Smith and Phil Hahn.

His research focused on *Megalurothrips usitatus*, commonly known as bean flower thrips. Ivey described them as minuscule insects that originated from the Asian tropics.

“They’re really fascinating. You can find them bunched up in flowers,” said the insect enthusiast.

He noted that these insects attack beans, which is a problem in Florida. The southern part of the Sunshine State accounts for the bulk of Florida’s snap bean production.

“A lot of the growers communicated that thrips were giving them issues,” Ivey said. “For my Ph.D., most of my work involved driving from Balm to Homestead at least once a month. Dr. Andy Jean-Louis, a Doctor of Plant Medicine student at the time, and I would sample different types of beans and bring them back to the lab. We let the growers know what species of thrips we were finding in the field.”

In addition, he said thrips are notorious for developing resistance to chemicals because they typically have shorter life cycles, thereby causing growers to lose money. Ivey said they tested various insecticides on different species to help farmers monitor and manage these insects.

After earning his doctorate, he became a postdoctoral research associate at UF. His experience included researching organic pesticides and continuing to work with small-scale alternative crop growers. Ivey then returned to his Georgia roots as a postdoctoral research entomologist and worked with Dr. David Shapiro-Ilan at the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Southeastern Fruit and Tree Nut Research Laboratory in Byron, Georgia. He first worked with Shapiro-Ilan as a student volunteer while studying at FVSU. Ivey’s time in Shapiro-Ilan’s lab increased his interest in biological control and a career with the USDA-ARS.

A huge fan of classic shows like *In the Heat of the Night*, Ivey values the opportunity to make a

real impact by finding ways to help farmers and communities.

“I always think back to Coolidge and the folks who had such an impact on my life,” he said. His maternal grandmother, Edythe Harden, for example, periodically sends him agriculture- and insect-related newspaper clippings, which serve as encouragement.

“I also think about the folks at Fort Valley State University and in surrounding areas,” Ivey said. “They add to my motivation and drive to keep going.”

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Ivey smiles with his Fort Valley State University mentor, Dr. George Mbata.



BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Public health alumna uses degree to communicate science at a medical college.

By ChaNaè Bradley

Cindy Montgomery, PhD, a 2009 Fort Valley State University Master of Public Health (MPH) alumna, serves as the public relations and social media manager for the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine's (PCOM) South Georgia campus in Moultrie, Georgia. Montgomery, a native of Doerun, Georgia, shares how her graduate degree, journalism background and higher education marketing and communications experiences, have helped her create a

rewarding career where she couples her public health education and knowledge to communicate about science and the people with whom she works.



Why did you choose to pursue a Master's in Public Health at Fort Valley State University?

"In 2004, I was working at Fort Valley State University as the publications editor in the Agricultural Communications Department. Dr. Oreta Samples encouraged me to start the program. At the time, she was in her second year in the MPH program. She expressed that agriculture ties directly into public health and was connected to my role in communications. Once I enrolled, I saw that all the issues and topics I was writing about were covered in my public health classes. Classes, like epidemiology and toxicology, provided additional insight into the agricultural issues I covered in my daily work."

How was the program set up?

“It was face-to-face. During that time all the classes were at the Warner Robins campus in the evenings. Each class was three hours once a week. I took two or three classes a semester. It was difficult to stay awake sometimes after working all day. Also, I was a single parent at the time, but my coworkers and professors were encouraging and supportive. My son was able to take some continuing education classes for kids that were in the same building. He would take those classes and when he was done, he would slip into the back of my class until I was done. My professors understood that we worked full-time and had family obligations.”

Describe your classmates and how you connected throughout the program?

“We had textbook swaps among our group because books were expensive. We would have study sessions on weekends and work on group projects. This was before Zoom, so we would meet in person and call each other on the phone. This really set the stage for when I entered my Ph.D. program.”

Share how you interacted with professors/instructors in the MPH program?

“They were encouraging. Dr. Zimmerli was amazing. He was great about explaining how your professional experience and your studies could mesh. He knew my background was marketing and communications, and he helped me understand how marketing and communications goes right along with health behavior and promotion. I was able to do projects combining the two.”

What was your most memorable experience while matriculating through the program.

“Traveling to the wastewater treatment plant and seeing how wastewater is treated. Learning how it’s cleaned and what happens to the debris that comes out of wastewater was eye-opening. It is a very scientific process. We also went to the drinking water treatment plant. I enjoyed the epidemiology class. I describe it as detective work. When COVID hit, I remember how the media outlets were trying to determine what to do. I felt like I was back in class. Having that knowledge was beneficial. We also studied health crisis management in my courses, and I applied that knowledge in my public relations role while working for a university during the COVID pandemic.”

As a communications professional at a medical college, how does your communications and public health background apply to your work?

“I use it every day. Many of our students who enter the Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine Program have an MPH. They are surprised to find out I also have an MPH. It helps because I understand their language when they discuss public health research. Also, public health work requires communication skills. When you understand both fields, you can see the intersection. Our mission at PCOM is to help increase access to healthcare in rural areas. A big part of that is not just having doctors, but it’s also about being able to share information about emerging health issues and chronic health conditions.”

Describe how it felt to graduate with an MPH?

“I was so excited to graduate with that degree. Graduating with the MPH was the culmination of many hours of hard work and dedication. My son, my mom and my brother came to commencement. I’m a first-generation college student in my family. I was the first to earn a bachelor’s, master’s and doctorate degree. Earning the MPH was only possible because of my family’s support and encouragement.”

What would you say to someone interested in the MPH program at FVSU?

“It’s a great program. It’s practical and relevant. You will enjoy the knowledge and immediately be able to apply it to your profession.”

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*In 2024, Cindy Montgomery earned her doctorate in communication from Regent University. She also holds a bachelor’s degree in English with a journalism minor from Valdosta State University. Montgomery worked as a newspaper journalist for several years before beginning her career in higher education marketing and communications in July 2001. She’s also taught health, journalism, communications and public relations courses part-time.

To learn more about the MPH program at FVSU, visit <https://bit.ly/3XE9Ye9>.

AG FAMILY DAY

Making memories,
establishing
connections

Each semester administrators and faculty members from the College of Agriculture, Family Sciences and Technology, invite current students and undecided majors together for a non- formal gathering to share information about programs and career options. The event, known as AG Family Day, includes games, food and a meet and greet between faculty and students, as well as Cooperative Extension employees. Students have an opportunity to engage with faculty and learn more about agriculture as a profession. Check out a few photos highlighting the event over the past two years.







SETTING THE STANDARD

AGRICULTURE EDUCATOR SERVES STUDENTS, ADMINISTERS POLICY.



When Kedrione Harris walks into a classroom at Calhoun County High School, his height alone commands attention. Standing at six feet, seven inches, he may be one of the tallest educators in the state of Georgia.

Harris, a native of Edison, Georgia, graduated from Fort Valley State University (FVSU) in 2008 with a degree in agricultural economics. He also graduated from Salem International University in 2010 with a Master of Business Administration.

For the past 14 years, Harris has taught agricultural education and served as advisor for the Future Farmers of America (FFA) at Calhoun County High in his hometown. As an agricultural educator, he covers various subjects including agricultural science, technology, horticulture and animal science.

He also guides students in planning and executing individual Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) projects and promotes FFA within the school and community. In addition, Harris serves as the Career Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE) director where he manages and oversees all CTAE programs.

“It is my responsibility to ensure the programs are aligned with state and federal guidelines and make sure they meet industry standards while addressing local workforce needs,” he said.

While growing up in Edison, Harris was raised on a 1100-acre farm. Crops grown on the land included peanuts, corn, cotton and sorghum. The agriculture educator is actively engaged in the day-to-day operation of the farm that is owned by his father, Wilbon Greggs, who attended Fort Valley State College.

After graduating from Calhoun County High School and lettering in basketball, Harris decided to attend FVSU. He followed his father, sister and several aunts to the institution and accepted a scholarship to play basketball.

“I also wanted to major in agriculture,” he said.

When selecting his major, Harris said the process was simple. He started by completing a postcard to inquire about FVSU’s agriculture program. When asked what his intended major would be, he selected agricultural economics.

“I wanted to follow my sister, Jacquelyn Howard, who started out with the same major,” Harris said.

Once he arrived in middle Georgia, Harris wasted no time getting the most out of campus life.

“I was able to socialize and meet people from different socio-economic backgrounds. I also

“

I had a fantastic academic experience while at FVSU. I was exposed to many great professors, guidance leaders and administrators while I was there.

”

enjoyed homecoming and participating in the agriculture program,” he said.

Furthermore, the Calhoun County native expressed FVSU’s classroom atmosphere. “I had a fantastic academic experience while at FVSU. I was exposed to many great professors, guidance leaders and administrators while I was there,” he said.

In addition to focusing on his classroom assignments, Harris had time to participate in extracurricular activities. He pledged Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity Incorporated and was a starter on the men’s basketball team. As a varsity athlete, he had to balance his studies accordingly.

“As a student-athlete and member of a team, our time had to be prioritized. Academics came first and we had mandatory study hall after practice,” he said.

Despite having a full plate both socially and academically, Harris managed to complete an internship at Golden Kist Poultry (now Pilgrim’s Pride) in Douglas, Georgia.

“While an intern, I was able to focus on developing my knowledge, skills and abilities related to poultry production, processing and agribusiness operations.”

After graduating from FVSU, Harris worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) for several months before



heading to Calhoun County to become a teacher. He also worked for two years as an agriculture teacher in the Bibb County School District.

His efforts as an agricultural educator in Calhoun County caught the attention of the Georgia State Senate.

“I was nominated to fill a vacant position on the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GAPSC). Upon senate approval, Governor (Brian) Kemp swore me in and appointed me to serve,” Harris said.

In 2021, Harris served as a commissioner on the Ethics Educators Review Committee (EERC) of the GAPSC and was promoted to EERC vice-chair in 2022. Two years later (June 2024), Gov. Kemp reappointed Harris to serve a second term as chair of the EERC.

“My role as a GAPSC committee member is to oversee the preparation, certification and disciplinary actions of public educators in Georgia. This includes setting standards for teacher certification, reviewing educator preparation programs, and investigating and taking action against educators who violate the state’s Code of Ethics for Educators,” Harris said.

Harris added that when he was presented with the opportunity to serve as EERC chair, he felt honored.

“To be considered for a position like this speaks volumes of the individuals who thought that

Kedrione Harris is not only an educator, but a full-time farmer. He remains active in the day-to-day operations of the 1,100-acre farm owned by his father.

much about me. I greatly appreciate them,” he said.

More importantly Harris said his educational and administrative duties are to help students.

“I love what I do. I have a passion for kids and the ability to help them maximize their potential for greatness. I value the opportunities to shape young minds, help students achieve their goals and help them grow academically. I also enjoy fostering meaningful connections with students, parents and colleagues,” he said.

As an FVSU alumnus, Harris has a biased sales pitch when promoting his alma mater to interested students. Especially to those interested in studying an agricultural discipline.

“FVSU has a strong tradition in agriculture and has many scholarships and internship opportunities. Agriculture is a growing field with diverse career paths and FVSU has been rated the top public Historically Black College and University in Georgia for the past seven years.”

■ agCOMPLISH

WEST AFRICAN NATIVE EARNS GRADUATE DEGREE FROM FORT VALLEY STATE

By Russell Boone Jr.

Imagine leaving a career to seek a graduate degree. Then, on your first trip away from home, you decide to pursue that degree in another country.

That's what Macdonald Aloh decided to do.

Aloh, a native of Ebony States, Nigeria, will graduate from Fort Valley State University (FVSU) December 2024 with a Master of Science degree in Public Health (MPH) with emphasis in environmental health. In addition to being a full-time student, he is also a full-time employee for Monroe County's Department of Public Health (DPH) in Forsyth, Georgia.

Some of his main responsibilities include pool inspections, well testing and septic inspections.

Before coming to FVSU, Aloh graduated from medical school in Nigeria and was a registered anesthesiologist.

While completing his post-graduate internship, he found out about the MPH program from Caroline Obi, a fellow Nigerian who was completing her studies at FVSU. He then reached out to Dr. Oreta Samples, assistant professor and program coordinator for FVSU's MPH Program. Samples sent him the requirements for admission to the program. After successfully meeting the criteria, he applied for his student visa and began his trip to the U.S.

Coming from Nigeria, Aloh was a bit concerned about fitting in the U.S. culturally, but once he arrived on FVSU's campus, he felt right at home.

Aloh rates his FVSU student experience a solid 10. "At Fort Valley State University there are professors who will bring out the best in you. They keep encouraging you to work hard and I can say that is their goal," he said.

The Nigerian native said that when he enrolled in the program, he never knew he would achieve several accolades and opportunities. In 2023, he received the Best Environmental Health Student Award at the Georgia Environmental Health Conference where he won a \$2,000 cash prize. He followed that up with a \$2,000 scholarship from the FVSU Foundation for his academic achievements.

The MPH student says that having a full-time job while completing work on his degree was no problem because most of his classes began at 6 p.m. He was able to apply some of the experiences from the job to his coursework.

While matriculating at FVSU, Aloh completed an internship with the National Environmental Health Association (NEHA) in Cabarrus County, North Carolina. His main responsibility was testing wells for high lead content because that was the main source of water for county residents. He also distributed information on lead content to clinics in the county.

Additionally, he participated in a peer review program at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia. There, he learned how to review, critique and certify articles and papers before being published in the CDC Journal. Aloh was offered and accepted a



“

At Fort Valley State University there are professors who will bring out the best in you. They keep encouraging you to work hard and I can say that is their goal.

”

position as a CDC peer reviewer, a post he still holds.

When it comes to going away to school to pursue a degree, Aloh says one must not be hesitant to venture out and experience new horizons.

“You need to break out of your shell, travel to different areas, explore options and learn about different people and how they behave. You will be amazed as to how much you will learn and how impactful that would be in your life,” Aloh said.

Furthermore, Aloh said he recommends FVSU to anybody who wishes to continue their education. “I know of one person from my school back in Nigeria who will soon be attending the university.” Aloh added that he appreciates that at FVSU and in the U.S., one can achieve success with hard work and dedication.

In the future, Aloh said he sees himself as an advocate for the environment, working closely with officials in his home country of Nigeria to improve environmental health.

“I wanted to get more knowledge in another country and make an impact on the health of Nigerians.” He said that earning his degree from FVSU and his work experience with the DPH in Monroe County will make that possible.

The December graduate plans to earn a doctorate degree in environmental health and preventive medicine. Aloh also wants to continue his work as a CDC peer reviewer and conduct impactful research with the goal of winning the Nobel Peace Prize for science.

For more information about the MPH program at FVSU visit <https://bit.ly/3WcBNsm>.

■ agCOMPLISH



DESIGNING A *UNIQUE* PATH

Clothing and textiles steers family and consumer sciences alumna into a rewarding career.

By ChaNaè Bradley

A passion for fashion and the skill of sewing led Dr. Vivian Fluellen to a career in family and consumer sciences.

The retired chair for Fort Valley State University's (FVSU) Family and Consumer Sciences Department, endeavored on a unique path into the profession.

"I used to make clothes for dolls. That was my passion. I'm more into the clothing, apparel and textiles area of family and consumer sciences," Fluellen said. These early influences stemmed from her childhood, where she spent time learning the skill from her mother and high school home economics teacher.

As a result, the Dublin, Georgia, native graduated high school and began attending Fort Valley State College (FVSC) in 1970, where she majored in vocational home economics education.

"A lot of my friends attended at the same time. My sister was also here," she said. While matriculating at FVSC, Fluellen was an honor roll student, a member of the FVSC Home Economics

Club, and the state and national home economics associations.

"That's where my professionalism started to grow," Fluellen said. It was then she began attending state meetings and traveling to other college campuses, participating in activities with students and expanding her outreach in community service.

During her senior year, Fluellen learned about a graduate program from an FVSC alumna, who was attending school at Iowa State University (ISU).

Intrigued, Fluellen followed her interest and applied to graduate school at ISU, where she was accepted. To her surprise, she received an assistantship. After graduating from FVSC with her bachelor's degree in 1974, Fluellen attended ISU to pursue a master's degree in textiles and clothing.

Fluellen said moving to Iowa from middle Georgia was a big change. "The main thing was the weather," she said laughing. She also expressed how she had to become close with her classmates, somewhat like family, because she did not get to go home often.



Dr. Vivian Fluellen poses with staff before a community event.

“You couldn’t afford to go home much because you were so far away. You had to decide if you were going home for Thanksgiving or Christmas,” she said. However, Fluellen expressed that she and her classmates would have gatherings to make up for not being able to travel home.

In addition to the geographical change and distance from family, Fluellen described the lack of minorities attending ISU in the 1970s.

“At that time there were not many African Americans in my area (FCS). I faced many obstacles and challenges while at Iowa State, but because of my strong family and spiritual background, I was able to persevere” she said.

Along with her personal experiences, Fluellen expressed how her educational experience at ISU expanded her research skills and knowledge in clothing and textiles, exposing her to many areas where she could work.

Dr. Vivian Fluellen (center) cuts the ribbon during the grand opening of the Family Development and Quality Childcare Center Complex.



In 1976 Fluellen graduated from ISU and began her professional career as a visiting instructor in clothing and textiles for the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. After a year in Illinois, she made her way back to Georgia and then gained experience in the clothing and textiles industry.

“I worked with J.P. Stevens and Company in my hometown as a textile designer. I forecasted fabrics and how they could be used in the future. Designers would visit from New York twice a year, and I would work with them on developing experimental fabrics. I had the opportunity to see designs placed on paper and complete the whole design process to product,” Fluellen said.

J.P. Stevens and Company designed items such as the fabric for billiard boards used on pool tables, and the green jacket fabric worn by golfers who participated in the Masters Tournament.

After working in industry for a short period, Fluellen learned about a job at FVSC.

“A former colleague informed me about a job opening for a textiles and clothing instructor, and I said, ‘Oh, that seems like something I would want to do,’” she said.

To get more information, Fluellen called Dr. Dorothy Conteh, chair of the FVSC FCS Department at the time to ask her about the job.

“She encouraged me to complete the application and the rest is history,” Fluellen said smiling. After applying and interviewing, Fluellen began her career at her alma mater in September of 1981.

Many of the professors who taught her became her colleagues. Fluellen credits Ms. Gladys

Sampson and Ms. Gladys Grace for providing insight and encouragement as a new instructor.

“Even though my parents instilled in me the work ethics and my spiritual background, my teachers instilled the knowledge in me to be successful – not just book knowledge but working with families and working with the community,” she said.

Along with her teaching duties, Fluellen also had a joint appointment with Cooperative Extension as an Extension specialist in clothing and textiles. This allowed her to train paraprofessionals and Extension agents to do informal teaching in a community setting. She often included students in her community work with families as well.

“I would often use my community resources to recruit students for the department. I also developed many publications in personal development, family resource management, dress for success and many more,” she said.

While working at FVSU, Fluellen completed her Ph.D. from ISU in family and consumer sciences education. She also completed a certificate program in family financial planning.

In addition to her role as an associate professor, Fluellen served in several capacities during her tenure at the institution. Her roles included interim program leader for FVSU’s Cooperative Extension Program, executive director for the Head Start and Early Head Start programs, and director of the Family Development Center and Quality Childcare Center Complex.

Fluellen said some of the highlights of her career include establishing the department’s reaccreditation with the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS). She secured more than \$4 million in external grant funds for the university. Fluellen also developed six online courses for the 1890 Family and Consumer Sciences-Distance Instructional Alliance (FCS-DIA) Family Financial Planning Certificate Program.

After 37 years of service, Fluellen retired in 2018. The mother of three and wife of Jared Fluellen, FVSU farm manager, said she hopes that her time at the university made a difference in the lives of others.

“I hope that I brought more insight to working with industry, and that I helped students become successful in their particular area,” she said.



Dr. Vivan Fluellen poses with her family.

When Fluellen is out in the community, she is often recognized by graduates, and they speak about their experiences.

“It’s good that they can remember me from when I worked with them at Fort Valley, and they are all doing great things,” she said.

Since retiring, Fluellen serves as president of the missionary society and secretary of the stewardess board at her church. She participates in outreach in the community by providing food for homeless shelters and helping local schools collect school supplies. She also continues to serve as an adjunct professor when needed. She expressed her desire to see the FCS program flourish.

“I want the program to continue to grow and to be viable to students. I want it to be better than what it was in the past,” Fluellen said.

For more information about the FCS Program at FVSU, visit <https://bit.ly/3TyComX>

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NEW HEIGHTS

Veterinary technology graduate begins his career



By Russell Boone Jr.

Animals, aquatic life and household pets have intrigued Brandon McIntyre since childhood.

The Lawrenceville, Georgia, native turned that fascination into a professional career after graduating from Fort Valley State University (FVSU) with a Bachelor of Science degree in veterinary technology spring 2024.

“I decided to attend FVSU because after researching different veterinary colleges in Georgia, I found out that the institution has a very reputable program,” the 22-year-old said.

However, McIntyre did not make up his mind to fulfill his childhood dream until his senior year of high school.

“I did dual enrollment at Georgia Gwinnett College. While in the program, I started taking early veterinary classes and exploring various

aspects of the major. It wasn’t until this point that I decided this is the career I wanted to pursue.”

Once enrolled at FVSU, McIntyre immersed himself into his studies and enjoyed campus life.

“Overall, I would say that my experience as an undergraduate student has been excellent.

Everything from my major and the professors in my department, living on campus and my interactions with other people has been enjoyable. I’ve never encountered any problems while an undergraduate at FVSU.”

Furthermore, he credits Dr. Saul Mofya, head of the veterinary technology department, for helping him successfully complete his academic journey.

“I consider him to be a mentor, a role model and a very serene and knowledgeable man,” McIntyre said.

When he wasn’t studying, the Lawrenceville native spent most of his free time in various community service activities. This included participating in campus clean-up projects, donating goods to the public and decorating the campus during homecoming.

The new alumnus plans to steer interested students to attend the middle Georgia institution.

“I would say that Fort Valley is a family-oriented school that looks out for its students in all aspects. From living on campus to interactions with faculty and staff, there is someone there for you. On top of that, it offers a variety of majors including the new nursing program.”

Brandon McIntyre conducts a lab experiment preparing him for a career in veterinary technology.

As a member of FVSU’s 2024 graduating class, McIntyre says he is excited about his achievement, knowing that all the work he put in will slowly pay off.

“I also feel a great deal of comfort, knowing that I can start a new chapter in my life outside of college with the knowledge I have gained.”

McIntyre hopes to have an informative and positive impact on his clients once he starts his career.

“By doing so, I can build strong client patient relationships. In addition to this, I want my clients to be up front and trust me with their situations,” he said. “I’m ready to find myself setting off for a new stage in my life,” McIntyre said.

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UNDECIDED ABOUT YOUR MAJOR?



Selecting a major in college may be easy for some, but for those who are undecided, agriculture is a viable option. Fort Valley State University offers 8 undergraduate majors and 3 graduate programs through its College of Agriculture, Family Sciences and Technology. These programs can prepare students to become dietitians, engineers, or veterinarians just to name a few. Below is a list of programs offered that can be a jumpstart to an exciting career.

Bachelor's Degree Programs

- Agricultural Economics
- Agricultural Education
- Agricultural Engineering Technology
- Animal Science
- Electronic Engineering Technology
- Family & Consumer Science
 - Food and Nutrition
 - Infant and Child Development
- Plant Science
 - Environmental soil science
 - Biotechnology
 - Horticulture
- Veterinary Technology

Master's Degree Programs

- Animal Science
- Biotechnology
 - Plant
 - Animal
 - Applied
- Public Health (MPH)
 - Environmental Health
 - Epidemiology

What can graduates do with a degree from the College of Agriculture?

Students are prepared for many careers. Possible jobs include:

- › Economist
- › Teacher
- › Veterinary Technician
- › County Extension Agent
- › Researcher

For more information, visit:
fvsu.academics

or contact:
Fanisha Maze
marketing and outreach coordinator

478-342-8215
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FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES PROGRAM GRANTED FULL ACCREDITATION

By Russell Boone Jr.

The American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences (AAFCS) recently awarded full accreditation to Fort Valley State University's (FVSU) Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS) program for the next 10 years ending in 2034.

AAFCS is a professional organization dedicated to professionals and students in FACS. It also provides them a platform to share knowledge, research and promote a high quality of life to families and communities with experts in the FACS field.

"This accomplishment is a testament to the hard work, dedication and commitment of our faculty, staff and students. Achieving accreditation signifies that our program meets rigorous standards of quality and excellence in education," said Dr. Francine Hollis, chair, of FVSU's FACS Department.

Furthermore, the FVSU faculty member said that meeting the mark for accreditation confirms the effectiveness of the program's curriculum and teaching methods. Hollis added that accreditation promotes the relevance of the program in preparing students for successful careers in the field.

"Personally, I feel a deep sense of pride and gratitude. This achievement reflects the collaborative effort of our entire department. I am thankful for the support of our university community and the AAFCS, who believe in the quality of our program," Hollis said.

Some of the certification criteria include mission and goals, curriculum, learning outcomes, assessment and evaluation, faculty

qualifications, diversity and inclusion and community and professional engagement.

Hollis elaborated about the advantages of having a fully certified program. Some of them include improved chances for employment, increased networking opportunities and students being recognized as products of a quality educational program.

"Employers often look for graduates from accredited programs because it assures them that students have completed a rigorous curriculum from qualified faculty," she said.

"Graduating from a fully accredited AAFCS Family and Consumer Science program at FVSU not only enhances a student's qualifications but also prepares him or her to make meaningful contributions to their careers and communities," Hollis said.

With the program garnering accreditation, Hollis said that FVSU FACS will not stand idle.

"Now that the program has achieved accreditation, my vision is for us to maintain our status by implementing recommendations approved by the AAFCS. This will allow us to further enhance our program and continue to work on strategies identified in our strategic plan," she said.

Currently, some of the strategies include the acquisition of more full-time faculty and the recruitment and retention of more students, which Hollis said is a top priority.

"We will also focus on enhancing curriculum relevance, strengthening community partnerships, expanding efforts on research and innovation and building on alumni relationships.



Dr. Francine Hollis, chair of FVSU's Family and Consumer Sciences Department, proudly displays letter confirming accreditation from the American Association of Family and Consumer Sciences.

This will assist us in marketing and recruiting for the program,” Hollis said.

“Discipline-specific accreditations are a wonderful validation of an academic program’s value and quality,” said Dr. Keith Howard, dean of FVSU’s College of Agriculture, Family Sciences and Technology (CAFST).

“We are extremely proud that our FACS Department, led by Dr. Hollis, has been reaccredited by the AAFCS. This is a well-deserved achievement for the department, and we applaud the efforts of Dr. Hollis and her staff in meeting the needed requirements for this important milestone,” Howard said.

Fort Valley State’s FACS program offers one major with two concentrations, food and nutrition along with infant and child development. Currently there are more than 20 students enrolled in the program.

For more information about FVSU’s FACS program, visit <https://bit.ly/3TjoXbk>.

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Graduating from a fully accredited AAFCS Family and Consumer Science program at FVSU not only enhances a student’s qualifications but also prepares him or her to make meaningful contributions to their careers and communities.

”



MAKING A DIFFERENCE

FVSU alumnus serves North Carolina as state conservationist.



By Russell Boone Jr.

For more than 37 years, Timothy (Tim) Beard has worked for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Some of his past positions in the agency include being director of the Management Service Division and branch chief for Environmental Improvement Programs at the national headquarters in Washington, D.C.

The longtime USDA veteran now serves as state conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in North Carolina. He's held this role for the past 11 years.

Beard, a native of Harlem, Georgia, graduated from then Fort Valley State College (now university) in 1988 with a Bachelor of Science degree in agriculture engineering technology (AET).

As state conservationist, Beard is responsible for the management, leadership and direction of all administrative and technical functions for the USDA's NRCS in North Carolina. He also oversees numerous programs that involve financial planning and management, equipment and property management, record management and communications. Other duties include coordinating, communicating and collaborating with various conservation partners.

Furthermore, the Fort Valley State graduate is accountable for a staff of more than 170 NRCS employees in North Carolina, 10 of whom report directly to him.

Beard was able to briefly take a break and answer a few questions about his time as an undergraduate on the FVSU campus.

Were you raised on a farm?

"I don't consider myself as being raised on a farm, but we grew almost everything we ate. My parents and grandparents always grew their own food while I was growing up in rural Columbia County, Georgia."

Did you have any relatives to graduate from FVSU?

"My dad's younger sister and brother (Martha and Cleveland Beard) both graduated from FVSC in the 1970's."

Why did you decide to enroll at FVSU?

"Even though my parents and grandparents did not receive a college education, they always encouraged my sister and I to attend college. I was also a two-sport letterman in high school with football being my best sport, but I was not recruited by many schools. I asked my uncle (Cleveland) about Fort Valley State's football program. He spoke to then head football coach Douglas (Doug) Porter, who requested my high school game films. After seeing them, he offered me a scholarship to play football at 'The Valley.'"

What or who inspired you to select your major?

"One of my high school teachers offered me a summer job working for his dad's irrigation company. At one of our worksites, there was an inspector that attended Auburn University. He majored in agriculture engineering. I had never heard of an agricultural engineer. I thought his job was interesting, and he explained what



Timothy (Tim) Beard not only majored in agriculture engineering technology but attended Fort Valley State on a football scholarship.



In addition to being a productive student and member of the football team, Beard also found time to pledge the Upsilon Sigma Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Incorporated.

agriculture engineering was and how the major offered various employment opportunities.”

AET is not an easy major. How did you balance your time to successfully complete your degree?

“It wasn’t easy. But part of the college experience is about being resourceful, flexible and disciplined. There was a time and place for all aspects of my college experience.”

Did you participate in any undergraduate organizations or extra-curricular activities

“I played football and pledged the mighty Upsilon Sigma Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Incorporated.”

How would you rate your undergraduate experience at FVSU?

“My experience at (then) FVSC was amazing. It helped mold me into who I am today, and I’m blessed to be a Wildcat. The chant of “I’m so glad I go to Fort Valley” is food for my soul.”

How well did FVSU prepare you for your professional career?

“I had great instructors at Fort Valley State. Dr. Charles Magee and Dr. Chau Nguyen were the main professors for AET students. They prepared me for work life and life in general.”

Before graduating, did you participate in any internships?

“No, I didn’t participate in an internship. However, I did work for several summers on the Fort Valley State farm.”

What do you enjoy the most about your job?

“I love my job. What I enjoy the most is developing and enhancing my staff’s professional growth.”

If a student approached you about attending FVSU, what advice would you give them to achieve academic success?

“My sales pitch would be that FVSU is the ultimate family experience, and its support system is second to none. To achieve academic success takes discipline and perseverance, but it’s achievable. That was my experience, and I hope that standard still exists.”

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*Beard is married to his wife, Zebetta (also an FVSU graduate). They have a daughter and one grandson.

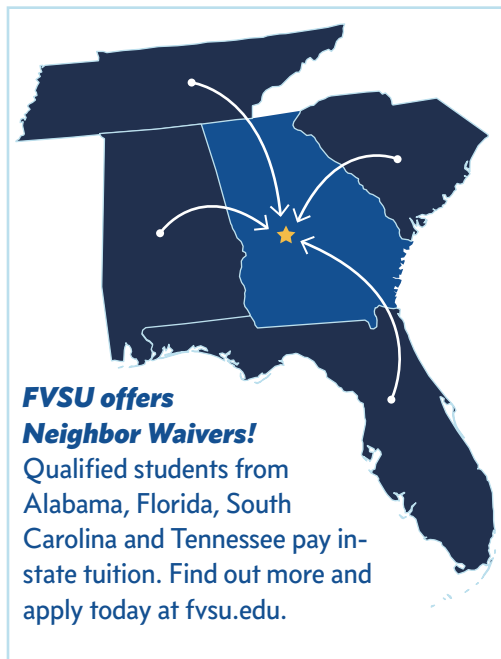


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