

FAMU's Agribusiness Program is in

Full Bloom

The students, faculty, and alumni of Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University's Agribusiness Program have garnered the national spotlight. Appropriately themed, "Come Grow With Us," FAMU's agricultural offerings have made their way into the halls of the U.S. Capitol, national competitions, and boardrooms of some of the world's largest organizations – showcasing the talent and research capacity of the College of Agriculture and Food Sciences (CAFS).

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- Nicholas Miller
Monsato Scholar

Kendall Strickland, a 2015 graduate, is a personification of the successes taking place within the Agribusiness Program. Strickland recently placed second at the 30th Annual Minorities in Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Related Sciences (MANRRS) Career Fair and Training Conference held in Houston, Texas.

He received national recognition in the poster category of the competition for a project titled "The Economic Value of Palm Trees in Hotel Landscaping."

The primary focus of the research was to determine the value of palm trees at hotels in areas such as Aruba. Since visitors travel to places like Aruba for its tropical environment, Strickland's research helped to address industry concerns regarding how the number of palm trees in proximity to hotels ultimately impacts the number of visitors.

Strickland's passion for agribusiness and research, not only contributed to his receipt of a full scholarship from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's 1890 National Scholars Program as a student, but it has also afforded him the opportunity to work for the USDA in a post-graduate program as an agricultural statistician.

"What I experienced at FAMU has given me confidence in my work in the agribusiness field. I learned to work hard at my research and put my heart into agriculture," he said.

Strickland follows in the footsteps of Agribusiness alumni like actor Montrel Miller, who has used the business, critical thinking, and people skills he acquired while in the CAFS program to build a successful career. Such skills have provided him with the flexibility needed to land roles in films like "Selma," "Coffee Shop," "Unconditional," and "Stomp the Yard 2." He recently took to Twitter to pay tribute to the Agribusiness Program. ▶

RATTLERS IN D.C. ▶

Agribusiness students and representatives from each CAFS unit at the 1890 land-grant celebration.





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“Thanks for all that you have instilled in me,” he said.
“I’ll continue to make you proud.”

While Strickland, Montrel Miller, and the Agribusiness Program alumni in leading roles at such companies as Target, Coca-Cola, Western Union, Kraft Foods, and Sanderson Farms are making waves in their respective fields, current students are serving as ambassadors for the University at a national level.

In July, students in the program joined 18 other universities at the U.S. Capitol to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the Second Morrill Act of 1890.

The Act awarded FAMU and other Black institutions land-grant status and helped FAMU grow into the academic and research powerhouse it is today.

While in Washington, D.C., students met with top U.S. officials to share their experience in FAMU’s agricultural programs and participate in a national convocation and exhibition. They were also on hand to witness President Elmira Mangum, Ph.D., make history as one of the first presidents from an 1890 land-grant University to testify before the U.S. House Committee on Agriculture.

“The type of recognition our agriculture programs are receiving helps to amplify the quality of our students at FAMU and display the groundbreaking research that is happening every day at the University,” President Mangum said.

Agribusiness Program Coordinator Daniel Solís, Ph.D., said he is proud that the program has been able to provide students with the opportunity to travel to national conferences, participate in research competitions, and showcase their skills while representing FAMU.

“Academic enrichment and research are the main focuses of our program. Each year we send students to professional conferences to garner additional knowledge and to share their work with others in their respective areas of interest. Consistently, they return to us from these conferences with top recognitions for their outstanding work,” said Solís, who was recently recognized by Research Gate as one of its most read authors.

Solís explained that the program has partnered with international companies and government agencies that provide internship opportunities that have led to incredible career opportunities for its students.

“We have a laser focus on internships. We try to discover what the main goals of the students are, what they really like to do and match them accordingly,” Solís said. “For instance, this year, we have one student who’s working in the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, we have another working in a federal credit union, and there’s another student who recently started with the Fish and Wildlife Commission, so depending on their goals we try to find them an internship that fits and inspires them.”

Gerard Gunner, a senior agribusiness student, said his internship experience truly opened his eyes to his future possibilities. This summer, Gunner was able to travel the country and learn about credit and banking as it applies to agriculture while interning with the Farm Credit Administration in Dallas, Texas.

Gunner explained that his internship through the Agribusiness Program showed him that he would be able to combine his interests in business administration, economics, and agriculture.



TOUCHING LIVES ▲

FAMU's Agribusiness Program provides students like Kendall Strickland with the opportunity to impact the lives of others by combining research and business training.

"I met representatives from the Farm Credit Administration at the career fair last fall, and after learning about the company I found that it combined everything I like into one job," Gunner said. "It was a great opportunity."

Monsanto Scholarship recipient Nicholas Miller always knew he wanted to study business. After three years in FAMU's five-year, Master of Business Administration Program and an internship with PepsiCo, Miller realized he was also interested in agriculture, so he decided to pursue an additional degree in agribusiness.

With internship and work experience with Monsanto and the FAMU Sustainability Institute under his belt, Nicholas Miller said he feels more than prepared to enter the job market and showcase all that he has learned at FAMU.

Upon graduation, he said he plans to establish his own marketing company.

"I want to have a multifaceted business, but at the same time I have a special passion for connecting small agricultural businesses with large players in the market," Miller said. "This is the kind of work that changes lives. If I'm a small business owner and now have large market access, I can be provided with a better livelihood, and a better future for my kids."

All in all, Miller said his main priority is to do something that will positively influence the lives of others, and he believes the agriculture and food industry is the perfect avenue for that.

"For me, I'm big on impact," Miller said. "We touch food every day. That's a direct impact on our day-to-day lives. As a player in the food industry, I'll have a direct impact on somebody's life every single day.

What more could you want from a career?"

Solis agrees that the research and work done in the agriculture industry has a global impact. Recently, Solis was recognized nationally for his research focusing on red snapper, one of the most economically important fish in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico. His study, entitled "The Effect of IFQs on the Total Productivity of the U.S. Gulf of Mexico Red Snapper Industry," produced results that will be presented to key stakeholders in the fishing industry, including both fishers and policymakers.

At its core, Solis said that making an impact through research and education is what agribusiness is all about – using tools from the classroom and applying them to real-world problems.

"What makes us unique is that everything we do here is extremely applied. It's not just focusing on theory, but application of the theory. I think that's what we do best. That's what sets us apart. We find solutions to issues that plague communities worldwide."AM