

FANR FOCUS: WHAT'S THE LATEST?

APLU's Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources (FANR) Update

FROM DOUG'S DESK

Doug Steele, Senior Vice President

It has been an active time in Washington, DC with the recent release of the President's Budget Request, House action on FY27 appropriations, and the Farm Bill moving from the House to the Senate. Alongside our university members and advocacy partners at Lewis Burke Associates, the FANR office views these developments as important opportunities for the land grant system to highlight our multi-dimensional roles and accomplishments as we advance the integrated missions of teaching, research, and Cooperative Extension.

Colleges of agriculture play a vital role in fortifying our nation's food systems and rural communities. Every day, your work helps equip and empower producers with the knowledge and tools they need to innovate, adapt, and succeed. By connecting science to practice and delivering solutions to those who work on the land, our institutions contribute to resilient farms, thriving communities, improved health, positive youth development, and a more sustainable future for all.

In the upcoming summer months, I hope that you take time to reflect on the impact of your work and how it supports the success of public and land-grant universities. As the FANR team continues to elevate the critical contributions of the land grant system, I am continually inspired by your commitment, motivation, and the positive differences that you make for our families, communities, and nation every day.

Doug

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Washington Update

Prepared for the Board on Agriculture Assembly by Lewis-Burke Associates

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- House Advances Farm Bill
- USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins Testifies Before Agriculture Appropriations Committees
- House Appropriations Committee Approves FY 2027 Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Bill
 - National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)
 - Agricultural Research Service (ARS)
 - Research, Education, and Economics (REE)

- U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
- EPA Announces \$50 million to Improve Water Quality Through Farmer-to-Farmer 2025 Initiative
- USDA Rural Utility Service Opens Annual Distance Learning and Telemedicine Grants Program
- USDA Announces New Office of Seafood

READ THE FULL REPORT

Celebrating Public and Land-Grant Universities and America's 250th

As the United States celebrates its 250th anniversary this year, APLU has developed [a timeline](#) highlighting defining achievements from member universities that have shaped and advanced the nation. From groundbreaking research and technological innovation to expanding educational access and strengthening communities, these contributions reflect the enduring impact of public and land-grant institutions across generations. The timeline also highlights major milestones such as federal laws and policies that have helped make these achievements possible.

Together, these moments tell a collective story of how public and land-grant universities have advanced opportunity, fueled discovery, and promoted the country's growth and resilience.

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APLU-AAU-ACE Prevail in All Legal Cases Challenging Cuts to Facilities & Administration Reimbursements

"I am pleased to report that the deadline has passed for the administration to ask the U.S. Supreme Court to review a lower court ruling in a case brought by APLU and its partners blocking major cuts to reimbursement of Facilities and Administrative (F&A) costs on National Institutes of Health grants, APLU President Waded Cruzado writes in an update.

"This means favorable rulings stand in all four cases, bringing an end to the litigation brought by APLU, AAU, and ACE challenging unlawful cuts at NIH, the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy, and the Department of Defense."

[Read the full update.](#)

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USDA and APLU Seek Nominations for Knapp Memorial Lecturer

Nominations for the Seaman A. Knapp Lecture will close on Friday, June 5. The Knapp Lecture is part of a [Memorial Lecture series](#) sponsored by NIFA and the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU). Given at the APLU Annual Meeting, the lecture honors one of three important historical figures of the Land-grant University System: William Henry Hatch, Seaman A. Knapp and Justin Smith Morrill.

This year's lecture commemorates the efforts of Seaman A. Knapp, considered by many to be the founder of the Cooperative Extension System. He pioneered a demonstration system for teaching farmers about modern, research-based agricultural techniques, laying the groundwork for Extension as we know it today.

[Submit nominations by Friday, June 5.](#)

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2026 New Administrators Orientation

The Board on Agriculture Assembly (BAA) is hosting a New Administrators Orientation on December 8-10, 2026 in the D.C. metro area.

This event is intended for individuals on the Board on Agriculture Assembly and their supporting administrators or faculty, who have entered an administrative position recently and any others who would like to learn more about APLU, the Land-Grant University System and the BAA. Information presented will be particularly useful to administrative heads, deans/directors, and associate/assistant deans/directors.

Learning objectives include: Gaining an understanding of the Board on Agriculture Assembly and APLU, including how national priorities are set by organizational committees and how you can become involved; gaining valuable tips from experienced administrators about what they wish they had known when they were hired; and hearing from senior university leadership about their career pathways.

[Please indicate your interest here.](#)

For questions, please contact Sophia Baker at sbaker@aplu.org.

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USDA Announces the Creation of the USDA National Proving Grounds Network

On April 7 USDA's Research, Education, and Economics Under Secretary Dr. Scott Hutchins announced the launch of the *USDA National Proving Grounds Network for AgTech* (NPG-Ag), a nationwide initiative designed to rigorously evaluate agricultural technologies under real-world U.S. farming and ranching conditions. Hutchins stated "By establishing a coordinated national research network to objectively validate new and emerging technologies, especially digital and AI-driven technologies, we are helping ensure row crop, specialty crop, and livestock producers all have access to reliable performance data for their investment decisions with a goal to accelerate adoption of AgTech innovations. Moreover, we fully expect that NPG-Ag will expand and facilitate the development and application of emerging technologies across the public and private sector to uniquely benefit U.S. agriculture."

The initiative will be spearheaded by USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS), working in coordination with other USDA research agencies. Grand Farm, a North Dakota-headquartered AgTech ecosystem and innovation testbed, will serve as the USDA's National Program Manager, alongside land-grant universities across the country that will serve as primary research and testing partners.

[Read the full press release.](#)

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USDA Advances Reorganization and Restructuring of the Research, Education, and Economics Mission Area

USDA Press Release:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Research, Education, and Economics (REE) Mission Area announced a reorganization and leadership restructuring to better align its work with USDA priorities, improve operational efficiency, and deliver results more effectively for American farmers, ranchers, and producers.

This effort refocuses REE's structure on mission delivery—streamlining operations, strengthening leadership accountability, and positioning resources closer to the agricultural communities USDA serves. The updated structure will be guided by five core principles: strengthening leadership accountability, reducing organizational complexity, ensuring

consistency across agencies where appropriate, leveraging emerging tools and technologies, and aligning clearly with USDA's priorities.

[Read the full press release.](#)

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ARD Honors the Life and Legacy of Congressman David Scott

From the Association of 1890 Research Directors (ARD):

The Association of 1890 Research Directors (ARD) honors the life and enduring legacy of David Scott, longtime U.S. Representative for Georgia's 13th Congressional District. Congressman Scott, a distinguished graduate of Florida A&M University passed away on April 22, 2026, at the age of 80. He is survived by his wife, Alfredia, two daughters and two grandchildren.

As Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, Congressman Scott was a steadfast champion of the 1890 land-grant universities and their mission to educate and prepare the next generation of leaders in food, agriculture, natural resources, and human sciences. Throughout his tenure in Congress, he consistently advanced policies that expanded access to higher education, strengthened federal investments in agricultural research and Extension, and created meaningful pathways for students from historically underserved communities to pursue careers in agriculture and related disciplines.

In the 2018 Farm Bill, Congressman Scott secured \$80 million in funding for the 19 historically Black land-grant universities. This scholarship program has provided critical financial support to students pursuing degrees at 1890 institutions, helping to reduce economic barriers, and cultivating a highly skilled workforce equipped to address the complex challenges facing agriculture, food systems, natural resources, and rural communities.

In 2021, Congressman Scott made history as the first African American to serve as Chair of the House Agriculture Committee. In March 2026, with strong bipartisan support, the Committee took a significant step to recognize his enduring contributions by renaming the "Scholarships for Students at the 1890 Institutions" program in his honor. This designation stands as a lasting tribute to his unwavering commitment to expanding educational opportunities and strengthening the capacity of the nation's 1890 land-grant universities.

This recognition not only commemorates Congressman Scott's distinguished service but also reinforces the critical importance of sustained federal investment in programs that broaden access to education and develop the next generation of scientists, researchers, and professional who will lead the future of American agriculture.

Congressman Scott's leadership helped elevate the role of the 1890 universities as engines of innovation, workforce development, economic opportunity in rural and underserved communities across the nation.

The directors and staff of the 1890 research community extend their deepest condolences to the Scott family. Our thoughts and prayers are with them during this time. May he rest in eternal peace.

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Growing Together: Conversations with CEOs

APLU's Board of Agriculture's interview series "[Growing Together: Conversations with CEOs](#)" showcases Presidents and CEOs of national agricultural associations, commodity groups, and other organizations and explores their powerful synergies with land-grant universities.

Christy Seyfert, President and CEO, Farm Credit Council

Christy Seyfert serves as President & CEO of the Farm Credit Council, the national trade association representing the nation's leading provider of credit and financial services to agriculture and rural America in good times and bad.

"Farm Credit and land-grant universities share a common goal: empowering the next generation of agricultural leaders. Farm Credit's commitment to agriculture and rural America complements the important work of land-grant universities, who are driving innovation and supporting producers...Farm Credit and land-grant universities are investing in the future of agriculture and strengthening rural communities." - Christy Seyfert

[Read the full interview.](#)

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The Financial Accountability in Research (FAIR) Model Webinar Recording

On Wednesday, April 8, APLU hosted a briefing for BAA leadership with APLU's Debbie Altenburg, VP, Research Policy, and Advocacy and Dr. Kelvin Drogemier, Chair of the Subject Matter Expert committee for the Joint Association Group (JAG) on Indirect Costs (and current Special Advisor to the Chancellor for Science and Policy, University of Illinois- Urbana-

Champaign), to discuss the state of play regarding federal grant indirect rate policy negotiations, the FAIR model, and how these intersect with USDA-funded research.

[A recording of the webinar can be viewed here.](#)

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Last year, APLU and several other national organizations came together to form the Joint Associations Group (JAG) on Indirect Costs and developed an efficient and transparent alternative model for how the federal government reimburses universities for the costs associated with conducting research on behalf of the American people, the Financial Accountability in Research (FAIR) model. Long term, APLU and the JAG associations will be advocating for the FAIR model to be adopted by federal agencies to support the true costs of conducting research. It is important for the BAA to consider if the agricultural research community might join these efforts.

Additional resources on the current status of USDA indirect rates and the FAIR model are available here:

- [NIFA explainer on indirect rates](#)
- [USDA indirect rates explainer from the University of Wisconsin](#)
- APLU website on [F&A](#) and [JAG](#)
- White paper on the FAIR model [link](#) and [PDF](#)

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Sprout of Peace

APLU Board on Agricultural Assembly (BAA) is part of a Global Confederation of Higher Education Associations for Agricultural and Life Sciences (GCHERA) that represents 12 regional associations across the world. GCHERA is supporting Earth University (located in Costa Rica) in launching an initiative called "Sprout of Peace" encouraging college of ag student groups to plant a tree in honor of the role of agriculture in cultivating peace.

[Learn more about the event.](#)

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AWARDS & OPPORTUNITIES

National Cooperative Extension Awards Nominations Open

The following award is offered by the [Extension Committee on Organization and Policy \(ECOP\)](#) in partnership with USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). Winning Cooperative Extension professionals from [these land-grant colleges and universities](#) are selected by the end of July and will travel to the [APLU Annual Meeting](#) in November to receive their awards.

The [National Extension Award for Innovative Programming that Addresses New Audiences](#) is for Extension efforts that go above and beyond in reaching new audiences. It recognizes innovative teaching models and techniques that ensure Extension programs reach all audiences, especially new and those that have not been participating in traditional Extension education.

Applications are due Monday, June 1, 2026.

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GCHERA World Agriculture Prize

The GCHERA World Agriculture Prize is an international award established by the Global Confederation of Higher Education Associations for the Agricultural and Life Sciences (GCHERA).

The Prize recognizes outstanding individuals whose work has significantly strengthened the mission of higher education institutions in education, research, innovation, and outreach within the agricultural and life sciences. Through this recognition, GCHERA seeks to encourage continued leadership and excellence that address global challenges related to agriculture, food systems, and life sciences.

Two World Agriculture Prizes will be awarded in 2026 each to an individual academic/faculty member from a higher education institution in recognition of the academic/faculty member's lifetime achievements working in the disciplines relating to the agricultural and life sciences – including but not limited to agriculture, forestry, natural resources, food, bio-based products, bioenergy, rural development, and the environment. At least one recipient will be from a country NOT classified as having a developed economy. [See the list of those countries with a developed economy.](#)

The 2026 GCHERA World Agriculture Prize Award Ceremony will be held on October 28, 2026 in Nanjing Agricultural University, Nanjing, China.

Nominations are due July 15, 2026 5:00 pm GMT.

[See the full call for nominations.](#)

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Farm Bureau Ag Innovation Challenge

The Farm Bureau Ag Innovation Challenge is a national business competition that showcases U.S. startups developing innovative solutions that address challenges facing America's farmers, ranchers and rural communities. Now in its 13th year, the Challenge was the first national business competition of its kind focused exclusively on rural entrepreneurs.

The American Farm Bureau Federation, in partnership with Farm Credit, is looking to identify the top entrepreneurs who are addressing both traditional challenges farmers face on their operation, such as access to labor, optimizing yield and reducing operating costs, and entrepreneurs who are addressing new challenges facing farmers and rural communities.

The overall winner of the competition will receive \$100,000 in startup funds, the runner-up will be awarded \$25,000 and two additional business owners who advance to the final four round will receive \$10,000.

Farm Bureau is offering a total of \$145,000 in startup funds throughout the course of the competition. After the application period closes on June 5, 10 semi-finalist teams will be selected and announced on Sept. 2. Next, the 10 semi-finalist teams will pitch virtually to compete for a spot in the final four round of the contest.

[See more information and apply.](#)

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Call For Presenters: National Farm Safety and Health Week 2026

AgriSafe is now accepting webinar proposals for the 2026 National Farm Safety and Health Week. We are looking for engaging presentations that appeal to a wide audience, including agricultural health and safety professionals, Extension staff, healthcare providers, and anyone involved in or supporting the agricultural community.

AgriSafe will host two webinars daily from September 21-25 (Monday to Friday). Webinars will be held live at 11 AM and 1 PM CT via Zoom. Presentations should be approximately 45 minutes in length, allowing for additional time for discussion and questions. While there are daily themes, we are open to any ideas you'd like to bring attention to this week. Multiple collaborators on a topic are welcome.

The deadline to apply is May 27, 2026.

[See more information and apply.](#)

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MEETINGS & EVENTS

2026 BAA Summer Leadership Meeting

Portland, OR | July 13-15, 2026

This meeting brings together elected and appointed leaders of the:

- Academic Programs Section,
- Administrative Heads Section,
- agInnovation,
- Association of 1890 Research Directors,
- Board on Health & Human Sciences,
- Budget and Advocacy Committee,
- CARET Executive Committee,
- Committee on Legislation and Policy,
- Communications and Marketing Committee,
- Cooperative Extension System, and
- International Agriculture Section.

Attendees will meet in person to discuss sectional business, provide program and partnership updates, set advocacy priorities, and identify strategic opportunities for the Board on Agriculture Assembly. The meeting will emphasize advocacy priorities with an in-depth presentation of Phase 2 of the BAA Capacity Initiative and the work of Adaptive Roots on the Land-grant Roadmap. Participants will also hear from USDA NIFA leadership. Discussions will focus on drafting a comprehensive strategy for FY2028, Farm Bill update, and a long-term approach to increasing federal funding.

Invited attendees should have already received an invitation to register via Cvent. Please contact Sophia Baker at sbaker@aplu.org with any questions.

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Regional Summer Meetings

Northeast Joint Summer Session

June 1-3, 2026 | Burlington, Vermont

[Registration](#)

Western Region Joint Summer Meeting

June 22-25, 2026 | Hilo, Hawai'i

[Registration](#)

Southern AHS/CARET Conference

July 24-26, 2026 | Athens, Georgia

[Registration](#)

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2026 National Extension Directors & Administrators Annual Meeting

The 2026 NEDA meeting is scheduled for September 15-17 in Seattle, WA. Monday, September 14 will be a travel day for those attending the ECOP meeting on Tuesday, September 15. New administrator orientation will take place the afternoon of Tuesday, September 15, followed by a reception and dinner featuring a 4-H speaker.

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Save the Date

2026 APLU Annual Meeting

San Antonio, TX

November 15-17, 2026

New Administrators Orientation
D.C. Metro Area - Final Location TBA
December 8-10, 2026

2027 BHHS Spring Meeting
Florida State University | Tallahassee, FL
March 2-4, 2027

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RESOURCES

Public and Land-grant University Job Board

The APLU [job board](#) is a free resource available to member institutions. Post your own job or find open positions at public and land-grant universities across North America.

FOCUS is an update from the Food, Agriculture, and Natural Resources office of the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) to provide timely, relevant information and actions items to the membership of the Commission on Food, Environment, and Renewable Resources (CFERR) and its member boards and sections. [Join the FANR Focus Mailing List.](#)

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