Urban Forestry Professor Zhu H. Ning Receives Funding from USDA/NIFA

Urban Forestry Professor Zhu H. Ning, PhD/Project Director, and her project team have received $297,479.00 from the US Department of Agriculture/National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) for Capacity Building Grant Program in support of a new project titled "Modeling Approach to Climate Change and Natural Resource Education."

In collaboration with Columbia University and USDA Forest Service Northern Research Station, this project assembles a multidisciplinary team to advance urban forestry and natural resource education at Southern University (SU). The goal is to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in urban forestry and natural resources, especially at the undergraduate level. The objectives are to: 1. Enhance curricula and instructional delivery through modeling approach; 2. Reinforce student learning through research engagement; 3. Extend learning beyond the classroom through experiential learning field studies; and 4. Foster student critical thinking, communication skills, and leadership development.

"To accomplish the project objectives, the team plans to implement the project with five major approaches: Incorporate Educational Global Circulation Model (EdGCM), I-Tree Eco Model, and their associated new teaching modules into two courses at B.S. and M.S. degree levels; Guide students to apply the two models in research to motivate students to retain and transfer the learned knowledge; Conduct experiential learning field studies at USDA Forest Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, and project partner's sites; Develop leadership through mentoring, shadowing, and training workshop; and Take collaborative team approach to recruit new students from underrepresented groups," Ning says.

The team anticipates the project to strengthen the Urban Forestry's B.S. and M.S. curricula by introducing important new course contents and pedagogical enhancements; enhance instructional delivery, student learning experiences, and recruitment; broaden students' knowledge and strategies to address the complexities of the ecosystems and natural resource management; strengthen their ability to apply learned knowledge to urban forestry and natural resource related fields; enhance students' marketability and workforce preparedness; build partnerships and cultivate diversity; develop leadership and prepare the next generation for sustainable natural resource management.

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