

**Primary Media Contact:**

Kendall Feenstra  
Savannah River Nuclear Solutions  
(839) 746-1001  
[kendall.feenstra@srs.gov](mailto:kendall.feenstra@srs.gov)

**NNSA Media Contact:**

Bryan Cox  
NNSA – Savannah River Field Office  
(803) 989-9050  
[bryan.cox@nnsa.srs.gov](mailto:bryan.cox@nnsa.srs.gov)

**For Immediate Release**

## **SRNS/LANL university collaborations are developing next-generation pit production technology and staffing future workforce**

**AIKEN, S.C.**, (October 29, 2024) – Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS), the managing and operating contractor at the Savannah River Site (SRS), and Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) are partnering with multiple universities to develop next-generation technology and personnel pipelines in advancement of the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA)'s two-site pit production mission.

Through these university engagement initiatives, personnel from SRNS Pit Production Operations and Programs (PPOP) and LANL's Associate Directorate for Weapons Production's Technical Applications Office (ALDWP-TAO) visited the University of Texas El Paso (UTEP) the week of Sept. 16, during National Hispanic Heritage Month. UTEP, one of the largest and most successful Hispanic-serving institutions in the country, has a renowned Metallurgical and Engineering program focused on materials synthesis, development of high-performance materials and material degradation in extreme environments.

"One of the goals of this collaboration is to develop and test next-generation materials, processes and technology for the pit production mission," said Bill Blake, PPOP Technical Applications Team Lead. "We have been very impressed with LANL's engagement with UTEP and other universities and are looking to expand our partnership with them on current and future university collaboration efforts".

The visit provided a comprehensive update of ongoing UTEP initiatives, key capabilities and recent advancements, and included student capstone research project presentations.

SRNS Deputy Vice President for PPOP Erika Baeza-Wisdom offered an overview of SRS and the pit production program mission during a student seminar, while sharing her personal story and tips for professional success.

“Across all industries, there are not many executives who look like me,” said Baeza-Wisdom. “Representation matters. It’s what makes these students, many of whom are of Hispanic and Latino backgrounds like myself, feel empowered to chase their goals and dreams and to know they are attainable because they are seeing progress being made by others. It shows them that anything is possible.”

Baeza-Wisdom, along with LANL’s ALDWP-TAO director, Dr. Robert “Bob” Putnam, were recently invited to participate in a UTEP Advisory Board, where they will work closely with the Vice President for Research’s office and faculty members to provide input on curriculum and student capstone projects.

“The next generation of our workforce must be an adaptive, innovative and diverse team. This is why LANL partnered with TechSource Inc. to develop the weapons production technology and nuclear training program (WP-TNT) to interface with key colleges and universities,” said Putnam. “The quality of UTEP graduates, their sense of



*Erika Baeza-Wisdom, SRNS Deputy Vice President, NNSA Pit Production Operations and Programs, presents an SRNS pit production overview to UTEP students.*

mission and reverence for mission to the safety and security of the United States is what first attracted us to UTEP. We are thrilled to be sharing WP-TNT with our mission partner at SRNS.”

Representatives from PPOP also participated in a joint UTEP career fair with TAO, where they spoke with students about the pit production mission at both sites.

“We received dozens of resumes from students and are looking forward to sharing more about our two sites and how we are working together to keep the world safe through our defense program missions,” said Blake.

Since 2022, SRNS has partnered with local Historically Black Colleges and Universities to develop talent pipelines. The Site also engages in educational outreach with local and regional technical schools and universities, middle schools, high schools and community organizations to increase awareness and interest in career opportunities for the pit production mission.

In addition to these efforts, SRNS has been invited to join LANL in collaborations with Montana State University and Arizona State University on pit production-specific projects.

*Established by Congress in 2000, NNSA is a semi-autonomous agency within the U.S. Department of Energy responsible for enhancing national security through the military application of nuclear science. NNSA maintains and enhances the safety, security, and effectiveness of the U.S. nuclear weapons stockpile; works to reduce the global danger from weapons of mass destruction; provides the U.S. Navy with safe and militarily effective nuclear propulsion; and responds to nuclear and radiological emergencies in the U.S. and abroad.*

*Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, a Fluor and HII partnership company, is responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy's Savannah River Site, located near Aiken, South Carolina.*

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