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For Immediate Release

SRNS boosts USC Salkehatchie's STEM education with forensic laboratory donation

AIKEN, S.C. – (February 5, 2025) Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) recently donated \$50,000 to the University of South Carolina (USC) Salkehatchie to help fund the establishment of the first-ever [Forensic Science Laboratory](#) at the Allendale campus. The laboratory's opening celebration and donor recognition ceremony was held at the USC Salkehatchie Atrium Center on Jan. 29, with attendees participating in laboratory tours and demonstrations.



SRNS' Education Outreach Program tour the new USC Salkehatchie Forensic Science Laboratory with Francis Burns, Assistant Professor of Chemistry, left, during the Donor Recognition Ceremony held on Jan. 29.

Christopher DeWolf, Senior Director of Development at USC Palmetto College, emphasized that forensic chemistry is a new addition to the criminal justice curriculum at USC Salkehatchie. "This equipment will empower our students to master techniques in DNA, drug, and fingerprint analysis, as well as crime scene documentation and toxicology," he explained.

In 2022, SRNS provided an initial donation of \$25,000, which was used to acquire instructional equipment, such as a Gas Chromatograph – Mass Spectrometer for drug and arson analysis, as well as Polymerase Chain Reaction and Capillary Electrophoresis systems for DNA analysis. Recently, SRNS

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increased the total award to \$50,000 to ensure the lab received a matching \$150,000 grant from the USDA Rural Community Development Initiative Program. In total, the university secured \$300,000 to fully equip the laboratory and get the program off the ground.



SRNS funding was used to acquire instructional equipment to support fingerprinting, drug testing, DNA analysis, and other crucial forensic techniques. Education Outreach Program Specialist Cindy Hewitt, right, examines a glass fragment under a microscope during a tour of the Forensic Science Laboratory.

DeWolf continued, "This achievement would not have been possible without the generosity of our donors. SRNS provided the initial donation, and when we needed additional support to reach our goal, they made a second significant contribution that turned this vision into reality. We are incredibly thankful for their support."

Francis Burns, Assistant Professor of Chemistry, noted, "These instruments will play a key role not just in forensic sciences but across various STEM fields, including biology, chemistry, engineering, and geology. It will be instrumental in fostering the career growth of students, law enforcement, and lawyers, and will bolster the capacity for research and education among our STEM faculty."

USC Salkehatchie, a regional campus of Palmetto College, is located in an economically disadvantaged area of South Carolina and serves Allendale, Bamberg, Barnwell, Colleton, and Hampton counties. More than 50% of the students who attend are first-generation college students and qualify for Pell Grants, indicating that their household income falls below poverty guidelines.

Kim Mitchell, SRNS Education Outreach Lead, highlighted the importance of the donation, stating, "This funding is part of SRNS' broader commitment to support and promote STEM-based education and will advance criminal justice education in the Lowcountry. We hope to inspire the next generation of scientists and professionals who will drive innovation and progress in our communities."

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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