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For Immediate Release

SRS and FIU strengthen partnership to advance DOE missions

AIKEN, S.C. (April 8, 2025) – In an effort to strengthen academic and industry partnerships, representatives from the Savannah River Site (SRS) recently visited Florida International University (FIU), a leading public research university in Miami, Florida. The visit aimed to bolster the growing collaboration between FIU’s Applied Research Center ([ARC](#)) and the Department of Energy (DOE).

Since 2007, the [DOE-FIU Science & Technology Workforce Development Initiative](#), also known as the [DOE Fellows Program](#), has played a pivotal role in advancing the missions of DOE’s Environmental Management ([DOE-EM](#)) and the Office of Legacy Management ([DOE-LM](#)).

In fiscal year 2024, Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) began to establish a partnership with FIU to increase the number of interns transitioning into full-service roles, strengthen technical capabilities, and elevate industry reputation and visibility with academic institutions.



DOE Fellows Program Mechanical Engineer Brendon Cintas, left, and SRNS Director of Engineering Technical Services Ken Burrows, right, test out the Boston Dynamics Robot nicknamed ‘Spot,’ showcasing cutting-edge technology being integrated into DOE projects.

"This partnership brings fresh perspectives and innovative solutions to the complex challenges we face at DOE facilities," said Bryan Ortner, SRNS Acting Senior Vice President of Workforce Services and Talent Management. "By collaborating with FIU, we hope to harness the capabilities of their students and faculty, yielding valuable research outcomes and providing students with hands-on experience in addressing real-world problems."



Leonel "Leo" Lagos, DOE Fellows Program Director; Bryan Ortner, SRNS Acting Senior Vice President of Workforce Services and Talent Management; Anthony Abrahao, FIU Research Scientist; Angela Martin, SRNS Talent Acquisition Manager; Ken Burrows, SRNS Director of Engineering Technical Services; Carla Wheeler, SRNS Engineering Staffing & Development Manager; and FIU Senior Research Scientists Yelena Katsenovich and Ravi Gudavalli.

rekindling and strengthening our ties with FIU," said Ken Burrows, SRNS Director of Engineering Technical Services. "The innovative work being conducted is directly applicable to solving the challenges we face in our aging nuclear facilities and supporting new projects for DOE-EM and NNSA missions. Interacting with the faculty and students has given me confidence that there is a bright, capable group ready to tackle our challenges at SRNS."

SRNS Engineering Staffing & Development and Training Manager, Carla Wheeler, remarked, "I was very impressed with the drones and robotic applications that the FIU students were working on. I can see how these innovations could significantly benefit our future missions."

SRS plans to implement a high-level memorandum of understanding with FIU to ensure a steady stream of skilled specialists are available to tackle technical challenges through grant-funded research or the SRNS Internship Program. This summer, DOE Fellows Program intern Kevin Yulkowsky will join

The program includes a two- to four-year mentoring component, offering paid research experiences to address technical problems that benefit DOE missions. Research areas include deactivation and decommissioning of contaminated facilities, soil and groundwater remediation, workforce development, robotics, intelligence applications, radioactive waste management, IT, and environmental protection.

"SRNS plans to hire 9,000 full-services resources over the next five years, so it is imperative to leverage this agreement to build a robust talent pipeline," said Leonel "Leo" Lagos, DOE Fellows Program Director. "By integrating coursework, DOE fieldwork, and applied research at FIU, we create a well-structured program that brings highly skilled individuals into the workforce to fill those critical gaps."

During the visit, representatives from SRNS' Workforce Services and Talent Management and Engineering departments toured FIU's research facilities, reviewed student projects, and revisited past research findings.

"The initiative marked a significant step towards

SRS to gain hands-on experience in H Canyon— the only operating, production-scale, radiologically shielded chemical separations facility in the United States.

Additionally, FIU students and faculty are scheduled to visit the Site in May 2025 for a comprehensive tour, expanding their scope to include National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA) missions.

“With our recent landlord transition from EM to NNSA, we hope to further enhance students’ understanding and identify potential opportunities for involvement in NNSA-related projects,” concluded Ortner.



SRNS established a partnership with FIU in 2024 to increase the number of interns transitioning into full-services roles at SRS. From left: SRNS Senior Vice President of Plutonium Disposition Operations and Programs Jeff Griffin, Lagos, and Martin.

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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