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For Immediate Release

SRNS and Florida International University sign MOU advancing workforce development and DOE missions support

AIKEN, S.C. – (July 24, 2025) Savannah River Nuclear Solutions (SRNS) continues to advance innovation and strengthen research partnerships that deliver solutions for the Department of Energy's (DOE) critical missions. In that spirit, SRNS recently invited two representatives from Florida International University (FIU) Applied Research Center (ARC) to visit the Savannah River Site (SRS).

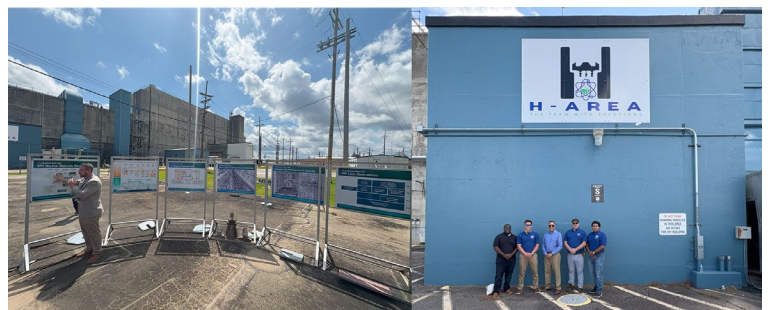
The collaboration was formalized with the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) in 2025, with a shared goal of identifying pathways, increasing the number of interns transitioning into full-service positions, strengthening technical capabilities and raising ARC's visibility.

"One of our primary goals is to build strong talent pipelines," said Bryan Ortner, Senior Vice President, SRNS Workforce Services and Talent Management. "Partners like this allow us to solve complex technical problems that support both the National Nuclear Security Administration and DOE's Environmental Management missions. By investing in students today, we're building the workforce of tomorrow."

During their visit, FIU representatives toured key SRS facilities, including H Canyon, the only operating, production-scale, radiologically shielded chemical separations facility in the United States. Originally built to recover uranium and neptunium from fuel tubes used in nuclear reactors for weapons production, H Canyon's mission shifted after the Cold War to focus on nonproliferation and environmental cleanup.



Ceremonial Memorandum of understanding signing with Rich Zaharek, SRNS Senior Vice President Chief Engineer and Nuclear Safety Officer; Leonel Lagos, FIU Associate Professor and Director of Research; Sean Alford, SRNS Senior Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer.



James Therrell, SRNS Mission Planning Manager for Environmental Management Operations, educating FIU representatives on the H-Canyon process

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They also visited the Savannah River Plutonium Processing Facility (SRPPF) High-Fidelity Training and Operations Center (HFTOC). The SRNS Operational Technology (OT) Center of Excellence (CoE) demonstrated its advanced initiatives, incorporating Augmented Reality (AR) to create immersive training environments. Through AR, digital assets are superimposed into real-world environments, allowing users to walk through a facility at a 1:1 scale. These extended reality solutions are expected to transform how SRNS trains employees and modernizes manufacturing operations.



HFTOC AR tour showcasing gloveboxes, specialized equipment and operational workspaces.

“We want to create a clear pipeline for FIU to join SRNS—not just in engineering, but in multiple disciplines,” said Leonel Lagos, FIU Associate Professor and Director of Research at FIU’s ARC. “We’re working with SRNS to identify research topics and develop technologies that can directly support Site operations. For example, robotics systems designed by FIU staff and students could one day inspect and repair facilities such as H Canyon.”

ARC’s work is performed under the DOE-FIU Cooperative Agreement, which focuses on environmental remediation and workforce development. In 2007, DOE-EM and FIU created the Science & Technology Workforce Development Initiative. The aim of this workforce development program is to develop future talent by fostering collaboration between academic, government and DOE contractor organizations. This partnership trains and mentors the next generation of scientists and engineers while helping to develop innovative technologies that address DOE’s environmental cleanup challenges.

“This partnership allows SRNS to tap into a proven source of talent,” added Sean Alford, Senior Vice President and Chief Administrative Officer. “FIU students are well-trained, and with our growing missions, we want to give them the best opportunities to contribute. Beyond engineering, we see potential for students to support supply chain, construction management and other critical areas. Together, SRNS and FIU are committed to advancing applied research and technology development to support DOE’s critical missions while developing a highly skilled future workforce.”

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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