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FSU gets climate-research grant

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Florida State University has received a $2.5-million grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for the Southeast Climate Consortium to develop methods to forecast droughts and other extreme climate events in the Southeastern states, U.S. Rep. Allen Boyd's office has announced.

"This project provides a bridge between our climate researchers and our farmers, leading to larger crops and more productive farms," FSU President Eric J. Barron said.

The forecasts will help agricultural, forest and natural resource managers to reduce risks of losses and environmental damage. In addition, the consortium will develop new partnerships and methods for incorporating climate forecasts into agricultural and water policy decisions. The Agricultural Extension Service managed by the University of Florida is a key partner.

"Agriculture is one of Florida's largest industries, and for more than a decade the Southeastern Climate Consortium has helped strengthen the contributions the agriculture sector makes to our local and national economies," Boyd said in a release. "I commend FSU for its leadership in the consortium and for the invaluable research it has provided farmers throughout the southeast region."

Boyd on Friday met with James O'Brien, emeritus Robert O. Lawton Distinguished Professor of Meteorology and Oceanography and former director of the FSU Center for Ocean-Atmospheric Prediction Studies (COAPS), and Raymond Bye, director of federal relations and economic development at FSU.

FSU is the lead institution in the SECC, which also involves researchers from the University of Florida, University of Miami, University of Georgia, Auburn University, University of Alabama in Huntsville, North Carolina State University and Clemson University.

O'Brien is the grant's principal investigator and leads the FSU team.

The grant continues work begun in 2003 to develop new methods to predict the consequences of climate variability — including rainfall, temperature and wild fires — for agricultural crops, forests and water resources. This research provides critical and cutting-edge information to farmers that helps them better adapt their crops to drought, hurricanes and other inclement weather systems.

Florida State University President Eric Barron