



WEDGORTH LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Developing Leaders for Florida Agriculture & Natural Resources

Organizational Profile and History

In 1989, the Institute of Food and Agricultural Science (IFAS) saw the need for an agricultural-based leadership program in Florida. Dr. Gene Trotter was hired to lead this initiative and with the help of Dr. Burl Long, established the Florida Leadership Program for Agriculture and Natural Resources. The first class began in 1991 and ran for two years, through 1993. In 1994, these graduates created the WLIANR Alumni Association. Dr. Trotter continued with the Program through the graduation of the fifth class in 2001, at which point, Dr. Hannah Carter was hired as his replacement, having had extensive experience with the Program as Coordinator. Dr. Long continued to participate in the program up to his death in 2011.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Drs. Trotter and Long, along with many dedicated alumni, undertook an endowment campaign. This successful campaign culminated in the creation of a self-sustaining endowment that will continue to support the Program's financial independence for many years to come. In recognition of the Wedgworth family's generosity, in 2001, the Program was renamed the Wedgworth Leadership Institute for Agricultural and Natural Resources (WLIANR). At that time, the Alumni Association also changed its name to the WLI Alumni Association (WLIAA).

The WLIAA was created by and for graduates of the WLIANR. From the beginning, it was recognized that spouses and partners were an integral reason for each participant graduates success and thus those respective partners and spouses who supported the participant through the two-year program were invited to also join as members.

The Alumni Association's charter meeting was held in 1994. Since 1994, the Association has held an annual alumni meeting every year in various locations around the state. These alumni meetings include an educational component, a business meeting and a chance for alumni to interact, renew friendships and continue the networking that begun while they were participating in the program. In addition to these annual conferences, each one of the six regions has held regional meetings to discuss matters of interest and to foster a regional network.