

# Howard participates in national hiring discussion

By Roger RyDell Daniels, NRCS public affairs



Dexter Howard, area resource conservationist for programs in the Jackson Area Office, participated in the three-day, 20th annual Agriculture and Food Human Resources Roundtable, a premier North American event for human resource and educational professionals hosted at Tennessee State University, held in July, and attended by more than 160 people from across the United States and Canada.

Howard joined the four-person rural recruiting and retention panel to discuss national hiring practices. Howard joined NRCS in 2012. As an area resource conservationist, he is responsible for maintaining all NRCS Western area programs, in accordance with agency goals, to include a portfolio of more than 1.3 million acres. During his NRCS career, he has served in roles including soil conservationist in the Arkansas Delta, a district conservationist in Fayette County, Tennessee, and acting state conservation stewardship program coordinator in Kansas.

“Having a plan and having everyone on the same accord with that plan is very important,” Howard said during the discussion.

The panel covered many topics, received questions from the audience and offered valuable information. Among the topics of discussion included benefit packages and rethinking how it

should be distributed, transportation challenges in rural areas, retention bonuses, remote working, the increase of broadband in rural communities, recruiting more engineers, tuition reimbursement, short-term housing for interns, and mentorship,

“NRCS, we are a boots-on-the ground organization,” Howard said. “How we approach short-term housing, we must flexible and think outside of the box. [As far as mentorship], knowing that employee and placing that employee where they will succeed is important.”

“This event was awesome,” said Eston Williams, 1890 agricultural liaison officer. “I was happy to see so many agriculture companies are willing to accommodate and make a hard effort to diversify their workforce through utilizing 1890 Land Grant Institutions.”