



Welcome to **Connections**, your monthly newsletter for the latest **NAADA news, member stories** and **important industry information**.

A LETTER from the PRESIDENT

As we approach the holiday season, I want to take a moment to thank each of you for your dedication and contributions to NAADA. Your commitment makes NAADA stronger and more impactful every year.

I wish you and your loved ones a joyful holiday season and a Happy New Year filled with health, happiness, and success!

Looking ahead to the coming year, we have exciting opportunities for you to engage and share your expertise:

- **Submit Proposals for Education Sessions**
We are now accepting proposals for educational sessions for our upcoming conference. This is a great chance to showcase innovative ideas, best practices, and strategies that can benefit our members.
- **Nominate Your Colleagues and supporters for NAADA Awards**
Help us recognize excellence within our community by nominating outstanding professionals for one of our many awards. Your nominations ensure that we celebrate the achievements and leadership that make NAADA exceptional.

Look below for details on proposal submissions and award nominations.

Thank you for being an integral part of NAADA. Together, we will continue to grow, learn, and lead in the year ahead.



Merry Christmas!

Paula Beecher, Clemson University
2024-2025 President, NAADA

The renewal cycle for annual NAADA membership is underway for the upcoming membership year. Please note that memberships expired on October 30, 2025, and the deadline to renew, without penalty, is January 15, 2026!

Institutional contacts: To review your membership details and submit your renewal, visit www.naada.org and click the "Member Login" button in the top right corner to log in to your member profile using your username and password. *If you've forgotten your password, you can request a reset link on the login page, or contact the NAADA Office.

Once you are logged in, click the "My Profile" link and then the "Renew Now" button. If you have any changes to information that appears on the invoice, such as the member type or the individuals linked under your membership, please contact the NAADA Office. We will update your information and re-issue the renewal invoice.

If there are no changes to the invoice, please click the "Pay Invoice" button to pay online with a credit card, or click the "Download Invoice" button to download the invoice and submit it for payment.

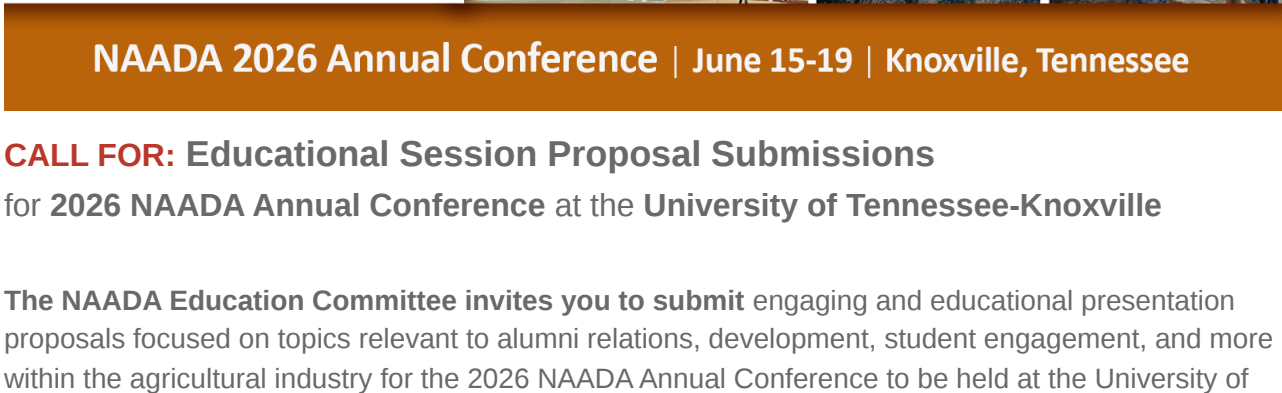
Important Membership Information:

- NAADA memberships **expired October 30, 2025**
- **Renew by January 15, 2026** to avoid the \$100 late fee
- NAADA Institution Memberships include unlimited Dean and Volunteer members
- Memberships not renewed by February 1, 2026 will lapse

For any questions, concerns, or to make changes to your membership, please contact memberservices@naada.org or call 800-303-6062.

Don't miss out on all things NAADA! We look forward to your continued membership in the upcoming programming season.

CLICK HERE to learn more about NAADA Membership Benefits!



CALL FOR: Educational Session Proposal Submissions

for **2026 NAADA Annual Conference** at the **University of Tennessee-Knoxville**

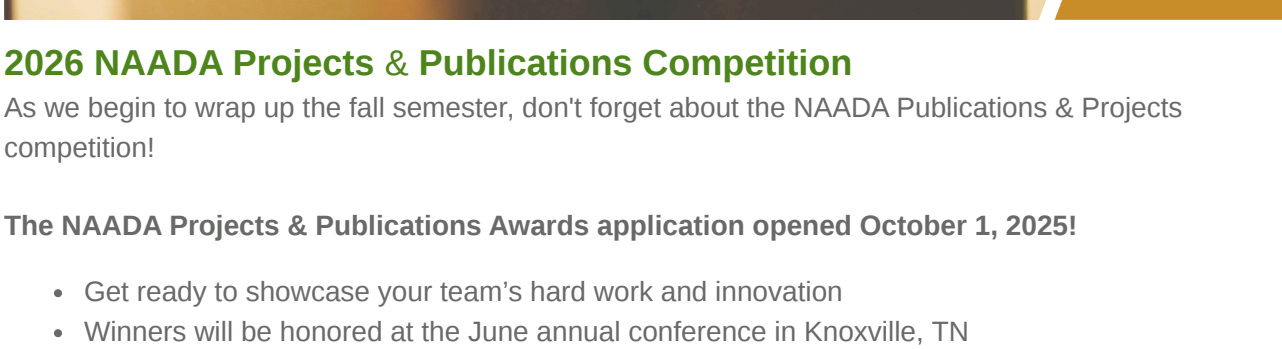
The NAADA Education Committee invites you to submit engaging and educational presentation proposals focused on topics relevant to alumni relations, development, student engagement, and more within the agricultural industry for the 2026 NAADA Annual Conference to be held at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville, June 15-19, 2026.

We look forward to reviewing your proposals and creating an impactful educational program.

The **deadline** for submissions is **January 30, 2026**.

Submit Your Proposal

For questions, contact info@naada.org



2026 NAADA Projects & Publications Competition

As we begin to wrap up the fall semester, don't forget about the NAADA Publications & Projects competition!

The NAADA Projects & Publications Awards application opened October 1, 2025!

- Get ready to showcase your team's hard work and innovation
- Winners will be honored at the June annual conference in Knoxville, TN
- Submissions are open for any project or publication completed in 2025
- **Deadline:** February 20, 2026
- Let's celebrate the amazing work happening across our campuses!

New to NAADA Projects & Publications: Article Submissions!

After seeing many articles submitted into categories that didn't quite fit, the P&P Committee is excited to introduce a dedicated Article subcategory under Print Media for the 2025 NAADA Awards.

This new category is designed to recognize single articles that demonstrate excellence in writing, storytelling, and design. All projects and publications from 2025 are eligible

We can't wait to read your inspiring work!

CLICK HERE for Award Descriptions & Submission Instruction

CLICK HERE to View Past Award Winners

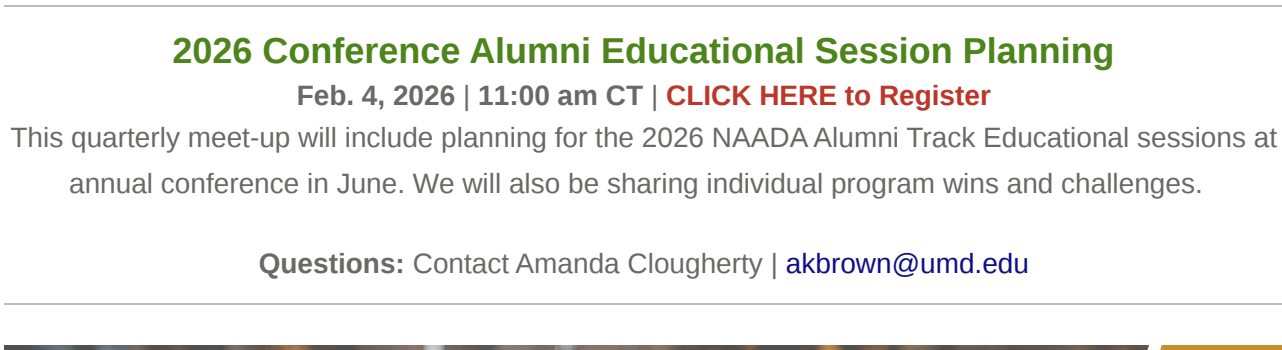
Nominate a Colleague for the 2026 NAADA Individual Awards

This is your chance to recognize a peer whose contributions deserve the spotlight. Award recipients will be announced and celebrated at the NAADA Annual Conference in Knoxville, Tennessee in June 2026.

Nominations will be accepted **until February 20, 2026**.

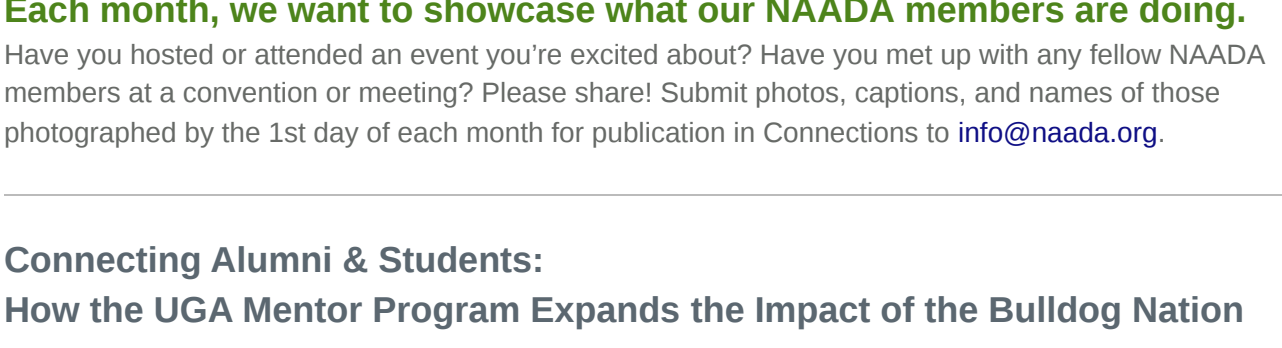
CLICK HERE for Award Descriptions & Submission Instruction

CLICK HERE to View Past Award Winners



This quarterly meet-up will include planning for the 2026 NAADA Alumni Track Educational sessions at annual conference in June. We will also be sharing individual program wins and challenges.

Questions: Contact Amanda Clougherty | akbrown@umd.edu



Each month, we want to showcase what our NAADA members are doing.

Have you hosted or attended an event you're excited about? Have you met up with any fellow NAADA members at a convention or meeting? Please share! Submit photos, captions, and names of those photographed by the 1st day of each month for publication in **Connections** to info@naada.org.

Connecting Alumni & Students:

How the UGA Mentor Program Expands the Impact of the Bulldog Nation

When the University of Georgia launched the **UGA Mentor Program** in 2019, it was more than a college-specific initiative—it was a presidential priority designed to deepen the connections between our students and alumni. Housed within the University of Georgia's Career Center the program, its platform, and its subsequent pilot and full-public launch was part of my project load as a communications associate with the Development and Alumni Relations team. Today, in my role as Director of Alumni Relations for the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, I continue to champion the program as one of the most effective ways to engage alumni, on their schedule, no matter where they are in the world.

How the Program Works

The UGA Mentor Program is built on a simple but powerful idea: every student deserves access to our incredible alumni network and to a mentor who can guide them through the challenges that academic and professional experiences will bring.

How it operates:

- **Accessible Platform:** Students and alumni connect through mentor.uga.edu, an easy-to-use online system that makes suggestions of alumni to mentees based on interests, career goals, and background. Students are the ultimate drivers of the relationship and can search based on their specific interests and goals.
- **Flexible Commitment:** Mentorships can be short-term or long-term, allowing alumni to participate regardless of their schedules or geographic location. There is even quick chat option that allows students to request 15-20 minutes of a mentor's time to learn more about their journey (a good way to preview if that mentor is a good fit).
- **Inclusive Reach:** Because the program is virtual, alumni from across the country—and even around the world—can make a meaningful impact without needing to be physically present in Athens.
- **Student-Centered Design:** Students drive the relationship, choosing mentors who align with their aspirations and setting the pace for conversations. There are prerequisites that students must meet (a training video and quiz) before they can "go live" in the platform, and there are steps to be reactivated if you have failed to follow through on a mentor relationship (i.e. "ghost them").

Benefits of a Mentor Program:

The UGA Mentor Program embodies that mission by:

- **Expanding Access:** Students gain insights from alumni in diverse industries and regions, broadening their horizons.
- **Strengthening Alumni Bonds:** Alumni feel connected to their alma mater in a tangible way, even if they live thousands of miles away.
- **Building Career Readiness:** Mentorship helps students translate classroom learning into professional success, reinforcing the workforce development goals central to land-grant institutions.

Lessons Learned

Launching this program taught us that alumni engagement doesn't have to be limited by geography. By leveraging technology, we've created a scalable model that other institutions can adapt to their own communities (we use [xinspire platform](http://xinspireplatform.com) for context). The key is to make participation simple, flexible, and rewarding for both students and alumni.

For a brief insight into the program's early reception, I encourage you to read [this internal article](#) from 2019, which captures the excitement and curiosity surrounding its launch.

In the six years since we launched the UGA Mentor Program we have learned that sometimes alumni will not be requested by students quickly or for a long time. To combat negative emotions around the delay we try to educate alumni that it is student-driven and that every year we graduate students who know about the program and gain new uninformed students so there can be a delay in educating and activating students to participate. I always tell alumni to create a profile if they are at all interested because they can edit their settings to reflect what capacity they have at the time, but a student cannot find them if they are not in the platform.

Additionally, the Career Center who runs the UGA Mentor Program, as well as individual alumni directors strategically pull the list of unmatched alumni mentors to invite them to participate in webinars, social media features, and even in-person speaking opportunities to ensure we are engaging these amazing alumni who have raised their hand to serve.

Looking Ahead

As we continue to grow the UGA Mentor Program, our goal remains the same: to ensure every student can learn from those who have walked the path before them. For alumni, it's a chance to give back in a deeply personal way—sharing wisdom, encouragement, and perspective that can shape the next generation of leaders.

I invite my colleagues to explore mentor.uga.edu and consider how a similar model might strengthen their own alumni and student networks. Together, we can ensure the next generation of leaders are prepared for what's ahead.

By Laura Bayne, Director of Alumni Relations for the University of Georgia's College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences



If you are a new member and not listed, please email info@naada.org.

Kevin Hardee, Auburn University

Brittyn LeCompte, Texas Tech University, Davis College of Agricultural Sciences & Natural Resources

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University of Tennessee-Knoxville Fun Facts

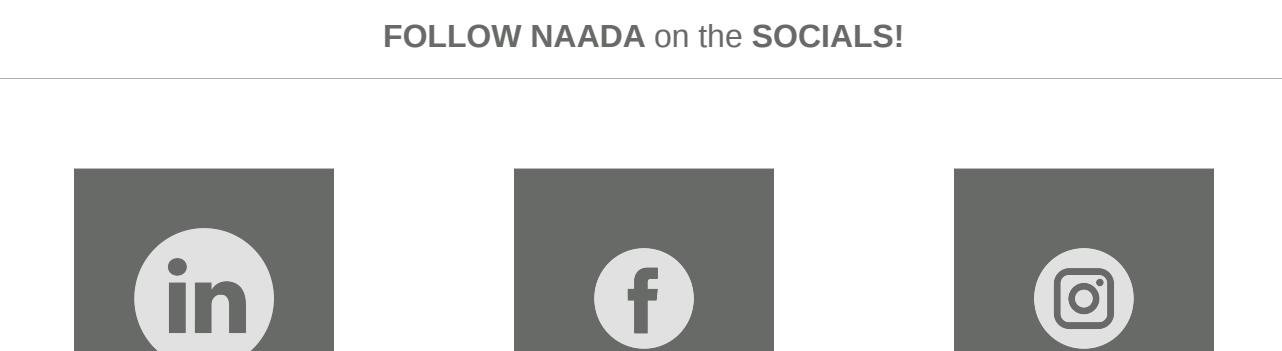


Did You Know ?

Bristol, Tennessee is the birthplace of country music, not Nashville?

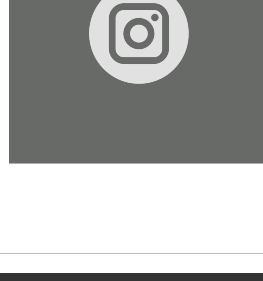
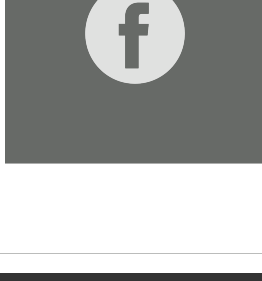
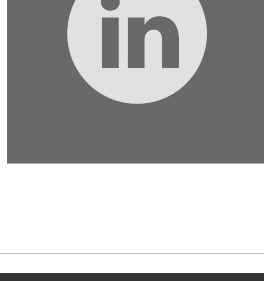
In December, our playlists are loaded down with songs that only come around once a year. Maybe add 'Rocky Top' to that playlist to get ready for NAADA 2026 in Tennessee!

We are so excited to host NAADA 2026! Get ready for a fun, educational, unforgettable time at University of Tennessee-Knoxville!



CLICK HERE for Sponsorship Opportunities

FOLLOW NAADA on the SOCIALS!



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