## Dionne F. Toombs



**TITLE: Associate Director for Programs**

Dr. Dionne Toombs is the NIFA Associate Director for Programs at National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) – U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) extramural grant funding agency for agricultural research, education, and Extension programs. In the role she provides national leadership and direction for NIFA’s science and federal assistance programs. Dr. Toombs works with university partners and other cooperators and customers to advance the mission of research, education, and extension programs in the food and agricultural sciences.

Dr. Toombs returned to NIFA in 2022 to serve as the Acting Director and provided policy direction and leadership to advance knowledge for agriculture, the environment, human health and well-being, and communities by supporting research, education, and extension programs in the Land-grant University System and other partner organizations. Previously, she was Director of the Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS), where she provided leadership on a wide range of issues affecting science programs and science policy in agricultural research, education, and economics. She directed and coordinated activities of OCS to strengthen science and science leadership, improve national coordination, and enhance outreach and awareness.

Dr. Toombs provided scientific leadership and coordination to the White House, Office of Science and Technology Policy, National Science and Technology Council working groups, across USDA and other federal agencies, and the agricultural community. As director, she managed the information OCS provides the Secretary of Agriculture and USDA science agencies, ensuring the scientific research and advice are held to the highest standards of intellectual rigor and scientific integrity. She spearheaded collaboration with USDA advisory boards and builds partnerships with the scientific community.

With over two decades of USDA service, Dr. Toombs has significantly contributed to USDA’s agricultural research, education, and Extension services while serving in various leadership roles, including heading the Division of Nutrition at NIFA. In this role, she led USDA nutrition science leaders who helped steer science policy and program development to ensure America’s food supply is safe, nutritious, and accessible to all citizens. Dr. Toombs has been repeatedly featured as one of USDA’s most impactful woman scientists and recognized by the Secretary of Agriculture for outstanding leadership.

Additionally, Dr. Toombs served as the National Program Leader (NPL) for NIFA’s Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI), leading large competitive grant programs to fund research into nutrition, food science and technology, and food safety. These research investments include helping rural, low-income, minority, and at-risk populations make more informed food choices and become more physically active. Prior to serving as NPL, Dr. Toombs was a Program Specialist for Food Science and Nutrition at the former USDA Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service, now NIFA. She started at USDA as a student intern at USDA’s Agricultural Research Service.

Throughout her career, Dr. Toombs has helped her colleagues, staff, and students maximize their potential by bolstering their talents and developing their leadership skills. Always willing to champion the next generation of scientists, she often emphasizes the importance of relationship building, citing collaboration as a key to her success.

Dr. Toombs earned her Ph.D. in Nutritional Sciences from Howard University, her Master of Science degree in Food Science from Alabama A&M University, and her Bachelor of Science degree in Biology from Bethune-Cookman University.

She enjoys spending time with family, Pilates, participating in community service projects, and learning how to play golf.