

Athens State University
Board of Trustees
External Relations Committee
Minutes
October 20, 2023, 1:15 pm
Founders Hall Chapel

Call of Order - Ms. Missy Ming Smith, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:16 pm.

Welcome Committee Members - Introductions of the External Relations Committee were conducted. Members present were as follows: Ms. Missy Ming Smith, Mr. Mike Underwood, Mr. Darren Waldrep, Ms. Kimberly Dunnivant, Ms. Betty Ruth-Oliver, Dr. Keith Ferguson, Mr. Chris Latham, Ms. Rachel O'Sullivan, Ms. Brandy Conway.

Roll Call - Ms. Brandy Conway conducted a roll call. Members absent: Yvette Evans. All other members were present.

Committee Charge - Ms. Missy Ming Smith shared the committee charter document. The committee was formed to communicate better and for everyone to stay well-informed. The committee is responsible for reviewing practices with regard to marketing, public relations, and communications; promoting engagement with external constituencies; promoting engagement with federal, state, and local governments and policymakers; building partnerships with the community, industry, and the public at large, performing activities within the scope of its charter.

Updates

- **LaunchBox** - Dr. Keith Ferguson presented an update on the LaunchBox. This is the former Center for Lifelong Learning on the square in Athens. A decision was made to transition the LaunchBox to a business incubator. LaunchBox is currently funded through two grants, ARC which ends in May 2024, and USDA which ended in July 2023. Mr. Larry Way was hired as a consultant to help transition the LaunchBox to a business incubator. Mr. Way founded the entrepreneurial center in Decatur in 2010.
- **Learning Partnerships** - Ms. Brandy Conway provided an update on our learning partnership. Currently have 30 agreements. Since our last Board of Trustees meeting, we have signed five new organizations: Decatur Morgan County Chamber of Commerce, Limestone County Commission, WellStone, Athens-Limestone Chamber of Commerce, and Madison County Commission. We received an agreement that is waiting for signatures from Leadership Greater Huntsville. We have four agreements in the pipeline with Mazda Toyota, CWN Aviation, Army Material Command, and NHS Management. In the fall of 2021, we had one student apply but withdrew. In fall 2022, we had 22 students, and in fall 2023, we have 68 students currently participating in the program. Net tuition and fees have increased from \$51,631 in 2021 to \$172,561 for the fall of 2023. We have employees from 16 companies currently participating with Huntsville Hospital System being our largest with 34 students. We are sending a quarterly newsletter. A copy was provided to all committee members. Chris

Latham informed the committee that social media campaigns will begin to target employees at their employer locations.

- Government Relations - Dr. Keith Ferguson reported that we are working on setting up meetings with our Student Government with Legislators through the Higher Education Partnership. We are currently working on budget proposals for 2024-25. Dr. Ferguson met with the Governor's Office to discuss the budget on October 19. He is in the process of scheduling meetings with the Budget Committee Chairs, Limestone County Legislative Delegation, and the State Finance Director.
- Marketing - Mr. Chris Latham reported that 17 programs that highlighted over 50 programs from all three colleges were included in a campaign. The campaign consisted of paid digital display ads, paid search ads, video pre-roll, and paid social ads. From mid-May to mid-August online advertising has received 28 million impressions, leading to 165,000 clicks. Social media is our most effective advertising tool. The top program for engagement has been the RN to BSN program. We received 800 lead submissions from the program's landing page. Sixty percent of our marketing budget is spent on digital advertising. Mr. Latham reported that we have engaged with Up & Up to help do a communications review and make sure we are making the right touch points. Mr. Latham reported that we will be doing an end-of-year campaign strategy to ensure the messaging between admissions and marketing is cohesive as we market to students through their enrollment journey. In March 2024 we will launch a digital campaign.

New Business

Ms. Smith requested that we add the Alumni Association to the next committee meeting's agenda. She requested that we provide information on memberships, how much the membership dues bring in annually, and an overall report on the status of the alumni association.

Adjourn - Ms. Missy Ming Smith called the meeting to end at 2:13 pm.