

THE

COLUMN

ATHENS STATE
UNIVERSITY

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SUMMER 2023



*Athens State Graduate Carrie Trousdale
Became Nurse to Show Compassion*

OUR VISION

Athens State University will be the premier destination for transfer students seeking the highest quality education and cutting-edge delivery at the most affordable cost. As the upper division university in Alabama, building on a tradition that began in 1822, Athens State University will be the catalyst for positive change in the lives of its students.

OUR MISSION

The University advances the best interests of its students and the State of Alabama through teaching, service, research, and other creative activities to empower students to make valuable contributions in their professional, civic, educational, and economic endeavors. Through innovative communication and course delivery for high-quality undergraduate and select graduate programs, Athens State University provides a supporting environment for each student, demonstrating the importance of the diverse and interdependent nature of our state and society. Athens State University changes the face of Alabama by changing the lives of its students.

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CONNECT WITH US





Onward ever!

*On Alabama's Northern border,
Reared against the sky,
Proudly stands our Alma Mater,
As the years roll by.
Alma Mater, Alma Mater,
Conquer and prevail;
Hail to thee, our Alma Mater;
Athens State, All Hail!*

*Through the years we've learned to love you
And we sing your praise;
For the pleasure you have shown us,
Through our college days.
Onward ever, be our watchword,
May we never fail,
Hail to thee, our Alma Mater;
Athens State, All Hail!*

Dear alumni and friends of Athens State University:

At every commencement ceremony, we sing the Athens State *Alma Mater*. It's a beautiful melody, and the lyrics are incredibly meaningful. The singing of the *Alma Mater* happens at the end of the ceremony, and everyone who is able stands together for this tradition. The Latin phrase, *Alma Mater*, is usually translated as "nurturing mother" and can mean the actual institution ("Athens State is your *alma mater*"), but it has come to also mean the anthem or hymn that represents the college or university.

The second verse of our *Alma Mater* contains the phrase "Onward ever, be our watchword, may we never fail." As we move into our third century of educating students, these words take on special meaning. Athens State is moving forward in many exciting and ambitious ways. Building on the growth and structure of our academic programs and strategic planning led by Dr. Philip Way, we are anticipating the development of new and stronger pathways for our students that will lead to enhanced economic mobility and intellectual progress. Our graduate programs are experiencing tremendous growth, and students are finding that a degree from Athens State University opens many doors for them. We have also seen expansion in our new undergraduate programs such as our Bachelor's of Science in Nursing (BSN) program which has just received full accreditation from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). At the Spring 2023 commencement ceremony, we had our first BSN Pinning Ceremony to mark the importance of our Nursing students' hard work and dedication to their field.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to you as the Athens State University Interim President. I took on this role in January 2023, and it is an honor to work with our amazing staff, faculty, and Board of Trustees members as well as to get to meet so many of you, our alumni and friends. I came to Athens State in the Summer of 2021 as the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and quickly got to know the many reasons why Athens State has flourished. Athens State is growing and changing – and we are boldly taking on the many challenges that face higher education right now so that we can continue to best serve our students and our community. We know that by focusing on who we are and who we serve, we will never fail (to use another phrase from our *Alma Mater*). Athens State University will most certainly be celebrating another 200 years!

As you can see, it is an exciting and significant time at Athens State. Thank you for your continued support of what we do. I look forward to meeting you at one of our many events or the next time that you're on campus. Athens State University is your university – and I'm excited to begin our third century of educating students! Onward ever!

Catherine M. Wehlburg, Ph.D.
Interim President



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ATHENS STATE APPOINTS DR. TROY ADAIR DEAN FOR COLLEGE OF BUSINESS

Dr. Troy Adair has been named Dean for the College of Business at Athens State University. He will begin his deanship on July 1, 2023.

Dr. Adair received his Bachelor in Computer Science from the University of Alabama at Birmingham; Master of Business Administration from the University of North Dakota, and Doctorate in Finance from Indiana University. Dr. Adair comes to Athens State with a broad range of experience from serving in the United States Air Force to most recently serving as a teaching professor and co-director for the Computer Science and Business Degree Program at Lehigh University.

"Dr. Adair brings a wealth of experience to this position, having served in the military, the private sector, and higher education," stated Dr. Lee Vartanian, Interim Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs. "He is a thought leader within his field, having co-authored nationally-renowned textbooks on finance and investing."

As Dean for the College of Business, Dr. Adair will maintain a strong commitment to quality and innovation to direct the program and enhance instruction. His background and expertise are well-suited to lead the flexible, engaging, and relevant programmatic offerings within the College of Business at Athens State.

"When I visited, I was very impressed by the professionalism and passion exhibited by everyone," stated Dr. Adair. "Clearly, Athens State is an exceptional university filled with committed faculty and staff, and I am overjoyed to be able to join them." ■



ATHENS STATE RANKED BY ONLINEU IN SEVERAL "MOST AFFORDABLE" CATEGORIES

OnlineU has ranked Athens State among the most affordable colleges and degree programs in the country in the following categories:

- 2023 Most Affordable Online Colleges & Degrees - #1
- 2023 Most Affordable Online Bachelor's Degrees - #1
- 2023 Most Affordable Online Master's Degrees in Accounting - #1
- 2023 Most Affordable Online Master's in Supply Chain Management - #1
- 2023 Most Affordable Colleges for an Online MHA - #3
- 2023 Most Affordable Online Degrees in Healthcare Management - #3
- 2023 Most Affordable Online Supply Chain Management Degrees - #3
- 2023 Most Affordable Online Master's Degrees in Healthcare Management - #3 (tie)
- 2023 Most Affordable Online Master's Degrees in Religious Studies - #4
- 2023 Most Affordable Online Master's Degrees in Human Resources - #4 (tie)
- 2023 Most Affordable Online Master's Degrees in Management - #4 (tie)
- 2023 Most Affordable Online Human Resources Degrees - #5

- 2023 Most Affordable Online Elementary Education Degrees - #6
- 2023 Most Affordable Early Childhood Education Degrees Online - #7
- 2023 Most Affordable Online Colleges for Accounting Degrees - #9
- 2023 Most Affordable Online Education Degrees - #9
- 2023 Most Affordable Online Colleges for Psychology Degrees - #10

As an upper-division institution that serves non-traditional students, affordability is one of the pillars of Athens State's mission. The University strives to offer the highest quality education and cutting-edge delivery at the most affordable cost. Our programs connect students with practical careers and allow them to graduate without unnecessary debt.

For more information on these rankings, visit onlineu.com. ■

ATHENS STATE SIGNS MOU WITH WALLACE STATE

Athens State University and Wallace State Community College have signed a Memorandum of Understanding designed to help Wallace State students retain prior learning assessment (PLA) credit when they transfer to Athens State after completing their associate degree.

Students who receive PLA/CPL credit are more likely to successfully retain and graduate than the general college and university population. Many institutions in the state of Alabama are encouraging students to take advantage of learning that is acquired outside of the classroom; however, because PLA/CPL does not transfer, students have been faced with a choice between not receiving credit they have earned, taking classes they already received credit for, or going through two or more lengthy and costly PLA reviews when they transfer from their community college to a university.

FACULTY EMERITUS: DR. PIEPLOW

Athens State is pleased to announce that Dr. Thomas Pieplow has been given Faculty Emeritus status.

Dr. Pieplow served as a member of Athens State University's faculty for over 10 years and held the ranks of Associate Professor and Professor. He attained a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Administration from Northwood University, a master's in Business Administration from the Florida Institute of Technology, and a Doctor of Public Administration from Nova Southeastern University.

Dr. Pieplow also served as Department Chair and Interim Dean for the College of Business and served on many University Committees during his tenure. Dr. Pieplow is a much-respected citizen of the Athens State University community, and his dedicated efforts contributed to the quality and reputation of Athens State University and its students and will be beneficial for years to come.



NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Alabama Governor's Office and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education are actively pursuing crosswalks for accepting PLA credit across the state of Alabama. Athens State University and Wallace State Community College have built a first of its kind transfer pathway for PLA credit received at one institution to transfer to the other.

"This partnership with Wallace State is another way to remove barriers that adult learners face," said Felicia Mucci, Director of Athens State's Adult Degree Program. "By accepting PLA credit that was awarded at Wallace State, we are letting students know that we recognize how valuable learning obtained from work, training, and certifications is to their overall educational goals." ■



ATHENS STATE'S BSN PROGRAM RECEIVES CCNE ACCREDITATION

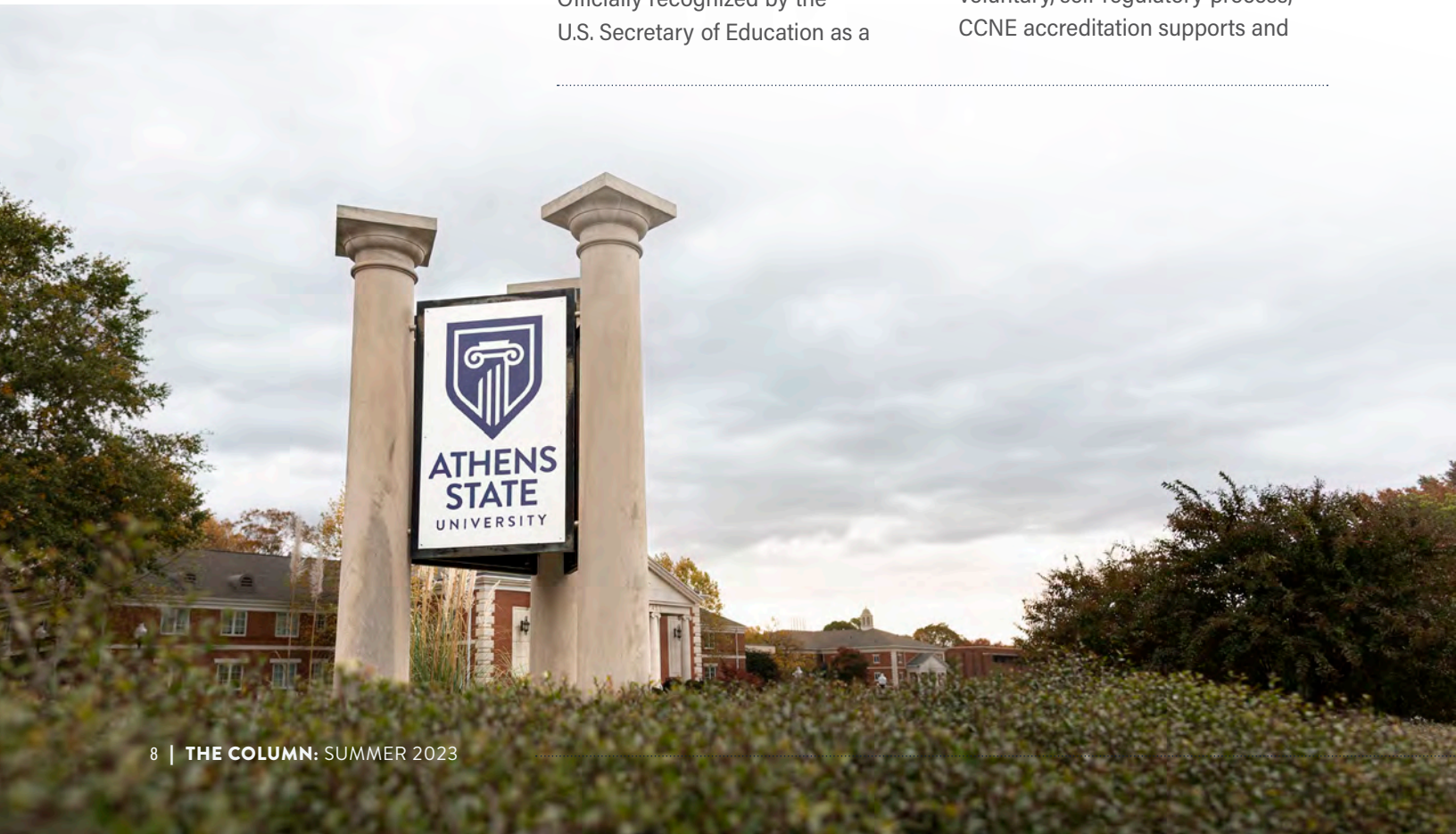
The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) has announced that Athens State University's Baccalaureate Degree Program in Nursing has been accredited by the CCNE Board of Commissioners for five years, the maximum allowable for initial accreditation.

Officially recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education as a



national accreditation agency, the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) is an autonomous accrediting agency, contributing to the improvement of the public's health. CCNE ensures the quality and integrity of baccalaureate, graduate, and residency/fellowship programs in nursing.

CCNE serves the public interest by assessing and identifying programs that engage in effective educational practices. As a voluntary, self-regulatory process, CCNE accreditation supports and



encourages continuing self-assessment by nursing programs and supports continuing growth and improvement of collegiate professional education and nurse residency/fellowship programs.

“Obtaining national CCNE accreditation for the baccalaureate degree program in nursing indicates a program of quality, excellence, and academic rigor,” said Dr. Mark Reynolds, Chief Nurse Administrator at Athens State University. “It is a truly historic time at Athens State and I am excited to be part of this amazing university.”

Athens State’s RN to BSN program provides a pathway for success to registered nurses already working in their field to complete their baccalaureate degree in nursing. The program provides student-centered learning experiences in a supportive environment to prepare registered nurses to assume leadership positions, manage complex clinical care, and improve the health and welfare of the individuals and populations within their community and across the nation. It also prepares the registered nurse to be a professional health care practitioner,

who provides compassionate and ethical care, which is based on research and scientific evidence, and who serves the dynamic health care needs of the individual patient, family, community, or population, and the health care environment across the lifespan.

For more information about Athens State’s BSN program, visit athens.edu/BSN. ■



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ATHENS FOREVER

gala

Athens State University welcomed donors, alumni and friends of the University for the ATHENS FOREVER Gala on Saturday, February 25, to celebrate the record-breaking results of the ATHENS FOREVER Bicentennial Campaign.





Athens State celebrated its Bicentennial in 2022. In honor of this historic achievement, the University launched the silent phase of a five-year capital campaign on August 5, 2017, that concluded after a year-long Bicentennial celebration at the end of 2022. More than \$25 million was raised, which surpassed the campaign’s goal of \$20 million. The funds raised will endow scholarships, establish Learning Labs, and improve campus infrastructure for generations to come.

“We are honored to have each of you here tonight,” stated Dr. Keith Ferguson, Vice President for University Advancement, as he welcomed everyone to the Gala. “Thank you for investing in the University, which allows us to make a positive impact on our students and community.”

The Carter Gymnasium was transformed with extravagant draping, linens, florals, lighting, and a photo booth which set the tone for a night meant to celebrate and say “thank you!” to everyone involved in the ATHENS FOREVER campaign. Guests enjoyed a cocktail hour to kick start the evening, followed by opening remarks by Dr. Catherine Wehlburg, Interim President.

“Not only are we Athens Forever, but we are Ever Ascending through the rigorous work done by our faculty, staff, and donors,” stated Dr. Wehlburg. “Tonight marks the success of the past and bright future of tomorrow.”

Guests enjoyed a plated meal and surprise entertainment by The



Three Waiters, a singing waiters act involving three amazing opera singers posed as real “waiters” for the gala. Following this surprise was a time to celebrate the accomplishments of the ATHENS FOREVER Campaign, led by Dr. Keith Ferguson. Ms. Donna Coleman, president of the Athens State University Foundation Board, shared a personal testimony and call to action for continued support of the University. The celebration concluded with a toast to ATHENS FOREVER and everyone that moves the University forward. Guests enjoyed live music, dancing, and time together.

“Athens State is a unique university that fills a unique gap by providing an excellent education that is accessible to students in all walks of life,” said Coleman.

The funds raised throughout the campaign will provide the cornerstone upon which the foundation for Athens State’s future will be built and help the University support its commitment to students as it enters its third century as an institution of higher learning. ■



**Athens State Graduate Carrie Trousdale
Became Nurse to Show Compassion**

Photo: Jeronimo Nisa/The Decatur Daily

Story provided by Erica Smith/
The Decatur Daily

Her mother's illness inspired Carrie Trousdale to pursue a nursing degree at Athens State University and go into the medical field, determined to be a nurse who shows her patients compassion and care.

"My mother is a Type I diabetic, and she was in and out of the hospital so much and you can see the difference that the nurses truly make and that can be a positive or a negative," Trousdale said. "I've seen several nurses who are just not very nice and not very compassionate, and also nurses who you can tell love their job, they love their patients, and they want the best for their patients."

Trousdale, 28, from Danville, was in the first graduating class of Athens State University's new Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree which started fall 2021. She started the program in October 2021 and graduated in the spring with a 4.0 grade point average.

Trousdale said good nurses make a difference in their patients' lives and health.

"I wanted to be that compassionate, caring nurse, to give the best possible outcome to my patients," she said. Trousdale wants her

patients to know "they are not just a number, they were not just a patient, I was there to make them better."

Trousdale became a registered nurse in 2018 after completing an associate's degree at Wallace State Community College. There she was awarded the 2018 Health Science Excellence Award and the Nightingale Award, which is given to a student who shows care and compassion for patients.

The Athens State program, Trousdale said, was more advanced than the one at Wallace State. She said clinical reasoning and clinical judgment were taught more in the bachelor's program than in the associate's program.

"It really makes you think about why you're making these decisions for these patients rather than just following orders," Trousdale said. "You're also kind of thinking on your own. You're being more autonomous."

A bachelor's degree in nursing has helped Trousdale recognize the importance of getting all the facts.

"We really talked about not jumping to conclusions," she said. "You collect more information, you put it all together. Just a lot more clinical reasoning."

Trousdale got a job in 2018 working for Dr. Roger Moss Jr. at New Decatur Clinic and worked there for about a year before working in the emergency room at Decatur Morgan Hospital for about a year

and a half. Ultimately, she returned to work for Moss in 2020 and has worked a total of about four years at New Decatur Clinic. Trousdale said her work in the ER taught her many skills that have helped her become a better nurse.

"Now I know how to respond to emergent situations as well," she said. "So, if something emergent were to happen in the office, I know how to quickly respond."

Trousdale said she returned to the clinic because she prefers preventive care.

"I like being able to keep the patients out of the emergency room, prevent medical exacerbations," she said. "Keeping their diabetes under control, keeping their high blood pressure under control so they don't have to end up in the hospital."

Trousdale said she feels she has made a difference in her patients' lives and health.

"I try my best to get to know my patients on a deeper level rather than just a nurse-patient relationship," she said. "I want them to trust me and know that I'm here for them."

Moss, a primary care physician, said he nicknamed Trousdale "Sunshine" due to her demeanor.

"She's always cheery and she makes my patients feel that way," he said. "She has a lot of compassion for the patients and she's an excellent nurse."



“Just getting my Bachelor's has already made me a better nurse.”

Moss said Trousdale is a benefit to his practice.

“I wish I could keep her on, but I think she wants to move up to other things,” he said.

Trousdale said she enrolled at Athens State because she wants to pursue a doctoral degree in nursing and become a nurse practitioner.

“I plan to do the dual enrollment program at (the University of) Alabama; I actually just applied there as a psychiatric and family nurse practitioner,” she said. “It is a longer course of study, but once I’m finished, I will be certified in psychiatry and family care. ... I’m going to study both, and I will just go wherever my heart leads me.”

Trousdale said she realizes it is a lot to take on and has been told by people to slow down.

“It’s kind of how I’ve always done things,” she said. “I’m a little nervous about it but I think I can do it.”

Like Athens State's nursing program, Trousdale's courses from the University of Alabama will be online. She said she will be able to complete her clinicals at local hospitals.

Trousdale is married to Robbie Trousdale. They have three children, and she is expecting another. She said she has worked while enrolled at Athens State and it has been hectic.

“Typically, I will take my kids to school early in the morning. I come to work, I do school work on my lunch break,” Trousdale said. “Pick the kids up from school, get all their stuff done, put them in bed. Then I do school work most of the night.”

Trousdale said after attending Athens State she is even more committed to improving her nursing skills.

“Just getting my bachelor's has already made me a better nurse,” she said. “I want to keep improving and continue to educate myself as far as I can possibly go in order to give my patients the best possible care.” ■



NEW FAST-TRACK BSN PROGRAM

between Athens State and Calhoun Community College

Calhoun Community College and Athens State University have signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a new fast-track BSN program that will allow students to receive their Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) and Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree simultaneously. In addition to better serving students, the program's benefits will extend to the consumers of healthcare and professional nursing workforce across the nation.

The fast-track BSN program will launch in Fall 2023. Athens State also offers an RN to BSN degree program which provides a pathway for success to registered nurses already working in their field to complete their baccalaureate degree in nursing. For more information, please visit athens.edu/BSN.



“ The Fast-Track BSN is an excellent option for motivated nursing students at Calhoun Community College. This option provides **both a time and cost-saving option** for the nurse to gain additional skills and expertise along with the ability to move into **advanced-practice education expeditiously**. The collaborative efforts between both institutions indicates **a commitment to the region** to produce quality Registered Nurses who are prepared to provide quality patient care.
– Dr. Mark Reynolds, *Chief Nurse Administrator at Athens State* ”



ACHE APPROVES TWO NEW MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAMS

Athens State is pleased to announce that the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) has approved two new Master's degree programs: Master of Fine Arts in Integrative Design and Master of Education in Training and Development.

The **Master of Fine Arts in Integrative Design (MFA)** program is a professional terminal degree in art and its disciplinary extensions of graphic design and digital design. Students will have the opportunity to choose between three areas of concentration: Media and Digital Arts, Painting and Drawing, and Ceramics.

"We are excited to launch our MFA in Interactive Design," said Dr. Lee Vartanian, Interim Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs. "This new program, based in the Alabama Center for the Arts, will provide a compelling option for innovative, next generation artists to receive a terminal degree in the fine arts. Our MFA student artists will explore exciting new territory,

including digital, multimedia, and virtual reality—areas not traditionally seen within the fine arts. I can't wait to see the amazing projects and pieces our new MFA students will produce. They will make our physical and digital world more visually interesting and engaging!"

"This is an historic event, as the MFA is the University's first terminal degree," said Pamela Keller, Chair of the Visual and Performing Arts. "It is the Ph.D of the visual arts world. With such a degree, artists can feel totally accomplished academically and also capable of progressing fully in their areas of employment to the top jobs. Graduates of the MFA program can become university professors, creative directors and innovators in STEAM careers. The Alabama Center for the Arts was built with this degree in mind and since its inception in 2012, has continued to grow its outstanding faculty and develop as a facility along with the progressive changes in the world of arts and media."

This program will begin in Spring 2024. For application information, contact Professor Keller at pamela.keller@athens.edu.

The **Master of Education in Training and Development** program will allow graduates to gain foundational knowledge of theories underlying best practices for adult learning and how to effectively apply this information in the workplace as training and development specialists, training and development managers, and education administrators. The program will begin in Fall 2023 and be offered entirely online.

The job market potential for graduates of this program include the management of in-service education and training in business and industry, health-related institutions and agencies, military agencies, institutions of higher education, K-12 education, and related self-employed activities. ■



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**PREVIEW NIGHT:
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THURSDAY, OCTOBER 5 | 7 PM



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FRIDAY, OCTOBER 6 | 6 PM



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Pictured left to right: Lilly Ledbetter, U'Meeka Smith, Bailey Lee, Donna Coleman, Vishwa Parikh, & LaJoy Johns

INTERNATIONAL Women's Day

Athens State University celebrated International Women's Day on March 8 with an International Women's Day Breakfast on campus.

International Women's Day (March 8th) is a global day of celebrating the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women while reinforcing a commitment to women's equality.

The celebration was held in the Sandridge Student Center Ballroom and featured breakfast and keynote speaker, Lilly Ledbetter. Ledbetter was the plaintiff in the United States Supreme Court case Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. regarding employment discrimination, setting off a wave of change and opening a dialogue across the nation.

"Panel with Pizzazz" was held after the keynote, providing a chance

for attendees to learn alongside each other as panelists discussed a number of different issues, what keeps them motivated, and how anything is possible with the right support network.

This year's panel included Donna Coleman, LaJoy Johns, Bailey Lee, Vishwa Parikh, and U'Meeka Smith (moderator).

The 3rd Annual International Women's Day Celebration is scheduled for Friday, March 8, 2024.

About Lilly Ledbetter:


For more than a decade, Lilly Ledbetter fought to achieve pay equity.

It was here in Alabama, where Ledbetter was born and raised, that she began a crusade that would eventually lead her all the way to the nation's capital.

In 1979, Ledbetter took a job at the Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company in Gadsden, Alabama.

Although she was the only woman in her position as an overnight supervisor, Ledbetter began her career earning the same salary as her male colleagues. By the end of her career, however, Lilly was earning less than any of the men in the same position.

Although she signed a contract with her employer that she would not discuss pay rates, just before Ledbetter's retirement an anonymous individual slipped a note into her mailbox listing the salaries of the men performing the same job. In spite of the fact that Ledbetter had received a Top Performance Award from the company, she discovered that she had been paid considerably less than her male counterparts. Ledbetter filed a formal complaint with the Equal Employment



Opportunity Commission and later initiated a lawsuit alleging pay discrimination. After filing her complaint with the EEOC, Ledbetter, then in her 60s, was reassigned to such duties as lifting heavy tires. The formal lawsuit claimed pay discrimination under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Pay Act of 1963.

Although a jury initially awarded her compensation, Goodyear appealed the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court. In 2007, the Supreme Court ruled on the Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. case. In a 5-4 decision, the court determined that employers cannot be sued under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act if the claims are based on decisions made by the employer 180 days ago or more. Due to the fact that Ledbetter's claim regarding her discriminatory pay was filed outside of that time frame, she was not entitled to receive any monetary award.

Since that decision, Ledbetter has lobbied tirelessly for equal pay for men and women. Her efforts finally proved successful when President Barack Obama signed the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act into law on January 29, 2009. Ledbetter said of her continuous and persistent efforts, "I told my pastor when I die, I want him to be able to say at my funeral that I made a difference."



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SEEING STUDENTS SUCCEED:

Mission Multiplier

MEET ZACHARY GRIFFIN

Meet Zachary Griffin, a graduate from Athens State University's College of Business and recipient of the Outstanding Recent Graduate Award from the Athens State Alumni Association. Griffin began his journey at the University in the Fall of 2020. What began as a purely academic endeavor, grew into a thriving and well-rounded campus experience for Zachary Griffin.

Along his way, Griffin realized he needed a change in his chosen field of study and attributes his personal and professional growth to the faculty and staff at Athens State.

"The staff in the Career Development Center were instrumental in assisting me find my academic and personal strengths," said Griffin. "It became clear that the management program in the College of Business was the perfect fit."

Griffin graduated with a bachelors degree in management and a minor in human resources management in December of 2022. Today, he works as the human resources generalist and business operations analyst at Mission Multiplier, a cybersecurity business based in Huntsville, Alabama.

As an Athens State Student, a pivotal decision that launched Griffin into a successful campus experience was

"taking the leap" to become involved in various student activities. The first step Griffin took was applying for the Athenian Ambassadors. At the start, Griffin recalls being uncertain of student activities truly being a worthwhile investment of his time. Little did Griffin know that his involvement in the Athenian Ambassadors would be the catalyst to developing his love for connecting with peers, mentors, the community, and the University.



Griffin's involvement on campus steadily increased as he became the Head Athenian Ambassador and Director of Student Relations for the Athens State Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) Student Chapter. Griffin even made several appearances as Hebrew the Bear.

Perhaps what sets Griffin apart the most is his willingness to say "yes" and serve wherever needed, even when he might rather be the person behind the scenes. Staff members across campus attest to Griffin's consistent service and dependability. These qualities are what have led campus leaders back to Griffin time and time again, which have in turn, provided Griffin with service and experiential learning opportunities. After all, the best way to learn is through real-world experience.

Griffin also served as an officer in Delta Mu Delta and steadily increased his responsibilities with the Ambassadors. He stated that "everything fell into place" through his involvement in student organizations on campus.

"Students have the opportunity to be big fish at Athens State," commented Griffin. "Big fish can make a big splash."

While the majority of Griffin's courses were online, he made it a priority to come to campus for student activities and to converse with faculty and staff members.

"Athens State provides a unique opportunity to students to be both virtual in their coursework and present on campus and in their community through their chosen student activities," stated Amy Garrison, Director of Student Engagement.

In his postgraduate endeavors, Griffin is an active member of Greater Leadership Huntsville, which provides him with professional and community service opportunities. He also desires to continue his work at Mission Multiplier and contribute to the success of the small business as it grows into a thriving company.

Griffin remains an active alumnus, engages with the University as often

as possible, and looks forward to watching the University continue moving forward. He hopes other students will be encouraged to get involved on campus and take the same leap that he did. After all, it's what changed everything for him at Athens State and beyond.

"Student activities, the career development center, and other programs at Athens State helped me grow in areas outside of the classroom," said Griffin. "Overall, Athens State University's greatest gift to me was the power and way of networking and building relationships." ■

About the Management Program
To jump-start your business career, you need a comprehensive understanding of the basics of good business. The BS in Management gives you an opportunity to pursue a variety of business fields, offering in-depth courses in accounting, finance, management, information systems, global business, production theory, and marketing. Learn more about programs in the College of Business at athens.edu/business.

CLASS NOTES

JAN. - JUN. 2023

Current Students

- Erin Hanners was recently hired as a cyber operations analyst at the U.S. Army Combat Capabilities Development Command Aviation & Missile Center.

Class of 2022

- April Dawn Murph recently started a new position as Human Resources Generalist at Aviagen.

Class of 2020

- Trevor Allison was recently named Educator of the Year at the Franklin County Partnership Awards Ceremony. He currently serves as science teacher and coach at Phil Campbell High School.

Class of 2019

- Brett Godbee recently started a new position as Software Test Engineer at U.S. Army DEVCOM Aviation & Missile Center.
- Jeremy Boles recently started a new position as HRIS Analyst at Yulista Holding LLC.

Class of 2018

- Evan Thomas recently started new position as Jr IT Asset Management Analyst at IPT Associates.

Class of 2017

- Kevin Posey recently received the Governor's Volunteer Stars Award.

Class of 2016

- Darrell Echols has recently started a new position as one of the culinary teachers at the Culinary Arts Academy in Decatur, Alabama.

Class of 2014

- Blair Northcutt recently started new position as Staff Accountant at Hexagon Safety & Infrastructure & Geospatial.
- Adam Pharr was recently named the new pastor of South Side Baptist Church in Russellville, Alabama.

Class of 2013

- Katie McGee was recently named as a finalist for Alabama Teacher of the Year. She was also named the Cullman Middle School and Overall Secondary Teacher of the Year for 2022-2023.
- Joseph Longino recently started a new position as Test Resource Manager with KBR at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.
- Steve Lanford has been named Teacher of the Year at Bob Jones High School.

Class of 2012

- Blake Denton recently accepted a position as Collection Management Librarian at the University of Southern Mississippi.
- Deborah Rice was recently featured by Alabama News Center as part of Sarcoidosis Awareness Month.
- Amber Robinson was recently featured in The Cullman Times.

Class of 2011

- Ashley Hargrove Osborne's show, "Unnerving," has

been released on Amazon Prime Video.

- Josh Helton was recently named the new senior pastor at Highland Baptist Church in Molino, Florida.
- Bonnie Howard was recently named as a finalist for Alabama Teacher of the Year.

Class of 2010

- Maranda Wilkinson has been named Director of Education and Public Programming with the Charles H. Coolidge National Medal of Honor Heritage Center.

Class of 2009

- Ryan Tittle recently won 2nd Prize in Blue Institute's 5th annual Words on Water Writing Contest (Adult Poetry Category) for his poem, "The Rain Dance."

Class of 2005

- Meleighsa McLaughlin was recently chosen as the Teacher of the Year for James Clemens High School.

Class of 2004

- Kerry Donaldson Jr. was recently appointed as Acting Principal at James Clemons High School.
- Ashley Thompson has been nominated for Alabama Home Builder of the Year for 2022.

Class of 2003

- Isabella "Belle" Coffell was recently named Decatur City Schools' secondary education teacher of the year. She currently serves as a science teacher with the Schools' Excel Center.
- Amanda Stidham was recently named the Cullman City Primary

School and Overall Elementary Teacher of the Year for 2022-2023.

Class of 2002

- Charlie Miller was recently named "Vietnam Veteran of the Year" for the state of Alabama.

Class of 1999

- Elizabeth "Eve" Cheatham was recently featured by the Hartselle Enquirer in association with her being named Hartselle City Schools Secondary Teacher of the Year.

Class of 1993

- Susan McGrady recently started a new position as Executive Director at Eighth Street Community.

Class of 1993

- William Weaver the Chief Executive Officer at Brentwood Hospital in Shreveport, Louisiana, was recently named to the area's Committee of 100 (C100) for Economic Development.

Class of 1992

- Janet Burton was recently presented with the Albert Nelson Marquis Lifetime Achievement Award.
- Teresa Newman was recently featured in the U.A. Army News for her outstanding career in the Navy.

Class of 1991

- Kim Jared was recently named as a finalist for Alabama Teacher of the Year.
- David Reeves was recently hired as the Jasper High School head football coach.

Class of 1990

- Bill Hopkins, most recently serving as director of Fayetteville City Schools in Tennessee, has announced his resignation at the end of the school year.

Class of 1989

- Jimmy Bright recently released his new book, "Jake and the Snake."

Class of 1987

- Kenny Jordan was recently recognized for his outstanding dedication as the assistant principal at Elkmont High School.
- Dr. Frank Malone has been appointed by the governor of Delaware to serve on the Delaware Childhood Lead Poisoning Advisory Committee, a state executive board.

Class of 1987

- Myra Garth Nickson retired from APT Research, Inc. (Government Contractor/ Engineering firm) on December 31, 2019. She went back to work for APT Research on January 7 as a Human Resources Consultant. Once the pandemic started, Myra stopped working as a consultant. She then started her own Notary Signing company, Nickson's Notary. Her company performed notary services for major home refinancing. Effective December 31, 2023 Myra will be retiring from her successful company as well.

Class of 1979

- Tracy Lowery has been named to the 2023 Class of the Limestone County Sports Hall of Fame.

Class of 1977

- Dr. Glenn Conner was recently named as Founding Pastor of Grace Global Methodist Church in Scottsboro, AL.

Class of 1973

- Bill Murrell has been named to the 2023 Class of the Limestone County Sports Hall of Fame.

Class of 1972

- Mark McDaniel was recently appointed as the Aerospace and Science Advisor for the 118th Congress.

Class of 1970

- Edward T. Minetti has been voted into the Bridgewater-Raritan, New Jersey High School Sports Hall of Fame. Eddie coached several sports for 56 sports seasons over the course of his teaching career. He will be formally inducted into the Hall of Fame during the October 2023 ceremony.

Class of 1963

- Bill G. Bass recently spoke to the National Association of Government Retirees at the Alabama Veterans Museum and Archives on the subject of "An Overview of the Early Space Science From The Jupiter Program to International Space Station Launch." Bill retired from MSFC/NASA in 1994 as Deputy Chief to the Microgravity Science and Application Division in the NASA/ MSFC Space Science Laboratory, a division created in 1980 to support the International Space Station (ISS) scientific activities. Dr.

Robert Naumann, who taught at Athens State as an Adjunct Prof. was the chief of the Division and also was International Space Station (ISS) Mission Scientist.

Other Members of the University Community

- Maureen Chemsak - Non-Graduate (Retired Director of Counseling): Chemsak was recently featured in The Madison Record where she spoke about the organization she founded, St. Joseph the Worker Job Networking Club.
- Charlie Gover - Attended in 1975: Gover has been named to the 2023 Class of the Limestone County Sports Hall of Fame.
- Joe Hulse - Current Graduate Student: Hulse was recently awarded the Outstanding Technical Faculty Award from Gadsden State Community College.

Let your fellow Athens State alumni see what you've been up to! Submit your alumni updates at athens.edu/alumni.





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