

# *The* COLUMN

ATHENS STATE UNIVERSITY

## LEADING THE WAY:

President Way  
Completes First  
100 Days in Office

WINTER 2020

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*Gala*

Join us for the public launch of  
**ATHENS FOREVER**  
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# A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT WAY



## *Dear alumni and friends of Athens State University:*

As you are no doubt aware, I am the new president of Athens State University. Just in case you have not had an opportunity to learn about me, I am from the South – of England. Born in London, raised in several places in the north of England, educated at Cambridge and Warwick Universities, I came to the US during graduate school on a Fellowship to Harvard to do research. That led to a faculty position at the University of Cincinnati (UC), where I also gained progressive leadership experience.

I was then persuaded to be Associate Provost at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. To gain experience as a provost and vice president for academic and student affairs, I spent six years at Slippery Rock University (SRU) just north of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. I thoroughly enjoyed being interim president there for a year (with no chance to apply for the permanent position), so I searched elsewhere. Fortunately, Athens State University offered me the presidency, and I began work on August 1, 2019. My wife Cheryl and I are delighted to be back in Alabama!

That's my resume in a nutshell. But what you care about is whether the University is truly in good hands. Having Athens State as your alma mater or in your regional backyard is rather like having it in your retirement portfolio. Will the stock price rise or fall? I can allay any fears you have.

First, I am totally committed to continuing to transform the lives of our students, helping them improve their socio-economic status through a quality education. I am no stranger to our typical demographic. Half of my time teaching at UC was devoted to older students who had returned for a master's degree. Around 40% of SRU students enrolled after community college. One of my consuming interests as a researcher, teacher, and administrator has been student success: how can we optimize our teaching and university policies and services to promote learning and graduation? I will be supporting our faculty and staff as we fine-tune our student success strategies.

Second, I believe that Athens State will benefit from my academic background in economics and human resource management. I am able to weigh options in terms of return on investment, which augurs well for sound financial decision-making. At the same time, I care deeply about the employees and will attempt to create a constructive culture in which the university achieves its goals, and employees are satisfied with their supervisors, peers, and personal development.

Third, I am committed to Athens State University being a powerful partner with the region and its communities. I have observed that we are already an "anchor institution." We have been here for nearly 200 years; we are not going anywhere. We will continue to enhance the arts and cultural fabric of the region, provide service to our community, seek to enhance P-12 education, and contribute to economic development.

As a result, I hope you see your stock in Athens State continue to appreciate!

Sincerely,

Dr. Philip K. Way  
President

## 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.*

## CONTACT US

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**UNIVERSITY**  
**YOUR UNIVERSITY. YOUR WAY.**



# LEADING THE WAY:

## President Way Completes First 100 Days in Office

**T**hroughout history, “100 days” has marked a critical benchmark for any new leader. Having taken office on August 1, 2019, Dr. Philip Way has successfully completed his first 100 days in office, a milestone worthy of reflection. His time so far at Athens State has been quite busy; he wasted no time launching a listening and learning tour with faculty, staff, and students, gaining an understanding of the institution through the eyes of those who have firsthand experience.

The strengths of Athens State University are fairly easy to recognize: high-quality programs with flexible offerings, affordability, small class size, and a positive campus community, to name a few. Dr. Way was also quick to define the weaknesses and threats that the University faces and create strategies to turn them into opportunities.

As the first 100 days transition into the first 365 days, Dr. Way has outlined four overarching strategic foci to lead the University into even greater success:

1. Outreach to further become an anchor institution within the Athens-Limestone County area
2. Diversity, inclusion, and equity for both students and employees
3. Recruitment of students by examining products, price, place, promotion, and people
4. Student success through persistence, graduation, and career success

One pertinent facet of Dr. Way’s plan includes engaging all stakeholders of Athens State University and allowing the campus community to voice feedback about various processes, decisions, and future plans.

“The future is bright at Athens State University,” stated Dr. Way. “I am continuously impressed by the dedication of the faculty and staff in serving students and seeing that they reach their personal and professional goals. I’m excited to work alongside my colleagues in paving the way for a new era of success.”



Learning & Listening Tour



Veterans Day  
Celebration



SGA Welcome  
Back Luau



Student Meeting for the newly-established  
National Society of Leadership & Success



Fall Commencement Ceremonies



Dr. Way with Hebrew the Bear

# ATHENS STATE TEAMS WITH THE US ARMY COMBAT CAPABILITIES DEVELOPMENT COMMAND AVIATION AND MISSILE CENTER



Athens State University has partnered with the US Army Combat Capabilities Development Command Aviation and Missile Center (AvMC) in an Educational Partnership Agreement (EPA). The formal agreement between a federal agency and an educational institution encourages and enhances study in scientific disciplines at all levels of education.

The AvMC's authority for Educational Partnerships is Title 10 United States Code Section 2194 which states, in part, that under such agreements the director of a defense laboratory may provide assistance to the educational institution by making laboratory personnel available to teach science courses or to assist in the development of science courses and materials for the institution; involving faculty and students of the institution in defense laboratory research projects; and cooperating with the institution in developing a program under which students may be given academic credit for work on defense laboratory research projects.

There is a sharp decline in the number of students pursuing science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) degrees in the United States, making the pool of qualified candidates smaller and more difficult to recruit for the Army's mission-critical efforts. Encouraging and nurturing a student's interest in STEM subjects must start early in a student's education. In an effort to ignite interest in STEM subjects, the AvMC does EPAs with several schools and universities to bring real-world science and technology applications to the classroom environment. Through education outreach, the AvMC not only strengthens the student's understanding of science and technology but exposes them to the vast career opportunities at AvMC to influence their future career decisions in business opportunities, says Ms. Wallace, Deputy Chief, Office of Research and Technology Applications.

"The Educational Partnership Agreement will benefit the students by enhancing their skills in all levels within science, technology, and mathematics. As a result of closer interaction with research projects based upon practical, "real world" situations, this effort gives the students experiential relevance to academic programs. The main goal of an EPA is to encourage and enhance the study of the scientific disciplines at all levels of education. The students will be better prepared to enter into the ever-changing workforce," said Ms. Cindy Wallace, Deputy Chief for the Office of Research & Technology Applications, AvMC.

"The mission of the ORTA is to facilitate access of federally-funded research and development efforts by private industry, academia, state and local governments, and nonprofit organizations. This is accomplished primarily through marketing, technical outreach, cooperative research and development, and the licensing of intellectual property. One of the vehicles that facilitate the process of technology transfer is through EPAs," said Wallace.

The partnership was officially launched at an agreement signing event held on Thursday, November 21 at AvMC's Office of Research & Technology Applications. Athens State University was represented by Dr. Philip Way, University President; Dr. Kim LaFavor, Dean of the College of Business; and Dr. Lionel Wright, Assistant Professor of Business and Graduate Program Manager. "Athens State is proud to partner with local organizations to provide experiential learning opportunities to students and better prepare them for real-world careers upon graduation," stated Dr. Kim LaFavor. "Our goal is to shape the future of this area by preparing leaders in business, education, and science, and we're appreciative of this partnership to help us in our mission."



## ATHENS STATE UNIVERSITY SCHOLARSHIP CREATED TO HONOR EULA BATTLE

Teaching has always been close to Eula Battle's heart. She taught middle school and kindergarten during her career, and she devoted her energy to helping children with dyslexia once she retired. After working in education for over 30 years, she was all too familiar with a common problem many teachers face: paying for school supplies out of their own pockets to provide their students with the resources they need to succeed.

To help alleviate this problem, Eula and a friend established Free 2 Teach, a non-profit organization that provides free school supplies to all full-time teachers in Madison County's three public school systems: Huntsville City, Madison City, and Madison County. By visiting the organization's storefront, teachers in the Huntsville area have access to a large range of classroom resources, including traditional school supplies, office supplies, furniture, room décor, craft supplies, books, and math and science resources – all at no cost to them. These supplies directly benefit students by enhancing classroom instruction and giving teachers the ability to put school supplies into the hands of the underserved students in their classrooms. To date, Free 2

Teach has distributed almost \$6 million of school supplies and resources to thousands of teachers and students in the Huntsville area.

Due to her tireless work addressing prevalent needs in the education field as both a teacher and community volunteer, friends and supporters of her work came together to establish the "Eula Sammons Battle Teacher Scholarship" at Athens State University. The scholarship, which will be awarded to an Athens State University education student from the Huntsville area who intends to teach in the Madison County public school system, will continue Eula's legacy of advocacy and support in the field of education for years to come.

The endowed scholarship was presented to Eula on her birthday, a surprise gift she was delighted to receive. "Athens State prepares wonderful teachers who impact students across all of North Alabama," stated Eula. "To have a scholarship in my name that will help these teachers in their journey to the classroom is such an honor."

For more information about the Free 2 Teach program, visit [free-2-teach.org](http://free-2-teach.org).

# SAVE THE DATE



## ATHENS FOREVER

*Gala*

Join us for the public launch of  
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# FEBRUARY 29, 2020

Invitations to follow



# ATHENS STATE RECEIVES \$2.1 MILLION TITLE III GRANT

Athens State University is proud to announce that it has been awarded a Title III grant by the U.S. Department of Education as part of the Strengthening Institutions Program to enhance student support in the process of degree completion. The award amount for the five-year grant is \$2,106,955, with the funds being utilized to ensure that the University is meeting the needs faced by students in their journey to obtain a college degree.

Title III grants help institutions of higher education become self-sufficient and expand their capacity to serve low-income students by providing funds to improve and strengthen academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability. Services that qualify for Title III funding include innovations designed to retain students and move them toward program completion.

Funding for Athens State's project, **"Pathways to Success – Improving Campus to Career Success,"** will provide financial resources to help students succeed not only at the university but also to take their skills and successfully transfer them into the workplace. As an upper-division institution serving transfer students, Athens State students come from colleges all over the state to complete their degrees. They face unique challenges, and the University will now be able to offer additional services as students work to achieve their goal of a baccalaureate degree.

The "Pathways to Success" project focuses on a three-pronged approach, including proactive advising, increasing the diversity and inclusion of campus, and expanding professional development on the campus, including work-based learning opportunities. At the core of these efforts is offering two free classes to all undergraduate students beginning in the spring of 2020; the new courses will provide skills relevant to both personal and professional success through the exploration of various real-world, pertinent topics.

The first free course will consist of a "Pathways to Success" seminar that is designed to provide students with the tools they need to succeed during their college career – writing,

team skills, awareness of diversity and inclusion issues, financial literacy, and cross-cultural communication. Additionally, given the long-term impacts of student debt, the University will offer educational resources to students about the importance of financial literacy. Strong skills related to finances will benefit students' life decisions going forward and further enable them for success.

The second free course is a Career Capstone seminar. According to a study done by the National Association of Colleges and Employers in 2018, employers cite a significant gap between employers' and graduates' perceptions of career readiness. Therefore, Athens State is focusing efforts around career preparation, including the expansion of students who take part in work-based learning opportunities while providing all students with specific career path and skills training.

Through all of these efforts, Athens State students will graduate faster and be better prepared for their careers.

"Athens State University has a distinguished history of providing the necessary academic programs and support services to meet the diverse needs faced by our student body," stated Dr. Philip Way, Athens State University President. "Having recently arrived on campus, I am continually impressed by the work our faculty and staff put into making our students feel at home and be successful. This grant will allow us to expand our efforts to foster degree completion and successful entry into and advancement in well-paying careers."

"The Board of Trustees at Athens State University is laser-focused as it relates to achieving our mission as a completion college for the diverse group of students we serve in the North Alabama region," added Mr. Ronnie Chronister, Chair of the Athens State University Board of Trustees. "This grant enhances our ability to provide a higher level of service to our students, and we would like to thank Senator Richard Shelby, Senator Doug Jones, and Congressman Mo Brooks for their support."

# ACTIVE MINDS STUDENT GROUP

## ESTABLISHES COMMUNITY BOOKSHELVES FOR MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

The Athens State University “Active Minds” student group has recently established community bookshelves around campus to help spread mental health awareness and self-help materials.

Active Minds is a nonprofit organization that seeks to empower people to speak openly about mental health as well as to encourage and support one another. The purpose of the shelves is to provide quick access to these mental health and self-help materials and to connect students with real people who are involved with the organization and are ready to provide help and support.

In addition to the two established shelves, which are located in Waters Hall and Founders Hall, the group plans to add additional shelves across campus, including locations in Kares Library, Sandridge Student Center, and the Classroom Building.

All students and community members are welcome to take the free materials, as well as contact those associated with Active Minds either for assistance or to get involved.

### For more information about Active Minds:

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**Lisa Philippart, LPC, DCC**  
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ALABAMA CENTER FOR THE

ARTS

## RECEIVES 3M COMMUNITY VIBRANCY GRANT

The Alabama Center for the Arts is pleased to announce that it has been awarded a \$25,000 3M Community Vibrancy Grant. The purpose of this grant is to help improve the quality of life in underserved families, increase access to youth development programs for underrepresented children, and provide access to vibrant and diverse art opportunities.

The ACA will be putting the funds provided from this grant towards the summer fine arts camp, "The Project." The Project serves as a Summer Arts Pathway Project, giving local high school students an in-depth experience in the world of visual and performing arts. The intensive two-week experience helps shape and bolster the students' natural talents in many areas of the Arts while bringing Athens State University and Calhoun Community College faculty in the Visual and Performing Arts together as one collaborative faculty for the duration of the program. Grant funds will provide materials, supplies, and stipends for faculty, visiting artists, and current Calhoun and Athens State students who coordinate the camp experience and serve as mentors to students. The camp will be available to students at no cost.

The Project contributes directly to student success and career development in the Fine and Performing Arts, especially targeting students in regional high schools that have limited resources and access to opportunities in the Arts. The program provides an inspiring, creative, educational, and supportive avenue to allow young artists to showcase their talents while helping students gain awareness and knowledge of college and career opportunities in the Arts.

Dr. Stephen Spencer, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Athens State University, expressed his gratitude saying, "We cannot express how excited and appreciative we are to have this grant from 3M. It will assist us in opening up arts opportunities to deserving students via our summer project. We are grateful to 3M for their support."

Dr. Philip Way, President of Athens State University, stated, "Athens State University seeks to benefit the community in myriad ways, including through the fine and performing arts. 3M also invests in our region to improve the quality of life. The generosity of 3M enables us to reach regional high school students, engage them in cultural experiences they would not otherwise have access to, and perhaps even help them find a compelling educational and career path. It's a win-win-win for the students, the university, and 3M."

The Project is open to sophomore, junior, and senior high school students across Northern Alabama. Participants are chosen through an application and review process. Upon completing the program, the participants will be eligible for four-year art scholarships at the Alabama Center for the Arts. If students choose to follow the Fine Arts Pathway Program at Calhoun and Athens State, they will have access to many career development opportunities such as classroom visits by professionals in their field, career workshops, and job shadowing.

Follow "The Project" on Facebook  
for more information: @TheProjectACA





# Philanthropy 101:

## GIVING BACK IS THE BIGGEST REWARD

**GINGER HARPER - CLASS OF 2013, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT AT IBERIABANK**

"I'm proud to say that I've been married to my high school sweetheart since a young age. We married in September of 2001 and welcomed our son, Annin, who is now fourteen, into the world a few years later. I now have the privilege to do volunteer work, as giving back to the community is something I'm very passionate about due to the challenges I overcame as a child. Sharing the wisdom I garnered from those challenging days and converting the negative memories into a positive experience for the benefit of others brings a great deal of fulfillment to my life.

"Most recently, for a school assignment Annin was tasked with writing an essay on leadership and service. To prepare him for this assignment, our family volunteered at the Downtown Rescue Mission serving meals to the homeless women and children in our community. He told me that he was nervous, as he had never seen or spoken to a homeless person. I reassured him: 'all you do is smile, and show them love and kindness, because not everyone does that—a simple smile can break down barriers.' I came from severe poverty, and life was always a challenge. As a parent who provides a life very different from my upbringing, I strive to give Annin

a glimpse of life that is reality to many, one that he wouldn't be exposed to otherwise.

"From a very young age, I always knew that I wanted to go to college. However, we did not have many resources, and we were always being supported by assistance of some kind. I believed college was for everyone else; not a reality for me. There were times I thought I would never get there; that I would never be able to afford it, let alone rise above my circumstances. But when I received a job offer at SouthTrust Bank, my life took a remarkable turn for the better.

"I remember it like it was yesterday. I was attending a job fair, advocating and encouraging my husband to find his career path. While waiting, I was there directing traffic and encouraging people to check out the resume-builder workshop or visit certain booths. Surprisingly, the Human Resources Director of SouthTrust Bank approached me and asked if I had ever considered a career in banking. The next week, I had an interview, followed by a job offer for a teller position. While it was not an industry I had given much consideration, it proved to be a pivotal direction for me

professionally. It did not take long for me to learn that working in the banking industry was a great fit and would ultimately become my career path. At my core, I love helping people because of my humble beginnings. My responsibilities to my clients and community partners, even today, is to ensure I am educating and helping people secure their financial future. After joining SouthTrust, I learned that they had a tuition assistance program. Shortly after finishing high school, I enrolled at Calhoun Community College. It was a dream come true—one I never imagined would have been possible.

“After a few years, I advanced my career landing my first Branch Manager position with AmSouth Bank at the age of twenty-two. The previous Branch Manager had taken her team to start a new bank, so my primary responsibility was to retain the existing client base. I am pleased to share we were extremely successful! With this success, professional opportunities became plentiful. My career had catapulted so quickly that my college studies were beginning to hinder my opportunity to continue to advance. It was at this moment I

had a decision to make: go all in with my career and ultimately benefit my family, or continue with my degree. I decided to go all-in and focus on climbing the corporate ladder.

“It wasn’t too long before the U.S. Operation of Royal Bank of Canada acquired the branch that I was managing. I announced the news to my team on Friday, and on Monday we opened as RBC Centura Bank. After thirty days following the acquisition, the leadership team asked me to assume the management responsibilities of the private banking franchise. After spending many years with RBC, I left in January of 2011 to become the first hire in the market for IBERIABANK.

“Before obtaining my degree, I was fortunate that few inquired where I attended college or where I earned my degree. As Annin grew, I began to feel convicted about my lack of college education, telling him that college is a non-negotiable. It was then that I decided I should serve as a role model for my son and complete my education. Otherwise, how could I ask him to do something that I had never done myself? It was an opportunity for me to rewrite my family legacy and become the first person in my family to graduate from college.

“I decided to take the plunge. I transferred to Athens State University. Even while managing a 55-hour work week and being a wife and mom, I knew that this was what I needed to do. It afforded me a unique opportunity to use what I was learning on the job.

“I graduated Athens State in December of 2012 and earned my degree in business management. To be a role model for my family has been truly gratifying. I’ve always been a very driven individual and possess a great amount of perseverance, but I also rely heavily on my faith. I think God has a wonderful sense of humor; after growing up in poverty, he has placed me in a role of advocating and fundraising for the most underserved in our community. I truly believe to whom much is given – much is required.

“My career is extremely rewarding, and IBERIABANK has been incredible to me, yielding opportunities for continued growth and professional development. With respect to my future, I’m going to continue to solidify our brand in the marketplace and enhance the solid business foundation our team has achieved thus far. We will continue to focus on what has made us successful—which is giving back to our community.”



Follow **ATHENS FOREVER** on Facebook (@AthensForeverBicentennial) or visit **ATHENSFOREVER.ORG** for more stories from students, alumni, donors, and others from the Athens State family.

**#AthensForever**

# CONCERT

TENNESSEE VALLEY OLD TIME

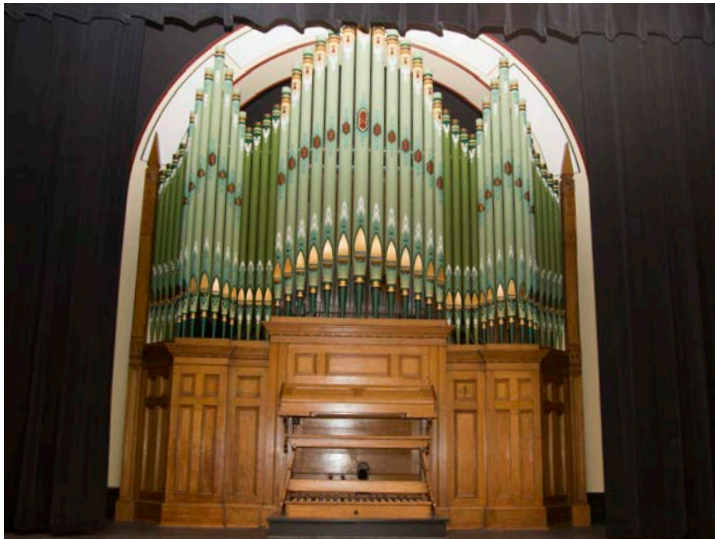


FIDDLERS CONVENTION.

# SERIES

2020

## Enjoy Old Time Music Year-Round



The Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Convention is a special time of year for many people. Thousands of people arrive on the campus of Athens State University to enjoy good food, good friendship, and most importantly, good music. The goal of the Fiddlers Committee remains the same as it did fifty-three years ago, which is to continue the tradition and keep old time music alive.

In that effort, the Committee introduced the **TENNESSEE VALLEY OLD TIME FIDDLERS CONCERT SERIES** in 2019, allowing fans to enjoy old time music year-round.

The 2020 Concert Series, sponsored by the Athens State University Livingston Concert/Lecture Series and



Muscle Shoals National Heritage Area, includes a full lineup of top performers that are sure to impress, all at an affordable cost.

**Tickets for each show are on sale now at [TVOTFC.org](http://TVOTFC.org)!**

New for 2020 is a season pass, granting you admission to all five events and a weekend pass to the 2020 Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Convention. **Get yours today and enjoy old time music year-round!**

**TVOTFC.ORG**

THURSDAY,  
**JANUARY 23**

7 PM | McCANDLESS HALL



**GEEZ LOUISE**  
**Dangerous Dames &**  
**Their Killer Songs**

Louisa Branscomb  
with Jeanette Williams,  
Pam Gadd, and Wanda Vick

THURSDAY,  
**MARCH 5**

7 PM | McCANDLESS HALL



**SIERRA HULL &**  
**JUSTIN MOSES**

TUESDAY,  
**JULY 7**

7 PM | McCANDLESS HALL



**JAKE WORKMAN,**  
**REBEKAH WORKMAN**  
**& JEFF PICKER**

THURSDAY,  
**SEPTEMBER 24**

7 PM | McCANDLESS HALL



**KENNY & AMANDA**  
**SMITH**

TUESDAY,  
**SEPTEMBER 29**

7 PM | McCANDLESS HALL



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**THE LONESOME**  
**RAMBLERS**

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