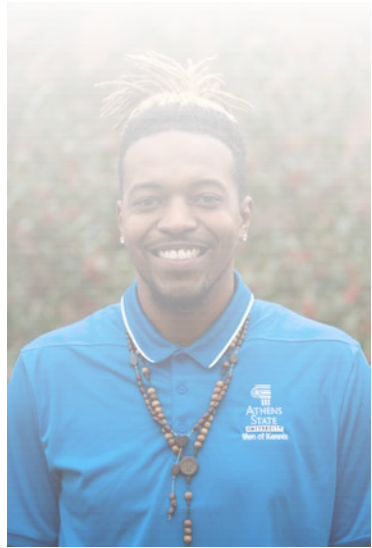
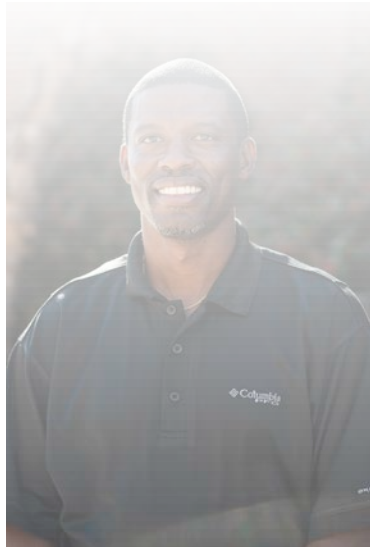


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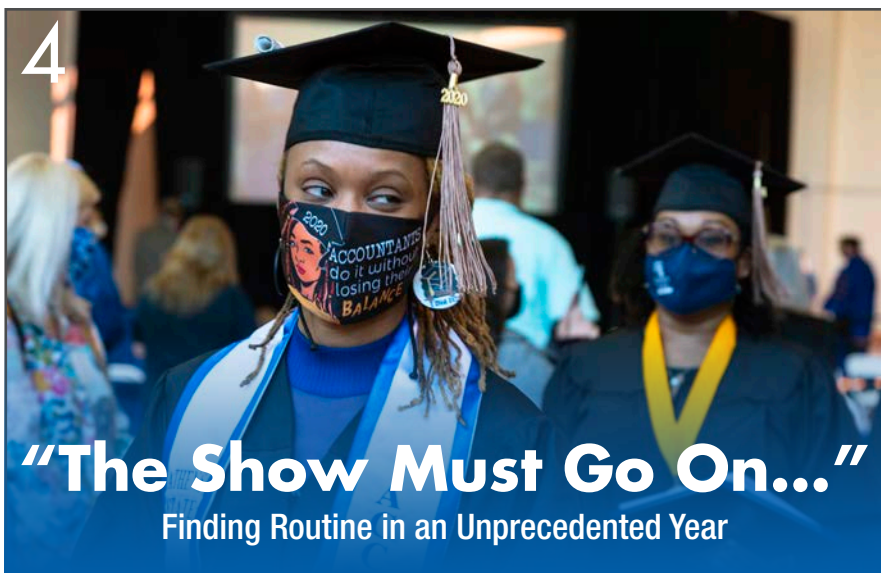
ATHENS STATE UNIVERSITY



**“MEN OF KENNIS” PROGRAM
SEEKS TO INCREASE DIVERSITY
IN THE CLASSROOM — PG. 8**



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A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT WAY

What Counts Is How You Finish

As I write my article for the new edition of The Column in late November, I am conscious that the Fall Commencement will have taken place by the time you read this. Even with the smaller participation in person due to COVID-19 precautions, I will have presented diplomas to hundreds of graduates. At most universities, educational pathways are well trodden – high school to college graduation in four or five years, perhaps with a transfer of institution along the way. In contrast, Athens State graduates don't usually follow conventional pathways. I suspect that each of them will have a different story to tell about how they come to be walking across the stage on the same day in December.

As an upper-division university, our students have necessarily transferred to Athens State, but via all sorts of educational pathways. Even within the group that comes directly from community colleges, there are wide differences in how many credits they have completed and how long it took to earn them. Similarly, the graduate students and undergraduate students who took time off before returning to college have been out of higher education for varying periods. The pattern continues while enrolled at Athens State. Finances, family obligations, and work commitments account for much of the variation.

But we don't mind what journey our students have taken or will take. We don't mind if they are less than fulltime or stop out for a semester. We cater to all pathways. What matters more to us – and our students – is that they are ultimately successful. For most, success is graduation and improved lifetime earnings, perhaps through a new job or promotion, while paying an affordable price for their education.

How do we facilitate success? New programs are developed in conjunction with employers in the field – and we are introducing many of them to respond to the rapidly changing demographic, economic, and technological environment. Once enrolled, success coaches are available to advise students and help with any issues that might hold them back. We maintain tuition rates at around 70 percent of the public university average for Alabama, and award merit- and need-based scholarships.

How are we doing? First, our retention rate - the percentage of new students who return for a second year of study - has increased 6.8% over the past three years. Second, over the same period, the graduation rate has improved by 6 percentage points. Third, one year after graduation, Athens State University alumni in the Class of 2017 earned salaries that were 11.3% higher than the average salary for alumni of all Alabama four-year public institutions.

In short, it doesn't matter how you begin your education, it's how you finish! That is the Athens State brand. This edition of the Column magazine includes concrete examples of how we live up to our brand promise. A new Master's in Strategic Leadership and Business Analytics is featured. The Men of Kennis scholarship program is spotlighted. The effect of a major grant from the federal government on retention is assessed. In addition, student achievements and Commencement are highlighted. Please join me in congratulating a new graduate, perhaps with a handwritten notecard!

Sincerely,

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.

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CONNECT WITH US





“The Show Must Go On...”

Finding Routine in an Unprecedented Year

All around the globe, we’re constantly reminded what an unusual and unprecedented year it has been – face masks are a crucial part of one’s wardrobe, families are turning to FaceTime and Zoom to stay in touch with their loved ones, and the phrase “new normal” has been uttered more times than we can count. Everything is different, but we’ve all had to adjust and attempt to create a new routine in a year that has been anything but. As a nation, as a community, and as a family, Athens State has proven time and time again that we are resilient, as our institution is no stranger to turbulent times. In a nearly 200-year history, we have weathered our fair share of storms. This year adds another significant entry on our historic timeline – a global pandemic that has temporarily changed the way we operate, yet one unable to deter us from the life-changing work accomplished as part of our mission.

Campus Looks Different

Take a drive down Pryor Street or Hobbs Street and you’ll notice that Athens State’s campus doesn’t look quite the same as it typically does. With only two entrances currently in use, the rest have been gated. Attendants screen each individual entering campus, asking a series of COVID-19 health questions and taking the visitors’ temperatures. Small buildings shield these attendants from rain and keep them warm during brisk fall mornings.

The interiors of campus buildings have also changed. Plexiglass barriers have been installed in classrooms, and hand sanitizer stations have been placed by main doorways and in hallways. Stickers reminding students and guests to remain six feet apart line the floors, and other safety reminders hang on walls.

Campus events have also been impacted. For over half a century, the first weekend in October brings a special tradition to Athens, Alabama. Athens State’s campus

comes to life as friends and family gather to enjoy good food, fellowship, and the sounds of old time music. This year, however, that tradition was temporarily broken when the 54th Annual Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Convention was canceled due to COVID-19.

“The Fiddlers Convention is a much-anticipated event each year, and we were disappointed that we had to cancel it for 2020,” stated Rick Mould, event organizer. “However, we felt moving forward with the Convention would not be in the best interest of our competitors, judges, entertainers, guests, or event staff.”

University leaders and the Fiddlers Steering Committee are working to reschedule the entertainment slated to perform at this year’s Convention to perform at the 2021 Fiddlers Convention, which is scheduled for Thursday, September 30, 2021 through Saturday, October 2, 2021.

Graduation Looks Different

Due to COVID-19, Athens State University couldn’t celebrate its spring graduates in May when commencement ceremonies are typically held. Instead, the event was postponed and combined with the summer graduation on August 1.

Like everything else, the ceremonies looked a bit different from past commencements. To ensure a healthy and safe environment for all graduates, guests, faculty, and staff, a number of safety precautions were put into place. Only 100 graduates per college were allowed to participate in the ceremony, and each was only allowed to invite two guests to attend the ceremony. Upon arriving, everyone was required to have their temperature taken to ensure they weren’t running a fever. Once allowed to enter the gym, guests found their chairs placed in pairs and carefully spaced out six feet apart to allow for social distancing. Seats for graduates were also spaced six feet apart. Finally, all guests, graduates, faculty, and staff were required to wear face coverings. Due to the limited number of guests who could be in attendance, Athens

State live streamed each ceremony so that all friends and family members of each graduate could join in the celebration.

Athens State’s fall commencement, which took place on December 5, had the same precautions in place.

Learning Looks Different

Students had more class options than ever before this year. Many courses were offered on campus, online, or a hybrid of the two, allowing students to select the option they felt the most comfortable with. If a student chose to attend class in person, face coverings and social distancing were required.

Students were required be tested for COVID-19 before they entered campus for the first time. Random COVID testing has continued throughout the semester, with a small number of faculty, staff, and students randomly chosen weekly to participate. All faculty, staff, and students also had to fill out a health screening app every day, called Athens State Healthcheck, to record any symptoms they may be experiencing.

The spring semester will look much like the fall – same gate screenings, same random testing, same Healthcheck. Despite the changes that have occurred, students are still reaching their goals. Undergraduate retention rates are the highest they’ve been in a decade. Enrollment numbers for the summer semester were high. Hundreds of graduates completed their degrees and celebrated their graduation this year.

So while everything may be different, some things will never change – our students will continue to dream big, our faculty and staff will help them turn those dreams into reality, and the Athens State family will weather this storm together. Just like we have been for nearly 200 years and will continue to do. That’s the true meaning of *Athens Forever*.





Meet Jaymi Ray

Athens State's New Director of External Relations & Alumni Affairs

To the Athens State University Family:

Thank you for such a warm welcome! I'm truly thankful for the kind, helpful, dedicated faculty, staff, and administration, many of which are Athens State alumni who I've had a chance to meet with already. I am greatly honored to be a part of such a passionate, professional team as I step into this new role. Athens State has such an exciting time ahead with the Bicentennial year coming up. In my position prior to coming to Athens State, I worked on a sesquicentennial celebration at another institution. I am thankful to have the opportunity to carry forward my experience as we embark on this time of jubilation. Our Bicentennial will be a year of celebration as we highlight where we've been over the past 200 years and where we're headed in the future.

Within our Athens State Alumni is where our history is found, and through learning about you, we'll be able to convey our story even stronger. I hope you'll each feel free to reach out to me at any time if you have a story that you'd like to share, a fond memory that's just come to mind, or if you think of a way I can help you. I'm excited to learn about the traditions and heritage of Athens State University, as well as the surrounding community of Athens, and look forward to getting to know the people that have made Athens State what it is today.

My wish is for each and every alumnus to know that you are important to Athens State for so many reasons! Our successes are told through your stories of searching for and discovering what brings you happiness in life. We hope you'll continue to keep in touch with us so we can keep you informed on what's going on around campus, but also so we can enjoy your life's successes with you!

If you are interested in learning more about our Bicentennial celebration, be sure to check out www.athensforever.org, and stay tuned as we release more information about the Bicentennial celebrations.

With Athens State Pride,

Jaymi

Jaymi has ten years of combined experience working in community and alumni relations, working most recently as the Director of Alumni Relations & Martin Methodist Fund at Martin Methodist College in Pulaski, Tennessee. She received her bachelor's degree from The University of Tennessee at Martin, where she was inducted into the UT Martin Athletic Hall of Fame and was a member of the UTM Rifle Team. Jaymi served as a Chamber ambassador for the Giles County Chamber for three years and also participated in Leadership Giles in 2018/2019 and the Gattis Regional Leadership class in 2019/2020.

Note Cards for New Alumni

*Help us welcome new alumni
into the Athens State family!*

The Athens State Alumni Association is seeking volunteers to write note cards to our recent graduates to congratulate them on their achievements and welcome them as new alumni. Volunteers can choose to write as many cards as they would like (we recommend between 10 – 20 cards, depending on personal preference). All supplies will be provided, including the note cards, pen, first name of graduate, and sample verbiage for the note card message.

Here's how to participate:

- 1 Scan the QR code with your smartphone or visit <https://bit.ly/39M9xq1> to sign up. (If you would prefer, you can sign up by reaching out to Jaymi Ray at 256-233-8190 or Jaymi.Ray@athens.edu.)
- 2 We will send you a package with needed supplies, including blank note cards, an ink pen, sample messages, and a list of graduates' first names (for the number of cards you have indicated you will complete). We will also include an envelope with pre-paid postage for you to return the completed note cards to us.
- 3 Place your completed note cards in the provided envelope, and stick it in your mailbox. That's it!

*Thank you for your willingness to welcome
Athens State graduates to the Athens State family!*





“MEN OF KENNIS” PROGRAM FILLING NEED FOR MALE TEACHERS OF COLOR IN THE CLASSROOM

At the beginning of 2020, Athens State University launched the “Men of Kennis” program, an initiative to improve the pathway for students of color to become teachers in Alabama school districts. The name of the program, “Kennis,” was derived from the word “knowledge” in Afrikaans. By offering scholarships to men of color and allowing them to fulfill their dreams of becoming an educator, the program immediately began to change the lives of participants. “When I begin to think of what this program means to me, I instantly think of the reassurance I received knowing I was accepted; letting me know that I will be a part of a movement that’s going to break the cycle of the shortage in the African American male teachers currently,” stated Men of Kennis member Jereme Morgan. “Leading by example for many young kids of color, especially boys trying to find their mark in life. Giving them reassurance – it’s possible for them to become a teacher in any subject they’re desiring.”

BREAKING THE CYCLE

Over the past two decades, men of color have represented less than 2% of teachers in classrooms

nationwide. These findings hold true in the North Alabama region, which spurred Athens State University’s College of Education and the Alabama legislature to develop Men of Kennis to help increase the number of diverse teacher candidates and fill the local community’s need for African American and Hispanic male teachers.

Using funds made possible through a grant provided from the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE), participants of Men of Kennis receive \$10,000 in scholarship money to cover tuition, books, and housing. The funds are split between the spring, summer, and fall semesters.

As part of the program, participants must agree to a two-year teaching commitment in Alabama, which will ensure classrooms throughout the state are more equitably represented. Research shows the importance of youth experiencing diverse teachers in positions of authority and demonstrating respect to all students, especially students of color, whose learning improves when they are taught by a teacher of the

same race. Additionally, test scores improve, retention and graduation rates increase, absenteeism decreases, and students have fewer disciplinary problems.

THE PROGRAM

Men of Kennis initially began with 16 participants and is continuing to grow each semester. There are now 20 men currently enrolled in Men of Kennis who will continue with the program in Spring 2021 with hopes of adding an additional five men to the Spring cohort.

“The primary objective of the Men of Kennis program is to recruit and prepare minority students majoring in education at Athens State University to become highly-qualified, strong teachers and leaders,” said Dr. Darlene Turner-White, Men of Kennis Program Coordinator and College of Education faculty member at Athens State University. “Not only do we aim to give an under-represented population a pathway to a teaching career, we as a college aim to step up our efforts to recruit, support, and mentor these men.”

Beyond filling a need for teachers of color, Men of Kennis also seeks to enhance Athens State’s campus culture by focusing on the need for diversity and inclusion in university life and activities. Once enrolled in the program, Men of Kennis members participate in several activities outside of the classroom each semester. Monthly professional development and service activities are offered, such as the Man-Up Workshop, Diversity Day, financial literacy sessions, academic writing and anxiety workshops, and various Lunch and Learns. Participation in these events helps promote each student’s growth and development.

Members are also highly encouraged to join student organizations such as the National Society of Leadership and Success, form mentoring relationships with middle school and high school boys of color, and are required to participate in internships and meaningful field experiences to enhance skills needed to be an effective classroom teacher.

The Men of Kennis Program is based on a partnership between Athens State University and educational leaders. This partnership was developed with the mindset of using mentors to provide men of color a supportive pathway to teaching. Mentors support each participant by sharing their knowledge, skills,

information, and perspectives to enhance personal and professional growth. The goal of mentorship is for the members of Men of Kennis to receive support from leaders in education to help bridge the gap between theory and practice and reduce their feelings of isolation and stress. We currently have seven mentors that consist of assistant principals, principals, faculty from Athens State’s College of Education, and Athens State’s Director of Diversity and Student Inclusion. The mentorship program will build strong relationships with local school districts and community organizations to enhance the preparation process for the Men of Kennis.



CHANGING LIVES

Men of Kennis has proven to be a life-changing program for its members. Without it, these men may have been unable to pursue their dream of becoming a teacher. “The Men of Kennis is a long overdue program which allows and supports men of color to enter the teaching profession in order to impact the lives of students for years to come,”

said Keonte Noels, Athens State student and member of Men of Kennis. “This program gives a chance of hope, which may otherwise be unobtainable.” DeWayne Garth also shared how grateful he is for the program. Thanks to the scholarship opportunities, he will be the first child in his family to earn a bachelor’s degree. “Obtaining this degree will give me the opportunity to provide positive impact in my community. It will allow me to work with children of all backgrounds in the public education system. This will not only help students of color, but it will help all students. It will further demonstrate that men of color, along with all men, are of a great value to our communities as well as our nation.”

The comprehensive support system and education each man receives at Athens State ensures they are prepared to meet the challenge of teaching in public schools and are ready to make a difference in students’ lives. As a result of this support, some of the first members of Men of Kennis are expected to graduate and obtain their teaching certificates in May 2021. With an education degree, these men are poised to become excellent role models and mentors for all children in Alabama public schools.

For more information about the program, please visit www.athens.edu/MOK.



STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: MARIO TURNER

“I had a vision that where I belong is in the classroom,” said Mario Turner, member of Athens State University’s new Men of Kennis program. The program, which provides scholarships to men of color and gives them an opportunity to obtain an education degree with little-to-no out of pocket cost, is changing lives, including Mario’s. “To be able to turn a plant line worker into a professional that’s teaching children – that in itself is awesome.”

Mario was inspired to pursue a degree in education by a group of boys that he began coaching in basketball as third graders. Over the years, the boys grew up, won championships, and went off to college. They made an impact on Mario as big as the one he made on them. “I used to preach to them about education, and I used to tell them how important it was. However, I couldn’t preach to them about something if I wasn’t being an example. I noticed that there was something special about me that I can give to kids other than the guys that I had coached. That’s when I decided to get back in school and pursue a degree in education.”

His path to higher education wasn’t easy. “I had a bunch of failure. I had to fall and hit rock bottom. I had to go through hoops, hills, and valleys because I messed up the first time I was in school because I didn’t take it seriously. Coming back, I had to get my grade point average high enough to actually be able to afford to get in school through financial aid.” Luckily, everything worked out for Mario, and he graduated from Calhoun Community College this past semester.

Mario says that Men of Kennis came into his life at the perfect time. “When I saw the opportunity here at

Athens State, it was a blessing. I got my mind right and knew where I belonged, and the timing of this program worked in my favor. Now I’ve got a way where I can actually afford to be in school and not have to worry about the finances when it’s all over with. I can focus on helping kids, changing lives, and getting our kids ready for tomorrow.”

Men of Kennis has helped Mario grow professionally and prepare him for his time in the classroom. “I’m enjoying every moment of the experience. The program is really making me more of a ‘Teacher of the Year’ candidate,” Mario said. “Men of Kennis is really designed for a brotherhood: guys just like you, the same color, the same passion - to try to teach the kids. It helps knowing where you come from and where you’re going to go and that these guys are with you and that you all are feeling the same way with one goal. We stick together, watch each other’s back, and keep each other accountable.”

At 38 years old, Mario can offer his future students something that younger teachers can’t: advice and guidance from real world experience. “I’ve been out there. I’ve had bad jobs where it’s horrible. I’ve had bad

(Cont.)

pay. I've had bad coworkers. I've experienced all the things that a lot of these teachers haven't experienced," said Mario. "I know the things that affected me and that helped me get to where I am now. I can use that to my favor to prevent the kids from having to go through any of the things that I went through. It's like, I've already been there for you, so you don't have to. I'm here to tell you to keep from going that route."

Mario is on track to graduate in Fall 2021 with a degree in Elementary Education K-6. Meanwhile, the kids he used to coach will be graduating from college around the same time, making the accomplishment even more

special. He is eager to bring his energy, excitement, and passion into the classroom as quickly as possible. "I'm ready to change lives. I'm going to give my students that love because I know what it's like out there and I've got to get them prepared to see things that I didn't see when I was younger because no one gave me the vision - no one helped me see things more clearly. You can be anything you want to be! You've just got to put your mind to it and you've got to praise God and ask Him for the guidance to get you where you're supposed to be going. Once you get that clear vision, nothing can hold you back."

SHOW YOUR SUPPORT



OUR PROGRESS AS OF NOV. 30, 2020:

GOAL: \$20M

\$13,342,173

Visit **ATHENSFOREVER.ORG** to learn more about our Bicentennial Celebration and the capital campaign that is building the next chapter of Athens State University. Read stories from alumni, students, donors, faculty, and staff who all have one thing in common - a great love for this historic institution we call home!



Follow us on Facebook (@**AthensForeverBicentennial**) to learn about Bicentennial news and events and see even more stories from the Athens State family. You can also reconnect with classmates, faculty, and staff from years gone by!



Show your Athens State pride and help us spread the word about our upcoming Bicentennial Celebration - all while helping support student success! Order your "Athens Forever" bicentennial merchandise online at **athens.edu/alumni/fundraisers** or call us to place your order by phone at (256) 233-8185.



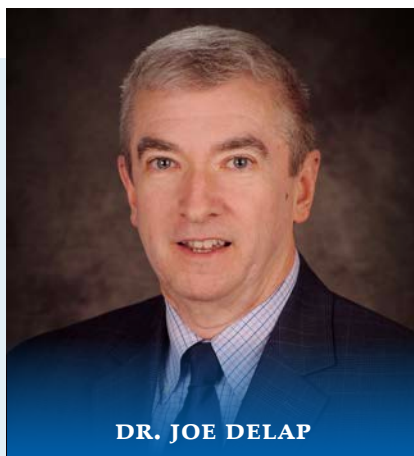
SCAN ME

LEADERSHIP ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Joe Delap has been appointed as Athens State University's Vice President for Corporate and Community Relations (VPCCR), a newly-created position to better enable the University to engage with external communities.

Dr. Delap will be working with all departments at Athens State to create and implement or enhance partnerships with corporate and business leaders, the non-profit sector, P-12 education, community colleges, and community organizations. These partnerships will strengthen the University's academic and leadership role in North Alabama.

Athens State has strong ties to the area's external communities, serving as an anchor institution in the region. The University supplies top-notch teachers and training for incumbent teachers, strengthens the arts and cultural fabric of the area through the Alabama Center



DR. JOE DELAP

for the Arts, and provides service to the community through student and faculty outreach and through programs at the Center for Lifelong Learning. These relationships are mutually beneficial for the University and the North Alabama area.

"Dr. Delap will be well-suited to this role," stated Athens State President, Dr. Philip Way. "As Provost and VP for Academic Affairs, he has been responsible for many of these areas internally. We thank him for his service. Now he will use his deep knowledge of internal operations to market the University externally, resulting in benefits for all VP areas."

"I am excited about this new opportunity," said Dr. Delap, "This new position will strengthen the University academically and strategically."

Athens State University is pleased to announce that Dr. Jim Kerner has been appointed as the Interim Dean of the College of Business and Dr. Lionel Wright has been appointed as the Interim Associate Dean of the College of Business. The two will divide the duties of the Dean so that each can continue to lead and grow their respective home departments. Former Dean of the College of Business, Dr. Kim LaFevor, was recently announced as the new Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs.



DR. JIM KERNER

Dr. Kerner brings a wealth of experience to the position of Dean with 18 years of service to the University. In addition to moving through the faculty ranks to Professor, he has also been a long-serving Department Chair, and has been elected to multiple terms as Faculty Senator and Presiding Officer of the Faculty Senate. His portfolio includes extensive business experience, including 14 years serving as a Director in Environmental Services within the healthcare industry. He holds an EdD in Educational & Organizational Leadership from Nova Southeastern and a MS in Human



DR. LIONEL WRIGHT

Resource Development and Administration from Barry University.

Dr. Wright has been at Athens State for four years but has quickly established himself as an effective administrator. He serves as the Graduate Program Manager for College of Business graduate programs and Business & Workforce Development and

Department Chair for the graduate Logistics faculty. Dr. Wright also has 26 years' tenure with the Army of which the last 13 were in leadership roles with the Army Materiel Command as Logistics Operations Manager and Inspector General. He holds a DBA in Global Supply Chain Management from Walden University and a MS in Logistics and Supply Chain Management from Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

"Dr. Kerner and Dr. Wright are two highly capable and established leaders in the College of Business," stated Dr. Philip Way, President of Athens State University. "I believe that they will both be very successful in their new roles."

Athens State University is pleased to announce that Dr. Jackie Smith has been appointed as its interim Provost and Dr. Kim LaFevor has been appointed as its interim Vice President for Academic Affairs, effective immediately. This selection follows the recent announcement that Dr. Joe Delap, former Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, had been appointed as the University's new Vice President for Corporate and Community Relations.



DR. JACKIE SMITH

Dr. Jackie Smith has a total of 34 years of experience in higher education, with 14 of those years spent at Athens State. She has a Master of Science in Management from Faulkner University and an EdD in Higher Education Administration from the University of Alabama. Smith has worked in the office of the Provost at Athens State for eight years holding positions as Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs. Before that, she held various academic roles as Interim Library Director, Interim Administrative Dean for the College of Education, and Director of the Quality Enhancement Plan in addition to ten years of teaching experience. She currently serves as the University's SACSCOC accreditation liaison and provides leadership for Athens State's Adult Degree Program, Kares Library, Institutional Research and Assessment, University Writing Center, and Testing Center. Smith is married to Phillip Smith, and together, they have three sons and two grandchildren.

A native of Detroit, Michigan, Dr. Kim LaFevor has a Bachelor of Science degree with dual majors in



DR. KIM LAFEVOR

Psychology and Personnel Psychology from Athens State University, a Master of Science in Human Resource Management from Troy University, and a DBA with dual majors in Management and Education from the University of Sarasota. Dr. LaFevor has 29 years of experience in academia, 21 years of experience in the

private sector industry working for General Motors, and 17 years combined executive-level experience. During her 15-year tenure at Athens State University, she served as the Department Chair for the Management, Human Resources, and Management of Technology departments for seven years, and more recently, has served as the Dean of the College of Business for the last seven years. In addition to her work with Athens State, LaFevor has also taught human resource management and business management curriculum collegiately at the associate, baccalaureate, masters, and doctoral level spanning a period of 29 years at both public and private academic institutions.

"Dr. LaFevor has a rich background in developing and executing strategic initiatives and is ably suited for this interim role," stated Dr. Philip Way, President of Athens State University. "Meanwhile, Dr. Smith's long tenure in the Provost Office, including her role as SACSCOC liaison, equips her to assume control as Provost without missing a beat."

Athens State in the process of selecting a search firm to assist in the process of finding a new Provost/Vice President for Academic Affairs.

LEADERSHIP & BUSINESS ANALYTICS

ONLINE
MASTER'S PROGRAM

For more information:
athens.edu/masters/SLBA

**APPLY
TODAY!**





REMEMBERING OUR FRIEND, *Ms. Betty Marks*

Betty Marks, long-time member of the Athens State community, passed away on October 13, 2020 at the age of 78 after a lengthy battle with cancer. “Ms. Betty,” as so many referred to her, graduated from Athens State College in 1987 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business, and she retired from Athens State in 2010 after more than 30 years of service.

Ms. Betty was born in December 1941 in Athens, Tennessee, to Henry and Helen Ray. She was a longtime member and Sunday school teacher at Decatur Baptist Church, as well as a volunteer at Clearview Cancer Center. She was widely known for her servant’s heart and love for Jesus.

Betty was an integral part of the Alumni Association as a board member, often donating both her time and money to benefit students, alumni, and the greater University community. She was awarded the Alumna Loyalty Award in 2019, at which time she provided these remarks:

“As a previous employee of more than 30 years, devoted alumna, and strong supporter of Athens State University, I would like to say that this is an award that is not taken lightly; Athens State owns a big piece of my heart. As a member of the Alumni Association, it has been my privilege to work closely with other dedicated alumni members in the selection process of outstanding alumni, and in the planning and execution for the Annual Christmas Community Band Concert and creating ‘Ms. Santa’s Kitchen.’ (Thank you sweet ladies for agreeing to wear aprons and thank you to Santa, Richard Morris, who is also a graduate.) Last but not least, I have been a working committee member supporting the annual Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Convention throughout my years at Athens State.

“Thank you to Doug, Charles, and Mildred for providing your expertise and assistance; to those dedicated few who have contributed so much; to the staff and administration who serve in the background and make everything work; and to my precious loving family: Larry Joe, Besty, Whitney, and Helen, who have supported their crazy mama throughout the Athens State years. As time moves on and as the oldest institution of higher education in the State of Alabama continues to provide educational opportunities for you and yours, I say ‘Thank You’ for allowing me to be a part of Athens State University’s past, present, and future. May God bless you and yours.”

As Betty so unmistakably pointed out, the University was a big part of her life and had a special place in her heart. Likewise, she held a special place in ours. She will be remembered as a cheerleader, a mother, a confidante, and a great friend to so many, both past and present.

Ms. Betty will be terribly missed.



Title III Grant Update

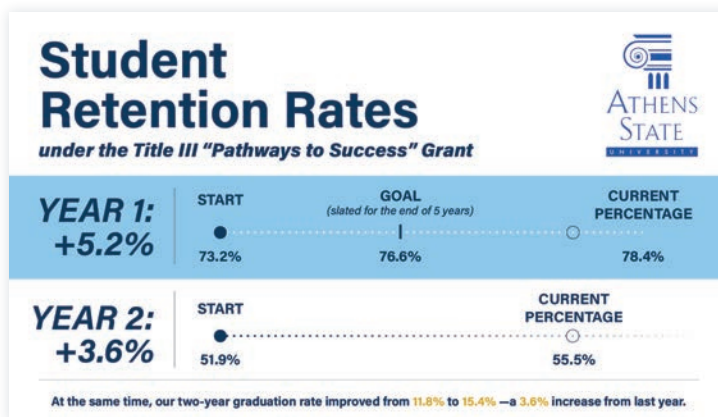
In 2019, Athens State University was awarded a five-year, \$2.1 million federal grant to enhance student support in the process of degree completion. A portion of the funds from the grant were used to hire Student Success Coaches who assist students with academic advising, degree planning, and any other student matters to keep them motivated and on track for degree completion. The grant was also used to fund two courses that Athens State has been able to offer for free to incoming students - a Pathways to Success seminar designed to provide students with the tools such as writing, team skills, awareness of diversity and inclusion issues, financial literacy, and cross-cultural communication that they need to succeed during their college career, and a Career Capstone seminar.

As a result of these efforts, undergraduate retention rates from Fall 2019 – Fall 2020 increased to 78.4% from the previous rate of 73.2% (Fall 2018 to Fall 2019). This marks the highest undergraduate retention rate the university has recorded in over a decade.

“We are very excited about the impact that the grant and the Success Coaches are having on student retention and success. This is precisely what the grant was intended to do,” said Dr. Jackie Smith, Athens State’s Interim Provost.

Aside from increasing retention rates, other goals of the Title III grant include improving student pathways from campus to career through early and consistent advising, improving the diversity and inclusion of our campus through increased campus-wide initiatives and targeted support and expanded campus-wide professional development to include advising models, financial literacy, and collaborative team development.

Last fall and in the early months of 2020, the University was also able to host on-campus events that focused on diversity and inclusion such as Diversity Day and themed Lunch and Learns. With COVID precautions now in place, Athens State has hosted similar virtual events and is in the process of planning more for the upcoming spring semester.

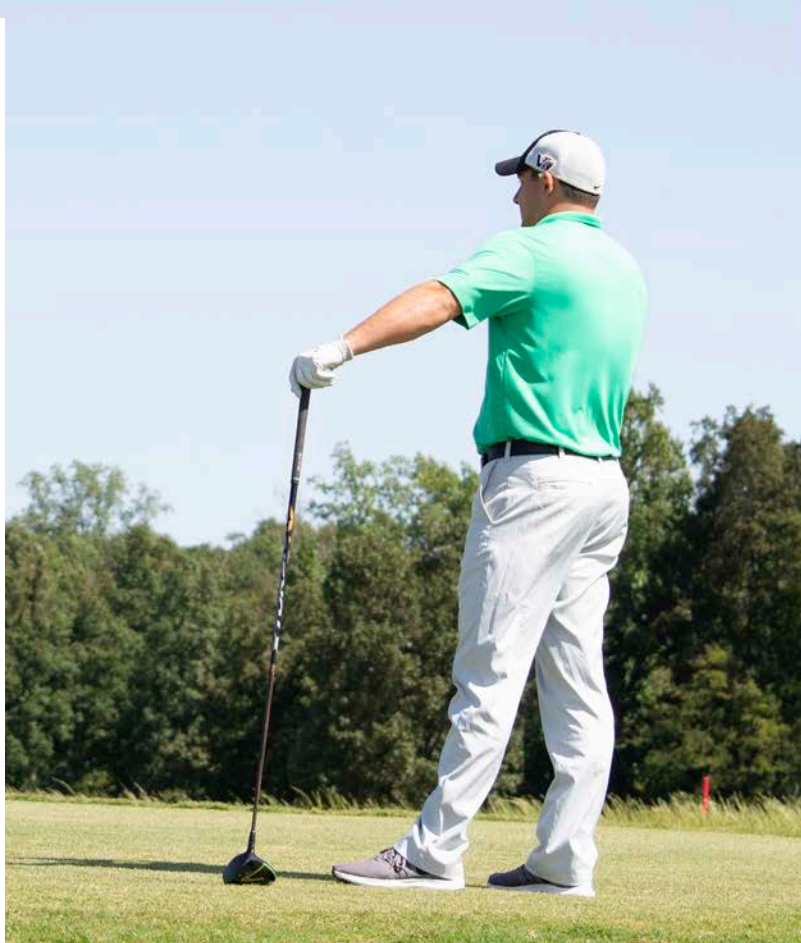


2020 ALUMNI GOLF CLASSIC RECAP

The Athens State University Alumni Association hosted the 29th Annual Golf Classic on September 21 at Canebrake Club in Athens. The event raised over \$35,000 for student scholarships, the most ever raised in the history of the event.

Thanks to the generosity of golfers, donors, and volunteers, students received annual \$2,000 scholarships. The 2019-2020 golf scholarship recipients were Kelsi Cooley, Alivia Gambrell, Alexis Gentry, Nancy Kennedy, Shannon Longshore, Andrew Shaw, Tyler Stevens, and Morelia Tinajero.

Athens State would like to express its sincerest gratitude to all donors and everyone who came together to make this event a success.





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COMING SOON

A Refreshed Athens State University Logo & Website

While it has been a year of uncertainty, it has also been a busy year of planning and looking to the future for Athens State University. We've been diligently developing new resources for our students and positioning our institution for growth.

We're proud to soon introduce a NEW WEBSITE in early 2021, along with a new LOGO and brand platform to help students on their journeys to success.

So stay tuned, and get excited for a new Athens State experience!