

THE

COLUMN

ATHENS STATE
UNIVERSITY

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WINTER 2026



Onward Ever!

A New Era of Leadership

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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A NOTE FROM *Dr. Catherine M. Wehlburg*

Dear Alumni and Friends of Athens State University,

As the Fall semester winds down and we begin to think about the new year approaching, I have been thinking about how profoundly Athens State University is woven into the life of our community. We are more than a campus, more than offices and classrooms, and more than the degrees we award. We are a place where history, service, learning, and opportunity come together—and this semester has offered several powerful reminders of just how meaningful that connection truly is and how much more we can do.

One of the most significant moments we have experienced this semester was hosting The Wall That Heals. Welcoming this traveling memorial to our campus was both an honor and a responsibility—one we embraced with great care. Over 12,000 visitors came to pay their respects, and I watched as our students, faculty, staff, and community members stood side-by-side in reflection. The quiet conversations, the shared memories, and the collective sense of gratitude reminded me that Athens State is not simply located in this community—we are deeply rooted in it. Our campus became a place of healing, education, and remembrance, and I could not be more proud of the way we came together to support this historic event.

This sense of unity and belonging was also on full display during our first-ever “Bear Bash,” a new tradition created to welcome all of our students to Athens State in a spirit of celebration and connection. Seeing our students—from brand-new transfers to those nearing graduation—come together to enjoy food, fellowship, and meeting our faculty felt like a milestone. “Bear Bash” wasn’t just an event; it was a statement of who we are becoming. As we grow, innovate, and expand our offerings, we are also building a stronger student experience—one that reflects the warmth and engagement for which Athens State has always been known.

And while we celebrate our present, we are also preparing intentionally for our future. The groundbreaking for the Carter Hall renovation marked the beginning of a transformative project that will serve generations of students to come. Carter Hall has been an iconic part of our campus, and its renovation represents both preservation and progress. By modernizing this historic building, we are honoring our past while ensuring that we remain equipped to meet the evolving needs of today’s learners and supporting our growing community.

Together, these moments illustrate exactly why Athens State matters—why it matters to you, our students, our alumni, our local partners, and the broader community. We are a university that remembers our history, embraces our present, and invests boldly in our future.

Thank you for being part of the Athens State story. I am grateful for the shared commitment that continues to move us forward. Onward Ever!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Catherine Wehlburg".

Catherine M. Wehlburg, Ph.D.
President, Athens State University



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Advertisements are included in this issue of "The Column" to help offset the expense of printing and distribution. For information about advertising in future issues, please contact Brandy Conway at brandy.conway@athens.edu.

ACTIVE MINDS CHAPTER NAMED 2025 CHAPTER OF THE YEAR

Athens State University's Active Minds Student Organization was named the 2025 Chapter of the Year at the organization's Annual National Active Minds Mental Health Conference. Jessica Toney, Athens State's Student Chapter President, was also honored with the 2025 Adam Carlson Student Leader of the Year Award. The conference took place in Washington D.C. on August 1-2, where advisors Dr. Patrice Broaden and Carolyn Carthen, as well as members of the Athens State Active Minds chapter, were present to receive the awards.



"Receiving the Active Minds Chapter of the Year Award is an incredible honor that reflects our unwavering commitment to fostering a supportive, stigma-free environment for mental health on campus," said Dr. Patrice Broaden. "This recognition is not just about our chapter's work, but about the courage of our students, faculty, and community members who continue to speak up, listen,

and advocate for mental wellness every day."

Active Minds is the leading nonprofit organization that empowers students to speak openly about mental health in order to educate others and encourage help-seeking. The organization empowers students to change their perception of mental health on college campuses.

Active Minds supports a network of campus-based chapters across the

United States and Canada that consist of students passionate about mental health advocacy and education. Athens State's chapter goals are to increase students' awareness of mental health issues, provide information and resources regarding mental health, encourage students to seek help as soon as it is needed, and serve as a liaison between students and the mental health community. The chapter is open to all students. ■

ATHENS STATE LAUNCHES NEW CYBERSECURITY PROGRAM

The Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) has approved a Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity program that launched this fall. This program will join the existing Master of Science in Cybersecurity program and

Cybersecurity and Cybersecurity Operations certificate programs.

The Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity equips students with the technical expertise, critical thinking skills, and ethical foundation needed to secure networks, defend against cyber attacks, and protect sensitive information across every industry. Students will receive a strong foundation in programming,

problem analysis, problem solving, and software engineering, significantly supplemented with practical experience using hardware and software resources available in the Athens State University CyberLab.

Experienced faculty and industry professionals will lead classes using real-world tools, hands-on labs, and simulations, while teaching in-demand skills such as network

security, digital forensics, ethical hacking, risk management, and incident response. Students will also be prepared for certifications like CompTIA Security+, CISSP, and CEH while building a strong foundation for roles such as cybersecurity analyst, security engineer, or information security manager.

The Alabama Department of Labor predicts that in 2024, three of the top 10 high-demand occupations for the State will be in computer science-related disciplines. Furthermore, a majority of current job postings require applicants to possess heavy technical skills related to cybersecurity.

"We're excited to launch this interdisciplinary cybersecurity program that bridges the technical depth of computer science with the practical, systems-based approach of information technology and operations," said Dr. Katia Maxwell, Assistant Dean for the College of Arts & Sciences. "As security threats grow in complexity and frequency, industry needs professionals who not only understand how systems work, but also how to secure them, manage risks, and respond effectively. This program is designed to meet that need by preparing students to lead in both technical and operational roles within today's rapidly evolving cybersecurity landscape."

Applications for the new Cybersecurity program are now open. ■

ATHENS STATE HAS LARGEST STUDENT ENROLLMENT SINCE 2018

With the Fall 2025 semester coming to a close, Athens State University is pleased to share that enrollment numbers are continuing to grow. At the beginning of the Fall 2025 semester, the University reported a headcount of over 3,000 students with more than 27,700 credit hours being produced. This is the first time Athens State's student enrollment has surpassed 3,000 since 2018.

"We are excited to welcome an even greater number of students this Fall compared to last year," said Dr. Catherine Wehlburg, President

of Athens State University. "Our students' presence brings renewed energy and purpose to our campus, and we look forward to supporting each student's success as they become part of the proud tradition of Athens State University. More than ever, students are seeking a career-connected education, and Athens State is committed to preparing them for their future. Onward Ever!"

Athens State has consistently been recognized for its value and affordability, as well as its seamless transfer pathways with community colleges across the state. As the University looks ahead, officials remain focused on sustainable enrollment growth while continuing to deliver the personalized experience students expect. ■

INTRODUCING PILLAR & PAW, ATHENS STATE'S NEW CAMPUS GIFT SHOP

We are excited to announce the opening of our new gift shop and campus store, Pillar & Paw. Located on the top floor of the Sandridge Student Center, the store is open to the community and offers a wide selection of collegiate merchandise and other gifts.

Pillar & Paw is designed to be more than just a place to shop for Athens State gear – the store also offers a large selection of gifts and goodies for all ages, making it the perfect destination to stop by to pick something up for special occasions or just for fun!



Pillar & Paw will also serve as the pick-up and drop-off location for the new online bookstore, operated by eCampus.com. eCampus.com is a premier online retailer of textbooks and digital course materials and partnered with Athens State in Summer 2025. Through eCampus.com, students have the ability to order their textbooks online and ship their orders directly to Pillar & Paw for free in-store pickup.

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Plans for Pillar & Paw also include an adjoining coffee shop, appropriately named “heBREW’S” on behalf of Athens State’s mascot, Hebrew the Bear. Construction is expected to be complete in 2026.

The store is currently open Monday – Friday from 9:00 am – 4:30 pm. ■



Athens State is proud to foster the growth of future teachers, business owners, artists, cybersecurity professionals, and much more! **The inaugural Bear Bash** held on August 22, 2025 was the perfect way to welcome students back to a new academic year and kick off the fall semester.



CEDRICK NKULU NAMED NEW CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

Athens State University is pleased to announce that Cedrick Nkulu has joined the University as the institution's Chief Information Officer (CIO).

"I am thrilled to join Athens State University, an institution renowned for its unwavering commitment to a student-centric vision and deep-rooted dedication to community engagement," said Nkulu. "I look forward to collaborating with the talented faculty, staff, and students to drive innovation and enhance the university's mission of empowering learners and fostering meaningful connections within the community."

Nkulu's career as an information technology professional spans over 15 years. Most recently, he served as Chief Technology & Information Security Officer at University of Tennessee Southern where he managed IT strategic plans, budgets, and policies while aligning IT initiatives with the university's goals

and enhancing operational efficiency. Before that, he served in many other roles at the institution including Director of Information Technology.

Nkulu earned his Master's in Information Security & Assurance from Middle Tennessee State University and his BA in Business Administration from UT Southern. He also holds several certifications including Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP), GIAC Critical Controls Certification (GCCC), and CompTIA Security +.

"I am excited to welcome Cedrick Nkulu to Athens State University as our new Chief Information Officer," said Dr. Catherine Wehlburg, President of Athens State University. "His leadership comes at a critical time, as technology continues to evolve at a rapid pace, and I am confident he will help us navigate this ever-changing landscape with vision and innovation."

Nkulu began his duties on August 1. ■

ATHENS STATE RECEIVES NASAD ACCREDITATION

On October 17, the National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) granted Athens State University institutional membership and full accreditation of its undergraduate and graduate degree programs in Art: the Bachelor of Art with a minor in Art Education, the BFA in Art, and the MFA in Integrative Art.

The National Association of Schools of Art and Design (NASAD) is an organization of schools, conservatories, colleges, and universities which establishes rigorous national standards for undergraduate and graduate education in art and design. Athens State will join a network of 321 colleges, universities, and conservatories across the nation who enjoy the distinction of accreditation and institutional membership with NASAD.

Professor Pamela Keller, Division Head for the Arts and Humanities within the College of Art and Sciences, led the three-year accreditation journey with crucial contributions from Professors Jamie Adams, Jessica Spowart, Mary Beth Johns, and David Ragsdale, Dean of Colleges. The accreditation process included rigorous reporting, a comprehensive self-study, and a thorough site visit by NASAD officials who reviewed classrooms, student work, degree requirements, student exhibitions, and faculty credentials.

Dr. David Ragsdale (Dean of Colleges) and Professor Pamela Keller (Division Head for Arts & Sciences)



NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

NASAD accreditation greatly enhances the value of every art student's degree, giving their credentials national recognition and reinforcing the program's reputation. Accreditation is a sign that an institution ascribes to, believes in, and has met an external set of criteria for the programs it offers. It indicates that threshold standards are adhered to in a fashion that provides academic strength and operational integrity.

"This milestone is not a one-time achievement; it is a long-term commitment to quality that will benefit every future graduate of Athens State University," said Professor Pamela Keller.

The Art Department at Athens State is housed at the Alabama Center for the Arts (ACA) in Decatur, Alabama. The ACA is the region's premier art center and degree program and represents

a unique and dynamic partnership between Calhoun Community College and Athens State University. ■

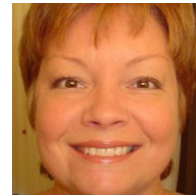
NEW FACULTY MEMBERS FOR 2025:



Jessica Allen
Associate Professor of Psychology



Danielle Chouinard
Access & User Experience Librarian



Dr. Lori Price
Associate Professor of Psychology



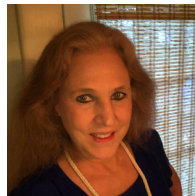
Lionel Holguin
Instructor of Computer Science and Information Technology



Lawrence Reeves
Instructor of Logistics/Supply Chain Management



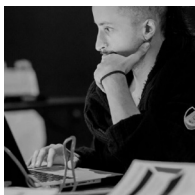
Dr. Branton Baird
Assistant Professor of Psychology



Vicky Knerly
Instructor, Acquisition & Contract Management



Latoya Solomon
Assistant Professor of Nursing



Dr. Joao Beira
Assistant Professor of Art and Design-Multimedia



Michael Kranz
Assistant Professor of Computer Science



Baoqiang Yan
Associate Professor of Computer Science and Information Technology



Dr. Hannah Birchfield
Master Teacher/ Program Coordinator



Dr. Sergio Olivares
Assistant Professor of Homeland and Corporate Security

Right: Athens State campus received nearly 1.5" of snow on February 19, 2025.



ATHENS STATE UNIVERSITY

FOUNDED 1822





Dr. Catherine Wehlburg being congratulated by Senator Arthur Orr, Board of Trustees Chairman.

Onward Ever!

A New Era of Leadership



Dr. Catherine Wehlburg has officially been inaugurated as Athens State University's 39th President. A Presidential Inauguration & Investiture Ceremony was held on April 25 in Carter Hall and attended by University faculty, staff, alumni, and special guests. Dr. Wehlburg began her Presidential term in May 2024 after serving as Interim President since January 2023. She is Athens State's third permanent female president in the institution's history.

"We're very proud of Dr. Wehlburg," said Senator Arthur Orr, Chair Pro Tem of the Athens State University Board of Trustees. "In the few years that she's been here, she's been making great strides for our university. We look forward to the future and her being our president. In my opinion, the best is yet to come.

"Dr. Wehlburg brings personal and professional qualities of the highest order to her new position.

The Athens State University Board is fully persuaded that she can take Athens State to heightened levels not previously seen. We have great confidence in her leadership, and the time could not be more right for her to lead the university onward."

Dr. Wehlburg received her B.S. in Psychology and her M.Ed. and Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from the University of Florida. She is an accomplished leader and has over three decades of experience in higher education. In addition to her faculty and administrative roles, she has also served as a Senior Fellow at the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and at the American Association of Higher Education (AAHE).

She is known nationally for her scholarly work in teaching, learning, and the assessment of student learning outcomes. She has been recognized for her work in outcomes assessment by being elected

president of the Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education (AALHE) and has received their Outstanding Achievement Award. She is currently Editor-in-Chief for the New Directions for Teaching and Learning (NDTL) series and serves on editorial boards for several national higher education journals. Dr. Wehlburg represents Athens State by serving on the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) Board of Directors.

Dr. Wehlburg has also served on many accreditation committees for The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), chairing several of these.

“What an extraordinary and humbling moment this is,” said Dr. Catherine Wehlburg, President of Athens State University. “I stand before you today with immense gratitude, a deep sense of purpose, and tremendous hope for what lies ahead. It is the honor of a lifetime to serve as the president of Athens State University—a university with a proud legacy, a strong present, and an even brighter future.

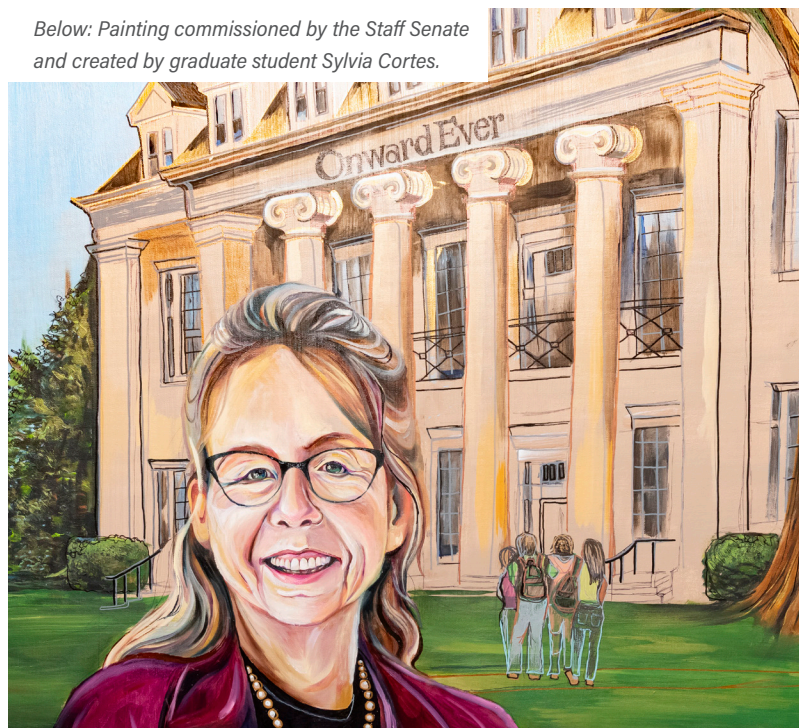
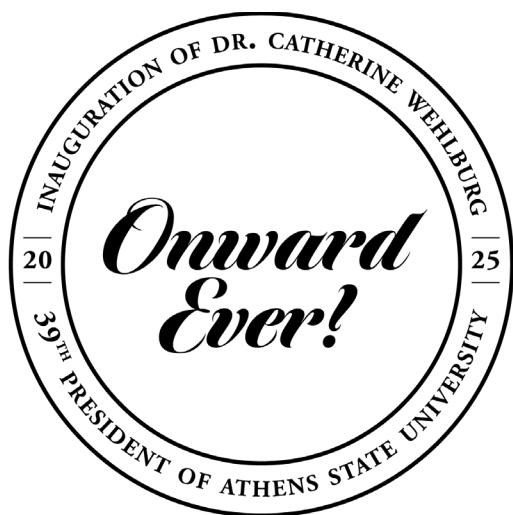
“I am so deeply honored to lead this university because I believe in the transformational power of access, of opportunity, and of education that meets people where they are and helps them go further than they ever thought possible.” ■



Above: Dr. Wehlburg's daughter, Brooke Krasowsky, holds the Bible for the Investiture Ceremony.



Below: Painting commissioned by the Staff Senate and created by graduate student Sylvia Cortes.







GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY HELD TO CELEBRATE CARTER HALL RENOVATION

Athens State University held a groundbreaking ceremony on September 3 to kick off the renovation of Carter Hall.

The renovated and expanded Carter Hall will serve as a vibrant hub for both campus and community life, offering flexible spaces for academic programs, public events, and collaborative engagement. This revitalized facility reflects Athens State's ongoing commitment to creating welcoming, innovative environments that support learning, connection, and service.

"This project has been long anticipated and will have a lasting impact on our students, city, county, region, and state," said Dr. Catherine Wehlburg, President of Athens State University. "What excites me most is not just the construction and the renovation of the building, it's what it represents. Carter Hall symbolizes the strength of partnership – the county, the state, the city, and Athens State

and beyond coming together to meet the growing needs of our community. Today is about much more than bricks and mortar - it's about opportunity, collaboration, and the future that we're building together."

The current vision for Carter Hall includes constructing 19,600 square feet of new space on the south side of the structure (facing Hobbs Street) and 8,100 square feet of new space on the north side (facing Pryor Street). Additionally, the renovation of gym space would create seating capacity for approximately 1,100 individuals and would include movable partitions to allow for multiple event configurations to occur simultaneously. The plans also include a multi-purpose space on the north side with a seating capacity of approximately 700.

"Exactly ten months ago today, my grandfather, Tommy Carter, passed from this life," said Dr. Gil Carter, Tommy Carter's grandson. "As we've

been going through his possessions, we found an old newspaper article. They asked him: 'In your years of service, what was your toughest fight you ever had on your hands?' And he said, 'Saving Athens College.' To see his name here, I think about not just him, but the qualities he possessed and that he would want everyone at this university to possess: resilience, grit, and determination, and the ability of one person to make a difference."

Special thanks to our construction and architect partners Goodwyn Mills Cawood (GMC), Building Construction Associates, and Martin & Cobey.

Thank you to the City of Athens, the Limestone County Commission, and legislative delegates for their unwavering support and partnership.

The project is expected to be completed in 18-24 months. ■





ATHENS STATE CELEBRATES GRAND OPENING OF NAZARETIAN ALUMNI WELCOME CENTER

A ribbon cutting ceremony was held on July 25 to celebrate the grand opening of Athens State's new Nazaretian Alumni Welcome Center. The Center will house the University's Office of Alumni Affairs and serve as a welcome center for alumni and campus visitors.

"The Nazaretian Alumni Welcome Center was reconstructed to preserve the home of Dr. Angie Nazaretian, a long-time Athens State employee and former Director of the Athens State University Alumni Association," said Dr. Keith Ferguson, Vice President for University Advancement. "The Center has offices for alumni, staff, meeting space, event space, and will serve as

a historical repository for University Museums and Archives."

Dr. Angeline (Angie) Nazaretian, a beloved individual who spent 42 years in service to the Athens State campus and namesake to the new Welcome Center, served at Athens State as chair of the Physical Education Department beginning in 1958, and later as Director of Alumni Affairs. She retired in 2000. Dr. Nazaretian was a prominent leader in the community and spent numerous hours teaching swim lessons, working with the Special Olympics, and serving on leadership boards. She received many awards and recognitions throughout her career for her service to local and state

initiatives. When she wasn't working, she spent her time ensuring that newcomers felt right at home through her memorable flower bouquets and handwritten notes. She passed away on March 17, 2019.

"We are thrilled to celebrate the opening of the Nazaretian Alumni Welcome Center, a space that honors the legacy of Dr. Angie Nazaretian," said Dr. Catherine Wehlburg, President of Athens State University. "Dr. Nazaretian believed deeply in the potential of every student, and this center reflects her lifelong commitment to their success. Her memory will continue to inspire all who walk through our historic columns."



How these 2 local students scored promotions + a tuition discount that includes 1,000+ other employers

Locals Amberlyn and Javian have different career goals, but are achieving them the same way. (Elizabeth Hobbs / Hville Blast)



Amberlyn Brewer
Elkmont, AL

Current career: Systems Analyst and Radar Operator at Maximum Technology Corporation in Huntsville

Degree: Bachelor's in Management of Cybersecurity Operations (Dec. 2026)

Learning Partner qualification: Employee at Maximum Technology Corporation



Javian Conley
Decatur, AL

Current career: Grade IV Wastewater Operator for Decatur Utilities at the Dry Creek Wastewater Treatment Plant

Degree: Bachelor's in Management, Master's in Strategic Leadership and Business Analytics

Learning Partner qualification: Employee at Decatur Utilities, a member of the Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce

Meet Amberlyn + Javian: 2 students benefiting from the Learning Partner Program at Athens State

Q: What has your career path looked like + what are your goals?

Amberlyn:

Amberlyn went to school for dental assisting after graduating from high school in 2010 before becoming a stay-at-home mom. Three kids later, Amberlyn felt the itch to go back to school.

"I was back-and-forth about what I wanted to do. I knew I wanted to go in the tech field, because there are so many opportunities. I started researching and found Athens State's cybersecurity program. If you go into the tech field, cybersecurity is the way to go."

While getting her Associates in Cybersecurity at community college, Amberlyn secured an entry-level position at Maximum Technology Corporation, a missile defense agency in Huntsville. Soon after, she knew a bachelor's would unlock more opportunities.

"Once you get in this field, you realize all the opportunities there are out there. The professors and professionals at

Athens State help you network and find future jobs."

"And once I get this degree, it could bring me to higher positions in the tech field or prepare me for another opportunity out there. I can go anywhere with this degree."

Javian:

Javian is the embodiment of "a lifelong learner." He started in the wastewater industry right out of high school, working his way up through strong work ethic and certifications. He views education as opportunity for professional and personal growth.

"I've always kept the mindset of being a lifelong learner. You can always become stronger in any aspect of life. But of course, education is one that really takes you forward."

"To fulfill my long-term goals, both in my career and personal life, I decided to further my education in Strategic Leadership and Business Analytics. I don't want to be that employee that sits in the same position for 30 years—I feel like I could serve a bigger purpose. And that's part of my drive to gain the knowledge and education."

Q: How is the Learning Partner Program helping you?

For both Amberlyn and Javian, the Learning Partner Program is lifting some of the financial burden of going back to school.

When Amberlyn and Javian first met with their advisor, they learned they qualify for the Learning Partner Program through their employers, saving them 10% of tuition and waving their application fees.

"I jumped on it real quick—anything to help me save money counts. It's such a rewarding program, and it's doing much more than just giving me a tuition discount." **Amberlyn**

"It's definitely making it more affordable and reducing the financial stress, which has been instrumental in helping me reach both my career and personal goals. Just to have a little bit of help is always phenomenal." **Javian**

Are you ready to advance your career?

1,000+ local employers offer tuition discounts through the Athens State Learning Partner Program.

Scan the QR code to see if you are eligible and learn more about the program benefits.





THE WALL THAT HEALS

★ **The Wall That Heals** exited Beasley Field on November 9, 2025. With the help of more than 302 volunteers, we hosted 12,000+ visitors and offered a space for remembrance, healing, and honor. Some saw their loved one's name on The Wall for the first time while others were acquainted with stories that will forever shape their future.

The Wall That Heals is a three-quarter scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., along with a mobile education center. The traveling exhibit honors the more than 3 million Americans who served in the U.S. Armed Forces in the Vietnam War, and it bears the names of the 58,281 men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam.

Thank you to everyone who made bringing The Wall That Heals to Athens, AL possible, including The Judy Gilbert Johnson Family Foundation, City of Athens, Limestone County Commission, and the Limestone County Legislative Delegation in conjunction with the Alabama Veterans Museum.





CLASS NOTES

MAY - NOV 2025

Class of 2025

- Nikki Black started a new job at Parsons Corporation as a Contract Administrator.
- Jeslynn Chamberlain has begun a new job as an Analyst with Atlas Collective.
- Whitney Clark started a new job as Family Services Home Visitor Advocate with Alabama Council on Human Resources, Inc.
- Tressie Day has been promoted at Coastal Alabama Community College.
- Coleen Driggers passed the SHRM-CP exam.
- LaSondra Dudley got married on June 28, 2025.
- Demetria Ewing has been promoted to Procurement Agent at Boeing.
- Misty Ferguson celebrated the arrival of her 6th grandchild, Mykah Elizzabeth Ferguson, on March 27.
- Michelle Franco Melendez started a new job as Senior HR Coordinator at Trident Security.
- Eddie Garlen Jr. graduated Magna Cum Laude in July, and will be moving into a management position soon.
- Ashlyn Gibson has been promoted to Client Advocate at South Central Human Resource Agency.
- Amber Green was promoted to Accounting Technician for the State of Alabama.
- Rashawn Green graduated Magna Cum Laude in July.
- Julie Hardison was honored earlier this year as SGA President, awarded Most Outstanding Student in Health and Physical Education, and inducted into Sigma Tau Delta.
- Michelle Hughes started a new job as Associate Contract Administrator with Northrop Grumman.
- Abby Izell started a new job as a PreK Teacher at DeKalb County Schools.
- Michael Jacobson began a new job as Accounts Payable and Bookkeeper at Carson Nugget Casino in Carson City, Nevada.
- Tori Kirk was promoted to HRBP at Inteva Products.
- Chelsea Lovelady started a new job as a Registered Nurse at Madison Hospital.
- JC Martin recently got engaged and began a job as a mathematics teacher at Boaz High School.
- Barbara McKinnie was honored with the Exceptional Visionary Leadership Award from the Athens State SHRM Chapter.
- Jasmyine Milton started a new job at MDA. She also graduated Magna Cum Laude in May, was inducted into the National Society of Leadership and Success, and made the President's List and Dean's List.
- Brittaney Moore graduated Magna Cum Laude in May.
- Peyton Moore-Murphy graduated Cum Laude during the Summer 2025 Commencement.
- April Morgan started a new job as Culinary Instructor at the Madison County Career & Technical Center.
- Carol Morneau married Kyle Morneau on March 10.
- Zachary Nail married Lauren Stephenson (Class of 2022) in October.
- Ashley Nelson was promoted to Lead Teacher in the Pre-K Program at the YMCA.
- Keonte Noel started a new job as an Elementary Teacher at Weeden Elementary School.
- Erin Osborne was promoted to First Grade Teacher at Danville-Neel Elementary School.
- Carlos Parker started a new

- job as Career Prep Coach with Huntsville City Schools.
- Coleman Pike graduated Summa Cum Laude in July.
- Melissa Raburn was promoted to First Grade Teacher at Haleyville City Schools.
- Anna Rainey graduated Summa Cum Laude in May.
- Erik Ramos started a new job as a teacher with Madison County Schools.
- Brittney Russell got married in December 2024.
- Luke Sutton welcomed his second child in April 2025.
- Jerry Swanson recently got married and started a job as a teacher at Covenant Christian School.
- Shawantha Thomas started a new job as Assistant to the Director of Accounting and Payroll with the Alabama Legislature.
- Amanda Tracy started a new job in Sales with Naterra.
- Tarina VanNatta graduated Summa Cum Laude in May.
- Paige Walker started a new job as a Registered Nurse at Vanderbilt University Medical Center Tullahoma.
- Regina Wallace was promoted to RN with the US Department of Veterans Affairs.
- Ta-Tanisha White has been inducted into the National Society of Leadership and Success.
- Blake Williams started a new job as a Rural Carrier for the United States Postal Service.
- Nick Wilson started a new job as a Teacher/Coach at the Alabama Department of Education.

Class of 2024

- Nathalia Owens started a new position as Adult Learner Services Office Advisor at Athens State University.
- Cody Putman has started a career as a Case Manager with the Tennessee Department of Children's Services.

- Davis Smallwood has completed his master's degree in history education from the University of West Alabama.
- Dalton Thrasher began a new position as HR Coordinator at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center.

Class of 2023

- Jeremy Hughey started a new position as Automation Specialist at Blue Origin.

Class of 2022

- Zach Griffin was promoted to Business Operations Manager at Mission Multiplier.

Class of 2021

- Kelsi Meals started a new position as Information Systems Security Officer at Intrepid.
- Jonathan Owsley started a new position as Senior Consultant, Healthcare Finance & Strategy at Forvis Mazars US.

Class of 2019

- Phillippia Fuqua was named the Alabama Art Education Association Secondary Art Educator of the Year.

Class of 2018

- Emerald Simmons was selected for the Regional Campus Graduate Fellowship at Indiana University, East.
- Randole Stone began a new position as Elementary Assistant Principal at Addison Elementary School.

Class of 2017

- Hannah Carpenter started a new job as an HR administrative assistant for Indorama IVXP.
- Misha Ortiz retired from the Secretary of Defense in FY2024 after 30 years of public civil service.

Class of 2016

- Gayle Hagewood was promoted to Executive Assistant to the President at Calhoun

Community College.

- Emily Hewgley was named "Teacher of the Year" for Minor Hill School Grades 5-8.
- Ryan Jolly announced his candidacy for Mayor of Moulton.
- Taylor Lance accepted a position as Project Controls - Scheduler with Universal Destinations & Experiences in June 2024.
- Brendan Murphy was promoted to the newly formed Custom Systems, a Microsoft Partner for Microsoft Dynamics Business Central ERP.

Class of 2015

- Chris Allen started a new position as Huntsville Market President at Story Financial Partners.
- Katie Deen was named a 2025-2026 Athens City Schools Teacher of the Year.
- Brooke Harris was named the new principal at Tharptown Elementary School.
- Alisha Mayfield was named Teacher of the Year at Columbia Elementary School and received a scholarship for training to receive National Board Certified Teacher status.
- Kristie Ray was promoted to Senior Vice President of Private Banking at Bryant Bank and named as one of the 2025 Rising Stars of Banking.

Class of 2014

- Caleb Horton joined ServisFirst Bank Huntsville as Vice President, Portfolio Manager.

Class of 2013

- Uriah Williams was featured in an article by The Birmingham Times.

Class of 2012

- Kayla Crum was named the Staff Member of the Year for 2025 at James Clemens High School.

Class of 2011

- Darby Allison was named the head coach of the Phil Campbell

High School Lady Bobcats softball program.

- Ashley Boutwell was named a 2025-2026 Athens City Schools Teacher of the Year.
- Josh Bryant started a new job as Sr. Product Manager at Caliber Public Safety.
- Jamie Edmonson started a new position as Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer at Regency Properties.
- Katie Walker was named a 2025-2026 Athens City Schools Teacher of the Year.

Class of 2009

- Michelle DeBord started a new position as Vice President of Human Resources at Phoenix - Huntsville Rehabilitation Foundation, LLC.
- Bob Thompson was named as one of the 2025 Rising Stars of Banking.

Class of 2007

- Josh Dendy will portray a photographer in the upcoming movie, "Kangaroo Christmas."
- Hannah Posey was named the Principal of South Lincoln School.

Class of 2005

- Chad Davis was selected as Deputy Director for Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' (ADCNR) State Parks System.

Class of 2004

- Maurice Dawson Jr. has been granted tenure and promoted to Associate Professor of Information Technology and Management at the Illinois Institute of Technology, making him the first African American to earn tenure in the institute's College of Computing.
- John Griffith qualified to run for Place 2 on the Hartselle City Schools Board of Education.
- Cyrus Swearingen accepted the positions of Assistant Principal and Athletic Director at Liberty Middle School.

Class of 2002

- Jamie Hill was appointed as the new principal of Gulf Shores Middle School.
- Jodie Minor announced his Democratic bid for the Senate District 21 seat in the 2026 election.

Class of 2001

- Wes Brown serves as the acting Associate Administrator for Communications at NASA.

Class of 1999

- Clint Hollingsworth announced his candidacy for House District 12.

Class of 1997

- Steve Clemons was hired as Central Carroll High School's new head girls' basketball coach.
- Keith Jarrell became the head coach of the Woodville girls' basketball and softball programs.

Class of 1996

- Christy Ferguson was inducted into the Morgan County Sports Hall of Fame in May.
- Linda Lee recently retired.

Class of 1994

- Kim Hall announced her candidacy for Place 5 on the Cullman City Council.

Class of 1993

- Randy Garrison announced his candidacy for Mayor of Hartselle.
- Nick Myers' daughter, Makenzie Alyssa Myers, married Gavin Delaney on September 6, 2024 in Lolland, Denmark. The couple resides in Wicklow County, Ireland.

Class of 1992

- Stephen Williamson retired from Madison County Schools after 33 years.

Class of 1989

- Jimmy Bright has released new children's books, "Bee Free" and "Jemimah Jope."

Class of 1984

- Lena Andrews' writing career was recently spotlighted by Day to Day with Mariah on WHNT.

Class of 1980

- Tere Richardson was honored with the String of Pearls Tourism Award.

Class of 1979

- Riki Thoreson-Schaefer retired from a position as lead Mammographer at various facilities in California.

Class of 1978

- Frances Tate received the 2025 Decatur-Morgan County Chamber of Commerce's Miss Athelyne C. Banks Citizen of the Year Award.

Class of 1975

- Deborah Samaniego retired from Holy Spirit Catholic High School in Tuscaloosa, Alabama after 26 years teaching Middle School Science, Math and Religion.

Class of 1959

- Dr. Azalia Francis Moore celebrated her 90th birthday this year.

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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The 4th annual Giving Day was hosted on August 5 and raised \$133,745 to support student programs and campus projects, including a \$25,000 matching gift by the Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Convention.

Athenian Giving Day was established for the Athens State community to come together and lend financial support to students and campus initiatives. Thank you all for your continued support of Athens State and our amazing students!

Learn more about all our areas for giving at www.athens.edu/give.