

Athens State University  
Board of Trustees  
External Affairs Committee  
Minutes  
July 19, 2024, 1:15 pm  
LaunchBox, 121 S. Marion St., Athens

**Call of Order** - Ms. Missy Ming Smith, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:15 pm.

**Roll Call** - Ms. Brandy Conway conducted roll call. Members absent: Yvette Evans, Kenneth Lones, Darren Waldrep. A quorum was present.

**May 17, 2024 Minutes** - Ms. Missy Ming Smith presented the minutes. Motion to approve by Betty Ruth-Oliver.

### **Updates**

- **LaunchBox** - Dr. Keith Ferguson asked Kim Dunnivant and Tyler Jones to provide the update. Kim Dunnivant joined the Center for Lifelong Learning (CLL) in February 2023. In May 2023, the CLL was moved under the Office of Advancement. The CLL was focused on community outreach and held youth summer camps and various workshops, like blacksmithing. The LaunchBox was under the CLL and provided services to small businesses. In May 2023, the CLL began to operate solely as LaunchBox due to the need for small business support. Two grants from USDA and ARC helped build the framework and paid for programming, furniture, salaries, renovations and technology. In October 2023, Larry Way joined LaunchBox to help with the transition. LaunchBox has conducted a series of workshops including LeadUp, a professional development series, which had 19 participants; RampUp, for aspiring entrepreneurs, which had 12 participants; and Seven Essentials for Growing Your Business which had 17 participants. On April 1, Tyler Jones joined the LaunchBox as Executive Director. During his first week he attended the International Small Business Conference to better understand how to get the most return on the investments made to the LaunchBox. The LaunchBox team continues to meet with LCEDA and NAIDA to find out what the community needs are for small businesses. Currently, that need is for office space. To date, there are three offices filled with tenants. Due to grant restrictions, we cannot currently charge rental fees. The LaunchBox team is evaluating rental fees for office and facility rentals.
- **Learning Partnerships** - Ms. Brandy Conway presented the update on learning partnerships. Currently have 49 partners. For fall semester, as of July 16, 2024, we have 176 students enrolled. This is up 159% in comparison to the fall semester 2023. Students have enrolled in 1,718 credit hours resulting in net tuition and fees of \$498,986.60. Of the 49 partners, 33 have employees enrolled. This is a 94% increase over fall 2023. Dr. Ferguson provided current enrollment figures. As of July 18, 2024, the

current student headcount is 2,523. 176 are a learning partner student and represent 7% of the current headcount. The new students enrolled are 557. 63 are learning partner students and represent 11.3% of new student enrollment. 113 of continuing students are a learning partner student and represent 5.7% of continuing students enrolled. Ms. Smith asked to provide information on the number of students who received the promotional discount in the next report.

- **Government Relations** - Dr. Keith Ferguson reported that we are meeting with our lobbyist in August. We will discuss a strategy for state funding. We are meeting with Speaker Ledbetter on August 9<sup>th</sup> at the Business Council meeting to discuss our state appropriations. And we are currently working on the budget proposal for 2024-2025.
- **Alumni Affairs** - Ms. Denise Santos provided a list of upcoming alumni events.  
July 26 – Homecoming – 72 attendees confirmed  
July 27 – Summer commencement – celebration of Class of 1974  
August 22 – Madison County Alumni Happy Hour at Yellowhammer Brewery from 5 – 7:30 pm  
September 19 – Alumni Golf Classic  
September 28 – Fiddlers 5K at 7 am – 55 participants registered to date  
October 24 – Florence Alumni Mixer  
Ms. Santos is actively working to engage more alumni, both in person and virtually. We have 300 – 400 members of the alumni association who are paid members, 1,100 with a free one-year membership.
- **Alumni Association** - Ms. Betty Ruth-Oliver reported that the groundbreaking of the Nazaretian House. The anticipated completion date is June 19, 2025. She also noted that there are still sponsorships available for the Fiddlers 5K.
- **Marketing** - Mr. Chris Latham provided the marketing report. For fall, we are currently doing digital, TV, radio, and billboards. There are campaigns for the College of Business. They are working on recruiting materials as well. Up & Up is working on a direct mail campaign that will go out at the end of July. The mail pieces will be tied to a digital email campaign. Mr. Latham provided a list of campus events:  
July 19 – Family Movie Night  
July 23 – Fiddlers Concert Series with Chris Jones and the Night Drivers  
August 6 – Giving Day – goal is 436 donors for \$60,500. This is a 10% increase over last year.  
August 16 – Convocation  
August 17 – Community Band Concert  
Mr. Latham stated that there is a website administrator position currently open.

No new business was discussed.

The meeting adjourned at 2:07 pm.