Establishing and Maintaining Operating Policies

I.   Policy Statement and Purpose

In accordance with Athens State University's educational mission, this policy defines and sets standards to ensure that operating policies are in compliance with University policies (see definitions below) as set by the Athens State University Board of Trustees, and with applicable state and federal requirements.

The definitions and procedures contained within this policy establish consistent standards and expectations for the development, formatting, review, approval, and ongoing evaluation of the operating policies of the University. Defining standards for operating policies helps to promote operational efficiency and effectiveness in accordance with best practices in higher education.

II.   Policy Level Hierarchy and Definitions

In accordance with the University's removal from governance under the Alabama State Board of Education and Department of Postsecondary Education, and the establishment of an independent board of trustees for the University, effective October 1, 2012, the Athens State University Board of Trustees has approved the following hierarchy and definitions for the policy levels of the University. This hierarchy ensures a clear and appropriate distinction between the policy-making function of the Board and the responsibility of the administration and faculty to administer and implement policy.

Board of Trustee Policies
Also known as Board Policies or Trustee Policies. Policies and any associated procedures governing the actions, procedures, and processes of the University Board of Trustees or of the individual Board members. These policies and any associated procedures apply only to the Board or Board members and do not apply to any University areas, offices, or personnel.

New Trustee Policies and changes to existing Trustee Policies must be approved by the Board of Trustees according to the rules of procedure of the Board.

University Policies
Policies expressing the comprehensive or overriding expectations and/or requirements of the Board of Trustees, as the executive body governing the University, related to achieving the mission of the University or to the duties of the President.

New University Policies and changes to existing University Policies must be approved by the Board of Trustees according to the rules of procedure of the Board.

Operating Policies
Policies defining the specific expectations or requirements of the President for each administrator, area, or function of the University, in accordance with the comprehensive requirements defined in the University Policies and published according to approved formats. Operating Policies may include associated comprehensive procedures when appropriate, particularly when the procedures apply to all members of the University community or to large groups (e.g., all faculty members, all staff members) within the University.

New Operating Policies must be approved by the President, and changes to existing Operating Policies must be approved by the President or the President's designee. The President's designee given the ownership of any existing Operating Policy must be specified in the initial approval and the original issue of a new Operating Policy.

Operating Procedures
Procedures are the required processes associated with a particular Operating Policy that are specific to the day-to-day operations of a specific area, office, or function of the University in order to ensure compliance with the associated Operating Policy.

New Operating Procedures must be approved by the Vice President overseeing the area, office, or function, and changes to existing Operating Procedures must be approved by the appropriate Vice President or the Vice President's designee. The Vice President's designee given the responsibility for approving changes to existing Operating Procedures must be specified in the initial approval of any new Operating Procedures.

Operating Procedures that apply to all members of the University community or to large groups with the University (e.g., all faculty members, all staff members) should be published according to approved formats.

Operating Procedures specific to the day-to-day responsibilities of an individual or group of individuals in the performance of their duties will be maintained in internal office procedure manuals and will normally not be widely distributed or published. Distribution or publication of such office procedure manuals will be at the discretion of the appropriate Vice President and the Vice President's designee.

Guidelines
Guidance that further explains policies. Guidelines provide general, non-mandatory recommendations to users, streamlined processes, best practices, and non-standard operational procedures.

III. Operating Policy Definitions

Operating Policy Categories

Operating policies of the University generally fall into one of seven main categories, with sub-categories under each main category to be established and defined as needed.

Category Number	Category Title and Description
I	**Administrative** – policies that are of a general administrative or operational nature
II	**Academic** – policies related to the academic programs and courses offered by the University
III	**Financial** - policies related to accounting, budgeting, procurement, travel, and other financial functions
IV	**Human Resources** – policies and procedures related to employees and their working relationship with the University, including hiring, compensation, leave, performance evaluations, and related issues
V	**Student Affairs** – policies related to student life, student code of conduct, and other areas directly related to students as members of the University community
VI	**Information Technology** – policies covering IT systems, web services, electronic mail, access, data, and related functions
VII	**Research** – policies related to research, including grant development, facility/resource use, copyright and intellectual property, outside research consulting, and related issues

Definition of Terms Associated with Operating Policies

In addition to the definitions above, there are several words/terms associated with the development, formatting, approval, and implementation of operating policies.

Originally Issued
The date that the original operating policy was first approved by the President and subsequently put into effect University-wide. This date is shown in the header on all policies in accordance with the standard policy template.

Periodic Review and Evaluation
A minimum timeframe for the review and evaluation of an operating policy must be established during the original approval and issue of the policy. The timeframe for the review of a policy is clearly identified in the final section of a policy document in accordance with the standard policy template.

Policy Implementation
The person(s) responsible for the implementation of an approved operating policy. This person is the first point of contact to answer questions about the policy and its implementation. The person(s) responsible for policy implementation is established during the original approval and issue of any operating policy. The person(s) responsible for policy implementation is clearly identified in the policy header and in the final section of the policy document in accordance with the standard policy template.

Policy Analyst
The person assigned by the President to support and assist policy owners and persons responsible for policy implementation in the development, approval, and ongoing evaluation of the operating policies of the University. This person is also assigned the responsibility for the dissemination of approved policies and information regarding new and amended operating policies. In conjunction with the appropriate information technology and web personnel, the policy analyst is also responsible for maintaining a user-friendly electronic library of policies on the University's web site, and for maintaining a policy archive which records and tracks the policy approval, revision and review processes, according to the requirements of the Alabama State Records Commission document, *Public Universities of Alabama – Functional Analysis and Records Disposition Authority*.

Policy Number
The number assigned to an operating policy during its original issue and implementation. This number, used primarily for cataloging purposes, is generally assigned according to the policy category number (see above) and the chronological order in which the policy was approved. For example, the fifth policy approved in the category "Information Technology" would be assigned the policy number "**VI.05**". The policy number is shown in the header on all policies in accordance with the standard policy template.

Policy Owner
The person assigned the responsibility of evaluating, revising, and approving changes to an existing operating policy subsequent to its original issue. The policy owner is always established during the original approval and issue of any operating policy. In general, only Vice Presidents can serve as policy owners. Once established, the policy owner is clearly identified in the policy header and in the final section of the policy document in accordance with the standard policy template.

Policy Revision
Once originally issued, minor revisions to an operating policy are under the authority of the policy owner; however, the President and University community must be notified of any policy revisions. Substantive revisions to existing operating policies, including deletion of existing policies, must be approved by the President in a manner similar to the approval of new operating policies.

Policy Template
The template which defines the approved format for all operating policies of the University. The template specifies the format and the minimum information required in all operating policies.

IV. **Procedures for Developing a New Operating Policy or a Substantive Revision to an Existing Operating Policy**

Determine the Need for a New Policy or a Substantive Revision to an Existing Operating Policy

In general, operating policies of the University either require or prohibit specific actions of faculty, staff, or students, and may apply to external individuals who use University resources or services. In addition, operating policies generally address some risk to the institution (e.g., unwanted behavior, financial

consequences, non-compliance with state or federal requirements) that exists in the absence of a policy.

1. The person initiating the development of a new policy consults with the likely or current policy owner to determine the risk to the institution and the need for a new policy or a substantive change to an existing policy.

2. If the policy owner determines that the need exists, the policy owner, in consultation with the policy analyst, first considers all existing policies to determine if the need can be addressed by a revision to an existing policy. If the need can be addressed by a minor revision to an existing policy, the policy owner can address the need using the Procedures for Minor Revision of an Existing Operating Policy (see below).

3. If the need requires the establishment of a new policy and/or the deletion of an existing policy, or a substantive revision to an existing policy, the policy owner and policy analyst proceed with the development of an operating policy draft for the new policy or policy revision.

Develop the Policy Plan and Draft the Operating Policy

1. With the assistance of the policy owner, the policy analyst completes a draft of the proposed policy or policy revision using the standard policy template.

2. Once completed, the policy   draft is submitted to the President for consideration and action through the administrative process established by the President.

3. The President can choose to direct the policy analyst to make the policy plan and draft available for public review and comment prior to beginning the administrative process for consideration of the proposal. This review period will be no more than 30 calendar days. At the end of the review period, the President, in consultation with the policy owner, policy analyst, and other administrators, determines what modifications to the policy draft will be made. Once the proposal is in its final form subsequent to the review period, it is submitted to the President for consideration and action through the administrative process established by the President without further public review.

4. In cases where the absence of the proposed policy poses a serious risk to the institution, the President can choose to forego the review process and begin the administrative process for consideration and action on the proposal.

Implementation of an Approved Policy

1. Once a proposed policy is approved by the President through the administrative process, the policy analyst publishes the approved policy in the policy library web site, and ensure that any old or deleted policy is added to the policy archives for tracking purposes.

2. Once the approved policy is published in the policy library, communication concerning the new policy is made broadly to the University community and any other appropriate audiences. However, communication of the policy should not include distribution of copies (electronic or otherwise) of the policy; all approved policies reside officially in the policy library and are therefore readily available to any interested parties.

3. If a new policy requires formal training for University personnel, the policy owner and person responsible for policy implementation work with the appropriate specialists (internal or external) to ensure training is completed.

V. Procedures for Minor Revision of an Existing Operating Policy

Policy owners and persons responsible for policy implementation share the responsibility for ensuring that their policy and any procedure information within the policy are current and accurate.

1. In cases where minor changes (e.g., office or title name changes, rate changes when applicable) to an existing policy are required, the policy owner notifies the policy analyst.

2. The policy analyst updates the policy with the minor changes and records the revision date in the policy header. The policy analyst ensures that the old policy is added to the policy archives for tracking purposes. The policy analyst then publishes the revised policy in the policy library and communicates the revision of the policy broadly to the University community and any other appropriate audiences.

3. Substantive revisions (e.g., change of policy owner, deletion of a policy) to existing operating policies must be approved by the President in a manner similar to the approval of new operating policies (see above).

VI. Procedures for Periodic Review and Evaluation of an Existing Operating Policy

The purpose of a periodic review and evaluation of an existing operating policy is to: 1) determine if the policy is still needed, or if it should be deleted or combined with another operating policy; 2) determine whether the purpose and goal of the policy is still being met; and 3) determine if substantive changes are needed to improve the effectiveness of the policy and any associated procedures.

1. According to the policy review and evaluation timeline specified in the original issue of the policy, the policy analyst notifies the policy owner in writing of the timeframe for the completion of the review. The timeframe for completion of the review will be no greater than 60 calendar days.

2. If the review and evaluation indicate that minor or substantive changes are needed in the policy, the policy owner works with the policy analyst to ensure the changes are made according to the appropriate procedures (see above).

3. The policy analyst ensures that the record of the policy review and evaluation is added to the policy archives for tracking purposes.

VII. Responsibility for this Operating Policy

Policy Owner

As part of the initial approval of this policy by the President and subsequent to the original dissemination of the policy, the President remains the policy owner for the ongoing evaluation, review, and approval of this policy. Subsequent reviews and revisions to this policy must be in accordance with approved operating policy procedures and processes.

This policy will be reviewed every two years or more frequently as needed by the Policy Owner. Revisions will be reviewed/affirmed by the Cabinet and approved by the University President. This policy will be updated/published in the University's Policy Library.

Responsibility for Policy Implementation

The President has assigned the responsibility of implementing this policy to the Policy Analyst, under the direction of the President.