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A Word from Sharifah Abubaker

Athens State SHRM Student Chapter President

As we reflect on this academic year, I am filled with pride, gratitude, and excitement for the future of our SHRM Student Chapter. Serving as your President has been both an honor and a transformative experience, one that has reinforced the power of leadership, collaboration, and professional growth.

This year, our Chapter has taken meaningful strides toward strengthening our presence on campus and preparing our members for success in the field of Human Resource Management. From hosting engaging events and workshops to participating in conferences and networking opportunities, we have worked intentionally to bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world application.

One of our greatest accomplishments has been fostering a community that is both inclusive and empowering. Each member brings unique perspectives, talents, and aspirations, and it is through this diversity that we continue to grow stronger. Whether you joined us for professional development, leadership opportunities, or to connect with peers, your involvement has made a lasting impact.

Looking ahead, our focus remains on innovation, engagement, and opportunity. We are committed to expanding our programming, increasing member involvement, and creating even more pathways for you to develop as future HR leaders. With upcoming conferences, collaborative events, and new initiatives on the horizon, the possibilities are endless.

I encourage each of you to stay engaged, take advantage of the resources available to you, and step into leadership opportunities within our Chapter. SHRM is more than an organization; it is a foundation for your future career and a network that will support you long after graduation.

Thank you for your dedication, passion, and commitment to excellence. Together, we are not only building a stronger Chapter but also shaping the future of HR.

With appreciation,
Sharifah Abubaker
President, SHRM Student Chapter

AFFILIATE OF



Meet the Team



Dr. Tina Camba

Assistant Professor of Management/
HR Management at Athens State, Co-Advisor
for ATSU SHRM Student Chapter



Dr. Gary Valcana

Associate Professor of Management, at
Athens State, Co-Advisor for ATSU
SHRM Student Chapter



Sharifah Abubaker

President



Ashley Powers

Vice President



Zoe' Kelsey

Director of Chapter
Information Systems



Kimberly Wilcox

Director of Communications



Hannah Edmonds

Director of SHRM Merit Awards



Michelle Bissell

Director of Student Relations



Alena Vajukic

Secretary



ATHENS STATE
UNIVERSITY



2026 ALSHRM HR Games

February 27, 2026

On February 26, I had the opportunity to attend the Alabama SHRM Conference, where I proudly represented Athens State University in the HR Games. The conference brought together students, professionals, and industry leaders from across the state, creating an engaging environment focused on learning, networking, and professional growth. Competing in the SHRM Games alongside my team was both challenging and rewarding, as we applied our HR knowledge to real-world scenarios while strengthening our communication and problem-solving skills.

Through dedication, preparation, and strong collaboration, the Athens State University team performed exceptionally well and ultimately earned first place in the competition. This achievement reflected not only our understanding of human resource concepts but also our ability to work effectively as a team under pressure. The experience reinforced the importance of strategic thinking, adaptability, and clear communication in the HR field.

Attending the Alabama SHRM Conference was truly an unforgettable experience. It allowed me to expand my knowledge of human resources, build meaningful connections with peers and professionals, and gain valuable insight into the industry. Most importantly, it strengthened my confidence and passion for pursuing a career in HR, leaving me motivated and inspired for future opportunities.



By Alena Vajukic

2026 ALSHRM HR Games

February 27, 2026

The 2026 ALSHRM HR Games in Tuscaloosa, AL brought together student SHRM chapters from across Alabama for a day filled with competition, collaboration, and professional growth.

Our day started bright and early, fueled by energy, anticipation, and a round of “HR dad jokes” to get everyone laughing and loosened up before the competition began. It didn’t take long before we jumped straight into the HR Games, ready to test our knowledge and teamwork skills.

The competition proved to be both exciting and challenging. We came out strong, winning our first round and setting a confident tone for the day. However, after falling short in the second round, we knew we had to regroup and refocus. What followed was an incredible comeback! Our team went on to win every remaining round, ultimately earning first place overall.

One of the most memorable (and funniest) parts of the day was trying to eat lunch in between rounds. Each time we returned to our table, excited to grab a bite of our Chick-fil-A, we were quickly called back to compete again. This cycle repeated itself three or four times, leaving us laughing as we barely managed to get more than a bite or two before heading back into the competition.

After the HR Games concluded, we had the opportunity to hear from an inspiring speaker who shared her journey in the HR field. She discussed how she got her start, the various roles she has held throughout her career, and the wide range of opportunities available within human resources. Her insights provided valuable perspective for all students considering their future paths in HR.

The day wrapped up with a discussion panel, followed by the awards ceremony where we proudly received our medals from the ALSHRM president. It was an exciting and rewarding moment that reflected the hard work, resilience, and teamwork demonstrated throughout the day.

To celebrate, our group explored the University of Alabama’s campus and enjoyed a well-deserved meal together. It was the perfect ending to a day filled with learning, laughter, and achievement.



By Zoe' Kelsey

Case Competition

April 21, 2026

Our SHRM case competition was a great opportunity for students to step outside of the classroom and apply HR knowledge in a more realistic setting. Each team was challenged to work through a case, analyze the situation, develop recommendations, and present their ideas in a clear and professional way. Events like this are a great reminder that HR is not just about theory. It also requires problem solving, communication, teamwork, and the ability to think critically under pressure.

One of the best parts of the competition was seeing how each team approached the case differently. Even when groups were working from the same information, their ideas, priorities, and presentation styles still reflected their own perspectives and strengths. That made the event especially interesting and showed just how much creativity and thought students brought into the competition. The amount of effort put in by each team was clear throughout!

We also want to recognize our winner from this year's competition! Culture Crafters (Sharifah Abubaker, Savannah Graner Cornelius, Zoe' Kelsey) earned 1st place, Claw & Order (Ashley Powers, Michelle Bissell) earned 2nd place, and Blooming Atlantic HR Solutions (Hannah Edmonds, Alena Vajukic, Kimberly Wilcox) earned 3rd place. Congratulations to each of these teams for their hard work and strong performances. Their preparation and professionalism stood out, and they should be proud of what they accomplished!

Beyond the competition itself, this event reflected the overall talent and potential within our SHRM Chapter. It gave students the chance to build confidence, strengthen practical HR skills, and learn from one another in a setting that encouraged both collaboration and growth. We are proud of everyone who participated, tuned in to watch, and those that helped make the competition a success. We also want to extend a sincere thank you to our judges for taking the time to support this event, listen thoughtfully to each team, and help make the experience meaningful for everyone involved.

By Ashley Powers

Transfer Day

March 14, 2026



Athens State Transfer Day was an energetic and joyful celebration! On March 14, 2026, Athens State University rolled out the red carpet for new students, inviting them to mingle with friendly faculty and advisors. The welcoming financial team was on hand to answer questions, while success coaches and the Athens State Bonners flooded everyone with warm smiles, offering encouragement and support. Attendees toured the campus, explored various programs, and picked up handy tips on how transfer credits work. A highlight of the day was at the Athens State SHRM Chapter booth, where Michelle Bissel, the Director of Student Relations, Hannah Edmonds, the Director of SHRM Merits, Zoe' Kelsey, the Director of Chapter Information Systems, Alena Vajukec Bacak, the Secretary, and me, Kimberly Wilcox, the Director of Communication, delighted in meeting visitors, swapping stories, and sharing our chapter's mission. We threw in a fun match game to entertain everyone, along with a small thank-you gift for their time — both of which added extra spark to the event! It was a fantastic chance to connect, have fun, and share our inspiring goals: promoting education, serving the community, and building a lively network of professionals eager to support each other's success.



By Kimberly Wilcox

Athens State Job Fair

April 21, 2026

Attending the Athens State Job Fair gave me the opportunity to step into a different role and represent the SHRM Student Chapter. Instead of just attending, I was able to speak with a wide variety of job seekers and students about the opportunities SHRM offers within our school. I connected with a few people who were curious about Human Resources as well as those already interested in the field, and I shared information about networking events, professional development, experiential learning hours, and leadership opportunities. It was encouraging to see how many people were open to learning how SHRM can support their academic and professional growth.

This experience helped me grow in my confidence and communication skills. Speaking with new people and answering questions pushed me outside of my comfort zone, but it also showed me the impact of simply



showing up and being willing to connect. I was able to help others see that SHRM is more than just a student organization and can truly be a stepping stone into the HR field. Overall, I am grateful for the opportunity to represent SHRM and I look forward to continuing to connect with students and help them take advantage of everything our Chapter has to offer.

By Heather McCray

Athens State Earth Day

April 24, 2026

The Student Chapter of SHRM at Athens State University recently took part in the University's Earth Day celebration, contributing their time and energy to support a meaningful day focused on sustainability, community, and environmental awareness. The event, hosted by the University in partnership with Keep Limestone Beautiful, brought together students, families, and local organizations for a day of engagement and education.

SHRM members volunteered in several key roles throughout the event, helping ensure everything ran smoothly. One of their primary responsibilities was assisting guests with directions across campus. By guiding attendees to various activity stations, booths, and attractions, volunteers helped create an organized and welcoming environment for everyone.

In addition to supporting event navigation, SHRM students also played an important role in the children's train rides. Volunteers helped manage lines, assisted participants as they boarded and exited, and ensured a safe and enjoyable experience for families. Their involvement added to the excitement of the event and helped create lasting memories for younger attendees.

The Chapter also helped out at the popcorn booth, serving free popcorn to guests throughout the day. This simple but thoughtful gesture became a popular stop, giving SHRM Student members another opportunity to interact with attendees and contribute to the event's friendly, community-centered atmosphere.

Through their service, the Athens State SHRM Student Chapter demonstrated a strong commitment to community involvement and teamwork. Volunteering at Earth Day allowed members to apply

leadership and communication skills in a real-world setting while supporting a campus-wide initiative that promotes environmental responsibility.

Overall, the experience was both impactful and rewarding. By showing up to serve and engage, SHRM Student members helped make Earth Day at Athens State a success while reinforcing the chapter's dedication to service, collaboration, and positive community impact.



By Sharifah Abubaker

ATSU SHRM + The Circle Ranch Book Drive

February 12–March 20, 2026

Every year, we at the ATSU SHRM Student Chapter choose to do a project that will serve the community. This year, after careful discussion we decided to partner with the Circle Ranch for a book drive. Our goal was to be able to provide remedial reading books, math practice books, introduction to reading books, as well as coloring books to Circle Ranch. We chose to do this for multiple reasons. One of the main reasons is that foster families and foster children are a massively under-serviced part of the community. There are around 6,000 foster children in Alabama alone, and only about 2,600 families who can take them. Additionally, while families do receive a stipend per child, they often end up paying out of pocket for clothes, school supplies, books, and toys. Doing a book drive to help Circle Ranch not only helps foster children, but helps the parents involved in the process.

For a little information on Circle Ranch, it is located in Danville, Alabama, and is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping foster children and families. It was founded around 2016 and its goal is to provide safe housing, support and a stable environment for children who have experienced abuse, neglect, and trauma. The Ranch is massive, sitting on around 40 acres of land and has houses that foster families can care for multiple foster children in. Crucially, the Ranch often takes in foster children who are siblings as they are focused on not splitting them up. Along with housing the Circle Ranch provides counseling, mentoring, and training to potential foster families. Additionally, they offer community events, and as stated on the website, “we host free community events throughout the year, such as fall festivals, Easter egg hunts, and summer picnics, where these families can enjoy a day of fun, fellowship, food, and networking. We also offer training sessions, support groups, counseling services, and mentoring programs for these families to help them grow in their faith and skills as foster parents.”

If you are ever in the area during one of their events, I personally recommend that you make the time to go and experience the true community that has been built at the Circle Ranch. The goal of the Circle Ranch is to offer a supportive environment that provides stability, emotional healing and long-term success for these vulnerable youth.

For the book drive, we set up boxes in the Sandridge Student Center, the Classroom Building, Kares Library, and Waters Hall. Overall, it was an outstanding success as we gathered 80 reading books and 15 coloring books, bringing us to a total of 95 books. The books were a mix of children's and parent's books, including theology, art, fiction, and non-fiction.

If you are interested in donating or helping the Circle Ranch, you can contact them on their website www.thecircleranch.org. You can also volunteer at Events for the Ranch, as they host multiple a year. I am thrilled with how this service project has turned out, and I hope you are too. I will end with a quote from Mr. Jeff Denard, who is the operator of the Circle Ranch.

“Thank you guys so much for donating the books to the Ranch, the impact that you guys are making on the kids is huge. [With] most of the children there it is all about reading. And I've seen actually some Christian books in there also. So you guys blessing us with books that the children can read, and possibly mature in their spiritual also is a huge impact to the children. So, thank you so much.”

By Hannah Edmonds

Fiddler's Fundraiser

March 19, 2026

Athens State University's SHRM student chapter proudly volunteered at the Tennessee Valley Old Time Fiddlers Convention Concert Series on March 19, 2026. Supporting this meaningful cultural event provided chapter members with the opportunity to actively engage with the community while contributing to the success of a cherished regional tradition. Through their involvement, students were able to connect with attendees and organizers, representing the university in a positive and professional manner.

In addition to community engagement, chapter members played an important role in assisting with event logistics, guest coordination, and overall operations. These hands-on responsibilities allowed students to strengthen their teamwork, communication, and problem-solving skills while gaining valuable real-world experience outside of the classroom.

Beyond professional development, the experience also allowed members to celebrate and appreciate the rich musical heritage of the Tennessee Valley. By supporting an event centered on folk music and storytelling through song, students gained a deeper understanding of the cultural significance of the tradition, reinforcing the chapter's commitment to service, community involvement, and cultural appreciation.



By Alena Vajukic



EFI Plant Tour

February 17, 2026

I had the opportunity to tour EFI Manufacturing, where I was warmly welcomed by Barbara and Willamina. None of this would have been possible without Dr. Camba connecting me with this opportunity, and I'm very grateful for that.

It was a great experience getting to learn more about who they are and what they do, especially from the HR side. The facility itself is very clean, organized, and overall welcoming.

During the visit, they took time to walk us through the history of the plant, how it operates, and what their day-to-day processes look like. It was interesting to see the different machines they use and learn about the vehicle parts they produce.

Since then, I've had the chance to return several times to shadow the HR department, which has given me valuable insight into what my future career in HR could look like. I've been able to sit in on interviews with potential employees, help schedule onboarding, and go over OSHA training. I even learned how to coordinate interviews across three different time zones, which was a really useful experience.

For anyone interested in going into HR and wanting hands-on experience before fully stepping into the field, I would definitely recommend reaching out to Ms. Barbara. She has been incredibly helpful, taking me under her wing and walking me through each step of the process. The entire staff has been great, and I've also had the opportunity to connect with other members of the office team.



By Heather McCray

ATSU SHRM

Alumni Spotlight

Barbara
McKinnie



Hello Athens State University SHRM members!

I am honored to be featured as your ATSU Alumni Spotlight. Just last year, I sat among you with dreams and aspirations of finishing college and questions about what would come next after obtaining my degree. Those feelings of uncertainty, while still pushing forward to make a better future for you and your family, are what keep you going.

I am here to tell you that you have made the right decision by joining ATSU SHRM. The guidance and leadership of the mentors over ATSU SHRM are a big part of why I am where I am today. There is no doubt in my mind that God led me exactly where He wanted me to be.

My bachelor's degree was in Business Management with a minor in Human Resource Management. It was through the classes I took while pursuing my minor that I fell in love with HR, the opportunity to learn people's stories and to help them be better and do better.

It was at a fall panel discussion that a stay-at-home mom and widow with four children attended her first SHRM event. She didn't know what she was looking for, but she showed up. That was the day Dr. Tina Camba saw something in me that I did not yet see

in myself. She encouraged me, and while I didn't fully understand what it meant at the time, I would see it clearly years later. She asked me what I was going to do after graduation. A woman I had never met before was genuinely interested in plans that I, myself, had no clue about. I only knew that I had to finish school so I could provide for my children.

Without ever telling her my life story, and after only a few conversations with Dr. Camba, I was persuaded that I needed to pursue my master's degree. The program consisted of just 10 classes, and I could complete it in less than two years—yes, sign me up. The classes were challenging, and at times I didn't know how I would get it done, but by God's grace, I did. I graduated with a 4.0 GPA while raising four children.

During this time, I had the opportunity to represent ATSU by serving in several offices and eventually becoming the ATSU SHRM President. This experience allowed me to attend conferences and spend time with incredible professors and mentors such as Dr. Kim LaFevor, Dr. Alana Daniels, Dr. Elizabeth Bowden, Professor Kim Bell, Mrs. Sharron Woods, and many others. God placed these people in my life to help change my trajectory.

I am now happily remarried and was given the opportunity to work at Athens State University's Department of Education through the work-study program. This was an amazing way to transition back into the workforce after 16 years at home. The program allowed me the flexibility to learn administrative work while gaining the soft skills necessary to build my repertoire. Not to mention, I worked with an amazing group of women who poured into me daily.

I was also given the opportunity to have an article published in Athens State University's College of Business Research Journal. After graduation, Dr. Camba used her resources and knowledge to help open the right doors for me. I now work at EFI Automotive, a top-tier manufacturing plant in Elkmont, Alabama, as an HR Generalist. In my role, I am able to give back by offering plant tours and job shadowing opportunities to future HR professionals.

I share my story because life can sometimes put you in situations you are not prepared for. Sometimes it's the result of your own actions, and sometimes life is just life. The question is: what now? Are you going to give up, or will you strive to do better and become better?

It's not how you start, it's how you finish. Finish strong.



SPRING 2026 ATSU SHRM SPEAKERS



ATSU SHRM started the semester strong with an engaging first chapter meeting featuring Professor Jillian Miles Massey and her presentation, “Who Are You, Really?” – Personal Branding & Professional Identity. Professor Massey emphasized the importance of authenticity in personal branding, encouraging members to reflect on their values, skills, experiences, and aspirations. She also highlighted how to effectively communicate transferable skills through storytelling, especially in interviews, and stressed the importance of maintaining a professional digital footprint. Members were introduced to career exploration tools like O*NET and participated in interactive discussions and reflection exercises throughout the session. In addition, Professor Massey shared insights on career opportunities in Alabama, including emerging career paths, remote work options, and the state’s affordability and quality of life. She also encouraged students to engage in workforce development and advocacy initiatives. Overall, the meeting provided valuable guidance and set a strong foundation for members’ professional growth this semester.

Zoe’ Kelsey



On February 17, 2026, SHRM students attended an engaging session on Interview Success Strategies for HR Students led by Dr. Elizabeth Bowden of Athens State University. Drawing on over 26 years of experience, Dr. Bowden shared practical advice to help students confidently prepare for interviews and stand out to employers. She emphasized that success comes from preparation, professionalism, and authentic connection—not just a strong resume. Key takeaways included the importance of researching organizations, communicating skills effectively, and using the STAR method to answer behavioral questions. Students were encouraged to present themselves professionally, whether in person or virtually, and to avoid common missteps such as lack of engagement or preparation. Dr. Bowden also highlighted the value of sending a timely thank-you email and approaching salary discussions strategically. Additional tips included developing an elevator pitch, leveraging tools like LinkedIn and Handshake, and managing interview anxiety. Overall, the session equipped students with the confidence and tools needed to succeed in today’s competitive job market.

Kim Wilcox



ATSU SHRM’s third chapter meeting featured Davani Buckley, SPHR, SHRM-SCP, GPHR, who presented “Navigating the Job Market.” The session provided practical tips to help members approach interviews, evaluate job offers, and navigate the hiring process. Buckley emphasized understanding total compensation—including salary, benefits, and PTO—and encouraged students to establish a salary range and discuss pay early. She also highlighted that interviews are a two-way process, urging candidates to ask questions and remain authentic. She concluded with key advice on negotiation, encouraging students to be realistic, communicate clearly, and consider the full offer, not just base salary. Overall, the session equipped members with valuable tools and confidence for their job search.

Zoe’ Kelsey

Meet the 2026-2027 Executive Board

**Congratulations to the newly
elected executive board for the
2026-2027 school year!**



Sharifah Abubaker
President



Zoe' Kelsey
Vice President



Hannah Edmonds
Director of SHRM Merit Award



Heather McCray
Director of Communications &
Chapter Information Systems



Alena Vajukic
Director of Student Relations



Kimberly Wilcox
Secretary



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Spring Graduates



Congratulations

**The Athens State University
SHRM Student Chapter would like to
congratulate the graduating
class of 2026!**



ATHENS STATE
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Upcoming Events



SHRM26
ORLANDO, FL
JUNE 16 - 19, 2026

**CONNECT, LEARN,
AND LEAD FORWARD.**

*Join us in Orlando at the world's
largest HR conference.*

SHRM National Conference in Orlando, FL (June 16 - 19, 2026)

Artificial intelligence, pay transparency, talent shortages, and deep transformations in organizational culture are rewriting the rules of work. Keeping up won't cut it—you need to lead.

SHRM26 is where you start. This is your front-row seat to the future of HR—packed with cutting-edge insights from top experts and peers facing the same challenges. From AI breakthroughs and evolving regulations to real-world strategies for navigating a rapidly changing workforce, SHRM26 delivers the clarity and tools you need to make informed decisions—and drive serious impact.

Join SHRM's global HR community and connect with people who get it. Share real experiences, dive into bold conversations, swap strategies, and spark ideas with peers who understand the pressures and possibilities.

This is your moment to elevate your HR expertise, future-proof your career, and position yourself as a leader in shaping the future of work. Own your moment.

ALSHRM State Conference in Fairhope, AL (August 10-12, 2026)

Attendees of this year's ALSHRM Conference will have the opportunity to engage in dynamic HR learning sessions, expand their professional networks, and invest in their continued development as industry leaders. HR professionals and industry experts will share their knowledge and insights on a wide range of relevant topics, including leadership, compliance, workplace culture, and emerging HR trends. These sessions will foster meaningful dialogue, encourage the exchange of ideas, and provide practical takeaways that attendees can bring back to their organizations. In addition to its educational focus, the conference will also emphasize giving back through a meaningful service project supporting Rise Against Hunger, reinforcing the profession's commitment to both organizational success and community impact.



Connect with HR Professionals Through North Alabama SHRM (NASHRM)

Do you live or work in North Alabama? Are you an HR professional, student, or someone interested in human resources, leadership, or organizational development? The North Alabama Chapter of the Society for Human Resource Management (NASHRM) invites you to get involved and grow within a vibrant professional community.

As a local affiliate of Society for Human Resource Management, NASHRM is dedicated to promoting excellence in the HR field by offering a wide variety of professional development opportunities and a forum for sharing ideas and experiences. Members have the opportunity to connect through local events, engage with knowledgeable speakers, and gain practical insights into today's workplace challenges and trends. Whether you are new to HR or a seasoned professional, NASHRM provides a supportive environment focused on accountability, involvement, diversity, and high performance. It's a place to build meaningful connections, expand your knowledge, and stay aligned with the evolving landscape of human resources.

Don't miss your opportunity to get involved—grow your skills, strengthen your network, and be part of a community committed to advancing the HR profession. Follow NASHRM on LinkedIn to stay up to date on upcoming meetings and events.



PURSUE YOUR PURPOSE

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**SHRM Membership +
Your Local Chapter Is the
PERFECT COMBINATION.**



Networking & leadership
opportunities



Career development



Over \$13,000 worth of
tools and resources

BEGIN YOUR JOURNEY



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**Zoe' Kelsey, Editor
Kimberly Wilcox, Editor**