

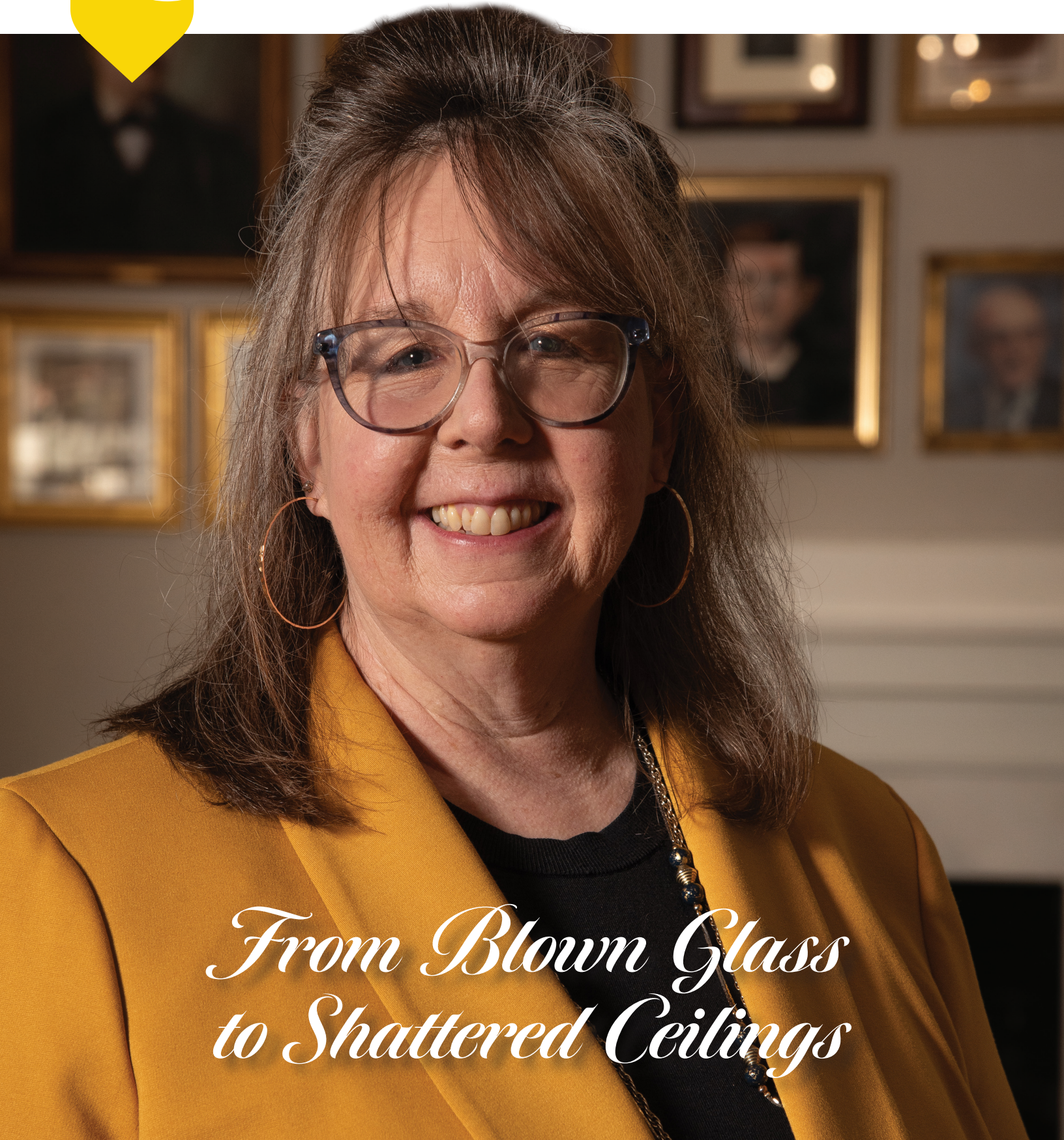
THE

# COLUMN

ATHENS STATE  
UNIVERSITY

ATHENS.EDU

WINTER 2025



*From Blown Glass  
to Shattered Ceilings*



## 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.*

## CONTACT US

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## CONNECT WITH US







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# *Change – The Only Constant*

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**Dear Alumni and Friends of Athens State University:**

There is an inevitability in life that change occurs, sometimes suddenly, while other times it is a gradual, almost unnoticeable process. As an institution of higher learning for over 200 years, Athens State has certainly seen the result of change, sometimes for the better, and at other times, for the worse. This edition of *The Column* highlights one of the positive aspects of change – a change in leadership that will usher the University into its third century of existence..

In 1975, with our very survival on the line, State Representative Tommy Carter stepped to the forefront and led an effort that would result in the private Methodist college becoming a part of the Alabama State Higher Education System, earning him the title of “Modern Day Founder” of Athens State. Sadly, as this version of *The Column* was going to press, Tommy passed away on November 3, 2024, 23 days shy of his 90th birthday. His leadership along with that of many others has paved the way for an institution that continues to prosper.

On May 17, 2024, Dr. Catherine Wehlburg became the 39th president of Athens State University, specifically the third permanent (not interim) woman to serve in this capacity and the most recent since Mary Norman Moore McCoy, the 26th president whose term ended in 1930. In that 94-year time span, these United States of America have witnessed a Great Depression, a World War, multiple other conflicts in various parts of the world, as well as innumerable other hardships. Like many other colleges and universities nationwide, Athens State was affected by these upheavals, some more directly than others.

Joining President Wehlburg as she shares her vision of the future Athens State is Dr. Alyson Gill, who became Provost July 1, 2024. Under their capable leadership, Athens State is poised to take the necessary steps that will lead us down a prosperous path. Change will come. Nonetheless, with resiliency as our watchword and determination as our course, we have changed innumerable lives and will continue to do so.

Keith Ferguson, Ph.D.  
*Vice President for University Advancement*





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### **DR. ALYSON GILL NAMED PROVOST & VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND STUDENT SERVICES**

**Dr.** Alyson Gill has joined Athens State University as the institution's Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Student Services. She was selected after a nationwide search which included virtual interviews and on-campus forums with faculty, staff, and students.

Dr. Gill has served in higher education leadership since 2015, first as Associate Provost for Instructional Innovation at a large, public, land-grant institution, then as Provost at two private colleges. Prior to moving into an administrative role, she was a tenured faculty member in Art History and the founding director for the Center for Digital Initiatives at Arkansas State University.

From 2015-18, she served as Associate Provost for Instructional Innovation and Associate Professor, Art History at University of Massachusetts, Amherst where she served as a catalyst for instructional innovation and technology initiatives by building and sustaining relationships with faculty, chairs, and deans around strategies and programming. While at UMass, she also played an advocacy role on behalf of faculty and students in campus matters related to instructional innovations, pedagogical advancements, and teaching and learning with technology, working closely with academic units to ensure that their needs were incorporated into undergraduate and graduate seated and online course delivery and instructional technology plans.

Gill earned her Ph.D. in History from the University of Memphis, and an M.A. in Art History specializing in Greek architecture from University of California, Irvine. Her dissertation topic focused on Greek baths and the gendered use of space in Classical antiquity, and this work brought her to Greece where she worked at the Ohio State University excavations at Isthmia and later returned on a Fulbright grant to live in Athens. She has been awarded several grants through the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) including two Digital Humanities Start-Up grants: Ashes2Art (2007) and Dangerous Embodiments (2014-17), and co-directed two NEH Advanced Topics

in the Digital Humanities Summer Institutes, "Humanities Heritage 3D Visualizations" (2012) and "Advanced Challenges in Theory and Practice in 3D Modeling of Cultural Heritage Sites" (2015-16).

"Dr. Gill brings an impressive career in higher education and a forward-thinking approach to Athens State University," said Dr. Catherine Wehlburg, President of Athens State. "Her focus on student success, teaching and learning quality, and academic innovation make her the right choice for this role. I look forward to working with her to build on our successes and opportunities."

"I am thrilled to be joining the Athens State University community at this pivotal point in the University's history and to serve on the leadership team," stated Dr. Alyson Gill. "Athens State is delivering on its promise to empower and support students and is positioned to grow and flourish over the coming years. The deep love that the community has for the University is evident everywhere you go, and I knew from the first moment that I stepped foot on campus that I wanted to be part of that story."

Gill and her husband have four daughters, and their most recent addition to the family is a Goldendoodle puppy (Lucy) who joins their 6-year-old Goldendoodle Katie. Dr. Gill began her duties on July 1. ■





## GIVING DAY RAISES OVER \$44,000

Athens State University hosted its 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Giving Day on August 6 and raised \$44,935 to support student programs and campus projects, including a \$25,000 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. 73 donors contributed to the cause this year.

"Supporting Athens State University and its students is our main focus - the event's success showed that we can do great things when we unite to achieve a single goal," said Chelsea Green, Donor Relations Officer. "None of this would be possible without the generosity of our community of donors. Thank you to everyone who participated in this year's Athenian Giving Day."

Learn more about all our areas for giving at [www.athens.edu/give](http://www.athens.edu/give).

## ATHENS STATE ACCEPTED AS MEMBER OF SIGMA THETA TAU HONOR SOCIETY OF NURSING

**T**he University has been accepted as a new member of the Sigma Theta Tau Honor Society of Nursing (Sigma) as its Beta Phi At-Large chapter, which is in conjunction with the University of Alabama in Huntsville. Sigma is an international community of nurses,

dedicated to the advancement of knowledge, teaching, learning, and service through the cultivation of communities of practice, education, and research. It is the only international honor society for nurses.

Founded in 1922 by six nursing students, Sigma has more than 100,000 active members and 600 chapters at institutions of higher education and healthcare partners from Armenia, Australia, and Botswana to Thailand, the United States, and Wales. Sigma members include clinical nurses and administrators, academic nurse educators and researchers, policymakers, entrepreneurs, and others working to fulfill the organization's vision of connected, empowered nurse leaders transforming global healthcare.

"Athens State University is honored and privileged to be officially associated with the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing (Sigma), Beta Phi At-Large Chapter," said Dr. Mark Reynolds, Chief Nurse Administrator and Assistant Professor of Nursing.

"Sigma is a nursing organization that recognizes academic achievement, encourages leadership, and promotes high professional standards. The organization's mission is to develop nurse leaders anywhere to improve healthcare everywhere. This association will be an asset for our Bachelor of Science in Nursing students and we look forward to



inducting eligible students into this prestigious organization. Personally, as a member of Sigma since 2007, I have been involved in various research collaboratives, philanthropic missions, and leadership development programs which are the essence of nursing leadership and nursing practice."

Athens State inducted its first class of Sigma members this fall. For more information about Sigma, please visit [sigmanursing.org](http://sigmanursing.org). ■

### ATHENS STATE OPENS NEW CYBERSECURITY LAB

On September 16, Athens State celebrated the grand opening of its new CyberLab, a cutting-edge cybersecurity facility designed to equip students with the skills and knowledge needed to tackle the ever-evolving challenges of the digital world. The Alabama Legislature provided a \$250,000 grant to help fund the lab, initiating

an investment in the University's cybersecurity education, research, and innovation. The grand opening celebration included a ribbon-cutting ceremony, lab tours, and demonstrations of the lab's capabilities. Guests had the opportunity to meet with faculty and students, learn about the university's cybersecurity programs, and discuss the critical role of cybersecurity in today's world.

The CyberLab, located in Waters Hall, is a testament to the institution's commitment to staying at the forefront of technology and preparing the next generation of cybersecurity professionals. The lab is equipped with the latest tools and technologies, offering students hands-on experience in areas such as ethical hacking, digital forensics, network security, and cyber threat analysis.

"The lab will provide students and faculty a secure and isolated environment where they may safely employ cybersecurity tools, preventing interaction with systems external to those installed in the lab," said Dr. Adam Lewis, Associate Professor of Computer Science and Program Coordinator for Computer Science and Information Technology. "Students will engage in cybersecurity exercises, such as Red Team-Blue Team cyberwarfare mock drills, among many more exciting experiments."

The lab will also serve as a hub for research and collaboration,





bringing together students, faculty, and industry professionals to explore innovative solutions to cybersecurity issues. Athens State has established Learning Partnerships with leading cybersecurity companies such as Torch and Colsa, and engages in industry partnerships through the Program Advisory Board. Athens State aims to utilize these partnerships to help students learn and develop best practices and cutting-edge strategies in the field.

“The acquisition of the new Athens State CyberLab exceedingly elates the faculty of the Mathematical, Computer, and Natural Sciences Department (MCNS),” said Dr. Ronald Merritt, Chair of MCNS. The CyberLab is part of Athens State University’s broader initiative to expand its STEM offerings and provide students with the education and training necessary to succeed in high-demand fields. With the opening of this lab, the university reaffirms its commitment to

fostering innovation, supporting economic growth, and preparing students to meet the challenges of the 21st century. ■

### **BETTY RUTH-OLIVER RECEIVES LIFE OF SERVICE AWARD**

**T**he Corporation for National and Community Service (AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors Agency) has presented Betty Ruth-Oliver with its Life of Service Award. This award honors individuals with over 20 years of service in promoting older adult volunteerism.

Betty has over 40 years dedicated to serving older adults and has been a strong advocate in Congress and her home state's legislature. She serves as President of the National Association of RSVP Directors (NARSVPD) and President of the Alabama Association of

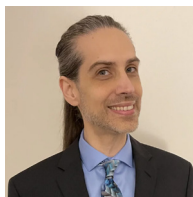
RSVP Directors. Her extensive contributions include serving on the Alabama Department of Senior Services Board of Directors and as a delegate to the White House Conference on Aging in 1995 and 2005. Currently, she serves on the Governor’s Office of Volunteer Services Alabama State Service Commission. She has led efforts to ensure meaningful volunteer opportunities for older adults and cultivated ethical leaders in the community. Embodying a life of service, her leadership and advocacy have cultivated a community of ethical leaders committed to meaningful volunteer opportunities for older adults.

Betty Ruth-Oliver graduated from Athens State in 1982 with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration. She then earned a Master of Science in Business Administration in 1986 from another university in Alabama. ■

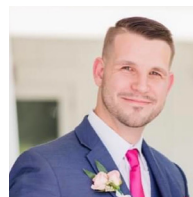
### **NEW FACULTY MEMBERS FOR FALL 2024:**



**Danielle Chouinard**  
*Access and User Experience Librarian*



**Dr. Kevin Kelleher**  
*Assistant Professor of Music Industry Studies*



**Michael Phillips**  
*Assistant Professor of Accounting*



**Tammy Clemmons**  
*Assistant Professor of Nursing*



**Dr. Kendra Lee**  
*Assistant Professor of Acquisition & Contract Management*



**Dr. Jason Watkins**  
*Associate Professor of Chemistry*





# Residence Hall Opens at the Alabama Center for the Arts

On August 12, Calhoun Community College and Athens State University welcomed Fine Arts students for their first official move-in day at the brand-new Alabama Center for the Arts (ACA) residence hall apartments in downtown Decatur. This historic milestone marks the institutions' commitment to providing accessible education to the community through their ever-growing partnership.

According to Kim Parker, Calhoun's Dean of Fine Arts, the three-story, 43,474-square-foot building features 49 ADA-compliant apartments, which are evenly split between Calhoun and Athens State. A variety of living options are available for students, including 11 studios, 19 one-bedroom, and 19 two-bedroom units, accommodating a total of 68 beds.

Dr. Jimmy Hodges, President of Calhoun Community College, expressed his enthusiasm about the new residence hall apartments:

"This residence hall is a game-changer not only for the ACA from a recruiting standpoint but most importantly for our students who will occupy these apartments," he said. "This is a significant step forward in providing a full college experience, as the ACA is within walking distance of the residence halls. Calhoun and Athens State offer elite courses in Fine Arts, and we've added top-notch living facilities, which our students have asked for, and we are so grateful to say we have delivered."

"This upcoming academic year feels different," commented Parker. "Here at the ACA, we feel like we are finally accomplishing the goals set for this academic facility during its early stages, which was to provide a local Arts School experience for students. I couldn't be any happier to see all of the faces as they move into their new apartment homes."

The ACA residence hall apartments are a first-of-its-kind project, a joint effort between Calhoun, Athens State, and Alabama Senator Arthur

Orr. It was developed primarily for students seeking art degrees through Calhoun or Athens State at the ACA. Orr envisioned the living space, and the two institutions worked together to turn this vision into a residence hall proposal. Senator Orr submitted the proposal to Governor Ivey in January 2020, and upon review, Governor Ivey approved \$15 million in funding through the Public School and College Authority (PSCA) Bond issue, which was established to help fund construction, safety improvements, and technology upgrades to Alabama's public schools. A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held to celebrate the facility's completion on June 4.

"The main goals and focus for the ACA are to attract more students and increase enrollment, and this will help us to do just that," Orr said.

Each apartment is equipped with modern amenities such as a refrigerator, stove/oven, microwave, dishwasher, washer





and dryer, and high-speed internet with Wi-Fi access. The building includes a post office, leasing office, and computer study labs on all three floors. Residents can enjoy common areas throughout the facility, as well as access to a fenced courtyard for outdoor gatherings. Security measures include keyless entry access cards and video surveillance at all exterior entrances and exits.

Additionally, a 250-mph-rated storm shelter is located on the first floor for resident safety during inclement weather.

"Athens State is thrilled to collaborate with Calhoun Community College to create a living/learning environment for our arts and theatre students," said Dr. Catherine Wehlburg, President at Athens State University. "This is a

new era of opportunity for our students – our students will not just reside at the new ACA Residence Hall, they will thrive as they immerse themselves in a community that is dedicated to fostering their talents and enriching our vibrant, artistic educational programs!" ■



## Visit Studio 310 at Lowe Mill!

Studio 310 is designed to be a creative space for students at the Alabama Center for the Arts to plan, design, collaborate, and display their artwork. It also hosts occasional Open Studio Nights that allow students, faculty, and alumni from the Alabama Center for the Arts the opportunity to publically display their artwork.

Lowe Mill ARTS & Entertainment is the largest privately owned arts facility in the United States. With a focus on visual arts, this huge historic factory building has been redeveloped into 152 working studios for over 200 artists and makers, 7 galleries, a theatre, community garden, and performance venues.



# From Blown Glass to Shattered Ceilings

**How Dr. Catherine Wehlburg is Crafting a Vision of Sustainable Growth by Looking "Onward Ever"**

By: Hannah Coffin

**Dr.** Catherine Wehlburg sits in her office in Athens after a long day of phone calls and meetings, where she strategizes her next steps to help Athens State students succeed and thrive. Just outside her office in the hall is the portrait of another renowned Athens State president, Madame Childs.

"There are 14 state four-year [colleges] in Alabama, and I am currently the only female president," Dr. Catherine Wehlburg said of her position. "Madame Childs' portrait sits right outside my office, and it's quite a stern portrait," Wehlburg laughed. "She was university president during the Civil War... knowing I'm the third female president is empowering."

For many women, the legacy of being the first female president in about a century at a historically all women's college would be daunting, but Wehlburg is well-versed in the ways of higher education.

Dr. Wehlburg attended the University of Florida for her undergraduate and graduate degrees, receiving both her

Ph.D. and M.Ed. in Educational Psychology. During her time there, she was encouraged to teach a course on child development, and through the process, developed a love of education and its systems. After having leadership roles at Stephens College, Texas Christian University, and Marymount University, Dr. Wehlburg came to Athens State as provost in 2021, then became interim president in the beginning of 2023 after the previous president announced his retirement. She was named president of the University in May 2024.

Wehlburg's interest in higher education is in her blood, as her father was a professor and her mother had a law degree. But it's clear that education isn't the only thing that her parents instilled in her.

"Growing up, learning how to ride a bike, when I would fall, both of my parents were the type of people to say 'Get up and try it again,'" Dr. Wehlburg said. "I've seen my parents' encouragement in me to learn from failure play out again and again in my life."







*Dr. Catherine Wehlburg, 39th President of Athens State*





Like her parents instilled in her, Wehlburg realized that in order to make strides and achieve real change, you have to take calculated risks. "If a goal is easily achieved, that's more of an agenda than a strategic plan!" Wehlburg laughed. "If you ever fall short of the plan, or if you fail, you learn from it. And you pick yourselves up and you try it again in a different way. All things that are worth doing are difficult, otherwise everyone would be doing it. It's frustrating to learn something new, but you practice, again and again," Wehlburg said.

"Did you know I do glass blowing?" Dr. Wehlburg asked. She explained that when you learn glass blowing, you have to accept failure. "You

break a lot of glass before you arrive at the final piece, and that is not a bad thing. It can be frustrating, but it's how you grow and learn. That is true of any individual, any department, and certainly any institution."

Dr. Wehlburg explained that she is focusing her efforts and research into understanding how to take

**“ If a goal is easily achieved, that’s more of an agenda than a strategic plan. ”**

Athens State from its current position to new heights in a responsible, deliberate way.

"The strategic plan for Athens State is going to be targeted," Dr. Wehlburg said. "We need to start small, and add as we go along. Focusing on fewer things at a time means that those items get the deliberate effort they deserve... If something is important enough," she says, "you keep working at it."

And "important" is exactly how Dr. Wehlburg considers Athens State. As one of two upper division schools nationally, she takes her responsibility of fostering a suitable learning environment at Athens State very seriously.



“What makes Athens State special is what we can offer our students,” Wehlburg said. “And we can offer them flexibility and understanding.”

Wehlburg emphasized that she desires to keep Athens State a place where students from all walks of life can learn and thrive. She believes that by focusing on developing a staff that has a similar educational background to their students, that creates an environment of empathy and understanding amongst faculty and students alike.

Roy Nagle is one such student-turned-teacher who was positively impacted by Athens State’s ability to cater to his unique situation, and place him in an academic environment where he could thrive. Roy went from a 37-year career on the railroad, to a masters in History, and will soon be an adjunct professor at Athens State.

“Getting a degree is absolutely helpful and sometimes totally life changing,” Dr. Wehlburg said. “Many of our students can go on to pursue careers that they otherwise wouldn’t. Many of our students get a second chance at a college education, or sometimes they’ll become the first in their family to get a college education.”



The reality of Athens State students being older than the normal median college age (an Athens State student’s average age is about 30 years old) means that there is an amplified sense of community and camaraderie around campus. This atmosphere creates mutual encouragement, and the lived experience of being an Athens State student compels some alumni to become professors there as well.

“That’s something I’ve always loved about this university,” Dr. Wehlburg said. “Athens State morphs to be a better version of what it was before for its students. I believe we’re in another moment in time where we are being called to change. As the rate of 18-year-olds attending college declines, we will continue to embrace adult learners and college students. We focus on

transfer students, and we believe that this is what is needed right now and is what our college is supposed to be.”

Referencing a line in the alma mater, Dr. Wehlburg explained that “Onward Ever” is the name of her strategic plan. She recognizes that meaningful change will require risk. Not unlike glass-blowing, Dr. Wehlburg says that all missteps are productive and can be learned from.

But all failure or setback can be deeply important if you learn from it, try again and keep “Onward Ever.”

“This is how we will move forward to continue to meet the needs of our students, our community, and our state,” Dr. Wehlburg said of her strategic plan. She went on to explain that Athens State is poised to embrace this next chapter of its history. It is a university that has never shied away from progress or change in the name of growth for its students, and that attitude will not end with Dr. Wehlburg as its president. That sentiment, “Onward Ever,” is sure to thrive under her leadership. ■





## Brown Hall Revitalization Under Way

Athens State University held a “groundbreaking” ceremony on May 14 to kick off the renovation of Brown Hall.

This iconic, columned three-story building that stands directly behind Founders Hall, was constructed in

1912 and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986. It is the second oldest building on the Athens State campus behind Founders Hall. Brown Hall is named in honor of Ms. Florence Brown, the 21-year-old staff member who remained with young women on campus who were too ill to travel as a result of the 1909 typhoid epidemic that claimed the lives of 15 students. Ms. Brown also succumbed to the epidemic on November 5, 1909.

The vision for the future of Brown Hall is to transform the building into a space for the University’s growing

health-focused academic programs, including Health Science, Health Science Management, Healthcare Management, Biology, Psychology, Behavioral Sciences, and Nursing. Brown Hall was built for students in honor of a woman who gave her life in service to students – Athens State wants to renew that mission and utilize Brown Hall to serve students once again.

The expected renovation completion date is Spring 2025. ■







# Athens State Breaks Ground on Nazaretian Alumni House & Welcome Center

A groundbreaking ceremony was held on June 20 to celebrate the beginning of construction on the campus' new Nazaretian Alumni House & Welcome Center. The Center, complete with historical artifacts, conference areas, and administrative offices, will house the University's Office of Alumni Affairs and serve as a welcome center for alumni and campus visitors.

The Alumni House will be named after Dr. Angeline (Angie) Nazaretian, a beloved individual who spent 42 years in service to the Athens State campus, first as chair of the Physical Education Department beginning in 1958, and later as Director of Alumni Affairs, retiring in 2000. She 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, Dr. Nazaretian spent her time ensuring that newcomers felt right at home through her

memorable flower bouquets and handwritten notes.

Visitors recall Dr. Nazaretian on the porch of her house, on the southwest corner of campus, waving at passersby and inviting them to come sit a spell. The original white Victorian cottage was built for Fortunatus S. Wood around 1902. Later in the 1920s, it was used by Henri Fusch Sr. as a school for boys known as Athens Academy. The long room in the back of the home was used as classroom space, and Mr. Fusch lived in the front. Years passed and the home exchanged hands, eventually sold to Dr. Nazaretian by the Hightower family in December 1973. Athens State University took ownership of the home in June 2014 when Dr. Nazaretian entered a full-time care facility. She passed away on March 17, 2019.

"We are going to build this welcome center to help carry on the work that Dr. Nazaretian did," said Dr. Catherine Wehlburg, President of Athens State University. "This facility will support our students and serve as a space to welcome our alumni back to campus where

they know that they are part of our past, certainly, but they are also very much a part of our future."

"Miss 'N' made an impact for so many students at this institution," said Betty Ruth Oliver, Athens State Alumni Association Board Member. "We would have students who wouldn't have money for food, students who didn't know where their next meal was coming from, but Miss 'N' was always able to find that student and help them. Through all of her years here, she was always here for our students and we were thankful for what she was doing."

The decision was made to raze the existing Nazaretian House and move forward with constructing a new facility due to the similarity in costs between renovating the original facility and building a new one. The new Alumni House will be a replica of the former Nazaretian House and will cost \$1,150,000 to complete. Construction will begin immediately and is expected to be completed in June 2025.

"We're excited about this project," said State Representative Danny Crawford. "Dr. 'N' was an icon of Athens College and Athens State. This institution is so important to our community, sort of the crown jewel of our community, and projects like this will keep that going." ■





# STEM MADE FUN

## *Athens State's Regional Inservice Center Provides Curriculum Kits to Students and Teachers Across Alabama*

By: Hannah Coffin

The Regional Inservice Center (RIC) at Athens State is instrumental in granting access to students across the state with relevant, hands-on educational material, particularly in science and math.

The primary way they accomplish this is through their Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI) math or science kits. Dr. Brad Lewis, the Director of Athens State University Regional Inservice Education Center, said that these kits are specialized depending on the grade and subject and create opportunities for students to engage in math and science in practical ways. The kits are assembled at the RIC and then distributed throughout the state. Each kit is stocked with the tools teachers need to offer their students hands-on learning activities.

"Many school districts rely on AMSTI Science kits to provide the

curriculum and hands-on activities that match the Alabama Course of Study (COS) for each grade," Dr. Lewis said. "The math kits help reinforce concepts covered in the math COS. AMSTI plays a vital role in everyday math and science instruction for many Alabama schools. AMSTI also provides specific professional development sessions to enhance teacher knowledge and helps teachers to effectively utilize kits with lesson plan development."

The impact of these kits is felt in schools and their extended communities.

Suzanne Mizell graduated from Athens State in 2003 with a Bachelor of Science in Education. Her concentration is in mathematics and chemistry. Today, she teaches tenth grade chemistry at Hartselle High School.

"I have been using the AMSTI science kits for about 18 years,"

said Mizell. "They provide the students with the ability to see and learn chemistry in a way that a textbook cannot teach them." Mizell uses the science kits to supplement her instruction. After she teaches a concept, she allows her students to do experiments using the kits, which offers them hands-on learning experience and furthers their understanding of abstract concepts. The kits are supplied with everything the students need to conduct labs that coincide with their COS.

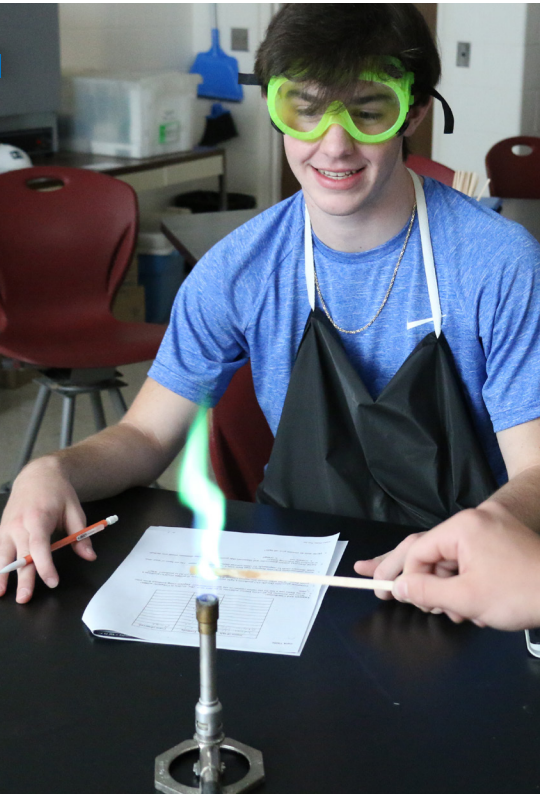
"Without the kits, my students would have no way of actually seeing chemistry happen before their eyes," she shared.

Dr. Lewis explained that the purpose of the RIC is to offer professional development for all K-12 teachers and administrators. He shared that throughout the years, the RIC and AMSTI have made a huge impact on teacher learning and instruction.



Phillip Jarmon teaches sixth grade at Athens Middle School. He graduated from Athens State in 2003 with a Bachelor of Science in Education and enjoys the continuing education courses that the RIC offers to local educators.

“The opportunity to further my skills and access resources like the



AMSTI kits strengthens the work I do in the classroom,” shared Jarmon.

Students and educators across the state of Alabama are benefitting from the work at Athens State’s Regional Inservice Center through its commitment to offer growth opportunities to teachers which ensures the success of all students.

“As a former elementary school principal, I remember the excitement in the classroom when students received kit materials,” Dr. Lewis said. “I also remember students using tape measures and yardsticks to measure distances and converting it to fractions. They had a lot of fun figuring it out. Students need time to get up and move and use hands-on items to really master the learning standards.”

When looking toward the future, Dr. Lewis emphasized that teacher learning is paramount to student success. If teachers have the resources they need to teach



effectively, their students are more likely to flourish and thrive.

Dr. Lewis explained that many people in the community are not aware of what RIC can provide. “Teaching is a tough business and has become more challenging since COVID,” Dr. Lewis said. “Teachers need more support and can help each other by collaborating and building lessons and activities together. We cannot expect student learning to improve unless we improve teacher learning.” ■





## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT:

# DAVID McCAULLEY



Athens State University was accepted as member of the Alpha Sigma Lambda Honor Society as its Upsilon Kappa chapter in August of 2023. Alpha Sigma Lambda is recognized as the official honor society for adult learners.

David McCaulley is the first Athens State student to receive a scholarship from Alpha Sigma Lambda. He is from Hayden, Alabama, and will be a first-generation college graduate. McCaulley is a devoted father to three beautiful daughters and a brother to five other siblings. He shared that his life is an enriching blend of work, academia, and family.

McCaulley is a senior majoring in biology and minoring in psychology,

behavioral science, and education. He plans to become a high school biology teacher or university professor with the aspiration to "ignite young minds with the wonders of biology."

Through leadership born of effort, both scholastically and fraternally, Alpha Sigma Lambda inspires its candidates to give of their strengths to their fellow students and communities through their academic achievements.

"Most of our adult learners are juggling school work, families, and careers, yet they still maintain a high level of academic achievement," said Felicia Mucci, Director of Athens State's Adult Learner Services Office. "We are so excited to bring Alpha

Sigma Lambda to our campus. It is a great way to celebrate and acknowledge our adult learners."

This new honor society coincides with Athens State's emphasis on adult learning and helping adult students balance their education with the demands of work and family. The University's Adult Learner Services Office (ALSO) helps these students finish their degrees by assessing their experience and knowledge and applying it as college credit. By conducting a Prior Learning Assessment, learning attained outside the classroom such as work, seminars, training programs, military education, and certification programs, can be counted toward a student's degree.

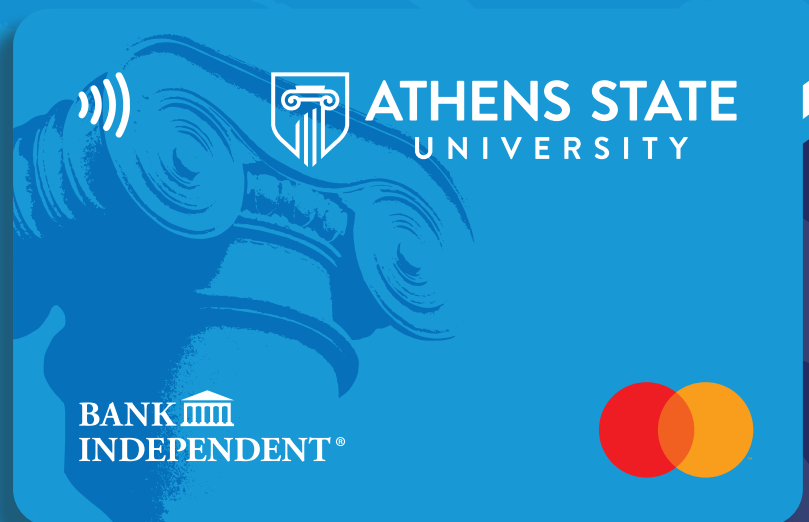
"I firmly believe in the power of education and the doors it can open, and I am committed to using my knowledge to make a difference in the lives of others," shared McCaulley.

Athens State will continue supporting its students through organizations like Alpha Sigma Lambda and ALSO because education paves the way to a brighter future for the student and produces a ripple effect in the whole family, community, and beyond. ■



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# CLASS NOTES

MAY - OCT 2024

## Current Students

- Dalton Thrasher started an internship at the Better Business Bureau as their Operations and Marketing Intern.

## Class of 2024

- Rebecca Nix began teaching Pre-K at Cotaco School in Somerville, Alabama.

## Class of 2022

- Shannon Casiday has been hired as Sheffield High School's new head softball coach.

## Class of 2021

- Jessica Tucker began teaching 1st grade at Cotaco School in Somerville, Alabama.

## Class of 2020

- Heidi Barnes has been inducted into the Limestone County Sports Hall of Fame.
- Melanie Curits started a new position as a Human Resources Analyst at Redstone Federal Credit Union.

## Class of 2019

- Morganne Weaver was promoted to Project Coordinator at CG Jones Construction.

## Class of 2017

- Braeden Netherton has been named the new head coach of the Bob Jones softball program.

## Class of 2016

- Heather Juron was featured in Huntsville Business Journal's "Top 40 Under 40."

- Shelby Smith was promoted to Senior Property Manager at COPT Defense Properties.

## Class of 2015

- Brooke P. Alexander was featured in an article by Oxford Magazine.
- Chris Allen was named Huntsville Market President of Southern States Bank.
- Camron Williams became a patrol officer in Hartselle.

## Class of 2013

- Shunda Willis started a new job as a Management Analyst with the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) Team for the Department of Veterans Affairs in Washington DC.

## Class of 2012

- Lisa Strong started a new position as the Talent Acquisition Specialist at Mesa Associates.

## Class of 2011

- Ashley Hargrove was featured in the IndieWrap and CaliPost for her upcoming film, *Marriage Bites*.

## Class of 2006

- Laura Beth Quick is currently the acting civilian deputy to the commander of the U.S. Army Engineering and Support Center, Huntsville.
- Justin White was featured in an article in The Daily News Journal.

## Class of 2004

- Dr. Kerry Donaldson was named the Alabama PTA Principal of the Year.
- Susie Tverberg was named Northwest Shoals Community College's new volleyball coach.
- Bran Skipper, member of the Class of 2004, 2018, and 2023, was featured in a spotlight article by his employer, Phoenix, in Huntsville, AL.

## Class of 2003

- Macy Smith was named "Teacher of the Year" at Journey Middle School.

## Class of 2002

- Erin Coggins started working with Artemis Virtual Academy within the Huntsville City Schools system.
- Kristie Pedigo announced her candidacy for the Scottsboro City School Board, Place 1.

## Class of 2001

- Faron Key was hired as the head coach of Wallace State Community College's men's basketball team.
- M'Shairi Parks was featured in an article by Hville Blast.

## Class of 1999

- Jim McCamy won a second term as the Mayor of Scottsboro, Alabama.

## Class of 1998

- Tina Coan was named the new principal of Phillips High School.
- Jackie Moran was inducted into the Limestone County Sports Hall of Fame.

## Class of 1997

- Lesley Westmoreland Smothers has been named a member of the Morgan County Sports Hall of Fame Class of 2024.

## Class of 1995

- Jamie Coggins retired as the boys' head basketball coach at Sparkman High School and has accepted a teaching and assistant coaching job at Fayetteville High School.

## Class of 1992

- Tiana L. Brook was promoted to Assistant Vice President - Treasury Management at First Southern Bank.
- Cindy Wales recently completed her 30th year in

education and has been named the Assistant Principal at Decatur High School.

## Class of 1989

- Jimmy Bright published "Fat Kat" from Christian Faith Publishing, a delightful story that captures the essence of a simpler time while imparting valuable lessons about trust, commitment, and healthy living.

## Class of 1988

- Chris Whitt was inducted into the Limestone County Sports Hall of Fame.

## Class of 1985

- Russell Fleming recently retired from the state of Georgia as State Coordinator for Services for Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind.

## Class of 1981

- Stan Pylant retired from WHNT in August.

## Class of 1971

- Hubert Chittam was inducted into the Limestone County Sports Hall of Fame.

## Certificate Holders

- Steve Icenogle has been honored with an Honorary Life Member award by SkillsUSA.

Let your fellow Athens State alumni see what you've been up to! Submit your alumni updates at [athens.edu/alumni](https://athens.edu/alumni).



# SAVE THE DATE:

To stay up to date on all upcoming events, visit [athens.edu/events](https://athens.edu/events).



2024-2025  
FIDDLERS CONCERT SERIES  
**KENNY &  
AMANDA SMITH**

7 PM  
JANUARY 16, 2025  
McCandless Hall Auditorium



**INTERNATIONAL  
WOMEN'S DAY**

8 AM  
MARCH 7, 2025  
Sandridge Ballroom



**DR. CATHERINE WEHLBURG'S  
PRESIDENTIAL  
INAUGURATION**

APRIL 23-25, 2025  
More details to come.

## 2024-2025 FIDDLERS CONCERT SERIES (CONT.)

**THE TENNESSEE  
BLUEGRASS BAND**  
MARCH 4



**ACT OF CONGRESS**  
MAY 15



**THE KODY  
NORRIS SHOW**  
JULY 24



**THE  
SELDOM SCENE**  
SEPTEMBER 4







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