



## What's to Come

- Focus Groups
- Four groupings of EL Activities

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO US?

The survey results are in and the QEP Leadership Team is working on possible definitions of Experiential Learning.

When drafted definitions have been prepared, a survey will be sent to faculty to take a vote and provide comments on the definition of Experiential Learning here at Athens State University.

## BLACKBOARD

Everyone has access to the New QEP Blackboard organization. Please visit this site often as we will utilize it as one of the means to communicate with the campus community.

## WHAT DID YOU SAY????

The Initial QEP Survey closed at the end of February and the response was fantastic. Of the 229 students who responded, 61% reported that they had been involved in some form of Experiential Learning in their classes here at Athens State. Faculty responses also reflect a high rate of EL (40 out of 48) in their classes. The category cited most frequently by faculty was the "Assigned project based on self-created content."

This month's highlight of Experiential Learning at Athens State University involves the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program. This program facilitates dialogue and education across profound social differences. Inside-Out courses bring traditional college students and incarcerated students together in jails and prisons for semester-long learning. These courses ignite enthusiasm for learning, help students find their voice, and challenge students to consider what good citizenship requires.

Dr. Vanessa Miller and Dr. Susan Owen from the Behavioral Sciences Department have involved Athens State students in these educational opportunities at the Limestone Correctional Facility (LCF). Both inside and outside students go through an application and interview process before being accepted into the course. Inside students (inmates) do not receive college credit for participating in the course but receive a certificate of completion once they have finished the college level course.

There are many job openings at LCF that our students are equipped for and can be successful in if they choose to pursue this path. Many of the topics and skills learned through this experience will vastly benefit the student's understanding, compassion, and exposure to diversity, mental illness, social and political issues, social stratification, hierarchy, and communication.

Students benefit by gaining first-hand, real-world experience by applying the topics and working with a population of individuals that many in society deem unfit, deviant, and unworthy of attention. Dr. Miller and Dr. Owen believe that this program will be an important component to Athens State students' academic, civic, and professional education.

*I will take a new appreciation for what knowledge I can gain from others with different backgrounds if I will only take the time to step back and listen. Inside/Out has helped me become more accepting and less judgmental of others. I am more apt to see past what someone has done in the past and appreciate where they are and where they are going.*

- Brittany, Outside student

Students contribute, help build, and strengthen the following areas shown to be both lacking and vital to the restorative justice ideals: a) Therapeutic forgiveness, b) Positive mental attitude, c) Opportunities for self-improvement, d) Social interaction, and e) Psychological and moral deterioration in prison. Students can use the skills from this classroom setting when applying for jobs after completing their degree.

## Your Participation is NEEDED!!!

Only a small fraction of faculty and staff (14) have joined a QEP Focus Group!

PLEASE set aside a little bit of your time while working from home to join a Focus Group. You can do this through the Blackboard "New QEP" organization. The categories are based on your interests. Just choose a topic and select at least one of the items posted to that Focus Group, read over it and share your thoughts on it through the group discussion board already set up. Once the conversations get started, the sky is the limit!



# Michael Haney: A Student's Perspective

During the spring 2020 semester at Athens State University, while taking a clinical psychology course with Dr. Miller, I was offered and accepted the opportunity to embark upon a field trip to Roots and Wings (R&W). R&W is a small, private, professional counseling center in Huntsville, Alabama. I participated in two engaging activities, including the "balloon pass" and art therapy.

Along with four other students and a faculty member, we were asked if we would like to participate in a balloon exercise. An enthusiastic, "sure, why not," was the reply I heard. The purpose of this activity was to highlight the difficulty for individuals who suffer from depression and/or anxiety to adaptively utilize cognition and behaviors simultaneously.

I found the semantics of the exercise to be simple, yet highly effective, fun, and engaging.

*"The longer I live, the more I have come to the conclusion, that perhaps more than any other resource available, time may be the most precious of all. Therefore, it is my opinion that when an individual provides others with their time, it is the most noble practice of humility, kindness, generosity, and patience to humankind that an individual can do."*

*-Michael Haney*

The instructions for the balloon exercise were as follows: hit the balloon, pass it around the room to the person beside you, and say whatever comes to mind.

Another activity I participated in was that of art therapy. It was actually relaxing and insightful. For example, during this exercise, not only did I feel fear, disappointment, sadness, happiness, and joy, I was also able to label the timing of these feelings and move adaptively forward with them. The overarching goal with the art therapy is the discovery and adaptation of control vs. non-control, exogenously and endogenously. Ultimately, as an aspiring clinician, I realized that it is never too early to begin exploring who I want to serve, how I want to serve them, leaving a positive impact on the world.

Holistically, I learned a myriad of new things and solidified concepts which I had previously learned during lecture.

*Submitted by Michael Haney*

## Four Experiential Learning Categories Identified @ Athens State

**1. Workplace Learning** – this includes students participating in internships or having the opportunity to job shadow someone in a field that they have interest in making their own career. This also includes when students are partnered with a community sponsor to work closely with them on a specified project and deliver the required results as if they had been hired to perform the tasks at hand.

**2. Learning through Research** – this includes students partnering with faculty members to conduct research in topics that are relevant to the community and/or discipline. These opportunities allow the learner to attain similar skills as those in the workplace learning environment, however more focused in theoretical aspects of a discipline along with hypothesis and proofs.

**3. Hands-On Learning** – the classes that incorporate hands-on projects come in many different forms. These opportunities are completed in a controlled environment, such as a classroom, where a faculty member is present to serve as facilitators and active participants within the student's learning experience.

**4. Learning through Expeditions** – this includes students being able to get out of the classroom and apply their skills and knowledge through activities that may occur during trips that are taken, whether locally, regionally, nationally, or internationally.

## QEP Leadership Team

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Professor Kim Bell, COB Faculty  
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