

## Strategic Plan: 2016 – 2020

Athens State University has identified and compiled a four-year Strategic Plan based on Vision 2020 and input from all University stakeholders. This plan conceptualizes and sets a course for action for the University community to pursue and achieve through 2020. It is the intent of the Strategic Planning Committee that an annual report be given assessing the progress of these plans.

### I. Athens State University will increase its recognition as the institution of choice for a culturally diverse traditional and non-traditional student population.

#### a. A variety of student activities and programs will be offered that will serve to enhance learning and increase the visibility of the University in the community and region.

1. Appropriate extra-curricular programs that engage students and support learning goals will be offered annually. When appropriate, online programs and activities will be designed and offered.
  - The Student Government Association and the Athenian Ambassadors hosted a number of events including a Veteran’s Day program, an African American Read-In for Black History Month, a Financial Literacy workshop, a Cultural Climate Workshop and a Diversity Day event.
2. For any student activities program offered regardless of format, data on program participation, attendance, etc., will be collected so as to gauge the effectiveness of programs and whether they should be continued, revised, or discontinued.
  - Students were asked to provide input through a Student Activities Survey in Fall 2019. Over 130 students participated and this data was used to develop events in response to requests. This instrument will be used annually to ensure that student preferences are in place for activities.
3. Student Activities and programs will be offered at each off-campus University Center every semester.
  - In June 2020, the University hosted a Debt & Long-Term Planning webinar to discuss different financial literacy concepts. Students at all off-campus sites were included in this and subsequent webinars.
  - The COVID-19 pandemic changed our approach to student events. Virtual activities were planned and while we were concerned that this transition would negatively affect attendance, the opposite occurred. Because each event was provided in a virtual setting, students were free to attend without safety concerns. Additionally, these activities were recorded and provided through open access and this allowed expanded viewership.

#### b. Increase the diversity of student body.

1. Enrollment of Hispanic students will, at a minimum meet the State of Alabama percentage for public two-year institutions, and pursue an aspirational goal of 5% of the institution’s total enrollment by 2020.
  - Enrollment of Hispanic students increased from 3.1% for AY2018-19 to 3.4% for AY2019-20.
  - January 2020, University hosted Dr. Mervin Warren a community Lunch & Learn event to focus on Dr. King’s Birthday and Black History Month.
  - March 2020, the University hosted a Diversity Day event featuring Melva Tate who engaged participants in interactive scenarios designed to provide different perspectives to decision-making.
  - July 2020, Athens State hosted a Lunch and Learn live webinar session with Harvard University Fellow from the Center for Public Leadership, Gabrielle Scrimshaw, who addressed diversity and inclusion in the workplace.
  - August 2020, University hosted the MANUP Black Male Mentoring Sessions for Men of Kennis students.

**II. Through a variety of innovative course delivery methods, Athens State will provide market-driven learning opportunities that offer a robust array of adult degree, liberal arts, education and business programs designed to meet the professional and personal needs of both students and employers.**

<p><b>a. Enhance services to strengthen the University’s standing as the Completion College in the State.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ This is a new metric for AY 2018-19. The institution is actively developing 2+2 Pathway agreements with community college partners to aid in recruiting and student understanding of Athens State’s unique ability to help them efficiently finish their undergraduate degree.</li> <li>➤ Four Student Success Coaches were added as part of the Title III grant to strengthen the University’s value as a Completion College and to improve student persistence, retention and completion.</li> </ul>
<p><b>b. Establish quality indicators to strengthen and monitor the instructional quality of all courses, regardless of delivery format.</b></p> <p>1. Provide a variety of support mechanisms (technology, finances, personnel) to facilitate continuous improvement in the instructional quality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The Athens Teaching and Learning Innovation Service (ATLIS) Faculty Commons area opened in December 2019 to provide technology supporting course development, create and manage multimedia content and to improve faculty collaboration. During AY 2019-2020 ATLIS provided a number of face-to-face and online training sessions for all faculty. COVID-19 required the quick transition from F2F classes to online and ATLIS was instrumental in this transition.</li> <li>➤ Full and Part-Time faculty were offered a 4-course certification opportunity through ACUE to support ongoing instructional quality in online and hybrid courses.</li> <li>➤ Ongoing efforts to provide flexible course offerings to students culminated in the development and submission of a \$2.8 million FIPSE grant to support continuous improvement in instructional quality and the student learning experience.</li> </ul>
<p><b>c. Continue to add new programs of study that support the institution’s mission and are based on regional needs analysis.</b></p> <p>1. Each College will examine the feasibility of adding Certificate and Badge options where appropriate to support the employment and professional development needs of students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Student employment was significantly affected by the pandemic. The University created 2 short-term Badge options (Federal Tax Accounting &amp; Forensic Accounting) designed to provide students with skill sets in high-demand areas. Certificate programs in Health Care Administration and Early Childhood Teacher Assistant were also developed.</li> <li>➤ The University successfully achieved a Change in Instructional Role from ACHE allowing the institution to develop additional graduate degree programs to meet student and employer demands.</li> <li>➤ Health professionals from across the region were invited to participate in a Health Summit hosted by the College of Arts &amp; Sciences to provide input on workforce needs and Athens State health programs. Their input led to the revision of health programs and the creation of a new nursing program.</li> </ul> <p>2. Continue to strategically expand programs and activities located at the Alabama Center for the Arts buildings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Total enrollment at the ACA increased by 11% between AY 2018-19 and AY 2019-20.</li> <li>➤ Collaboration between Athens State &amp; Calhoun Community College continued to grow. One of the programmatic results was the development of 2 new Minors; Vocal Music and Music Recording.</li> <li>➤ Plans were created for a joint production within the ACA for a musical theatre show.</li> </ul>

<p>3. Strengthen data-driven strategies that closely monitor and respond to student needs and preferences for course scheduling (traditional, blended, distance learning).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Credit Hour Production in DL courses increased by 2.8%.</li> <li>➤ To ensure high quality teaching and individual student attention, the average class for Fall 2019 was 16.4 students/class. The average Student-to-Faculty Ratio was 14 to 1.</li> </ul>
<p>d. <b>Information literacy</b></p>
<p>1. Information literacy guidelines will be embedded in all Library instruction courses as well as in the EdTPA process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Librarians taught 21 different sections (409 students) of Library instruction courses that included information literacy guidelines.</li> <li>➤ Library faculty were embedded into 302 different courses reaching 4,774 students.</li> </ul>
<p>2. Establish benchmarks for information literacy learning outcomes and monitor student achievement using a systematic assessment instrument</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Student achievement on the Evaluative Bibliography Assignment in the Library Instruction Courses for the college which measures students' information literacy competence for 2018-2019: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 70% of students in GBA 300 made a C or better (AY 2017-2018 = 94%)</li> <li>○ 84% of students in HU321 made a C or better (AY 2017-2018 = 81%)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**III. Athens State University will enhance its fiscal strength and effective planning process.**

<p>a. Develop and execute strategies to improve <b>enrollment</b>, based on demographic projections, by 1% annually through 2020. This annual growth should also result in increases in credit hour production.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Annual enrollment for AY 2019-2020 declined by 3.2%. However, graduate enrollment increased by 5 % and graduate CHP increased by 12%.</li> </ul>
<p>b. Develop, execute and assess <b>retention</b> strategies to maintain retention (Fall to Fall) within 2% of 76% (Fall 2016 data).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Retention rates continued to increase. AY 2017-2018 = 71.6%; AY 2018-2019 = 73.2%; AY 2019-2020 = 78.4%</li> </ul>
<p>c. Maintain <b>persistence</b> (Fall to Spring) rates within 2% of our 82% (4-year average) rate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Persistence rates for Fall 2019 to Spring 2020 were within the goal range at 81%.</li> </ul>
<p>d. Utilize a comprehensive marketing and communications plan that encompasses outreach to prospective students, current students, alumni, current donors, and prospective donors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Social media analysis tools (Facebook/Instagram/Twitter Insights, Google Analytics, and LinkedIn Engagement Tracker, etc.) were used to ensure engagement was maximized. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ GOAL: Increase Facebook followers by minimum 2.5% on an annual basis. ACHIEVED: 2.8%</li> <li>○ GOAL: Increase Twitter followers by minimum 2.5% on an annual basis. ACHIEVED: 3.0%</li> <li>○ GOAL: Increase Instagram followers by minimum 5.0% on an annual basis. ACHIEVED: 29%</li> <li>○ GOAL: Increase LinkedIn followers by minimum 1.5% on an annual basis. ACHIEVED: 4.6%</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p>e. Begin preparations for a 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary capital campaign that will begin in 2017 and conclude with a celebration event in 2022.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Total donations to the Capital Campaign for AY 2019-2020 increased by 32% over AY 2018-2019.</li> </ul>
<p>f. Amount of grants received will be \$100,000 annually.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Total amount of grants received for AY 2019-2020 was \$2,114,000.</li> </ul>

- g. Monitor institutional effectiveness procedures and policies to ensure a clear connection to and support of planning, budgeting, and assessment activities.
  - The University’s Policy Library maintains a rolling review schedule to ensure currency. During 2019-2020, a total of 44 existing policies were reviewed by the policy analyst and the policy owner for accuracy and clarity. In addition, 9 new policies were developed.
  - The AY 2019-2020 Summary of Assessment activities reflected a number of changes implemented based on results. For Academic Programs and Student Support Programs, the largest area of change was in Assessment Methodology. For non-academic Student Support Services and for Administrative Units, the largest area of changes occurred with Revised Services.
  - Planning for 2021 SACSCOC visit required a significant review of annual assessment planning and institutional effectiveness procedures and policies. Assessment activities were found to be in compliance with SACSCOC standards.

**IV. Athens State University will continue to strengthen its governance, partnerships and work with communities.**

- a. Improve offerings targeted to provide support of Athens State programs and attendance at Concert/Lecture events.
  - While the University did host some events in late 2019, most of the planned activities for the 2019-2020 year were cancelled or postponed.

**b. Internal Collaboration**

- 1. Encourage and reward cross-disciplinary collaborations that maximize the collective talent of faculty from across all three colleges and the library.
  - Across the institution, approximately 20 faculty members collaborated with their University peers on scholarly publications and research activities.
  - Art faculty worked with community college peers to develop 2+2 Pathways designed to provide a clear transfer path for students interested in the Art field. An example is the 2+2 pathway between Calhoun and Athens State that takes a student through an A.A.S. degree in Visual Communication all the way through a B.A. in Art with a Computer Graphics Option.
  - Faculty from Education and Business collaborated on a national presentation entitled “How to Streamline and Improve Instructions for Students”.
  - Education and Library faculty jointly developed a peer-reviewed presentation on “Empowering Pre-service teachers to utilize multicultural literature for supporting English language learners”. Presentation was given at the Alabama/Mississippi TESOL Conference.
  - Writing Center Director and faculty from Business, Arts & Sciences and Education jointly developed a panel presentation entitled “The Journey through OER – Faculty Perspectives.”
- 2. Sponsor activities that focus on interdisciplinary opportunities for faculty through program development, research, and professional development.
  - In support of this goal, during 2019-2020 all faculty were involved in the design and implementation of the new Athens Teaching, Learning and Innovation Space (ATLIS). The goal was to improve faculty collaboration on educational technology and the exploration of pedagogy to improve teaching and learning, and to provide enhanced pedagogical and technological training opportunities for faculty. ATLIS opened in late 2019.

**c. External Collaboration**

- 1. Strengthen and cultivate partnerships with the business and industry community for the purpose of listening and meeting their employment needs.
  - In Summer 2020, the University opened the Office of Corporate & Community Relations tasked with working with all University departments to enhance or create and implement partnerships with corporate and business leaders, the non-profit sector, P-12 education, community colleges, and community organizations to strengthen the University’s academic and leadership role in the North Alabama area.
- 2. Develop joint recruiting programs with community college partners that focus on the K-12 audience.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ July 2020, Athens State and Calhoun Community College hosted a “So You Want to be An Accountant” workshop where Student Success Center and faculty members from the Accounting Department delivered a 45-minute online information session to get an in-depth look at accounting and the Accounting Program at Athens State University..</li> </ul>
<p>3. Foster intentional relationships between university faculty and community college faculty.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Athens State and Calhoun faculty and staff jointly developed a Vision, Mission and Strategic Plan for the ACA.</li> <li>➤ Faculty from both institutions now serve on all search committees for any new hires.</li> <li>➤ A shared recruiting and advising staff member was hired to work with students for both institutions.</li> <li>➤ Annual faculty art show was hosted with faculty entries from both institutions.</li> <li>➤ Calhoun’s Chorale (musical performance group) opened membership to Athens State students.</li> <li>➤ University hosted first annual Mentoring in Higher Education for Faculty and Staff event designed to bring colleagues from peer institutions to campus to share best practices and strengthen relationships. Approximately 125 faculty and staff from 18 institutions across the state attended. Plans for the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual event are underway.</li> <li>➤ College of Business faculty served on program advisory committees for community college institutions.</li> <li>➤ University signed articulation and pathway agreements with Motlow State for Health Science students and with Wallace State for students in Forensic Psychology.</li> </ul>
<p>4. Continue to seek collaborative ventures with other institutions to increase access and services to students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Athenian Ambassador students represented the University by participating in the Grand Opening of the Cook’s Natural Science Museum in Decatur.</li> <li>➤ In September 2019, the University’s Health &amp; Wellness students assisted with the Duck and Run 5K race sponsored by Keep Athens Limestone Beautiful.</li> <li>➤ In March 2020, Athens State students and staff represented the University at the Higher Ed Day in Montgomery.</li> <li>➤ In February 2020, the University hosted multiple Society of Human Resource Management student organizations from other institutions. Clubs competed in games and case studies. Athenian Ambassadors served as hosts and official score keepers.</li> </ul>
<p>5. Work with the City of Athens to increase visibility and promotion of the university.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Hosted Limestone County Chamber of Commerce, Keep Athens/Limestone Beautiful, and other county/city organizations during the 2019 Fiddlers’ Convention.</li> <li>➤ The University’s Sandridge Student Center serves as site host for the regular meetings of the Rotary Club of Athens. This partnership brings a wide variety of community business leaders to campus on a regular basis.</li> </ul>
<p>6. Develop a framework of activities to connect faculty and alumni.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The Alumni Affairs Office hosted eight events targeted at connecting faculty and alumni with over 750 participants.</li> </ul>
<p>7. Continue to develop innovative Professional Development Schools (PDS) partnerships with P-12 schools to include year-long curriculum building as well as summer enrichment programs that provide robust hands-on experiences for teacher candidates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Summer PDS partnerships for 2020 were cancelled because of the Covid-19 pandemic.</li> <li>➤ All student teacher candidates were able to complete their field experience requirements even with the pandemic. Students gained skills in online teaching and learning which better prepared them for the changing needs of any classroom teacher.</li> </ul>