

# Quality Enhancement Plan

## What's to Come

The ball is already rolling for us to have a successful QEP. This section summarizes some of the plans that we have moving forward.

### SURVEYS

Faculty, staff, students, and Board of Trustee members were each sent a survey during the last week of January. The goal of this initial survey is to establish a baseline of existing experiential learning activities already taking place across the University.

In late February a second survey will be sent to help us determine how Athens State University defines Experiential Learning.

### BLACKBOARD

All employees have access to the QEP organization in Blackboard. Please visit this organization often as we will utilize it to share with the campus community.

### DISCUSSION & COLLABORATION

We know that everyone has A LOT going on and meetings are hard to schedule, so we are hoping that through Blackboard we will be able to have many discussions and share collaborative ideas.



## Introduction

For those who I may not have had a chance to meet, my name is Katia Maxwell and I am an Assistant Professor of Computer Science and the Director of the Quality Enhancement Plan.

I am very excited to be in this new role and I am looking forward to working with everyone to bring new experiences to our students and highlight some of the Experiential Learning that is already taking place on our campus.

## Hitting the ground running...

As many of you are aware, the topic for Athens State University's next Quality Enhance Plan is Experiential Learning.

According to Webster's dictionary **experiential** means *relating to, derived from, or providing experience*. The dictionary provides three definitions for **learning** (1) *the act or experience of one that learns*, (2) *knowledge or skill acquired by instruction or study*, or (3) *modification of a behavioral tendency by experience*.

Experiential Learning can have many different meanings. We believe that one of the first steps we must take is to define what Experiential Learning means to us and our students here at Athens State University.

Our initial goal is to capture what faculty are currently doing in their classes. We also want to know what faculty would like to do in the future with their courses and use this input to come up with what experiential learning means to us.

In order to identify this definition, it is EXTREMELY important that all stakeholders share their feedback through the surveys. Your participation is critical to laying a solid foundation for how we move forward.

You will be invited to join in ongoing focus group conversations. Many of these will be centered around current best practices and research. Because all stakeholders will be involved we believe that we can have some GREAT discussions!

**Challenge:** We know that some of you have a competitive nature. As a friendly competition, you are encouraged to work with students to develop a title or catch-phrase for our new QEP.

Are you already doing Experiential Learning?? We would like to highlight work that goes beyond the four walls of the classroom, so if you are doing something of the sort, please let us know! You and your students could be featured in future newsletters. You can submit a short description by email at [katia.maxwell@athens.edu](mailto:katia.maxwell@athens.edu).

## Challenge to all Professors: Getting our Students Involved

### What will Experiential Learning look like at Athens State University?

I have a goal that by Spring we will have a definition of what Experiential Learning means for Athens State University. This will be shared with everyone and I challenge all professors to find a creative way to get their students involved in this QEP process.

The first challenge is to answer the question of how to get your students involved in the process of coming up with a "catch phrase" for Experiential Learning (our last QEP was "Building Success through Writing"). The second challenge is to encourage your students to submit a logo for Experiential Learning.

Of course, to complete these challenges we must know what experiential learning means to us, but I wanted to get these challenges on your radar. Your students can submit their creations by emailing me at

[katia.maxwell@athens.edu](mailto:katia.maxwell@athens.edu). Please have them include the Subject QEP Challenge.

## Message from President Way

Since arriving at Athens State, I have been impressed by the ongoing commitment to maintaining a strong and positive learning environment for our students. This is reflected in the fact that over 1,100 comments and ideas were submitted concerning the focus of the institution's next Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP).

Experiential Learning emerged as a priority for Athens State. It is not surprising in view of the evidence that demonstrates better student outcomes when experiential learning is employed.

A good number of our faculty are already employing experiential learning techniques in and outside the classroom: project-based learning, consulting projects with external partners, co-op experiences, practicums, directed study projects, internships, study abroad, service learning and undergraduate research, to name but a few. This QEP will provide a university-wide platform to spread the use of experiential learning across the curriculum.

As we move forward in this endeavor, I encourage you to think broadly and boldly about how EL activities could fit into your individual courses and departmental programs. Dare to incorporate high-impact practices and new and powerful pedagogies to ignite your students' interest and involvement and further strengthen their competencies in their chosen field. I look forward to seeing how your creativity will further prepare our students for their very best future!

Of course, the beneficial student outcomes will be seen only if we develop sound experiential pedagogies. Hence your creative efforts will be supported and encouraged through professional development activities and funding.

I have to tell you, the focus of this QEP – Experiential Learning – and all of its potential benefits, makes me wish I could have my time over!

Philip

# Today's Highlight: Coming Together – CS & Art Students

Fall 2016 marked three years since the Computer Science department began working with the Athens community and surrounding area to try and bring projects from the "real-world" into the classroom.

Fall 2016 was a little different than past semesters. During this particular semester the organization that sponsored the Computer Science Capstone project wanted a website created from scratch to be able to host information about their Relay for Life Team.

This was not the first time that the Capstone Class was doing a project that involved a website. However, it was the first time that a website was being created from nothing.

There was no previous site to re-design or provide ideas of color schemes, images, etc.

***"The CS faculty realize that our students are very good developers. We don't have a class where we focus on color schemes and similar concepts. They are not taught how to create the designs or what it is that they are developing, but they do a great job in putting a design together when needed." – Prof. Maxwell***

In this particular semester, Prof. Maxwell chose to do something a little different. After speaking with Prof. Keller from the Art Department, the two departments collaborated to bring in an Art student to work with the CS Capstone team.

The Art student had full responsibility for selecting color schemes, images, and a wire frame for the website. The student was also involved in creating the required technical documents at the end of the semester.

The CS students were responsible for developing the front end webpage according to the Art students' designs and the backend database that would store data and images.

The Art student was also responsible for determining how the information that was pulled from the database would be displayed on the website and the CS students had to make it happen.

The result was a successful full web application design!

## Our QEP Leadership Team

Mr. Nick Agrawal, COAS Faculty  
Ms. Laura Allen, Career Development Center  
Ms. Mary Aquila, Library Faculty  
Ms. Kim Bell, COB Faculty  
Ms. Lauren Blacklidge, Public Relations  
Dr. Chet Breaux, Writing Center  
Ms. Carolyn Carthen, Veteran's Affairs  
Ms. Dakota Cotton, Library Faculty  
Mr. Tim Crafton, IT  
Ms. Helen Crider, Wallace Center  
Ms. Barbara Ferguson, Financial Affairs  
Dr. Mark Gale, COE Faculty  
Mr. Jeffrey Guenther, Institutional Research  
Dr. Diann Hammon, COB Faculty  
Ms. Juliana Hunt, Accessibility Services  
Ms. Laura Lynn Kerner, COB Faculty

Ms. Chelsea Love, Advancement Office  
Ms. Katia Maxwell, COAS Faculty  
Ms. Elizabeth Mead, Student  
Mr. Aron Moss, Student  
Ms. Savannah Pearson, Testing Center  
Dr. Shannon Pittman, COAS Faculty  
Dr. Michael Radden, Career Development Center  
Dr. Kim Roberts, COB Faculty  
Mr. Derrek Smith, Student Success Center  
Dr. Jackie Smith, Accreditation Liaison  
Ms. Brittany Stanley, Student  
Dr. Quanda Stevenson, COAS Faculty  
Dr. Bruce Thomas, COAS Faculty  
Dr. Darlene Turner-White, COE Faculty  
Dr. Bridgette Walker, COE Faculty  
Ms. Debbie Wilson, COE Certification Office