

Experience | Success: An Experiential Learning QEP

Athens State University

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Athens State University is an upper-division university that serves junior-level, senior-level, and graduate students as they pursue their degrees. As an upper-division institution, Athens State University is a destination for transfer students and those students who have paused their educational journey – students who are often balancing education with the demands of adult life, including work and children. With the development of a new strategic plan, *Horizon 2030*, Athens State continues to focus on the needs of our students and our role as an anchor institution in our community. Therefore, Athens State University's Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) has a focus on increasing and strengthening **Experiential Learning** (EL) opportunities for students.

The goals of the QEP include:

- increasing the number of experiential learning opportunities in each program,
- connecting these EL activities directly to the student's program of study and career path,
- strengthening students' ability to transfer the knowledge, skills and abilities from the EL activities into those chosen career paths.

The **Experience | Success** initiative will provide a vehicle for broad-based involvement in the design and implementation of a university-wide effort to ensure that graduates are equipped with a strong set of competencies for their chosen careers. The focus of this project directly supports Athens State University's strategic goal to "provide quality teaching and engaged learning." The **Experience | Success** initiative will enhance our graduates' workplace readiness skills and improve their career mobility.

Five types of EL were identified as having particular significance to Athens State University.

- Workplace Learning which includes internships or job shadowing.
- Learning through Research involves partnering with faculty or other experts to conduct research.
- Hands-On Learning which comes in many forms and is often disciplinary specific.
- Learning through Expeditions which identifies learning from activities done during field trips or study abroad opportunities.
- Community-Based Learning emphasizes learning that may happen outside the classroom with civic engagement as a key element.

Through the **Experience | Success** initiative, Athens State University is poised to prepare graduates to meet the challenges of our region's growing and changing workforce. The **Experience | Success** initiative is designed to have a lasting, positive impact on our students and our community.

