



Control Number: 1500-0710

Final Report
VISION 2020 Committee
October 19, 2010

VISION 2020

Table of Contents

October 19, 2010



Transmittal Letter...	<i>i</i>
Prologue...	1
Support Services...	14
External Relations...	33
Faculty...	42
Degree Programs...	50

VISION 2020

Transmittal Letter



October 19, 2010

Dear Dr. Glenn:

Find attached the final report of the VISION 2020 Committee.

Based upon substantial input from many sectors of the University community and after much opportunity for dialogue, we present 14 basic goals with accompanying rationales for your consideration. We hope they will serve as valuable guides for critical decision-making at the institution during the next decade. Also embedded in the report is a collection of 81 suggested tactics or more specific recommendations that will assist with implementation of the goals. The goals, accompanying rationales, and tactics are categorized into four areas – Support Services, External Relations, Faculty, and Degree Programs.

We are confident that pursuit of these goals and implementation of these tactics will enhance considerably the scope and quality of services rendered by Athens State University. The Committee, consisting of persons with great diversity of experiences and perspectives, fully understands that universities, like other social institutions, are presented with a constantly changing environment, and that this increasingly high rate of social change makes any projections about future needs difficult. But, we have tried to make recommendations that build upon current institutional strengths, while forthrightly recognizing weaknesses. We have tried to look at the near-term future and make recommendations that we believe will improve the position of the University within public higher education in Alabama and will ultimately serve students and taxpayers better.

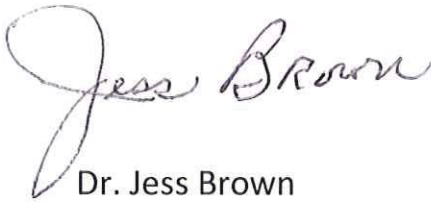
These recommendations endorse, on occasion, both the status quo and change. Some tactics simply require continuity; others require considerable redirection. At times, we suggest a process for achieving desired results through greater use of external expertise rather than defining a substantive outcome based upon the collective expertise of the Committee.

These recommendations cover the full spectrum of University life and vary substantially in terms of the amount of time and money necessary for implementation. Implementation of some recommendations should be relatively easy and can occur with few dollars and within a short span of time. Other recommendations will take many years and will necessitate a greater commitment and frankly more risk-taking by the President of the University and other policymakers. As expected, these latter recommendations require either a more fundamental adjustment in the operation of the University or a large commitment of currently unavailable revenue.

And finally, we encourage you to develop a mechanism within the University administration that results in an annual, public accounting of whether these goals and tactics are being pursued or have been accomplished. This periodic accounting should help everyone to stay focused on the key elements of the University's basic plan for the future.

This report is transmitted to you with genuine respect for your dedication to this process and your demonstrated commitment to improve Athens State University during the next decade. We are individually grateful for the opportunity you provided us. We hope we have served you, our University colleagues, current and future students, and the larger public through this planning endeavor and resulting recommendations. We believe this report, if implemented, will nurture a very bright future for Alabama's oldest institution of higher learning.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jess Brown

Chairperson



Dr. Jim Kerner

Chair, External Affairs



Dr. Susan Owen

Chair, Degree Programs



Dr. Robert Burkhardt

Deputy Chairperson



Ms. Suzanne Sims

Chair, Support Services



Dr. Sean Busick

Chair, Faculty



Dr. Yvette Bolen



Ms. Robin Carter Clem



Mr. Heath Daws



Mr. Mike Essary



Dr. Prentice Chandler



Judge Mike Davis



Dr. Al Elmore



Mr. Dave Fitzsimmons

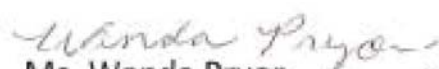

Dr. Ron Fritze

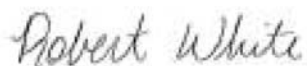

Ms. Kim Goedhart


Dr. Wanda Hutchinson


Dr. Kim LaFavor


Mr. Nate Mitchell


Ms. Wanda Pryor



Dr. Robert White


Mr. Mike Gibson


Mr. Carl Hunt


Dr. Thomas Jandebour


Ms. Mary Pat Martin


Dr. David Nye


Dr. Lisa Rich

VISION 2020

PROLOGUE



Initiative, Process, and Major Themes

.....

The Initiative. In the Spring of 2009, Dr. Robert Glenn, the relatively new President of Athens State University, commenced a long-range planning initiative for the institution. He concluded that a new University President should build consensus for a plan of action among the institution's numerous constituencies. In his view, this University-wide, consensus approach for charting the future, as opposed to a President-centered approach, would have more support and resilience, and therefore, a greater chance of successful implementation. The subsequent planning endeavor, *VISION 2020*, was created primarily to produce a list of goals that would guide critical decision-making at the University between 2010 and 2020. In addition to the list of goals, the endeavor was to generate a list of suggested tactics that would be useful to policymakers and administrators as they seek to implement the goals.

"...build consensus for a plan of action among the institution's numerous constituencies."

Responsibility for *VISION 2020* was assigned to a *VISION 2020* Committee. This Committee consisted of 27 voting members. There were additional non-voting, associate members, who held a wide variety of administrative leadership roles at the University. All facets of

the University community received representation on the Committee, including faculty, staff, students, the Alumni Association, community leadership in the public and private sectors, and the University Foundation. The President from the outset emphasized representation by the faculty and ensured that the full spectrum of faculty would receive a voice at the table. In appointing faculty to the Committee, he sought substantial diversity in terms of academic discipline, experiences at various universities, and experiences outside of higher education. Both newcomers and old-timers were appointed to provide both fresh perspective and institutional memory.

On April 9, 2009, at the Committee's first meeting, President Glenn asked the Committee to act as a fiduciary for the interests of future students, faculty and alumni of the University. He viewed *VISION 2020* as an opportunity for the Athens State community to work openly and collectively to chart its future. It was to be the by-product of input, dialogue and deliberation. This process and resulting decisions would then serve as the basis for Athens State to act as a more unified and proactive community in pursuit of a better planned future.

"...an opportunity for the Athens State community to work openly and collectively to chart its future."

Dr. Glenn charged the Committee to take the next 18 months to develop a set of recommendations that would reflect or balance three key traits. These traits were comprehensive, visionary and feasible. The recommendations of the *VISION 2020* Committee were to be comprehensive in the sense that they could encompass every facet of the University. The recommendations were expected to be visionary in the sense of being creative and innovative. The Committee was

instructed to act in the best interest of the University regardless of whether such recommendations reinforced or challenged the status quo. And finally, the Committee was asked to be feasible in the sense of keeping the list of goals rather succinct, and to recommend a manageable list of tactics rather than produce a very lengthy set of recommendations designed to appease every faction within the University community. Basically, the President asked the Committee to listen to others and then to bring its vast array of experiences and insights to the challenge of dreaming prudently about the next decade.

“...to bring a vast array of experiences and insights to the challenge of dreaming prudently about the next decade.”

The Process. As directed by the President, the work of the *VISION 2020* Committee was conducted between April 9, 2009 and October 19, 2010. The full Committee met 15 times on the second Thursday of the month. Each session was approximately 60 to 90 minutes in length. Additional sessions were held by subcommittees between January and April of 2010.

The Committee’s work was conducted in three phases. These three phases were *Environmental Scan*, *Strategic Evaluation*, and *Prescription*. During the first phase - *Environmental Scan* - the Committee essentially listened for many hours to numerous voices and groups within the University community. The Committee heard input from several key stakeholders and via their comments received a thorough review of the programs and services of the institution. Presentations were made to the full

“...listened for many hours to numerous voices and groups with the University community.”

Committee by many principal administrators of the University, including every vice president and college dean. Each presenter was asked to review the responsibilities and resources of his/her unit, to identify current strengths and weaknesses, and to recommend an initiative that would substantially improve the quality of services within the unit.

The Committee received special input from the Alumni Association Board, Foundation Board, current and former student leaders, the Staff Senate and Faculty Senate through separate focus group sessions with each of these

“...development of a common and thorough portrait of current conditions at the University.”

constituencies. At these focus group sessions, the Chairman, Deputy Chairman, and Staff Assistant of the *VISION 2020* Committee as well as the Staff Senate’s Presiding Officer and Faculty Senate’s Presiding Officer were typically present. This initial phase was designed to assist the Committee with development of a common and thorough portrait of current conditions at the University.

The Committee was also provided data which permitted a comparison of Athens State with three other public universities in the Tennessee Valley region of north Alabama. This data, typically generated from the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, permitted a multi-year comparison of north Alabama public universities in terms of a few key variables associated with enrollment and finances. Among these variables were tuition, transfers from community colleges, and the county of residency of the student. Information was also produced to permit an assessment of the relative affordability of

Athens State services for students from lower income households and middle income households.

Later in the *VISION 2020* process, it was suggested by Committee members that additional student input be achieved via a large survey of the student body rather than only through the input of current and former student leaders at a focus group. With the assistance of President Glenn and the staff of the Office of Institutional Assessment and the Department of IT, a survey of students was undertaken through the University's email system during the latter part of the Spring term of 2010. This survey, completed by 630 students, appeared generally representative of the entire student body and afforded the Committee with additional input about student views or concerns across a wide range of topics. A session of the full Committee was devoted largely to a review of this dataset.

During the second phase – *Strategic Evaluation* – the *VISION 2020* Committee commenced its work with a discussion of the societal roles and important functions of a contemporary public university, and the extent to which Athens State performs those roles and functions. The Committee concluded that American state universities have undergone a substantial transition during the last fifty years as the nation extended higher education to a much larger spectrum of the population. The proportion of the population acquiring higher education services as well as the number and diversity of universities has increased. Nevertheless, a university's core social responsibilities remain the same. These often-cited core functions are instruction, research and

“...a discussion of the social roles and important functions of a contemporary public university.”

service. A university is expected to provide instruction in order to preserve and perpetuate a body of knowledge from one generation to the next. A university is expected to expand knowledge and understanding of human activities through research. A university is expected to utilize its vast, collective expertise for the benefit of community. Admittedly, the exact mix or relative weight of these core functions will vary substantially from one university to another, depending upon the institution's history and resources.

For the remainder of the *Strategic Evaluation* phase, the Committee focused on one central question. What are the primary strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats faced by Athens State University?

“What are the primary strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats faced by Athens State University?”

Using this so-called SWOT analysis, the Committee was asked to generate a list of perceived strengths; then, after assembling the list of strengths, the Committee devoted a meeting to a review and discussion of those strengths. A similar process was followed for the identification and review of the institution's weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This process ultimately produced a list of 18 basic strengths, 22 basic weaknesses, 24 opportunities on the horizon, and 19 threats.

During the third and final phase of its work, *Prescription*, the Committee began to formulate goal statements and tactics for inclusion into a final report. The full Committee divided itself into four subcommittees of almost equal size. There was a subcommittee for each of four topics – Support Services, External Relations, Faculty, and Degree Programs. Each subcommittee was assigned a range of subject matter for its consideration. Each subcommittee then developed a draft

or working document of proposed goals and tactics for review by the full Committee. There was a full session of the Committee devoted to a review of the subcommittee reports on Support Services and Faculty, and another session of the full Committee utilized for a review of the subcommittee reports about Degree Programs and External Relations. This summary of subcommittee activities and findings was presented by each subcommittee chairperson to the full Committee.

The Chairperson of the full *VISION 2020* Committee subsequently met with the four subcommittee chairpersons in an effort to shorten the list of goal statements, improve the rationales for certain goal statements, minimize overlapping information in subcommittee reports, clarify or make more specific some tactics, and add tactics suggested during or after the full Committee's initial consideration of subcommittee reports. Both editorial and substantive changes were made as a result of this interaction between the Chairperson of the full Committee and the four subcommittee chairpersons. Then, the revised subcommittee reports were submitted to subcommittee members for a second review. Upon approval by subcommittee membership, these revised subcommittee reports were submitted electronically to the full Committee for a second review.

This Final Report for the *VISION 2020* Committee was issued by the Committee to Dr. Robert Glenn at a luncheon in the Student Center's Ballroom on October 19, 2010. It consists of

"Cumulatively, the Report presents 14 goals and recommends 81 tactics for consideration by the Athens State University community."

three parts. Cumulatively, the Report presents 14 goals and recommends 81 tactics for consideration by the Athens State University

community. (1) There is a transmittal letter from the Committee to the President. (2) There is this Prologue which outlines for posterity the purpose and process of *VISION 2020*, and which presents four major themes that encapsulate much of the feedback and dialogue of the Committee and that ultimately served as the “bone marrow” for the Committee’s recommendations. (3) There are the final versions of the subcommittee reports containing the goals and recommended tactics regarding four important areas of University life – Support Services, External Relations, Faculty and Degree Programs.

The Major Themes. Four key themes surfaced often during the various phases of *VISION 2020*, and served as a foundation for many of the final recommendations by the Committee. These themes or concerns permeated much of the feedback from internal and external constituents of the University. For many within the University community, these themes reflected more than the direction of opinion; they reflected opinions often expressed with intensity and based upon personal experiences. These overarching themes were:

“...four major themes...ultimately served as the ‘bone marrow’ for the Committee’s recommendations.”

1. Campus as an Emerging Jewel,
2. Life at the University,
3. Transition to a University Culture, and
4. Opportunity PLUS Quality.

The campus of Athens State University is an emerging jewel.

Repeatedly, throughout the VISION 2020 process, voices from several University constituencies expressed pride in the ambience of the campus. Many viewed the

“Athens State is on the verge of campus aesthetics that could rival or exceed many colleges and universities...”

structures and landscaping as an existing strength that is being enhanced with on-going and planned developments. The historic campus with its traditional collegiate appearance was seen as a major asset and relative strength, when compared to the more diverse and architecturally eclectic collection of facilities on many other campuses. In light of developments during the past decade, the Athens State campus within the next decade could be developed into a well-integrated, highly functional, architecturally compatible, physical plant supplemented by a few truly historic structures, such as Founder’s Hall. Athens State is on the verge of campus aesthetics that could rival or exceed many colleges or universities in Alabama and could serve as a powerful magnet for numerous activities at the institution.

Athens State University needs more life or human interaction on its campus. Traditionally, life at Athens State meant students taking classes, interacting in-person with faculty and staff, and participating in a narrow range of discipline-based and extra-curricular activities. The overall positive nature of these experiences for students served to make some of them de facto recruiters or “ambassadors” for the University. During the past twenty years or so, the University has witnessed a gradual decline in student interaction with the institution. This decline is a by-product of several conditions. Among the often-cited conditions are the changing demography of the student body, an

absence of sufficient resources committed for extra-curricular activities, and the introduction of distance learning and operation of off-campus centers. Although the institution's credit hour production has increased substantially during the last generation, the student's personal connection to the institution appears to have declined markedly. Impersonal communications with faculty as well as the

"...the University should undertake a series of initiatives to attract more people to campus by gradually providing a much wider array of activities for the community and region."

absence of student contact with the campus weaken the capacity for lasting relationships between alumni and the institution. However, efforts to nurture more life at the University should entail more than students in campus-based classes. During the next decade the University should enhance not merely the level of activity on campus, but also the nature of that activity. It should bring students and non-students to campus for non-credit instruction as well as expanded service and research functions. In sum, the University should undertake a series of initiatives to attract more people to campus by gradually providing a much wider array of activities for the community and region.

Athens State must transition its internal operating culture from a collegiate orientation devoted almost exclusively to undergraduate instruction to an operating culture more synchronous with a contemporary public university. Athens State is a very old institution of higher learning with deep roots in the Tennessee Valley region of north Alabama. Its traditions predate many public institutions of higher learning in Alabama. For generations it has produced thousands of

teachers for north Alabama schools. However, it is the state's newest university, having achieved that status by legislative declaration only 11 years ago. Because of this development, other universities and accrediting authorities will likely expect Athens State to reflect the norms and functions of a university. Increasingly, faculty have been hired at Athens State with doctoral degrees and appropriate professional preparations for duties relating to university services not currently offered or offered sparingly at Athens State. For Athens State to truly join university ranks, it should begin to mobilize assets for expanding its activities beyond undergraduate classroom instruction, to initiate plans for select post-baccalaureate programs, and to make personnel and other decisions reflecting longstanding university practices. This significant transition to a university operating culture will inevitably need to be incremental or phased. The institution must accomplish this expanded role without an overextension of limited extant resources. To do otherwise would obviously undermine the current and future core mission of Athens State, which is and should be to serve students with high quality, undergraduate instruction.

"This significant transition to a university operating culture will inevitably need to be incremental or phased."

Athens State University must emphasize and adequately balance both educational opportunity and service quality. Since becoming a state institution 35 years ago and being placed in the Alabama Community College System, Athens State has operated with policies and practices that went the "extra mile" to extend baccalaureate-level, educational opportunities to students. This emphasis on opportunity and access manifested itself with two basic practices – (1) appreciably

lower tuition than other baccalaureate degree-granting institutions and (2) creative scheduling and delivery of course offerings. These practices made degrees possible for students who were constrained by finances, location, and/or time. This mode of operation was especially beneficial for the older non-traditional student seeking a career change many years after high school graduation, or the college age student who received very little financial assistance from home, or the student from the working class family that desired its first-generation college graduate. For thousands of north Alabamians, Athens State became their best hope for social mobility through acquisition of a baccalaureate degree.

In this context of trying to maximize educational opportunity and operate with relatively low cost tuition, the institution was still able to preserve regional accreditation, to improve its physical plant, to increase appreciably the number of faculty with terminal degrees, and to acquire specialized national accreditations for the degree programs in Education and Business. However, without an influx of additional revenue from existing or new sources, the maintenance and certainly the enhancement of service quality could become more problematic in future years. Many current conditions and some that are highly probable in the near future will adversely impact quality. There have been year after year reductions in state funding. Historically, there has also been a lack of stability and a “boom and bust” cycle in state funding, with large increases followed by proration. There are demands by students for both traditional and distance learning

“...the maintenance and certainly the enhancement of service quality could become more problematic in future years.”

methods of course delivery. There are frequently changing standards for teacher preparation emanating from federal and state authorities. There are diverse, rapidly changing and expensive technologies associated with effective delivery of distance learning classes. These factors and others combine to present major challenges to the University as it strives to maintain opportunity and simultaneously to guarantee a level of quality expected by conscientious students, employers, accrediting agencies and others within higher education.

To minimize educational opportunity undermines the very rationale for why Athens State became a state institution a generation ago; to neglect the quality of offerings ultimately undermines the value of the degrees awarded and the reputation of the University. For this reason, there must be a genuine and strong commitment to both educational opportunity and service quality. This commitment will ultimately manifest itself by having both opportunity and quality constantly at the forefront of all major decisions by University leadership during the next decade.

“...there must be a genuine and strong commitment to both educational opportunity and service quality.”

VISION 2020

Support Services



Goals, Rationales, and Tactics

.....

Goal 1: Substantially enhance student interaction with and student appreciation of the University by creating or improving selected activities relating to student life.

Rationale: During the last generation, there has been a steady decline in the ability of students to interact with the University other than through classroom instruction. Athens State increased its enrollment during the 1970's, 1980's, and 1990's by accommodating commuters and non-traditional students with innovative scheduling of courses. Over time, non-instructional student activities, such as the performing arts, athletics, and discipline-based student clubs declined, and some were eliminated. The result of these developments over thirty years, when combined with the more recent impact of computer-based, distance learning (DL), has been an insufficient level of campus life and limited opportunities for students to develop associations and loyalties to the institution. Universities should seek to nurture more than a fee-for-service relationship with its student body.

Tactic 1: Create additional opportunities for students to participate in performing arts activities, including music, drama, and dance.

Athens State University should provide adequate funding for the drama program and related theatrical productions, as well as possible offerings in music. A University Chorale and perhaps other small musical ensembles are also needed. Students performing in these types of organizations will not only have an additional connection to the institution by having represented the institution, but they will also be engaged in a function that will increase the visibility of the institution with the general public. The recently announced, cooperative endeavor among the City of Decatur, Calhoun Community College and Athens State University concerning fine arts programming and the construction of a new 45,000 square foot facility for this purpose in proximity to Decatur's Princess Theatre should also create excellent opportunities for students interested in the fine arts.

Tactic 2: Produce and implement a required high-quality orientation for all new students.

Since students at Athens State, unlike their undergraduate peers at other universities, will not have a full four-year experience at the institution, it is especially important that Athens State make a very positive, early/first impression and instill in its students a better understanding

of the rich heritage and array of programs and services offered by the institution. For this reason, a mandatory orientation of students should be instituted. This orientation should be completed by the end of the first academic term in which the student is enrolled and should be a state-of-the-art production appropriate for both DL and non-DL students. Faculty from each of the University's three colleges should have input in the development of this important orientation.

Tactic 3: Establish a dedicated staff position as an ADA coordinator.

As part of its effort to lead the State in DL instruction, Athens State should ensure that it can provide instructional services for students with disabilities that set the standard for other universities. The University should seek to develop a reputation for its ability to do so. An important step in this direction would be the employment of an ADA coordinator who would be fluent in computing technologies and highly skilled at working with students who have disabilities.

Tactic 4: Enlist the services of an external consultant to assess food services.

The quality of social life at a university is greatly impacted by on-campus food services. The relationship of the University with both internal constituencies of the institution and visitors to campus is affected by the food service. Basically, both the food and the ambience within which it is served can become a major catalyst for re-energizing social life on campus. For this reason, there

should be a complete assessment of food services on the campus through the use of an external consultant. This consultant should produce recommendations for improving the visibility, ambience and accessibility of food services. The overall objective of the consultant should be to make recommendations that result in greater student and community utilization of the services.

Tactic 5: Relocate the University Bookstore.

The University's bookstore has been operated in a very undesirable location. It must be more accessible to students and the general public, and should attempt to sell and market a wider range of products and services. Online purchase of textbooks and other instructional materials as well as growth in the use of e-readers and e-books presents a new challenge and perhaps requires a new business model and innovative mode of operation for the University bookstore. Small institutions of higher learning have traditionally relied on bookstore sales as a noteworthy, supplemental revenue source; therefore, it is imperative that the University bookstore be designed, located and operated based on the desire to maximize the receipt of funds from this critically important, auxiliary enterprise.

Tactic 6: Encourage academic departments to develop and/or revive participation in honorary societies or other career-based student organizations.

Discipline-based honor societies or other career-oriented student organizations are proven mechanisms for

establishing better connections between students and a university. These organizations enhance relationships between faculty and students by providing additional interaction in more social, non-classroom settings. These organizations often improve the student's understanding of his/her academic discipline. These organizations can identify and facilitate interest in continued, post-baccalaureate studies in the student's academic field. While these organizations might involve a small portion of the total student body, they are likely to include a high-achieving, socially mobile subset of the student body. This subset should be identified early during students' tenure at Athens State and nurtured by the University as a base upon which to build the Alumni Association and other University support organizations. Therefore, the University should undertake to create or revive discipline-based or career-oriented organizations, especially for the larger degree programs. The University should provide resources to demonstrate sufficient commitment to this endeavor.

Tactic 7: Explore the feasibility of returning fraternities and sororities or similar organizations to Athens State University.

ASU, as an upper-division institution, must make an extra-special effort to develop a strong, lifelong bond with its students. Organizations, such as fraternities and sororities, can be utilized to mobilize students for university and community service work, and to provide initial interaction between students and the alumni association. Through the service activities of these organizations,

universities hope to instill a sense of commitment to community within its graduates. If fraternities and sororities are not returned to the Athens State campus, the possibility of a high profile society (perhaps an “Athenian Society”) should be pursued. Membership in this Athenian Society should be based in part on academic merit, but also include some amount of community involvement or service to the University. Membership would be in addition to other honorary societies or other career-based student organizations that are promoted at Athens State. A student society of this nature could potentially serve as an important foundation for subsequent experiences in the Alumni Association.

Tactic 8: Pursue the idea of temporary lodging for students.

The University should attempt to negotiate and work with local motel/hotel establishments and restaurateurs to achieve reduced rates for persons taking classes or attending events at Athens State.

Tactic 9: Promote access to an affordable wellness center.

The University should maintain and publicize existing arrangements, and pursue additional arrangements, which permit its students to utilize wellness centers in proximity to the main campus at a discounted rate. And, in light of the high level of student interest regarding this activity, the University should explore the feasibility of an on-campus wellness center.

Goal 2: Aggressively enhance university-wide technological support to distinguish the University as a recognized leader in the applications of technology.

Rationale: Technologies have become more and more prevalent in the delivery of instructional and administrative support services for institutions of higher learning. This development is especially evident at Athens State in light of its rapid transition to DL instructional services during the last decade. The rate of change in technologies available to support instructional and non-instructional services at a university is substantial, and college-age students often enter the institution as savvy users of communication technologies. For Athens State to establish itself clearly as a leader in the application of technologies within the arena of higher education, the University must provide a more solid infrastructure for the identification and use of highly dynamic technologies.

Tactic 1: Engage the services of an outside consultant for a thorough exploration of the technology needs of the campus.

The consultant should be independent of any on-campus administrators, and should be well-versed in the evolution and on-going developments of technologies related to distance learning in the United States. This

consultant should issue a report directly to the President of the University. This consultant should indicate to the President the current technological capacity of the institution relative to peer institutions, and should recommend needed developments for both instructional and non-instructional services on campus.

Tactic 2: Institute in the near term a variety of tactical changes related to user interface with computer technologies on campus.

Among the suggested near term changes are the following: (1) provide a single log-in for students to reach Blackboard, e-mail, and ASU on-line, (2) establish and staff a Technology Help Desk in the library to provide on-line and person-to-person assistance to students, (3) employ a full-time Web Services staff member, (4) create a properly staffed computer lab on campus, (5) provide continuous real-time back-up service for the University's network and (6) stabilize and expand University's wireless access network with a designated "hot spot" for visitors to access wireless.

Goal 3: Enhance library services to embrace new technologies and resources in support of the instructional and research needs of the changing academic community so that the Library remains an important center of intellectual life at the institution.

Rationale: Technology continues to shape the nature of learning and research, the delivery of resource materials, and the design of learning and study spaces. Increasing digital content is required to support online education and research that is not place-bound. Improvements and modifications in library resources and services are necessary to provide sufficient collaborative, technology-assisted learning areas expected by today's students.

Tactic 1: Develop and preserve unique digital content to support user needs.

Athens State should digitize the unique collections held by its Library and Archives. It should prioritize the collections to be digitized, purchase the necessary equipment, and employ and train staff dedicated to the digitization and preservation initiative. This activity also has the potential of building bonds between the University and community as the Library becomes recognized more and more as a resource for readily-accessible, primary materials related to local history and culture.

Tactic 2: Establish a test space (a “sandbox”) where librarians, faculty, and students can experiment with new technologies.

This “sandbox” and perhaps other initiatives should explore innovative ways to promote the use and delivery of library services and resources, especially focusing on reaching remote populations through the use of new technologies. Ongoing, proactive efforts will be necessary to remain aware of and become familiar with changing delivery methods which might be relevant for library use. Current examples of potential technologies include real-time chat reference, blogs, wikis, and methods to deliver content to mobile devices. Vast social networks are being developed in the United States among today’s youth and young adults using various communications technologies. Library services must respond to these developments, and the “sandbox” can be the laboratory for testing application of these technologies to library services.

Tactic 3: Develop a plan and provide support for off-campus initiatives regarding Library services.

Athens State should develop a plan and seek appropriate funding to provide program-specific Library services and resources to improve library support for off-campus educational initiatives. The University Centers at selected community colleges, the proposed Arts Center in Decatur, the proposed Lifelong Learning Institute, and other

off-campus developments should be the focus of these initiatives.

VISION 2020

Goal 4: Continue the efforts in recent years of creating a physical plant that is architecturally compatible, aesthetic, and highly functional to support academic and extracurricular programs, to improve the work environment of employees, and to enhance the University as a hub for community activities in Athens-Limestone County.

Rationale: The initial impression of a university is often formed by a person's reaction to the physical appearance and functionality of the campus. Given the current state of the University's physical plant, continued improvement in the aesthetics of the small campus can make the campus environment a real forte' for the institution relative to other universities with campuses containing eclectic architectural styles. For this reason, Athens State University should continue the trend of recent years by mandating adherence to general architectural compatibility when renovating existing buildings. It should be emphasized that the University, when implementing the suggested programmatic responses listed below, should maintain the traditional architectural pattern reflected in the Library and in the renovations of Waters Hall and Sanders Hall, with the exception of the University's historic structures, consisting of Founders Hall, McCandless Hall, and Brown Hall as well as the Beaty-Mason Home.

Tactic 1: Utilize the University's Facilities Committee so that it includes representation from a wide segment of the University community, meets periodically, and is consulted during all phases of planning University facilities.

It is imperative that there be extensive consultation with affected faculty and staff (and students for particular facilities) to determine their needs and preferences in order for a new or renovated facility to serve fully its intended purpose(s). The experiences and insights of end-users should ultimately serve as the critical predicate for planning the physical plant of the campus.

Tactic 2: Construct a new Center for Instructional Technology and Technical Support.

This facility should be of a magnitude and quality that it conveys a genuine commitment by the University to be a leader among regional universities in the use of technologies. It should serve as a symbol of excellence and should be competitive with, if not superior to, any comparable facility in the region. This center and its staff should initially be focused on the following functions: (1) to design and produce instructional materials, (2) to train personnel in the use of technologies, and (3) to operate an internet-based television station for both instructional and service missions.

Tactic 3: Create a fully functional Testing Center.

Given the current and projected magnitude of DL instruction at Athens State University, it is imperative that the institution enhance its resources for structured, customized testing opportunities for students. The University administration should carefully review plans in a proposal provided to the Vice President for Academic Affairs by a Testing Center Ad Hoc Committee during March 2006.

Tactic 4: Consult appropriate external experts and convene a broad-based internal committee to investigate or compare the benefits of, and make recommendations for the functions of a new or thoroughly renovated Student Center.

Currently, much of the Student Center is oriented to the maintenance of student records, operation of a post office, and the sale of textbooks. Ideally, the Student Center should be designed to offer a wide range of student services under one roof. In planning for a new or renovated Student Center, there should be a greater emphasis upon potential social activities for students. The proposed committee would make recommendations to the University President for a new or substantially renovated student center which reflects the service needs of a diverse student body containing traditional and non-traditional students. A thorough review of the functional requirements for the Student Center and the potential utilization of the current facility should be undertaken in light of proposed efforts to

revitalize student life on campus. Attention in the near-term should be to undertake a major renovation of the Student Center's Ballroom, a facility used often by University and community groups.

Tactic 5: Renovate and substantially expand the Carter Building.

Athens State University and potentially the Athens-Limestone County community need a larger, multi-functional venue for in-door activities than is presently available. For Athens State to serve as a hub for large-scale community events, to provide adequate physical space for instruction in the performing arts (music, theater, and dance), or to accommodate certain University-related activities, such as graduation, banquets or concerts, it must have a facility that houses substantially more persons than either Griffin Auditorium or McCandless Hall or the Ballroom of the Student Center. Also, the current gymnasium in the Carter Building does not have the capacity, ambience, or functionality for current or projected needs. However, given its structural design, the possibility exists for a substantial renovation of the Carter facility by removing portions of the building and extending its northern and southern ends. The renovated facility should give Athens State University a venue that permits auditorium seating for approximately 1500, permits banquet style activities accommodating not less than 250 persons, and houses a small "black box" facility

designed for theatrical productions. This facility should also include a large commercial kitchen.

Tactic 6: Expand and reconfigure the Library facility to provide a dynamic, welcoming, comfortable, and secure environment that is conducive for all types of learning and research.

Athens State should design and build an addition to the current facility that will house a Learning Commons area with dedicated space for quiet study, collaborative learning, instructional activities, technology-assisted learning, leisure reading, research assistance, a technology help desk, classroom instruction, and other student-centered curricular activities, as well as expanded space for materials supporting the curriculum and an enhanced and enlarged Archives area.

Tactic 7: Create additional parking along Hobbs Street to facilitate better access to buildings, such as the Student Center.

On-going developments and street re-routings on the south side of the Student Center with the planned/on-going addition of 18 parking spaces may provide a sufficient number of convenient parking spaces to serve this need.

Tactic 8: Continue the maintenance and improve the functionality of the University's most historic structures. These structures include Founders Hall, Brown Hall, McCandless Hall and the Beaty-Mason Home.

In addition to on-going plans to renovate Brown Hall so that all floors become functional, special focus should be given to the possible removal of the Houston Wing of Founders Hall. The space currently consumed by this wing should be utilized to expand the courtyard found in proximity to Founders Hall, McCandless Hall, and Brown Hall. Efforts should also be undertaken to modify the exterior of the Powers Wing of Founders Hall in order for it achieve greater architectural compatibility with the original part of Founders Hall. The University should continue with current plans to renovate Griffin Auditorium of McCandless Hall and the Beaty-Mason Home. Both of these structures – McCandless Hall and the Beaty-Mason Home – are important elements of the University's plans for enhanced interaction with the community.

Tactic 9: Continue implementation and maintenance of adequate exterior lighting during evening hours and a video surveillance system throughout campus.

In recent years, there have been well-publicized episodes of violence and theft at educational institutions. Athens State should implement this recommendation to instill a heightened sense of security among faculty, staff, and students and to create an improved evidentiary record should criminal action of this sort unfortunately occur. The style of lighting installed in the Courtyard area close to Founders Hall should be replicated throughout campus as much as possible. This exterior lighting is adequate in terms

of lumens, but also very compatible with the historic structures and general ambience of campus.

Tactic 10: Create a designated space for the drama program at Athens State University.

The University offers a minor in drama and produces at least one play during each of the three semesters. The logistics of these productions have, on occasion, been problematic as a result of the drama program not having a venue on campus that is dedicated for its use. Griffin Auditorium of McCandless Hall, although an excellent setting for many small-scale theater productions, is often in demand for other activities. Larger, multi-purpose facilities lack the intimacy needed for proper actor-audience connection and are less-than-ideal for conveying the full spectrum of human emotions found in high quality, live theater. Also, the University is committed to an enhancement of its performing arts programming based on recent actions by its governing board pertaining to a cooperative arrangement with Calhoun Community College. It should also be noted that it is common practice at other postsecondary institutions within Alabama for a drama program to have a designated space. For these reasons, the substantial renovation of the Carter Building should encompass a small theater facility that permits production of live theater using a variety of configurations and a small facility appropriate for classical dance instruction.

Tactic 11: Purchase the property in the entire northeast corner of Pryor Street and Elkton Street.

The University currently owns much of this property, including the Library and house facing Pryor Street as well as several houses on Hargrove Street. Ownership of the entire block would enable the University to make future plans which might include additional structures or additional parking for the campus. Also, purchase and subsequent development of this block would start to evolve the campus as more of a square resulting in future facilities being closer to the core of campus rather than continuing to evolve the land mass of campus in an elongated fashion from east to west.

Tactic 12: Plan long-term to utilize one or more of the houses on Hargrove Street for specialized development functions of the University.

The University should explore the possibility for designating one of the aforementioned houses as a facility for the Alumni Association and its officers, and one of the houses as suitable lodging for out-of-town guests, speakers, and visitors to campus.

VISION 2020

External Relations



Goals, Rationales, and Tactics

.....

Goal 1: Maximize the University's fundraising efforts to achieve a higher level of funding and to reduce dependency upon traditional revenue sources, such as tuition and the annual state appropriation.

Rationale: Athens State University should strive to become more financially independent through public and private philanthropy to meet the needs and challenges of faculty and students. The University should establish a comprehensive strategy to explore and develop opportunities for annual giving, major gifts and planned giving. Endowments through contributions and investments secure a permanent and alternative source of income and strengthen instructional programs, research and community outreach. The magnitude of such giving impacts the quality of education provided by the University.

Tactic 1: Generate and maintain an accurate, comprehensive database of alumni, and friends of the University. Businesses, corporations and foundations that support higher education should be identified and incorporated into the database.

Tactic 2: Create an improved environment of philanthropy by providing prospective donors with a clear vision of the needs of the University and multiple opportunities for giving. To facilitate this environment, it is essential that the University communicates with potential donors in a manner that describes precisely the needs and priorities of the University, both immediate and long-range, and affords opportunities for participation at all financial levels.

Tactic 3: Expand the role of the Foundation Board in the area of planned and annual giving to the University. Members of the Foundation Board should facilitate public and private funding through identification of potential donors. Scholarships for students should remain the priority of the Board.

Tactic 4: Involve faculty as part of a structured process to identify former students who have the potential for supporting the University through financial gifts.

Tactic 5: Communicate periodically with alumni and friends of the University to encourage annual giving to the University, such as through an annual phonathon.

Goal 2: Enhance substantially the University's interaction with business, mass media, and public school systems to facilitate a greater understanding of the institution's actual and potential roles in the region's economy with special attention to the University's contribution to workforce development in both the public and private sectors.

Rationale: When the University reaches out in ways that add value to business firms in the region, some are likely to reciprocate through donations and other support. A university that is viewed as an important element in the region's economy improves its chances of growth and development for several reasons. Potential students link the activities of the university to employment opportunities; employers see the university as creating a skilled and more productive workforce; and government officials view the university as an investment in the tax base and thereby helping to pay for other government services.

Some years ago, Athens State students and faculty successfully served small businesses in Limestone and Morgan counties on behalf of the North Alabama Small Business Development Center, an arm of the U.S. Small Business Administration. More recently, a professor of marketing has provided consulting services to several area businesses. There seems every reason to believe that Athens State can continue and expand these activities, especially if a structured program were in place. Grant money should be

pursued to start or partially fund a structured program that links faculty skills with economic development issues.

Tactic 1: Contact local firms and offer specialized assistance in areas, such as development of business and marketing plans, business ethics, and human resources.

Tactic 2: Make regular presentations about economic development issues to groups, such as Rotary Club and the region's Chamber of Commerce.

Tactic 3: Sponsor "get-acquainted" social gatherings on campus to bring together stakeholders in economic development, such as local business leaders, mass media, alumni, other educators, personnel with the Department of Postsecondary Education, and government officials.

Tactic 4: Routinely invite business leaders, media, alumni, members of Department of Postsecondary Education, and government officials to University events.

Tactic 5: Develop and disseminate through the College of Business an electronic or on-line journal with research and commentary about the regional economy. A faculty member in the College of Business would serve as editor, but authors would include academics, business leaders, and government officials with a role in economic development.

Tactic 6: Develop or enhance the use of advisory committees for each college at the University. These somewhat large committees should be chaired by the Dean of the College

and comprised of select faculty, College alumni, and community activists with an interest in one or more of the programs within the College. External members of the advisory committee should interact with the College Dean and faculty on a periodic basis, and should assist with the identification and promotion of academic programs and service-related activities of the College.

Tactic 7: Initiate joint ventures between academic units and major media outlets within the Tennessee Valley region of north Alabama. These joint ventures might take several forms, including survey or other research about local or regional issues. The formation of a University research institute or similar administrative structure may be needed to provide adequate resources and support for this activity.

Goal 3: Increase the visibility of the University with governmental institutions that have a major impact upon the growth and development of the institution with special attention to those with direct regulatory authority, such as the Alabama Department of Post-Secondary Education, the State Board of Education, the Alabama Commission on Higher Education, and the State Legislature.

Rationale: Athens State University is a public sector institution operating as part of the Alabama Community College System. Therefore, its operation is inevitably impacted by the decisions of other governmental bodies. It is directly controlled by the State Board of Education and Alabama Legislature, and further regulated by authority delegated to the Department of Post-Secondary and the Alabama Commission on Higher Education. The needs and opportunities of the University must be communicated effectively to these governmental bodies. Effective interaction with these entities requires that their leaders have an in-depth understanding of the University. This desired level of understanding by these important governmental leaders necessitates more than trips to Montgomery by Athens State administrators. This enhanced understanding should be nurtured, in part, as a result of these governmental leaders having had a physical presence on the campus and recurring interaction with the full spectrum of the University community. An energized effort in governmental relations will also nurture the attainment of other goals in this report.

Tactic 1: Create an *Athens State University Advisory Committee*, a three-member subset of the Alabama State Board of Education with specially designated oversight functions for Athens State University.

Athens State University is a unique entity within the Alabama Community College System. In recognition of the fact that Athens State University, unlike other elements of the Alabama Community College System, awards baccalaureate degrees and produces a large number of public school teachers annually for public school systems, the State Board of Education should create a subcommittee with responsibility for monitoring and reviewing on-going and proposed activities at the University.

This *Advisory Committee* would equate to one-third of membership of the State Board of Education. One member, and the Committee's Chairperson, would be the member of the State Board of Education representing the District within which Founder's Hall of Athens State University is located. A second member would be the State Board member who represents the largest number of residents found in the combined populations of Morgan and Cullman counties. The third member would be one of the other six members of the State Board of Education elected to represent a District. This third member would serve a two-year term, and that position on the *Advisory Committee* would rotate among State Board members in a manner that permits Board members from all Districts to serve on the *Advisory Committee* at least once during a period of 12 years.

The *Advisory Committee* would meet twice annually on the campus of Athens State. Additional special sessions could be called by the Chairperson of the *Advisory Committee*. During these meetings the Advisory Committee would review information and hear presentations related to current conditions and planned developments at Athens State. Committee meetings would be structured to permit input from several elements of the University community, including administration, students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the Foundation. This Committee would review proposed initiatives of the Chancellor and Athens State President regarding the University, and make recommendations about the proposal prior to review by the entire State Board of Education.

Tactic 2: Create a *Presidential Council on Governmental Affairs*. This group should be appointed and chaired by the President of Athens State University. It should include, among others, the Chairman of the Board of the local Chamber of Commerce, legislators representing any portion of Limestone County, legislators who are alumni of the institution, the President of the Alumni Association, the Chairman of the Foundation Board, an elected county official of Limestone County, an elected City official of Athens, the member of the State Board of Education representing Limestone County, and the Vice-President for University Advancement. Others with effective relationships to relevant governmental actors at the federal, state and local levels, or an understanding of the political landscape of

the state or region, might also be appointed to this group. This group should convene periodically to assess issues of concern to the University within the governmental arena and to provide guidance to the President about these issues.

Tactic 3: Use one of the monthly faculty-staff convocations as an opportunity to hear an address from the Chancellor or a designated Vice Chancellor of the Alabama Community College System.

Tactic 4: Use one of the monthly faculty-staff convocations as an opportunity to hear an address by the Executive Director or other high profile administrator of ACHE.

Tactic 5: Broadcast live the monthly meetings of the State Board of Education via the Athens State University website, and perhaps use the same technology to broadcast meetings of other governmental entities.

Tactic 6: Invite governmental leaders to be guest speakers in classes. Classes in certain subjects, such as Political Science and Business Law, would seem particularly suitable for this endeavor. Also, the comparatively large size of the College of Education would seem to create ripe opportunities for that College to have various events where high profile leaders at the elementary-secondary and post-secondary levels of education could play important roles.

VISION 2020

Faculty



Goals, Rationales, and Tactics

Goal 1: Expect and support more academic research from the faculty.

Rationale: Research activities by faculty should be an integral element of a university environment, especially within institutions offering graduate programs. The creation of graduate programs was recognized as an opportunity by the Vision 2020 Committee, and focus groups were also supportive of this idea. The lack of adequate incentives for research and service by the faculty was identified by the Vision 2020 Committee as a weakness of Athens State University.

Tactic 1: Reward faculty excellence in research, teaching and service. This set of rewards should include both symbolic and tangible incentives, such as public recognition, monetary awards, promotion, etc.

Tactic 2: Examine faculty workloads and make them consistent with a university environment that nurtures research and service roles by its faculty. The use of graduate

assistants, increased support staff, and reduced class loads or class enrollments should be considered.

Tactic 3: Implement sabbaticals and other special avenues for research and professional development.

Tactic 4: Reformulate faculty evaluation, tenure, and promotion processes to reflect and support this goal.

Tactic 5: Create a high level staff position at the University dedicated solely to the pursuit of grants from the public and private sectors. The University should undertake a thorough national search for this individual and provide adequate staff and other resources for this office.

Goal 2: Focus on hiring a more diverse faculty capable of greater productivity in academic research and with better preparation for teaching graduate courses.

Rationale: The process and timetable for employment of faculty was identified as a problem at Athens State. Maximization of taxpayer dollars for faculty resources necessitates that the University enter the national academic labor market at opportune times. The current process is driven by the State's budget cycle, resulting in last minute job advertisements and an unnecessarily limited pool of qualified applicants. Greater sensitivity to faculty skills and expertise is especially important as the University contemplates graduate programs. Selection of faculty exclusively for undergraduate teaching roles does not serve the long-term development of the University. Also, a regional university serving largely Alabamians should make a special effort to recruit faculty from a wide variety of backgrounds, so that faculty can provide a surrogate multicultural experience for students. Diversification of the faculty in the fullest sense of the term becomes a mechanism through which students of the north Alabama region acquire a larger perspective about humanity. The assorted ideas and values brought to campus by a diverse faculty virtually guarantee a university with greater intellectual energy stemming from the competition of ideas.

Tactic 1: Reform the University's faculty hiring process. Undertake specific efforts to hire a diverse faculty by beginning job searches near the beginning of the Fall academic term and by advertising using methods that reach a genuinely national pool of applicants.

Tactic 2: Institute a faculty personnel policy that makes possession of a terminal degree in the teaching field a highly desirable if not required trait for initial appointment to a full-time, tenure-track position as well as for subsequent promotion or tenure.

VISION 2020

Goal 3: Develop additional policies and procedures to guarantee the academic integrity of all Athens State University classes.

Rationale: Insufficient sensitivity to issues of academic integrity was identified by the Vision 2020 Committee as a weakness of Athens State University. The academic reputation of an institution is often the ultimate measure of the value of degrees awarded. Therefore, any university must be cognizant of academic practices which potentially undermine its image among academics, employers, and the general public. Institutions, such as Athens State, which are heavily dependent upon revenue from tuition and undertake to implement quickly a new distance learning paradigm for instructional services, should be especially vigilant in trying to identify and eliminate academic practices that might undermine confidence in the educational experience of the students.

Tactic 1: Reduce the percentage of courses taught by adjunct instructors by adding full-time faculty to those programs with the largest proportion of adjuncts.

Tactic 2: Require all major exams to be proctored or monitored, and insist that students provide proof of identity.

Tactic 3: Provide an IT orientation for faculty which includes software training and effective applications of hardware and software for distance learning instruction.

Tactic 4: Provide organized training and supervision of adjunct faculty to ensure compliance with University policies and basic academic norms for grading and evaluation.

VISION 2020

Goal 4: Increase and strengthen the role of faculty in University governance.

Rationale: A university's faculty is essentially responsible for the core societal function of a university – to generate and convey knowledge and skills. The collective experiences and judgment of a university faculty are vast regarding academic issues in higher education. For this reason, after adequate deliberation, there should be substantial deference to faculty opinion about two issues. Those issues are curriculum (what subjects should be taught) and pedagogy (how subjects should be taught). Other non-academic elements of a university's operation, such as facilities and staffing, may impact these academic issues, so faculty opinion should be considered on them as well. And finally, effective inclusion of faculty views during University policymaking about almost any topic should also improve or streamline the actual implementation of such policies.

Tactic 1: Clarify the role of faculty in University governance. This endeavor should take the form of a document specifying with greater precision the topics about which the faculty should play a meaningful role in policy making.

Tactic 2: Conduct an annual meeting between the central administration and the Faculty Senate. Similarly structured

gatherings may also be held on a case-by-case basis for high profile issues.

Tactic 3: Work to educate faculty about their fiducial role at the University. This tactic should be implemented as part of an improved faculty orientation program.

Tactic 4: Ensure adequate faculty input in all workload-related decisions through deliberation of these issues before the Faculty Senate.

VISION 2020

VISION 2020

Degree Programs



Goals, Rationales, and Tactics

Goal 1: Expand the scope and delivery of course offerings.

Rationale: Public universities operate in an increasingly dynamic social and economic environment. Therefore, course offerings and degree programs in the future are more likely to be fluid and less constrained by traditional disciplinary alignments. Also, at a commuter institution, there must be almost constant concern about accessibility to instructional services for students who desire a diverse set of learning environments. Athens State must also be mindful of the growing number of Americans who contemplate advanced degrees and the inability of the University to currently serve any of this clientele. It is the presence of graduate or professional degree programs that contributes greatly to activities, such as research and service, associated with a fully functional university culture housing faculty with research-oriented doctoral degrees.

Tactic 1: Develop a small number of graduate programs that are not duplicative of current offerings in the Tennessee Valley region of north Alabama.

The selection of these new graduate programs should carefully consider, among other factors, the impact of graduate programs upon current baccalaureate programs, the resources needed to develop graduate programs that genuinely reflect regional or national excellence, the availability of faculty and library resources, current and future student demand for a projected graduate program among undergraduate students and alumni of Athens State, changes in professional roles and requirements of faculty in graduate programs, and the potential for partnership with high profile universities.

Tactic 2: Identify and deliver continuing education programs with a special focus on those instructional activities that lead to certification or recertification in high demand occupations, or programs that attract a growing number of retirees who periodically engage in intellectual pursuits for recreation or personal enhancement.

Tactic 3: Experiment with innovative class offerings that provide flexibility for both the traditional student and the student taking coursework in a so-called blended arrangement. These potential innovations should perhaps

include instruction on weekends, during holiday periods, or via highly compressed or accelerate sessions.

Tactic 4: Create interdisciplinary degree programs to maximize the appropriateness of a degree program for certain job markets, to perhaps achieve greater efficiencies in the use of the faculty personnel, and to broaden the intellectual perspectives of students in a degree program. The existing undergraduate program in Behavioral Science is an example of this type of interdisciplinary program and resulting benefits.

Tactic 5: Assess the feasibility of a joint baccalaureate degree program with Calhoun Community College in the fine arts to include the performing arts.

Goal 2: Enhance the quality and consistency of all degree programs.

Rationale: In the development of a university, there is always the potential for positive synergism between growth and quality. Ideally, each one “feeds” the other. Growth creates a larger critical mass of resources with the potential for enhanced quality, while quality fosters an enhanced image that can serve as both a “magnet” for additional students and perhaps justification for higher tuition. However, an institution that fails to adequately emphasize quality in its programming loses the potential for this synergism. At any institution, as it gets bigger, it is equally important to ask: is it getting better?

Tactic 1: Implement discipline-specific writing requirements in all academic majors to ensure good faith compliance with the recently adopted Quality Enhancement Plan.

Tactic 2: Communicate the current core competencies for admission with greater clarity to students and faculty, and establish, with extensive faculty participation, a new set of core competencies, if appropriate, and strictly enforce these admission standards.

Tactic 3: Adopt enrollment caps on distance learning courses, while recognizing that these limitations may vary based upon the subject matter of the course or the technology utilized.

Tactic 4: Establish rules and guidelines for the courses taught by multiple instructors by providing for “leads” or “anchors”, who would serve as mentors for less experienced faculty.

Tactic 5: Establish quality standards for the use of technology in instruction for all academic programs, and ensure that these standards are communicated and effectively enforced.

VISION 2020

Goal 3: Identify the student clientele of degree programs at Athens State University by using more sophisticated methods and implementing innovative marketing strategies to appeal to these targeted audiences, and establish and sustain a comprehensive enrollment management system to track students from point of interest through application, entry, graduation, and as alumni.

Rationale: Every successful organization must understand its principal clientele. In the case of a university, that critical clientele is the student body. Athens State University does not have a comprehensive Enrollment Management Plan that covers short range and long range enrollment, recruitment, student services and retention objectives and tactics. To ensure success in the aforementioned areas, a plan should be developed. The development of the plan should be coordinated by the Vice President for Enrollment and Student Support Services and should include extensive input from and involvement by a committee comprised of faculty from the three University colleges, staff, students, and alumni.

The effective marketing of an institution requires reliable data about three critical subjects. These subjects are: (1) an understanding of key institutional strengths, (2) the systematic identification of potential students seeking an institution with those strengths, and (3) the communication of this information in a cogent and timely manner. The recruitment of students is of special importance to Athens

State University in light of three other, state universities within close proximity.

Recruitment is especially problematic for an upper division (junior-senior) institution which must attract students after they have enrolled at another institution of higher learning. Therefore, the upper division structure of Athens State University makes a commitment to sophisticated and innovative recruitment even more critical to its operation and success of academic programs than would be the case at most universities. Nevertheless, the importance of recruitment is evident at any college or university, since it ultimately impacts the quality of student and the viability of programs within the institution.

Tactic 1: Develop via an Enrollment Management Committee an innovative and very proactive recruitment strategy directed toward community college students and other target populations, such as high school students. Elements of this strategy should be to forge partnerships with high schools, community colleges, and magnet schools, and should reinvigorate the concept of 2+2 with community colleges.

Tactic 2: Develop and promote via an Enrollment Management Committee special on-campus activities and events for and among high school and community college students.

Tactic 3: Clarify the role and improve the quality of services rendered by the University Centers.

Athens State operates University Centers on Redstone Arsenal and, in light of its assigned duty to be an upper division institution for the State's community college system, at a select number of community college campuses in Alabama. The focus of Center activities is and should remain to facilitate a smooth transfer for the student who desires to enter the University. To accomplish this objective, the Centers should improve their capacities and administrative processes for recruitment, admission, academic advisement, financial aid, and acquisition of books and other classroom supplies. The Centers should develop and make a special effort to conduct a student orientation for Center-based, Athens State enrollees, and to perhaps implement a joint admission process with the community college. The Centers should continue to perform exam proctoring. If staffing levels and schedules of Athens State University Center personnel preclude the operation of a testing center routinely during daytime and nighttime hours, then Athens State should undertake a cooperative arrangement with the community college's testing center for this important instructional support function.

Tactic 4: Develop and maintain an accurate database comprised of current students and alumni.

Currently, there are five different methods at Athens State University for storing permanent student records: 1)

records from 1995 to current are in Banner; 2) some records from around 1970 to 1994 are in paper form in Admissions; 3) some records from this era are being converted to images through a system purchased that is incompatible with the Banner system; 4) records before 1970 are on microfilm in a bank vault; 5) the very oldest ones are in paper form in the Gymnasium vault. If using the University's latest imaging system, records are only capable of being retrieved through two access points: name and social security number. All student records, past and present, need to be consolidated in a single unified database that will also allow retrieval through other access points needed by Alumni, such as the year of graduation and major field of study.

Tactic 5: Improve student retention by attempting to interview students who leave the University without graduating.

To better understand and subsequently improve student retention, the Enrollment Management Plan should include specific activities that lead to the identification and contact of students who either withdraw from Athens State or do not return for a term following initial enrollment. These activities should include a formal withdrawal process that includes a brief exit interview or survey. Ideally, all students not withdrawing, but not returning for enrollment prior to graduation, should be personally contacted by staff to determine reasons for not returning and their plans for future enrollment.

Tactic 6: Utilize emerging computer technologies to promote the Athens State “brand” through phenomena known as data mining, Second Life, social networking, and phone Apps. These relatively new avenues of communication are increasingly prevalent among college age students.

Tactic 7: Make the webpage of the University more dynamic and interactive for the user by incorporating features, such as greater use of video blogs and on a periodic basis profiling a particular academic program or activity.

Tactic 8: Recognize the core competitive advantages of Athens State and leverage them consistently in brand marketing with potential emphasis on factors, such as cost, quality, location, and flexibility of scheduling.

Tactic 9: Utilize faculty and current students in recruitment activities to enhance the level and quality of discipline or program-specific recruiting.

Tactic 10: Set measurable (numerical) goals for recruitment.

Tactic 11: Use scholarships as a marketing tool with special consideration to the needs of a closer and more effective working relationship with Phi Theta Kappa and full-time faculty at community colleges, and the possibility of joint (community college and Athens State) scholarships offered to high school seniors.

Tactic 12: Undertake a special initiative with community college faculty and human resource departments at selected businesses to identify and recruit math and science majors.

VISION 2020