



Associated Student Government
Fall 2017 State of the Students Address
Tuesday, November 28, 2017 | 6:00 p.m.

The Associated Student Government is an organization in place to serve students and be their active voice. We, as an organization, are here to provide a memorable experience to all students that they will take with them for years to come. We are here to empower other student leaders and help them better their organization for the benefit of all students. We are here to build new relationships and strengthen old ones, and to take ASG and our mission to places at this university that it has never been before. We are here to bring new ideas and improve old ones, making good on the promises that we pledge to keep.

As student leaders, this work is not for ourselves or for our own glory. Rather, we sacrifice our time and effort for the chance to serve the best thing that this university has to offer: our peers. This institution is growing fast and things are changing. However, one thing that remains the same is that our students create an environment where greatness not only lives, but thrives.

And ladies and gentlemen, it is for this reason that I can confidently say that:
The State of the Students is strong

Just a little less than a year ago, it began as promise; a promise to go “All In for Arkansas”. This rallying cry was founded on the idea that it would take our total commitment to get things done. But what we knew all along is that we cannot do this alone. We would give all that we had to the university and its students. But in order, for this year to be a success, it had to be a collaborative effort.

We began this summer, meeting and engaging the Class of 2021. We told them our mission and taught them that this institution is a place where excellence is not simply encouraged but it is expected. We expressed to them that freshman are a vital part of this university and, through the leadership of Abigail Walker and her team, we continue to give freshman the tools in order to be the future of this great institution.

Secretary Ashton Yarbrough and Vice President Natalie Counce have worked tirelessly to take staple ASG initiatives such as the Chancellor’s Ball, Homecoming, and the Welcome Back Cookout to new heights. Through pairings with organizations like Headliners Concert Committee, Student Alumni Association, Greek Life, and many other RSOs, we have seen an increase in interest and attendance at all ASG events. These widely successful events will set standards for future administrations and I hope that we continue to work with other organizations in order to connect the campus community.

We supported [ASG Joint Bill 9](#) and thanks to GSC Speaker Arley Ward II and the Graduate Student Congress, this autonomous graduate student government initiative passed a student referendum vote to give an underrepresented group of students the power to make their voice heard. The GSC’s success did not stop there. They were awarded a bid to host the 2018 National Association of Graduate and Professional Students (NAGPS) National Conference and the GSC also won South Regional and National Member of the Year in NAGPS. These achievements are just small tokens of what this amazing body has done for this organization and university. I look forward to the hard-work that they will do moving forward.

The ASG student senate under the leadership of Chair Colman Betler continues to pursue writing and drafting legislation that will affect this university in a positive way. I am proud to work with such a passionate group of student leaders who care about impacting this university and its students.

Under the leadership of Treasurer Macarena Arce, the Office of Financial Affairs board has allocated over \$89,000 dollars of student fee money to over 80 registered student organizations on campus. Treasurer Arce and her team have been one of the most effective boards that this organization has ever seen, and they have engaged many different organizations in order to help make their events a reality. Through ASG's relationship with SOOIE, I look forward to seeing what organizations OFA is able to help next.

We have put an emphasis on student advocacy through The Razorback Action Group. Director Trevor Villines and his team have been hard at work in order to establish better relationships with legislators and local officials in the city and state. This group will complete an Honor Roll at the end of the year that will recognize those representatives that have created and supported legislation that improves Higher Education within the state. This is the most proactive nonpartisan advocacy group seeking to represent the interests of the University of Arkansas. I am very excited for what this group will accomplish by the end of the year.

The executive cabinet took our promises and initiatives and made them a reality. We promised to make ASG a more diverse and inclusive organization. We promised to create a united campus outcry against sexual assault. Through Diversity and Inclusion week, It's On US week, and Health Days. These initiatives have become a reality this semester.

All of these are accomplishments are something to be proud of. However, we will not stop here.

Moving forward, it is obvious that this university is changing. And that being said, ASG must adapt as well. In the Chancellor's [Eight Guiding Priorities](#), he states that his number one priority is Student Success. The Chancellor hopes to create a student success center at the university. This place will be a one-stop shop for students and will include all areas of academic student success on campus. This center will be much like the Jerry and Gene Jones Family Student-Athlete Success Center and will allow our students the opportunity to be more successful at the University of Arkansas. And this spring, this idea will be piloted near the Garland Avenue University Bookstore. I encourage all students to go and check it out.

I believe that in the upcoming semester ASG can help the Chancellor advance student success on campus by turning our focus toward a few initiatives.

We will do this by first advocating to see Mullins Library be turned into a 24 hour library for students for certain days during the week. This is an initiative that has been pursued in the past without success. However, with data used from our last student poll, it is the one initiative that students are most excited to see ASG pursue. Today, we live in a culture that runs non-stop, and I believe that it crucial for a university that emphasizes student success to provide a safe and quiet place for students to go in order to succeed academically no matter what hour of the day or night.

Second, ASG will pursue an expansion of the Grade Forgiveness Policy. This idea was created in order for students to be given the opportunity to finish their academic tenure the way that they intended to finish. College is a learning experience, and this way every student can finish their time satisfied with their results in the classroom if they choose to do so.

Finally, the Associated Student Government will be writing and revising its Constitution and Code. A committee has been created and chosen from the different branches and areas of ASG. The committee looks forward to tackling this project and is excited for the opportunity to outline the rules and guidelines of the organization for years to come.

As I take a look at the next semester, I realize that these initiatives are not easy. Nothing worthwhile is. They will take a lot of time and effort in order to complete but I'm encouraged by this quote from Reed Markham: "Successful Leaders see the opportunities in every difficulty rather than the difficulty in every opportunity."

On that note, ASG has a great relationship with our athletic department. I appreciate all that Jeff Long and Bret Bielema did for our students at the University of Arkansas. They truly cared about students and always wanted to know what they could do to help the student body as a whole and I thank them for this! That being said, I have full faith in Interim AD Peoples, Chancellor Steinmetz, the search committee, and the Board of Trustees. These people have tough decisions to make and I know that they have the university's best interest at heart. My hope and prayer is that the next Athletic Director and Head Coach care for students as much as Coach Bielema and Dr. Long did.

In conclusion, throughout my four years at this university one term that I have heard over and over again is legacy. At the University of Arkansas, one day your name will be etched in stone forever. How will you leave this university in a better place than when you arrived?

For the longest time, I struggled with how to answer this question, however I think that this quote from former student body president Bo Renner provides a pretty adequate answer: "Legacy or significance is not about what you do at all. It is who you are in the lives of others."

This being said, I hope that this organization and the members of ASG, can continue to have positive impacts on the lives of other students. The blunt truth for each student leader in this room today, including myself, is that in a few short years our names may be forgotten. Our titles are only temporary, but the impact we can make on the lives of students will last forever.

God Bless and Go Hogs

Andrew Counce
96th Student Body President