

**SGA,
CONTINUED**

“It will kind of be like a pilot for that program (Swipe Out Hunger),” Kirksey said. “People who have an excess amount of meal blocks within the caf will be able to give those away to those who don’t have access to a good hot meal. Those will mostly be students able to use meal blocks. That’s kind of how that pilot will work for that program then going on to the next semester and working from there.”

SGA met with Jonesboro Mayor Harold Copenhaver Tuesday to discuss sustainability initiatives for both A-State and Jonesboro.

Kirksey said he hopes to create a city wide composting

system that would be in collaboration with A-State.

SGA is also in talks with A-State about a sustainability plan.

“We are presenting our sustainability proposal to the university this coming Monday,” Kirksey said. “After I ran that by Dr. Dampousse in the past, he loves ideas of us becoming a more eco-friendly university.”

Kirksey said Spack and dining services General Manager Daniel McLain are in support of the sustainability initiatives as well.

The SGA president said he knows if they pass the sustainability plan it will be a great

step in the future for A-State.

“After getting full approval from all of them then presenting a resolution and working out the logistics of it and how it will work for the university over the next three to five years, I’m pretty sure it’ll be extremely significant for our university,” Kirksey said. “It will definitely bring great joy to me because I think that is a step that SGA would have passed something so prominent that I haven’t seen done in my time here at A-State.”

As SGA president and a Black student at A-State, Kirksey talked about the importance of Black History Month. Kirksey emphasized he

looks at Black history as his history and he doesn’t just take the initiative to learn about Black history in February. It’s a year round undertaking.

“I have always been eager to learn about Black history, about where my people have come from, since growing up,” Kirksey said. “It’s one of the reasons that inspired me to go down the path that I am going. Being able to go into the justice field, Thurgood Marshall, who I greatly look up to, has inspired me to take the path that I am in college. To pursue law school, to pursue a legal career.”

Although Kirksey said he hates that because of the

pandemic A-State hasn’t been able to do as much for BHM in person as usual, the virtual aspect of many events has allowed people who might not have been able to come in person to show up for BHM events.

On Instagram, SGA is highlighting prominent members of Black history in Arkansas this month. Kirksey said once people realize the impact different Black people have had on people’s daily lives and the barriers those people broke, it is essential to celebrate them.

“I can’t speak enough of how much this month means to me and how much it means for our

university,” Kirksey said. “That goes back to a resolution we passed this fall that called for the renaming of our military sciences building after Lt. Col. Frederick Turner Jr.”

Looking ahead through the rest of the semester, new SGA elections are on the horizon as students will start campaigning March 8 and elections will take place March 17-18.

Kirksey’s last day in office will be April 13.

As his time winds down in office, Kirksey is still hard at work looking to get things accomplished before the next administration comes in.

Henderson State University joins the Arkansas State University System

**SAM SCOTT
NEWS WRITER**

It is now official: Henderson State University gains new membership in the Arkansas State University System.

Signed into official status by Gov. Asa Hutchinson under Act 18 of the 93rd General Assembly of Arkansas on Feb. 2, Henderson State University became the seventh institution into the ASU System. It also gains significance as the second four-year university in the system, alongside A-State. This marks the final step in the transition process, since it was first approved on Dec. 6, 2019 by the ASU Board of Trustees.

“Our Board of Trustees voted to merge Henderson State into our System for a variety of reasons,” said Dr. Chuck Welch, president of the Arkansas State University System. “We all believed that we could provide the support services

necessary to help Henderson prosper moving forward.”

Having an institution like Henderson State into the fold could provide the ASU System a vital asset for efficiency, in terms of cost and student management.

“The addition of Henderson gives our system a stronger foothold in South Arkansas and provides excellent collaboration opportunities for our other six campuses,” Welch said. “The ASU System will gain greater operating efficiencies by adding a seventh campus, and the opportunities for curricular collaboration, student transfer, and other partnerships are endless.”

Adding Henderson State University into the system marks the continuation of a trend happening for the past six years. In 2015, Mid-South Community College in West Memphis joined the system as Arkansas State University Mid-South. The College of the Ouachitas in



PHOTO COURTESY OF A-STATE NEWS | NEWS RELEASE
Gov. Asa Hutchinson signed Act 18 of the 93rd General Assembly of Arkansas to officially make Henderson State University part of the Arkansas State University system. Arkansas State University System President Dr. Chuck Welch looks on.

Malvern was the previous addition, as it transitioned into Arkansas State University Three Rivers in January 2020.

As for the reasons for the ASU System to add new institutions, Welch said, “Additional campuses in the ASU System bring a multitude

of benefits including operating efficiencies, cost-sharing and shared service opportunities, curriculum collaboration, greater student transfer opportunities, and many other collaboration opportunities.”

Located in Arkadelphia, Henderson State University

is the second oldest public university in Arkansas as it was first founded in 1890. The university has approximately 3,200 students enrolled and offers undergraduate and graduate degrees into multiple studies, including business, education, the arts, sciences, and even having the only aviation degree available in Arkansas. Henderson State’s athletics teams, the Reddies, compete in the NCAA Division II level in the Great American Conference.

When asked about what Henderson State’s addition would mean to students, Welch sees bigger possibilities for them.

“This means that any student enrolled at an ASU System campus will have greater opportunities because of this relationship. From more student transfer possibilities, to academic program offerings, to lower costs because of efficiencies, etc,” Welch said.

As for future plans, there are not any potential campuses

being accessed to be added into the system, although it could be a possible suggestion later on.

Welch expressed satisfaction for Henderson State University entering into the ASU System, as he said, “I think the opportunities are endless, and I am appreciative that both Boards of Trustees, Gov. Hutchinson and the Arkansas General Assembly all agreed and supported this merger.”

He also sees many opportunities continuing to grow for A-State students and beyond.

“Our A-State students should be very proud that our System continues to grow and is widely recognized as a leader in higher education in Arkansas,” Welch said. “This merger will afford us many opportunities to be more efficient, contain costs, provide additional academic options for students, and influence public policy in Arkansas to ensure that our campuses and students are well represented.”

Mardi Gras celebrations to start soon, could look different amid pandemic

**COURTNEY EDWARDS
NEWS WRITER**

In America, Mardi Gras is known as a celebration in Louisiana, specifically in New Orleans. While some may think Mardi Gras is a day-long celebration, it actually leads up to Fat Tuesday, a Christian feasting celebration.

“Mardi Gras” is actually French for Fat Tuesday. Mardi Gras celebrations start on Jan. 6 and continue until the day of Fat Tuesday, which marks the beginning of the Lenten period.

Fat Tuesday takes place the day before Ash Wednesday, which begins the tradition known as Lent. Lent is a 40-day ceremony in which participants sacrifice something, such as eating junk food or posting to social media. This sacrifice symbolizes the sacrifice Jesus made to save Christians from their sins.

Ash Wednesday is the first day of the Lenten period, leading up to Easter, the day Christians believe Jesus was resurrected. On Ash

Wednesday, Christians will wear ashes on their forehead to symbolize death and repentance.

Mardi Gras is also known as Fat Tuesday because it is the last day before fasting begins. It is a day of indulgence and celebration. Galas, parades and parties will take over the cities for Mardi Gras celebrations. Mardi Gras is a Louisiana state holiday, even though it is celebrated throughout the U.S.

Mardi Gras’s origins can be traced back to the 17th century in medieval Europe. It is believed to have made it to North America in 1699 when French-Canadian explorer, Pierre Le Moyne d’Iberville camped not far from the future location of New Orleans. He knew it was Fat Tuesday in France and decided to name his campsite “Point du Mardi Gras,” where he held a small gala.

It’s not necessary to be a Christian to celebrate Mardi Gras, even though it stems from a Christian tradition. Christians typically follow Fat Tuesday traditions rather than celebrating Mardi Gras, as it is usually considered

a non-religious holiday.

Mardi Gras traditions include parades, wearing masks (the kind associated with masquerades, not the kind to keep from spreading COVID-19), coconut throwing, flambeaux, bead throwing, king cake, and the King of Carnival, Rex.

The colors associated with Mardi Gras are purple, green, and gold. Purple symbolizes justice, green represents faith, and gold signifies power. If one wears these colors to a Mardi Gras parade, they’ll acquire more beads. All kinds of things are thrown from parade floats, but beads are the most common.

When it comes to wearing masks, it’s actually illegal for someone riding on a parade float to show their face. This tradition dates back to a time when masquerades were the only way for different classes to celebrate together.

Actually throwing coconuts has since evolved to simply giving away coconuts since throwing them caused people to get injured. But, if one receives a coconut during a



PHOTO COURTESY OF A-STATE STUDENT ACTIVITIES BOARD
Mardi Gras is coming up as Fat Tuesday is Feb. 16. A-State has celebrated Mardi Gras in the past with a crawfish celebration on the lawn in front of the Student Union as seen above.

Mardi Gras celebration, it’s considered a special prize.

The flambeaux tradition comes from the use of torches helping a horse-drawn carriage see the parade at night. Since the torches were often carried by enslaved individuals, the tradition continues in remembrance of the cultural history it represents.

The king cake served at Mardi Gras celebrations has a

small, porcelain baby hidden in it. The baby symbolizes luck and prosperity to whoever finds it. The finder of the baby also gets to be “king” for a day.

The King of the Carnival, Rex is the Mardi Gras mascot. Every year, Rex receives the key to the city from the mayor of New Orleans.

Because of the on-going pandemic, some of these traditions will not be

celebrated the same this year. Thankfully, there are ways to celebrate safely from home:

- Bake a king cake (just remember to decorate it with purple, green, and gold).
- Watch Mardi Gras parades from previous years.
- Build float dioramas using shoe boxes.
- Host a small party with friends/host an online party.