



## **Carolyn Peluso Atkins, Ed. D., Professor**

**Coordinator, Presidential Ambassadors Program**

**West Virginia University**

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Dr. Carolyn Peluso Atkins is a professor in the Eberly College of Arts and Sciences at West Virginia University. She received all of her degrees—a bachelor's and master's in rhetoric and public address, a master's in speech-language pathology, and a doctorate in curriculum and instruction—from WVU. She also received the Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology from the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association.

The recipient of numerous teaching awards, Dr. Atkins was the 2005 West Virginia CASE Professor of the Year. This national teaching award, sponsored by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, is based on dedication to teaching, commitment to students, and innovative instructional methods.

Dr. Atkins also received the WVU Foundation Award for Outstanding Teacher, the Golden Key International Honour Society Golden Apple Award for Outstanding Teacher, and the WVU College of Human Resources and Education Award for Outstanding Teacher on two occasions. In 2002, she was selected as Most Loyal Faculty Mountaineer; in 2004 and 2014, she received the College of Human Resources and Education Laddie Bell Award for Distinguished Service. Inducted into Mountain Honorary, she was named Italian-American Woman of the Year by the Clarksburg Italian Heritage Festival in 2006. In 2009, she received the WVU Student Affairs Outstanding Achievement Award. In 2013, she was selected by the WVU Department of Intercollegiate Athletics as Honorary Captain of the Big XII Inaugural Basketball Game against Oklahoma. In 2017, she received the Nicholas Evans Excellence in Advising Award.

Having served on more than 100 committees at WVU, Dr. Atkins chaired the Faculty Senate and was WVU Faculty Advocate for the Class of 2001. She has served on University committees including the Faculty Senate, Advisory Council for Alcohol and Other Drugs, the Athletic Council, the Honorary Degree Committee, and the Outstanding Senior/Order of Augusta Selection Committee. She chaired the Human Resources & Education Hall of Fame/Outstanding Distinguished Alumnus Selection Committee as well as the Speech Pathology & Audiology Undergraduate Affairs Committee. She has been an invited speaker at many university and statewide events, including

Named an Outstanding WVU Honors Advisor, Dr. Atkins has taught several public speaking classes with sections for student-athletes, military veterans, and students enrolled in the Honors College. She also taught the senior capstone course in Communication Sciences and Disorders, is the author of numerous refereed publications, and has made over 200 presentations to regional, state, and national audiences.

Atkins is most recognized as the creator of “Student Athletes Speak Out,” a service-based program that prepared WVU student-athletes for public speaking through development of communication skills and self-confidence. In 2007 and 2008, she created and sent character education DVDs featuring nine WVU student-athletes to all middle schools in West Virginia and developed an accompanying web site (<http://saso.wvu.edu>). In 2008, she published *Great Unexpectedions: Lessons from the Hearts of College Athletes*, a book about her teaching experiences. As a result of a generous donation, the book was sent to all middle schools and all public libraries in the State of West Virginia. In 2012, Atkins published a children's book entitled *Living Life the West Virginia Way*. A celebration of West Virginia, the book features facts about the state, information about attending college, and positive character traits exhibited by those who live their lives the West Virginia way. Former Mountaineer basketball standout, Nathan Adrian, helped Atkins “tell” the story via [video](#). Also in 2012, Atkins created twenty-six radio announcements and two videos targeted for middle school audiences: [Bullying is NEVER okay!](#) and [Character.Own.it](#). Participants included twelve WVU student-athletes and the Mountaineer mascot.

In spring 2019, she created the Presidential Ambassadors Program at West Virginia University which encompasses [Presidential Student Ambassadors](#) (PSAs) and [Presidential Augusta Ambassadors](#) (PAA). Faculty nominate freshman and sophomore students with a minimum 3.7 grade point average for the PSA program which helps to foster a spirit of service and leadership as they advocate for WVU. In addition, PSAs enroll in two classes taught by Atkins, and they engage with their peers, prospective students, and the campus community to offer suggestions, advice, and feedback regarding the college experience.

In the Presidential Augusta Ambassadors program, Atkins reconnects with former [Order of Augusta](#) recipients who are willing to return to engage with the PSAs and the WVU community as part of the *Welcome Home Initiative*.