



## **Dr. Carolyn Peluso Atkins, Professor Emerita, West Virginia University**

Dr. Carolyn Peluso Atkins, Assistant to the President and Coordinator of the [Presidential Ambassadors Program](#), is a Professor Emerita 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 is the author of numerous refereed publications, books, and has made over 200 presentations to regional, state, and national audiences.

Since 2019, Atkins has served as the Coordinator of the Presidential Ambassadors Program, which includes the [Presidential Student Ambassadors](#), [Presidential Augusta Ambassadors](#), and [Presidential Distinguished Ambassadors](#). All three programs encompass leadership, service, and public speaking. The Presidential Student Ambassadors have recorded over 700 speeches and podcasts to provide peer advice about the college experience and West Virginia University ([PSAs from the PSAs](#)). They have been guest speakers to a variety of community and WVU audiences, including prospective students and their families. In addition, [former Order of Augusta recipients](#) and [former WVU students/distinguished graduates](#) speak to the PSAs about their leadership journeys as part of the [Presidential Ambassador Welcome Home Initiative](#).

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; she was also inducted into Mountain Honorary. In 2006, she was named Italian-American Woman of the Year by the Clarksburg Italian Heritage Festival. In 2009, she received the WVU Student Affairs Outstanding Achievement Award. She was selected by student-athletes to be the Honorary Captain for the WVU Volleyball Team in 2010 and the Honorary Captain of the Inaugural Big 12 basketball game in 2013. Atkins was one of five WVU faculty honored in *Standing on the Shoulders of Giants*, featured in the *West Virginia University Alumni Magazine*, Spring 2012. She was a member of the Board of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and serves as advisor to FCA and the Presidential Student Ambassadors Council.

Having served on more than 100 committees at WVU, Dr. Atkins chaired the Faculty Senate and was named WVU Faculty Advocate for the Class of 2001. Selected as an Outstanding WVU Honors Advisor, Dr. Atkins was the director of the undergraduate program in Communication Sciences and Disorders, supervised student clinicians, and taught the departmental capstone course. She has been an invited speaker at many university and statewide events, including WVU Commencement, CEHS Commencement, and the Author's Forum at the Italian Heritage Festival in Clarksburg.

In 2026, both she and her husband, Billy, received the [Earl Core Award](#) from the Morgantown Area Partnership. The award is the organization's highest honor, recognizing individuals with a multi-generational legacy of outstanding community service, leadership, and economic impact in Monongalia County, West Virginia. It is not awarded annually, but specifically honors those showing exceptional dedication to improving regional quality of life.

Atkins is most recognized as the creator of various student programs, including Veterans Speak Out. From 1990-2016, she developed "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 Unexpectations: 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 West Virginia. In 2012, she 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. In 2026, she added a *Teacher's Guide* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) to the book to facilitate discussion and creative discussion. 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.](#) After former student Joe Mazzulla coached the Boston Celtics to the NBA national championship in 2024, she was a guest on [365 Sports](#) podcast.