



KENTUCKY STATE UNIVERSITY

LAND GRANT PROGRAM

NEWLY REOPENED ATWOOD RESEARCH FACILITY HAS RICH HISTORY AT KENTUCKY STATE UNIVERSITY

The people, and what they did there, linger in memories more than the building itself.

Newly pledged fraternity members performed a step show. Colleagues gathered around the coffee pot.

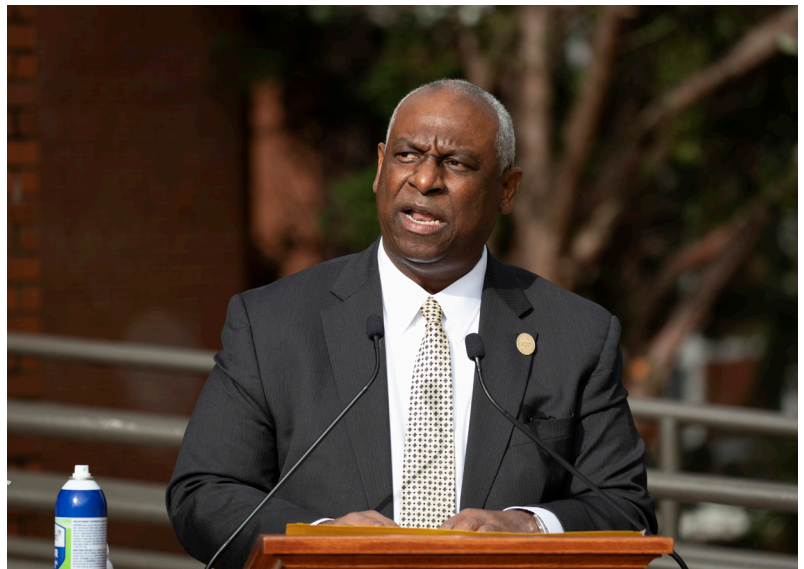
Rufus B. Atwood Research Facility [reopened](#), newly renovated, in October 2020, but the building has been part of Kentucky State University's campus since the 1970s. Originally a dining hall called Underwood, the building now known as Atwood has undergone two renovations in the last four decades.

In the late 1970s, Derrick Graham— [now representing Kentucky's 57th district in the state House](#)— was a student who swapped food with his friends in the Underwood cafeteria. Administrative assistant Susan Templeton's office was upstairs, where she could smell chitlins when they were on the menu.

"You would get a lot more odor than at other times," Templeton said. Other smells from her many years in the building come back to her— popcorn popping in the microwave across from her office, cinnamon coffee that was the favorite of one of her colleagues, pawpaws after a tasting contest.

A student at the university from 1976 to 1980, Graham remembers Underwood as a place of community.

"It was a place where you could go and basically unwind for a moment," Graham said.



TOP: The newly renovated Rufus B. Atwood Research Facility on October 21, 2020

ABOVE: Rep. Derrick Graham speaks during the Rufus B. Atwood Research Facility ribbon cutting ceremony on October 30, 2020.



The arches from the original building are visible during a construction update tour of Rufus B. Atwood Research Facility on January 8, 2020.

When he remembers Underwood, Graham remembers being young— hanging out with his friends and his fraternity brothers. He also remembers, as a participant and an observer, when new pledges would march through the cafeteria and perform a step show at the end of Greek Week.

In the 1980s, Underwood was renovated to be a classroom and office building and renamed Atwood, after [Rufus B. Atwood](#), who served as president of Kentucky State University from 1929 to 1962. Born in Kentucky as the son of formerly enslaved parents, Atwood attended and taught school in segregated school systems. Atwood secured Kentucky State's accreditation and remains the university's longest-serving president.

By that time, Templeton had been relocated to another building, but after the 1986 renovation to make Atwood a research facility, Templeton moved back in. She was there until 2012, when plans for the most recent renovation began. Now that Atwood has reopened, Templeton will soon return to the building once again.

"It's my Alpha and Omega," Templeton said.

Templeton remembers getting her first personal computer while working in that building, and she remembers minor disasters— pipes bursting over Christmas break, for example. Mostly she remembers the people.

"It was a happy place," she said. "People worked together. It was just good people."

Rep. Graham spoke during the October 30, 2020, ribbon cutting of the renovated Atwood Research Facility. Afterwards, he toured the building.

It's changed a lot since he ate his meals there— though the brick arches that marked the dining hall entrance remain.

"It's a beautiful building," Graham said. "A beautiful facility for learning and research."

The building's air conditioning and heating were never working properly in Underwood and Atwood, Templeton remembers— it was always too hot or too cold.

When she moves back in to the new Atwood, she hopes the temperature will be just right.