

ARKANSAS HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD
Regular Quarterly Meeting
April 24, 2026

Minutes of Meeting

The Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) convened its regular meeting on April 24, 2026, at Ozarka College in Melbourne. Acting Chair Lucas Pointer called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and confirmed that a quorum was present.

Coordinating Board present:

Lucas Pointer, Vice Chair
Graycen Bigger
Dr. Jerry Cash
Carolyn Rhinehart

Coordinating Board absent:

Dr. Jim Carr, Chair
Dr. Katherine Dudley, Secretary

Presidents, chancellors, institutional representatives, members of the press, ADHE staff and guests were also present.

Acting Chair Lucas Pointer presented Heather Maxey with a plaque in recognition of her service and expressed his sincere appreciation for her contributions to the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB). He thanked her for her dedication and commitment, which has made a lasting impact on higher education in Arkansas.

Agenda Item No. 1
Welcome

Next, Pointer called on President Josh Wilson for a welcome. Dr. Wilson welcomed Coordinating Board members, ADHE staff, and college and university presidents and chancellors to the Ozarka College campus. He noted that the Arkansas Pie Festival would be held that weekend in Clarksville. Dr. Wilson stated that, since 1975, Ozarka College has proudly served students by providing educational opportunities that lead to meaningful and rewarding careers.

Agenda Item No. 2
Approval of Minutes

Graycen Bigger moved to approve Agenda Item No. 2. Carolyn Rhinehart seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 3
Commissioner's Report

Fiscal Session Update

Commissioner Ken Warden reported that most appropriations have moved through both chambers with little opposition. A key development is that the Governor's proposed balanced budget includes an approximate \$4 million reduction from the Coordinating Board's productivity funding recommendation. Final decisions on the budget will not be made until the passage of the Revenue Stabilization Amendment, which is typically among the final actions of the session. Lawmakers are currently anticipating adjournment on Wednesday, April 29.

America 250

On July 4, 2026, the United States will commemorate its 250th anniversary. In recognition of this milestone, ADHE has provided each institution with a commemorative Arkansas 250 flag to display as part of the semiquincentennial celebration. Warden noted that most institutions have already picked up their flags from the ADHE office.

Website Accessibility

ADHE remains committed to ensuring that all website content meets accessibility standards. If you encounter any inaccessible materials, please notify our office so we can address the issue promptly.

HIRED Grants Update

Dr. Tina Moore presented an overview of the HIRED (Higher Industry Readiness through Educational Development) Grants, a workforce-focused initiative established under the Workforce Initiative Act of 2015 and aligned with the 2024 Arkansas Workforce Strategy. She explained that the program is designed to strengthen Arkansas's workforce pipeline by supporting employer-driven partnerships that develop training programs and career pathways in high-demand industries. Dr. Moore outlined the two funding tracks: Track 1, the Workforce Initiative Grant Program, provides up to \$51 million over five years through planning, implementation, and potential continuation grants, while Track 2, the Arkansas Workforce Strategy Grants, offers up to \$48 million over two years for implementation-focused projects.

She highlighted that funded projects must demonstrate clear workforce demand, include collaboration among employers, higher education institutions, and K–12 partners, and focus on preparing individuals for immediate employment, career advancement, and industry-recognized credentials. Dr. Moore also reviewed the allocation of funds, noting that planning grants totaling approximately \$273,640 were awarded to support initial project development across a range of sectors such as advanced manufacturing, aerospace, cybersecurity, agriculture, and emerging technologies. She further discussed the implementation phase, where over \$26.7 million has been awarded to

institutions to carry out workforce training initiatives, with additional funds remaining for future distribution.

Finally, Dr. Moore explained that continuation grants of up to \$1 million per year for up to three years may be available to high-performing projects that demonstrate measurable success and continued workforce need, emphasizing the program's focus on accountability, outcomes, and long-term impact on Arkansas's economy.

SAU HIRED Grant Update

Sherrell Johnson of Southern Arkansas University (SAU) presented an overview of the institution's HIRED Grant, which focuses on building a strong talent pipeline to support Arkansas's emerging lithium and critical minerals industry. She explained that the initiative is designed to connect education and workforce needs by engaging students early through expanded concurrent Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and increased participation in STEM-focused activities. Johnson highlighted efforts to spark student interest through interactive programming such as STEM nights, while also strengthening partnerships between K–12 schools, higher education, and industry through targeted professional development for educators. She further emphasized the development of industry-driven academic pathways, including Industrial Engineering Technology and Construction Technology, which provide students with clear routes to in-demand careers and increase the number of credentials earned. Overall, Johnson noted that SAU's HIRED Grant is aimed at creating a sustainable, homegrown workforce pipeline that aligns education with industry demands and supports long-term economic growth in Arkansas's critical minerals sector.

Agenda Item No. 4 Annual Report on Student Retention and Graduation

Sonia Hazelwood, Chief Data Officer and Assistant Commissioner, presented the Annual Report on Student Retention and Graduation, providing an overview of how Arkansas institutions compare to national benchmarks and highlighting recent trends across the state. She explained that national retention rates have remained relatively stable, with public 4-year institutions averaging between 78% and 82% and 2-year colleges between 58% and 63% and noted that Arkansas uses IPEDS-based methodologies to calculate its statewide rates.

Hazelwood reported encouraging gains in retention across the state, particularly among 2-year colleges, where many institutions saw increases from the Fall 2023 to Fall 2024 cohorts. Several colleges recorded significant double-digit gains, and most systems showed overall improvement. Among 4-year institutions, six universities experienced increases, with Southern Arkansas University showing the largest gain at nearly 9%, while Arkansas State University saw a notable decline attributed to challenges affecting international student enrollment.

Graycen Bigger asked how far back the data goes. Hazelwood explained that the data goes back several decades.

Agenda Item No. 5
Annual Report on Student-Athletic
Retention and Graduation

In discussing graduation rates, Hazelwood noted mixed but generally positive trends. For public 4-year institutions, the 100% graduation rate increased by more than 4%, while the 150% rate slightly declined and remained below the national average. At 2-year colleges, there was a slight decrease in 100% completion rates but a modest increase in 150% rates. Private institutions showed improvement in both measures. She also emphasized key differences in how graduation rates are calculated nationally versus in Arkansas, particularly for 2-year colleges.

Finally, Hazelwood highlighted data on student-athletes, noting that participation exceeded 4,600 students across more than 12 sports, with football, baseball, and track accounting for the majority. Participation increased in 2025, and institutions reported continued tracking of retention and graduation outcomes for student-athletes as part of the broader accountability framework.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 6
Rules Governing Residency Classification
for State-funded Scholarships at
State Supported Institutions of Higher Education

In compliance with the Arkansas ACCESS Act of 2025 (Act 341 Section 63), the Arkansas Division of Higher Education Rules Governing Residency Classification for State-Funded Scholarships at State-Supported Institutions of Higher Education is presented to the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) for final approval.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board reviews the rule presented in this agenda item for the Residency Classification for State-Funded Scholarships at State-Supported Institutions of Higher Education to be administered by the Arkansas Division of Higher Education.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education or his designee is authorized to make technical changes and corrections, when necessary, in the rule for the Residency Classification for State-Funded Scholarships at State-Supported Institutions of Higher Education.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Residency Classification for State-Funded Scholarships at State-Supported Institutions of Higher Education rule be approved for final approval.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 7
Rules Governing the Arkansas
Workforce Challenge Scholarship Program

In compliance with the Arkansas ACCESS Act of 2025 (Act 341 Sections 84-87) and Act 429 of 2025, the Arkansas Division of Higher Education Rules Governing the Arkansas Workforce Challenge Scholarship are presented to the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) for final approval.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board reviews the rules presented in this agenda item for the Arkansas Workforce Challenge Scholarship to be administered by the Arkansas Division of Higher Education.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education or his designee is authorized to make technical changes and corrections, when necessary, in the program rules for the Arkansas Workforce Challenge Scholarship.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Workforce Challenge Scholarship rules be approved for final approval.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 8
Rules Governing the Arkansas
Academic Challenge Scholarship

In compliance with Acts 386, 413, 539 of 2023, and the Arkansas ACCESS Act of 2025 (Act 341 Sections 80-83), the Arkansas Division of Higher Education Rules Governing the Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship are presented to the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) for final approval.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board reviews the rules presented in this agenda item for the Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship to be administered by the Arkansas Division of Higher Education.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education or his designee is authorized to make technical changes and corrections, when necessary, in the program rules for the Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship rules be approved for final approval.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 9
Rules Governing Arkansas Access to
Acceleration Scholarship Program

In compliance with the Arkansas ACCESS Act of 2025 (Act 341 Section 91), the Arkansas Division of Higher Education Rules Governing the Arkansas ACCESS to Acceleration Scholarship Program are presented to the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) for final approval. The following resolution is offered for the Board's consideration:

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board reviews the rules presented in this agenda item for the Arkansas ACCESS to Acceleration Scholarship Program to be administered by the Arkansas Division of Higher Education.

FURTHER

RESOLVED, That the Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education or his designee is authorized to make technical changes and corrections, when necessary, in the program rules for the Arkansas ACCESS to Acceleration Scholarship Program.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Arkansas ACCESS to Acceleration Scholarship Program rules be approved for final approval.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 10
Rules Governing Uniform Course
Credit for Institutions of Higher Education

In compliance with the Arkansas ACCESS Act of 2025 (Act 341 Section 5) and The LEARNS Act of 2023 (Act 413 Section 54), the Arkansas Division of Higher Education Rules Governing Uniform Course Credit for Institutions of Higher Education are presented to the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) for final approval.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board reviews the rules presented in this agenda item for the Uniform Course Credit for Institutions of Higher Education to be administered by the Arkansas Division of Higher Education.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education or his designee is authorized to make technical changes and corrections, when necessary, in the program rules for the Uniform Course Credit for Institutions of Higher Education.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Uniform Course Credit for Institutions of Higher Education rules be approved for final approval.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 11
Rules Governing the Teacher Opportunity Program

In compliance with the Arkansas ACCESS Act of 2025 (Act 341 Sections 64-68), the Arkansas Division of Higher Education Rules Governing the Teacher Opportunity Program are presented to the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) for final approval.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board reviews the rules presented in this agenda item for the Teacher Opportunity Program to be administered by the Arkansas Division of Higher Education.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education or his designee is authorized to make technical changes and corrections, when necessary, in the program rules for the Teacher Opportunity Program.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Teacher Opportunity Program rules be approved for final approval.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 12
Rules Governing the Arkansas
Teacher Academy Scholarship Program

In compliance with the Arkansas ACCESS Act of 2025 (Act 341 Sections 77-78), the Arkansas Division of Higher Education Rules Governing the Arkansas Teacher Academy Scholarship Program are presented to the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) for final approval.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board reviews the rules presented in this agenda item for the Arkansas Teacher Academy Scholarship Program to be administered by the Arkansas Division of Higher Education.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education or his designee is authorized to make technical changes and corrections, when necessary, in the program rules for the Arkansas Teacher Academy Scholarship Program.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Teacher Academy Scholarship Program rules be approved for final approval.

There were no questions.

Carolyn Rhinehart moved to approve Agenda Items No. 6 - 12. Graycen Bigger seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 13
Policy Regarding the Arkansas
Workforce Challenge Scholarship Program

Graycen Bigger moved to table Agenda Item No. 13, the Policy Regarding the Arkansas Workforce Challenge Scholarship Program. Carolyn Rhinehart seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 14
General Education Policy

This policy presents the State Minimum General Education Core for associate and baccalaureate degrees as adopted by the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board and includes general provisions necessary for implementation.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) approves the policy effective Fall 2027. The Policy on State Minimum Core for General Education presents the State Minimum General Education Core for associate and baccalaureate degrees.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That all Arkansas state-supported colleges or universities shall implement the State Minimum Core for General Education in accordance with the policies of the AHECB and the rules of the Arkansas State Board of Education.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the AHECB instructs the Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education to provide a copy of the policy to presidents and chancellors, chief academic affairs officers, students affairs officers at Arkansas state-supported colleges and universities.

There were no questions.

Graycen Bigger moved to approve Agenda Item No. 14. Carolyn Rhinehart seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 15
Certificate of General Studies

The Certificate of General Studies is a specific set of general education core courses that will document a student's mastery of skills and competencies needed to be successful in the workforce and today's world. The range of credit hours is 31-32

semester hours. Remedial/developmental education courses must be used for placement purposes only and cannot be used to fulfill certificate requirements.

This Appendix B - Definitions update adjusts the prescribed curriculum for the state-wide Certificate of General Studies (CGS). The update will simultaneously align the credential with ACT 566 of 2025, which established a new 15-credit hour Requisite Core, and will bring the CGS into closer alignment with the State Minimum General Education Core.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 16
Distribution of Mineral Lease Funds

According to the provisions of A.C.A. §6-61-801 through §6-61-808, there is established the Arkansas Research Development Program for providing Arkansas Research Development Program Grants to publicly-supported universities in Arkansas by the Division of Higher Education. Act 610 of 2025 provides that after the sum of \$13,200,000 has been deposited into the Higher Education Building Maintenance Fund, any additional deposits are to be transferred to the Research Development Fund to be used as provided by law.

RESOLVED, That after review by the Legislative Council, the Director of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education is authorized to distribute up to \$475,000 from the Higher Education Research Development Fund to the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville for continuing personal services and operating expenses related to ARE-ON.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 17
Economic Feasibility of Bond Issue
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

The University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (UAF) requests approval of the economic feasibility of plans to issue bonds not to exceed \$132 million with a term of no longer than thirty (30) years at an annual interest rate not to exceed 5.5 percent. Proceeds from the bond issue will be used for educational and general (E&G) and auxiliary purposes. The University of Arkansas Board of Trustees approved this financing at its meeting on April 16, 2026.

The auxiliary issue will be up to \$107 million with a maximum annual debt service of \$6,477,750 and a term of thirty (30) years. Proceeds from this bond issue will be used for (a) the acquisition, construction, furnishing, and equipping of the Maple Hill Central residence hall (the "Maple Hill Central Project"); and (b) the acquisition, construction, improvement, renovation, equipping and/or furnishing of other capital improvements and infrastructure and the acquisition of various equipment and/or real property for the Fayetteville Campus.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board considers economically feasible plans for the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (UAF) to issue bonds not to exceed \$132 million with a term not to exceed thirty (30) years at an annual interest rate not to exceed 5.50 percent for various E&G projects.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education is authorized to notify the President and the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas System, and the Chancellor of the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville of the Coordinating Board's resolution.

Graycen Bigger asked if this feasibility would result in additional student fees. Nick Fuller said food and board fees would increase by 6 percent.

Carolyn Rhinehart moved to approve Agenda Item No. 17. Graycen Bigger seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 18
Associate of Applied Science in Artificial Intelligence
Northwest Arkansas Community College

The proposed Associate of Applied Science in Artificial Intelligence is a workforce-focused academic program designed to prepare students for roles in which AI tools and systems are used to improve productivity, decision-making, automation, and service delivery across industries. The program is designed with a workforce-aligned, applied focus that emphasizes practical use of artificial intelligence tools, machine learning concepts, automation, data analytics, cloud computing, and responsible AI practices.

The 60-credit hour curriculum will prepare students to apply AI technologies in real-world business and industrial settings rather than emphasizing theoretical or research-based study. The program is intended to serve adult learners, working professionals, and recent high school graduates seeking an affordable, locally accessible pathway into AI-related careers.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Associate of Applied Science in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102) at Northwest Arkansas Community College, effective Spring 2027.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Coordinating Board instructs the Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education to inform the President and Chair of the Board of Trustees of Northwest Arkansas Community College of the approval.

Dr. Diane Johnson, Senior Vice President for Learning and Chief Academic Officer, provided additional background information.

Graycen Bigger moved to approve Agenda Item No. 18. Carolyn Rhinehart seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 19
Associate of Applied Science in Nursing
South Arkansas College

The proposed Associate of Applied Science in Nursing (Traditional) program is designed to respond to critical and sustained registered nurse workforce shortages in southern Arkansas and surrounding areas. The program focuses on providing access to rural, underserved, and place bound students who are likely to remain employed in the region after graduation. Graduates will be prepared for the NCLEX and for immediate employment in acute care, long-term care, and community-based healthcare environments.

The program's curriculum requires completion of 68 total credit hours, comprised of 30 credit hours of general education prerequisites and, upon admission to the program, 38 credit hours of nursing coursework is completed over three semesters. Through classroom instruction, high-fidelity simulation, and supervised clinical experiences, the curriculum emphasizes patient-centered care, clinical judgment, safety and quality, evidence-based practice, professionalism, and leadership, ensuring graduates are well prepared for entry-level nursing practice and licensure.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Associate of Applied Science in Nursing (Traditional) (CIP 51.3801) at South Arkansas College, effective Summer 2026.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Coordinating Board instructs the Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education to inform the President and Chair of the Board of Trustees of South Arkansas College of the approval.

Dr. Jenny Sanders, Provost and Athletic Director, provided additional background information.

Graycen Bigger moved to approve Agenda Item No. 19. Carolyn Rhinehart seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 20
Master of Library and Information Studies
in Library and Information Studies
by University of Arkansas Fayetteville

The proposed 36-credit-hour Master of Library and Information Studies in Library and Information Studies program is designed to prepare students for professional roles in libraries, archives, museums, healthcare, government, higher education, and corporate and nonprofit organizations. The curriculum emphasizes information organization and

retrieval, digital literacy, research methods, management and policy, and ethical and legal issues related to information access and stewardship. Graduates will be prepared for positions including librarians, archivists, curators, research analysts, and information professionals across a variety of sectors.

The program will be housed within the University Libraries, providing students with access to a working academic library environment and opportunities for applied, experiential learning. Instruction will be supported by newly hired full-time faculty, existing faculty librarians, and adjunct faculty as needed. The program is designed to meet American Library Association (ALA) accreditation standards, and UAF intends to seek this accreditation within the first three years of program implementation.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Master of Library and Information Studies in Library and Information Studies (CIP 25.0101) at the University of Arkansas Fayetteville, effective Fall 2027.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Coordinating Board instructs the Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education to inform the Chancellor of the University of Arkansas Fayetteville and Chair of the Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas System of the approval.

Dr. Indrajeet Chaubey, Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, provided additional background information.

Graycen Bigger moved to approve Agenda Item No. 20. Carolyn Rhinehart seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 21
Master of Science in Outdoor Recreation and Sport Tourism
University of Arkansas Fayetteville

The proposed 30-credit-hour, 100% online Master of Science in Outdoor Recreation and Sport Tourism is designed to prepare professionals for leadership roles in outdoor recreation tourism, outdoor adventure tourism, sport tourism, and sustainable destination management. The curriculum emphasizes applied learning and integrates coursework in tourism management, finance, data analysis, sustainability, consumer behavior, and strategic planning. Courses are designed without prerequisites, allowing working professionals to complete the program in any sequence. Graduates will be prepared to manage and expand recreation and sport tourism initiatives across public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Master of Science in Outdoor Recreation and Sport Tourism (CIP 31.0301) at the University of Arkansas Fayetteville, effective Fall 2026.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Coordinating Board instructs the Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education to inform the Chancellor of the University of Arkansas Fayetteville and Chair of the Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas System of the approval.

Dr. Indrajeet Chaubey, Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, provided additional background information.

Graycen Bigger moved to approve Agenda Item No. 21. Carolyn Rhinehart seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 22
Bachelor of Science in Artificial Intelligence
University of Arkansas Little Rock

The proposed 120 credit-hour, 100% online Bachelor of Science in Artificial Intelligence degree is designed to provide students with a rigorous foundation in mathematics, computer science, and applied artificial intelligence. The curriculum integrates core computing principles with specialized coursework in machine learning, natural language processing, robotics, computer vision, reinforcement learning, intelligent agents, and AI governance.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Bachelor of Science in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102) at the University of Arkansas Little Rock, effective Fall 2026.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Coordinating Board instructs the Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education to inform the Chancellor of the University of Arkansas Little Rock and Chair of the Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas System of the approval.

Dr. Philip Huff, Associate Professor of Cybersecurity, provided additional background information.

Graycen Bigger moved to approve Agenda Item No. 22. Carolyn Rhinehart seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 23
Master of Science in Cybersecurity
University of Arkansas Little Rock

The proposed, 100% online Master of Science in Cybersecurity prepares advanced practitioners to secure complex digital and AI-enabled systems. The curriculum includes defensive and offensive cyber operations, post-quantum cryptography, advanced cloud security, critical infrastructure protection, and secure artificial intelligence. Graduates will be equipped to design resilient architectures, manage cyber risk across enterprise and

AI environments, and communicate technical findings effectively to both technical and executive audiences.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Master of Science in Cybersecurity (CIP 11.1003) at the University of Arkansas Little Rock, effective Fall 2026.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Coordinating Board instructs the Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education to inform the Chancellor of the University of Arkansas Little Rock and Chair of the Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas System of the approval.

Dr. Philip Huff, Associate Professor of Cybersecurity, provided additional background information.

Carolyn Rhinehart moved to approve Agenda Item No. 23. Graycen Bigger seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 24
Cyber Learning Network Consortium
Certificate of Proficiency in Artificial Intelligence
Technical Certificate in Artificial Intelligence
Certificate of Proficiency in Software Engineering
Technical Certificate in Software Engineering
Certificate of proficiency in Cyber-Informed Engineering

The Cyber Learning Network (CLN) is a consortium among Arkansas member institutions to collaboratively expand and diversify cybersecurity education throughout Arkansas and beyond. The Cyber Learning Network's purpose is to provide a shared cyber curriculum and learning experience across member campuses, leveraging pooled resources and expertise to address the cybersecurity workforce and skills gap. As lead institution, the University of Arkansas Little Rock provides coordination and services on behalf of the consortium, including managing shared resources. The CLN is governed by a committee consisting of one representative from each member institution and collectively oversees the implementation of the shared curriculum and policies of the consortium. Through this collaborative model, students enroll at their home institution while benefiting from consistent curriculum, stackable credentials, and coordinated pathways into advanced degrees and the workforce.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Certificate of Proficiency in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102), Technical Certificate in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102), Certificate of Proficiency in Software Engineering (CIP 14.0903), Technical Certificate in Software Engineering (CIP 14.0903), and the Certificate of Proficiency of Cyber-Informed Engineering (CIP 14.2701) at Cossatot Community College of the University of Arkansas, effective Fall 2026.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Certificate of Proficiency in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102), Technical Certificate in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102), Certificate of Proficiency in Software Engineering (CIP 14.0903), Technical Certificate in Software Engineering (CIP 14.0903), and the Certificate of Proficiency of Cyber-Informed Engineering (CIP 14.2701) at North Arkansas College, effective Fall 2026.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Certificate of Proficiency in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102), Technical Certificate in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102), Certificate of Proficiency in Software Engineering (CIP 14.0903), Technical Certificate in Software Engineering (CIP 14.0903), and the Certificate of Proficiency of Cyber-Informed Engineering (CIP 14.2701) at Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas, effective Fall 2026.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Certificate of Proficiency in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102), Technical Certificate in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102), Certificate of Proficiency in Software Engineering (CIP 14.0903), Technical Certificate in Software Engineering (CIP 14.0903), and the Certificate of Proficiency of Cyber-Informed Engineering (CIP 14.2701) at University of Arkansas Community College Batesville, effective Fall 2026.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Certificate of Proficiency in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102), Technical Certificate in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102), Certificate of Proficiency in Software Engineering (CIP 14.0903), Technical Certificate in Software Engineering (CIP 14.0903), and the Certificate of Proficiency of Cyber-Informed Engineering (CIP 14.2701) at University of Arkansas Community College Hope-Texarkana, effective Fall 2026.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Certificate of Proficiency in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102), Technical Certificate in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102), Certificate of Proficiency in Software Engineering (CIP 14.0903), Technical Certificate in Software Engineering (CIP 14.0903), and the Certificate of Proficiency of Cyber-Informed Engineering (CIP 14.2701) at University of Arkansas Community College Morrilton, effective Fall 2026.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Certificate of Proficiency in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102), Technical Certificate in Artificial

Intelligence (CIP 11.0102), Certificate of Proficiency in Software Engineering (CIP 14.0903), Technical Certificate in Software Engineering (CIP 14.0903), and the Certificate of Proficiency of Cyber-Informed Engineering (CIP 14.2701) at University of Arkansas Fayetteville, effective Fall 2026.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Certificate of Proficiency in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102), Technical Certificate in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102), Certificate of Proficiency in Software Engineering (CIP 14.0903), and the Technical Certificate in Software Engineering (CIP 14.0903) at the University of Arkansas Little Rock, effective Fall 2026.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Certificate of Proficiency in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102), Technical Certificate in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102), Certificate of Proficiency in Software Engineering (CIP 14.0903), Technical Certificate in Software Engineering (CIP 14.0903), and the Certificate of Proficiency of Cyber-Informed Engineering (CIP 14.2701) at University of Arkansas Pine Bluff, effective Fall 2026.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Certificate of Proficiency in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102), Technical Certificate in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102), Certificate of Proficiency in Software Engineering (CIP 14.0903), Technical Certificate in Software Engineering (CIP 14.0903), and the Certificate of Proficiency of Cyber-Informed Engineering (CIP 14.2701) at University of Arkansas Pulaski Technical College, effective Fall 2026.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Coordinating Board instructs the Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education to inform each institution's Chancellor or President and Chair of the Board of Trustees of the approval.

Graycen Bigger moved to approve Agenda Item No. 24. Carolyn Rhinehart seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Items No. 25 & 26
Arkansas Public Institutions
Letters of Notification and Letters of Intent

The Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education approved institutional requests for new programs not requiring Board action unless further review is requested by the Board. During this period, the Institutional Certification Advisory Committee received notice of requests from Arkansas public institutions to offer degree programs.

The program notice lists appear in the Arkansas Public Institutions Letters of Notification on pages 25-1 through 25-45 and in the Arkansas public institutions Letters of Intent on pages 26-1 of the agenda book.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 27
Out-of-State and Arkansas Private Institutions

RESOLVED, That pursuant to A.C.A. §6-61-301, the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board grants initial certification to the institutions listed on pages 1 - 2 to offer the specified degree programs to Arkansas residents for a period of three years through December 31, 2029.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education is authorized to notify the administration of said institutions that the certification of the degree programs requires the institution to notify the Arkansas Division of Higher Education whenever any of the following occurs: (1) major reorganization of the controlling body; (2) changes in the charter or incorporation documents of the institution; or (3) changes in the method of operation of the institution's programs in Arkansas.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Coordinating Board instructs the Commissioner to notify the administration of said institutions that any advertisement or published materials using the name of the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board or the Arkansas Division of Higher Education must contain the following statement:

Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board certification does not constitute an endorsement of any institution or program. Such certification merely indicates that certain criteria have been met as required under the rules and regulations implementing institutional and program certification as defined in A.C.A. §6-61-301.

Initial Program Certifications – Distance Technology

Academy of Art University, San Francisco, California
The Chicago School, Los Angeles, California
University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California
Walden University, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Initial Program Certification – Arkansas Campus

Baptist Health College Little Rock, Little Rock, Arkansas

Initial Program Certification – New Institution

Southwestern Law School, Los Angeles, California

Carolyn Rhinehart moved to approve Agenda Item No. 27. Graycen Bigger seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Items No. 28 & 29
Out-of-State and Arkansas Private Institutions
Letters of Notification and Letters of Intent

The Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education approved institutional requests for new programs not requiring Board action unless further review is requested by the Board. During this period, the Institutional Certification Advisory Committee received notice of requests from out-of-state and Arkansas private institutions to offer degree programs to Arkansas residents. The program notice lists appear in the Letters of Notification on pages 28-1 through 28-9 and in the Letters of Intent on page 29-1 of the agenda book.

There were no questions.

Remarks by Presidents/Chancellors and Guest

Chancellor Brian Shonk thanked the Board for its due diligence in reviewing the Workforce Challenge Scholarship Program policy. However, he noted that institutions had already submitted their budgets for the upcoming fiscal year and had included funding associated with the Workforce Challenge Scholarship. Chancellor Shonk then asked when ADHE anticipated resolving the delay and implementing the policy.

Commissioner Warden explained that concerns had been raised regarding certain parameters established in the policy, particularly the minimum eligibility thresholds and the number of credit hours required for students to qualify for the scholarship. He stated that ADHE and the Board would work expeditiously to address those concerns and resolve the matter within the next 45 days.

The next quarterly meeting will be held on July 24, 2026, at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville at 9:00 a.m.

With no further comments, the meeting was adjourned at 10:52 a.m.

SUBMITTED BY:

Nichole Abernathy

APPROVED:

Dr. Katherine Dudley, Secretary