

ARKANSAS HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD
Regular Quarterly Meeting
October 24, 2025

Minutes of Meeting

The October 24, 2025, regular meeting of the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) was held at Arkansas State University-Beebe (ASUB). Chair Jim Carr called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., with all members present.

Coordinating Board present:

Dr. Jim Carr, Chair
 Lucas Pointer, Vice Chair
 Dr. Katherine Dudley, Secretary
 Graycen Bigger
 Dr. Jerry Cash
 Heather Maxey
 Carolyn Rhinehart

Coordinating Board absent:

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

Chair Carr began by calling Chancellor Jennifer Methvin for a welcome. Dr. Methvin began by thanking the Coordinating Board for their commitment to higher education. Next, she stated that ASUB is a public two-year community college with the third-largest enrollment among two-year institutions in Arkansas. Founded in 1927, ASUB is the oldest two-year college in Arkansas with campuses in Beebe, Searcy, Heber Springs, and at the Little Rock Air Force Base.

Agenda Item No. 1
 Economic Feasibility of Bond Issue
 South Arkansas College

South Arkansas College (SAC) requests approval of the economic feasibility of plans to issue bonds not to exceed \$9.5 million with a term of thirty (30) years at an annual interest rate not to exceed 7.0 percent. Proceeds from the bond issue will be used for educational and general (E&G) purposes and auxiliary purposes. The South Arkansas College Board of Trustees approved this financing at its meeting on June 19, 2025.

The combined millage, E&G and auxiliary issue will be up to \$9.5 million with a total maximum annual debt service of \$734,774 and a term of thirty (30) years. The millage/E&G bond will be approximately \$6.5 million with an annual debt of \$518,936. The auxiliary bond will be approximately \$3.0 million with annual debt service of approximately \$215,838. Proceeds from this bond issue will be used to finance the construction of the first Residence Hall on campus. We have secured additional private donations currently in excess of \$3.0 million with an additional

\$3.0 million in trust from a generous benefactor. When the trust funds are available, it will be applied first to complete the Auxiliary Bond issue balance and the pay towards the remaining balance of the general obligation/E&G bond. An ongoing capital campaign is underway as well.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board considers economically feasible plans for South Arkansas College to issue bonds not to exceed \$9.5 million with a term of thirty (30) years at an annual interest rate not to exceed 7.0 percent to finance the construction of the first Residence Hall on campus.

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 South Arkansas College and the President of South Arkansas College of the Coordinating Board's resolution.

There were no questions.

Dr. Katherine Dudley moved to approve Agenda Item No. 1. Carolyn Rhinehart seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 2
Economic Feasibility of Bond Issue
University of Central Arkansas

The University of Central Arkansas (UCA) requests approval of the economic feasibility to issue bonds in the amount of approximately \$10.52 million with a term of twenty (20) years and an estimated annual interest rate of 5.50 percent. Proceeds from the issue will be used for educational and general (E&G) purposes. The University of Central Arkansas Board of Trustees approved this financing at its August 8, 2025, meeting.

The E&G issue will be approximately \$10.52 million with an estimated maximum annual debt service of \$849,074 and a term of twenty (20) years. Proceeds from the bond issue will be used for the Campus District Loop & Hydronics Refresh Project. The project involves enhancing the overall capacity and efficiency of the Campus District Loop Hydronics systems. It includes building a new chiller plant on the north side of campus and installing new underground district chilled water lines to connect with existing district cooling piping and buildings. Additionally, the university is refreshing its South Plant Central Chiller Facility by increasing cooling capacity through the installation of high-efficiency water-cooled chillers and new cooling towers and upgrading controls and electrical connections. These new chillers and connections will allow for the decommissioning of aging, localized chillers and will reduce the campus' overall energy consumption. These upgrades are a key component of UCA's long-term energy and infrastructure strategy - improving system reliability, lowering maintenance requirements, and maximizing energy efficiency campus-wide.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board considers economically feasible plans for the University of Central Arkansas to issue bonds in an amount of approximately \$10.52 million with a term of twenty (20) years at an estimated annual interest rate of 5.50 percent for the Campus District Loop & Hydronics Refresh Project.

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 Central Arkansas of the Coordinating Board's resolution.

Graycen Bigger asked if the 5.50 percent annual interest rate was fixed. Nick Fuller said the interest rate has not been determined; however, it will not exceed 5.50 percent.

Dr. Katherine Dudley moved to approve Agenda Item No. 2. Lucas Pointer seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 3
Bond/Loan Feasibility Update

This update consists of the actual terms for bond and loan issues receiving AHECB approval that occurred October 2024 through October 2025. An annual update was requested by the AHECB during the July 30, 2010 quarterly meeting.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 4
Recommendation for Distribution of Productivity Funding
For State-Supported Institutions

A.C.A. §6-61-234 directs the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) to adopt polices developed by the Arkansas Division of Higher Education (ADHE) necessary to implement a productivity-based funding model for state-supported institutions of higher education.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board adopts the recommendation for distribution of productivity funding to the Arkansas public institutions of higher education in the 2026-27 fiscal year as included in Table 04B.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education is authorized to prepare appropriate documents for transmission to the Governor and the General Assembly of the 2026-27 productivity funding distribution recommendation of the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That should any errors of a technical nature be found in this recommendation, the Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education is authorized to make appropriate corrections consistent with the policy established by the Board's action on these recommendations.

There were no questions.

Dr. Katherine Dudley moved to approve Agenda Item No. 4. Lucas Pointer seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 5
Intercollegiate Athletic Revenues and Expenditures

Act 245 of 1989 (A.C.A. §6-62-106) directed the Coordinating Board to develop and establish uniform accounting standards and procedures for reporting revenues and expenditures. Based on these standard definitions and formats, the Coordinating Board is to collect the financial data and provide a uniform report of each institution's athletic revenues and expenditures for the previous fiscal year to the Legislative Joint Auditing Committee and the public by November of each year.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board accepts the Report of 2024-25 Intercollegiate Athletic Revenues and Expenditures as prepared in accordance with Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board uniform accounting standards and definitions for athletic reporting.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Coordinating Board authorizes the Commissioner to transmit the Report of 2024-25 Intercollegiate Athletic Revenues and Expenditures to the Legislative Joint Auditing Committee according to the provisions of A.C.A. §6-62-106.

There were no questions.

Lucas Pointer moved to approve Agenda Item No. 5. Dr. Katherine Dudley seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 6
Technical Certificate and Certificate of Proficiency
in Construction Trades Technology
Arkansas State University-Beebe

The administration of Arkansas State University Beebe (ASUB) and Board of Trustees of the Arkansas State University System request approval to offer the Technical Certificate in Construction Trades Technology and Certificate of Proficiency in Construction Trades Technology, effective Fall 2025.

The proposed Construction Trades Technology program is designed to prepare students with the necessary skills and knowledge to be proficient in the fundamentals of residential and commercial construction. The 27 credit-hour Technical Certificate, with embedded 12 credit-hour Certificate of Proficiency, provides instruction in safety and industry codes, methods and materials of construction, blueprints and drawings, site layout, carpentry and roofing, plumbing and electrical systems, framing, flooring, cabinetry and finishing work, and general processes of project management. Graduates of the proposed program may continue their education through additional coursework in HVAC-R, welding, and other related fields or pursue the Associate of Applied Science in General Technology. Electrical or plumbing apprenticeship programs are also available at the ASUB Heber Springs campus.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Certificate of Proficiency in Construction Trades Technology (CIP 46.0000) and Technical Certificate in Construction Trades Technology (CIP 46.0000) at Arkansas State University Beebe, effective Fall 2025.

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

Dr. Blake Perkins, Chief Academic Officer, provided additional background information.

Graycen Bigger said this is a great program geared toward high school students.

Carolyn Rhinehart moved to approve Agenda Item No. 6. Dr. Katherine Dudley seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 7

Associate of Science in Outdoor Recreation, Technical Certificate in Outdoor Recreation, and Embedded Certificates of Proficiency in Foundations in Outdoor Recreation, Mountain Biking & Trail Maintenance, Outdoor Maintenance, Outdoor Recreation Activities, Outdoor Recreation Management, Tourism & Hospitality, and Wilderness Safety
National Park College

The administration and Board of Trustees of National Park College (NPC) request approval to offer the Associate of Applied Science in Outdoor Recreation, Technical Certificate in Outdoor Recreation, Certificate of Proficiency in Foundations in Outdoor Recreation, Certificate of Proficiency in Mountain Biking & Trail Maintenance, Certificate of Proficiency in Outdoor Maintenance, Certificate of Proficiency in Outdoor Recreation Management, Certificate of Proficiency in

Outdoor Recreation Activities, Certificate of Proficiency in Tourism & Hospitality, and Certificate of Proficiency in Wilderness Safety, effective Fall 2026.

The proposed program contains a 60-credit hour Associate of Applied Science and 45-credit hour Technical Certificate, both in Outdoor Recreation, as well as seven Certificates of Proficiency, varying from eight to twelve credit hours, which allow a student to tailor the program to their interests and needs. The program will provide students with a fundamental understanding of the outdoor recreation industry, issues in policy and law, leadership and supervision, survival and first-response in remote environments, to name a few. A comprehensive listing of skills per program is available in the full proposal.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Associate of Applied Science in Outdoor Recreation (CIP 31.0101), Technical Certificate in Outdoor Recreation (CIP 31.0101), Certificate of Proficiency in Foundations in Outdoor Recreation (CIP 31.0101), Certificate of Proficiency in Mountain Biking & Trail Maintenance (CIP 46.9999), Certificate of Proficiency in Outdoor Maintenance (CIP 46.0000), Certificate of Proficiency in Outdoor Recreation Activities (CIP 31.0101), Certificate of Proficiency in Outdoor Recreation Management (CIP 31.0301), Certificate of Proficiency in Tourism & Hospitality (CIP 52.0901), and Certificate of Proficiency in Wilderness Safety (CIP 31.9999), at National Park College, effective Fall 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 National Park College of the approval.

Dr. Chuck Argo, Vice President for Academic Affairs, provided additional background information.

Chair Carr asked if the headcount of 115 new students was unduplicated. Dr. Argo said most of the numbers were low estimates. He believes the actual enrollment number will be much higher.

Lucas Pointer moved to approve Agenda Item No. 7. Carolyn Rhinehart seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 8
Associate of Applied Science and Technical Certificate in
Uncrewed Aerial Systems and Data Applications and
Certificate of Proficiency in Uncrewed Aerial Systems
North Arkansas College

The administration and Board of Trustees of North Arkansas College (NAC) request approval to offer the Associate of Applied Science and Technical Certificate in

Uncrewed Aerial Systems and Data Applications and Certificate of Proficiency in Uncrewed Aerial Systems, effective Fall 2025.

The proposed 16 credit hour, 100% online Certificate of Proficiency in Uncrewed Aerial Systems will focus on the skills necessary to operate and troubleshoot the various types of drones and equip students with the knowledge to apply industry regulations and standards to ensure safe, responsible drone use in commercial, governmental, and recreational environments. The proposed 31 credit hour Technical Certificate in Uncrewed Aerial Systems and Data Application aims to educate students on the analysis, interpretation, and application of aerial data, effective communication, and the evaluation of ethical issues, privacy implications, and cybersecurity threats associated with drone use in different professional contexts. Expanding on the foundational and technical certificate-level training, the proposed 61 credit hour Associate of Applied Science in Uncrewed Aerial Systems and Data Applications will prepare students for advanced roles in drone industry by obtaining deeper knowledge in data analysis, business applications, and workforce readiness.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Associate of Applied Science in Uncrewed Aerial Systems and Data Applications (CIP 43.0407), Technical Certificate in Uncrewed Aerial Systems and Data Applications (CIP 43.0407), and Certificate of Proficiency in Uncrewed Aerial Systems (CIP 49.0109) at North Arkansas College, effective Spring 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 North Arkansas College of the approval.

Dr. Matt Cardin, Vice President of Academic Affairs, provided additional background information.

Lucas Pointer moved to approve Agenda Item No. 8. Graycen Bigger seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Items No. 9 & 10
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 notices appear in the Arkansas Public Institutions Letters of Notification on pages 9-1 through 9-27 and in the Arkansas public institutions Letters of Intent on pages 10-1 of the agenda book.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 11
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, 2028.

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

Carrington College, Sacramento, California
University of California Irvine, Irvine, California
University of the People, Pasadena, California
Walden University, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Initial Program Certification – Arkansas Campus

Arkansas Colleges of Health Education, Fort Smith, Arkansas

Initial Course Certifications – New Institution

Rocky Vista University, Englewood, Colorado

There were no questions.

Carolyn Rhinehart moved to approve Agenda Item No. 11. Dr. Katherine Dudley seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Items No. 12 & 13
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 notices appear in the Letters of Notification on pages 12-1 through 12-7 and in the Letters of Intent on page 13-1 of the agenda book.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 14
Approval of Minutes

Dr. Katherine Dudley moved to approve Agenda Item No. 14. Graycen Bigger seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 15
Appointment of Nominating Committee

Chair Dr. Jim Carr appointed members of the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board nominating committee. The nominating committee will recommend Board officers for 2026-27 at the January 23, 2026, meeting. The members included Lucas Pointer, Dr. Katherine Dudley and Carolyn Rhinehart.

Graycen Bigger moved to approve Agenda Item No. 15. Heather Maxey seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 16
Approval of 2026 Coordinating Board
Meeting Schedule

The Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board meets quarterly to act upon Board initiatives and to respond to campus proposals.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board agrees to the following dates for regular quarterly meetings during 2026: January 23, April 24, July 24, and October 23.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board expresses its appreciation and accepts the invitations to meet in January at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, in April at Ozarka College, in July at the

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, and in October at Arkansas State University Mountain Home.

Graycen Bigger moved to approve Agenda Item No. 16. Lucas Pointer seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 17
Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Warden began by thanking the Coordinating Board and ADHE staff for all they do to help move education forward in Arkansas. He also thanked Chancellor Methvin and ASU-Beebe for hosting the Coordinating Board meeting.

ADHE New Location

The Division of Higher Education has relocated to the Capitol Mall complex.

2025 Annual Trustees Conference

The 2025 Arkansas Annual Trustees Conference will be hosted by the Arkansas Division of Higher Education (ADHE) on December 4, 2025, at the University of Arkansas - Pulaski Technical College (UAPTC). The event serves as an introduction for new board members and a refresher for long-serving trustees and Board of Visitors members, providing information on their roles, governance, and effective board development. In addition to board members, conference attendees include presidents and chancellors, as well as administrators from state and private institutions.

Institutional Changes

At the end of the calendar year, Dr. Debra West will retire as Chancellor for ASU Mid-South. Dr. West has served as chancellor since 2015.

Agenda Item No. 18
ASU System Overview

President of ASU System, Dr. Brendan Kelly provided an overview of the ASU System. The Arkansas State University (ASU) System is Arkansas's second-largest higher ed system. A public network led by ASU in Jonesboro, including community colleges (ASU-Beebe, ASU-Newport, etc.), Henderson State University, and international campuses (Mexico, Qatar), focused on accessible education, workforce training, research, and economic growth with diverse offerings from certificates to doctorates.

Agenda Item No. 19
Annual Report of Credentials Awarded

I For the second year in a row, Arkansas institutions reported solid gains in both credentials awarded and the number of students receiving those credentials. In academic year 2025, Arkansas higher education institutions reported 56,708 credentials awarded to 45,307 students. This was a 5.7% increase in the number of credentials and 5.3% increase in the number of unduplicated students receiving those credentials. This is the second year in a row statewide numbers reflected gains. Prior to 2024, the number of students receiving credentials remained consistent for the previous five years running just above 40,000. Comparing 2025 to 2016, the number of credentials awarded has increased more than 13,000 and the number of students receiving those credentials has increased more than 7,900.

Agenda Item No. 20
Annual Report on Academic Program Status
Academic Year 2025

Throughout the academic year, ADHE Academic Affairs staff receive documentation from Colleges and Universities requesting a change of status for academic degree programs. Each quarter, these program status change requests are presented to AHECB for approval via Program Proposal and Letters of Notification agenda items.

From July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025, ADHE Academic Affairs staff completed a total of 355 status change requests. The graph below shows the distribution of these changes in status. As depicted, 107 Additions to create new, active programs were processed, along with 159 Deletions/Phase-Outs and 89 Inactivations/Future Inactivations.

Agenda Item No. 21
Annual Report on Concurrent Education

Under Arkansas Code §6-18-223, a public-school student who is enrolled in an Arkansas public school system and has successfully completed the eighth grade is eligible to enroll in a public two-year or four-year institution of higher education to complete a college course for *high school* and *college credit*. Concurrent enrollment allows students to obtain credit toward a high school diploma at the same time they earn college credit. Concurrent enrollment can be taught on a high school campus, college campus, or by distance/digital technology.

For the last several years, the overall number of students enrolling in high school has increased. The percentage of high school enrollment has increased by 4.93% over the past five years, comparing AY2021 to AY2025.

Dr. Katherine Dudley asked what is being done to increase concurrent credit offerings in Pulaski County. Commissioner Warden said that the LEARNS and ACCESS Act, are both aligned to accelerate learning. ADHE has recently hired

Dr. Leslie McClellon to build out concurrent credit pathways, specifically in Pulaski County.

Agenda Item No. 22
Academic Program Policy Update

Arkansas Code Annotated §6-61-208 charges the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) with the responsibility to request, receive, evaluate, and approve proposals for all new units of instruction, research, and public service, consistent with established role and scope designations, and to approve academic programs and organizational units based on established policies.

The goal of this policy revision was to improve clarity of existing criteria, definitions, and deadlines, create well-defined thresholds for revising existing academic programs, update terminology, and align policy to practice.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the policy revision for the Policy for the Approval or Revision of Academic Programs and Organizational Units as presented in this agenda item.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board instructs the Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education to notify the presidents, chancellors, and chief academic officers of public colleges and universities of this policy.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board repeals the Criteria and Procedures for Establishing New Certificate and Degree Programs and Organizational Units policy adopted on January 30, 2015.

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

Agenda Item No. 23
Annual Status Report for
Sexual Assault Prevention on Campus

Mason Campbell presented the Annual Status Report for Sexual Assault Prevention on Campus. Under Act 563 of 2017, the Higher Education Coordinating Board was directed to develop an action plan to address the prevention of sexual assault. ADHE has collected the annual campus status reports for the 2024–2025 academic year, as required by the legislation.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 24
Unplanned Pregnancy Prevention Annual Report

Mason Campbell presented the Unplanned Pregnancy Prevention Annual Report. Under Act 943 of 2015, the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) was directed to develop an action plan to address unplanned pregnancies on college campuses. In the uncodified portion of the legislation, the high rate of unplanned pregnancy among older teens of college age was addressed and institutions of higher education were called upon to act. ADHE has collected the campus implementation reports for 2024-2025.

There were no questions.

Remarks by Presidents/Chancellors and Guest

The next quarterly meeting will be held on January 23, 2026, at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, at 9:00 a.m.

With no further comments, the meeting was adjourned at 11:42 a.m.

SUBMITTED BY:

Nichole Abernathy

APPROVED:

Dr. Katherine Dudley, Secretary