

ARKANSAS HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD
Regular Quarterly Meeting
April 25, 2025

Minutes of Meeting

The April 25, 2025, regular meeting of the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) was held at Southern Arkansas University in Magnolia. Chair Jim Carr called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., with a quorum present.

Coordinating Board present:

Dr. Jim Carr, Chair
Lucas Pointer, Vice Chair
Graycen Bigger
Chad Hooten (via Zoom)
Heather Maxey
Dr. Kyle Miller (via Zoom)
Carolyn Rhinehart (via Zoom)

Coordinating Board absent:

Dr. Katherine Dudley, Secretary
Dr. Jerry Cash

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

Chair Carr began by calling on President Bruno Hicks for a welcome. Dr. Hicks welcomed Coordinating Board members, ADHE staff, and presidents and chancellors to the SAU Campus. Established in 1909, on approximately 1700 acres, SAU has become the best small comprehensive public university in Arkansas, said Hicks.

Next, Carr stated the board would go into a Committee of the Whole, which would allow all members to vote during both committee meetings.

Agenda Item No. 1
Distribution of Mineral Lease Funds

Nick Fuller presented the 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 870 of 2023 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.

Graycen Bigger moved to recommend Agenda Item No. 1 to the full Board for consideration. Heather Maxey seconded, and the Committee unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 2

Associate of Applied Science in Industrial Maintenance
Technical Certificate in Industrial Maintenance
Certificate of Proficiency in Industrial Maintenance
Certificate of Proficiency in automation
Certificate of Proficiency in Machine Tool Technology
Arkansas Northeastern College

The proposed Industrial Maintenance program is designed to address the critical workforce need for skilled industrial maintenance technicians within the steel industry, steel service industries, and other manufacturing sectors in the region surrounding ANC. This program proposal is in direct response to industry demands for a trained and adaptable workforce capable of maintaining and optimizing advanced manufacturing equipment and systems.

The proposed Industrial Maintenance program will educate students in the areas of electricity/electronics, mechanics, welding, automation systems, manufacturing, machining operations, blueprint/schematics, industrial tools, and troubleshooting. It will provide students with the knowledge and skills required to secure high skill, high demand, and high wage employment in a variety of industries. Three Certificates of Proficiency, each 12 credit hours, and a 30 credit-hour Technical Certificate are embedded in the 60 credit-hour Associate of Applied Science curriculum. These stackable credentials will give students the opportunity to earn nationally recognized industry credentials and local employer endorsed credentials while learning specific high-demand skillsets.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Associate of Applied Science in Industrial Maintenance (CIP 47.0303), Technical Certificate in Industrial Maintenance (CIP 47.0303), Certificate of Proficiency in Industrial Maintenance (CIP 47.0303), Certificate of Proficiency in Automation (CIP 15.0406), and Certificate of Proficiency in Machine Tool Technology (CIP 48.0501) at Arkansas Northeastern College, effective Fall 2025.

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 Arkansas Northeastern College of the approval.

Ryan Perkins, Vice President for Instruction/CAO and Stacy Walker, Associate Vice President for Workforce Development, presented additional background information.

Graycen Bigger said she was surprised this program wasn't already in place. She asked if the critical need for skilled industrial maintenance technicians was due to skilled workers retiring and questioned if there were any plans for two plus two transfer agreements.

Perkins said the need is mostly retirement based, and yes, they are looking at potential two plus two agreements.

Chair Carr asked how many new students are anticipated in this program. Perkins said they anticipate 20-25 new students in each program.

Graycen Bigger moved to recommend the approval of Agenda Item No. 2 to the full Board for consideration. Lucas Pointer seconded, and the Committee unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 3
Bachelor of Science in Advanced Manufacturing Engineering
Certificate of Proficiency in Advanced Manufacturing
University of Arkansas at Fort Smith

The proposed 120 credit-hour Bachelor of Science in Advanced Manufacturing Engineering blends courses in traditional and applied mechanical and electrical engineering with courses from business and data science. Graduates will be prepared to design, implement, maintain, and manage modern manufacturing systems that require knowledge in automation, device networking, systems integration, technical communication, project management, quality control, procurement, supply chain management, compliance, safety, and manufacturing processes.

The embedded 9 credit-hour Certificate of Proficiency in Advanced Manufacturing prepares graduates to apply technical and management principles in an advanced manufacturing environment to achieve operational excellence. Graduates will apply technical skills such as quality assurance, risk analysis, process management, product management, and other necessary specialties in the field of technology management.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Bachelor of Science in Advanced Manufacturing Engineering (CIP 14.3601) and Certificate of Proficiency in Advanced Manufacturing (CIP 14.3601) at the University of Arkansas Fort Smith, effective Fall 2025.

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 Fort Smith and the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas System of the approval.

Dr. Shadow Robinson, Provost and Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, presented additional background information.

Bigger asked if there is an anticipated average wage or increase for students getting this degree or technical certificate? Dr. Robinson said, yes, the certificate program will open leadership opportunities while the bachelor's degree will see average salaries in the \$70,000 - \$80,000 range.

Graycen Bigger moved to recommend Agenda Item No. 5 to the full Board for consideration. Lucas Pointer seconded, and the committee approved.

Agenda Items No. 4 & 5
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 4-1 through 4-45 and in the Arkansas public institutions Letters of Intent on pages 5-1 of the agenda book.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 6
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 institution listed 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 institution 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 institution 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

University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California

There were no questions.

Graycen Bigger moved to recommend Agenda Item No. 8 to the full Board for consideration. Heather Maxey seconded, and the Committee unanimously approved.

Agenda Items No. 7 & 8
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 7-1 through 7-5 and in the Letters of Intent on page 8-1 of the agenda book.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 9
Approval of Minutes

Lucas Pointer moved to approve Agenda Item No. 9. Graycen Bigger seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 10
Commissioner's Report

Commissioner Warden began by thanking Dr. Hicks and SAU for hosting such a wonderful meeting. He then thanked the Coordinating Board members and DHE staff for all they do for higher education in Arkansas. Next, he announced that Dr. Terry Martin was stepping down as provost and executive vice chancellor for academic affairs for the University of Arkansas and thanked him for his service to higher education in Arkansas.

Return on Investment

All of the institutions should have received our initial findings on the return on investment metric, said Warden. A lot of work went into the report in a short period of time to really highlight that there is value in higher education in Arkansas.

Agenda Item No. 11
Report on First-Year Student Remediation

Mason Campbell presented information about first-year student remediation. He noted the primary focus of this report is the cohort of 7,620 students receiving remediation during the academic year 2023-2024. These students are a subset of the 21,357 first-time entering, degree seeking students who graduated high school in 2022 or 2023. Of this population, 91% were classified as full-time students and 9% were classified as part-time students. With regards to sex, 58% were female, 42% were male, and less than 1% percent did not report. When examining the institution type, 69% of this population enrolled at a four-year institution compared to 31% enrolled at a two-year institution. Lastly, the remediation status of all first-time entering students, 64% did not require remediation while 36% did require remedial coursework.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 12
Report on Student Retention and Graduation
for Arkansas Higher Education

Sonia Hazelwood reported on the statewide student retention and graduation rates for students entering Arkansas higher education institutions for public 4-Year and 2-Year institutions, and private/independent institutions. While the 4-year institutions held steady, a 1.7% decrease for the 2-year colleges resulted in a small decline of 0.7% in the statewide retention rate.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 13
Report on Retention and Graduation
of Intercollegiate Athletes

Sonia Hazelwood reported on the retention and graduation rates for first-time in college students who participate in Arkansas intercollegiate athletics. In Academic Year 2023-24, 4,509 students participated in athletics at ten universities and twelve 2-year colleges, which is up from nine who reported last year. This is the most student-athletes ever reported for an academic year. The increase was due in part to 139 student-athletes reported by the three additional 2-year colleges and several increases in the number of student-athletes reported by other institutions.

There were no questions.

Report of the Committees

Chair Carr presented the report of the Finance Committee and moved approval of Agenda Item 1. Lucas Pointer seconded, and the board unanimously approved.

Chair Carr presented the report of the Academic Committee and moved approval of Agenda Items 2, 3 & 6. Graycen Bigger seconded, and the board unanimously approved.

Remarks by Presidents/Chancellors and Guest

The next quarterly meeting will be held on July 25, 2025, at the University of Arkansas Pulaski Technical College, at 9:00 a.m.

With no further comments, the meeting was adjourned at 10:15 a.m.

SUBMITTED BY:

Nichole Abernathy

APPROVED:

Dr. Katherine Dudley, Secretary