

**ARKANSAS HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD
Regular Quarterly Meeting
October 25, 2024**

Minutes of Meeting

The October 25, 2024, regular meeting of the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) was held at the University of Arkansas Community College in Batesville. Chair Graycen Bigger asked Vice Chair Jerry Cash to facilitate the meeting since she was present via zoom and not in person. Vice Chair Cash called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., with a quorum present.

Coordinating Board present:
Graycen Bigger, Chair (zoom)
Dr. Jerry Cash, Vice Chair
Dr. Jim Carr
Dr. Katherine Dudley
Chad Hooten (zoom)
Lucas Pointer (zoom)
Heather Maxey
Carolyn Rhinehart

Coordinating Board absent:
Dr. Kyle Miller, Secretary

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

Vice Chair Cash began by calling Chancellor Brian Shonk for a welcome. Dr. Shonk began by thanking the Coordinating Board for their commitment to higher education. Next, Dr. Shonk explained how UACCB began in 1991 as Gateway Technical College. In October 1997, Gateway Technical College merged with the University of Arkansas System and with the passage of a county sales tax became the University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville in March 1998.

Vice Chair Cash announced the board would go into a Committee of the Whole. He noted that this would allow all members to vote during both committee meetings.

**Agenda Item No. 1
Bond/Loan Feasibility Update**

This update consists of the actual terms for bond and loan issues receiving AHECB approval that occurred October 2023 through October 2024. An annual update was requested by the AHECB during the July 30, 2010 quarterly meeting.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 2
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 2023-24 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 2023-24 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.

Dr. Katherine Dudley moved to recommend Agenda Item No. 2 to the full Board for consideration. Dr. Jim Carr seconded, and the Committee unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 3
Recommendations for State Funding of Capital Projects:
2025-27 Biennium

Capital priorities for Development and Enhancement Fund projects in 2025-27 remain the same as those established in past biennia by the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB).

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board adopts the staff recommendations for state funding of capital projects totaling \$389.2 million as identified in the accompanying agenda materials.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Commissioner is authorized to transmit to the Governor and the General Assembly the Board's recommendation for state funding.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Commissioner is authorized to make such technical adjustments to these recommendations as may be required.

Vice Chair Cash asked how the selection for the release of funds was made. Nick Fuller said the recommendations could be made by the Governor's Office or the

Legislature but the decision is made outside of the Division. ADHE only helps facilitate the release of the funds.

Dr. Jim Carr moved to recommend Agenda Item No. 3 to the full Board for consideration. Heather Maxey seconded, and the Committee unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 4
Economic Feasibility of Bond Issue
Arkansas State University - Jonesboro

Arkansas State University-Jonesboro (ASUJ) requests approval of the economic feasibility of plans to issue federally taxable bonds in the amount of approximately \$30.0 million with a term of thirty (30) years with an estimated annual interest rate of 5.50 percent. Proceeds from the loan will be used for educational and general (E&G) purposes. Arkansas State University Board of Trustees approved this financing at its meeting on September 19, 2024.

The E&G issue will be \$30.0 million with an estimated annual debt service of \$2,038,297 and a term of thirty (30) years. Proceeds from the bond issue will be used to design, construct, furnish, and equip the College of Veterinary Medicine building, with an estimated square footage of approximately 55,392. Coordinating Board policy regarding debt service for E&G projects provides that a maximum of twenty-five (25) percent of net tuition and fee revenue less unrestricted educational and general scholarship expenditures may be pledged to E&G debt service.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board considers economically feasible plans for Arkansas State University-Jonesboro to issue federally taxable bonds in the amount of approximately \$30.0 million with a term of thirty (30) years with an estimated annual interest rate of 5.50 percent to design, construct, furnish, and equip the College of Veterinary Medicine building.

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 Arkansas State University-System, and the Chancellor of Arkansas State University-Jonesboro of the Coordinating Board's resolution.

Dr. Jim Carr asked when the College of Veterinary Medicine building would be complete and when would the program start. Nick Fuller said the program is scheduled to begin in the Fall of 2026.

Dr. Jim Carr moved to recommend Agenda Item No. 4 to the full Board for consideration. Carolyn Rhinehart seconded, and the Committee unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 5
 Technical Certificate and Certificate of Proficiency in Energy Management
 North Arkansas College

The administration and Board of Trustees of North Arkansas College (NAC) request approval to offer the Technical Certificate and Certificate of Proficiency in Energy Management, effective Fall 2024.

The proposed 17 credit-hour Certificate of Proficiency and 35 credit-hour Technical Certificate in Energy Management are designed to prepare students for an entry-level career in energy management, building science, and related fields, with a focus on sustainable practices and green technologies. The program will also focus on workforce training for local and regional businesses, partners, and contractors in the renewable energies industry. The proposed program will stack into the existing Associate of Applied Science in General Technology for those students wishing to further their education.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Technical Certificate in Energy Management (CIP 15.1701) and the Certificate of Proficiency in Energy Management (CIP 15.1701), at North Arkansas College, effective Fall 2024.

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.

Dr. Katherine Dudley moved to recommend Agenda Item No. 5 to the full Board for consideration. Carolyn Rhinehart seconded, and the Committee unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 6
 Associate of Science in Data Science – Data Analytics
 Arkansas State University Newport

The administration of Arkansas State University Newport (ASUN) and Board of Trustees of the Arkansas State University System request approval to offer the Associate of Science in Data Science – Data Analytics, effective Spring 2025.

The proposed, fully online Associate of Science in Data Science – Data Analytics will equip students with the skills needed to navigate artificial intelligence, automation, and the rapid pace of technological advancement in order to make timely, data-driven decisions and improve business processes and outcomes, develop new products, and make strategic marketing decisions. This high wage, high-demand employment sector provides students with a positive outlook for

employment prospects, internship and apprenticeship opportunities, and overall long-term program viability.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Associate of Science in Data Science – Data Analytics (CIP 30.7001) at the Arkansas State University Newport, effective Spring 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 Newport and the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Arkansas State University System of the approval.

Dr. Tiffany Myers, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, provided additional background information.

Dr. Katherine Dudley asked if there was a proposed timeline for incorporating it into the K-12 curriculum. Dr. Myers said Fall 2025.

Dr. Jim Carr moved to recommend Agenda Item No. 6 to the full Board for consideration. Carolyn Rhinehart seconded, and the Committee unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 7
Associate of Science in Data Science
Southern Arkansas University Tech

The administration of Southern Arkansas University Tech (SAUT) and the Board of Trustees of the Southern Arkansas University System request approval to offer the Associate of Science in Data Science – Data Analytics, effective Fall 2024.

The proposed, 62 credit-hour Associate of Science in Data Science program will prepare students with the necessary skills to identify, clean, transform, model, and present data to identify relationships, inform conclusions, and support decision making. The program will provide students with a comprehensive understanding of data science principles, tools, and techniques, equipping them with the skills necessary for a career in data analysis, data management, and related fields. The program will emphasize practical experience and interdisciplinary applications to prepare students for both immediate entry into the workforce and transfer to four-year institutions.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Associate of Science in Data Science (CIP 30.7001) at Southern Arkansas University Tech, effective Fall 2024.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Coordinating Board instructs the Commissioner of the Arkansas Division of Higher Education to

inform the Chancellor of Southern Arkansas University Tech and the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Southern Arkansas University System of the approval.

Dr. Valerie Wilson, Vice Chancellor for Academics, and Divesh Acharya, Computer Information Systems instructor, provided additional background information.

Dr. Jim Carr asked why SAU is only projecting four (4) students for their program when ASUN is projecting twenty (20).

Divesh Acharya explained that the program's main goal was to create a program that will close the gap between transferring students as well as allowing students to be hired after two years.

Carolyn Rhinehart moved to recommend Agenda Item No. 7 to the full Board for consideration. Dr. Katherine Dudley seconded, and the Committee unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 8
Doctor of Philosophy in Environmental Health Sciences
University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences

The administration of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) and Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas System request approval to offer the Doctor of Philosophy in Environmental Health Sciences, effective Spring 2025.

The proposed Doctor of Philosophy in Environmental Health Sciences will offer students advanced study in the field of environmental health science, or the study of how chemical, physical, and biological exposures cause adverse effects on individuals, communities, and the environment. The program will take a multidisciplinary approach to provide students with an advanced understanding of the impact of the environment on human health, how humans interact with the environment, and the importance of improving and maintaining healthy environments in communities and workplaces.

RESOLVED, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the offering of the Doctor of Philosophy in Environmental Health Sciences (CIP 51.2202) at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, effective Spring 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 for Medical Sciences and the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas System of the approval.

Dr. Gunnar Boysen, Associate Professor of Environmental Health Sciences for the College of Public Health, provided additional background information.

Dr. Jim Carr asked how many PhD programs UAMS offers. Dr. Kristen Sterba, Provost, said that UAMS has several PhD programs, however, none that cover this area.

Dr. Katherine Dudley asked what a typical job as a Doctor of Philosophy in Environmental Health Sciences looks like. Dr. Boysen said with this degree a person could either be a researcher or work for a government regulatory agency, among other things.

Dr. Jim Carr moved to recommend Agenda Item No. 8 to the full Board for consideration. Carolyn Rhinehart seconded, and the Committee unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 9
Doctor of Philosophy in Forest Resources
University of Arkansas

The University of Arkansas at Monticello (UAM) proposes a change to its role and scope to include the offering of doctoral programs with the Doctor of Philosophy in Forest Resources as its inaugural program. UAM is uniquely positioned to offer this degree as the only four-year institution in Arkansas with a Forestry program. UAM's program offerings currently include degrees in Forestry at the Associate, Bachelor, and Master levels.

The proposed Doctor of Philosophy in Forest Resources will increase the state's forestry and natural resources scientific workforce, and importantly, do so through applied, in-depth education and research on Arkansas forestry and natural resource issues. Given that Arkansas has never offered a Ph.D. in forest resources, it has been entirely reliant on doctoral programs of other states. This doctoral program will be offered by UAM's College of Forestry, Agriculture, and Natural Resources (CFANR). The CFANR also houses the Arkansas Forest Resources Center of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture which provides funding for research that bolsters the ability of the CFANR to deliver the program.

The proposed Ph.D. in Forest Resources will require 72 post-baccalaureate credit hours, of which a minimum of 48 hours will be coursework and up to 24 hours of credit for research/dissertation preparation and defense. Additionally, the degree requirements include the completion of an entrance seminar, comprehensive exams, a dissertation, one semester of instruction of a lower-level undergraduate course or lab, and a dissertation defense. Over the first five years, UAM expects to enroll at least fourteen students into the proposed doctoral program.

Vice Chair Cash asked where the closest forest resources doctoral program is located. Michael Glaser, Dean of the College of Forestry Agriculture and Natural Resources, said that there are some similar programs at Missouri State University, Louisiana State University and Oklahoma State University.

Agenda Items No. 10 & 11
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 10-1 through 10-23 and in the Arkansas public institutions Letters of Intent on pages 11-1 of the agenda book.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 12
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, 2027.

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

Pepperdine University, Malibu, California
University of California, Davis, Davis, California
University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California
Walden University, Minneapolis, Minnesota

New Institutions – Initial Program Certifications – Distance Technology

American Musical and Dramatic Academy College of the Performing Arts, Los Angeles, California
Hannibal-LaGrange University, Hannibal, Missouri

There were no questions.

Dr. Jim Carr moved to recommend Agenda Item No. 12 to the full Board for consideration. Carolyn Rhinehart seconded, and the Committee unanimously approved.

Agenda Items No. 13 & 14
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 13-1 through 13-7 and in the Letters of Intent on page 14-1 of the agenda book.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 15
Approval of Minutes

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

Agenda Item No. 16
Appointment of Nominating Committee

Chair Graycen Bigger appointed members of the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board nominating committee. The nominating committee will recommend Board officers for 2025-26 at the January 24, 2025, meeting. The members included Dr. Jim Carr, Lucas Pointer, and Dr. Katherine Dudley.

Carolyn Rhinehart moved to approve Agenda Item No. 16. Heather Maxey seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 17
Approval of 2025 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 2025: January 24, April 25, July 25, and October 24.

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the Board expresses its appreciation and accepts the invitations to meet in January at Arkansas Tech University in Russellville, in April at Southern Arkansas University in Magnolia, in July at the University of Arkansas Pulaski Technical College in North Little Rock, and in October at Arkansas State University in Beebe.

Dr. Katherine Dudley moved to approve Agenda Item No. 17. Carolyn Rhinehart seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 18 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 Shonk and UACCB for hosting the Coordinating Board meeting.

Institutional Changes

Effective on September 23, Dr. Brendan Kelly became the third president of the Arkansas State University System. Kelly, previously served as president of the University of West Georgia since 2020.

Celebrating 15 Years of the Arkansas Scholarship Lottery

This month marks the 15th year of the Arkansas Scholarship Lottery. Since 2009, ADHE has awarded more than \$1,390,788,584.00 in Arkansas Lottery Scholarships to Arkansas college students.

Arkansas Student Loan Authority

The Arkansas Student Loan Authority (ASLA) partners with colleges and universities to assist student loan borrowers in successfully managing their student loan debt. Dr. Tony Williams, Director of ASLA, provided national and local federal student loan default rates.

Agenda Item No. 19 Annual Report of Credentials Awarded

In academic year 2024, Arkansas higher education institutions reported 52,773 credentials were awarded to 42,325 students. This was a 5.4% increase in the number of credentials and 4.6% increase in the number of unduplicated students receiving those credentials. Prior to 2024, the number of students receiving credentials remained consistent for the past five years, running just above 40,000, but 2024 showed solid improvement with institutions reporting an increase of almost

2,000 recipients over 2023. Comparing 2024 to 2015, the number of credentials awarded has increased more than 10,000 and the number of students receiving those credentials has increased more than 5,000.

Agenda Item No. 20
Annual Report on Academic Program Status
Academic Year 2024

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, 2023, through June 30, 2024, ADHE Academic Affairs staff completed a total of 265 status change requests. The graph below shows the distribution of these changes in status. As depicted, 130 Additions to create new, active programs were processed, along with 50 Deletions/Phase-Outs and 85 Inactivations/Future Inactivations.

There were no questions.

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 two years, the overall number of students enrolling in high school has increased. The percentage of high school enrollment has increased by 4.1% over the past five years, when comparing AY2020 to AY2024.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 22
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 2023–2024 academic year, as required by the legislation.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 23
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 2023-2024.

There were no questions.

Report of the Committees

Vice Chair Cash presented the report of the Finance Committee and moved approval of Agenda Items 2 - 4. Dr. Jim Carr seconded, and the board unanimously approved.

Vice Chair Cash presented the report of the Academic Committee and moved approval of Agenda Items 5 – 8 and 12. Carolyn Rhinehart seconded, and the board unanimously approved.

Remarks by Presidents/Chancellors and Guest

The next quarterly meeting will be held on January 24, 2025, at Arkansas Tech University in Russellville, at 9:00 a.m.

With no further comments, the meeting was adjourned at 11:06 a.m.

SUBMITTED BY:

Nichole Abernathy

APPROVED:

Dr. Kyle Miller, Secretary