

**ARKANSAS HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING BOARD**  
**Regular Quarterly Meeting**  
**July 28, 2023**

**Minutes of Meeting**

The July 28, 2023, regular meeting of the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) was held at Northwest Arkansas Community College in Bentonville. Chair Graycen Bigger called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m., with all members present.

Coordinating Board present:

Graycen Bigger, Chair  
Dr. Jim Carr, Secretary  
Al Brodell  
Dr. Jerry Cash  
Kelley Erstine  
Chad Hooten (via Zoom)  
Dr. Kyle Miller (via Zoom)  
Andy McNeill (via Zoom)

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

Chair Bigger began by thanking everyone for participating in the meeting. She then introduced Dr. Dennis Rittle, President of Northwest Arkansas Community College (NWACC), for a welcome.

Dr. Rittle began by thanking everyone for making the trip up to Northwest Arkansas for the Coordinating Board meeting. He noted that he has had the good fortune of seeing the country and there is nothing better than seeing the state of Arkansas and all of its beauty. After a brief promotional video, Dr. Rittle shared a few campus highlights.

Agenda Item No. 1  
Approval of Minutes

Dr. Jim Carr moved to approve Agenda Item No. 1. Dr. Jerry Cash seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 2  
Commissioner's Report

*Institutional Changes*

Dr. Bentley Wallace has been appointed the new chancellor of Arkansas State University – Mountain Home, effective August 1. Wallace, the previous president of South Arkansas College, will succeed Dr. Robin Myers, who will retire on July 31.

Dr. Stephanie Tully-Dartez, has been named the interim president at South Arkansas Community College (SouthArk). Tully-Dartez currently serves as the vice president for academic affairs and has been employed at SouthArk since 2009.

*Career and Technical Education*

The Division of Career and Technical Education oversees vocational and technical education in the state. It was established to “create opportunities for strong comprehensive education regardless of the student’s ultimate career choice.” This division is now under the Division of Higher Education. We are glad to have Ross White and his team, as part of our group, said Dr. Warden.

*Financial Aid Update*

In 2021-2022, ADHE distributed over \$108M to 32,200 students. Although we haven’t compiled all of the 2022-2023 data, early estimates indicate only slight differences, said Warden.

Agenda Item No. 3  
Report on Faculty Performance Review

Arkansas Code Annotated §6-63-104 and Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) policy require that each college and university conduct an annual performance review of faculty members. The Arkansas Division of Higher Education (ADHE) staff are also required to make an annual report to the Coordinating Board and Legislative Council. Each institution is required to submit a report to ADHE that describes the process followed during the 2022-2023 academic year. Institutional plans are on file with ADHE. Institutions are required to conduct rigorous, consistently applied, annual review of all faculty.

Annual reviews include evaluation of teaching, scholarship, service, advising, overall productivity, and planning expectations for all instructional faculty. There are a variety of methods including assessment by students, classroom monitoring visits, administrator review, peer review, and self-evaluation activities utilized in the faculty performance review process. Evaluation methods and timeframes of the process varied among institutions. All teaching faculty members including full-time, part-time, adjunct, visiting faculty, as well as teaching assistants were evaluated.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 4  
Report on Academic Program Review

Arkansas Code §6-61-214 requires that the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) review existing academic programs at Arkansas public colleges and universities to identify certificate and degree programs not meeting minimum standards of quality and to establish schedules for either resolving these concerns or removing the programs from the AHECB approved program inventory. The existing academic program review policies (AHECB Policy 5.2) were adopted in 1988 and revised in 1995 and 1998. Institutions have been submitting program reviews for more than 35 years.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 5  
Economic Feasibility of Bond Issue  
National Park College

National Park College (NPC) requests approval of the economic feasibility of plans to issue bonds not to exceed \$6.675 million with a maximum term of thirty (30) years at an annual interest rate of approximately 6.70 percent. Proceeds from the bond issue will be used for educational and general (E&G) purposes. The National Park College Board of Trustees approved this financing at its meeting on May 24, 2023.

The E&G issue will be up to \$6.675 million with annual debt service structured around the existing 2018 bonds for an aggregate annual debt service of approximately \$1,652,000 and a term of up to thirty (30) years. The new debt service is expected to average \$426,000 annually until 2049, then increase to \$1,650,000 thereafter. Proceeds from this bond issue along with \$4,300,000 of unrestricted cash funds, will be used for the construction of a new 160-180 bed residential housing facility for students. The improvements will allow National Park College to educate more students, increase the number of graduates and credentials, as well as positively impact the educational attainment levels in Garland County and the State of Arkansas.

**RESOLVED**, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board considers economically feasible plans for National Park College to issue bonds not to exceed \$6.675 million with a term not to exceed thirty (30) years at an annual interest rate of approximately 6.70 percent for the construction of a new 160-180 bed residential housing facility for students.

**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 National Park College of the Coordinating Board's resolution.

Al Brodell asked for additional information regarding NPC's need for an additional 160 beds. Dr. John Hogan, President of NPC said that last summer, NPC had over 100

students on the dorm waiting list. If the dorm is open in the fall, NPC would have no problem filling it, said Hogan.

Al Brodell said the feasibility's remaining debt service is close. Dr. Hogan said that is correct. This is all mileage funds and will generate revenue that NPC can reinvest.

Al Brodell moved to approve Agenda Item No. 5. Kelley Erstine seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 6  
Economic Feasibility of Loan Issue  
Arkansas State University – Jonesboro

Arkansas State University-Jonesboro (ASUJ) requests approval of the economic feasibility of plans to secure a loan in the amount of \$2.9 million with a term of ten (10) years with estimated annual interest rate of 0.0 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 June 8, 2023.

The loan is being sought from the Arkansas Sustainable Building Design Revolving Loan Fund which is managed by the Arkansas Building Authority. This fund was established with funds provided by the federal government under the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act of 2009.

**RESOLVED**, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board considers economically feasible plans for Arkansas State University-Jonesboro to secure a loan in the amount of \$2.9 million with a term of up to ten (10) years at an estimated annual interest rate of 0.0 percent to provide needed campus-wide energy improvements including reroofing and updating air handling systems of existing buildings.

**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.

Al Brodell asked for additional information regarding the energy improvements. Dr. Todd Shields, Chancellor of Arkansas State University Jonesboro (ASUJ) said that in terms of energy efficiency, ASUJ tries to upgrade and save funds wherever they can.

Kelley Erstine moved to approve Agenda Item No. 6. Al Brodell seconded the motion and the Board unanimously approved.

Agenda Item No. 7  
Certification of Intercollegiate Athletic Budgets

A.C.A. §6-62-805 (Act 366 of 1991) requires each state supported institution of higher education to annually certify by June 15 to the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board that its intercollegiate athletic program will generate sufficient revenues to meet expenditures or that any athletic deficit will be met by separate institutional board sanctioned student athletic fees.

**RESOLVED**, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board accepts the Certification of Intercollegiate Athletic Revenues and Expenditures Budgeted for 2023-24 as prepared in accordance with Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board uniform accounting standards and definitions for athletic reporting.

Dr. Jerry Cash asked what percentage of E&G can be transferred to athletics. Nick Fuller said that up to two percent of their budget can be transferred.

Dr. Jerry Cash moved to recommend the approval of Agenda Item No. 6 to the full Board for consideration. Kelley Erstine seconded and the Committee approved.

Agenda Item No. 8  
College of Veterinary Medicine and  
Doctor of Veterinary Medicine  
Arkansas State University Jonesboro

The administration of Arkansas State University Jonesboro (ASUJ) and Board of Trustees of the Arkansas State University System request approval to establish the College of Veterinary Medicine and to offer the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine effective Fall 2025. ASUJ is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and the proposed administrative unit and program is within the role and scope established for the institution. The ASU System Board of Trustees approved the administrative unit and program on March 10, 2023.

**RESOLVED**, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the establishment of the College of Veterinary Medicine and the offering of the Doctor of Veterinary Medicine (CIP 01.8001) at Arkansas State University Jonesboro 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 Jonesboro and Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Arkansas State University System of the approval.

Dr. Todd Shields provided additional background information.

Dr. Jim Carr asked how many out-of-state students the state is currently supporting at veterinary schools. Dr. Shields said it is 12 per year primarily at Louisiana State University (LSU).

Dr. Carr asked if Arkansas could support two veterinary schools. Dr. Sheilds said given the number of needed veterinarians, he is hopeful that they will.

Agenda Item No. 9  
Certificate of Proficiency and  
Technical Certificate in Biotechnology  
Northwest Arkansas Community College

The administration and Board of Trustees of Northwest Arkansas Community College (NWACC) request approval to offer the Certificate of Proficiency in Pre-Biotech: Molecular and Cellular Biology and Technical Certificate in Biotechnology, effective Fall 2024. NWACC is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and the proposed program is within the role and scope established for the institution. The Northwest Arkansas Community College Board of Trustees approved the program on February 13, 2023.

**RESOLVED**, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the Certificate of Proficiency in Pre-Biotech: Molecular and Cellular Biology (CIP 41.0101) and Technical Certificate in Biotechnology (CIP 41.0101) at Northwest Arkansas Community 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 Northwest Arkansas Community College of the approval.

Dr. Diana Johnson, Senior Vice President for Learning, provided additional background information.

Chair Bigger asked who the target audience is for this program. Dr. Gary Bates, program coordinator, said they are targeting students that want to get into STEM.

Dr. Jim Carr said this sounds like a great program; however, the projected enrollment seems very modest.

Agenda Item No. 10  
Certificate of Proficiency and  
Technical Certificate in Medical Assistant Technology  
Southeast Arkansas College

The administration and Board of Trustees of Southeast Arkansas College (SEARK) request approval to offer the Certificate of Proficiency in Administrative Medical

Assistant and Technical Certificate in Medical Assistant Technology, effective Fall 2023. SEARK is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and the proposed program is within the role and scope established for the institution. The Southeast Arkansas College Board of Trustees approved the program on May 10, 2023.

**RESOLVED**, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the Certificate of Proficiency in Administrative Medical Assistant (CIP 51.0710) and Technical Certificate in Clinical Medical Assistant (CIP 51.0801) at Southeast Arkansas College, effective Fall 2023.

**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 Southeast Arkansas College of the approval.

Dr. Stacy Pfluger, Provost and Chief Academic Officer provided additional background information.

There were no questions.

Agenda Item No. 11  
Graduate Certificate in Forestry Business  
University of Arkansas Monticello

The administration of the University of Arkansas Monticello (UAM) and Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas System request approval to offer the Graduate Certificate in Forest Business effective Fall 2023. UAM is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and the proposed program is within the role and scope established for the institution. The University of Arkansas System Board of Trustees will consider the program for approval on May 24-25, 2023.

**RESOLVED**, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the Graduate Certificate in Forest Business (CIP 03.0506) at University of Arkansas Monticello, effective Fall 2023.

**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 Monticello and Chair of the Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas System of the approval.

Crystal Halley, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs; Michael Blazier, Dean of the College of Forestry, Agriculture, and Natural Resources; and, Dr. Matthew Pelkki, Professor and Chair of Forestry, provided additional background information.

Kelley Erstine asked if there were any other graduate certificate programs within the forestry department. Mr. Blazier said they also have graduate certificate programs in waterfowl habitat and recreation management.

Agenda Item No. 12  
Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity  
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

The administration of the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff (UAPB) and Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas System request approval to offer the Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity effective Fall 2023. UAPB is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and the proposed program is within the role and scope established for the institution. The University of Arkansas System Board of Trustees will consider the program for approval on May 24-25, 2023.

**RESOLVED**, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity (CIP 11.1003) at the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff, effective Fall 2023.

**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 Pine Bluff and Chair of the Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas System of the approval.

Dr. Andrea Stewart, Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Dr. Charles Colen, Professor of the Department of Industrial Technology, provided additional background information.

Kelley Erstine asked UAPB to explain the need for this program. Chancellor Laurence Alexander explained that this program is not only needed locally but nationally. By bringing this program to UAPB, we are making sure that we serve an underserved population, said Alexander.

Chair Bigger questioned the workforce needs for this program. She noted that the letters of support were from out of state and the majority of the job postings were also from out of state. Pine Bluff is a wonderful area of the state; however, we do not want to train our students so they can leave, said Bigger.

Chair Bigger asked if UAPB had secured any local partnerships. Dr. Alexander said that several local businesses have expressed interest, such as Entergy, local government and law enforcement. He noted that there are ongoing conversations about investments in Pine Bluff to address the declining population.



Chad Hooten asked how many of the 22 two-year colleges have a cybersecurity program. Mason Campbell said that SAUT, SACC, and NWACC offer a cybersecurity program.

Agenda Item No. 13  
Bachelor of Science in Engineering  
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

The administration of the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff (UAPB) and Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas System request approval to offer the Bachelor of Science in Engineering effective Fall 2023. UAPB is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and the proposed program is within the role and scope established for the institution. The University of Arkansas System Board of Trustees will consider the program for approval on May 24-25, 2023.

**RESOLVED**, That the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board approves the Bachelor of Science in Engineering (CIP 14.0101) at the University of Arkansas Pine Bluff, effective Fall 2023.

**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 Pine Bluff and Chair of the Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas System of the approval.

Dr. Jerry Cash asked what type of title III assistance UAPB would receive. Dr. Andrea Stewart said they have received approximately \$289,000 every year, as well as faculty equipment and administrative support.

Chair Bigger noted that the letters of support for this program and the majority of the job postings were also from out of state. She asked UAPB to discuss their local partnerships for this program. Dr. Charles Colen said they have several opportunities for partnerships with companies such as the Jefferson County Manufacturing Council, Georgia-Pacific, and NUCOR.

Agenda Item No. 14  
Institutional Certification Advisory Committee

**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, 2026.

**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**

Fielding Graduate University, Santa Barbara, California  
University of Massachusetts Global, Irvine, California  
University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California

There were no questions.

Dr. Jim Carr moved to recommend Agenda Items No. 8 - 14 to the full Board for consideration. Dr. Jerry Cash seconded and the Committee approved.

### Agenda Items No. 15 & 16 Letters of Notification and Letters of Intent

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 institutions to offer degree programs to Arkansas residents. The program notice lists appear in the Letters of Notification on pages 15-1 through 15-61 and in the Letters of Intent on pages 16-1 through 16-4 of the agenda book.

### Report of the Committees

Chair Bigger presented the report of the Finance Committee and moved approval of Agenda Items 5 - 7. Kelley Erstine seconded and the board approved.

Chair Bigger presented the report of the Academic Committee and moved approval of Agenda Items 8 - 14. Dr. Jerry Cash seconded and the board approved.

Remarks by Presidents/Chancellors and Guest

Chair Graycen Bigger thanked everyone for coming and announced that the next quarterly meeting will be held on October 28, 2023, at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, at 10:00 a.m.

With no further comments, the meeting was adjourned at 11:18 a.m.

SUBMITTED BY:

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Nichole Abernathy

APPROVED:

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Dr. Jim Carr, Secretary