Academic Program Proposals for April 24, 2026

The following is a list of academic program proposals being reviewed for possible consideration for approval at the April 24, 2026, Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board meeting. The summary contents are subject to change. The finalized version of the summaries will be available in the board book.

The institution's name, program title, and program summary are listed below. Contact ADHE for a copy of the proposals.

If you have concerns, objections, questions, or comments concerning a specific proposal, please send them to **Mason Campbell, Assistant Commissioner of Academic Affairs** (mason.campbell@adhe.edu) no later than April 1, 2026.

NORTHWEST ARKANSAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE
Associate of Applied Science in Artificial Intelligence

The administration and Board of Trustees of Northwest Arkansas Community College (NWACC) request approval to offer the Associate of Applied Science in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102), effective Spring 2027.

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 November 10, 2025.

Program Description

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

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

The proposed program will utilize existing library and learning support resources as well as existing instructional classrooms, laboratories, and computing infrastructure. Up to four new faculty members will be hired over the first three years. Specialized instructional equipment and software will be required.

Program Need

Labor-market data provided by ADHE indicates a strong and sustained demand for AI-related occupations in northwest Arkansas, with 4,163 jobs in 2026 projected to increase to 4,494 jobs by 2031 (+8.0% growth), representing 331 net new jobs and approximately 283 annual openings. Median earnings for these occupations are $46.73 per hour ($97,200 annually). Key aligned occupations include Software Developers, Network and Computer Systems Administrators, Web and Digital Interface Designers, and Computer Occupations. From January 2025 through January 2026, the region recorded 2,617 unique job postings, with an average of 201 monthly postings and 150 monthly hires, reflecting ongoing recruitment pressure. Labor market data also reports zero regional completions and zero regional training providers for CIP 11.0102 (Artificial Intelligence), demonstrating a significant gap in educational supply.

Regional employers further report difficulty finding workers with AI-aligned and AI-enabled skill sets, particularly individuals who can apply AI tools in practical workplace environments. Student and community demand is evidenced through strong participation in NWACC's non-credit "AI in the Workplace" workshops, crossover participation by current and prospective students, employer requests for credit-bearing AI training options, and a credit-bearing AI course currently offered at a local high school serving approximately 40 students annually. Collectively, these indicators demonstrate both immediate and future enrollment potential and support the need for NWACC's proposed Associate of Applied Science in Artificial Intelligence.

Program Expenditures and Funding

Up to four full-time faculty members will be hired over the first three years with a program coordinator and one full-time faculty hired as soon as Spring 2026. As enrollment increases, adjunct instructors will be used for specialized topics, flexible scheduling, and additional sections. The total estimated personnel cost over the first three years ranges from $740,000 to $866,000. The purchase of library resources, equipment, and specialized software will be necessary to support instruction in artificial intelligence, machine learning, cloud computing, data analytics, automation, and responsible AI practices. The total estimated resource and equipment cost over the first three years is $70,000 to $121,000. Additional estimated costs can be found in the full proposal.

Program funding will be generated primarily through student tuition and program fees. Projected enrollment is 20 students in Year 1, 50 students in Year 2, and 80 students in Year 3. Total projected tuition and fee revenue is $114,300 in Year 1, $285,000 in Year 2, and $457,200 in Year 3, for a total of $856,500 over the first three years of operation. NWACC reports no grants, reallocations, or external funding sources at this time; long-term sustainability is expected to be supported through tuition and fee revenue based on projected enrollment.

Program Duplication

There are no active associate degree programs similar to the proposed Associate of Applied Science in Artificial Intelligence.

Program Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion, a student will be able to:
1. Demonstrate the ability to use AI platforms, machine-learning models, cloud-based tools, and automation frameworks to address authentic business, industry, and community challenges.
2. Implement AI systems that follow responsible-use guidelines, including fairness, transparency, safety, bias mitigation, documentation, and alignment with frameworks such as the NIST AI Risk Management Framework.
3. Gather, prepare, analyze, and interpret data; write Python and API-based automations; and incorporate cloud AI services into end-to-end workflows supporting technical decision-making.
4. Interpret, analyze, and validate the performance of machine-learning and generative models using appropriate evaluation metrics, regulatory considerations, and domain-specific requirements.
5. Convey AI findings through clear written, oral, and visual communication tailored to diverse audiences, including technical teams, industry partners, and non-technical decision-makers.
6. Demonstrate readiness for the workplace through hands-on project work, adherence to professional standards, version control, documentation, and collaboration across interdisciplinary teams.

Program Enrollment and Graduation Projections

Academic Year	Projected Enrollment	Projected Graduates
2027 – 2028	20	
2028 – 2029	50	
2029 – 2030	80	15
2030 – 2031	110	35
2031 – 2032	135	35

Program Curriculum

General Education – 15 credit hours
ENGL 1013   Composition I
COMM 1003   Fundamentals of Speech OR
COMM 1303   Public Speaking
MATH 1203   College Algebra OR
MATH 1103   Contemporary Mathematics
HIST 2003   History of American People to 1877 OR
HIST 2013   History of American People since 1877
PLSC 2003   American National Government

Major Course Requirements – 45 credit hours

WFAI 1003 *Survey of Artificial Intelligence*
WFAI 1303 *Prompt Engineering and Generative AI*
WFAI 1403 *Data Literacy for Artificial Intelligence*
WFAI 2103 *Responsible and Trustworthy AI*
WFAI 2203 *Cloud AI Tools & Services*
WFAI 2303 *Machine Learning Fundamentals*
WFAI 2403 *Computer Vision and Natural Language Processing*
WFAI 2503 *Automation and AI Agents*
WFAI 2603 *Machine Learning Operations and AI Deployment*
WFAI 2703 *Applied Programming for AI (Python and APIs)*
WFAI 2803 *AI Capstone/Work-Based Learning*
Italics – New Course

SOUTH ARKANSAS COLLEGE
Associate of Applied Science in Nursing (Traditional)

The administration and Board of Trustees of South Arkansas College (SAC) request approval to offer the Associate of Applied Science in Nursing (Traditional) (CIP 51.3801), effective Summer 2026.

SAC is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, and the proposed program is within the role and scope established for the institution. The South Arkansas College Board of Trustees approved the program on January 20, 2026.

Program Description

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

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

The College will hire one program director, two faculty, and one simulation laboratory assistant to support the proposed program. Existing facilities will be utilized but will require renovations to accommodate simulation laboratory equipment requirements.

Program Need

Labor market data provided by ADHE demonstrate sustained and growing demand for Registered Nurses across southern Arkansas and surrounding counties. The region reports 4,679 registered nursing jobs in 2025, with continued growth projected through 2030 and approximately 270 annual openings. From January 2025 to November 2025, employers posted an average of 349 RN job postings per month, with 208 average monthly hires, indicating ongoing recruitment pressure and persistent workforce shortages. Registered Nursing is also a high-wage occupation in the region, with median earnings of $36.77 per hour and 75th percentile wages exceeding $42 per hour.

Although the educational supply has increased, it has not kept pace with the workforce demand. In 2024, the region produced 573 Registered Nursing completions across 11 institutions, reflecting 17% growth since 2020, with associate degrees representing the largest share of completions (55.5%). Despite this growth, sustained hiring activity, competitive posting intensity, and documented annual openings indicate a continued supply-demand gap, particularly in rural and underserved communities within South Arkansas College's service area.

The demand for Registered Nurses in southern Arkansas was confirmed through an employer needs survey distributed to local clinical partners, advisory committee members, and employers. All reported ongoing difficulty filling RN positions and projected continued hiring needs across acute care, long-term care, and community-based settings. Magnolia Regional Medical Center anticipates 10-15 RN vacancies annually. Employers also expressed strong support for the proposed program through clinical placements, advisory participation, tuition assistance, and recruitment partnerships, reinforcing both workforce need and commitment to graduate employment.

Program Expenditures and Funding

The proposed program will require the addition of a full-time Program Director who will be responsible for day-to-day activities, liaising with the partner healthcare facilities, developing the new RN curriculum, developing and implementing recruiting strategies with the college marketing department, procurement of necessary supplies, equipment, and training, and teaching in the program. In addition, two full-time nursing faculty, a simulation lab assistant, and adjunct clinical faculty will also be hired. Salary and fringe benefit details can be found in the full proposal. Simulation laboratory equipment, including a SimMan and SimNewborn, will be acquired at an estimated total cost of more than $156,000.

Funding for the proposed program will be come primarily from student tuition and fees based on the projected enrollment of 24 students per cohort. Tuition revenue projections are calculated using SAC's in-district, out-of-district, and out-of-state tuition rates, with conservative estimates based primarily on in-district enrollment patterns. SAC also received a Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in the amount of $1,572,936 with the intent

of supporting the program's salaries, fringe benefits, training, new equipment, participant costs, and supplies through 2029.

A private donation through the SAC Foundation will allow renovation of existing facilities to create a designated simulation laboratory and classroom for the program.

Program Duplication

Twenty-three Arkansas public institutions offer a similar Associate of Applied Science in Nursing program with a traditional/RN focus, a transitional/LPN-to-RN focus, or both.

South Arkansas College currently offers an approved Associate of Applied Science in Nursing program with an LPN-to-RN focus developed in partnership with Arkansas Rural Nursing Education Consortium (ARNEC).

Program Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion, a student will be able to:
1. Provide safe, compassionate, patient-centered nursing care to diverse individuals, families, and communities across the lifespan.
2. Apply clinical judgement and the nursing process to assess, plan, implement, and evaluate evidence-based nursing care.
3. Implement safe nursing practices and participate in quality improvement activities that minimize risk of harm and enhance patient outcomes.
4. Integrate best current evidence, clinical expertise, and patient preferences to guide nursing practice.
5. Use informatics and healthcare technologies to communicate, manage information, support clinical decision-making, and promote safe patient care.
6. Communicate and collaborate effectively with patients, families, and members of interprofessional healthcare teams to coordinate care and achieve optimal patient outcomes.
7. Demonstrate professional behaviors consistent with ethical principles, legal standards, and regulatory requirements of nursing practice.
8. Apply principles of leadership and delegation appropriate to the role of the associate degree nurse within structure healthcare environments.

Program Enrollment and Graduation Projections

Academic Year	Projected Enrollment	Projected Graduates
2026 – 2027	24	
2027 – 2028	48	24
2028 – 2029	48	24
2029 – 2030	48	24
2030 – 2031	48	24

Program Curriculum

General Education Prerequisites – 30 credit hours
SASC 1101	Campus Technology
ENGL 1113	Composition I
PSYC 2003	General Psychology
MATH 1083	Math for Health Professionals
BIOL 2064/L	Anatomy & Physiology I
PSCI 2003	American Government
ENGL 1123	Composition II
BIOL 2074/L	Anatomy & Physiology II
BIOL 2174/L	Microbiology
HIST 2013	History of the United States to 1876 OR
HIST 2023	History of the United States Since 1876

Nursing Coursework – 38 credit hours
HSCI 1201	*Introduction to Professional Nursing*
RNSG 2102	*Pharmacology for Nursing Practice I: Foundations*
RNSG 2106	*Foundations of Nursing Care*
RNSG 2103	*Psychiatric-Mental Health Nursing*
RNSG 2112	*Practicum I*
RNSG 2201	*Pharmacology for Nursing Practice II: Across the Lifespan*
RNSG 2205	*Adult and Older Adult Medical-Surgical Nursing I*
RNSG 2204	*Family-Centered Nursing*
RNSG 2212	*Practicum II*
RNSG 2301	*Pharmacology III*
RNSG 2305	*Medical-Surgical Nursing II*
RNSG 2302	*Community & Leadership Nursing*
RNSG 2322	*NCLEX Preparation*
RNSG 2 312	*Practicum II*

Italics – New Course

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS FAYETTEVILLE
Master of Library and Information Studies in Library and Information Studies

The administration of the University of Arkansas Fayetteville (UAF) and Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas System request approval to offer the Master of Library and Information Studies in Library and Information Studies (CIP 25.0101), effective Fall 2027.

UAF 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 March 9, 2026.

Program Description

The proposed 36-credit-hour Master of Library and Information Studies in Library and Information Studies program is designed to prepare students for professional roles in

libraries, archives, museums, healthcare, government, higher education, and corporate and nonprofit organizations. The curriculum emphasizes information organization and retrieval, digital literacy, research methods, management and policy, and ethical and legal issues related to information access and stewardship. Graduates will be prepared for positions including librarians, archivists, curators, research analysts, and information professionals across a variety of sectors.

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

Program Need

Workforce analysis provided by ADHE indicates a sustained and growing demand for library and information professionals across the state. As of 2024, occupations linked to library and information science within Arkansas and immediately surrounding counties accounted for more than 25,700 positions, with nearly 5,000 jobs added over the past three years and an additional 14,800 workers projected to be needed over the next seven years.

Employer need surveys and letters of support from Arkansas public libraries, academic libraries, museums, healthcare organizations, and state agencies indicate that the Master of Library and Information Studies degree is frequently required for advancement into professional and leadership roles. Employers report anticipated retirements among long-serving librarians, expansion of digital services, and increased demand for professionals with expertise in information organization, data management, digital literacy, and public service. Several employers noted difficulty recruiting qualified candidates within the state, resulting in reliance on out-of-state hiring.

The median wage for library and information professionals in Arkansas is approximately $54,530, with higher salaries associated with advanced credentials and specialized responsibilities. Employer data indicate that positions requiring a master's degree offer increased earning potential and greater opportunities for advancement. Establishing an in-state master's-level program would expand access for Arkansas residents, strengthen the local talent pipeline, and support the long-term workforce needs of libraries, cultural institutions, healthcare systems, and public agencies throughout the state.

Program Expenditures and Funding

UAF will invest approximately $145,000 annually over an initial three-year period to support faculty salaries and instructional costs. This investment will be shared between central university resources and the University Libraries. After three years, the

program's funding will be evaluated again and, if sufficient enrollment exists, a permanent transfer of these funds will be considered to support the program.

The estimated total cost to students for completion of the 36-credit-hour program is $19,423, based on current in-state tuition and fees. One new faculty member will be hired to serve as the department/program lead at an approximate salary of $115,000 per year. The University Libraries will invest approximately $30,000 in support of the proposed program for adjunct faculty and associated program costs.

Program Duplication

Three Arkansas public universities offer graduate degrees in library media studies or instructional technology.
- Arkansas Tech University – Master of Science in Library Media and Instructional Technology
- Southern Arkansas University Magnolia – Master of Education in Library Media and Information Specialist
- University of Central Arkansas – Master of Science in Library Media and Instructional Technologies

Program Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion, a student will be able to:
1. Demonstrate the ability to create and implement systems that promote access to information resources by a wide variety of community members that libraries serve.
2. Analyze and address barriers within library environments to create spaces that are welcoming, beneficial, and accessible.
3. Employ ethical practices to curate, organize, and provide access to a variety of information resources, supporting intellectual freedom and privacy.
4. Evaluate and apply methods to manage the lifecycle of information resources, from acquisition to long-term preservation, considering evolving technologies and community needs.
5. Design and deliver library programs and services that contribute to the public good by fostering education, literacy, and community empowerment.
6. Engage in effective outreach and partnerships to support informed, connected, and educated communities.
7. Assess and implement emerging technologies to enhance library services, ensuring solutions are sustainable and ethical.
8. Promote practices that balance environmental, economic, and social sustainability in library and resource management.
9. Pursue ongoing professional growth to adapt to the evolving needs of libraries and their communities, embracing lifelong learning as a core value.
10. Apply principles of active and engaged pedagogy and learning outcomes assessment to design and implement educational initiatives within information settings.

11. Conduct and apply research to inform library practices, using evidence-based approaches to address community needs and professional challenges.
12. Evaluate the ethical and cultural dimensions of research and scholarly communication in library studies.
13. Demonstrate effective leadership and management skills, including strategic planning, human resource development, and community collaboration.
14. Employ change management principles to innovate and adapt library services in response to societal and technological shifts.

Program Enrollment and Graduation Projections

Academic Year	Projected Enrollment	Projected Graduates
2027 – 2028	4	
2028 – 2029	12	4
2029 – 2030	20	8
2030 – 2031	28	12
2031 – 2032	36	16

Program Curriculum

ESRM 50103   Research Methods in Education
Library Studies Core – 15 credit hours
LIBS 50003   Foundations of Libraries, Information & Society
LIBS 50103   Organization of Information, Access & Use
LIBS 50203   Management, Policy & Program Evaluation
LIBS 50303   Technology Fundamentals
LIBS 50403   Outreach & Service in Libraries
Electives – 15 credit hours (12 credit hours for thesis option)
LIBS 52003   Information Literacy & Searching Techniques
LIBS 52103   Collection Development, Strategy & Analysis
LIBS 52203   Cataloging & Metadata Management
LIBS 52303   Pedagogies & Instructional Design
LIBS 52403   Special Topics in Libraries
LIBS 52503   Marketing, Outreach & Service in Libraries
LIBS 52603   Assessment & User Experience in Libraries
Thesis or Capstone
LIBS 6000V   Thesis (6 credit hours) OR
LIBS 61003   Capstone
Italics – New Course

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS FAYETTEVILLE
Master of Science in Outdoor Recreation and Sport Tourism

The administration of the University of Arkansas Fayetteville (UAF) and Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas System request approval to offer the Master of Science in Outdoor Recreation and Sport Tourism (CIP 31.0301), effective Fall 2026.

UAF 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 March 9, 2026.

Program Description

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

The program will be housed in the Department of Health, Human Performance, and Recreation within the College of Education and Health Professions and will be supported by existing faculty expertise and instructional infrastructure, including the University's Global Campus. One full-time faculty member will be hired, with additional part-time lecturers utilized as needed. No new facilities are required to implement the program.

Program Need

Outdoor recreation and sport tourism represent a significant and growing component of Arkansas's economy. According to the Arkansas Office of Outdoor Recreation, the sector contributes more than $7.3 billion annually to the state's GDP and supports over 68,000 jobs. Workforce analysis provided by ADHE indicates that occupations linked to parks, recreation, and leisure facilities management added more than 10,000 jobs over the past three years and are projected to require approximately 54,500 newly trained workers over the next seven years.

Median wages for linked occupations are estimated at $81,600, with entry-level wages beginning near $65,900, significantly exceeding the statewide median wage. Employer survey results indicate strong demand for graduates with advanced training who can combine business, management, and analytical skills with industry-specific knowledge. These employers expressed a preference for an online program format to accommodate working professionals and identified leadership development and advancement opportunities tied to graduate-level credentials.

Employer support for the proposed program includes participation from organizations such as Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage, and Tourism, Ozark Foundation, 37 North Expeditions, and municipal parks and recreation departments. These partners cited anticipated workforce needs,

advancement opportunities for current employees, and the importance of specialized training aligned with the state's Natural State Initiative.

Program Expenditures and Funding

The proposed program will be supported through existing institutional resources, tuition revenue, and instructional capacity. The program is designed to be financially sustainable over the long term. The estimated total cost to students for completion of the 30-credit-hour program is $15,380.

One new non-tenure track faculty member will be hired to implement the program, with an anticipated cost of approximately $81,000 including salary and fringe benefits. No significant instructional, library, or research resources are required for implementation.

Program Duplication

No similar active master's-level programs in Outdoor Recreation and Sport Tourism are currently offered in Arkansas. Comparable programs in the region are limited and are offered outside the state.

Program Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion, a student will be able to:
1. Demonstrate knowledge of marketing, economics, and financial management related to tourism in outdoor recreation and sport tourism.
2. Identify funding strategies, including application and administration of grants.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of trends and issues as well as sustainability in Outdoor Recreation and Sport as it pertains to tourism.
4. Apply critical thinking skills to problem identification, problem solving, and decision making within the context of outdoor recreation and sport tourism.
5. Adapt classroom knowledge of outdoor recreation and sport tourism and apply it in the field during an experiential learning opportunity.
6. Evaluate social and environmental aspects of consumer behavior in outdoor recreation and sport tourism.
7. Analyze recreation and sport tourism policies and business practices in the for-profit and non-profit sectors.

Program Enrollment and Graduation Projections

Academic Year	Projected Enrollment	Projected Graduates
2026 – 2027	10	
2027 – 2028	15	7
2028 – 2029	20	10
2029 – 2030	25	14
2030 – 2031	30	17

Program Curriculum

ORST 51003	*Trends in Outdoor Recreation and Sport Tourism Management*
RESM 58903	Public and Private Finance in Recreation and Sport Management
ORST 51203	*Applied Consumer Behavioral Analysis in Outdoor Recreation & Sport*
ORST 51303	*Applied Data Analysis in Outdoor Recreation and Sport Tourism*
ORST 51403	*Analysis of Recreation and Sport Tourism Industry Segments*
ORST 51503	*Foundations of Sustainable Recreation and Sport Tourism*
ORST 51603	*Organization & Administration of Outdoor Recreation & Sport Tourism*
ORST 51703	*Capstone in Outdoor Recreation and Sport Tourism*
ORST 5180V	*Outdoor Recreation and Sport Tourism Field Experience*

Italics – New Course

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS LITTLE ROCK
Bachelor of Science in Artificial Intelligence

The administration of the University of Arkansas Little Rock (UALR) and Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas System request approval to offer the Bachelor of Science in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102), effective Fall 2026.

UALR 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 approved the program on January 28-29, 2026.

Program Description

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

Graduates will be prepared for employment in AI-enabled and advanced computing roles across sectors including technology, healthcare, finance, manufacturing, logistics, retail, government, and professional services. Career pathways include positions such as Software Developer, Artificial Intelligence Engineer, Machine Learning Engineer, Data Analyst, Computer Systems Analyst, and related computing occupations. The proposed program also provides a strong foundation for graduate study in artificial intelligence, computer science, data science, or related fields.

Existing faculty, state-of-the-art hybrid classrooms and laboratories, computing infrastructure, and resources will be leveraged by the proposed program.

Program Need

Labor market data provided by ADHE indicates a significant demand for occupations aligned with artificial intelligence and advanced computing across Arkansas. Target occupations are projected to support 7,909 jobs in 2026, increasing to 8,328 jobs by 2031, representing 5.3% growth and 419 net new jobs. Median earnings across these occupations are $40.59 per hour, or $84,400 annually, with approximately 509 annual openings. Key aligned occupations include Software Developers, Computer Systems Analysts, Computer Network Support Specialists, and Web Developers.

Hiring activity further demonstrates consistent employer demand. From January 2025 through January 2026, Arkansas recorded 12,622 total job postings (5,204 unique) for these occupations, posted by more than 550 companies, with an average of 400 monthly postings and 284 monthly hires. Educational supply remains limited as labor market data indicates a substantial gap between workforce demand and in-state educational production.

Program Expenditures and Funding

No new full-time faculty positions are required initially. The program will utilize nine existing faculty made available through the reallocation of resources from low-enrollment programs currently under review. This reallocation ensures sufficient instructional capacity without requiring immediate new hires. Strong industry partnerships provide access to highly qualified adjunct instructors who can support rapid enrollment growth and specialized course offerings. Approximately $18,000 per year will be spent on adjunct instructional costs. Existing facilities, equipment, and library resources will be used.

Program operations will be funded exclusively through student tuition and fees. Based on enrollment growth and a tuition rate of $246 per credit hour, projected tuition and fee revenue totals $147,600 in Year 1, $407,376 in Year 2, and $602,208 in Year 3, for a three-year total of $1,157,184. In addition, UALR was awarded a HIRED grant through the Spring of 2027 for up to $226,000 to support curriculum development, adjunct faculty, and AI licensing.

Program Duplication

There are no active bachelor's degree programs similar to the proposed Bachelor of Science in Artificial Intelligence.

Program Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion, a student will be able to:
1. Apply core concepts of computer science, mathematics, and statistics to design and implement AI systems.
2. Develop and evaluate machine learning, deep learning, and natural language processing models for real-world applications.

3. Analyze complex problems and select appropriate AI tools and techniques to address them effectively.
4. Evaluate the ethical, societal, and governance implications of AI technologies in professional practice.
5. Communicate technical ideas, research findings, and project outcomes clearly to both technical and non-technical audiences.
6. Collaborate effectively in multidisciplinary teams to design, build, and deploy AI-driven solutions.

Program Enrollment and Graduation Projections

Academic Year	Projected Enrollment		Projected Graduates
2026 – 2027	25		
2027 – 2028	50	(69)	
2028 – 2029	50	(102)	
2029 – 2030	50	(126)	11
2030 – 2031	50	(137)	21

Values in parentheses indicate overall enrollment.

Program Curriculum

CPSI 10501   First Year Experience for Computing Majors
General Education Core Courses – 24 credit hours
Additional Mathematics and Science Courses - 25 credit hours
MATH 24004   Calculus I
MATH 25004   Calculus II
MATH 26103   Discrete Mathematics
MATH 31263   Linear Algebra
STAT 35203   Applied Statistics I
Complete the courses in one of the following science areas:
CHEM 10234   General Chemistry I AND
CHEM 14204   General Chemistry II
or
PHYS 20103   College Physics I (also PHYS 20101 College Physics I lab) AND
PHYS 20203   College Physics II (also PHYS 20201 College Physics II lab)
Computer Science Requirements – 19 credit hours
CPSI 17503   Programming I
CPSI 27603   Programming II
CPSI 28003   Algorithms
CPSI 28204   Computer Organization
CPSI 37503   Database Concepts
CPSI 38003   Operating Systems
Artificial Intelligence Requirements – 51 credit hours
AINT 11003   *AI Foundations*
AINT 12003   *AI Operations*
AINT 21003   *AI Governance*

AINT* 22003   *AI Tools and Techniques*
AINT* 23003   *AI Practicum*
AINT* 31003   *Machine Learning I*
AINT* 35003   *Machine Learning II*
AINT* 32003   *Search and Planning*
AINT* 33003   *Probabilistic Reasoning in AI*
AINT* 36003   *Natural Language Processing*
AINT* 34003   *Robotics*
AINT* 43003   *Perception and Computer Vision*
AINT* 44003   *Intelligent Agents*
AINT* 45003   *Deep Learning*
AINT* 46003   *Reinforcement Learning*
AINT* 41003   *AI Capstone I*
AINT* 42003   *AI Capstone II*
AINT* 47003   *Bio-Inspired Technologies*

<u>Additional Electives</u> – 3 credit hours

Additional upper-level CPSI elective courses (30000–40000 level) may be chosen from the following ordered list of program codes: CPSI, IFSC, CSEC, PHYS, MATH, ECET, BINF, SYEN, and GEOL 42104.

<u>Unrestricted General Electives</u>

Remaining hours, if any, to reach 120 minimum total hours, 45 hours of upper-level courses (30000–40000 level), and/or 30 hours in residence.

Italics – New Course

*Course prefix subject to change

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS LITTLE ROCK
Master of Science in Cybersecurity

The administration of the University of Arkansas Little Rock (UALR) and Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas System request approval to offer the Master of Science in Cybersecurity (CIP 11.1003), effective Fall 2026.

UALR 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 approved the program on January 28-29, 2026.

Program Description

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

The curriculum emphasizes applied learning through hands-on labs, real-world projects, service learning, and industry-aligned practicum experiences. Students may complete either a 30-credit-hour project option or a 33-credit-hour thesis option and select a concentration in Cyber Offensive Operations or Secure Artificial Intelligence. The program offers flexible delivery in online and in-person formats, along with transfer credit options, prior learning assessment for industry certifications, and an Early Entry pathway for qualified undergraduates. Accreditation through the NSA National Centers of Academic Excellence will be pursued following graduation of the program's first cohort.

The program leverages existing university resources, such as cybersecurity labs, online infrastructure, and practicum partnerships. The proposed program will transition one part-time faculty to full-time and hire 2 additional teaching assistants to support the program.

Program Need

Labor market data provided by ADHE shows continual demand for professionals in Computer and Information Systems Security/Auditing/Information Assurance. Regionally, approximately 14,755 jobs are projected in 2026, increasing to 15,465 by 2031, representing 4.8% growth and more than 700 net new positions. High-demand roles such as Information Security Analysts are projected to grow by approximately 11%, and Computer and Information Systems Managers by 8%, indicating strong expansion in both technical and leadership cybersecurity roles. Median regional earnings across target occupations are approximately $83,100 annually ($39.93 per hour), with several advanced roles exceeding $100,000 annually.

UALR conducted an employer survey to evaluate regional workforce demand for graduates in cybersecurity and information systems security. Data were collected through structured interviews, email correspondence, letters of support, and direct engagement with industry partners in Central and Northwest Arkansas. Employers reported ongoing difficulty recruiting and retaining qualified candidates, particularly in security analysis, systems administration, cloud security, risk management, compliance, and security operations. They emphasized the need for graduates with applied technical skills in cloud platforms, scripting (e.g., Python), security frameworks, auditing, and incident response, along with strong communication, project management, and problem-solving abilities. Several employers noted reliance on out-of-state or remote recruitment due to limited in-state talent, highlighting the need to strengthen Arkansas' cybersecurity workforce pipeline.

Program Expenditures and Funding

Implementation of the proposed Master of Science in Cybersecurity program will require modest incremental personnel support. Over the first three years, projected personnel costs total $388,200 which include converting an existing part-time appointment to full-time status, at an annual cost of $66,000, and the hiring of two teaching assistants at $31,700 each annually. No additional administrative positions, faculty development

funds, instructional or research equipment, library resources, or facility renovations are required. The program will utilize existing hybrid classrooms, cybersecurity laboratory space, cloud infrastructure, and the newly established Cyberspace Operations Research and Education (CORE) Center.

Program sustainability will be supported through student tuition revenue generated by projected enrollment growth. Over the first three years, the total projected tuition revenue is approximately $1,158,300. The specific tuition rates, credit hours, and enrollment projections used for this approximation can be found in the full proposal. No additional grants, reallocations, special fees, or external funding sources are identified for program implementation. Tuition revenue exceeds projected personnel costs over the three-year period, supporting long-term financial sustainability.

Program Duplication

No similar active master's-level programs in Cybersecurity are currently offered in Arkansas.

Program Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion, a student will be able to:
1. Analyze and Mitigate Cyber Risks – Identify, assess, and reduce vulnerabilities across enterprise, cloud, and critical infrastructure systems.
2. Design Secure Architectures – Develop and implement secure, resilient systems using industry standards, layered defenses, and zero-trust principles.
3. Conduct and Defend Cyber Operations – Apply advanced offensive and defensive techniques to evaluate and enhance system security.
4. Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Competence – Apply ethical, legal, and policy considerations in the planning and execution of cybersecurity activities.
5. Communicate and Lead Effectively – Produce clear, actionable analyses and demonstrate leadership in cybersecurity strategy and governance.

Program Enrollment and Graduation Projections

Academic Year	Projected Enrollment		Projected Graduates
2026 – 2027	25		
2027 – 2028	50	(77)	22
2028 – 2029	50	(93)	43
2029 – 2030	50	(93)	43
2030 – 2031	50	(93)	43

Values in parentheses indicate overall enrollment.

Program Curriculum

Core Courses – 15 credit hours
CSEC 53003   Cybersecurity Principles & Systems
CSEC 55003   Defensive Cyber Operations

CSEC 73503   *Quantum-Resistant Cryptography*
CSEC 75003   *Advanced Cloud Security*
CSEC 79503   *Cybersecurity Practicum*
<u>Choose one of the following concentrations</u> – 12 credit hours
Cyber Offensive Operations Concentration
CSEC 73003   *Reverse Engineering*
CSEC 73503   *Critical Infrastructure Security*
CSEC 74003   *Offensive Cyber Operations*
Elective – 3 credit hour course
Secure Artificial Intelligence Concentration
CSEC 75503   *Adversarial AI*
CSEC 76003   *Securing AI*
Choose two of the following elective courses:
CPSI 77503   Machine Learning
CPSI 77303   Artificial Intelligence
IFSC 72503   Deep Learning Theory and Apps
<u>Choose one of the following options</u> – 3-6 credit hours
Option 1 – Master's Thesis (6 credit hours)
Students pursuing the thesis option are required to only complete 3 credit hours of electives. They must also enroll in any combination of CSEC 79801, 79802, 79803, 79804, 79805, or 79806 over consecutive semesters to total 6 thesis credits. A thesis requires an advising committee of three graduate faculty members (advisor plus two additional members).
Option 2 – Master's Project (3 credit hours)
Students complete a Graduate Project course, CSEC 79003. The project is completed in one course (i.e., no committee is required). Deliverables and evaluation follow the project course syllabus and the supervising instructor's guidance.
Italics – New Course

CYBER LEARNING NETWORK CONSORTIUM
Certificate of Proficiency in Artificial Intelligence
Technical Certificate in Artificial Intelligence
Certificate of Proficiency in Software Engineering
Technical Certificate in Software Engineering
Certificate of Proficiency in Cyber-Informed Engineering

The administration and Board of Trustees of the following institutions request approval to offer the Certificate of Proficiency in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102), Technical Certificate in Artificial Intelligence (CIP 11.0102), Certificate of Proficiency in Software Engineering (CIP 14.0903), Technical Certificate in Software Engineering (CIP 14.0903), and the Certificate of Proficiency of Cyber-Informed Engineering (CIP 14.2701), effective Fall 2026.

All institutions named in this proposal are accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, and the proposed certificates fall within each institution's established role

and scope. Each institution has obtained approval from its respective Board of Trustees to offer the programs described herein.

- Cossatot Community College of the University of Arkansas
- North Arkansas College
- Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas
- University of Arkansas Community College Batesville
- University of Arkansas Community College Hope-Texarkana
- University of Arkansas Community College Morrilton
- University of Arkansas Fayetteville
- University of Arkansas Little Rock
- University of Arkansas Pine Bluff
- University of Arkansas Pulaski Technical College

Program Description

The Cyber Learning Network (CLN) is a consortium of Arkansas institutions established to expand and diversify cybersecurity and related technology education statewide. Through a shared curriculum and coordinated delivery model, the CLN leverages pooled resources and faculty expertise to address workforce and skills gaps. The University of Arkansas Little Rock serves as the lead institution, providing coordination and shared services on behalf of the consortium. Students enroll at their home institution while benefiting from consistent curriculum, stackable credentials, and coordinated pathways into advanced degrees and the workforce.

The CLN proposes a set of five certificates, known as Cyberspace Foundations, that are designed to prepare students for high-demand roles in applied artificial intelligence, software development, and the protection of critical infrastructure systems.

The proposed Artificial Intelligence certificates introduce students to essential mathematics, programming concepts, and applied AI methods used across a range of industry and public-sector contexts. The 15-16 credit-hour Certificate of Proficiency in Artificial Intelligence provides a compact foundation in AI literacy and practical tools, while the 27-29 credit-hour Technical Certificate in Artificial Intelligence builds on this foundation through advanced coursework that develops deeper technical competencies. Students may complete these credentials as standalone workforce preparation or stack them toward a bachelor's degree in Artificial Intelligence or a related field.

The proposed Software Engineering certificates focus on modern software and web development practices. The 15 credit-hour Certificate of Proficiency in Software Engineering emphasizes front-end development, user-centered design, and JavaScript programming, while the 30 credit-hour Technical Certificate in Software Engineering builds on this foundation with server-side development, database integration, cybersecurity fundamentals, and Development, Security, Operations practices, culminating in a full-stack practicum. These stackable credentials prepare students for a

range of software development roles and provide flexible pathways into related degree programs.

Lastly, the proposed 6 credit-hour Certificate of Proficiency in Cyber-Informed Engineering integrates cybersecurity principles into the systems engineering lifecycle, with an emphasis on securing industrial control and cyber-physical systems.

The proposed set of Cyberspace Foundations certificates will be supported through existing resources, faculty, equipment, instructional facilities, and technology. No new expenses are anticipated for program implementation.

Program Need

Labor market data provided by ADHE indicate continued corporate demand for applied computing, software, and systems-oriented skills aligned with Artificial Intelligence, Software Engineering, and Cyber-Informed Engineering. Employers across healthcare, finance, energy, manufacturing, logistics, government, and technology sectors report continued need for professionals who can develop software solutions, integrate emerging technologies, and support digital transformation and critical infrastructure protection. Employment projections for software development and systems-focused roles exceed statewide and national averages, and median wages are well above the statewide average. Educational supply is limited for short-term, stackable credentials in these fields, particularly in Artificial Intelligence and Cyber-Informed Engineering, creating a statewide gap that the proposed credentials are intended to address.

In addition, Cyber Learning Network program advisory members, which includes representatives from industry, government, and workforce partners across multiple sectors, provide direct feedback on hiring needs, emerging skill requirements, and desired technical competencies in artificial intelligence, software engineering, and cyber-informed engineering. This employer input helps ensure curriculum alignment with real-world workforce expectations and reinforces the documented need for these proposed certificates.

Program Expenditures and Funding

The proposed Cyberspace Foundations certificates will be implemented using existing full-time faculty across CLN partner institutions. No new administrative positions or new full-time faculty are required. Adjunct faculty may be utilized as enrollment grows, with Year 1 adjunct instructional costs supported through the ADHE HIRED grant. Faculty development will be supported through existing institutional and CLN grant-related professional development resources. No additional facility, equipment, library, or other capital expenditures are required, as the programs leverage existing classrooms, computer laboratories, cloud-based tools, software platforms, and library resources across participating institutions.

Program funding will be supported primarily through student tuition and fees retained by the institution of record for each enrolled student. Actual tuition rates and revenue will

vary by institution. ADHE HIRED grant funds will offset adjunct instructional costs during program implementation, ensuring adequate instructional capacity without creating permanent start-up costs.

Program Duplication

Three Arkansas public institutions offer certificates in Artificial Intelligence, Black River Technical College, Northwest Arkansas Community College, and Arkansas Northeastern College, while no comparable certificates exist in Software Engineering. The Certificate of Proficiency in Cyber-Informed Engineering was developed by the CLN lead institution, the University of Arkansas Little Rock, in Fall 2025.

Program Learning Outcomes

Certificate of Proficiency in Artificial Intelligence

Upon successful completion, a student will be able to:
1. Apply foundational concepts of mathematics and computing to understand and use basic artificial intelligence methods.
2. Demonstrate introductory proficiency with AI tools and operational workflows through hands-on coursework.
3. Recognize and evaluate ethical, societal, and security considerations related to the use of AI in real-world contexts.
4. Communicate AI-related concepts and results clearly to technical and non-technical audiences.

Technical Certificate in Artificial Intelligence

Upon successful completion, a student will be able to:
1. Apply core concepts of mathematics, statistics, and computing to design and implement introductory AI systems.
2. Use a range of AI tools, techniques, and governance frameworks to analyze and address applied problems.
3. Evaluate ethical, societal, legal, and governance implications of AI in professional and organizational contexts.
4. Collaborate effectively in project-based and practicum settings to design, implement, and evaluate AI-driven solutions.
5. Communicate technical results, project outcomes, and ethical considerations effectively to diverse stakeholders.

Certificate of Proficiency in Software Engineering

1. Apply foundational knowledge of HTML, CSS, and JavaScript to build responsive and accessible front-end web applications.
2. Demonstrate competency in user interface (UI) and user experience (UX) design principles, including prototyping and usability testing.
3. Use version control tools to collaborate effectively on software development projects.

Technical Certificate in Software Engineering

1. Develop secure, data-driven applications using server-side programming and relational and non-relational databases.
2. Implement Development, Security, Operations practices, including automated testing, security scanning, and continuous integration and deployment pipelines.
3. Apply cybersecurity principles to the design, implementation, and evaluation of software systems.
4. Collaborate in agile, team-based environments to plan, build, and present full-stack software solutions that meet stakeholder requirements.

Certificate of Proficiency in Cyber-Informed Engineering

1. Identify and distinguish between digital and non-digital assets within engineered systems and describe their intended functions, capabilities, and criticality.
2. Analyze potential cyber-initiated events that could affect system operations and evaluate mitigation strategies within industrial control system environments.
3. Explain the role and importance of cybersecurity in engineering and operational technology contexts to technical and non-technical audiences.
4. Apply engineered controls, layered defenses, and basic active defense strategies to protect critical system functions.
5. Demonstrate appropriate handling of sensitive information, supply chain considerations, and operational constraints within critical infrastructure environments.

Program Enrollment and Graduation Projections

Certificate of Proficiency in Artificial Intelligence		
Academic Year	**Projected Enrollment**	**Projected Graduates**
2026 – 2027	10	
2027 – 2028	18	6
2028 – 2029	22	7
2029 – 2030	27	9
2030 – 2031	33	11

Technical Certificate in Artificial Intelligence		
Academic Year	**Projected Enrollment**	**Projected Graduates**
2026 – 2027	12	
2027 – 2028	21	7
2028 – 2029	26	11
2029 – 2030	32	17
2030 – 2031	39	19

Certificate of Proficiency in Software Engineering		
Academic Year	Projected Enrollment	Projected Graduates
2026 – 2027	10	
2027 – 2028	18	6
2028 – 2029	22	7
2029 – 2030	27	9
2030 – 2031	33	11

Technical Certificate in Software Engineering		
Academic Year	Projected Enrollment	Projected Graduates
2026 – 2027	12	
2027 – 2028	21	7
2028 – 2029	26	11
2029 – 2030	32	17
2030 – 2031	39	19

Certificate of Proficiency in Cyber-Informed Engineering		
Academic Year	Projected Enrollment	Projected Graduates
2026 – 2027	10	
2027 – 2028	18	6
2028 – 2029	22	7
2029 – 2030	27	9
2030 – 2031	33	11

Program Curriculum

Certificate of Proficiency in Artificial Intelligence – 15-16 credit hours

AINT* 11003   *AI Foundations*
AINT* 12003   *AI Operations*
MATH 11003   College Algebra or higher
PHIL 23093   Ethics & Society
Choose one of the following:
CPSI 10003   Computing Essentials OR
CPSI 17503   Programming I OR
IFSC 11003   Web Technologies
Italics – New Course
*Course prefix subject to change

Technical Certificate in Artificial Intelligence – 27-29 credit hours

PHIL 23093   Ethics & Society
Choose one of the following:
MATH 11003   College Algebra

MATH 24004   Calculus I
Choose one of the following:
MATH 26103   Discrete Mathematics
MATH 25004   Calculus II
MATH 29003   Optimization and Graph Theory
STAT 35203   Applied Statistics I
Choose one of the following:
CPSI 10003   Computing Essentials
CPSI 17503   Programming I
IFSC 11003   Web Technologies
AI Core Courses:
AINT 11003   *AI Foundations*
AINT 12003   *AI Operations*
AINT 21003   *AI Governance*
AINT 22003   *AI Tools and Techniques*
AINT 23003   *AI Practicum*
Italics – New Course
*Course prefix subject to change

Certificate of Proficiency in Software Engineering – 15 credit hours

MATH 11003   College Algebra or higher
CPSI 10003   Computing Essentials OR
CPSI 17503   Programming I
CPSI 11003   *Web Technologies*
CPSI 24003   *UI/UX Fundamentals*
CPSI 2XXX3   *Web Development I*
Italics – New Course

Technical Certificate in Software Engineering – 30 credit hours

MATH 11003   College Algebra or higher
CPSI 10003   Computing Essentials OR
CPSI 17503   Programming I
CPSI 11003   *Web Technologies*
CPSI 24003   *UI/UX Fundamentals*
CPSI 2XXX3   *Web Development I*
CPSI 2XXX3   *Web Development II*
CPSI 2XXX3   *Server-Side Development Fundamentals*
CPSI 2XXX3   *DevSecOps Fundamentals*
CPSI 2XXX3   *Full Stack Practicum*
CSEC 11003   Cybersecurity I OR
CSEC 11004   Cybersecurity I with Lab
Italics – New Course

<u>Certificate of Proficiency in Cyber-Informed Engineering</u> – 6 credit hours

CESC 33003   Industrial System Security
CSEC 34003   Industrial Cyber Defense

OUT-OF-STATE AND ARKANSAS PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS
The following applications may be reviewed by ADHE for possible consideration at the AHECB meeting in April 2026.

<u>Academy of Art University, San Francisco, California</u>
Bachelor of Fine Arts in Game Art

<u>Baptist Health College Little Rock, Little Rock, Arkansas</u>
RN to Bachelor of Science in Nursing

<u>The Chicago School, Los Angeles, California</u>
Bachelor of Arts in Psychology
Master of Arts in Applied Forensic Psychology
Master of Arts in Marriage, Couples, and Family Therapy
Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences
Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine

<u>University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California</u>
Master of Arts in Gerontology

<u>Walden University, Minneapolis, Minnesota</u>
Master of Science in Clinical Psychology