

Academic Program Proposals for October 23, 2026

The following is a list of academic program proposals being reviewed for possible consideration for approval at the October 23, 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 October 1, 2026.

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE RICH MOUNTAIN

Associate of Applied Science in Traditional Nursing

The administration of the University of Arkansas Community College Rich Mountain (UACCRM) and Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas System request approval to offer the Associate of Applied Science in Traditional Nursing (CIP 51.3801), effective Spring 2027.

UACCRM 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 May 20, 2026.

Program Description

The proposed Associate of Applied Science in Traditional Nursing is designed to prepare students for entry-level practice as Registered Nurses. The curriculum combines classroom instruction, simulation-based learning, and supervised clinical experiences to develop the knowledge, clinical judgment, and professional competencies required for safe nursing practice. Graduates will be eligible to sit for the NCLEX-RN licensure examination.

The proposed program requires 63 credit hours, including general education coursework, nursing process courses, nursing practicum experiences, and an NCLEX-RN preparation course. The curriculum emphasizes quality and safe patient care, evidence-based practice, critical thinking, interprofessional collaboration, information management, leadership, and ethical and legal responsibilities of the registered nurse.

The program will be housed in the Division of Allied Health and will build upon UACCRM's existing health-related offerings, including the Technical Certificate in Health Professions, Technical Certificate in Practical Nursing, and the ARNEC Bridge pathway.

UACCRM has secured substantial infrastructure support for the program, including federal funding to construct a new Allied Health facility and Arkansas ALIGN grant funds simulation to purchase advanced training equipment. The current LPN faculty will transition to teaching the proposed program. The College will then hire two new faculty members, one full-time and one part-time, to support the current LPN program.

Program Need

The proposed program is designed to address a significant and sustained demand for Registered Nurses in UACCRM's service area and across the state of Arkansas. Labor market data from ADHE shows strong employer demand for nursing professionals, with 10,494 total job postings and 3,332 unique postings for nursing roles between January 2025 and November 2025. Average monthly job postings for Registered Nurses totaled 246, compared to 106 hires, suggesting persistent hiring challenges and a continuing need for additional RN graduates. Employment projections for Registered Nurses are anticipated to grow 7.5% by 2030, with approximately 1,640 annual openings statewide. Regional data also indicates need in Western Arkansas, with 176 annual RN openings reported for the region. Wage data demonstrate that Registered Nursing is a high-demand and competitive-wage occupation, with median wages of approximately \$72,790 annually, and regional RN wages reported around \$66,510 to \$71,000.

Local employer feedback confirms the regional need for additional Registered Nurses. UACCRM identified Mena Regional Health System, The Green House Cottages of Homewood, Elite Home Health, and Elite Hospice as local healthcare partners reporting ongoing RN workforce needs. Mena Regional Health System, the region's largest employer of nurses and allied health workers, identified recruitment and retention of RNs as a continuing workforce challenge. Long-term care, home health, and hospice providers also reported a need for qualified RNs to maintain or expand services. All these employer partners support the proposed program by providing clinical space and personnel to aid students with clinical rotations, serving on UACCRM's Allied Health advisory committee, and regularly hiring graduates of the College's programs.

In 2025, UACCRM surveyed 50 current LPN students where 86% indicated they had aspirations to earn an associate degree in Nursing, and 78% indicated they would attend a traditional RN program at UACCRM, if offered. Additionally, 37% said they would have chosen the traditional RN pathway instead of the LPN pathway had it been available, with another 48% responding "maybe".

Program Expenditures and Funding

UACCRM plans to reallocate current MSN-prepared nursing faculty from the existing LPN program to the teach the proposed traditional nursing program. The College will hire two replacement faculty, one full-time and one part-time, to teach the LPN program. These personnel costs are projected at approximately \$111,000 annually and include salary and fringe benefits where applicable.

Major facility, equipment, and resource costs will be supported through external funding. UACCRM received a \$12 million federal award for the construction of a new Allied Health Building which will add classrooms, faculty offices, a simulation lab, medical lab, and nursing skills lab to campus. In addition, the College received two Arkansas Linking Industry to Growing Nurses (ALIGN) grants totaling \$1,116,903.53 to support instructional equipment and simulation resources such as an Anatomage Table and high-fidelity mannequins.

Future operating expenses will be funded by student tuition and fees and other program-specific fees, such as lab fees, testing fees, clinical fees, simulation fees, and other student-paid program costs.

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.

The University of Arkansas Community College Rich Mountain 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 quality, safe, holistic, patient-centered, evidence-based nursing to diverse patient populations across the lifespan guided by a caring attitude.
2. Engage in critical thinking necessary to provide quality patient care.
3. Implement quality improvement measures for diverse patient populations.
4. Participate in collaborative relationships with members of the interprofessional team.
5. Use information management principles, techniques, and systems, and patient care technology to communicate, manage knowledge, mitigate error, and support decision-making.
6. Provide leadership in a variety of healthcare settings for diverse patient populations.
7. Function as a competent nurse assimilating professional, ethical, and legal guidelines in practice as a professional nurse.

Program Enrollment and Graduation Projections

Academic Year	Projected Enrollment	Projected Graduates
2027 – 2028	16	
2028 – 2029	32	14
2029 – 2030	32	13
2030 – 2031	32	14
2031 – 2032	32	15

Program Curriculum

General Education Courses – 27 credit hours

BIOL 20263	Microbiology & Immunology
BIOL 20161	Microbiology & Immunology Lab
BIOL 24003	Human Anatomy
BIOL 24001	Human Anatomy Lab
BIOL 24103	Human Physiology
BIOL 24101	Human Physiology Lab
ENGL 10103	English Composition I
ENGL 10203	English Composition II
HIST 21103	U.S. History to 1877
PLSC 20003	American National Government
PSYC 11003	General Psychology

Nursing Courses – 36 credit hours

NURS 20373	Math for Nurses (or equivalent course)
NURS 21148	Nursing Process II
NURS 21158	Nursing Process I
NURS 21242	Nursing Practicum I
NURS 22243	Nursing Practicum II
NURS 23141	NCLEX-RN Preparation
NURS 23158	Nursing Process III
NURS 23243	Nursing Practicum III

Italics – New Course

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS FAYETTEVILLE

Master of Science in Pavement Technology

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 Pavement Technology (CIP 14.0804), effective Spring 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 September 17, 2026.

Program Description

The proposed Master of Science in Pavement Technology is a 30 credit-hour, 100% online program designed for working professionals in the pavement, transportation, construction, materials, and civil engineering sectors. Designed for civil engineers seeking advanced expertise in pavement systems, as well as professionals in related disciplines such as chemical engineering, chemistry, business, construction, materials supply, and pavement operations, this program serves individuals working in the pavement industry who may not have formal academic training in pavement technology.

Graduates will develop specialized knowledge and skills that enhance their ability to contribute to pavement design, materials selection, production, construction, maintenance, rehabilitation, and asset management decision-making.

The curriculum is structured to provide graduate-level preparation across the full pavement life cycle, including aggregate materials, asphalt materials, concrete materials, asphalt emulsions, pavement structural design, pavement production and construction, quarry operations, and pavement maintenance and rehabilitation. Students may complete either a non-thesis option, consisting of 30 hours of coursework, or a thesis option, consisting of 24 hours of coursework and 6 thesis hours. Courses will be offered in an eight-week format, allowing students to take one course at a time and complete the program in approximately two years. The proposed program includes 21 credit hours of required pavement-focused coursework and 9 credit hours of electives in areas such as project management, operations management, construction management, or thesis research.

The proposed program is distinguished by its delivery format, as it will be the first fully online graduate program in pavement technology offered in the United States. The program will be delivered by existing faculty within the College of Engineering and will leverage current institutional resources, facilities, and technological infrastructure, enabling implementation without the need for significant additional investments.

Program Need

Labor market data indicated strong demand for professionals with engineering and management skills. ADHE workforce data identified 9,474 manager positions posted in 2025 compared to 4,152 hires, suggesting a need for a larger pool of qualified technical managers, with an anticipated increase of nearly 10,000 managers over the next five years. Supporting labor market analysis from UAF's Global Campus reports 17,257 annual openings nationwide in Civil and Transportation & Highway Engineering and 3,308 annual openings across a nine-state region.

Employer feedback further supports program need. Six Arkansas-based consulting firms completed an employer needs survey: Halff Associates, Olsson, Garver, Crafton Tull, McClelland Consulting Engineers, and Kimley-Horn. These employers reported substantial numbers of filled, open, and future positions in Civil EIT, Civil PE, and manager/team leader roles, with wages ranging from approximately \$35 – \$80 per hour depending on position level. Employers also indicated more than 110 employees could benefit from selected coursework in the proposed program. The unique delivery format aligns with employer feedback indicating a strong preference for distance or hybrid learning options, as well as evening and weekend scheduling, making the program particularly accessible and attractive to working professionals.

The full proposal also includes letters of support from industry and public-sector stakeholders, including the Arkansas Department of Transportation, Arkansas Asphalt

Pavement Association, Ergon Asphalt & Emulsions, APAC, and the Federal Highway Administration.

Program Expenditures and Funding

The proposed program will require minimal new expenditures during the first three years given existing faculty, library resources, instructional technology, and online delivery infrastructure will be utilized. No new faculty positions, graduate assistants, research assistants, instructional equipment, research equipment, facility expenses, or accreditation-related expenses are required for implementation. UAF's Global Campus has provided \$32,500 plus fringe to support development of the core online courses and will provide instructional design, technology, and marketing support.

After the first three years, once enrollment is expected to exceed 50 students, the program anticipates hiring a half-time staff member to manage program logistics and serve as the primary student contact and advisor. The projected cost for this position is approximately \$31,000 per year, including salary and fringe benefits.

The program will be funded through student tuition and fees. The total tuition and fee rate is \$656.69 per credit hour, resulting in an estimated total student cost of approximately \$19,700 for the 30-credit-hour program. Based on projected enrollment, the program is expected to generate approximately \$860,000 in tuition and fee revenue during the initial enrollment period.

No grants, reallocations, donations, employer funding, or other external funding sources are identified in the proposal. Existing resources within the College of Engineering, Department of Civil Engineering, University Libraries, and Global Campus will support start-up and early implementation, with future tuition revenue expected to cover the anticipated half-time staff position.

Program Duplication

No similar active graduate-level programs in Pavement Technology are currently offered in Arkansas.

Program Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion, a student will be able to:

1. Identify key aggregate properties within flexible and rigid pavement.
2. Classify materials properties of asphalt binder, asphalt mixtures, asphalt emulsion, cementitious materials, and portland cement concrete.
3. Differentiate multiple structural design strategies of flexible and rigid pavement.
4. Identify the steps in production and construction of flexible pavement, rigid pavement, and asphalt emulsion-based treatments.
5. Compare how flexible and rigid pavements are preserved, maintained, and rehabilitated.

6. Locate and evaluate pertinent, published literature relevant to a given topic, and apply the information gained to a design, analysis or research effort.

Program Enrollment and Graduation Projections

Academic Year	Projected Enrollment	Projected Graduates
2027 – 2028	20	
2028 – 2029	45	
2029 – 2030	50	20
2030 – 2031	65	25
2031 – 2032	85	30

Program Curriculum

Required Courses – 21 credit hours

CVEG 54203	Structural Design of Pavement Systems
CVEG 54333	<i>Asphalt Materials</i>
CVEG 54343	<i>Concrete Materials for Pavements</i>
CVEG 54353	<i>Asphalt Emulsions</i>
CVEG 54503	Production and Construction of Pavement
CVEG 54803	<i>Quarry Operations and Design</i>
CVEG 54903	Pavement Maintenance and Rehabilitation

Elective Clusters – 9 credit hours; choose one of the following

Elective Cluster 1 (Project Management)

OMGT 57803	Project Management for Operations Managers
OMGT 59803	Advanced Project Management
OMGT 52503	Leadership Principles and Practices

Elective Cluster 2 (Operations Management)

OMGT 50003	Introduction to Operations Management
OMGT 54703	Lean Six Sigma
OMGT 57803	Project Management for Operations Managers

Elective Cluster 3 (Construction Management)

CVEG 55203	Construction Productivity
CVEG 55803	Heavy Construction Equipment Management
CVEG 58603	Fundamentals of Sustainability in Civil Engineering

Elective Cluster 4 (Thesis Option)

INEG 53303	Design of Industrial Experiments
CVEG 60003	Master's Thesis (background, literature review, experimental design)
CVEG 60003	Master's Thesis (results and discussion of experimental design)

Italics – New Course

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS FORT SMITH

Associate of Applied Science in Respiratory Therapy

The administration of the University of Arkansas Fort Smith (UAFS) and Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas System request approval to offer the Associate of Applied Science in Respiratory Therapy (CIP 51.0908), effective Fall 2027.

UAFS 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 September 17, 2026.

Program Description

The proposed 64 credit-hour Associate of Applied Science in Respiratory Therapy program is designed to prepare graduates for entry-level practice as Respiratory Therapists who evaluate, treat, manage, and rehabilitate patients with cardiopulmonary disorders across the lifespan. Instruction will combine classroom learning, laboratory practice, simulation, and supervised clinical experience to develop competency in the cognitive, psychomotor, and affective domains of respiratory care.

Graduates will be eligible to apply for the National Board for Respiratory Care (NBRC) Therapist Multiple-Choice (TMC) Examination and, upon achieving the high-cut score, the Clinical Simulation Examination (CSE) leading to the Registered Respiratory Therapist (RRT) credential. Passing the NBRC TMC is required for licensure but is not required for graduation.

The proposed program will be housed in the College of Health, Education, and Human Sciences under the leadership of the Executive Director of Respiratory Therapy. UAFS plans to support the program with existing health sciences infrastructure, Boreham Library resources, classroom and laboratory space in the Pendegraft Health Sciences Center, and specialized respiratory therapy equipment funded through the Windgate gift.

Program Need

The proposed program will address a clear workforce need for Respiratory Therapists in the River Valley region. Labor market data received by ADHE show 113 respiratory therapist jobs in 2026, higher than the national average for a region of similar size, with employment projected to grow to 118 jobs by 2032, representing 5.1% growth.

Employer demand is also evident in recent job posting activity. From January 2026 to July 2026, regional employers posted 81 unique respiratory therapist job ads across 31 companies, with an average of 12 postings per month compared to 4 hires per month, indicating continued recruitment challenges.

With no regional Respiratory Therapy programs, students in the River Valley currently must travel 1.5 to 3 hours to access similar programs, creating barriers for local and place-bound students.

Local healthcare employers, including Mercy Fort Smith, Baptist Health-Fort Smith, Johnson Regional Medical Center, St. Mary's Regional Medical Center, and others, support the proposed program and are expected to provide clinical learning opportunities, preceptors, and employment pathways for graduates.

Program Expenditures and Funding

Program expenditures include personnel, instructional resources, equipment, facility renovation, and accreditation costs. Over the first three years, personnel expenses are estimated at \$612,945 and include the hiring of one full-time Executive Director, one full-time Clinical Director, two part-time clinical instructors/preceptors, one administrative assistant, and faculty professional development.

UAFS received a Windgate gift of \$3,776,640.13, with a gift end date of August 31, 2027, to support program implementation, including respiratory therapy instructional equipment/resources and simulation lab renovation. Approximately \$2,538,071 of these funds was used to purchase respiratory therapy instructional equipment/resources such as pulmonary and neonatal simulation mannequins, ventilators, neonatal warmer, tracheostomy mannequin, intubation heads, pediatric mannequin, cardiac stress testing system, ECG machine, spirometry system, blood gas arms, and a clinical evaluation system. The proposed program will require renovation of the respiratory therapy simulation lab at an estimated cost of \$500,000, also funded through the Windgate gift.

Additional program costs include Commission on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC) accreditation expenses, including application, self-study, annual fee, site visit, and key personnel academy fees.

Program Duplication

Five Arkansas public institutions offer a similar Associate of Applied Science in Respiratory Therapy programs.

- Black River Technical College (~269 miles)
- National Park College (~125 miles)
- Northwest Arkansas Community College (~78 miles)
- Southeast Arkansas College (~198 miles)
- University of Arkansas Pulaski Technical College (~153 miles)

Program Learning Outcomes

Upon successful completion, a student will be able to:

1. Demonstrate competent performance of entry-level respiratory care diagnostic and therapeutic procedures within the scope of a registered respiratory therapist.
2. Interpret and evaluate clinical and cardiopulmonary data, establish therapeutic goals, and modify care plans based on sound clinical judgment and evidence-based practice.
3. Communicate effectively both orally and in writing with patients, families, diverse populations, and inter-professional health care teams to support safe, patient-centered care.
4. Exhibit professional, ethical, and accountable behavior consistent with the standards of respiratory care practice, including patient safety, quality assurance, infection control, and regulatory compliance.
5. Function collaboratively within inter-professional and patient-centered teams to coordinate care, advocate for patients, and contribute to the health care system and community wellness.
6. Promote cardiopulmonary wellness, disease prevention, and management across the lifespan through education, quality improvement, and health systems awareness.

Program Enrollment and Graduation Projections

Academic Year	Projected Cohort Enrollment	Projected Annual Enrollment	Projected Graduates
2027-2028	12	12	
2028-2029	12	24	12
2029-2030	12	24	12
2030-2031	12	24	12
2031-2032	12	24	12

Program Curriculum

General Education Courses – 15 credit hours

A two-course sequence from English composition approved for the general education core.

MATH 11003 College Algebra (or higher math)
 HIST 21103 United States History I OR
 HIST 21203 United States History II
 PLSC 20003 American National Government

Major Requirements – 45 credit hours

BIOL 24003 Human Anatomy
 BIOL 24001 Human Anatomy Laboratory
 BIOL 24103 Human Physiology
 BIOL 24101 Human Physiology Laboratory
 CHEM 10003 Chemical Principles
 CHEM 10001 Chemical Principles Laboratory

RESP 10103	<i>Applied Cardiopulmonary Anatomy & Physiology</i>
RESP 11103	<i>Fundamentals of Respiratory Care Practice</i>
RESP 12102	<i>Respiratory Care Pharmacology</i>
RESP 13101	<i>Respiratory Care Skills & Equipment</i>
RESP 13112	<i>Respiratory Care Skills & Equipment Laboratory</i>
RESP 14106	<i>Non-Critical Care Clinical</i>
RESP 20103	<i>Mechanical Ventilation</i>
RESP 21203	<i>Neonatal and Pediatric Respiratory Care</i>
RESP 22301	<i>Respiratory Care Credentialing Preparation</i>
RESP 23303	<i>Cardiopulmonary Diagnostic Testing</i>
RESP 24306	<i>Critical Care Clinical</i>
HEAL 14703	Medical Terminology
FINN 15201	Personal Finance Applications
<i>Italics – New Course</i>	

OUT-OF-STATE AND ARKANSAS PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS

The following applications may be reviewed by ADHE for possible consideration at the AHECB meeting in October 2026.

California Institute of Applied Technology, National City, California

Certificate in Artificial Intelligence & Machine Learning
 Certificate in Cisco Networking Professional, Enterprise
 Certificate in Computer Information Systems
 Certificate in Cybersecurity
 Certificate in Project Management
 Certificate in Workflow Deployment
 Associate of Applied Science in Accounting
 Associate of Applied Science in Business Administration
 Associate of Applied Science in Business Data Analytics
 Associate of Applied Science in Computer Information Systems
 Associate of Applied Science in Digital Marketing
 Associate of Applied Science in Health Information Technology
 Associate of Applied Science in Healthcare Administration
 Associate of Applied Science in Human Resource Management
 Associate of Applied Science in Project Management
 Associate of Applied Science in Software Development
 Bachelor of Applied Science in Cloud Computing
 Bachelor of Applied Science in Cybersecurity
 Bachelor of Applied Science in Digital Marketing
 Bachelor of Applied Science in Health Information Management
 Bachelor of Applied Science in Human Resource Management
 Bachelor of Applied Science in Software Development

Campus, Inc., Sacramento, California

Diploma in Medical Billing and Coding
 Associate of Science in Healthcare Administration

Associate of Science in Information Technology

Champion Christian College, Hot Springs, Arkansas

Associate of Arts in Business

Associate of Arts in Criminal Justice

Associate of Arts in Sports Management

Associate of Arts in Education

Southern California University of Health Sciences, Whittier, California

Doctor of Physical Therapy

Southwest University at El Paso, El Paso, Texas

Associate of Applied Science of Business Management in Healthcare Support Systems

Bachelor of Science in Healthcare Leadership Management

Walden University, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Doctor of Behavioral Health Leadership