

**Tentative Agenda Items
April 24, 2026 AHECB Meeting**

**BOARD BUSINESS
REPORTS
POLICIES
ACADEMIC ITEMS*
FINANCE ITEMS***

* With the discontinuation of committee meetings, all agenda items will be placed on the full Board agenda for consideration.

BOARD BUSINESS

- Welcome
- Minutes, January 23, 2026, Regular Meeting
- Commissioner's Report

REPORTS

▪ **Annual Report on Student Retention and Graduation –**

The annual report on retention and graduation rates will be provided as an information item. This report will include multi-year statewide and institutional trends for all Arkansas institutions of higher education.

▪ **Annual Report on Student-Athlete Retention and Graduation**

The annual report on retention and graduation rates of student-athletes will be provided as an information item.

▪ **Report on H.I.R.E.D. Grants**

This presentation will provide an update on the Higher Industry Readiness through Educational Development (HIRED) grants, highlighting progress to date and summarizing the nearly \$88 million in workforce-focused funding awarded. It will outline how these investments are supporting industry-driven partnerships, expanding short-term and stackable credential programs, and strengthening Arkansas' workforce pipeline.

POLICIES

▪ **Rules Governing the Arkansas Workforce Challenge Scholarship Program**

In compliance with Act 340 of 2025, the rules for the Arkansas Workforce Challenge Scholarship are presented to the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) for final approval.

▪ **Rules Governing the ACCESS to Acceleration Scholarship Program**

In compliance with Act 340 of 2025, the rules for the ACCESS to Acceleration Scholarship Program are presented to the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) for final approval.

▪ **Rules Governing Uniform Course Credit for Institutions of Higher Education**

In compliance with Act 413 of 2023, the rules for the Uniform Course Credit for Institutions of Higher Education are presented to the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) for final approval.

▪ **Rules Governing the Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship Program**

In compliance with Acts 413, 438, 539 of 2023, the rules for the Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship are presented to the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) for final approval.

- **Rules Governing Residency Classification for State-funded Scholarships at State-Supported Institutions of Higher Education**

In compliance with Act 340 of 2025, the rules governing Residency Classification for State-funded Scholarships at State-Supported Institutions of Higher Education are presented to the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) for final approval.

- **Rules Governing the Arkansas Teacher Academy Scholarship Program**

In compliance with Act 340 of 2025, the rules governing Arkansas Teacher Academy Scholarship Program are presented to the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) for final approval.

- **Rules Governing the Teacher Opportunity Program**

In compliance with Act 340 of 2025, the rules governing Arkansas Teacher Opportunity Program are presented to the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) for final approval.

- **Policy Regarding the Arkansas Workforce Challenge Scholarship Program**

Pending the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB) final approval of Rules Governing the Arkansas Workforce Challenge Scholarship Program, policy supporting implementation of the Arkansas Workforce Challenge Scholarship Program are presented to the AHECB for approval.

- **General Education Policy**

The proposed policy formalizes the immediate adjustment of the 35-credit hour State Minimum General Education Core to comply with the Requisite Core in Act 566, and to clarify the purpose and intent of the 35-credit hour State Minimum General Education Core.

FINANCE ITEMS

- **Distribution of Mineral Lease Funds**

The Division of Higher Education recommends that up to \$475,000 from the Higher Education Research Development Fund be allocated to the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville for expenses associated with the operation of the Arkansas Research and Education Optical Network of all public universities.

ACADEMIC ITEMS

- **Certificate of General Studies**

A proposed revision to the curriculum of the existing statewide Certificate of General Education (CGS).

- **Northwest Arkansas Community College Associate of Applied Science in Artificial Intelligence**

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.

- **South Arkansas College**
Associate of Applied Science in Nursing (Traditional)

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.

- **University of Arkansas Fayetteville**
Master of Library and Information Studies in Library and Information Studies

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.

- **University of Arkansas Fayetteville**
Master of Science in Outdoor Recreation and Sport Tourism

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.

- **University of Arkansas Little Rock
Bachelor of Science in Artificial Intelligence**

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.

- **University of Arkansas Little Rock
Master of Science in Cybersecurity**

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.

- **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 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.

- **Arkansas Public Institutions Letters of Notification**

Programs included in the Arkansas Public Institution Letters of Notification have been approved by the ADHE Director and must be included on the AHECB agenda prior to program initiation. The programs are reasonable and moderate extensions of existing certificates and degrees.

- **Arkansas Public Institutions Letters of Intent**

A Letter of Intent informs the AHECB of institutions that plan to offer new programs or organizational units that require a proposal and Coordinating Board approval. Chief Academic and Chief Executive Officers can comment on the proposed programs and organizational units before the proposals are considered by AHECB.

- **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.

Academy of Art University, San Francisco, California
Bachelor of Fine Arts in Game Art

Baptist Health College Little Rock, Little Rock, Arkansas
RN to Bachelor of Science in Nursing

Southwestern Law School, Los Angeles, California
Juris Doctor

The Chicago School, Los Angeles, California
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

University of Southern California, Los Angeles, California
Master of Arts in Gerontology

Walden University, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Master of Science in Clinical Psychology

- **Out-of-State and Arkansas Private Institutions Letters of Notification**
Programs included in the Out-of-State and Arkansas Private Institutions' Letters of Notification have been approved by the ADHE Director and will be included on the AHECB agenda.

- **Out-of-State and Arkansas Private Institutions Letters of Intent**
A Letter of Intent informs the AHECB of institutions that plan to offer new programs that require a proposal and Coordinating Board approval.