

State of Arkansas
95th General Assembly
Regular Session, 2025

A Bill

HOUSE BILL 1696

By: Representative McAlindon
By: Senator J. Dotson

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO AMEND THE LAW REGARDING HIGHER EDUCATION;
TO ESTABLISH THE STRENGTHENING ARKANSAS EDUCATION
ACT; TO PROVIDE A CORE CURRICULUM AT STATE-SUPPORTED
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION; AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES.

Subtitle

TO ESTABLISH THE STRENGTHENING ARKANSAS
EDUCATION ACT; AND TO PROVIDE A CORE
CURRICULUM AT STATE-SUPPORTED
INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

SECTION 1. DO NOT CODIFY. Title.

This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Strengthening Arkansas
Education Act".

SECTION 2. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 61, Subchapter 1, is amended
to add an additional section to read as follows:

6-61-144. Core curriculum.

(a) A state-supported institution of higher education shall not grant
a baccalaureate degree to a student unless he or she has completed a core
curriculum of thirty-five (35) semester credit hours.

(b) A general education survey course, where appropriate, shall
incorporate substantial selections from works of first-rank literary quality
and enduring literary and philosophical influence, often called the Great



1 Books.

2 (c) The core curriculum shall include the following introductory
 3 survey courses:

4 (1)(A) Two (2) three-semester credit hour courses of English
 5 composition that includes without limitation grammar, logic, rhetoric, and
 6 substantial readings from works devoted to rhetoric and composition.

7 (B) The substantial reading requirement under subdivision
 8 (c)(1)(A) of this section shall aim to instruct a student to produce correct
 9 and lucid academic writing;

10 (2) A three-semester credit hour course in a comprehensive
 11 mathematics course;

12 (3) Two (2) four-semester credit hour laboratory science
 13 courses;

14 (4) A three-semester credit hour general education course in the
 15 humanities and social sciences that, where appropriate, shall explore and
 16 highlight:

17 (A) The theme of Western liberty and the republican form
 18 of self-government and its historical sources;

19 (B) Strengths and weaknesses of the republican form of
 20 self-government;

21 (C) Twentieth century challenges from communism and
 22 fascism;

23 (D) Contrasts with non-Western systems of government;

24 (E) The distinctive features of the republican form of
 25 self-government in the United States; and

26 (F) The spread of the republican form of self-government
 27 beyond the West;

28 (5)(A) A three-semester credit hour course of:

29 (i) United States History I 1607–1877 that is a
 30 broad survey course exploring the development of the United States's
 31 republican form of government from the colonial period through 1877; or

32 (ii) United States History II 1877-present that is a
 33 broad survey course exploring how the nation's republican form of government
 34 evolved through industrialization and its growing role in global politics.

35 (B) The course required under subdivision (c)(5)(A) of
 36 this section shall include particular attention to the issues of politics,

economics, technological progress, war, and foreign policy;

(6)(A) A three-semester credit hour course of United States Government that explores the founding principles of:

(i) Natural rights;

(ii) Liberty;

(iii) Equality;

(iv) Representative democracy;

(v) Separation of powers;

(vi) Checks and balances;

(vii) Federalism; and

(viii) Constitutional self-government.

(B) The course shall include an exploration of the topics in subdivisions (c)(6)(A)(i)-(viii) as the principles have developed over the United States's history, chiefly through the study of original source material, including without limitation:

(i) The contemporary documents that established and explained the United States's independence, United States Constitution, and Bill of Rights; and

(ii) Later documents that illustrate the United States's constitutional history and structure;

(7) A three-semester credit hour course of United States Literature I 1607–1914 that explores substantial selections from works of first-rank literary quality and enduring literary influence, often called the Great Books, with readings that include without limitation religious literature, novels, short stories, poems, essays, and memoirs;

(8)(A) A three-semester credit hour course of Introduction to Economics that includes:

(i) Supply and demand;

(ii) Market competition;

(iii) Economic growth;

(iv) Trade;

(v) Taxation;

(vi) Externalities; and

(vii) Public goods.

(B) The requirement under subdivision (c)(8)(A) of this section can be met by a higher-level economics course;

1 (9) A three-semester credit hour course of one (1) of the
2 Western visual arts that is a broad survey course; and

3 (10) A three-semester credit hour course to be selected from
4 English Composition, Speech Communication, United States History, Western
5 Civilization, Math, or Science.

6 (d) If approved by the Division of Higher Education and the Arkansas
7 Higher Education Coordinating Board:

8 (1) Applied Science degrees may be exempt from the requirements
9 of this section; and

10 (2) Competency-based and proficiency-based baccalaureate degree
11 programs may qualify for credit hour equivalency models.