

State of Arkansas As Engrossed: H3/19/25 H3/31/25

95th General Assembly

A Bill

Regular Session, 2025

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 – Legislative intent.

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

(b) It is the intent of the General Assembly:

*(1) That undergraduate students in state-supported institutions
of higher education acquire knowledge and skills that enable the students to
contribute to their state and country as informed, self-reliant, and civic-
minded citizens;*

*(2) To implement a fully transferrable core curriculum for
state-supported colleges and universities that ensures a general education
that provides students in Arkansas with a shared knowledge of the history,
ideals, and institutions of America, along with a proper introduction to
logic, reasoning, and communications;*



1 (3) To ensure that general education survey courses provide
2 students with a broad understanding of a subject's core ideas, theories, and
3 history, fulfilling breadth requirements and fostering a well-rounded
4 education;

5 (4) That the requisite core curriculum in this act serve as a
6 basis for a minimum general education core curriculum established by the
7 Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board for state-supported institutions
8 of higher education; and

9 (5) To promote a coordinated system of higher education in Arkansas
10 and to assure an orderly and effective development of each of the state-
11 supported institutions of higher education.

12
13 SECTION 2. Arkansas Code § 6-41-704(2), concerning the exemption under
14 the Building Better Futures Program from the state minimum core curriculum,
15 is repealed.

16 ~~(2) Be exempt from the higher education state minimum core curriculum~~
17 ~~as determined by the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board under § 6-~~
18 ~~61-218;~~

19
20 SECTION 3. Arkansas Code § 6-41-804(2), concerning the exemption under
21 the Building Better Futures High School Program from the state minimum core
22 curriculum, is repealed.

23 ~~(2) Be exempt from the higher education state minimum core curriculum~~
24 ~~as determined by the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board under § 6-~~
25 ~~61-218;~~

26
27 SECTION 4. Arkansas Code § 6-61-105 is repealed.

28 ~~6-61-105. Course in American history or civil government required.~~

29 ~~(a) A state-supported institution of higher education shall not grant~~
30 ~~to any student a baccalaureate degree unless he or she has passed a course in~~
31 ~~American history or civil government, including:~~

32 ~~(1) Instruction in the essentials of the United States~~
33 ~~Constitution; and~~

34 ~~(2) The study of American institutions and ideals.~~

35 ~~(b) The Division of Higher Education shall see to the strict carrying~~
36 ~~out of this section and may take such steps and measures as may be necessary~~

1 ~~to effectuate its provisions.~~

2
3 SECTION 5. Arkansas Code Title 6, Chapter 61, Subchapter 1, is amended
4 to add an additional section to read as follows:

5 6-61-144. Arkansas Requisite Core Curriculum – Definitions.

6 (a) This section shall be known and may be cited as the “Arkansas
7 Requisite Core Curriculum”.

8 (b) As used in this section:

9 (1) “Minimum general education core curriculum means” the
10 minimum general education core curriculum requirements for associate and
11 baccalaureate degree programs at state-supported institutions of higher
12 education;

13 (2) “Requisite core curriculum” means the fifteen (15) semester
14 credit hours of introductory survey courses as determined by the Division of
15 Higher Education;

16 (3) “State-supported institution of higher education” means a
17 public postsecondary institution or a department in a public postsecondary
18 institution that:

19 (A) Provides:

20 (i) An eligible program of training to prepare a
21 student for gainful employment in a recognized occupation; or

22 (ii) A program leading to an associate degree or a
23 baccalaureate degree; and

24 (B) Is accredited by a recognized accrediting agency or
25 association and has continuously held the accreditation for the number of
26 years required by the division.

27 (c)(1) Beginning with the entering class of fall 2027, the division,
28 in consultation with the state-supported institutions of higher education,
29 shall establish a minimum general education core curriculum that shall:

30 (A) Include the requisite core curriculum; and

31 (B) Apply toward the minimum requirements for associate
32 and baccalaureate degrees at the state-supported institutions of higher
33 education.

34 (2) The general education core curriculum shall be fully
35 transferable among all state-supported institutions of higher education.
36 completed the minimum general education core curriculum as determined by the

1 division.

2 (d) The requisite core curriculum shall include the following fifteen
3 (15) semester credit hours of introductory survey courses:

4 (1) Two (2) three-semester credit hours of oral or written
5 communication designed to develop the ability to organize ideas and to
6 communicate, with clarity, precision, and syntactical maturity;

7 (2) A three-semester credit hour course that cultivates critical
8 thinking, problem-solving, and logical reasoning skills; and

9 (3) A three-semester credit hour course in American history and
10 a three-semester credit hour course in American government, including:

11 (A) Instruction in the essentials of the United States
12 Constitution; and

13 (B) The study of American institutions and ideals.

14 (e) To ensure compliance with this section, the division may establish
15 reporting requirements for state-supported institutions of higher education
16 detailing implementation of the requisite core curriculum.

17 (f) In determining whether a course meets the general education core
18 curriculum requirements, the division may:

19 (1) Exempt Applied Science degrees;

20 (2) Grant credit hour equivalency for competency-based and
21 proficiency-based baccalaureate degree programs; and

22 (3) Allow for substitution of advanced coursework with specified
23 majors, with the exception that American Government and American History are
24 required for every student.

25 (g) The division may promulgate rules to implement this section.
26

27 SECTION 6. Arkansas Code § 6-61-218 is repealed.

28 ~~6-61-218. Minimum college core — Transferability.~~

29 ~~To promote a coordinated system of higher education in Arkansas and to~~
30 ~~assure an orderly and effective development of each of the state-supported~~
31 ~~institutions of higher education, the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating~~
32 ~~Board shall establish in consultation with state-supported institutions of~~
33 ~~higher education a minimum core of courses which shall apply toward the~~
34 ~~general education core curriculum requirements for associate and~~
35 ~~baccalaureate degrees at state-supported institutions of higher education and~~
36 ~~which shall be fully transferable among all state-supported institutions of~~

1 ~~higher education.~~

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3 SECTION 7. Arkansas Code § 6-61-231(a)(4)(A), concerning the
4 definition of "state minimum core curriculum" related to statewide transfer
5 agreements, is amended to read as follows:

6 (4)(A) "State minimum core curriculum" means sixty (60) semester
7 hours of lower-division coursework that include the ~~thirty-five-hour~~ general
8 education core, major program prerequisites, and elective requirements that
9 satisfy the requirements of an associate of arts degree, an associate of
10 science degree, an associate of arts in teaching degree, and selected
11 baccalaureate degrees at all public institutions of higher education as
12 determined by the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

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14 /s/McAlindon
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