

Criterion 1 - Mission

The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

1.A. Mission Alignment

The institution's educational programs, enrollment profile and scope of operations align with its publicly articulated mission.

Argument

On [May 6, 2011](#), the Board of Trustees approved the [vision, mission, and core values](#) of the University of Central Arkansas (UCA) that would guide its operations for the next 15 years. UCA seeks to be a premier, learner-focused public comprehensive institution nationally recognized for excellence in education, creative endeavors, and community engagement. Its mission centers on delivering responsive undergraduate and graduate degree programs that promote students' intellectual, professional, social, and personal growth through innovative teaching, scholarly inquiry, and collaborative partnerships. Driving this mission are four fundamental core values:

- Intellectual Excellence, which emphasizes producing educated citizens, promoting scholarship, developing cultural competence, and providing a supportive learning environment;
- Community, which focuses on collegiality, external partnerships, a safe environment, and public service;
- Diversity, which is dedicated to recruiting, retaining, and supporting a diverse campus, and enhancing interaction and understanding among diverse groups in a global community;
- Integrity, which commits the university to ethical conduct, mutual respect, responsible and accountable operations, and public trust.

We developed the vision, mission, and core values through a year-long strategic planning process involving extensive input and collaboration among faculty, staff, students, and external stakeholders. Two subsequent strategic planning processes reviewed them for continued relevance (see our Criterion 4 assurance argument for further details on strategic planning), and the Board of Trustees reaffirmed them in [2016](#) and [2021](#). Thus, since our four-year review in 2020 and through the past academic year, the above vision, mission, and core values have remained the enduring and guiding principles of the university, publicly accessible on the [university website](#) and in the [Faculty](#), [Staff](#), and [Student](#) Handbooks.

Additionally, the university has reinforced the vision, mission, and core values through its marketing, recruitment materials, social media, and other forms of communication to external stakeholders. For example, the [Undergraduate Viewbook](#) effectively translates the university's formal mission and core values into an accessible narrative for prospective students. It features academic sections which directly showcase UCA's dedication to intellectual excellence and innovation. Pages detailing campus life and the local region underscore our commitment to community and engagement. Furthermore, the Viewbook's emphasis that "every voice matters" realizes the core values of diversity and integrity by explicitly welcoming all individuals. Similar connections to our vision, mission, and core values can be found in the recruitment and informational materials focused on the needs of specific student populations, such as the [Honors Viewbook](#), the [Transfer and Returning Student Guide](#), and publications for external audiences, such as the [UCA Annual Report](#) and [UCA Magazine](#).

For fifteen years, the 2011 vision, mission, and core values guided university operations as presented in our assurance argument. In the 2025-2026 academic year, the university underwent a new strategic planning process resulting in a revised mission that better reflects the public role of the university and its distinctive regional impact. Instead of a vision statement and core values, the new strategic plan includes a set of core commitments that operationalize the mission and provide context for the plan's imperatives. On [May 27, 2026](#), the Board of Trustees approved the new mission, commitments, and strategic plan, effective July 1, 2026, to guide the university's operations through 2035. See the Criterion 4 assurance argument for more information about the new mission, commitments, and strategic plan.

Educational Programs

As embodied within its mission statement, UCA commits "to excellence through the delivery of outstanding undergraduate and graduate education." As of the 2026-2027 academic year, the university's program inventory includes 91 undergraduate and 59 graduate degree and certificate programs. In addition, most undergraduate degree programs require one of 82 minors that complement the major program of study. Information about the university's academic programs can be found in the [Undergraduate Bulletin](#) and [Graduate Bulletin](#). Our colleges remain "current and responsive to the diverse needs of those it serves" by regularly updating curriculum and developing new programs to meet a wide variety of student and workforce demands. For example, over the past six years:

- The College of Science and Engineering (CSE) expanded its engineering offerings to meet regional demand in [electrical](#), [robotics](#), and [software](#) engineering and partnered with the College of Education (CE) to develop a new

BSE in Science and Technology designed to meet the statewide need for high-school teachers in [biology](#), [chemistry](#), [computer science](#), and [physics](#).

- CE also worked with the Arkansas Department of Education to expand its residency program in Arkansas schools and partnered with Hendrix College, a private liberal-arts college in Conway, to offer a [3+2 pathway](#) for their students to earn an [MAT](#) and be eligible for teacher licensure.
- The School of Nursing in The College of Health and Behavioral Sciences (CHBS) partnered with Baptist Health College of Little Rock (BHCLR) to offer the [Bridge2BSN program](#), which allowed UCA students who were not admitted to our on-campus BSN program to complete coursework in-person at BHCLR and online at UCA to still earn their BSN.
- Prompted by requests from our [two-year partners](#), CHBS began offering the last 60 hours of the [BS in Psychology online](#), allowing students across the state who completed their associate's degree to earn the BS without leaving their community.
- Seeing the need to integrate business skills into their curriculum, CHBS developed a new executive-style [Master of Arts \(MA\) in Sport Management](#) and a complementary Graduate Certificate in [Sport Marketing and Commerce](#). Likewise, the college reconfigured the BS in Health Sciences into a new [BS in Healthcare Administration](#) to meet the growing demand for healthcare administrators. Students majoring in Healthcare Administration are encouraged to choose a business minor, and in response, the College of Business (CB) developed a minor in the [Economics and Insurance of Healthcare Administration](#) to complement the new program.
- Outreach to local companies revealed a need for data analysts and scientists, prompting CSE to develop a new [BS in Data Science](#) and CB to offer a [BS](#), [MS](#), and undergraduate [Technical Certificate in Applied Analytics](#).
- The university has also recognized the need to offer more specialized certificates and minors that provide students with a more focused set of knowledge and skills. To that end, the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences (CAHSS) now offers a certificate in [Historic Preservation](#) and minors in [Film Studies](#), [Japanese Culture and Language](#), and [Spanish Proficiency for Health Professionals](#); CB created new certificates in [Financial Literacy](#) and [Professional Selling](#); CHBS provides a certificate in [Child Advocacy](#); and CSE developed new minors in [Cybersecurity](#) and [Bioinformatics](#).

Periodic program reviews and annual viability checks assess the currency and responsiveness of our programs. State statute requires all degree and certificate programs to complete an [external program review](#) every seven to ten years. Over half of our programs meet this requirement through programmatic accreditation, while the rest complete a state-guided self-study that is reviewed by two external reviewers (see the

Criterion 3.F assurance argument for details). The university tracks enrollment and graduation numbers in its degree programs annually to assess program viability. State statute, as implemented by the Arkansas Division of Higher Education (ADHE), requires programs to maintain minimum [viability standards](#). For example, the BS in Computer Engineering was unexpectedly struggling to maintain enrollment and graduated only seven students from 2017 to 2023. The College of Science and Engineering analyzed regional and national labor data and determined that there was a growing demand for software engineers. As a result, they deleted the Computer Engineering program and replaced it with the BS in Software Engineering in 2025.

The [UCA Core](#), the university's general education program, operationalizes UCA's mission and core values by embedding these foundational principles throughout the undergraduate curriculum. Specifically, the UCA Core's emphasis on critical inquiry and effective communication carries out UCA's core value of intellectual excellence by fostering the analytical thinking, writing, and oral communication skills necessary to develop educated citizens. Furthermore, the UCA Core's focus on global learning advances UCA's commitment to diversity, guiding students to examine their own cultural assumptions while cultivating an appreciation for the diverse traditions, belief systems, and ideas found within a global community. Finally, the UCA Core's responsible living competency area translates UCA's values of integrity and community into actionable outcomes by training students to apply ethical reasoning to real-world problems and evaluate how their choices impact the well-being of themselves, others, and the environment.

UCA's [Living Learning Communities](#) (LLCs) blend residential and academic life by embedding classrooms directly inside residence halls and offering academically themed curricula, allowing first-year students to live, study, and collaborate alongside peers who share their interests. This innovation drives intellectual and professional development by extending academics beyond classroom walls and cultivates social and personal development by fostering a supportive community that eases the transition to university life and creates life-long connections. By anchoring this experience in inclusiveness and shared discovery, the LLC system embodies UCA's core values, ensuring that each student's academic journey is grounded in a community dedicated to their holistic success.

UCA creates "strong engagement with the local, national, and global communities" through several externally connected educational programs. Locally, [service-learning](#) courses integrate academic coursework with public service, directly addressing regional needs through collaborative efforts between faculty, students, and community entities. Nationally, the [National Student Exchange](#) study away program allows students to immerse themselves in diverse cultural environments across North America and U.S. territories. Globally, the [Global Learning Scholars Program](#) provides a structured, credit-

based framework designed to intentionally infuse global perspectives into a student's undergraduate journey, while a variety of [education abroad programs](#) encourage deep cross-cultural understanding through immersive international experiences.

Enrollment Profile

UCA advances its vision to be a “premier learner-focused public comprehensive university” through an [enrollment profile](#) that reflects regional stewardship, equitable access, and strategic responsiveness. As a public comprehensive institution, UCA's primary obligation is to serve the educational and professional needs of the state. From Fall 2021 through Fall 2025, in-state students comprised over 86% of UCA's enrollment, drawing annually from all 75 counties in Arkansas. With an average age of 20 years, UCA primarily serves traditional-age undergraduate students with a supportive residential campus tailored to their holistic success. Although no less important to our mission, non-traditional students (aged 25 or older) accounted for 8% of undergraduate enrollment from Fall 2021 through Fall 2025, many returning to school to complete a degree online. Graduate programs, primarily designed to meet regional workforce demands for advanced professional training, contributed 18.6% of total enrollment over this same period. UCA also partnered with several local private high schools to offer a limited number of concurrent courses to as many as 392 exceptional high-school students allowing them to earn high-school and college credit.

UCA's dedication to the diverse needs of those it serves is evident in its strategic approach to admissions and recruiting. For example, at the beginning of the pandemic, the UCA [Board of Trustees adopted a temporary test-optional admissions policy](#) due to disruptions in the administration of standardized tests. The policy allowed students with a minimum 3.0 high school GPA—which analyses had revealed as a strong predictor of student success—to be admitted without test scores. This intentional flexibility directly expanded access, facilitating the admission of 237 students in Fall 2020 and 859 students in Fall 2021. In 2025, [the Board of Trustees extended the test-optional admission policy](#) indefinitely.

Furthermore, UCA has increasingly focused on recruiting and supporting students from varying socioeconomic backgrounds. For example, in 2023, the university launched the [UCA Commitment](#) program—our [HLC Quality Initiative](#)—which provides last-dollar scholarship funding for first-time Arkansas students who are Pell-eligible or whose families have an annual household income of \$100,000 or less. In its inaugural year, UCA Commitment recruited 765 students who qualified for the scholarship, and an additional 564 students the year after, demonstrating how institutional policy directly aligns with our mission to remain accessible and affordable to its core constituents. As a result, we observed a significant increase in the percentage of first-time entering undergraduates who were Pell-eligible—from 38.1% in Fall 2023 to 46.3% in Fall

2025—or were first-generation college students—from 35.3% in Fall 2023 to 39.9% in Fall 2025. This increase partially contributed to a 25.6% rise in first-time undergraduate enrollment in Fall 2024 that exceeded the 3.1% increase in Arkansas high school graduations that year compared to 2023, boosting UCA's market share of students attending public four-year institutions in Arkansas from 16.8% to 20.8%.

Overall, from 2021 to 2025, UCA's undergraduate enrollment followed [projected demographic shifts](#) in the Arkansas population, though attenuated by focused recruitment and support efforts such as UCA Commitment. Following [the trend in Arkansas high school graduations and the college-going rate](#), UCA experienced moderate declines in undergraduate enrollment from Fall 2020 (8,615) to Fall 2023 (7,884), followed by a short-term increase in Fall 2024 (8,268) and Fall 2025 (8,238) bolstered by larger than projected first-time incoming cohorts. In contrast, UCA's graduate enrollment rose from 2020 (1,720) to 2023 (1,906) but has declined over the last two years (1,844 and 1,784 in 2024 and 2025, respectively).

Reflecting our core value of community through collaborative partnerships, UCA maintains flexible academic pathways for transfer students, including 475 [2+2 transfer articulation agreements](#) with 20 two-year colleges. Although transfer enrollment fluctuated between Fall 2021 and Fall 2025, ranging from a low of 452 in Fall 2024 to a high of 552 in Fall 2022, it maintained a strong five-year average of 491 students, constituting approximately 10% of overall enrollment. Additionally, the university's commitment to serving its students' diverse needs includes supporting one of the largest military-connected student populations in Arkansas. In Fall 2025, UCA enrolled over 520 veterans and military-connected students, representing a 50% increase over the past three years.

Finally, while rooted deeply in Arkansas, UCA enrolls approximately 10% of its students from other states, and over 3% of its students from at least 66 different countries. This geographic diversity supports our mission and core values by providing educational opportunities within a global community. Though international enrollment has declined, UCA enrolls over 300 international students each fall term (see [Bear Facts](#)). The [Center for Global Learning and Engagement](#) (CGLE) has a well-structured Global Welcome orientation program to ensure that students become acclimated to the US and UCA. The [Intensive English Program](#) enhances the English proficiency of prospective international students. CGLE hosts educational and social programming throughout the academic year to support our international students and connect them to the community on campus.

Scope of Operations

UCA's mission stems partly from its state-defined role and scope (see [Board Policy 102](#)), as filed with the Arkansas Division of Higher Education (ADHE), which tasks UCA

to serve the educational, economic, and cultural interests of the state. The ADHE Role and Scope charges UCA to provide baccalaureate and master's programs, as well as specific doctoral programs, in the arts, sciences, and several professional fields. The ADHE Role and Scope also highlights several specific outreach programs, including the UCA STEM institute, the Center for Asian Languages and Cultures, and the Community Development Institute.

UCA operates through eight [organizational divisions](#): Academic Affairs, Advancement, Athletics, Chief of Staff, Enrollment Services and Student Success, Finance and Administration, Information Technology, and Student Affairs. Each has its own mission statements supporting UCA's vision, mission, and core values.

- Academic Affairs represents the largest division on campus and serves UCA's mission to deliver "outstanding undergraduate and graduate education." It encompasses five academic colleges whose missions support the university: [Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences](#); [Business](#); [Education](#); [Health and Behavioral Sciences](#); and [Science and Engineering](#). Each department and school also aligns its mission with those of the university and college. Examples include [Communication](#); [Elementary, Literacy, and Special Education](#); [Occupational Therapy](#); and [Biology](#).
- Additionally, Academic Affairs houses the [Norbert O. Schedler Honors College](#) which offers an innovative learning community and interdisciplinary coursework for high-achieving students. The Honors College models academic vitality by challenging students to become "conscientious citizen-scholars" and equipping them to confront complex global issues. Its interdisciplinary focus reinforces UCA's commitment to diversity and community through collaborative conversation, public service, experiential learning, and global engagement.
- Academic Affairs is also home to academic support units that advance UCA's mission. The [Center for Excellence in Teaching and Academic Leadership](#) provides professional development, instructional consultations, and a collaborative community to continuously improve teaching and leadership. [Torreyson Library](#) provides physical and intellectual spaces that promote equitable access to knowledge, open inquiry, and user-centered services. The [Center for Global Learning and Engagement](#) cultivates international recruitment, education abroad, and cross-cultural outreach programs through global partnerships. More locally, [Outreach and Community Engagement](#) offers non-credit and continuing education programs, connecting the campus to external partners and public service opportunities to meet diverse community needs.
- [Advancement](#) secures private philanthropy and elevates UCA's brand to provide privately funded scholarships and resources that support academic excellence. Through Alumni Association and Foundation initiatives, Advancement

strengthens UCA's core value of community by connecting campus needs with external partnerships. By funding programs that attract diverse learners and transparently stewarding private support, the division translates UCA's dedication to diversity and integrity into tangible resources.

- [Athletics](#) cultivates a holistic environment focused on student success, inclusion, and principled leadership. It drives "excellence and accountability in the classroom, on campus, and in sports," advancing UCA's learner-focused vision. Athletics champions diversity and collegiality to foster multicultural understanding and engagement with stakeholders. By prioritizing work ethic, integrity, communication, and professionalism, Athletics reinforces UCA's dedication to ethical conduct and the intellectual, professional, social, and personal development of its student athletes.
- Reporting to the Chief of Staff, the [Office of Human Resources](#) (HR) and [UCA Police Department](#) support the university's mission. Operating under the guiding principle to "serve employees, so they can serve students," HR equips personnel to deliver exceptional, responsive higher education. HR fosters community through a safe, healthy, and unified workplace and operationalizes diversity through equal opportunity employment and transparent recruitment. Likewise, the UCA Police Department ensures a safe, supportive environment by embracing professionalism, accountability, integrity, and dedication. The department fosters a foundational climate of campus trust, respect, and ethical conduct through proactive policing and community outreach.
- [Enrollment Services and Student Success](#) (ESSS) includes offices that support students from their initial recruitment through graduation. [Admissions and Enrollment Services](#) and the [Office of Strategic Communications](#) advance UCA's commitment to recruiting and retaining a diverse student body, while [Academic Advising](#), [Student Success Services](#), and the [Athletic Academic Resource Center](#) provide responsive services that help all students achieve their educational goals. The [Registrar](#) and [Financial Aid](#) embody integrity through transparent and responsible operations, while programs like [UCA Commitment](#) offer targeted, equitable opportunities to students. Dedicated assistance from the [Veterans & Military Resource Center](#) and [Online, Transfer & Returning Student Services](#) ensures UCA remains responsive to the diverse needs of all learners, empowering them to thrive as engaged, educated citizens.
- [Finance and Administration](#) orchestrates UCA's financial and business operations. It ensures transparency, accountability, and ethical fiscal responsibility through budgeting, accounting, and purchasing. Facilities management sustains the physical infrastructure necessary for a "premier, learner-focused" environment. By managing auxiliary services—such as student accounts, scholarship compliance, food services, and the bookstore—the division

cultivates a supportive community and secures resources to recruit, retain, and empower a diverse campus.

- [Information Technology](#) (IT) serves as the university's digital foundation operationalizing UCA's learner-focused mission by maintaining modern instructional tools and spaces. Emphasizing its "T.R.A.C.K.S. with Integrity" ethos, IT ensures secure, reliable network services and robust data protection.
- [Student Affairs](#) puts students "front and center" by offering co-curricular programs that extend UCA's "learner-focused" mission outside the classroom. Student Affairs manages housing, student organizations, and family programs to build a supportive "university family." The division provides comprehensive wellness resources, inclusive support structures, and a safe haven for students. Within Student Affairs, the [Dean of Students](#) promotes "integrity, respect and personal responsibility" by guiding student decision making and holding students accountable to standards of conduct.

1.B. Mission and Public Good

The institution's operation of the academic enterprise demonstrates its commitment to serving the public good.

Argument

The University of Central Arkansas demonstrates its commitment to the public good by ensuring its academic programs, strategic initiatives, and community outreach serve the interests and needs of the region. As a public comprehensive university, UCA's vision and mission explicitly focus on building "strong engagement with local, national, and global communities" and remaining "current and responsive to the diverse needs of those it serves." UCA's core value of intellectual excellence and diversity emphasized UCA's dedication to preparing "educated citizens" that can engage positively with a changing global community. Moreover, UCA's core value of community includes a commitment to partnerships and service. Specifically, we value the people in our local, national, and global communities and are dedicated to sharing our academic and cultural resources through collaboration and preparing students to serve the community through experiential education. UCA's long-standing commitment to the public good is evidenced by the following initiatives, services, educational programs, workforce development projects, and community partnerships.

Service-Learning and Volunteerism

The [Service-Learning Program](#) was launched in 2013 as an initiative to institutionalize community-engaged teaching and learning. Service-learning is defined at UCA as "a course-based teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities." The Center for Excellence in Teaching and Academic Leadership (CETAL) offers a service-learning institute each summer to provide intensive training for faculty interested in designing new service-learning projects and courses. As a result, the Service-Learning Program has grown from 121 course sections enrolling 1,624 students in the 2020-2021 academic year to 298 course sections enrolling 2,272 students in the 2024-2025 academic year, totaling an estimated 95,933+ hours of service at an estimated value of over \$2.55 million to the community over that five-year period (see [Service-Learning Annual Reports](#)). UCA recognizes the outstanding partnership activities of students, faculty, and community partners through [annual service-learning awards](#).

UCA also offers a variety of [volunteer service opportunities](#) beyond the classroom, including signature initiatives such as the [Bear Boots on the Ground](#) disaster relief and

alternative break program, the [Big Event](#) day of service, the [Green Bear Coalition](#) sustainability and campus gardening program, and the [Bear Essentials Food Pantry](#), as well as numerous other volunteer programs supported through student organizations or student athletic teams. Over [60 registered student organizations](#) identify their primary mission as service-related. These organizations include chapters of national organizations such as Rotaract, Circle K, and Colleges Against Cancer; issue-based advocacy organizations such as Bears Adapt dedicated to inclusion of people with disabilities, and Green Bear Coalition which promotes sustainability on campus; and pre-professional service organizations, such as Bears Teach and Bear Care Health Club, which promote volunteer opportunities related to the fields of education and healthcare, respectively. Additionally, UCA's [Greek organizations](#) each promote service projects and philanthropy through local and national partnerships and have student leadership opportunities for members leading those initiatives, and UCA's athletic teams each engage in service activities and partnerships, such as reading to local elementary school children, fundraising for shoes and shoe distribution through Samaritan's Feet International, and hosting youth sports camps.

UCA Commitment

UCA's last-dollar scholarship program, [UCA Commitment](#), which launched in 2023, underscores the university's commitment to increasing access to higher education in Arkansas and engaging students in service to the community. The college-going rate within Arkansas has steadily declined over the last several years, and UCA responded by providing a debt-free pathway for tuition and fees to eligible Arkansas high school graduates. Participating students complete a minimum of ten service hours each semester, whether through service-learning coursework or co-curricular service opportunities. As a result, UCA Commitment students engaged in 11,518 service activities, logging 35,428 hours in service to 635 on-campus and off-campus organizations during the first two years of the program.

Outreach and Community Engagement

[Outreach and Community Engagement](#) (OCE) provides centralized support for camps and conferences, community education classes, professional development programs, workforce development programs, and community development partnerships. [Conference Services](#) administers event spaces open to the public, including the Brewer-Hegeman Conference Center and the McCastlain Hall Ballroom. In the area of youth services, OCE administers the Faulkner County enrollment in the [Imagination Library](#) program, which sends free books to children ages birth to five every month, and hosts the [Conway Area Youth Leadership Institute](#), which was established in 1995 and provides a year-long, cohort-based leadership development program for high school students throughout the county. OCE also works with numerous external and internal

partners to coordinate camps hosted on campus, including athletic camps, arts and culture camps, STEM camps, Arkansas Boys State, and more.

Another department of OCE, the [Center for Community and Economic Development](#) offers training and technical assistance to rural communities throughout the state, as well as administering an annual [Community Development Institute](#) (CDI). CDI was founded at UCA in 1987, with the goal of equipping community leaders and economic development professionals with the tools and strategies they need to create vibrant, successful communities. The Center for Community and Economic Development also relies on partnerships with statewide entities such as the Arkansas Economic Development Commission, the Arkansas Municipal League, and state leadership programs, as well as engagement with local communities, to fulfill their mission.

OCE also oversees non-credit programs in coding and aviation. The [Arkansas Coding Academy](#) provides flexible, expert-led online courses and bootcamps—spanning web development, programming, database management, and technical career services—designed to help beginners and professionals gain in-demand skills for tech careers. In 2024, OCE launched the [UCA Aviation Academy](#), in partnership with Central Flying Service of Little Rock, the City of Conway, and Conway Regional Airport, as an FAA-approved pilot training program to provide the hands-on instruction and aeronautical experience needed to earn pilot certifications.

Public Arts and Science Outreach

[UCA Public Appearances](#) is the hub for arts and culture programming open to the community. A division of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, UCA Public Appearances' mission is to provide world class national and international touring artists to students, faculty/staff and patrons across the state. They curate an annual performing arts season that is diverse in offerings and genres. Additionally, they present the [Main Stage Education Series](#) that introduces cultural, educational, and inclusive programming to Pre-K-12th grade students and ties curriculum to performing arts. UCA Public Appearances manages Reynolds Performance Hall and the Windgate Center for Fine and Performing Arts, where they also execute rentals for community events, meetings and performances.

The Department of Art and Design offers two main gallery spaces open to the public. The [Carmen T. Thompson Gallery](#) showcases the works of students, guest artists, and traveling exhibitions, and it serves as the focal point of any event that takes place in the Windgate Center for Fine and Performing Arts. The [Baum Gallery](#), an educational art museum, displays national and international touring exhibitions, sponsor juried student shows, and curated original exhibits distinctly suited to an academic environment. The Baum Gallery develops exhibitions and events that invite interaction and encourage dialogue about visual art.

Within the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, the [Artists in Residence](#) (AIR) program has brought 345 residences and 702 artists to campus over the last 25 years. These artists include actors, creative writers, dancers, filmmakers, journalists, musicians, visual artists, and others from around the world to give public performances, exhibits, and various kinds of student-focused presentations. AIR events are open to the public and often feature topics of significant public interest, with examples including commemorations of the desegregation of Little Rock's Central High School, the women's suffrage centennial, and the 2024 total solar eclipse.

The College of Science and Engineering additionally supports multiple public outreach initiatives that are enjoyed by community members, including UCA's 94-seat Dr. Edmond E. Griffin [Planetarium](#)—which is used for astronomy classes and laboratories, monthly shows open to the public free of charge, and school field trips—and the [Jewel Moore Nature Reserve](#), which includes 5 acres of tallgrass prairie and approximately 12.5 acres of woodland. The 17.5 acres of prairie and woodland represent the only remnants of the 2,500-acre prairie that once occupied land now overlain by the city of Conway. The local community is welcome to walk the trails and learn about the biology of the reserve through information signs as well as faculty- and student-led nature walks.

K-12 Engagement

In addition to welcoming K-12 students to campus for the Main Stage Education Series, planetarium and nature reserve visits, and other activities hosted by the academic colleges and departments, K-12 engagement is a cornerstone of how UCA achieves its mission in a variety of ways. The [UCA STEM Institute](#) focuses on professional development and outreach to STEM teachers and students throughout central Arkansas, offering a variety of programs and resources throughout the year that include classroom materials and field trips, and the [Mashburn Center for Learning](#) engages UCA education faculty in partnerships with educators to provide high-quality professional development and resources. UCA regularly hosts numerous statewide fairs and competitions for K-12 students, including the [Arkansas State Science and Engineering Fair](#), the [National History Day Arkansas State Competition](#), and [Arkansas Model United Nations](#).

Economic Development

According to UCA's [Economic Impact Analysis](#), conducted for fiscal year 2018-2019, "UCA influences both the lives of its students and the state economy. The university supports a variety of industries in Arkansas, serves state businesses, and benefits society as a whole in Arkansas from an expanded economy and improved quality of life. The benefits created by UCA even extend to the state and local government through increased tax revenues and public sector savings." The study estimated that UCA

added \$1.01 billion in income to the Arkansas economy, with UCA or its students supporting 19,506 jobs, amounting to one out of every 85 jobs in Arkansas. The study also examined outcomes for UCA graduates, finding that UCA students' average rate of return on their investment in higher education was 19.1%, with average increased annual earnings of \$31,100 compared to an adult with a high school degree or equivalent in Arkansas.

UCA's [Alliance for Economic Impact](#) unites the Center for Community and Economic Development, the Arkansas Coding Academy, the [Conductor](#), the [UCA Makerspace](#), and the Applied Data Analytics and Computer Information Systems programs to collaborate on innovative approaches that meet the economic needs of the state. The UCA Makerspace is a free, open-access facility serving central Arkansas with 3D printers, laser cutters, digital fabrication tools, classes, and expert mentorship. The Conductor, a public-private partnership between UCA and Startup Junkie Consulting, empowers students and local entrepreneurs through consulting, workshops, and mentorship. It also operates the Arnold Innovation Center, an 11,000-square-foot coworking space.

The result of a public-private partnership between UCA, the Conway Development Corporation (CDC), and the University of Arkansas Community College in Morrilton (UACCM), the new [UCA Innovation Campus](#) co-locates academic programs and industrial partners in the same space. By combining academic and workforce preparation, the Innovation Campus will serve as a nucleus for regional economic development. On-site academic programs will be aligned with high demand job sectors—including computer technology, advanced manufacturing, defense, and other related disciplines—to provide highly qualified graduates for positions at regional companies. The Innovation Campus will also house the Arkansas Coding Academy and select UACCM programs to provide the regional community with opportunities for professional reskilling, certifications, continuing education, and technical training that meet the needs of rapidly changing industries.

Health and Human Services

The [UCA Child Study Center](#) provides an important childcare resource for families in the community while also supporting experiential learning for UCA students across multiple academic programs. It is the only childcare center in Faulkner County accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children and holds a six-star rating through the Arkansas Better Beginnings Program.

[College Square Retirement Community](#) provides residential assisted living for individuals ages 55 and older and has been owned and operated by the university since 2002. College Square is a frequent collaborator with classes across university disciplines seeking opportunities for students to engage with older adults through

activities like the Exercise and Sport Science department's [Senior Fit Club](#) or hosting events such as a [French Film Festival](#) screening.

Finally, the university is home to multiple community health resources, including the interprofessional [Community Care Clinic](#), which uses whole-person care to address all factors affecting the client, such as physical health, mental health, and social circumstances that contribute to overall health and wellness. In addition to the Community Care Clinic, the College of Health and Behavioral Sciences offers a [Speech-Language-Hearing Center](#) (SLHC) that has provided specialized services to the community for over 30 years. Both the Community Care Clinic and SLHC offer opportunities for student clinical learning as well as accessible, high-quality care for the community.

1.C. Mission and Diversity of Society

The institution provides opportunities for civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world, as appropriate within its mission and for the constituencies it serves.

Argument

As already noted, UCA's vision and mission explicitly promote civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world through "strong engagement with the local, national, and global communities." Under the core value of intellectual excellence, the university develops "educated citizens" and fosters "cultural competence," empowering students to address complex societal issues while appreciating diverse ideas and people. The value of community reinforced this civic mindset by promoting public service, outreach, and collaborative partnerships. Finally, by valuing diversity and integrity, UCA fosters the social responsibility and cross-cultural understanding necessary for students, faculty, and staff to engage ethically within a global society.

As a result of its mission-driven commitment to civic engagement and the public good, UCA [successfully renewed](#) its [Carnegie Foundation Elective Classification for Community Engagement](#) in 2026. UCA originally earned the classification in 2020 and is one of only 279 institutions in the nation with the classification. The elective classification recognizes those institutions that share "knowledge and resources with those of the public and private sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance curriculum, teaching, and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good."

UCA additionally publishes a [Civic Action Plan annually](#), which was initially submitted to [Campus Compact](#) in 2018 as part of a civic action planning initiative for member campuses, and which has been updated regularly for participation in the [ALL IN Campus Democracy Challenge](#). UCA has been repeatedly recognized through ALL IN for voter participation and for having a highly established action plan.

Civic Engagement in the Curriculum

UCA integrates opportunities for civic engagement in a diverse, multicultural society and globally connected world into multiple aspects of the curriculum. For example, the [UCA Core](#) program is intended to develop students as engaged citizens, to be "curious, knowledgeable, articulate, and ethical people... who are willing and able to make effective contributions to their communities." At the lower-division (general education) and upper-division levels, the four goals of the program address the following

knowledge and skills recognized as essential for thriving in a multicultural society and globally connected world: Global Learning (formerly Diversity), Critical Inquiry, Effective Communication, and Responsible Living. In 2023, the university launched a new iteration of the First-Year Seminar (FYS) program that aligns FYS to the Global Learning goal of the UCA Core. The new version of FYS helps students to engage with global topics, explore various viewpoints, and develop self-awareness in a global context early in their studies. Additional information about the UCA Core, FYS, and assessment of its learning outcomes is provided in the assurance argument for Criterion 3.

In addition to the UCA Core curriculum, designated courses in UCA's [Service-Learning Program](#) help students become engaged citizens by fulfilling the following learning outcomes:

- Understand how the discipline can serve the needs of the community
- Achieve course objectives
- Understand and appreciate local, national, and/or global diversity
- Understand their role as engaged and informed citizens
- Understand the importance of UCA's responsibility to help address the needs of the community
- Learn to work well with others to achieve common goals.

We assessed these outcomes through six items added to the end-of-semester Student Course Experience Survey of service-learning courses, as well as through faculty assessment of student artifacts using a standard rubric (see [Service-Learning Annual Reports](#)). Over the last five academic years, students' average scores on each of the six items have ranged from 4.54 to 4.81 on a 5-point scale, with 5 indicating that the course "almost always" met the learning outcome. Using a three-level rubric from basic to intermediate to advanced, faculty assessed the degree to which students' service-learning projects met each of the following four goals:

- **Student Understanding:** Understand how this academic discipline can serve the needs or address the issues of the community/nation/world.
- **Diversity:** Appreciate cultural and community diversity.
- **Civic Responsibility:** Value their role as engaged and informed citizens.
- **Communication, Collaboration and Community:** Demonstrate the ability to work with others toward shared goals.

Over the last five years, a plurality of students (44-76%) achieved an advanced level on each service-learning goal, and a majority (84-94%) achieved at least an intermediate level. Additionally, we surveyed faculty members teaching service-learning courses over the same period, and most (79-100%) agreed or strongly agreed that students benefited academically, had a stronger sense of civic responsibility and community collaboration,

and had an increased awareness of diversity, of various cultures, and of racial and class backgrounds.

UCA students have opportunities to engage with a globally connected world through our Global Learning programs. Global Learning in the curriculum includes:

- [Education Abroad](#) opportunities include semester exchange programs across five continents, language immersion courses, and faculty-led short-term programs. A total of 635 students studied abroad between 2021-2026 (see [Study Abroad Data](#)). UCA offers a [variety of scholarships and funding opportunities](#) that can pay for education abroad programs. The [Study Abroad Advisory Committee](#) assists the Center for Global Learning and Engagement by reviewing and providing input on international partnership agreements, study abroad proposals, and the policies and procedures of our education abroad programs (see [minutes](#)).
- In 2020, UCA also joined the [National Student Exchange](#) (NSE) consortium which offers UCA students an opportunity to study away at member colleges and universities throughout the United States, Canada, Guam, Puerto Rico, and U.S Virgin Islands. Through spring 2026, UCA has sent 24 students to 17 different universities in the NSE consortium.
- [Collaborative Online International Learning](#) (COIL) "global classrooms" allow UCA faculty to partner with faculty abroad to engage UCA students in working with students in another country to solve problems and examine their academic discipline through international perspectives. Between spring 2022 and spring 2026, 25 GLI faculty fellows have implemented 49 COIL projects with faculty and students from 20 countries, impacting 778 UCA students. Eleven faculty who have completed two or more COIL units have been recognized as [Distinguished COIL Fellows](#).
- [Global Learning Scholar Program](#) (GLSP) encourages students to choose academic coursework with global learning content for their programs of study. Based on similar programs around the United States, UCA's GLSP is designed to increase global awareness, global perspective, and global engagement. Because GLSP is credit-based, students can graduate with the Global Learning Scholar or Distinguished Global Learning Scholar designation on their primary academic transcript. Since May 2025, 11 students have graduated with a Global Learning Scholar designation. A [Global Learning Advisory Committee](#) meets, as needed, to evaluate and consider changes to the GLSP (see [minutes](#)).

We provide professional development to faculty members interested in incorporating Global Learning into their courses through the annual [Global Learning Institute](#). This

two-day workshop focuses on COIL, education abroad, implementing global learning in the curriculum, and incorporating the [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) in the classroom. From 2021 to 2026, 57 faculty members completed the GLI training and were recognized as Global Learning Fellows. Additionally, in the last two years, 12 faculty members completed the [Global Learning Recognition track](#) and were recognized by the Center for Teaching Excellence and Leadership, the Provost and President at an annual recognition ceremony.

Co-Curricular Civic Engagement

UCA also offers civic engagement opportunities outside the classroom. For example, the [Student Government Association](#) (SGA), which represents each student classification, also provides social, cultural, and educational activities for students, advocates on behalf of all students, and allocates student activity funds to meet the needs of all student organizations. UCA also has multiple registered student organizations dedicated to nonpartisan voter engagement. Bears at the Ballot, UCA's student-led organization for nonpartisan voter education and engagement, and [Bear Advocacy Group](#), the governmental affairs committee of the Student Government Association, are specifically dedicated to civic engagement for all students, hosting voter registration drives, voter education panels and events, and civic holiday celebrations annually. Additionally, UCA consistently partners with the Faulkner County Election Commission to host a voting center during primary and general elections. The Civic Action Coordination Committee, consisting of students, faculty, and staff from various campus offices, meets annually to collaborate on programming and initiatives that support students' engagement in a democratic society.

UCA's [Bear Experience Record](#), or BearX, is the campus-wide initiative to promote and track co-curricular experiential learning that fosters civic responsibility and engagement. Through BearX, students can pursue one or more pathways by completing activities and experiences related to Community Engagement and Service, Diversity Awareness and Inclusion, Wellbeing and Personal Development, and Intellectual and Professional Development (see Criterion 3.E for more information).

The Center for Global Learning and Engagement also offers co-curricular events and activities that engage students in a globally connected world, including:

- The [Global Spotlight](#) program, designed to raise global awareness about cultural practices, traditions, and languages around the world through invited speakers and workshops.
- The [Center for Asian Languages and Cultures](#), which promotes intercultural learning on campus through events, seminars, and festivities to immerse students in Asian Languages and Cultures. The center also includes the

[Arkansas Chinese Heritage Project](#), a digital museum to preserve the 150-year history of Chinese immigration to Arkansas.

- [SDG Action and Awareness Week](#), an annual global celebration created by the [University Global Coalition](#) to promote awareness of the 17 [UN Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs).

Additionally, over 30 registered student organizations annually identify themselves as having a cultural focus; these organizations help connect students around shared identities, backgrounds, and cultural interests, including the [Latino Student Association](#), the [Minority Mentorship Program](#), and [Team Global](#), among others.