

The background of the entire page is a grayscale photograph of a classical building. It features a large, arched dome structure in the upper left and several prominent, fluted columns in the lower right, creating a sense of architectural grandeur and institutional stability.

STRATEGIC PLAN UCA 2035

UCA 2035 is the University of Central Arkansas' strategic plan for July 1, 2026 through June 30, 2035. Approved by the UCA Board of Trustees on May 27, 2026, the plan establishes four strategic imperatives that will guide university priorities, planning, and decision-making over the next decade.

UCA 2035: Who We Are & Where We're Going

The University of Central Arkansas was built on a simple belief: education strengthens communities. For more than a century, UCA has prepared people for meaningful lives and for strengthening the communities where they live and serve. We have grown into a comprehensive university known for building futures through effective teaching, meaningful relationships, and the confidence that comes from being challenged and supported, while advancing knowledge, creativity, innovation, and partnerships that strengthen Arkansas and the places we call home.

Our strength has never come from chasing trends, but from adapting what we do best to meet what comes next. It comes from staying focused on helping every learner clarify their goals, meet high expectations, and advance with the skills and resilience to succeed, while producing scholarship and creative work that matters and engaging meaningfully with the communities we serve. That strength is visible in every corner of the university: classrooms, advising conversations, mentoring, creative spaces, research labs, campus life, and community partnerships. It is central to who we are, and it will carry us forward, guided by evidence, into the decade ahead.

What distinguishes UCA is how we deliver on that belief: through a connected, residential learning environment where teaching, mentorship, and applied experience work together to move students forward with clarity and confidence.

Our graduates leave prepared for meaningful work, with less debt and stronger outcomes than many of their peers, and with the relationships and experience to contribute immediately in their communities.

MISSION AND COMMITMENTS

Mission

The University of Central Arkansas brings teaching, discovery, and community partnership together to educate students, expand access to opportunity, and serve the public. Through learning, scholarship, creative activity, and applied experience, we advance readiness for meaningful work, civic contribution, and lifelong growth.

Commitments

Student Opportunity and Momentum: Students and learning remain at the center of the UCA experience, with expanded access and clear pathways that support progress, deepen knowledge, and advance readiness for meaningful work, leadership, and lifelong growth.

Partnership and Engagement: Partnerships with communities, industries, and public institutions connect learning and innovation, strengthening economic opportunity, cultural vitality, and civic life.

Discovery with Impact: Research, creative activity, and inquiry are integral to the UCA experience, advancing knowledge while contributing to solutions that address the needs of communities and professions.

Foundations for the Future: People, systems, infrastructure, and resources are aligned to sustain excellence in learning, discovery, and partnership while enabling UCA to adapt and thrive over time.

THE MOMENT WE ARE IN

Higher education is under pressure, and UCA is well positioned to meet it. Families need clarity about cost, value, and career outcomes. Students arrive with wide variations in readiness and expectations. Employers need graduates and other learners who can adapt quickly to work shaped by technologies that did not exist ten years ago and may not even exist today. The pace of change continues to accelerate.

UCA meets this moment with confidence because our strengths are precisely what this moment demands. We have advantages that matter: a campus experience built on connection and belonging, strong student outcomes with less debt, faculty and staff deeply invested in every learner's success, and programs aligned with Arkansas communities and industries. These strengths give us momentum and clarity of purpose for the decade ahead.

HOW WE BUILT THIS DYNAMIC PLAN

UCA 2035 was shaped by a year of honest listening across campus and in the community. Faculty described shifts in student readiness and evolving expectations in their fields. Students spoke plainly about what helps them stay on track and what gets in their way. Staff highlighted systems that need to work faster and more coherently. Employers and community partners identified the talent and solutions they need most.

Across these conversations, one truth was clear: culture shapes results. When trust is strong and people feel ownership of student success, progress accelerates. When systems are misaligned, even good ideas stall. This plan reflects that reality, setting direction and aligning our work with our deepest ambitions for UCA and the communities we serve.

THE ROAD TO UCA 2035

UCA 2035 came together through a yearlong effort built on listening, analysis, and honest reflection about where the university stands and where we need to move. The work unfolded in four phases, each shaping the next and drawn from what our community told us matters most.

Listening In

We began by looking inward. Through facilitated discussions, campus-wide listening sessions, SWOT analyses, and a review of the previous strategic plan, we surfaced a clear picture of UCA's identity, strengths, and challenges. Staff, faculty, students,

alumni, and community partners were candid about what works well and what gets in the way. That early clarity set the foundation for every decision that followed, especially the need for clearer communication, better employee support, and a more coordinated, student-centered experience.

Looking Out

We paired campus insight with an external assessment of what's changing around us. Drawing on national benchmarking, competitor scans, and analyses of enrollment and workforce trends, this phase sharpened our understanding of where UCA stands in a shifting higher-education landscape: what is changing, where expectations are rising, and where UCA already holds an advantage. The combination of internal and external insight clarified the opportunities ahead, especially UCA's strengths in hands-on teaching, strong completion and career outcomes, post-graduate success, a culture of belonging, and a residential experience that continues to set the university apart.

Shaping Direction

With that foundation in place, the cross-campus Working Groups and the Central Strategy Team began turning insight into direction. Through iterative conversations, “big bets” discussions, and synthesis of campus input, four institutional imperatives took shape. Goals and objectives were drafted by the people closest to the work, then tested through Community Conversations and Feedback Labs involving more than 500 participants. Those sessions confirmed ideas, clarified perceptions, and refined the vision. They also revealed where language needed to be sharper, where objectives needed to reflect real practice, and where gaps remained between ambition and daily experience. As the imperatives and goals took shape, we returned to our mission and commitments, refining them to reflect what this process revealed about who UCA is and where we are going.

Aligning for Launch

In the final phase, we focused on refinement and readiness. Working Groups and the Central Strategy Team tightened goals, clarified objectives, and connected them to measurable outcomes. Leadership and governance groups reviewed the emerging plan to ensure alignment across divisions and to confirm that the direction matched the reality of how UCA works. Early implementation steps were identified where urgency or opportunity made them clear. The aim in this phase was straightforward: ensure the plan reflects the lived experience of the campus, incorporates insights from our community, and positions us to move confidently from planning to doing.

A COLLECTIVE EFFORT

The development of UCA 2035 was shaped by broad participation across the university and community. Surveys, Community Conversations, Feedback Labs, and cross-campus working groups brought together voices from across the institution, including hundreds of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community partners. The wide range of perspectives did not always lead to immediate agreement, but it strengthened the plan by surfacing diverse ideas and experiences. The work held together because it was grounded in trust, shared responsibility, and a commitment to create a plan that reflects UCA's reality. We are grateful for the collective effort that shaped UCA 2035. The lesson from this process is clear: UCA is strongest when we work together.

Participation Snapshot

- 1,400+ survey participants
- 500+ contributors in Community Conversations and Feedback Labs
- Representation from every division through cross-campus Working Groups
- Dozens of advisory groups, forums, and leadership reviews
- Three major rounds of campus feedback integrated into the plan

THE IMPERATIVES THAT GUIDE US

UCA 2035 is anchored in four long-term imperatives that define what the next decade requires of the university:

- a coordinated student experience,
- a stronger role in innovation, workforce development, and engagement,
- expanded capacity for research, scholarship, and creative activity,
- and the foundations—people, systems, and infrastructure—that make everything else possible.

These imperatives focus the university's work and guide decisions, resource allocations, and measurement over time.

It is important to highlight that UCA's strategy is not built on scale or specialization alone. It is built on integration.

We combine a high-contact residential experience with applied learning opportunities, strong career outcomes, and deep regional partnerships. This combination (connection, coordination, and real-world relevance) is what sets UCA apart and guides the choices in this plan.

A More Integrated and Innovative University

Students do not experience their education in separate pieces, and we cannot operate as if they do. Academic work, advising, campus life, financial planning, career development, and community engagement constantly intersect. When those pieces align, students move forward in their journeys. When they don't, progress slows.

UCA 2035 commits us to real coordination across the university. This requires a structural shift to deliver a coordinated, purposeful, and accessible educational experience for every learner, whether they arrive from across town, across the state, or across their career.

At the same time, UCA is strengthening how it works as an institution. Collaboration, creativity, and applied learning must function as part of everyday operations, not as isolated efforts. This means reducing unnecessary barriers, shortening the distance between a need and a response, and making it easier for students, faculty, and partners to work across disciplines and units.

Becoming a more integrated and innovative university requires both cultural and operational change. We must strengthen the habits and systems that support clarity, coordination, and speed while reinforcing a culture where innovation and continuous improvement are part of our daily work.

Part of this shift includes the UCA Innovation Campus, a dedicated site where students, faculty, and industry partners come together on applied projects, entrepreneurial

problem-solving, and workforce development. It will serve as a shared platform for collaboration, connecting learning with evolving industry and community needs. By extending how we work beyond the main campus, the Innovation Campus creates a visible point of connection between UCA and the region: a place where partners find solutions, students gain meaningful experience, and ideas move more quickly into practice.

This kind of innovation and integration depend on using technology in ways that strengthen human judgment, expand capacity, and support the relationships at the center of the UCA experience.

Using Technology Without Losing Ourselves

Technology, especially artificial intelligence, will continue to reshape higher education. But UCA's distinction has always been human-centered: the staff member who steadies a student in a difficult semester, the instructor who recognizes potential, the mentor who shows a first-generation student they belong, the alum who creates opportunity for the next generation.

Technology will not replace those strengths. It should strengthen them. Used thoughtfully and responsibly, technology can deepen insight into student learning, improve advising and support, streamline operations, and expand the reach of research and creative activity. This includes the use of AI-enabled tools to identify patterns, surface opportunities, and guide timely, informed action across the university.

These tools must support good judgment, not override it. They should make our work more effective without weakening academic freedom, personal connection, or accountability. At UCA, technology is used to strengthen decision-making, improve coordination, and extend the impact of the people who make this university work.

OUR COMMITMENTS AND THE WORK AHEAD

Across multiple rounds of campus feedback, a consistent set of priorities emerged: creating a more coordinated student experience, strengthening UCA's role in innovation and workforce development, expanding the capacity for research and creative activity, and reinforcing the people, systems, and infrastructure that make this work possible.

These priorities clarify where UCA must focus. They also require alignment. Advancing them will shape how we make decisions, allocate resources, and organize our work across the university.

To enact our plan, UCA will align its financial strategy with academic and student priorities, modernize technology systems, and advance campus and facility planning to reflect how students live and learn today. These are not separate initiatives. They are the mechanisms that make the plan real.

We will measure progress openly and adjust when needed. Transparency builds trust, and trust strengthens the institution.

UCA moves toward 2035 with a clear understanding of its role. Our identity remains rooted in a traditional residential experience that builds connection, belonging, and mentorship, while expanding to support learners who need online access, flexible schedules, certificate pathways, and workforce-aligned training. We serve recent high school graduates, working adults, and professionals building new skills. We are a partner to communities and industries that rely on talent and ideas. And we are a

university that respects its traditions while strengthening the foundation required for the decade ahead.

This plan sets our direction. Our community will carry it forward.

Our Direction for the Decade Ahead

The strategic imperatives that follow define UCA's priorities for the decade ahead, focusing the university on what matters most while allowing the work beneath them to adapt as conditions change. The initial goals in this plan represent the first phase of implementation. As progress is made and conditions shift, goals, objectives, and tactics will be reviewed, refined, and replaced to ensure resources and effort remain aligned with the university's priorities.

This approach positions UCA to act with clarity and adjust with purpose, maintaining a steady direction while responding to new opportunities and challenges.

IMPERATIVE 1: CENTERING STUDENT SUCCESS

We put students first by pairing excellent teaching with a connected, caring, and academically strong environment where every learner can thrive.

UCA delivers a student experience built on clarity, connection, and momentum. Students arrive with different levels of readiness and progress because the university is designed to keep them moving forward. We clarify the path, reduce friction, and surround students with people and systems that support progress. Engaging, high-quality teaching anchors this experience by setting clear expectations and building confidence through purposeful academic challenge.

This is UCA's competitive advantage. Students graduate with less debt and stronger career prospects than many peers, and in an era of rising expectations for value and personalized support, these outcomes matter. Clear, well-designed learning environments, combined with coordinated support, build momentum and confidence that drive persistence, completion, and success after graduation.

Over the next decade, UCA will strengthen this advantage by expanding high-impact learning, coordinating support across academic and student affairs, and building data and digital systems that make progress easier to navigate. Courses, programs, and delivery models will be regularly evaluated and adapted to reflect changing student needs and workforce expectations, ensuring readiness for a world that rewards adaptability, applied experience, and evidence-based problem solving. These shifts will reduce time spent navigating processes and increase time spent learning.

This imperative anchors the strategic plan because it strengthens UCA's value proposition: a university where care is matched by momentum, support is built into the experience, and students leave with clarity, confidence, and the skills to shape their futures.

Goal 1.1

Empower students to succeed academically, personally, and professionally through a practical, academically grounded, and career-informed learning experience.

Objectives

- Stronger indicators of academic success, skill development, and career readiness.
- Improved retention, persistence, and post-graduation outcomes across student groups.
- More students complete experiential learning and related high-impact practices that translate into readiness.
- Broader use of evidence-based, student-centered teaching practices.

Tactics

- Embed high-impact practices and career competencies into targeted courses and co-curricular programs.
- Expand faculty development focused on learning design, student-centered pedagogies, and authentic assessment.
- Strengthen integration and coordination between Academic Affairs and Student Affairs so curricular and co-curricular learning experiences (such as learning communities, advising, and career preparation) reinforce student success, skill development, and career readiness.
- Use workforce and market analysis to adjust programs and delivery formats so student preparation matches employer expectations.

Goal 1.2

Drive enrollment, persistence, and graduation through a seamless, predictable student experience with connected support, clear processes, and consistent communication.

Objectives

- Increased enrollment, persistence, and graduation rates across student populations.
- Students report stronger belonging, engagement, clarity, and confidence.
- Improved career placement and graduate-school outcomes.
- Integrated data systems guide timely interventions and coordinated support.
- Students experience a more consistent and responsive digital environment.

Tactics

- Integrate recruitment, advising, financial aid, and student success workflows to eliminate handoff gaps and duplicated processes.
- Build and use integrated data dashboards to identify risk, guide interventions, and align unit-level action.
- Improve the digital experience by simplifying access to tools, services, communication, and next steps.
- Implement targeted approaches for transfer, adult, first-generation, online, and other populations with distinct barriers.
- Expand structured opportunities for students to connect with faculty, staff, peers, alumni, and support units.

Goal 1.3

Equip faculty and staff to create engaging, evidence-based learning environments that accelerate student progress.

Objectives

- Students experience active, well-designed, high-quality learning environments grounded in proven instructional practices.
- Academic progress indicators improve, with retention and credit-hour completion increasing and DFW and repeat rates decreasing.
- Center for Excellence in Teaching and Academic Leadership (CETAL) participation increases alongside demonstrated growth in instructional practice.
- Courses deliver more structured learning experiences that support diverse learners while upholding strong academic expectations.

Tactics

- Expand CETAL programming and encourage broad faculty participation in teaching development that supports high-impact teaching, active learning, practical assessment strategies, and coaching for instructors trying new approaches.
- Support redesign of gateway and high-enrollment courses to increase engagement and reduce unnecessary barriers.
- Integrate course- and program-level analytics (DFW trends, assignment performance, engagement patterns) into teaching support conversations to target improvements.
- Build communities of practice where instructors share strategies, test innovations, and refine their teaching.
- Upgrade the systems that connect students with staff support and provide timely alerts when students need assistance.

IMPERATIVE 2: ARKANSAS CAMPUS OF INNOVATION

We bring people, disciplines, and ideas together to turn collaboration, creativity, and applied learning into solutions that strengthen Arkansas and serve the public good.

UCA connects people, ideas, industries, and government to solve real problems for Arkansas. As a comprehensive university, we draw on strengths across all disciplines to deliver practical, cross-disciplinary solutions that partners and communities can rely on. Our approach to innovation is grounded in applied learning and collaborative problem-solving that produces talent and ideas aligned with evolving community and workforce needs.

To meet this opportunity, UCA must operate with greater clarity and speed. We must understand local challenges, move decisively, and respond with solutions. When partners come to UCA, they should encounter a university that listens carefully, adapts quickly, and delivers outcomes that matter. We are building the structures and practices that make agile innovation and responsiveness possible.

Over the next decade, UCA will strengthen this position by building a coordinated partnership ecosystem across business, government, education, and nonprofit sectors; shortening the time required to respond to emerging community and market needs; and using data and workforce intelligence to guide decisions. Academic programs, operational support, and community-facing efforts will align as a designed system, ensuring that collaboration produces consistent, scalable results. UCA will become a first-stop partner for community organizations, employers, and regional leaders seeking support, expertise, and solutions.

The Innovation Campus extends this commitment. It provides a dedicated site where students, faculty, staff, and partners work together on applied projects, entrepreneurial problem-solving, and research that connects learning with evolving workforce needs. As the campus develops, it becomes a visible engine of regional progress and economic development: a place where Arkansas companies find solutions, communities access expertise, and students gain hands-on experience that prepares them for meaningful careers and community impact.

Together, the goals in this imperative position UCA to collaborate more effectively, respond more quickly, and convert regional needs into talent, ideas, and measurable results.

Goal 2.1

Build a coordinated partnership ecosystem that connects students, faculty, staff, industry, and community organizations for shared impact.

Objectives

- Broader, strategically aligned partnerships across business, government, education, nonprofits, and entrepreneurship.
- Campuswide participation becomes standard as all units define their place in and contribute to UCA's innovation efforts.
- Growth in partnerships that produce measurable outcomes such as internship-to-career pipelines, applied learning opportunities, cooperative education opportunities, collaborative research, creative activity, training, and community development.
- Clear leadership, governance, and shared structures supporting coordinated partner engagement.

Tactics

- Create a coordinated engagement model that maps partners, identifies gaps, and aligns outreach across units.
- Establish a cross-college governance structure with defined roles, decision processes, and shared ownership of partnership strategy.
- Engage academic units in evaluating their strengths and determining how they can participate in UCA's innovation and partnership ecosystem.
- Prepare and activate a dedicated space that anchors partner activity, supports applied learning, and reinforces interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Develop a multi-year financial plan covering start-up needs, operational costs, and diversified revenue pathways.
- Build an adaptable program portfolio that integrates existing initiatives and introduces new partner-driven opportunities across disciplines.

Goal 2.2

Develop an agile university infrastructure that responds quickly to emerging market, industry, and community needs.

Objectives

- Shorter timelines to develop, modify, and launch academic programs and workforce-aligned initiatives.
- A larger share of programs implementing timely, market-informed updates.
- Stronger partner satisfaction with UCA's responsiveness and turnaround times.

Tactics

- Conduct recurring market and workforce analyses that identify emerging needs and provide actionable insights for academic and administrative units.
- Build a data-informed evaluation framework that identifies bottlenecks and improves program approval and revision processes.
- Redesign high-friction processes to accelerate new program creation and updates to existing programs.
- Establish a cross-functional support structure that coordinates rapid-response work across academic colleges and administrative units.
- Implement a routine reporting schedule requiring programs to document how market trends shape decisions.

Goal 2.3

Establish the Innovation Campus as a dedicated site to advance innovation, entrepreneurial problem-solving, connection of learning with evolving workforce needs, and new pathways for enrollment.

Objectives

- Growth in external partners actively collaborating with UCA through the Innovation Campus.
- Partnerships at the Innovation Campus generate outcomes such as academic pipelines, applied learning experiences, collaborative research, training programs, and fundraising.
- Documented economic and community benefit from Innovation Campus activity, including job creation, training, and applied research with visible regional impact.
- Growth in learners enrolling in programs and offerings connected to the Innovation Campus.
- Students across academic levels gain access to project-based learning, community-based learning, internships, and other applied opportunities tied to the Innovation Campus.

Tactics

- Engage stakeholders across all academic colleges and community sectors so advisory groups guide direction, identify needs, and build shared ownership of the Innovation Campus.
- Prepare and activate the Innovation Campus space so it anchors partner activity, supports applied learning, and enables interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Implement a unified partner-management and impact-tracking system that aligns with existing institutional tools and supports Innovation Campus operations.
- Support cross-college collaboration to source projects, design programming, and involve multiple disciplines in Innovation Campus activity.
- Create clear partnership pathways—such as sponsored projects, training cohorts, applied research collaborations, cooperative education opportunities, and workspace access—to enable scalable engagement.
- Coordinate academic and continuing-education efforts to develop and deliver offerings that attract learners to the Innovation Campus.

IMPERATIVE 3: DISCOVERY IN ACTION

We make discovery central to the UCA experience, using research, creative activity, and real-world problem-solving to strengthen learning and deliver meaningful impact.

At UCA, discovery shapes how we teach, work, learn, and solve problems. Research, creative activity, and inquiry generate new knowledge and contribute to practical solutions that address real challenges. These experiences give students, faculty, and staff opportunities to explore ideas, create, and engage complex problems in a rapidly changing world.

Our partners need people who can analyze problems, work with emerging technologies, collaborate across fields and audiences, and adapt to new challenges. They also need research and creative activity that lead to practical outcomes—solutions, not just publications. UCA is built for this work: a comprehensive institution with teacher-scholars, creative practitioners, applied doctoral programs, and deep experience in regional partnerships. This approach strengthens the value of a UCA education by giving students discovery experiences that deepen learning beyond content alone.

Over the next decade, UCA will expand opportunities for discovery in classrooms, labs, studios, communities, and co-curricular experiences; strengthen support for faculty research and creative activity through improved infrastructure and development pathways; and increase external funding, collaboration, and community-engaged scholarship. We will embrace emerging tools, including AI and new research and creative technologies, to open new directions for scholarship and better prepare students for evolving fields.

Discovery is not separate from instruction or engagement; it fuels them. By integrating discovery across the university, we strengthen institutional excellence, expand our impact, and prepare graduates and other learners to analyze, create, lead, and contribute in a changing world.

Goal 3.1

Elevate research, scholarship, creative activity, applied and community-connected learning, and real-world problem-solving as defining elements of the UCA student experience.

Objectives

- Increase the number of academic programs that integrate discovery-focused learning experiences appropriate to their discipline.
- Strengthen student recognition that discovery (through research, creative activity, and community-connected learning) is a core part of UCA's academic culture.
- Increase student participation in faculty- or staff-mentored research, creative activity, and applied problem-solving experiences.
- Expand student access to community-connected inquiry, challenge-based learning, and real-world problem-solving opportunities across programs.

Tactics

- Integrate research, creative activity, and applied problem-solving components into academic programs where appropriate to the discipline.
- Expand faculty and staff capacity to mentor student projects by clarifying expectations, adjusting workload where feasible, and providing targeted support.

- Evaluate and strengthen participation and outcomes in research, creative activity, and community-connected learning.
- Incorporate indicators of inquiry, analysis, communication, collaboration, and other discovery-related skills into academic assessment and student-success measures.
- Establish a university-wide framework to document, communicate, and showcase research, creative activity, and scholarship.

Goal 3.2

Advance faculty excellence in research, scholarship, and creative activity to strengthen academic reputation and regional impact.

Objectives

- Optimize institutional capacity and structures that support faculty engagement in research, scholarship, creative activity, and other forms of experiential learning.
- Growth in refereed research, scholarly publications, and peer-reviewed creative works across disciplines.
- More external grant submissions and awards, supported by stronger pre-award and post-award processes and infrastructure.
- Increased use of faculty development, recognition, and support structures within departments.

Tactics

- Assess faculty engagement and support across departments and integrate findings into program review and planning.
- Improve the research and creative activity support structure by refining pre-award guidance, strengthening post-award processes, and upgrading physical and digital infrastructure for grant activity.
- Strengthen research, scholarship, and creative activity through expanded collaboration, enhanced support services, and additional resources (such as seed funds) for disciplinary and regionally relevant projects.

Goal 3.3

Align research, scholarship, and creative activity with community priorities to expand UCA's role as a catalyst for regional progress.

Objectives

- Increased proportion of faculty projects demonstrating community, regional, or national benefit, including economic, cultural, educational, or public service impact.
- More faculty-led partnerships with community, public, nonprofit, and industry organizations that produce measurable outcomes such as applied research, creative activity, policy contributions, or workforce-facing solutions.
- Growth in external funding from community, public, nonprofit, or industry collaborations.

Tactics

- Use a unified, university-wide system to document partnerships, identify community priorities, and track outcomes across research, creative activity, and service.

- Improve infrastructure for community-engaged research and creative activity by expanding access to space, technology, logistical assistance, and partner-management tools.
- Increase capacity for community-engaged work through seed funding, collaboration support, workload flexibility, and recognition structures.

IMPERATIVE 4: FUTURE-READY FOUNDATIONS

We invest in the people, culture, systems, and infrastructure that enable our community to excel—today and for decades ahead.

UCA's long-term success depends on more than strategy. It depends on investing in the people, systems, and infrastructure that make excellent work possible. A strong university depends on a supported workforce, reliable processes, modern technology, and physical spaces that enable all students, faculty, and staff to succeed. Strengthening these foundations allows our community to focus on the work that moves UCA and the communities we serve forward.

We will build an employee experience that attracts, develops, and retains talent by combining meaningful work, strong relationships, and systems that allow people to succeed without unnecessary friction. In a competitive labor market, institutions that align culture, support, and performance stand apart. UCA will be one of them.

This is a defining opportunity. As technology accelerates, expectations for service and flexibility rise, and financial pressures intensify, institutions stand out when their people have the tools, systems, and support to perform at a high level. UCA's culture of care is already a strength; to remain competitive, we must match that culture with structures that are predictable, modern, and built for long-term effectiveness.

Over the next decade, UCA will reinforce this foundation by cultivating a workforce experience that attracts and retains talent, maintaining facilities and technology aligned with the demands of a modern university, and building financial resilience that supports priorities even in volatile times. We will streamline systems, modernize tools, support professional growth, and improve the environments where people work and learn. These efforts reduce friction, strengthen performance, and reinforce the mission-focused work that defines UCA.

Future-ready foundations are not peripheral but are the operating system of the institution. By investing in people, systems, and infrastructure, UCA ensures it can adapt, compete, and serve Arkansas and the broader communities we engage with well into the future.

Goal 4.1

Cultivate a thriving, committed workforce that makes UCA an employer of choice in Arkansas.

Objectives

- Reduce voluntary departures and improve recruitment outcomes across the broader Arkansas talent market.
- Improve overall employee satisfaction, including satisfaction with supervisory support and internal career progression.
- Increase participation in professional development with evidence of meaningful growth.

- Expand advancement pathways and improve succession planning to support long-term career mobility.

Tactics

- Improve work policies and daily practices to support employee well-being, fulfillment, and performance.
- Expand and reinforce supervisor development so leaders focus on developing people, not just managing compliance.
- Strengthen professional-development pathways and clarify internal mobility routes so employees can see long-term careers at UCA.
- Maintain data-driven processes for reviewing compensation and benefits to ensure competitiveness and internal consistency.

Goal 4.2

Ensure a modern, connected campus environment through sustained investment in facilities and technology that enable effective work and learning.

Objectives

- Faculty, staff, and students report that campus technology and physical spaces support collaboration, innovation, and teaching and learning.
- Satisfaction ratings from building stakeholders and leadership indicate progress on addressing infrastructure barriers.
- Average age of the computing fleet reduced to roughly three years within the refresh cycle.
- All secondary-use technology needs met through the adoption of uniform technology and a redeployment pool rather than ad-hoc purchasing.

Tactics

- Implement a structured, recurring technology refresh cycle that removes replacement burdens from departments and keeps hardware current.
- Assess infrastructure barriers across campus, prioritize critical needs, and publish a phased roadmap for facility improvements.
- Create a clear, user-centered process for requesting updates to campus spaces to improve transparency and predictability.
- Strengthen the role of university technology committees within shared governance so they advise on major technology and infrastructure decisions.
- Deploy an online, interactive campus map with real-time features such as shuttle tracking to improve navigation.

Goal 4.3

Establish a resilient financial model that diversifies revenue and supports sustained investment in people, programs, and infrastructure.

Objectives

- Maintain strategic investment pools that support employee development, compensation incentives, academic programs, technology renewal, and facility refresh cycles.
- Sustain a positive annual operating margin that enables ongoing reinvestment in priorities.

- Increase net tuition and fee revenue through measured grant and aid, steady enrollment, and coordinated retention efforts.
- Grow revenue from grants, partnerships, philanthropy, and continuing education.

Tactics

- Implement funding approaches that stabilize long-term support for facilities, technology, and renewal cycles.
- Track and document savings from refresh cycles to guide reinvestment decisions.
- Strengthen Advancement's role as a strategic partner in building long-term financial resilience.
- Review funding for faculty and staff development and identify gaps that limit participation or affordability.
- Align program-level budget planning with institutional priorities so resources flow to high-value academic and co-curricular initiatives.

IMPLEMENTING THE DYNAMIC PLAN

UCA will treat this plan as a dynamic framework that aligns governance, resource decisions, assessment, and daily practices so they reinforce one another over time. This structure maintains long-term clarity while allowing goals, objectives, and tactics to evolve with changing needs and opportunities. The aim is straightforward: keep the plan active, keep the institution focused, and enable UCA to adjust as conditions change.

This operating cycle belongs to all of us. The plan sets direction. Our community will bring it to life.

Leadership, Ownership, and Cross-Functional Teams

As implementation begins, UCA's leadership team will take ongoing responsibility for ensuring that decisions, priorities, and resource allocations remain aligned with the university's mission and commitments. This is not a one-time check. It is a continuous discipline embedded in each operating cycle, requiring leaders to test whether current work reflects our stated direction and adjust when it does not.

To keep work moving across all disciplines and all units, each imperative will have a cabinet-level champion and a small implementation group. They will coordinate action, identify barriers, and maintain alignment as goals and tactics move from concept to execution. This structure prevents diffusion of responsibility and ensures that critical work has a clear home.

The Strategic Planning Committee (SPC) will steward the measurement system. They will monitor KPIs tied to each imperative and goal, identify when a tactic or goal is nearing completion, and recommend when components of the plan should be retired or replaced.

To support timely execution, leadership will clarify roles for each goal and major tactic within every operating cycle: who leads the work, who must be consulted, who provides recommendations, who approves decisions, and who carries out implementation. This clarity keeps cross-functional teams focused and prevents delays as work moves across units.

Strategically Aligned Resource Allocation

In this dynamic framework, strategy drives budgeting and operational decisions. As UCA strengthens student success, innovation, discovery, and foundational systems, resources will shift toward the work that most directly advances the imperatives. Realignment will be thoughtful and steady, sometimes adding capacity, sometimes winding down commitments that no longer serve institutional goals, and always ensuring that investments reflect the priorities of the plan rather than historical patterns.

To maintain alignment, UCA will create clear crosswalks connecting the strategic plan to cascading plans across the university, including budget, staffing, the campus master plan and building and facilities plans, IT strategy, academic planning, and other major operational frameworks. Leaders in these areas will routinely show how decisions in their domains support the imperatives and where adjustments are needed.

This ensures the plan is not an extra layer of work. Instead, it becomes the structure that organizes institutional work.

Rolling Review Cycles

Dynamic planning replaces fixed five-year cycles with regular, structured reflection. UCA will establish a review rhythm that keeps the plan current and responsive to what is happening on campus, in our community, and beyond. These reviews will consider not only internal progress but also external trends, policy shifts, market pressures, demographic changes, and other emerging headwinds that may influence the university's direction.

UCA's review cycle will include:

- Annual cabinet-level strategy reviews to reaffirm direction and set near-term priorities
- Mid-cycle reviews to assess indicators and identify emerging needs or opportunities
- Ongoing SPC monitoring of KPIs, qualitative signals, and external conditions shaping higher education

These reviews refine the path forward without altering the imperatives. The result is a plan that stays steady in purpose but flexible in execution.

Refreshing the Goal Portfolio

A dynamic plan evolves as progress is made. As implementation teams and the SPC determine that a goal has been achieved, or that conditions have shifted, goals will roll off. New goals will be added in support of the same four imperatives. This creates a living portfolio of priorities that remains manageable, visible, and aligned with institutional needs. It also ensures that faculty, staff, and students see steady, meaningful progress.

Operationalizing Measurement

Measurement should guide decisions, not decorate reports. UCA will rely on a concise set of institutional KPIs and unit-level metrics tied directly to the imperatives and their goals. These indicators will reflect what matters most:

- Student momentum and success for all students
- Partner engagement and regional impact
- Research and creative activity across disciplines
- Operational health, performance, and effectiveness

- Workforce well-being and development
- Infrastructure quality and reliability

Quantitative indicators will be paired with qualitative insights from students, faculty, staff, alumni, and partners. Together, these inputs will guide rolling reviews, help determine when goals should sunset, and inform where resources need to move next.

Keeping the Plan Alive

The strength of a dynamic strategy comes from alignment: leadership ownership, strategic resourcing, disciplined assessment, and steady renewal of priorities. This same alignment has long defined UCA's approach to serving students and the state. We focus on the work we do best, and we do it consistently.

As UCA moves toward 2035, this plan will operate as a living guide rather than a static document, helping the university remain organized, focused, and ready for what comes next. Our people will carry this work forward. Together, we will advance the future outlined by the four imperatives.

WITH THANKS TO OUR CAMPUS COMMUNITY

This strategic plan exists because people showed up consistently, thoughtfully, and with a willingness to wrestle with hard questions about UCA's future. Thousands of voices shaped this work through conversations, feedback, and shared problem-solving across campus. In addition, a set of formally organized teams committed hundreds of hours to turning aspiration into direction and ideas into action. Their work helped ensure this plan is not just ambitious, but grounded, credible, and ready to guide UCA through the decade ahead. What follows is a sincere expression of gratitude to those who served on the Central Strategy Team, Working Groups, and Strategic Framing Team.

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