

Stricken language would be deleted from and underlined language would be added to present law.

State of Arkansas
95th General Assembly
Regular Session, 2025

As Engrossed: H3/19/25 H3/31/25

A Bill

HOUSE BILL 1696

By: Representative McAlindon

By: Senator J. Dotson

For An Act To Be Entitled

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

Subtitle

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

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

SECTION 1. DO NOT CODIFY. Title – Legislative intent.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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concerning the exemption under the Building Better Futures Program from the state minimum core curriculum, is repealed.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

~~to effectuate its provisions.~~

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

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

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

(b) As used in this section:

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

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

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

(A) Provides:

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

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

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

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

(A) Include the requisite core curriculum; and

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

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

division.

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

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

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

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

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

(B) The study of American institutions and ideals.

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

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

(1) Exempt Applied Science degrees;

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

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

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

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

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

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

~~higher education.~~

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

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

/s/McAlindon