

CHANCELLOR'S

# Annual Report »



**UA** LITTLE  
ROCK





## A Moment of Reflection

On May 2 of this year, I had the honor to announce a new step forward in our efforts to preserve affordability for students at UA Little Rock. Thanks to a generous gift from the Windgate Foundation, we launched the Enduring Opportunity Scholarship Fund, an endowment intended to generate matching funds and grow into a permanent source of need-based scholarship support for future generations of Arkansans.

In the short time since that announcement was made, we've had many supporters step forward to contribute to Enduring Opportunity because the concept resonates deeply. They know what that opportunity means and want to help us ensure that it is available to as many people as possible in perpetuity. We are deeply grateful for this investment in the future of our students.

When it comes to opportunity, affordability is where we start, but we don't stop there. The five pillars on which this institution is built are: access, attainment, experience, research, and community engagement. Once students enroll (access), we are dedicated to making sure that they have the support and motivation they need to persist and be successful (attainment), and that everyone who comes to our campus, in person or virtually, has the most positive, high-impact experience we can provide (experience). We encourage students to take advantage of the many opportunities to work with faculty on applied research and creative endeavors in order to add skills and expertise to their portfolio. We also encourage them to join us in our community engagement commitment through academic, research, and public service programs, and through Trojan Athletics.

In addition to updating our university profile for 2025, this report will take you through our recent activities across these five pillars and invite you to learn more. Our campus this fall is buzzing with excitement. Come and see for yourself!

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christina S. Drale".

Christina S. Drale, Chancellor  
UA Little Rock




## Our Students

At UA Little Rock, our classrooms are filled with traditional and nontraditional students, transfer, first-generation, military, working, parenting, and independent students, all bringing unique experiences. This blend of perspectives creates a dynamic learning environment and vibrant campus life where the exchange of viewpoints fosters creativity, empathy, and a deeper understanding of the world.

### Our Undergraduate Students:

 **92%** ARE FROM ARKANSAS


 **62%** RECEIVE PELL ASSISTANCE

 **10%** ARE MILITARY STUDENTS

 **81%** LIVE WITHIN 50 MILES OF LITTLE ROCK

 **3.23** IS THE AVERAGE GPA OF ENTERING FRESHMEN

### Our Graduate Students:

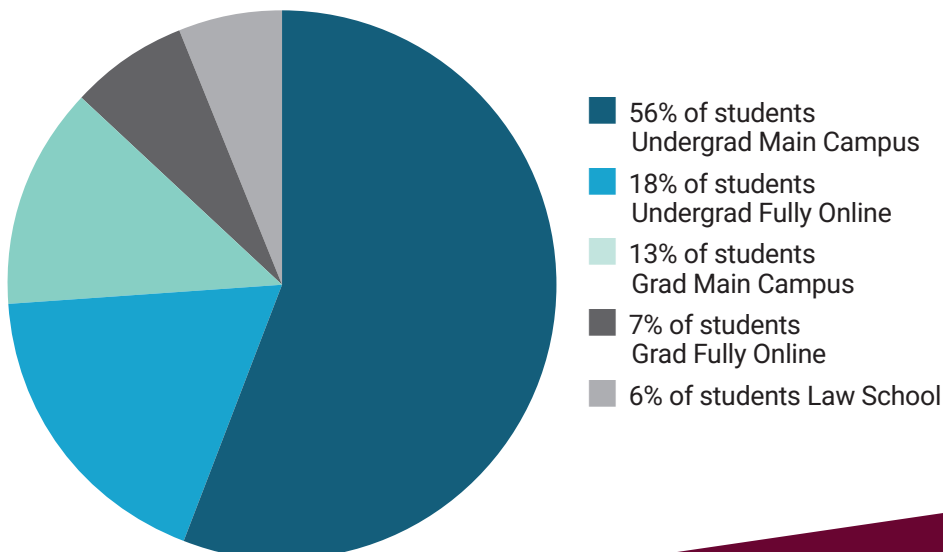
 **62%** ARE FROM ARKANSAS

 **75.5%** RECEIVED A BACHELOR'S DEGREE FROM ANOTHER INSTITUTION

 **5%** ARE MILITARY STUDENTS

 **70%** LIVE WITHIN 50 MILES OF LITTLE ROCK

### Types of students attending UA Little Rock:



**Top States  
Where Alumni Live:**



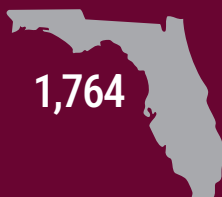
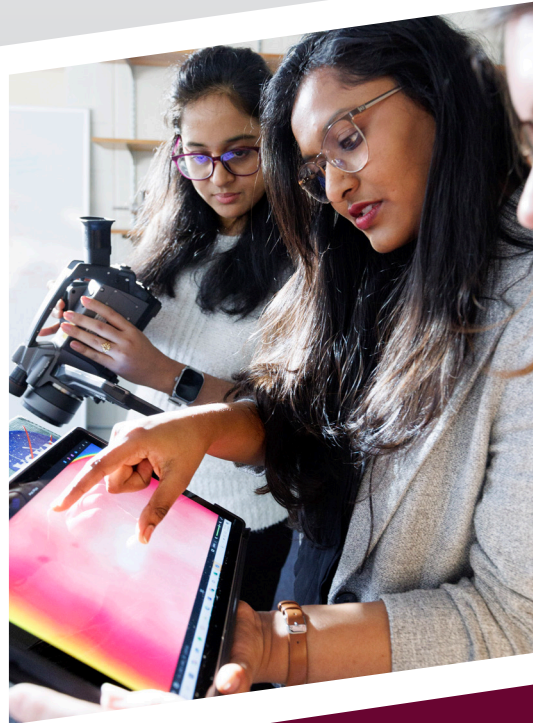
## TOP 10 Grads by County:

Pulaski	32,305
Saline	7,747
Faulkner	2,962
Lonoke	2,373
Garland	1,870
Jefferson	1,342
Washington	1,271
Benton	1,050
White	973
Grant	631

## TOP 15 Employers:

UAMS  
 UA Little Rock  
 Walmart Inc.  
 Baptist Health  
 Little Rock School District  
 Arkansas Blue Cross Blue Shield  
 Friday, Eldredge & Clark  
 Mitchell, Williams, Selig,  
 Gates & Woodyard

Southwest Power Pool  
 Wright Lindsey Jennings  
 Arkansas Children's Hospital  
 Acxiom Corporation  
 State of Arkansas  
 Simmons Bank  
 AT&T



## Centennial Successes

As we enter the home stretch of the Centennial Campaign, which has raised over \$233 million, the numbers tell a powerful story—but the real impact is in the belief behind them. Donors are giving because they've seen what UA Little Rock can achieve.

They've seen new programs take shape, students thrive, and faculty drive innovation. Their support is grounded in trust, momentum, and a shared commitment to finish strong.

That belief has translated into powerful new gifts. A \$1.5 million investment by Kathy Wilson Roberts established the Kenneth Pat Wilson Endowment for Innovative Business Programs, honoring her father while elevating the School of Business with forward-thinking, real-world learning experiences.

*"My dad was a successful businessman who cared deeply for his community and for Central Arkansas," Roberts said. "To him, education was the key, and he held that standard high in our family. To honor him with this endowment reflects my respect for his life-long efforts to make a difference. It is only because of his efforts that I am able to make this gift."*

The Willard & Pat Walker Charitable Foundation also stepped forward with \$1.5 million to endow the directorship of the Center for Simulation Innovation, ensuring high-impact, immersive training for hundreds of nursing students amid a growing healthcare need.

*"Our investment in UA Little Rock's nursing program is making a real difference, and we're proud to continue supporting its success," said Mandy Macke, executive director and vice chairman of the Willard & Pat Walker Charitable Foundation. "The Center for Simulation Innovation is equipping future nurses with the skills they need to provide quality care, ultimately increasing access to high-quality healthcare across Arkansas."*



And with a \$4.2 million pledge, the Trinity Foundation is securing the future of early childhood education by creating endowed professorships dedicated to shaping Arkansas's next generation of educators.

*"The Trinity Foundation is honored to support UA Little Rock's commitment to early childhood education," said Haskell Dickinson, representing the Trinity Foundation. "By investing in exceptional faculty, we aim to foster innovation and excellence in teaching, research, and public service that will benefit children and communities throughout Arkansas."*

Each of these gifts reflects a growing confidence in UA Little Rock's direction. That confidence is echoed in many other commitments, including a recent \$7.5 million gift for scholarships, which are helping us finish this campaign with strength and purpose.

*"The closer we get to the finish line, the more energy we feel from our supporters," said Christian O'Neal, vice chancellor for university advancement. "People are giving not just because of where we're going but because of what we've already proven we can do."*



### 191

TOTAL NEW  
ENDOWMENTS

### 21,794

DISTINCT DONORS

### 173,105

DISTINCT GIFTS

### \$233

MILLION  
AMOUNT RAISED



## How UA Little Rock Helped Wesley Ewell Finish What He Started

Wesley Ewell's journey at UA Little Rock hasn't been a straight path—but it's one defined by resilience, purpose, and a community that believes in second chances.

Wesley began his college education with big dreams. But like many students facing life's complexities, he made the difficult decision to step away. What brought him back was more than just unfinished business—it was a calling.

Inspired by his deaf aunt, Wesley felt compelled to make a difference through communication. He returned to UA Little Rock to pursue a degree in sign language interpreting, determined to turn personal motivation into a professional mission.

As a student, Wesley began working at Arkansas Children's Hospital, using his growing skills to help patients and their families feel seen and understood. That job became more than work—it became part of his purpose.

And thanks to UA Little Rock's Corporate Partnership Program, it's now helping him pay for his education.

The Corporate Partnership Program is a collaborative initiative that offers employees of partner organizations exclusive educational benefits. These include a tuition discount, waived application fees, and book scholarships, making it easier for working professionals to pursue or complete their degrees. With over 130 partners across Arkansas, the program is designed to support life-long learning while addressing the state's evolving workforce needs.



*"UA Little Rock helped me complete my degree by being affordable and by being a small community where I could feel like I had resources," Wesley said. "I definitely would not have had this experience anywhere else other than UA Little Rock."*

Today, Wesley is not only back in the classroom—he's thriving. He serves as president of the Kappa Psi Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., leading with the same heart and commitment that brought him back to school.

Wesley's story reflects UA Little Rock's promise to help every student succeed not just academically, but personally and professionally. It's a story of second chances, meaningful partnerships, and the real-world impact of the Corporate Partnership Program—showing what happens when a university truly supports its students and their futures.

### More about UA Little Rock's corporate partner program:

Students enrolled  
since 2022:

**1,548**

Fall 2025 students:

**470+**

Corporate Partners:

**135**

*Latest list of  
corporate partners:*







Since inception, 1,685 students have been supported and saved \$6,597,905.50 through UA Little Rock's affordability efforts. That comes out to an average of \$3,915 per student.

Learn more:







## Enduring Opportunity: A New Chapter in Affordability

***It gave me real hope that college was financially possible for me and my family. — Erryn Washington, Half-Off Scholarship recipient.***

For Erryn Washington, a first-generation college student from a small Arkansas town, the dream of a college education felt out of reach until she learned about the Trojan Guarantee and Half-Off Scholarship at UA Little Rock from her high school counselor. When she realized how much they could cover, the weight of uncertainty began to lift.

*"Without the scholarship, I would've had to take on more debt or work multiple jobs. Instead, I was able to focus on my studies, take care of my mental health, and even join a student organization where I found community and mentorship. That changed everything," said Erryn.*

Stories like Erryn's are exactly why UA Little Rock invests deeply in affordability and why the university recently launched the Enduring Opportunity Scholarship Program, a bold step toward permanently reducing financial barriers for Arkansas students.

Made possible by a \$7.5 million gift from the Windgate Foundation, the Enduring Opportunity Scholarship Program strengthens UA Little Rock's mission to make higher education both accessible and sustainable. The gift provides:

- **\$5 Million to create a permanent scholarship endowment**
- **\$2.5 Million in immediate aid for students**

The scholarship also includes a \$1.5 million challenge to the UA Little Rock community to grow the endowed fund for need-based affordability efforts like the Trojan Guarantee and the Half-Off Scholarship.

Chancellor Christina Drale made the first contribution toward the match with a personal gift of \$25,000.

*"This gift represents more than just financial support," Drale said. "It's an affirmation of our shared belief that education should be within reach for everyone."*

For student Genesis Moreno, a double major in political science and cybersecurity, the funding helped her turn opportunity into impact.

With financial stress removed, she was able to fully engage in her college experience, completing a prestigious internship at the Arkansas House of Representatives, being inducted into two national honor societies, and attending a cybersecurity consortium with students from across the country. At the consortium, she met and networked with Gen. Paul M. Nakasone, former chief of U.S. Cyber Command and the National Security Agency.

*"This scholarship gave me the confidence to pursue a variety of opportunities. In the future, I intend to go to law school and plan on a career in national defense, something I never thought would have been possible," said Genesis.*

Together, Genesis and Erryn represent what's possible when financial support meets student potential. They are two of more than 1,600 students who have benefited from programs like the Trojan Guarantee and Half-Off Scholarship.

As financial challenges continue to affect college-going students across the state, UA Little Rock remains focused on delivering real solutions. The Enduring Opportunity Scholarship Program is the latest example of how the university is continuing to lead, ensuring that more students have the opportunity to pursue their goals without being held back by cost.

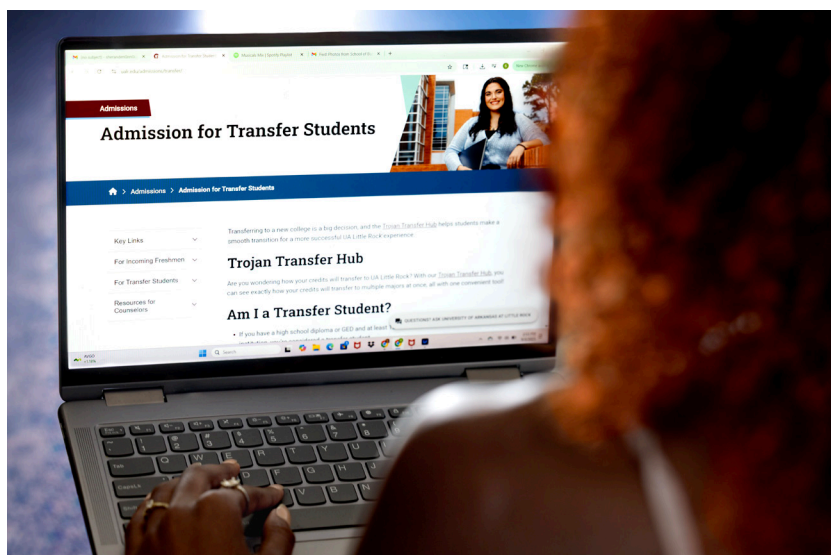
## Easing the Way: How the Trojan Transfer Hub is Simplifying the Transfer Journey

When Adreama Martin decided to return to college after nearly two decades away, the idea of navigating the transfer process felt overwhelming. Her first attempt—applying to a local college—left her feeling frustrated and unsupported. But a coworker suggested she look into UA Little Rock, and that small nudge changed everything.

*"I found the Trojan Transfer Hub convenient and easy to use," she said. "It has a simple layout, which makes it simple to navigate. Once I decided to take the steps and apply again, I simply typed in 'UA Little Rock' on the search bar, and everything was at my fingertips. It made it less stressful for a returning college student who has been out of school for at least 19 years."*

Adreama is one of the hundreds of students finding a clearer path to their goals through the Trojan Transfer Hub, an initiative launched in 2025 to remove the uncertainty and frustration that often come with transferring colleges. Designed to support students with prior educational experience, The Trojan Transfer Hub is helping make the transfer journey more transparent, more efficient, and more student-centered than ever before.

The Trojan Transfer Hub acts as a digital gateway for prospective students, offering access to degree maps, transfer pathways, and support from experts, all before they even apply. While formal transcript evaluations still occur after admission, the Trojan Transfer Hub gives students an early look at how their previous coursework might align with their intended major, helping them make smarter decisions from the start.



According to Dr. Cody Decker, vice chancellor for student affairs and chief data officer, the hub is a transformative tool that puts power and clarity into the hands of prospective transfer students.

*"It streamlines the admissions process, enhances transparency around credit evaluation, and connects students with the information and support they need to make confident, informed decisions at UA Little Rock," said Decker.*

For Adreama, the experience was a turning point in her education.

*"Transferring to UA Little Rock will be the final step in completing a life-long goal of being an educator," she said. "I'm excited to pursue my education goals at UA Little Rock and thankful for the ease and convenience of the Trojan Transfer Hub."*

By simplifying a process that has traditionally been anything but simple, the Trojan Transfer Hub is helping students move forward with confidence and hope. It's one more way UA Little Rock is working to meet students where they are, remove barriers, and support them on the journey to achieving their dreams.

**48-72 HOURS**  
AVERAGE RESPONSE TIME

**102**  
USERS WHO APPLIED  
AFTER USING THE  
TROJAN TRANSFER HUB

**57% OF USERS**  
FROM 2 YEAR COLLEGES

**187**  
DISTINCT USERS  
HAVE USED THE  
TROJAN TRANSFER HUB

Learn more  
about the Trojan  
Transfer Hub:



*\*Data since implementing in April.*





## Students Find Opportunity and Belonging at UA Little Rock

For Isabella Miller, a first-year biology major from Jonesboro, choosing UA Little Rock wasn't just about affordability, it was about finding the right fit. With a combination of scholarships and financial aid, including UA Little Rock's Half-Off Scholarship, Isabella is attending college with no out-of-pocket cost this year. That financial support, paired with the university's welcoming atmosphere and flexible class scheduling, made the decision easy.

*"I wanted to be away from home, but not too far," Isabella said. "Everyone I've met has been really friendly, and I love that I can work 30 hours a week and still stay on top of my classes."*

Her story reflects a broader trend: more students are finding their place—and their future—at UA Little Rock.

In Fall 2025, the university achieved its largest undergraduate enrollment increase since 2001, welcoming 7,011 undergraduate and graduate students, up 1.4% from the previous year. Including law students and high school concurrent enrollment, total enrollment is nearly 8,000 students.

But the real story is in the momentum:

- **First-time freshmen enrollment jumped 40.8%**
- **Continuing undergraduates rose by 7.1%, with continuing freshmen up 43.3%, and sophomores up 44%.**
- **On-campus housing saw an 8% increase in occupancy, reflecting deeper student investment in campus life.**
- **The Corporate Partnership Program also saw rapid growth, enrolling more than 470 working professionals as Arkansas employers turn to UA Little Rock to upskill their workforce.**

*"These numbers show that UA Little Rock is on the rise," Chancellor Drale said. "With continued investments in our students, our campus, and our community, we are building lasting momentum that will strengthen both our university and the State of Arkansas for years to come."*

Across the board, students are responding to UA Little Rock's commitment to affordability, flexibility, and support. Whether they're balancing jobs, exploring research opportunities, or taking their first steps into college life, Trojans are finding a community that helps them thrive.





## Building a Stronger Future for Arkansas K-12 Classrooms

Tinaya Brown was only seven when she knew she wanted to be a teacher.

*"I was in second grade when I remember thinking, 'this is what I want to do,'" she said. "By third grade, I was already helping a boy in my class with his cursive writing. My teachers would let me grade papers and help around the classroom."*



That sense of purpose never left her, but the path to a teaching career isn't easy, especially for students juggling school, work, and life. For Tinaya, the Trojan Teachers Residency Program made it possible.

Instead of a single-semester placement, the residency offers a paid, year-long co-teaching experience in a real classroom. Residents work side-by-side an experienced mentor teacher, from the first day of school to the last, learning classroom management, instructional strategies, and how to build relationships with students.

*"I got to have my 'first year' of teaching with a safety net," Tinaya recalled. "I learned routines, made mistakes, asked questions, and got better, before I ever had a classroom of my own. It gave me the confidence I needed."*

One moment in particular still sticks with her: a quiet kindergartner who refused to speak during a "Get to Know You" activity on the first day of school.

*"I gave her time and grace. I let her know it was okay to go at her own pace," said Tinaya. "By the end of the week, she was raising her hand to share. It reminded me so much of myself at that age, and it reminded me why I love this work."*

Launched in 2023, the Trojan Teachers Residency Program is designed to give future educators the practical experience and support they need to thrive. During their year-long residency, they participate in weekly seminars, receive regular feedback, and become active members of the school community. The goal is to ensure they experience every aspect of a teaching career before they graduate.



The program also removes financial barriers that often prevent talented individuals from entering the profession. Residents receive a stipend during their training year, making the program more accessible for nontraditional students, working parents, and first-generation college students who might not be able to afford unpaid placements.

The results speak for themselves:

- 100% job placement for the first cohort
- 91% placement for the second cohort
- Many residents are hired directly into the schools where they trained

*"This program changed everything for me," Tinaya said. "I wasn't just thrown into a classroom. I was supported every step of the way."*

Now as a full-time kindergarten teacher, Tinaya brings that same support to her students.

*"I want to be the teacher they remember," she said. "The one who helped them feel seen, safe, and excited to come to school. I want my classroom to be a place where they grow into the amazing people they're meant to be."*

As the Trojan Teachers Residency Program enters its third year, it continues to grow, expanding to new licensure areas like special education and secondary education. By combining hands-on experience with financial support, the residency creates a stronger pipeline of job-ready teachers who are committed to staying in Arkansas classrooms.



Read about the Match Day ceremonies where teacher candidates learn where they will be working:





## UA Little Rock Faculty Go Above and Beyond

At UA Little Rock, student success isn't just an outcome, it's a responsibility that faculty take seriously. Across the university, instructors put in extra time, care, and thought to help students navigate their academic journeys. For many, teaching is more than a job; it's a way to make a difference.

Dr. Shweta Dabetwar, assistant professor of mechanical engineering, recently participated in the Mobile Summer Institute on Scientific Teaching (MoSI). She came back with ideas she immediately put into practice—reshaping her classroom to encourage more active learning and support.

*"Students are the backbone of the education system," she said. "It is our duty to provide them with knowledge and support to the best of our ability. My students' success is ultimately my success."*

Her approach created space for students to build confidence and deepen problem-solving skills. One student, who had been close to failing, ended the semester near the top of the class after Dabetwar offered guidance and encouragement.

*"That kind of feedback brings tears to my eyes," she said. "It reminds me how much impact a teacher can truly have."*

Dr. Julien Mirivel, a professor of applied communication, has also focused on student growth throughout his nearly two decades at UA Little Rock. His courses are rooted in the Positive Communication Model, a framework he developed, that helps students build meaningful connections and reflect on their personal development.

*"For me, the most meaningful part of the work is to create an environment where students can experience a personal transformation — a place where they can move from their actuality to their potentiality," he said.*

In the College of Business, Health, and Human Services, exercise science instructor Jeremy Paprocki takes a student-centered approach that earned him the OVC Outstanding Faculty Commitment to Student Success Award. A former strength coach, Paprocki understands the demands student-athletes face and adapts his courses to meet them where they are.

*"If they can be proactive and responsible, we as faculty need to work with them as well," he said.*

These kinds of efforts are not isolated. The Academic Leadership Academy, launched in 2024, helps faculty deepen their skills in mentorship, communication, and reflective practice.

Program participant Dr. Annie Childers said the program helped her reframe her approach to better support the university's students, faculty, and staff.

*"One of the most valuable takeaways has been the emphasis on reflective practice—taking time to pause, evaluate, and adjust," Childers said. "This has allowed me to lead with more empathy, adaptability, and purpose."*

Teaching at UA Little Rock often means doing more than delivering content. It means asking what students need to succeed—and responding with care, flexibility, and purpose. The result is a culture where support is real and where students know they matter.

## UA Little Rock faculty who were recognized at the Faculty Excellence Awards:



**Julien Mirivel**, professor of applied communication, received the Faculty Excellence Award in Teaching.



**Lindsay Ruhr**, associate professor of social work, received the Faculty Excellence Award for Public Service.



**Theresa Beiner**, professor of constitutional law, was awarded the Faculty Excellence Award in Research and Creative Endeavors.



**Morgan Leyenberger**, instructor of social work, was honored with the Faculty Excellence Award for Social Justice.



**John Cook**, assistant professor of law, was named the winner of the Rising Faculty Excellence Award.



## UA Little Rock Continues to Strengthen Arkansas's Cyber Future

The University of Arkansas at Little Rock is continuing to shape the future of cybersecurity in Arkansas—preparing skilled professionals, supporting workforce development, and fueling innovation across the state. With its first graduates from the Bachelor of Science in Cybersecurity program now entering the workforce, the university is already making a tangible impact.

Among those graduates is Cameron Johnson, a Pine Bluff resident and deputy with the Jefferson County Sheriff's Office. Johnson was part of the program's inaugural cohort, earning his degree in May, while balancing a demanding job in law enforcement.

His decision to pursue cybersecurity stemmed from a desire to do more to protect people and systems in an increasingly digital world.

*"In today's world, where cyber threats are constantly evolving, cybersecurity professionals have a unique opportunity to make a tangible, positive impact every single day," Johnson said. "I want to be part of that effort, using my skills to help build a safer digital world."*

Johnson credited the hands-on labs, mentorship from faculty, and real-world simulations as key elements that helped him build both technical expertise and the ability to think strategically. Now, he's planning to focus his career on threat analysis or digital forensics, blending his law enforcement experience with new digital skills.

Graduates like Johnson are already securing positions at leading organizations such as Baptist Health, Blue Cross Blue Shield, Simmons Bank, and Forge Institute, helping fill a critical gap in the state's cybersecurity workforce.

These new professionals are entering a high-demand field with strong technical skills and valuable hands-on experience. Their early success highlights the program's potential to meet workforce needs and expand opportunities in Arkansas's growing cyber sector.

That momentum is being further strengthened by the development of the CORE (Cyberspace Operations in Research and Education) Center. The new 5,000-square-foot facility will serve as a hub for cybersecurity training, research, and collaboration. Designed to support both students and industry professionals, the CORE Center will feature a cyber range, simulation labs, and workforce-focused spaces.

It will also include secure areas for students and faculty to collaborate on sensitive projects alongside community leaders, law enforcement agencies—including the Arkansas State Police—and industry leaders. As part of its mission to serve Arkansas, the university is also launching a cybersecurity clinic to provide hands-on learning while addressing real-world challenges.

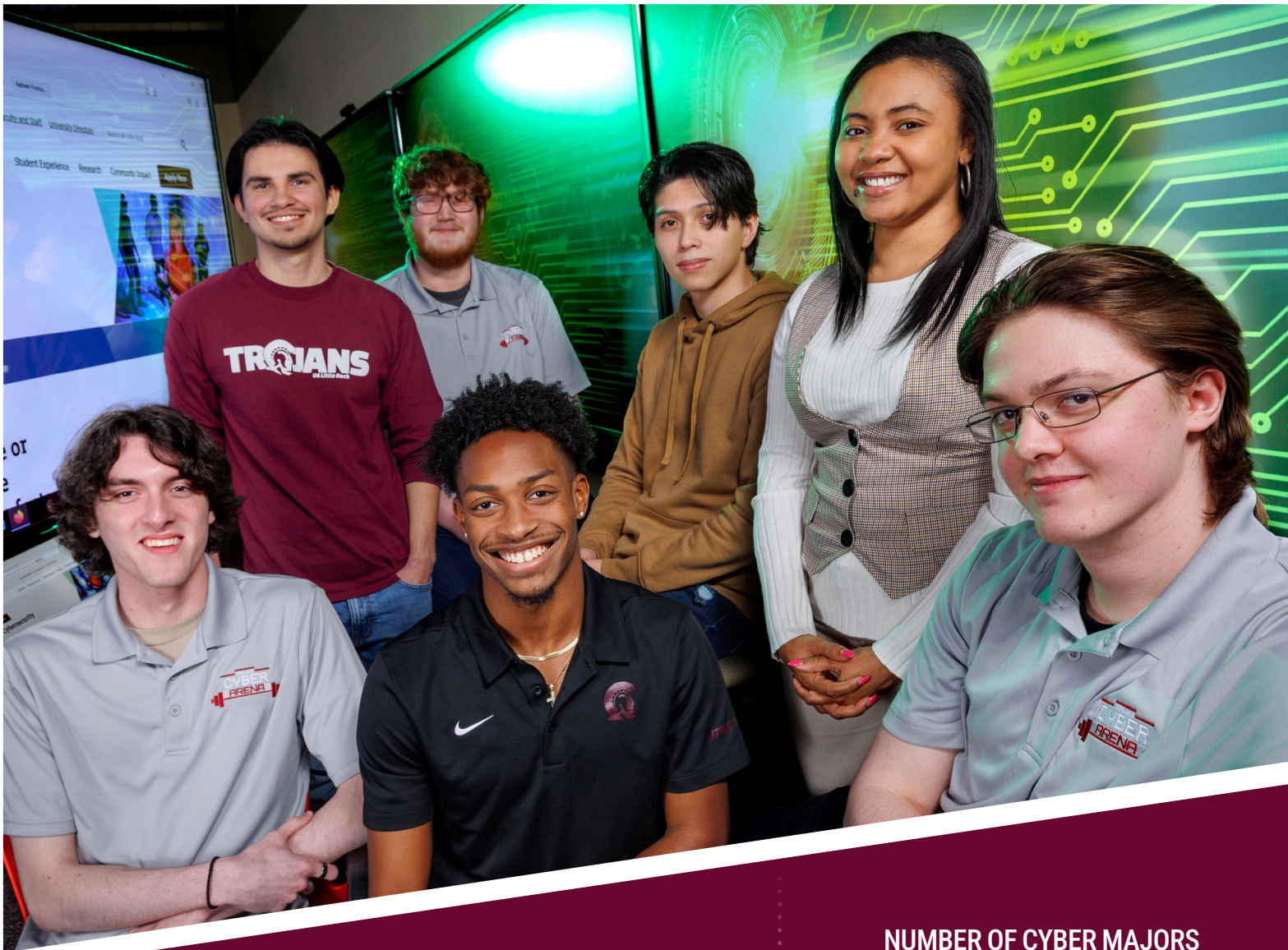
The center is supported by a \$1 million grant from the Arkansas Attorney General's Office and is being developed with input from industry partners to ensure it meets the evolving needs of Arkansas's cybersecurity workforce.

*"Our cybersecurity graduates are already applying their skills in meaningful ways across key industries," said Dr. Philip Huff, associate professor of cybersecurity. "They represent the future of this field, and the development of the CORE Center will allow us to expand those opportunities—giving more students access to real-world training that meets the needs of Arkansas and beyond."*

From the classroom to career, and through initiatives like the CORE Center, UA Little Rock is helping to develop the talent and resources needed to strengthen cybersecurity readiness, today and for years to come.



# ATTAINMENT



NUMBER OF CYBER MAJORS  
AT UA LITTLE ROCK  
**96**







## Retention Continues Improving with Key Programs

At UA Little Rock, we know that getting students in the door is only part of the story. The real work begins after they enroll—when life, responsibilities, and unexpected challenges can all stand in the way of earning a degree.

In the last four years UA Little Rock's retention rate has improved 5% to 70.5%. That progress reflects a deep, ongoing commitment to meeting students where they are. And in many cases, that means offering help before students even know what to ask.

*"When we talk about retention, we're really talking about students' lives—their goals, their stress, and everything that stands between them and a degree," said Brandon Solars, interim director of Academic Affairs Retention Programs. "Our team is here to walk alongside students, whether they need a laptop, a listening ear, or a game plan to succeed."*

Two programs, CARES and the Learning Commons, have played a pivotal role in this work. Though they operate in different ways, both provide students with meaningful, personalized support that helps them stay on track.



### CARES: Listening First, Then Lifting Up

The CARES program offers "just-in-time" support when students face obstacles that could derail their progress. In 2024–25, the CARES team responded to 844 referrals for support. Nearly 70% came directly from students themselves, showing growing trust in the program.

Top challenges included mental health and emotional concerns and financial insecurity, with students seeking support for everything from stress and anxiety to covering basic living expenses. CARES responded with personalized solutions, connecting students to both campus and community resources.

In addition, success coaches Amber Bryant and Alex Dayer met with 89 students for more than 260 one-on-one sessions, focusing on time management, study strategies, and academic adjustment.

*"The CARES program has been essential to my academic journey. The laptop program and success coaching gave me the flexibility, tools, and direction I needed to stay focused and succeed," said student Cornell Cornelius.*

The CARES team also tracked emerging issues, such as technology-related advising needs tied to the university's shift to Workday, and identified colleges with higher referral volumes, allowing for more proactive outreach.



The Learning Commons is made up of four key centers:





## The Learning Commons: Building Confidence, One Visit at a Time

Complementing CARES, the Learning Commons focuses on academic readiness and skill development. Across Fall 2024 and Spring 2025, it saw 1,817 visits from 646 unique students—most of them undergraduates, but also graduate and post-baccalaureate students.

Students from 66 different majors used the Learning Commons, and the support covered 127 courses across 38 subjects. The top three majors served were art, social work, and biology.

Perhaps no story reflects the Commons' impact better than the one shared between Kiandreia Massey, a nursing student, and her tutor, Lauren Jamell.

*"Lauren goes above and beyond; she is the best," Kiandreia said. "Just being able to bounce concepts and ideas back and forth out loud, while being challenged by questioning my knowledge further, has been a lifesaver. I go into exams with less anxiety, feeling more prepared than ever before."*

The transformation was so clear, a professor even pulled her aside to offer encouragement.

Lauren, too, felt the experience was transformative.

*"When I first was asked to consider taking on a summer position as a nursing tutor, I didn't quite know how to respond," she said. "But choosing to say 'yes' has had a real impact on my own journey. The Learning Commons isn't just a place where students learn from tutors, it's a place where tutors also learn from students."*

Students who engaged with these services had an average GPA of 3.0, showing that tutoring isn't just a safety net but is a strategy for sustained academic growth.

Together, CARES and the Learning Commons represent the heart of UA Little Rock's approach to student success: not a one-size-fits-all solution, but a flexible, responsive network that meets students with support, empathy, and action.



Communication  
Skills Center:

**264**  
STUDENTS  
SUPPORTED

**510**  
VISITS

Math Assistance Center:

**172**  
STUDENTS  
SUPPORTED

**661**  
VISITS

Trojan Tutoring:

**139**  
STUDENTS  
SUPPORTED

**352**  
VISITS

University Writing Center:

**179**  
STUDENTS  
SUPPORTED

**294**  
VISITS





## Research Comes Alive at the Research and Creative Works Expo

Every spring, the UA Little Rock campus comes alive with innovation and energy as students fill the Jack Stephens Center with posters, prototypes, digital displays, and creative works.

The Research and Creative Works Expo is the culmination of months of exploration, experimentation, and hard work. This year's event featured 87 projects spanning disciplines—from engineering and animation to literature and public health—each one a testament to the curiosity, talent, and ambition of our students.

Far more than a showcase, the Expo is a transformative learning experience. As students take their ideas from concept to presentation, they gain a deeper understanding of their disciplines and develop critical life skills along the way. They learn to investigate problems, think creatively, follow a disciplined process, and communicate their findings clearly and confidently. These are the tools they'll carry into graduate school, professional careers, and leadership roles in their communities.

On one side of the expo floor, Olivia Bacot, an art and design student, was using animation to tell a deeply personal story. Her project, Beef Boys, brought to life a friend group imagined as animated animals—a humorous and heartfelt short-form film rendered in Maya, ZBrush, and Adobe Suite.

*"This project really pushed me to think like a professional designer," Olivia said. "It was a way to bring something personal to life using the skills I've developed—and to see people connect with it made it even more meaningful."*

Judges awarded her an Undergraduate Creative Scholarship Award for the project's inventive storytelling and technical depth.

Across the room, Colby Martinez and his engineering teammates were demonstrating a very different kind of creativity. Their project, a working prototype for an automated bearing ball sorting machine, was designed for a student engineering design competition. Using mechanical and sensor technologies, the device sorts nylon, brass, and steel balls by size and material.

*"We wanted to create something functional and efficient," Colby said. "Building the prototype and troubleshooting in real-time taught us a lot about teamwork and adapting under pressure."*

The project earned praise in the Undergraduate Research Poster category for its sustainability focus and engineering precision.

Together, these projects, and the many others on display, embody the purpose of the Expo: to provide students with the opportunity and support to transform ideas into action. Through this experience, students build confidence, deepen their academic engagement, and contribute meaningfully to their fields.

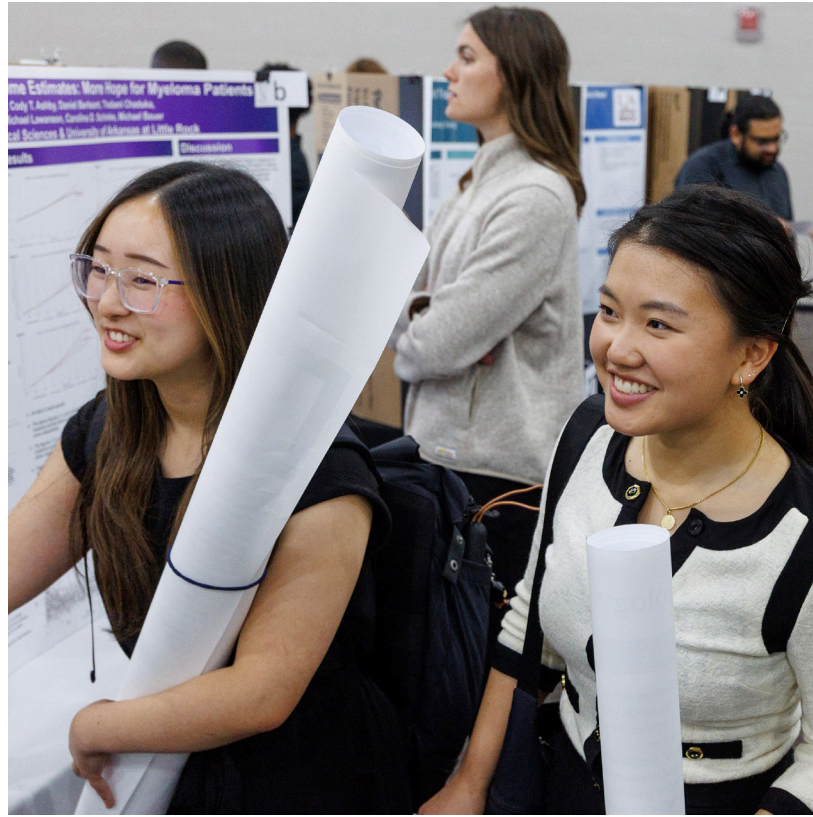
### 150

NUMBER OF STUDENTS  
PARTICIPATING IN THE  
RESEARCH EXPO

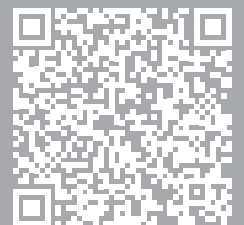
### 20%

INCREASE IN  
PARTICIPATION  
THIS YEAR

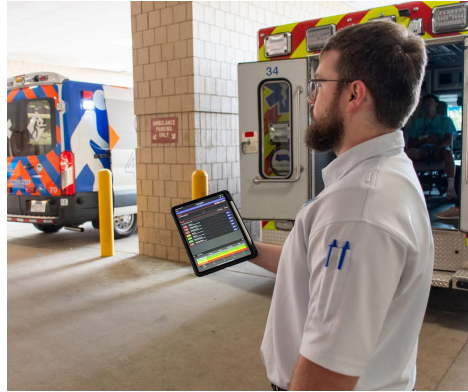




Scan the QR code for a KARK story highlighting student research:







## Theatre Students Step into Real-World Roles

A crowded ambulance bay at CHI St. Vincent this spring became the latest setting where UA Little Rock theatre students proved their talents extend far beyond the stage.

As part of a new course launched in the School of Literary and Performing Arts (SLPA), students participated in a mass casualty incident drill, working alongside healthcare providers, law enforcement, emergency responders, and community partners from across Central Arkansas.

The course, Special Topics in Simulation and Therapeutic Uses of the Performing Arts, debuted in Spring 2025 and gives students the opportunity to apply their training in empathy, communication, and character development to high-stakes scenarios. The experience not only strengthens essential soft skills but also helps students envision career opportunities in theatre that extend beyond the traditional stage.

*"Our students are helping professionals learn how to communicate in moments that really matter," said Stacy Pendergraft, co-director of SLPA. "It's about collaboration, growth, and impact."*

For theatre student Maxx Hodges, the experience was transformative.



*"Knowing how to 'sit' in another mindset while still being myself has helped me assist learners in achieving their goals—and helped me grow too," said Maxx.*

Students also acted in mental health training sessions in the School of Nursing's Simulation Lab, portrayed crisis subjects in an FBI-led Regional Crisis Negotiation Course involving 22 law enforcement agencies,

and participated in emergency drills at local hospitals and the airport. At every step, they worked side-by-side with professionals, adapting their craft to new environments and offering thoughtful feedback to help others improve.

*"It's powerful to see how our work can help first responders build emotional awareness and confidence in high-pressure situations," student Cooper Sikes said. "We're making a real impact."*

In the process, students gain valuable tools for communication and collaboration, while also discovering that a career in theatre can take many forms—not just on stage, but in service to others.

This immersive, cross-disciplinary approach to learning reflects the core of UA Little Rock's commitment to student learning. By pairing rigorous academic training with meaningful real-world application, UA Little Rock is helping students build the skills they need to succeed wherever their careers take them.



## Learning that Leads to Impact

When Lenora Jackson-Ayers enrolled in UA Little Rock's Master of Public Administration program, she didn't expect one class to spark a ripple of real-world change.

But that's exactly what happened when a grant writing course equipped her with the tools to win a \$150,000 grant for Evangelist Temple Church in Little Rock—her longtime place of worship and service.

Thanks to her efforts, the church will soon install new security cameras, fencing, and offer active shooter training for community members. She also secured



funding from the Arkansas Foodbank to expand the church's food pantry.

*"Having the skills to go out and secure grants for my church has been amazing," Jackson-Ayers said. "I think everybody should have the right to feel safe and secure, and sometimes you can't do it without external funding."*

This experience shows how hands-on learning can go far beyond the classroom. Through her coursework, Lenora not only prepared for her future career in public service—she made a meaningful difference in her community today.

## Engineering Impact: The Rise of the Aerospace Club

A crowd gathers near the stairwell of the Engineering Technology and Applied Sciences building, watching intently as students drop their carefully crafted contraptions from the upper floors. Below, hopeful shouts and laughter echo as eggs either survive or splatter.

It's the Aerospace Club's annual egg drop competition—part engineering challenge, part community gathering, and entirely student-driven.

Events like this are just one example of how the Aerospace Club at UA Little Rock blends creativity, collaboration, and impact. From launching pico balloons that travel the globe to bringing a mobile planetarium to schools across Central Arkansas, the club gives students hands-on experiences that extend beyond the classroom.

Vice President Will Fausel, a junior electrical and computer engineering major from Sherwood, leads the club's pico ballooning initiative, which includes developing educational kits and training materials for local teachers.

*"This work extends beyond the balloons," Will said. "We're helping students, especially in underserved areas, see what's possible in science and technology. That kind of impact goes far beyond a single project."*

In recognition of its outstanding outreach, interdisciplinary programming, and leadership development, the Aerospace Club was named UA Little Rock's 2024 Registered Student Organization of the Year.

With over 60 hours of community service and outreach impacting more than 1,500 individuals across the state, the club exemplifies how student organizations can shape a vibrant, engaged campus culture—where fun and discovery go hand-in-hand with service and learning.







## AI at UA Little Rock

Artificial intelligence at UA Little Rock isn't an abstract research project: it's a practical toolkit being used daily to make Arkansas safer, healthier, and more prosperous. By mastering AI now, our students are ready to thrive and lead in a world that is already being reshaped by these technologies.

*"AI presents both an opportunity and a responsibility. At UA Little Rock, we're committed to preparing students for both by equipping them with the skills and ethical grounding to lead in an AI-driven world," said Dr. Brian Berry, vice provost for research and dean of the Graduate School.*

### Real-World Impact, Right Now

The future of AI is already here, and it's solving urgent problems. From fighting misinformation to protecting infrastructure and natural resources, UA Little Rock researchers are leading the charge.



When misinformation threatens public safety, the COSMOS Research Center, led by Dr. Nitin Agarwal, deploys AI systems that spot and help mitigate digital deception. Backed by \$30 million in federal support, COSMOS helps agencies from Little Rock to NATO safeguard communities and shape national policy.

On our roads and bridges, Dr. Shweta Dabetwar uses machine-learning models to predict structural failure before it happens. Cities and transportation departments can act sooner, stretch budgets further, and keep travelers safe.

In our chemistry labs, Dr. Jerry Darsey uses AI developed by NASA to design next-generation herbicides and pesticides that are both highly effective and less toxic. His work screens out harmful compounds before they're created, reducing chemical waste and safeguarding Arkansas's soil and water.

## Growing Talent & New Businesses

Innovation doesn't stay in the lab. This summer, UA Little Rock hosted a week-long AI Hackathon where 31 students worked in teams to tackle real healthcare challenges. With support from faculty and industry mentors, students developed rapid prototypes addressing real-world needs—from mental health to patient scheduling.

Projects included Rapid Route, a triage solution for the VA; Happy Capy, a Duolingo-style app for teens with social anxiety; Story Buddy, an interactive tool using AI-generated narratives to explore emotions; Focus Coach, which combats distraction through real-time feedback; and Teen2Teen Connect, a peer support platform inspired by the Arkansas Crisis Center.

The week culminated in a Shark-Tank-style pitch session, where students presented to a panel of judges for potential seed funding to bring their ideas to life.

To ensure small businesses aren't left behind, Technology Entrepreneur-in-Residence Marla Johnson's new AI for Business courses give entrepreneurs hands-on experience with the same tools our researchers and students use, translating breakthroughs into bottom-line growth for Arkansas.







## Preparing Students for the World They're Entering

Our students won't just live in a world shaped by AI; they'll lead in it. At UA Little Rock, we're making sure they're ready. Across disciplines, faculty are embedding AI into real-world assignments and hands-on projects to ensure students graduate fluent in the tools of tomorrow.

Dr. Liz Pierce (Information Science) and Dr. Philip Huff (Computer Science) teach governance and website development without heavy coding, helping students understand how to use AI for building web products, while Dr. Mariofanna Milanova (Computer Science) is focusing on the technical creation of how machine learning works. Dr. Seunghyun Kim (Business) is applying emerging AI tools to help students creatively address real-world marketing and management challenges.

For students pursuing careers in service and care, Dr. Catherine Crisp (Social Work) and Jenny Bridges (Nursing) champion thoughtful integration of AI in patient support and policy conversations, showing how the tools can amplify human-centered work.

## Responsible Innovation

Leading in AI also means leading in ethics. Through the CHASSE-hosted AI in the Classroom Symposium, faculty are shaping guidelines for fair and transparent AI use by advocating syllabus standards, academic integrity updates, and stronger campus governance.

## The Bottom Line

From highways to hospitals to hometown startups, UA Little Rock is proving that AI can serve the public good. Our graduates leave campus ready to use these tools confidently and ethically, carrying Arkansas innovation into the wider world.





## Expanding Arkansas's Research Ecosystem Through ARA-Supported Innovation

With support from the Arkansas Research Alliance (ARA), UA Little Rock continues to expand its research efforts in ways that directly contribute to Arkansas's innovation capacity and economic vitality.

In 2025, three UA Little Rock faculty members—Dr. Alex Biris, Dr. Tansel Karabacak, and Dr. Mariya Khodakovskaya—received ARA Impact Grants to lead projects in nanomedicine, advanced manufacturing, and food safety. Each initiative aligns with statewide priorities and demonstrates the university's growing role in applied research that serves the public good.



**Dr. Alex Biris**, director of the Center for Integrative Nanotechnology Sciences, is developing nanomaterials that enhance medical diagnostics and therapies—including innovations in regenerative medicine. His work could improve outcomes for patients with serious skeletal injuries or degenerative bone conditions while strengthening Arkansas's presence in the

growing field of nanomedicine.



**Dr. Tansel Karabacak**, professor of physics and dean of the Donaghey College of STEM, is researching advanced nanostructures and thin-film coatings. These engineered materials are built at the nanoscale to give surfaces new properties like strength, conductivity, or antibacterial protection. His work has applications in energy, aerospace, and defense. One recent project

focused on creating antibacterial stainless-steel surfaces, a cost-effective and chemical-free solution that could improve safety in food processing and manufacturing.



*Dr. Tansel Karabacak, professor and dean of the Donaghey College of Science Engineering and Mathematics, works on a research project in the material science lab with his student Jacob Blackburn, a mechanical engineering major.*



**Dr. Mariya Khodakovskaya**, professor of applied science in the Donaghey College of STEM, is using sustainable nanotechnology to improve food safety and boost urban agriculture. Her research includes developing rapid testing systems to detect contamination. Additionally, she's applying microscopic particles, called nanoparticles, that can deliver nutrients directly to plants, helping

increase crop yield and nutrition while reducing the need for conventional fertilizers. This work strengthens public health, enhances food security, and supports Arkansas's agricultural economy.

### Making an Impact

*"These projects demonstrate the kind of applied research that makes a difference—not just for academic progress, but for the health, economy, and infrastructure of our state," said Dr. Brian Berry, vice provost for research and dean of the Graduate School. "ARA's support helps UA Little Rock researchers push the boundaries of innovation while keeping our work grounded in real-world impact."*

Together, these ARA-funded projects reflect UA Little Rock's commitment to growing Arkansas's research footprint.



# Making the World Better Through Applied Research

At UA Little Rock, research isn't just theoretical—it's action-oriented, community-driven, and focused on improving lives. Our faculty and students are solving urgent global problems: reducing industrial pollution, improving cardiac care, advancing cancer therapies, and conserving water for agriculture.

## Turning Pollution Into Progress: Sustainable Chemistry

Dr. Anindya Ghosh, associate dean in the Donaghey College of STEM is transforming industrial carbon dioxide and Arkansas timber waste into high-performance catalysts, specialty polymers, and biodegradable plastics. His team's enzyme-inspired oxidants offer a safer, more sustainable way to sterilize medical implants—an innovation that grew from earlier research on biocompatible materials for bone regeneration.

*"The implications for this work are significant because they would create the ability to disinfect stored water with a small pouch loaded with our oxidation catalyst, avoiding chlorine taste and toxic by-products," Ghosh said.*

This work illustrates how one discovery fuels another—linking environmental chemistry, healthcare, and materials science. Field-tested with industry partners, the lab's innovations are advancing clean energy, water treatment, and safer medical practices. Nearly 60 students have contributed to the research, gaining valuable experience in the field.

## Reimagining Cardiac Care with Augmented Reality

Dr. Aryabrata Basu, assistant professor of computer science, is using advanced imaging and augmented reality to help surgeons better understand the structure of the heart. His team turns standard medical scans into detailed 3D models that can be viewed through AR headsets, making it easier for doctors to plan surgeries and reduce risks to patients.

Developed at UA Little Rock's Emerging Analytics Center with support from the National Science Foundation (NSF), the project is now moving toward clinical testing with hospital partners.



## Fighting Cancer Without the Collateral Damage

Dr. Noreen Siraj, associate professor of chemistry, is using nanotechnology to make cancer treatment more

precise and less toxic. She's developing tiny, light-activated materials that deliver chemotherapy directly to cancer cells—sparing healthy tissue and reducing side effects.

A \$180,000 grant from the NSF is supporting the next phase of this promising research, helping advance a new generation of cancer treatments that are both more effective and easier on patients.



*"I currently work in Dr. Noreen Siraj's research lab, where I assist with a project focused on enhancing cancer treatment through nanomedicine. Specifically, we are optimizing the size and surface functionalities of ionic materials-based combination nanoparticles to improve cellular uptake and treatment efficacy. My goal is to attend medical school and pursue a career in medicine, with a strong interest in oncology—potentially specializing in either radiation oncology or pediatric oncology!"*

— Eshaal Nadeem

Learn more  
about research  
at UA Little Rock:



## Sustaining Agriculture Through Smarter Water Use

Dr. Kent Kovacs, associate professor of accounting, economics, and finance, is tackling one of the most pressing challenges facing rural economies: how to sustain agricultural productivity while preserving groundwater resources. With nearly \$750,000 in NSF support, his team is studying how farmers' risk preferences influence irrigation decisions, especially during droughts, in the Lower Mississippi River Basin.

*"This grant is an incredible opportunity to address a complex societal challenge and ensure sustainable water use in agriculture," Kovacs said.*

By combining farmer input with hydrologic and economic modeling, the project will help encourage conservation without sacrificing yields. The work connects universities, policymakers, and growers across the region to build a more resilient agricultural future.







## A Season to Remember

The roar from Baton Rouge still echoes. After a tough regular season, the Little Rock Baseball team did what great teams do: they found something deeper. Over four days, they battled through five straight games to win the OVC Championship, securing a spot in the NCAA Tournament. Then, in one of the most remarkable postseason runs in program history, they stunned seven-time national champion LSU, picked up their first-ever NCAA Tournament wins, and came within three outs of a regional title.

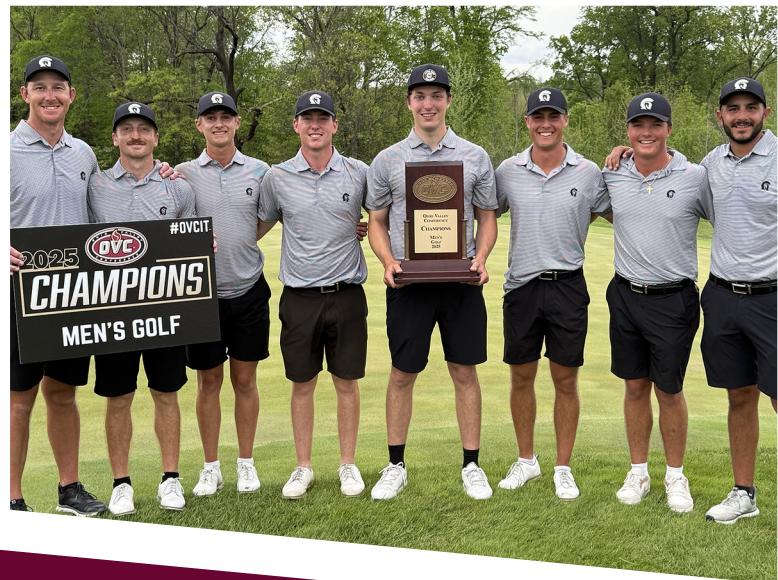
That kind of heart isn't limited to the diamond.

This year, Trojan teams raised the bar across the board. Men's Indoor Track & Field, Men's Golf, and Wrestling each captured conference titles. Wrestling continued its meteoric rise, winning the Pac-12 Championship and finishing among the top 20 teams in the country.

At the NCAA Championships, Stephen Little earned All-American honors for the second year in a row, while Matty Bianchi became the program's fourth All-American—adding his name to a growing legacy.

And while the headlines were big, so were the quiet wins: a department-wide 3.43 GPA, 66 graduates, and a culture of discipline, leadership, and pride that shows up just as strongly in classrooms and communities as it does in competition.

With momentum building, a growing list of accomplishments, and a deep commitment to both academics and community, the future is bright for Trojan Athletics.

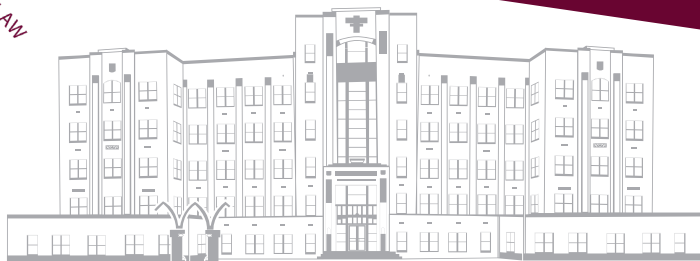


## Our student-athletes turned in standout performances in every season:

- Tune Gatkek, named Defensive Player of the Year in men's basketball, anchored the Trojans on the court, while teammate Jonathan Lawson earned a spot on the All-OVC First Team.
- In soccer, Peyton Urban and Mykena Turner were recognized as Goalkeeper and Defender of the Year, also landing on the First Team All-OVC.
- Jeila Fullerton delivered a stellar season for volleyball, earning First Team All-OVC honors as well.



# Celebrating Fifty Years of Impact, Access, and Excellence



For 50 years, the UA Little Rock William H. Bowen School of Law has served as a gateway to legal careers—grounded in access, affordability, and excellence.

Established in 1975 and uniquely located in the state's capital, the law school has provided more than 4,500 alumni with unmatched opportunities to gain hands-on experience with courts, government agencies, top law firms, and nonprofits just steps from campus.

As part of its 50th anniversary celebration, Bowen revived the Arnold Lecture Series, honoring the legacy of Judges Richard and Morris “Buzz” Arnold two influential Arkansas jurists. The series has welcomed U.S. Supreme Court justices and other leading legal thinkers to campus, reinforcing Bowen's commitment to excellence and giving students direct exposure to some of the nation's most respected legal minds.

That same commitment extends to affordability. With tuition less than half the national average, Bowen opens doors for aspiring attorneys who might otherwise be priced out of law school. Its commitment to keeping costs low—combined with a robust scholarship program and part-time evening track—has made a legal education more accessible and more achievable for generations of Arkansans.

*“The education may be inexpensive, but it's not poor—it's great quality,” said Mallory Wood, a recent graduate who*

*joined the Arkansas Attorney General's Office. “Graduating with less than half the debt of a typical law school student changed the future for me and my family.”*

Bowen students benefit from a hands-on curriculum that includes required lawyering skills courses, real-world experiential learning, and six legal clinics that serve low-income Arkansans. From family law to veterans' rights to small business development, students gain experience while making a difference.

Bowen's alumni are shaping the legal landscape across Arkansas and beyond. Four of seven current Arkansas Supreme Court justices, including the Chief Justice, are Bowen graduates. Alumni lead in courtrooms, corporations, classrooms, and communities—elevating the profession and expanding access to justice.

*“Bowen graduates know how to be lawyers,” said Michelle Ator, head of the medical malpractice group at Friday, Eldredge & Clark. “We'll take Bowen graduates over anybody.”*

As it celebrates five decades of impact, the William H. Bowen School of Law continues to deliver one of the best values in legal education—educating practice-ready attorneys who uphold the law and serve their communities with integrity.



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AND PART-TIME PROGRAMS

ALUMNI SERVE  
ACROSS EVERY  
SECTOR OF  
THE LEGAL  
PROFESSION

Learn More  
about the Bowen  
School of Law:





# A University That Builds What Arkansas Needs

At UA Little Rock, we believe education is more than preparation for a career. It's preparation to lead. That belief fuels a community-centered approach to learning that extends beyond the classroom and into the heart of Arkansas. From entrepreneurship to workforce development, we are creating opportunities that empower students, support industries, and strengthen our state.

In the entrepreneurial space, this vision comes to life through the work of Marla Johnson, tech entrepreneur-in-residence. She's using her background in business, education, and tech to connect students, faculty, and industry leaders. This fall, she began teaching a tech entrepreneurship course based on MIT's Disciplined Entrepreneurship, where students turn ideas into prototypes and solutions for real-world challenges.

She also launched Fourth Fridays entrepreneurship lunches, giving students the chance to present their ideas to industry leaders, faculty, and peers. These gatherings help students recognize the value of their ideas and learn strategies to turn them into sustainable enterprises that benefit their communities and create lasting impact.

*"We have innovative students, and we are going to give them the chance to speak up and share their ideas," Johnson said. "I want them to learn that their ideas have value and show them proven ways to transform those ideas into sustainable enterprises that will help them live well, serve communities here, and even make a global impact."*

To extend this work beyond campus, UA Little Rock's entrepreneurship and workforce development teams have partnered to offer AI upskilling programs through Corporate and Community Education. These sessions equip business owners, professionals, and community members with practical tools to improve operations, spark innovation, and keep Arkansas industries competitive in a rapidly changing economy.

That same collaborative approach is central to the work of Dr. Aaron Duvall, executive director of workforce development, who is reimagining how UA Little Rock connects education to the labor market. By engaging with more than 130 corporate partners, including UAMS and Nabholz Construction, Duvall's team is turning industry feedback into action, from launching AI upskilling programs to creating career pathways that address the state's most pressing workforce needs.

*"Our goal is to be the go-to partner for workforce innovation in Arkansas. We're listening to industry and turning that feedback into action," Duvall said.*

Beyond these initiatives, his team is also opening new



doors for students and employers alike. A \$25,000 grant from the Taylor Foundation funded 35 paid internships, and new career readiness modules are helping students strengthen critical workplace skills like communication and problem-solving.

His team is also expanding career-focused concurrent enrollment for high school students, including new offerings in banking and cybersecurity. Last year alone, more than 900 students from 15 schools earned UA Little Rock credit.

Other efforts include expanding industry-informed certificates and upskilling managers through corporate leadership academies.

At UA Little Rock, we are not waiting for the future. Through our entrepreneurial and workforce efforts, we are building it for Arkansas.

Scan the QR code  
to read how we are  
helping businesses with  
personalized training:





## Community Engagement in Action

At UA Little Rock, community engagement is an essential part of who we are. From enriching educational experiences to meeting critical needs in our city, the university continues to find meaningful ways to connect with and serve the Little Rock community.

### Stargazing for All

The UA Little Rock Observatory opened to explore the night sky from the rooftop observatory atop Stabler Hall. This offered an up-close look at the cosmos, guided by UA Little Rock faculty and students—making science accessible, inspiring, and just a little magical.



### Bridging Gaps with Mobile Grocery

Thanks to a grant from the City of Little Rock, the University District Development Corporation and UA Little Rock launched a Mobile Grocery initiative aimed at addressing food insecurity in local neighborhoods designated as food deserts. The project brings fresh produce and healthy options directly to residents, a powerful example of collaboration and impact.

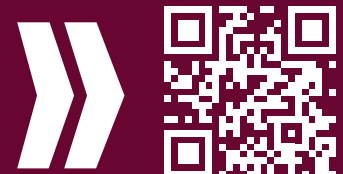


### Arts that Inspire

Throughout the year, the campus hosted a vibrant mix of concerts, theatre performances, and gallery exhibitions that were open to the public. Events like the Celebration of American Music Concert brought hundreds of visitors to campus and showcased the talents of our students, faculty, and guest artists.



Don't miss upcoming performances and exhibitions—visit our calendar at [ualr.edu/calendar](http://ualr.edu/calendar) or scan the QR code:







## Showing Up for Little Rock: Supporting Youth, Strengthening Community

Strong communities are built through shared investment, and that means showing up for programs that make our city better for everyone. That's why we proudly participated in this year's Little Rock Career Climb, a summer youth employment opportunity that gives high school students valuable paid work experience.

It's one more way we're serving as a good neighbor and contributing to the kind of Little Rock we all want to live in.

We welcomed a group of interns to campus and placed them within our Athletics Department, where they supported summer sports camps, learned how large-scale events come together, and helped with operations that keep our programs running smoothly. These experiences helped build skills that matter: accountability, communication, and showing up ready to contribute.

*"We know that when students have early access to meaningful work experiences, they build confidence and a clearer sense of what's possible," said Emily Cox, vice chancellor for university affairs at UA Little Rock. "This program is a great example of how collaboration across the city can open doors for young people while making Little Rock stronger as a whole."*

In addition to hosting interns, UA Little Rock hosted nearly 300 students participating in the program for a financial literacy workshop, in partnership with the city. This event helped students better understand how to manage their money, plan for the future, and make informed financial decisions, foundational tools for success no matter their path.

By investing in opportunities like this, we're investing in Little Rock's future. Because when our city thrives, we all benefit, and UA Little Rock is proud to be part of that momentum.







## New Leadership Appointments at UA Little Rock

UA Little Rock is pleased to welcome several accomplished leaders who bring deep expertise to key academic and administrative roles. Here's more about some of the new faces you'll see on campus.



### **Allen Stanley, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration**

Allen Stanley brings more than 25 years of experience in financial and operational leadership in higher education. A certified public accountant, he previously held key roles at UA Little Rock, including director of financial services and associate vice chancellor for finance. His leadership will

support sound fiscal management and strategic planning to ensure continued institutional progress.



### **Emily Jordan Cox, Vice Chancellor for University Affairs**

Emily Jordan Cox has over 15 years of experience in public service, including roles as acting city manager for the City of Little Rock and director of policy and budget for former Gov. Mike Beebe. She leads university affairs with a focus on policy, governmental relations, and

community engagement.



### **Dr. Tansel Karabacak, Dean of the Donaghey College of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (DCSTEM)**

Dr. Karabacak, a UA Little Rock faculty member since 2006, is an Arkansas Research Alliance Fellow and a nationally recognized physicist with a strong record of interdisciplinary scholarship and

external funding. He has published over 80 peer-reviewed articles and previously served as director of the School of Physical Sciences. He will lead DCSTEM in advancing research, academic excellence, and student success in STEM disciplines.



### **Dr. Ginger Gummelt, Dean of the College of Business, Health, and Human Services (CBHHS)**

Dr. Gummelt comes to UA Little Rock from Lamar University, where she led the Department of Sociology, Social Work, Criminal Justice, and Anthropology. She holds a Ph.D. in Social Work and brings broad academic leadership experience

across both health and business disciplines. Dr. Gummelt is passionate about building strong university-community partnerships and will guide CBHHS in developing programs that support economic growth, professional development, and community well-being.



### **Marla Johnson, Technology Entrepreneur-in-Residence**

Marla Johnson brings over 30 years of experience in technology innovation and entrepreneurship to her role as UA Little Rock's first Technology Entrepreneur-in-Residence. As the former CEO and co-founder of Aristotle, Inc., she led one of the nation's pioneering internet

service providers and digital marketing agencies. At UA Little Rock, Johnson is spearheading initiatives to expand entrepreneurship, business innovation, and artificial intelligence programs, fostering collaboration among students, faculty, and the business community.



### **Dr. Aaron Duvall, Executive Director of Workforce Development**

Dr. Aaron Duvall has been appointed as UA Little Rock's inaugural Executive Director of Workforce Development.

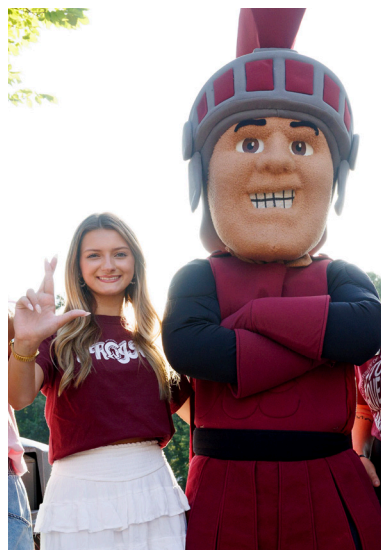
With a strong background in career and technical education, Duvall is focused on strengthening industry partnerships and expanding access to career and technical education opportunities. His leadership is instrumental in aligning the university's programs with the evolving needs of the workforce, ensuring that students are well-prepared for successful careers.





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