



UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS SYSTEM

Office of the President

March 18, 2014

Dear UA System Faculty:

On Monday I met with faculty leadership from each of the colleges and universities in the University of Arkansas System to explain my vision for a new online education initiative dedicated to reaching students who aren't currently served by public higher education in Arkansas.

At a meeting at the University of Arkansas at Fort Smith on Thursday, I will ask the Board of Trustees to consider expanding an existing consortium of UA System campuses to participate in planning for a new online university that will offer a limited number of degree programs designed for adults who need the flexibility afforded by online education. A key component of the proposal is to invite faculty from across the UA System to participate in developing and teaching courses and planning degree programs that will target workforce needs in the state.

The vision for the online university is to utilize high quality courses, affordable tuition and flexible scheduling in developing a small number of workforce relevant degree programs designed for adults who are unable to access traditional campuses because of job, family and financial constraints. As you know, many such students currently turn to expensive for-profit online institutions, which operate hundreds of programs in Arkansas, for higher education options.

The Board of Trustees passed a resolution in November 2012 directing us to coordinate and expand online education in the system. To respond to this charge, my staff and I spent more than a year studying the issues surrounding online education, including visiting with students and faculty on each UA System campus to learn more about the challenges and opportunities presented in the online environment. From those visits, we learned about the great work being done on each campus to meet the needs of our students, and we also determined that there is more we can do to reach those students who can't access our traditional campuses.

With approval of the board, the next step for this project will be to bring together a group of faculty members from across the UA System to begin organizing a governance structure and academic planning process. Participation by campuses and faculty in this effort will be voluntary and the goal is to complement the online programs already offered across the system.

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University of Arkansas, Fayetteville / University of Arkansas at Little Rock / University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff
University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences / University of Arkansas at Monticello / Division of Agriculture / Criminal Justice Institute
Arkansas Archeological Survey / Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas / University of Arkansas Community College at Hope
University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville / Cossatot Community College of the University of Arkansas
University of Arkansas Community College at Morrilton / University of Arkansas at Fort Smith
Arkansas School for Mathematics, Sciences and the Arts / University of Arkansas Clinton School of Public Service

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Dr. Michael Moore, vice president for academic affairs, and Dr. Daniel Ferritor, vice president for learning technologies, led the initial planning for this initiative and will continue to provide leadership as we move forward.

This is an exciting opportunity for faculty to work together from across the UA System to advance our ongoing mission to provide the highest quality educational opportunities to the people of Arkansas. I hope those of you who are interested will join this effort in the near future.

Thank you for your service to the University of Arkansas System.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Donald R. Bobbitt", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Donald R. Bobbitt
President

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