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SOUTHEAST ARKANSAS COLLEGE & REACH UNIVERSITY REMOVE THE TRANSFER & COST BARRIERS TO BACHELOR'S DEGREE ATTAINMENT FOR WORKING ADULTS

New articulation agreement transfers 100 percent of credits into Reach's job-embedded B.A. program, providing exposure to a career in teaching, while addressing local teacher shortages.

(PINE BLUFF, Arkansas) – March 14, 2024 – Southeast Arkansas College (SEARK) and Reach University today announced a partnership to offer every Associate of Arts (A.A.) and Associate of Arts in Teaching (A.A.T.) graduate a job-embedded and paid pathway to a bachelor's degree and professional career.

In the partnership's "A.A. to B.A. Transfer Pathway," graduates of the A.A. and A.A.T. programs are eligible to transfer 100% of credits into Reach University's liberal studies degree program. In recognition of the value of hands-on application of learning, Reach utilizes local schools as the university learning place through its accredited on-the-job undergraduate program. A degree seeker will work as an employee in a regional K-12 district while completing their Bachelor of Arts (B.A.), and have the option to pursue a teaching credential at the end of their degree experience.

"Southeast Arkansas College is committed to providing accessible and seamless transfer pathways that allow our graduates to easily make the transition to a bachelor's degree program," said Dr. Stacy Pfluger, Interim President of SEARK College. "The articulation agreement between SEARK College and Reach University is a great example. This partnership offers a clear and defined route for SEARK College graduates to continue their studies at Reach University in preparation for a career in education. It underscores our dedication to empowering students to achieve their academic and career aspirations."

SEARK College has a long history of actively supporting the transfer of its graduates into four-year degree programs. This partnership offers a new means of supporting working adults in bachelor's degree attainment, while building a potential pipeline of educators for regional schools.

"We are eager to build upon our individual partnerships with SEARK College and Reach University to pave a new pathway for local talent to work in our schools," said Dr. Jennifer Barbaree, Superintendent of Pine Bluff School District. "Southeastern Arkansas has one of the highest qualified teacher shortages in the state, and the more hands-on career exposure we can provide to local residents, the more effective we will become in building a pipeline of paraprofessionals-to-teachers. We invite all eligible SEARK alumni to work in our schools as they complete their B.A., and encourage all A.A.T. grads to utilize a paid and debt-free pathway to become a qualified teacher."



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In this job-embedded transfer pathway, an associate degree holder will typically fill a critical job (e.g., as a classroom aide or other classified employee) while securing a debt-free bachelor's degree in two years or less. Half of the learning towards the degree comes from the learner's paid, on-the-job work, while the other half comes from rigorous and synchronous online Oxford-style seminars held after work hours and on the weekends. Seminars are led by Reach's nationally-recognized teacher practitioner faculty, many of which are based in Arkansas.

Each program participant will pursue a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies, with a concentration in education science. To be eligible for the program, associate degree holders must be employed in a local school and have access to an instructional work setting (i.e., a place where the candidate can observe or participate in mentoring, teaching, tutoring, coaching, etc.) for approximately 15 hours a week. Degree seekers will be paid throughout the duration of their bachelor's program, taking on zero student loan debt.

This "A.A. to B.A. Transfer Pathway" marks Reach's fifth community college articulation agreement, and its second in Arkansas. After B.A. completion, the learner may continue working in the field of education, but there is no obligation to do so.

"Nationwide, 80% of community college students hope to transfer into a four-year university, yet only a third do," said Joe E. Ross, President of Reach University. "If our nation is serious about inclusively boosting bachelor's degree attainment, we must approach the current problem differently. SEARK and Reach are doing just that by removing the credit transfer hurdles, addressing questions of cost and return on investment, and coupling the job with the degree for the benefit of learners, K-12 districts, and the greater community. There is a better way, and we're proud to lead this effort together with SEARK College, Pine Bluff School District, and our regional partners."

Reach's job-embedded bachelor's degree program is now accepting applications for the Fall '24 term. All current and former SEARK College graduates who meet admission requirements, such as are currently employed at an eligible regional school, may now apply.

To learn more about the program, and view process and eligibility details, please visit <https://www.reach.edu/job-to-degree> or contact Apply@Reach.Edu.

ABOUT REACH UNIVERSITY

[Reach University](https://www.reach.edu) is the regionally accredited, non-profit university dedicated to advancing job-embedded degrees and credentials. Reach is actively solving America's teacher shortage by creating fully-embedded pathways for high-potential individuals to earn degrees, credentials and jobs as teachers within their own communities. By focusing on low-income, urban and rural regions, offering online tutorials and classes, and rendering academic credit for on-the-job experience, Reach University is eliminating barriers to entry in high-need professions, and building untapped pipelines of locally representative talent. Reach University currently operates in Alabama, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas.



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ABOUT SOUTHEAST ARKANSAS COLLEGE

Established by Act 1244 of the 78th General Assembly of the State of Arkansas on April 17, 1991, Southeast Arkansas College (SEARK) is a leading institution dedicated to providing technical, vocational, and adult education programs, industry training, and two-year college transfer programs. Originally known as Pines Vocational-Technical School since 1959, SEARK underwent a significant transformation in 1991, leading to its current status as a pivotal part of the state's higher education system. With a mission to offer accessible and responsive educational programs, SEARK caters to diverse segments of the population, facilitating training, retraining, and upgrade training for employment. The institution's commitment to providing basic, general, and specialized education aligns with the dynamic needs of the modern workplace.

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