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NORTHWEST ARKANSAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE & REACH UNIVERSITY PARTNER TO INCREASE LOCAL BACHELOR'S DEGREE ATTAINMENT FOR WORKING ADULTS

New articulation agreement transfers 100 percent of associate credits into Reach's job-embedded and paid B.A. program, providing career exposure, while addressing local educator shortages.

(BENTONVILLE, Arkansas) – April 3, 2024 – NorthWest Arkansas Community College (NWACC) and Reach University today announced a partnership to offer nearly every NWACC graduate a transparent, job-embedded, and paid pathway to a bachelor's degree and professional career in their local community.

In the partnership's "Associate to Bachelor's Degree Transfer Pathway," NWACC graduates from 30 majors are eligible to transfer 100% of associate credits into Reach University's liberal studies degree program. Rather than a traditional college campus, Reach utilizes local schools as the university learning place through its accredited on-the-job degree program. All degree seekers will work as an employee for a regional education provider while completing their B.A., and will have the option to pursue a teaching credential at the end of their degree experience.

"At NWACC, it is our greatest priority to meet and exceed the needs of our students, employer partners, and broader community," said Dr. Dennis C. Rittle, President of NorthWest Arkansas Community College. "We are very pleased to be partnering with Reach University to offer our students another amazing option to continue their education. This opportunity allows students to earn their bachelor's degree at no cost, while also providing our area K-12 schools with an ongoing talent pipeline to prepare the next generation of teachers. We are honored to be a part of this exciting new program."

As Arkansas's largest community college, NWACC has a long history of working closely with regional employers to align its curriculum to local industry needs, and equipping all graduates with the opportunity to transfer into a four-year institution. This partnership provides a new means of supporting working adults in achieving their postsecondary goals, while building a pipeline of educators for local schools.

"For years, we've worked closely with NWACC and Reach University to build a strong and representative teacher pipeline," said Dr. Missy Hixson, Assistant Director and Teacher Center Coordinator of Northwest Arkansas Education Service Cooperative. "I am thrilled to unify our individual partnerships to create a new local paraprofessional and teacher talent pipeline. I am confident that hands-on exposure to the joys of working in a school will unlock a love of teaching in those who may have never considered this career path before."

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

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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.

"We are extremely excited about this opportunity for our students and community," said Dr. Jeff Perry, Superintendent of Rogers Public Schools. "We firmly believe that this will create a direct pipeline for delivering quality and highly-effective educators to our classrooms, and expands upon our current partnerships with Reach University and NWACC. This is a clear demonstration of what can happen when multiple organizations come together with a clear mission and focus."

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.

"Affordability is one of the primary hurdles that keep so many aspiring educators from becoming teachers," said Christie Toland, Assistant Superintendent at Gentry Public Schools. "In removing the financial barrier to earning a bachelor's degree and teacher credential, Reach and NWACC are opening the door of opportunity for our larger community, while serving our local schools with the talent they need most. This is a win-win for everyone involved."

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

"Collaborative partnerships are at the core of Reach's job-embedded undergraduate degree," said Joe E. Ross, President of Reach University. "It's only in partnership with forward-thinking employers and fellow institutions of higher education that we can create barrier-free postsecondary and career opportunities in every community throughout the state. We are incredibly proud to expand our shared impact in northwest Arkansas arm-in-arm with NWACC, the Northwest Arkansas Education Service Cooperative, Rogers and Gentry Public Schools, and all of our public and private partners."

Reach's job-embedded bachelor's degree program is now accepting applications for the Fall '24 term. All current and former NWACC graduates who meet admissions requirements are eligible to 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

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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.

ABOUT NORTHWEST ARKANSAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE (NWACC):

NWACC is an accredited, public two-year institution that serves and strengthens its surrounding communities by helping students maximize their potential and exceed expectations. With state-of-the-art facilities, NWACC provides excellent academic instruction, workforce training and personalized attention from highly respected faculty, staff and administrators. For more information about NWACC, visit www.nwacc.edu.

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