

SOUTHERN ARKANSAS UNIVERSITY TECH & REACH UNIVERSITY PARTNER TO ACHIEVE GREATER LOCAL DEGREE ATTAINMENT & CAREER OPPORTUNITY

Partnership will transfer 100 percent of associate credits into Reach's job-embedded, paid bachelor's degree program, providing a new K-12 talent pipeline to address educator shortages.

(CAMDEN, Arkansas) – May 15, 2024 – Southern Arkansas University Tech (SAU Tech) and Reach University today announced a partnership to offer nearly every SAU Tech 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," SAU Tech graduates from approximately 20 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 have the option to pursue a teaching credential at the end of their degree experience.

"SAU Tech places a tremendous priority on meeting and exceeding the educational, training, and cultural needs of the greater Camden community," said Dr. Jerry W. Thomas, Chancellor of Southern Arkansas University Tech. "In partnership with Reach University, we're building a clear, debt-free, and community-serving pathway to an undergraduate degree that can be used in the field of education or any career of choice. We couldn't be more proud to expand the postsecondary and career options for SAU Tech grads here in our home community."

As part of the Southern Arkansas University System, SAU Tech is a leading technical institute offering learners degree options spanning from aviation to healthcare, education, technology and more. SAU Tech works closely with regional employers to align its curriculum to local industry needs, and equips graduates with the opportunity to [transfer into a four-year degree granting institution](#). SAU Tech's partnership with Reach provides a new means of supporting working adults in achieving their postsecondary goals, while building a pipeline of short- and long-term educators for local schools.

"When our community has the opportunity to remove the longstanding barriers to recruiting passionate, committed, and qualified educators, we all win," Karen McMahan, Director of the South Central Service Cooperative. "From affordability to providing on-the-job career exposure, this transfer program clears the way for aspiring teachers *and* aspiring degree holders from any major to achieve their college-to-career goals within their home community. We are thrilled to build yet another outside-the-box talent pathway into our local schools."

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 role) while securing a debt-free

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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.

"We value our longstanding partnership with SAU Tech and are excited to partner with SAU Tech and Reach University to continue our mission of hiring highly qualified educators at Camden Fairview," said Johnny Embry, Superintendent of Camden Fairview School District. "By joining forces in this new transfer program, we'll recruit and train local people who know our students and are committed to their success. We invite every eligible SAU Tech grad to join us."

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 "Associate to Bachelor's Degree Transfer Pathway" marks Reach's seventh community college articulation agreement, and its fourth in Arkansas, rounding out transfer opportunities in all regions within the state. After B.A. completion, the learner may continue working in the field of education, but there is no obligation to do so.

"Let's take a moment as a higher ed, workforce, and K-12 community to take note of the leading and solutions-driven innovation underway throughout the state of Arkansas," said Joe E. Ross, President of Reach University. "From K-12 through college success, leaders across the state are removing the barriers in educational equity and degree attainment. We are incredibly proud to partner with SAU Tech and further extend our K-12 partnerships throughout the south central region. Together, we're building a new talent pipeline for local schools while helping to achieve greater degree completion for all."

Reach's job-embedded bachelor's degree program is now accepting applications for the Fall '24 term. All current and former SAU Tech 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, nonprofit 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

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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 SOUTHERN ARKANSAS UNIVERSITY TECH

[SAU Tech](#) is a two-year public college that is part of the Southern Arkansas University System. The College began in 1968 and today has an average enrollment of over 1,800 students. SAU Tech offers NJCAA men's and women's basketball, softball, and baseball, and provides students with housing options and full student life. Cheerleading, the Tech Scholars Program, and the Tech Choir are all options for SAU Tech's students. SAU Tech employs around 160 staff and faculty and is located inside Highland Industrial Park in East Camden, Arkansas. SAU Tech operates under the governance of the Board of Trustees of the Southern Arkansas University System located in Magnolia, Arkansas. The chancellor of SAU Tech reports to the president of the Southern Arkansas University System. The president is advised by a governor-appointed board of trustees.

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