

Mary D. Hester-Clifton - Bio
Director of Communications
University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

Mary Hester-Clifton serves as Director of Communications and a member of the Executive Cabinet at the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB). She leads institutional strategy for communications, website governance, brand management, and public relations to ensure consistent, mission-driven messaging across all platforms.

In her role, Hester-Clifton works to strengthen and elevate the UAPB brand, positioning the university as a trusted source of educational information and impact within the region and beyond. She oversees strategic messaging alignment across digital, media, and stakeholder channels, building strong media partnerships and expanding institutional visibility.

With more than 30 years of experience as a senior-level leader in Fortune 500 global organizations, Hester-Clifton brings expertise in communications strategy, organizational development, marketing, and talent development. She is known for integrating the art and science of transformation—developing communication frameworks and leadership initiatives that drive engagement, performance, and cultural alignment.

An award-winning author and podcaster, she also writes under the pen name Debra Hester. As a certified facilitator and leadership development coach, she has worked globally across industries including financial services, media, higher education, retail, pharmaceutical, nonprofit, and entertainment. Her corporate leadership experience includes senior management roles with ADP, Chase, Discover, Morgan Stanley, T. Rowe Price, KPMG and ServiceMaster.

Currently pursuing a doctorate at Arkansas State University, Hester-Clifton holds a B.A. in Broadcast Journalism (Radio-TV-Film) from Oklahoma State University and an M.A. in Human Resource Management from Ottawa University. She also completed Technical Writing coursework at UCLA and is a Clark Atlanta Media Institute Fellow through Force 3 Radio Network. She is a Senior Certified Professional (SHRM-SCP) and MBTI qualified, with extensive certifications in leadership development, performance measurement, and executive coaching. She has served as an adjunct instructor of Business Communications in the UAPB School of Business and Management.



Born in Helena, Arkansas, Hester-Clifton is a proud member of a multi-generational AM&N/UAPB alumni family. She is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., the mother of three adult children, and is honored to call Pine Bluff home.

As an 1890 land-grant HBCU with a rich 140-year legacy, UAPB remains committed to access, opportunity, and transformation—and Hester-Clifton is dedicated to ensuring that the university's story reflects the excellence, resilience, and future-forward vision of the Golden Lion community.

Selected Credentials & Certifications

- EdD Higher Education/Higher Education Administration – Arkansas State University (currently pursuing)
- M.A., Human Resource Management – Ottawa University
- B.A., Broadcast Journalism – Oklahoma State University
- Minor: Management Information Systems
- Technical Writing Program – UCLA
- Online Teaching -Higher Education – Mississippi State University
- Social Media Marketing Certificate
- SHRM Senior Certified Professional (SHRM-SCP)
- MBTI Qualified
- Corporate Coach U Certified
- Situational Leadership II & High Performing Teams Certified
- Management Mentor Program Manager Certified
- Advanced Leadership & Culture Change Facilitator (Senn Delaney)
- 360 Feedback & Executive Assessment Trained (Korn Ferry / PDI / Ninth House)
- Jack Phillips Level 5 (ROI) Measurement Training & Learning Programs Certified