

## Academic Strategic Alignment Framework (Phase 2) University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff

### Introduction

The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB) is operating within a rapidly evolving higher education environment shaped by demographic changes, enrollment pressures, workforce transformation, increasing public accountability, financial constraints, and heightened expectations regarding student outcomes and return on investment.

As Arkansas's only public 1890 land-grant historically Black college and university, UAPB must ensure that its academic portfolio, instructional delivery model, faculty deployment strategies, and organizational academic structure are aligned with:

- institutional mission and strategic priorities;
- current and projected student demand;
- state and regional workforce needs;
- financial sustainability;
- student success outcomes;
- and long-term institutional viability.

The University recognizes that academic program offerings and organizational academic structures must continuously evolve to remain responsive, sustainable, mission-centered, and student-focused. Accordingly, following the completion of Phase I Administrative Strategic Realignment, the University will initiate Phase II: Academic Strategic Alignment and Academic Sustainability Review.

Phase II represents a comprehensive, data-informed, and governance-sensitive review of the University's academic enterprise designed to evaluate academic viability, instructional sustainability, workforce relevance, student demand, operational efficiency, and institutional alignment. This process shall be conducted in accordance with applicable University of Arkansas Board Policies, including Board Policy 405.5 Retrenchment as well as established shared governance principles and applicable accreditation expectations.

### Purpose of the Academic Strategic Alignment Initiative

The purpose of the Academic Strategic Alignment and Academic Sustainability Initiative is to:

- Evaluate the long-term sustainability and viability of academic programs and instructional structures;
- Align academic offerings with workforce demand, enrollment trends, and institutional priorities;
- Improve academic operational efficiency and instructional effectiveness;
- Strengthen student success, retention, progression, and completion outcomes;
- Evaluate organizational academic structures and administrative efficiency within Academic Affairs;
- Position UAPB for long-term academic strength, competitiveness, and sustainability.

## Institutional Context and Strategic Imperative

Like many regional public universities and historically Black colleges and universities nationwide, UAPB faces declining enrollment trends, financial pressures tied to student FTE, evolving student demographics, growing competition, and increased expectations related to measurable student outcomes and institutional return on investment.

As articulated throughout the University's broader Operational Sustainability Initiative, long-term institutional sustainability cannot be achieved solely through administrative realignment. The University must also thoughtfully examine the structure, viability, productivity, alignment, and sustainability of its academic enterprise; thus, this work is not intended to diminish UAPB's academic mission but to preserve and strengthen academic quality, improve alignment between institutional investments and student demand, ensure responsible resource allocation, and position the University to invest strategically in areas of growth, innovation, workforce relevance, and student success.

The University recognizes that academic alignment work requires a different process and governance framework than administrative operational restructuring. Accordingly, Phase II shall incorporate robust faculty engagement, shared governance consultation, academic leadership participation, and formal policy compliance.

## Alignment with University of Arkansas System Policy 405.5

Phase II shall be conducted in accordance with University of Arkansas Board Policy 405.5 concerning Retrenchment and Academic Planning. The University recognizes that academic program discontinuance, academic restructuring, faculty retrenchment, or academic reorganization decisions may trigger provisions of Board Policy 405.5 requiring formal review, consultation, and Board approval processes.

The University further recognizes that the University of Arkansas at Little Rock (UALR) implemented a comprehensive academic planning and restructuring process in 2019–2020 that combined:

- Academic planning review,
- Academic restructuring,
- Institutional effectiveness analysis,
- Organizational redesign,
- Board-approved retrenchment actions pursuant to Policy 405.5.

UAPB's Academic Strategic Alignment Initiative shall borrow conceptually from elements of the UALR model while remaining tailored to UAPB's unique mission, institutional identity, land-grant responsibilities, HBCU mission, and strategic priorities.

## Five Guiding Core Principles

The Academic Strategic Alignment Initiative shall be guided by the following five key principles:

1. **Student Success and Academic Quality:** Student success, academic excellence, and educational quality shall remain central to all academic planning and alignment decisions.
2. **Mission-Centered and Data-Informed Decision Making:** Academic planning decisions shall be guided by institutional mission, strategic priorities, and comprehensive data analysis, including enrollment trends, student outcomes, workforce demand, instructional sustainability, and institutional effectiveness indicators.
3. **Shared Governance and Transparent Engagement:** The University shall respect principles of shared governance and ensure meaningful engagement, communication, and consultation with faculty, academic leadership, and relevant institutional stakeholders throughout the review process.
4. **Long-Term Sustainability and Responsible Stewardship:** The University shall prioritize long-term institutional sustainability through responsible stewardship of academic resources, strategic investment, operational efficiency, and thoughtful alignment of academic offerings with institutional capacity and future viability.
5. **Strategic Alignment and Institutional Relevance:** Academic planning decisions shall align with accreditation expectations, workforce and economic development priorities, student demand, and the University's broader strategic vision as Arkansas's only public 1890 land-grant historically Black university.

## Scope of Academic Review

Consistent with the five guiding core principles, the Academic Strategic Alignment Initiative will leverage a data-informed methodology that will include a review and analysis across four indicators:

### Indicator #1: Academic Program Review

- Program enrollment trends;
- Degree productivity;
- Graduation output;
- Retention and completion outcomes;
- Workforce demand alignment;
- Instructional cost analysis;
- Student demand and market viability;
- Duplication and overlap;
- Program relevance to institutional mission.

### Indicator #2: Academic Organizational Structure Review

- College and departmental organizational structures;
- Administrative layering and reporting structures;
- Interdisciplinary alignment opportunities;
- Opportunities for consolidation or reorganization;
- Operational effectiveness within Academic Affairs.

### **Indicator #3: Faculty and Instructional Capacity Review**

- Faculty workload and deployment;
- Instructional efficiency;
- Course scheduling patterns;
- Student-faculty ratios;
- Adjunct utilization;
- Tenure and tenure-track distribution;
- Long-term instructional sustainability.

### **Indicator #4: Academic Support and Infrastructure Review**

- Advising structures;
- Student academic support services;
- Laboratory and instructional space utilization;
- Academic technology utilization;
- Alignment of support services with student success outcomes.

## **Academic Strategic Alignment Steering Committee**

The University shall establish an Academic Strategic Alignment Steering Committee to guide the review process. The Steering Committee shall include representation from:

- Chancellor's Office
- Provost and Academic Affairs leadership
- Representation from the Academic Deans
- Faculty Senate leadership
- Institutional Research
- Enrollment Management
- Finance and Administration
- Human Resources
- Accreditation leadership
- Student Affairs (as appropriate)
- Other representatives designated by the Chancellor and Provost

The Steering Committee shall serve in an advisory and planning capacity and shall assist in the following effort:

- Guiding institutional review processes;
- Reviewing data and recommendations;
- Ensuring alignment with shared governance principles;
- Supporting institutional communication;
- Facilitating engagement throughout the process.

It is imperative to note that the Steering Committee is advisory in nature; thus, final recommendations and implementation decisions remain under the authority of the Chancellor consistent with Board policy and institutional governance processes.

## Academic Unit Review Workgroups

To support meaningful shared governance engagement, unit-level consultation, and collaborative academic planning, the University may establish temporary Academic Unit Review Workgroups aligned with the major academic units of the institution. These workgroups would be intended to provide structured opportunities for faculty, academic leadership, and disciplinary experts to engage in thoughtful analysis and discussion regarding the future organization, alignment, sustainability, and strategic direction of their respective academic units.

Academic Unit Review Workgroups shall serve in an advisory capacity and shall operate within the broader framework, methodology, timelines, guiding principles, and institutional parameters established by the Academic Strategic Alignment Steering Committee. The workgroups are intended to strengthen inclusive participation and shared governance while maintaining institutional consistency, strategic coordination, and alignment with broader University priorities.

The primary responsibilities of the Academic Unit Review Workgroups may include:

- Review current academic organizational structures within their respective academic units.
- Assess departmental alignment, overlap, and opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Identify opportunities for academic modernization, innovation, and operational efficiency.
- Explore opportunities for departmental consolidation, restructuring, or realignment.
- Evaluate opportunities to strengthen academic identity, organizational clarity, and strategic positioning.

The Academic Unit Review Workgroups may also provide recommendations regarding academic unit naming conventions, departmental organization and structure, interdisciplinary academic pathways, instructional modality expansion opportunities, graduate and workforce credential alignment, and opportunities to strengthen student success outcomes and institutional effectiveness.

Each Academic Unit Review Workgroup shall provide recommendations, supporting analysis, and strategic considerations to the Academic Strategic Alignment Steering Committee for institutional review, synthesis, and consideration as part of the broader Academic Strategic Alignment process.

The Academic Strategic Alignment Steering Committee retains responsibility for ensuring consistency in methodology and evaluation, maintaining alignment with institutional priorities, financial realities, and strategic objectives, assessing broader institutional implications, integrating recommendations across academic units, and developing institution-level recommendations for consideration by the Chancellor.

The establishment of Academic Unit Review Workgroups is intended to strengthen shared governance, encourage meaningful engagement and transparency, leverage faculty and disciplinary expertise, and support thoughtful, data-informed academic planning that advances the long-term sustainability and strategic future of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff.

## Academic Review Methodology

The University shall utilize a multi-dimensional academic review methodology incorporating both quantitative and qualitative indicators.

### Core Review Categories

The following core review categories will guide the University's evaluation process and help inform academic planning, resource allocation, and long-term institutional alignment decisions.

**1. Student Demand and Enrollment Viability:** Programs shall be evaluated based on:

- enrollment trends;
- majors produced;
- course demand;
- transfer interest;
- recruitment potential;
- and future enrollment sustainability.

**2. Student Success and Outcomes:** Programs shall be reviewed relative to:

- retention;
- graduation rates;
- progression rates;
- licensure outcomes;
- placement rates;
- and post-graduation success.

**3. Workforce and Economic Alignment:** Programs shall be evaluated relative to:

- state workforce needs;
- regional economic priorities;
- labor market demand;
- employer partnerships;
- and strategic workforce sectors.

**4. Financial and Instructional Sustainability:** Programs shall be reviewed relative to:

- instructional cost;
- student credit hour production;
- faculty deployment efficiency;
- operational sustainability;
- and long-term fiscal viability.

**5. Mission Centrality and Strategic Value:** Programs shall be evaluated relative to:

- UAPB's 1890 land-grant mission;
- HBCU identity and differentiation;
- strategic importance;
- research and innovation value;
- community impact;
- and institutional reputation.

**6. Opportunity for Growth and Innovation:** Programs shall be reviewed for:

- interdisciplinary opportunities;
- online and hybrid expansion potential;
- workforce credential alignment;
- graduate and professional pathway potential;
- and innovation capacity.

**Academic Planning Categories**

Following review, academic programs and units will be categorized into one of the following planning categories:

Category	Description
<b>Strategic Growth</b>	High-demand, mission-aligned programs with strong growth and investment potential
<b>Strategic Enhancement</b>	Programs requiring targeted improvement or modernization
<b>Monitoring and Improvement</b>	Programs requiring improvement plans and ongoing assessment
<b>Consolidation Opportunity</b>	Programs with overlap or opportunities for interdisciplinary integration
<b>Restructuring Review</b>	Programs requiring significant redesign or operational restructuring
<b>Potential Discontinuation Review</b>	Programs with persistent sustainability or viability concerns

**Shared Governance and Consultation Framework**

Recognizing the importance of shared governance in academic matters, the University shall ensure meaningful engagement with:

- Faculty Senate;
- Academic departments;
- Academic deans;
- Faculty committees;
- Appropriate governance bodies.

Consultation processes may include:

- Academic hearings;
- Data review sessions;
- Open forums;
- Academic planning workshops;
- Formal recommendation review processes.

The University recognizes that certain actions may require additional formal procedures pursuant to Board Policy 405.5 and applicable faculty policies.

### **Potential Outcomes of the Academic Review Process**

Potential outcomes of the Academic Strategic Alignment process may include:

- Strategic reinvestment in high-demand academic areas;
- Academic program enhancement;
- Interdisciplinary restructuring;
- Departmental consolidation;
- School restructuring;
- Faculty workload redesign;
- Instructional modality expansion;
- Administrative restructuring within Academic Affairs;
- Phased program suspension or teach-out planning;
- Academic support redesign;
- Formal retrenchment recommendations where warranted.

The University emphasizes that no predetermined outcomes have been established at the outset of the review process.

### **Academic Program Discontinuance**

If the review process identifies the need for academic program discontinuance or faculty position elimination, the University shall proceed in accordance with:

- Board Policy 405.5;
- Applicable faculty handbook provisions;
- Accreditation expectations;
- Contractual obligations;
- Applicable legal requirements.

Any recommendation involving formal position elimination or significant academic restructuring requiring Board approval shall be submitted through appropriate University of Arkansas System channels for institutional and Board review.

The University recognizes that UALR's academic restructuring process required formal Board action and approval pursuant to Policy 405.5.

## Timeline and Phased Review Structure

The Academic Strategic Alignment Initiative shall be implemented through a phased and structured review process designed to ensure thoughtful planning, meaningful stakeholder engagement, data-informed analysis, and alignment with institutional priorities and governance expectations. The phased timeline below outlines the major stages of the review process, associated activities, and projected implementation sequencing.

Phase	Timeline	Key Activity
Phase 1: Planning and Framework Development	July 2026	Steering Committee formation; methodology finalization; data preparation
Phase 2: Data Collection and Review	August 2026 – September 2026	Program analysis; enrollment and financial review; workforce alignment review
Phase 3: Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation	September 2026 – October 2026	Faculty engagement; governance consultation; academic forums
Phase 4: Preliminary Recommendations	October 2026 – November 2026	Draft academic planning recommendations and organizational scenarios
Phase 5: Review and Refinement	November 2026 – December 2026	Governance feedback and refinement of recommendations
Phase 6: Final Recommendations and Institutional Action	December 2026 – January 2027	Chancellor Review and UA System consultation
Phase 7: Implementation and Transition Planning	Spring 2027	Approved Restructuring, transition, and implementation actions

## Key Required Deliverables

The Academic Strategic Alignment Initiative shall produce:

- Academic program review analyses;
- Instructional sustainability reports;
- Enrollment and workforce alignment analyses;
- Academic organizational structure recommendations;
- Faculty deployment analyses;
- Financial sustainability assessments;
- Governance consultation summaries;
- Implementation and transition plans;
- Final academic planning recommendations.

## Anticipated Outcomes

The Academic Strategic Alignment Initiative is intended to yield the following outcomes:

- A stronger and more sustainable academic enterprise;
- Improved alignment between academic offerings and student demand;
- Greater workforce and economic relevance;
- Improved operational efficiency within Academic Affairs;
- Stronger student success outcomes;
- Enhanced academic innovation and interdisciplinary collaboration;
- Improved stewardship of instructional resources;
- More strategically focused academic portfolio aligned with UAPB's long-term vision and mission.

## Conclusion

The Academic Strategic Alignment Initiative represents an important institutional opportunity to thoughtfully examine and strengthen the future of UAPB's academic enterprise. This work is intended to ensure that UAPB's academic structure, academic investments, and instructional strategies remain sustainable, relevant, innovative, student-centered, and aligned with the University's mission as Arkansas's only public 1890 land-grant historically Black university.

Through disciplined planning, shared governance engagement, strategic analysis, and mission-centered decision-making, UAPB seeks to position its academic enterprise for long-term strength, relevance, sustainability, and institutional preeminence.