

**Arkansas Colleges of Health Education**

**Strategic Plan**

**2020-2025**

## **Introduction**

The evolution of a Strategic Plan for the Arkansas Colleges of Education has been an ongoing process since the inception of the vision to establish a graduate campus to support health education programs in Fort Smith, Arkansas. This process included numerous discussions by the Board of Trustees of the Fort Smith Regional Healthcare Foundation and the Degen Foundation prior to the incorporation of the Arkansas Colleges of Health Education.

The Board of Trustees engaged in a planning retreat at Mount Magazine in March of 2017 to evaluate progress on the initial plan and to review directions for the future. The result of this planning retreat helped to clarify and focus plans for The Arkansas Colleges of Health Education. A key goal of this retreat was the formalization of elements which would comprise a strategic plan for the young institution.

On December 1, 2017 members of the Board of Trustees and selected members of the faculty leadership engaged in another review of the Strategic Plan prior to its presentation for consideration by the Board of Trustees and its subsequent adoption. This group activity included the review of goals formulated during the Board retreat, the addition of other needed elements and the organization of these statements in a form ready for review and adoption.

A Draft Strategic Plan resulting from the December 1, 2017 session was provided to all members of the Board of Trustees and to faculty leadership on December 15, 2017 requesting input prior to formal presentation for adoption. Comments from a small number of participants were incorporated into the final plan document.

The Strategic Plan was reviewed by the Arkansas Colleges of Health Education Board of Trustees and unanimously adopted on January 11, 2018.

On December 7, 2018 members of the Board of Trustees and selected members of the faculty and staff leadership reviewed the Strategic Plan to consider its appropriateness, to evaluate progress toward completion and to make revisions reflecting progress and newly identified elements. These changes were submitted for subsequent review by participants prior to presentation to the Board of Trustees. These revisions were a continuation of the plan covering the 2017-2022 period with the expectation that an annual review of the plan would occur.

The Board of Trustees of the Arkansas Colleges of Health Education unanimously endorsed the 2018 revised plan on February 9, 2019.

A cursory examination of the Strategic Plan for 2017-2022 immediately reveals a character of elements reflecting a start-up institution of higher education which is engaged in facility development, staffing and program development consistent with a young and growing institution. While preparing for an annual review of the Arkansas Colleges of Health Education Strategic Plan during the 2019-2020 academic year, it was immediately evident that many of the goals and activities included had been substantially completed ahead of the original schedule.

This prompted the institution to begin a restructuring of the plan instead of simply reviewing progress.

To accomplish this task a group comprised of more than fifty individuals representative of the Board of Trustees, faculty and administration, support staff, advisory committees, students and the community were invited to engage in the process. The individuals who participated in the strategic planning committee are identified in the appendix to this document. This group devoted a full day during the Board of Trustees annual retreat to this process on January 24, 2020. The mission statement, vision, and core values were reviewed as the foundation for a new group of mission-directed goals outlining the sustainability of a maturing institution devoted to the preparation of healthcare professionals. As part of the process participants identified and prioritized goal statements which reflect the institutional mission.

The work product of the large group was refined into an initial draft of a Strategic Plan which was submitted to the Board of Trustees for its review and comment. The Trustees took the opportunity to reflect on the initial draft and provided their comments during a 30-day review period. The Trustee' comments provided the basis for further refinement and revision to the document prior to its dissemination to all of the members of the strategic planning committee for further review and comment during a two-week period. Following the submission of several comments and final editing the document was submitted to the Board of Trustees of the Arkansas Colleges of Health Education for adoption at its board meeting in April, 2020.

The Board of Trustees unanimously adopted the Strategic Plan for 2020-2025 on April 25, 2020.

Appendix to Introduction

Arkansas Colleges of Health Education  
Strategic Planning Committee

| <b>First</b> | <b>Last</b>         | <b>Area</b>    | <b>Title</b>   |
|--------------|---------------------|----------------|--|
| Daniel       | Atchley, PhD        | Faculty        | Chair of Microbiology and Immunology                         |
| James        | Baker, DO           | Trustee        |  |
| Mike         | Barr                | Trustee        |  |
| Dennis       | Bauer               | Administration | VP & Chief Financial Officer                                 |
| Jeff         | Beauchamp           | Trustee        |  |
| Sabella      | Blanc               | MSB            | Master's Student   |
| Judy         | Boreham, PhD        | Trustee        |  |
| Lisa         | Boyd                | Administration | Executive Assistant to the CEO                               |
| Lance        | Bridges, PhD        | Faculty        | Chair of Biochem, Molecular & Cell Sciences                  |
| John         | Brown               | Trustee        |  |
| David        | Craig               | Trustee        |  |
| Ron          | Darbeau, PhD        | Trustee        |  |
| Susan        | Devero              | Administration | Executive Director of Communications and Community Relations |
| Gary         | Edwards, DO         | Faculty        | Interim Chair and Assistant Professor of Family Medicine     |
| Melissa      | Efurd, EdD          | Faculty        | Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs & Institutional Research  |
| Talal        | El-Hefnawy, MD, PhD | Faculty        | Chair of Physiology, Pharmacology and Pathology              |
| Saif         | Farag               | OMS II         | Student Doctor   |
| Tyler        | Farrar              | Administration | Associate Vice President and General Counsel                 |
| Connor       | Fuhrmann            | OMS I          | Student Doctor   |
| Abby         | Geis, PhD           | Faculty        | Assistant Professor of Microbiology and Immunology           |
| Glenna       | Gilliam             | Administration | Director of Financial Aid                                    |
| Benny        | Gooden, EdD         | Administration | Senior Executive Assistant to the CEO                        |
| Cole         | Goodman, MD         | Trustee        |  |
| Christopher  | Greer, DO           | Trustee        |  |
| Jon          | Gustafson, MD       | Faculty        | Interim Chair of Internal Medicine                           |
| Bill         | Hanna               | Trustee        |  |
| Ronnie       | Hawkins             | Trustee        |  |
| Ken          | Hensley, PhD        | Faculty        | Program Director of the MSB Program                          |
| Tom          | Holland, PhD        | Trustee        |  |
| Clayton      | Holmes, EdD         | Faculty        | Dean of the School of Physical Therapy                       |
| Barbara      | Jetton              | Administration | Associate Vice President for Human Resources                 |
| Brian        | Kim                 | Administration | President  |

|          |                |                  |   |
|----------|----------------|------------------|---|
| Jackie   | Krutsch        | Administration   | Executive Director of Development                           |
| Sharla   | Lau            | Community Member |   |
| Eric     | Lee, PhD       | Faculty          | Assistant Professor of Pharmacology                         |
| Hank     | Lemke, DhSc    | Faculty          | Dean of the School of Physician Assistant Studies           |
| Connie   | Manning        | Faculty          | Interim Director of Library Services                        |
| Rance    | McClain, DO    | Faculty          | Dean of ARCOM   |
| Lisa     | McClain, PhD   | Faculty          | Vice Provost & Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs |
| Laurel   | McIntosh       | Administration   | Assistant Dean of Student Affairs                           |
| David    | McWhorter, PhD | Faculty          | Chair of Anatomy  |
| Jennifer | Moore, PhD     | Faculty          | Dean of the School of Occupational Therapy                  |
| Lavon    | Morton         | Community Member |   |
| Louay    | Nassri, MD     | Faculty          | Chair of Pediatrics   |
| Barry    | Owen, EdD      | Administration   | Director of Institutional Relations                         |
| Kyle     | Parker         | Administration   | Chief Operating Officer                                     |
| Jim      | Patridge       | Trustee          |   |
| Karen    | Pharis         | Trustee          |   |
| Harvey   | Potts, MD      | Faculty          | Executive Director of Simulation and Clinical Studies       |
| Mike     | Rappeport      | Trustee          |   |
| Brandy   | Ree, PhD       | Faculty          | Assistant Professor of Biochem, Molecular & Cell Sciences   |
| Levi     | Risley         | Administration   | Chief of Police   |
| John     | Sealey, DO     | Faculty          | Associate Dean of Clinical Medicine                         |
| Les      | Smith          | Administration   | Chief Business Strategy Officer                             |
| Ray      | Stowers, DO    | Administration   | Chairman of External/Alumni Relations                       |
| John     | Taylor         | Trustee          |   |
| Tom      | Webb           | Administration   | VP & Chief Operations Officer                               |
| Joel     | Webb           | Administration   | VP & Chief Technology Officer                               |
| Joey     | Wells          | OMS III          | Student Doctor  |
| James    | Zini, DO       | Community Member |   |

## CONTEXT

The history of compassionate health care had its formal Fort Smith beginning in 1887 when medical care that became Sparks Hospital began through the efforts of Rev. George Degen. This community hospital was a foundation of service to the entire region for more than a century. Changes in the health care environment in the region resulted in a decision by the community-based Board of Trustees to sell the facility to a qualified purchaser who would continue to serve the community.

Following the sale of Sparks Health System in 2009, the Fort Smith Regional Health Care Foundation, the recipient of the sale proceeds, immediately began discussions about new opportunities to address health care needs. Expanding the number of well-trained primary care physicians and other health professionals emerged as the most viable option to provide better access to prevention and treatment of prevalent health conditions in Arkansas and the region. Feasibility studies to evaluate several options ultimately resulted in the decision to incorporate the Arkansas Colleges of Health Education (ACHE) and to pursue the establishment of a first-rate institution of higher education operating multiple graduate-level colleges in several health fields. In this way, the Arkansas Colleges of Health Education is continuing the vision of improving health care in one of America's most underserved regions.

The Arkansas Colleges of Health Education was incorporated in 2014 as an independent not-for-profit educational institution. Plans for the Arkansas College of Osteopathic Medicine (ARCOM) as the first graduate education program began immediately. The process was enhanced when the Fort Chaffee Redevelopment Authority donated 200 acres of prime land in the Chaffee Crossing area of east Fort Smith for the educational campus and related development. Subsequent land acquisitions have brought total campus size to 430 acres to provide for future growth. Chaffee Crossing is the result of the release of more than 7,000 acres of military land which was part of Fort Chaffee, a 78,000 acre military training post initially constructed in 1941. The release of land for private development was the result of the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process. In the two decades since this release, extensive development of residential, commercial and industrial sites has occurred in the area. The land donated and acquired by ACHE is choice property which positions the school for growth in the future.

The Fort Smith Regional Healthcare Foundation and the Degen Foundation have provided financial support to the Arkansas Colleges of Health Education to facilitate the initial start-up for programs, construction of facilities and for other needs. These Foundations continue as supporting organizations of ACHE while also providing grants to address other community health needs.

The initial building on the campus consists of 102,000 square feet on three levels at an appraised value of \$32.4 million. A grant was received for \$1.2 million which was used for parking lots and infrastructure of the facility. An initial anonymous gift of \$14 million was received to support the ACHE initiative. All ACHE facilities are designed to present a technologically advanced learning environment with the very best opportunities for aspiring medical professionals to acquire the required skills for the future.

In late 2019 ACHE completed construction of the College of Health Sciences, a 66,000 square foot facility. The funding came from an anonymous gift of \$15 million. This facility will house the Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, and Physician Assistant programs, with an overall value of approximately \$25 million.

To support campus growth student housing includes The Residents which can house more than 160 occupants as well as The Village at Heritage which includes retail establishments below student apartments on two upper floors. Additional residential developments and Celebration Gardens and Park bring trails and other amenities to the growing campus. The construction of a 40-bed inpatient hospital by Mercy on the campus will complement the Mercy Primary Care Clinic which has been operational since 2017. Planning for additional classroom buildings and other support facilities is ongoing consistent with resources and needs.

Guided by an independent ACHE Board of Trustees, this private institution has charted a bold course to develop future educational programs to serve the needs of the state and region. Additional programs will be based upon identified needs and will be initiated as space and resources allow. A planned development including retail, housing, restaurants and other amenities in a walkable environment to support the educational community and adjacent neighborhoods in a healthful manner when combined with the academic programs will transform the campus of the Arkansas Colleges of Health Education into a distinct destination.

**Goal 1: The Arkansas Colleges of Health Education will continue to maintain a diverse group of students, faculty, and staff and continue a commitment to educate competent and compassionate health care professionals by:**

- Recognizing all aspects of diversity through recruitment, retention, and practices supporting the inclusion of students, faculty, staff and other collaborating stakeholders;
- Continuing to recruit faculty, students and staff of the highest competence to be successful in fulfilling the institutional mission;
- Cultivating and sustaining an environment which advances the recruitment and retention of faculty to foster a high performing educational team;
- Establishing interprofessional education, practice, and research that affirmatively represent the mission of the institution locally, regionally, nationally and internationally;
- Adding programs and developing facilities based on sound research and planning, when appropriate, consistent with fiscal sustainability; and
- Continuing to establish and maintain clinical training opportunities for students and graduate healthcare education for post-graduates and medical education programs for physicians throughout Arkansas, the surrounding region and beyond.

**Goal 2: The Arkansas Colleges of Health Education will develop facilities and mechanisms to support the improvement of health and wellness through active research by:**

- Creating and identifying research and scholarship opportunities for faculty and students to acquire essential skills



to contribute to the expansion of professional knowledge and practice;

- Cultivating research environments which foster interdisciplinary scholarship by faculty and students; and
- Identifying, recruiting, developing, and retaining faculty committed to active research.

**Goal 3: The Arkansas Colleges of Health Education will continue the development of healthy living environments to improve the lives of others by:**

- Emphasizing wellness through physical and mental fitness activities and nutrition;
- Facilitating aesthetic awareness through the visual and performing arts as important aspects of personal well-being;
- Engaging the community to embrace the institutional philosophy on wellness; and
- Maintaining a safe and secure environment for daily living by students and the community.

**Goal 4: The Arkansas Colleges of Health Education will ensure institutional integrity, alignment to mission, and sustainability, by:**

- Securing and maintaining accreditation and all regulatory compliance requirements by appropriate agencies for the institution and each of its programs;
- Positively representing the institution locally, nationally and internationally through regular transparent dissemination of information on its status and achievements;

- Planning for orderly transition and succession of Board and executive leadership to ensure continuity of the mission and vision, as well as core values for future generations;
- Maintaining sound fiscal practices to procure and allocate resources commensurate with growth and sustainability;
- Expanding a K-16 pipeline to incentivize the creation of health professionals through extensive collaborative partnerships;
- Assessing data-driven outcomes to ensure academic rigor and student success;
- Regularly assessing data to identify student risk factors and to provide appropriate interventions as needed;
- Collaborating with community stakeholders to encourage healthy living through student and faculty engagement;
- Offering affordable education through endowment, scholarships, sound fiscal management and legislative advocacy; and
- Developing campus facilities to encourage healthy living environments while providing a revenue stream to contribute to the sustainability of the Arkansas Colleges of Health Education.

