



UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS
PULASKI TECHNICAL COLLEGE

SUMMER 2026

IMPACT



\$20M

INVESTMENT

Workforce Development Center

+8%

ENROLLMENT

Spring 2026

1,207

GRADUATES

Fall 2025 & Spring 2026

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THE BIG PICTURE

A Letter from Chancellor Summer DeProw

Welcome to the Spring 2026 edition of IMPACT! The academic year ended with a rip-roaring graduation ceremony where 608 graduates, 100 more than last year, participated in the festivities. It was standing room only in Barton Coliseum and Representative Denise Jones Ennett delivered an impassioned speech about success and the responsibilities of the college graduate. Each graduation is bittersweet watching the students rejoice in their accomplishments and knowing I may not ever see them again. Regardless, I am confident the UA - Pulaski Tech team prepared them well for their next steps.

The summer terms have started, and I am reflecting on all the great things happening at UA-Pulaski Tech. As I write this epistle, I am listening to one of my most favorite songs from my youth “Don’t Stop Believin,” by Journey. As the piano is made into the rock band’s central instrument, I’m thinking about the journey our campus has been on throughout the last three years.


We named our three-year strategic plan 2023-2026: Resilience, Purpose, Aspiration. Resilience represents the faculty and staff’s work to persevere through the pandemic. Purpose reminds us of our central mission, which is student success. The last word, aspiration, was chosen to set the tone for what we wanted to accomplish. And, accomplish we did! Here are just a few:

Year-over-year student enrollment increased by over 22%. Student persistence increased an average of 15%. Part-time student retention increased by 7%. Our teams reconstituted all program advisory councils in the applied technical science programs. Diamond Chef Arkansas was revived, earning over \$230,000 this year and the name Diamond Chef Arkansas was registered with the United States Trademarks and

Patents Office to honor our faculty in the Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management Institute. Student Senate was also rebuilt and the Student, Faculty and Staff Senates ratified a new campus-wide shared governance constitution and bylaws for each senate. All employees enjoyed the opportunity to expand their knowledge, skills, and student engagement through the Diamond Dog mini-grants, training, conferences, and externships.

UA - Pulaski Tech also received approximately \$30 million in grants and donations for construction, renovations, equipment, scholarships, and student engagement. We’ve started three new programs: avionics, energy grid reliability coordinator, and cybersecurity for critical infrastructure protection. Our teams also trained several Future Fit cohorts through Governor Sanders’ 10:33 Initiative and Mayor Scott’s Career Climb program. The highlight of the three years was seeing Senator Boozman and Central Arkansas come together to celebrate the new workforce center called Project L.I.F.T., which means “lifting individuals for future talent.”

This fall we will announce our new strategic plan. This plan will build on our accomplishments over the last three years. We have not named the plan yet but words such as believe, journey, engage, lift, accelerate, and excellence all come to mind as I close this letter. Regardless of the words we will use to describe the next three years, everyone is welcome, loved, and respected at UA - Pulaski Tech. Join us!



Dr. Summer L. DeProw
Chancellor, UA-Pulaski Technical College



COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

Board of Visitors



Amy Pierce - President of Bank Strategic Solutions - Term ends 2026

Christopher Dickie - CEO of Peak State Recovery - Term ends 2027

Brian Day - Executive Director, Port of Little Rock - Term ends 2029

Jennifer Maune - UA-PTC Graduate, MasterChef Finalist - Term ends 2030

Chancellor's Executive Council



Dr. Ana Hunt - Provost and Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs

Rita Fleming - Vice Chancellor of Finance and Administration

Amanda Kennedy - Interim Vice Chancellor of Finance and Administration

Ashley Henry-Saorrono - Vice Chancellor of Enrollment Management and Student Life

Laurie Ann Ross - Vice Chancellor of Advancement and Executive Director of the UA-PTC Foundation

Ken Wester - Interim Chief Information Officer

Foundation Board of Directors

Executive Committee - Jimmy Alessi (Chair), Wes Thomas (Vice Chair), Russell Mathis (Secretary)

Board Members - Andy Arnold, Adam Bradford, Renata Jenkins Byler, Ashley Carper, Rajesh Chokhani, Catherine DeVito, Deran Ford, Rocky Goodman, Ed Holman, Hon. Ashley Welch Hudson, Neill Linebarier, Tim McMennamy, Eric Nash, Lance Restum, Pamela Smith, Errin Stanger, Scott Strzelecki, Joyce Taylor, Lisa Teer, Rob Tillman

Foundation Advisory Committee - Sharon Heflin and Daniel Oberste

Ex-officio Faculty and Staff Representatives - Amber Lewis and Braden Taylor

NEW WORKFORCE TRAINING CENTER

\$20 Million Investment Secured



SPECIAL THANKS TO

U.S. SENATOR
JOHN BOOZMAN

LITTLE ROCK
REGIONAL
CHAMBER

Port of
Little Rock



A major step forward for regional workforce education took center stage May 7 at the Little Rock Port Authority as University of Arkansas–Pulaski Technical College hosted a celebratory event to showcase a new, state-of-the-art workforce training center—a project made possible by a massive \$20 million investment.

U.S. Sen. John Boozman joined university officials and community leaders at the Port Authority to highlight how the upcoming facility will transform central Arkansas's economic landscape. The center, funded through congressionally directed spending secured by Boozman in the federal appropriations bills, represents a powerful partnership between UA-PTC, the Little Rock Port Authority, and the Little Rock Regional Chamber.

"This investment will equip the University of Arkansas - Pulaski Technical College with the resources needed to train the next generation of Arkansans to step into skilled careers," Boozman noted of the project's vision.

Strategically located at 10600 Industrial Harbor Drive, right next to the Port Authority offices, the center was designed to serve as a direct talent pipeline for local manufacturing and logistics industries. The flexible, reconfigurable space will address the precise needs of area manufacturers, who collectively employ nearly 7,000 workers. Inside, students will find high-voltage

lineman training areas, robotics and automation instruction, and customized equipment tailored to specific corporate processes.

The facility's location on land provided by the Port Authority ensures maximum accessibility for employers. It lands at a critical time for the region, supporting the arrival of international newcomers like Elopak and Faymonville Group, alongside major local expansions at Dassault Falcon Jet and Welspun.

Currently, around 11,000 workers from 48 different counties commute to the Port of Little Rock for high-paying positions. With regional unemployment rates staying low, the training center aims to bring those currently outside the workforce into these stable, high-paying careers by providing them with life-sustaining credentials.

The launch of this project aligned perfectly with the University of Arkansas System's strategic plan to remain highly responsive to statewide economic priorities, cementing UA-PTC's role as a primary engine for central Arkansas's workforce development.



ENROLLMENT UPDATE

8% Spring Semester Increase, Boosted by 8-Week Terms



High school students tour the Main Campus for the Career Institute Exploration Day.

UA - Pulaski Tech saw an 8% increase in student headcount compared to Spring 2025, as 2026 Spring Semester enrollment numbers were updated to include the second eight-week semester. The total student headcount is 4,917, which includes the 16-week Spring Semesters and two eight-week semesters.

266 students enrolled in the second eight-week term without having taken classes in the 16-week or first eight-week semesters, compared to 227 students in Spring 2025, an increase of 17.2%.

Students have responded positively to the increased availability of the eight-week sessions since the college expanded the offerings. The expanded range of choices accommodates students' busy lives as well as their learning styles.

"The popularity of our eight-week semesters demonstrates how offering flexible schedules has a positive impact on our students, who often juggle family responsibilities and full-time employment," said UA-PTC Chancellor Summer DeProw. "Based on application data, we are on track for maintaining growth in enrollment in fall semester."

UA-PTC's enrollment is 68% female and 32% male, with an average age of 27 and an average course load of nine credit hours.

39% of UA-PTC's students enroll to earn technical certificates and degrees designed to facilitate direct entry into the workplace in fields such as medical professions and advanced manufacturing. 51% are enrolled in Associate of Arts or Associate of Science curricula designed

to satisfy requirements of the first half of a four-year degree. These students may transfer to UA Little Rock, UA Fayetteville, or many other four-year institutions in Arkansas. Specifically, UA-PTC graduates who transfer to UA Fayetteville or UA Little Rock pay the same tuition as UA-PTC, which yields substantial savings for students.

UA - Pulaski Tech's enrollment includes students attending the college's Main Campus in North Little Rock, Little Rock-South on Interstate 30, Aerospace Technology Center near the North Little Rock Airport, online classes, and high school students taking concurrent college classes.

OVERALL ENROLLMENT GROWTH

↑ 10%

Comparison of Fall 2024 & Spring 2025 - Fall 2025 & Spring 2026

Headcount might be duplicated.

DEGREE OR CERTIFICATE SEEKING

↑ 22%

YOY ENROLLMENT GROWTH
2ND 8-WEEK SEMESTER

↑ 8%

YOY ENROLLMENT GROWTH SSCH
(STUDENT SEMESTER CREDIT HOURS)

Comparison of Spring 2024/25 - Spring 2025/26

NON-CREDIT WORKFORCE TRAINING

↑ 21%

TRAINING HOURS

↑ 83%

COMPLETIONS

Comparison of Spring 2023/24 - Spring 2024/25



GRADUATION

UA - Pulaski Tech held its commencement exercises for the Class of 2026 on Saturday, May 16, at Barton Coliseum.

686 students participated in the formal ceremony and 1,207 graduates earned degrees or certificates as friends and families cheered their loved ones' success.







Arkansas State Rep. Denise Jones Ennett delivered the keynote address, offering encouraging perspectives to the graduates as they transition into their careers or further academic pursuits.

Following established tradition, members of the UA - Pulaski Tech Board of Visitors assisted in the ceremony. UA System Trustee Judd Deere and UA System Vice President for Academic Affairs Michael Moore attended to help recognize the graduates' accomplishments.

See the entire ceremony at the link below.

[UA-PTC Graduation 2026](#)







CONGRATS!

UA-PTC Class of 2026

Always a Diamond Dog



ADVANCEMENT LEADERSHIP

Laurie Ann Ross - VC Advancement, ED UA-PTC Foundation



A familiar face returned home to central Arkansas earlier this year to head up advancement efforts at University of Arkansas–Pulaski Technical College. Laurie Ann Ross, a North Little Rock native with nearly a quarter-century of fundraising and development experience, was named the college's vice chancellor of advancement and executive director of the UA-PTC Foundation.

Ross, who officially stepped into the role on Jan. 26, took over management of all fundraising, private gifts, and special events for the college. Her responsibilities also stretched into the cultural heart of the campus, where she assumed administrative oversight for the Center for Humanities and Arts (CHARTS) Theater and the Windgate Art Gallery.

For UA-PTC Chancellor Summer DeProw, bringing Ross on board was a major win for the institution's long-term goals.

"Laurie Ann Ross is a veteran fundraising professional with deep ties to our community," DeProw said at the time of the

announcement. "Her expertise and experience will further enhance UA–Pulaski Tech's ability to ensure student success and prepare graduates for the workforce."

Ross' career spans more than 24 years, largely defined by high-impact fundraising campaigns across major universities. Most recently, she spent five years as the director of development for general university at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. While at SMU, she was a key player in the ambitious \$1.5 billion SMU Ignited campaign, where she secured \$1.5 million to renovate student spaces and another \$500,000 for the university's Taos campus in New Mexico.

Before her time in Texas, Ross spent over a decade within the University of Arkansas System. At UAMS, she served as senior director of development, managing a major donor portfolio for the medical center and leading institutional advancement events. Earlier in her career, at UA Little Rock, she helped secure two endowments worth over \$1 million each from the Willard and Pat Walker Foundation to support the nursing department and coordinated major fundraising events that generated hundreds of thousands of dollars for the fine arts.

When her appointment was announced, Ross expressed enthusiasm for applying that extensive higher education background to UA-PTC's mission.

"UA–Pulaski Tech is a leader in education and workforce development for central Arkansas," Ross said. "I am honored to have the opportunity to partner with Chancellor DeProw, the Foundation board, faculty, staff and students to advance the mission of UA-Pulaski Tech with our partners across our city and state."

Ross earned both a bachelor's and a master's degree in communication from UA Little Rock. Beyond her professional achievements, she remained heavily invested in community service, serving on boards for the Presbyterian Village Retirement Community, the River City Men's Chorus, and the Susan G. Komen Foundation.

NEW ENDOWMENT

John P. Gill Endowment establishes Chair of Paralegal Technology



The University of Arkansas – Pulaski Technical College Foundation announces a new endowment established by John P. Gill along with his wife, Marjem, and their children, Elizabeth, Ward, and David Gill. The new Chair of Paralegal Technology in the college's School of Technical and Professional Sciences honors a career of exceptional legal service.

The endowment was created to recognize Desi Diane Gipson, a paralegal who has worked alongside Gill for more than 40 years. John P. Gill, a founding partner of the Gill Ragon Owen law firm, established the gift along with his family.

“The Gill family has valued Desi's years of service beyond words,” said John Gill. “Thus, this heartfelt gesture that honors her and benefits the UA-PTC Paralegal Technology Program with the hopes of ‘creating more Desis.’”

The gift provides a significant boost to the UA-PTC Paralegal Technology program, which prepares students for the legal field through an Associate of Applied Science, a Technical Certificate, and a Certificate of Proficiency. The curriculum focuses on essential skills including legal research, document preparation, and professional ethics.

This new fund builds upon a long-standing relationship between the Gill Ragon Owen firm and the college. The program is also supported by the existing Charles C. Owen and Carolyn D. Owen Endowed Scholarship, which was created by the

firm to honor its President Emeritus and longtime administrator.

“We are deeply grateful to the Gill family for their generosity and their vision,” said UA-PTC Vice Chancellor for Advancement Laurie Ann Ross. “By investing in our students, they are ensuring that the next generation of paralegals is equipped with the same dedication and skill that Ms. Gipson has modeled for four decades.”

Contact UA-PTC Foundation to learn more or donate.

 www.uaptc.edu/foundation

 advancement@uaptc.edu

 [501-812-2387](tel:501-812-2387)



UA PULASKI TECH

THEATER

AT THE CENTER FOR HUMANITIES AND ARTS



OPEN HOUSE

June 23, 2026 ★ 3-6 P.M.



Enjoy the music of Pattern Blu



Visit the Windgate Gallery



Sample treats from UA-PTC's Culinary School

Watch the 2026/27 Season Announcement Teaser

SAVE THE DATE



FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 2026

COUNTRY CLUB OF ARKANSAS

8A.M. & 1:30P.M. TEE TIMES

**This isn't just a day on the course—
it's an opportunity to change a student's future.**

Funds raised support the P.G. & Melanie Bradford Scholarship, benefiting UA-Pulaski Technical College students helping them pursue a career in Healthcare, Culinary Arts, or Technical Studies.

While tournament participation is by invitation,
Everyone can be part of the impact.

**Learn more or make a gift to the
P.G. & Melanie Bradford Scholarship**

Sponsorship & Team Information

UA-PTC Advancement

Advancement@uaptc.edu | 501-812-2211

[UAPTC.EDU/GOLF](https://uaptc.edu/golf)

Donate to Student Scholarships

DIAMOND ARKANSAS®

The kitchen simmered with excitement on April 16 as the UA-PTC Foundation hosted its signature fundraising event, Diamond Chef Arkansas® 2026. Held at the UA-PTC Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management Institute, the high-stakes, Iron Chef-style competition brought together local culinary professionals, eager students, and enthusiastic community members for an unforgettable evening of food and philanthropy.

When the timers buzzed and the final plates were scored, Team McFadden took home the coveted 2026 Championship title. Guided by Mentor Chef Brayan McFadden, UA-PTC student competitors Kelly Webb



ND CHIEF

2026





and Twanda Trader pulled off a spectacular final dish to win the crown. Their victory came after a grueling two-round face-off that tested six chef teams, culminating in a mystery basket challenge that pushed the final three teams to their creative limits.



Co-chaired by Emily and Witt Stephens, the event served as a powerful showcase for UA-PTC's impact on central Arkansas. Beyond the intense action in the competition lab, attendees enjoyed an evening packed with culinary competition, a wine pull, a unique culinary-themed auction, and diverse tasting stations provided by a variety of local restaurants. VIP guests also enjoyed second-story lounge access featuring exclusive cocktails and hands-on baking opportunities.

More importantly, the evening generated critical support for the campus community. As the foundation's premier fundraiser, Diamond Chef Arkansas® raises essential funds for student scholarships, academic success initiatives, and vital equipment upgrades for the culinary program.



The evening's success was made possible by a generous lineup of community partners. The Stephens Group served as the presenting sponsor, alongside major support from Alessi Keyes Construction, Allegra Print and Imaging, Arkansas Health & Wellness, Bank OZK, and Ben E. Keith Foods, among many other dedicated local businesses. Thanks to their generosity, UA-PTC can continue transforming passionate students into the region's next generation of culinary and hospitality leaders.



Mark your calendars for the next Diamond Chef Arkansas® on April 22, 2027!

WORKFORCE SUMMIT

Industry Leaders and Students Tackle Big Questions



As artificial intelligence and shifting labor trends continue to redefine the American economy, UA - Pulaski Tech is positioning Central Arkansas at the forefront of the conversation. The college hosted its second annual Workforce Summit on Economic Development and AI on April 9, 2026. The event brought together educators, policymakers, and industry leaders to tackle labor force participation and the expanding role of artificial intelligence in Central Arkansas.

Building on the success of the inaugural event, this year's summit focused heavily

on driving regional growth and attracting new businesses. Over a breakfast buffet provided by the UA-PTC Culinary Arts and Hospitality Management Institute, UA-PTC Chancellor Dr. Summer DeProw welcomed attendees with an updated look at the highly anticipated Workforce Training Center at the Little Rock Port.

The morning featured several rapid-fire panels composed of prominent local experts. Dr. Ana Hunt, Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and Provost, moderated a lively session on the innovations and disruptions of AI. The panel featured valuable perspectives from Amy Pierce,

President of GNA Advisors; Uday Akkaraju, CEO of Bond AI; Cory Boelkens, AI Systems Builder; and Justin Lareau, Vice President of Analytics and IT at Lexicon.

Shifting the focus to local talent pipelines, Career Services Coordinator Robbie Gill highlighted a group of standout UA-PTC students. Panelists included Culinary Arts student Alyssa Frisby, Benjamin Hampton-Duck, Jr. from the UA-PTC Welding program, Technology and Engineering student Sydney Wilson, and Respiratory Therapy student Katelyn Jackson. The students shared firsthand experiences

ENERGY GRID PROGRAM

Powering Arkansas' Energy Infrastructure



about how technical education prepares graduates for the modern workforce.

Later, Sharon Cantrell, Executive Director of UA-PTC's Business and Industry Center, led a critical discussion on increasing career pathway options. She was joined by state workforce leaders including Cody Waits, Executive Director of Workforce Connections at the Department of Commerce; Eric Atchison, Vice President of Strategic Research for the ASU System; Cathy Riggins, Founder/CEO of C.L.R. Educational Consulting; and Lindsay Wallace, Secretary of the Arkansas Department of Corrections.



While attendees at the Workforce Summit discussed regional economic growth, a major solution was already up and running on the UA-PTC campus. Launched in January, the college's new Energy Systems Technology program is celebrating a successful first cohort, directly addressing critical labor shortages in the state's power sector.

Funded by a \$2 million state workforce grant, the cutting-edge program blends flexible online coursework with hands-on training in two high-wage fields: Grid Operations and Critical Infrastructure Protection, or grid cybersecurity.

The program's impact is already being felt in real time. The first cohort of students is currently attending classes, with many sponsored by top regional employers like Entergy, Southwest Power Pool, MISO, and Arkansas Electric Cooperatives to upskill their workers through specialized apprenticeships.

With the foundation successfully laid, momentum is building. Industry partners are now actively recruiting for two upcoming cohorts to step into this high-demand pipeline. Utilizing previews of completed online modules and the college's state-of-the-art Energy Grid Simulation Lab, the program is poised to expand its reach, ensuring Arkansas has a highly skilled, secure workforce ready to keep the lights on.

To wrap up the panel presentations, Laurie Ann Ross, Vice Chancellor for Advancement, hosted a session on community building and corporate recruitment. Featured speakers included Jack Thomas from the Little Rock Regional Chamber, alongside Walbridge Consulting advisors Gregory Burkart and Dennis Cuneo, who provided insight on how Central Arkansas can position itself favorably for industrial site selectors.

Following closing remarks by Markous Jewett, President and CEO of the Academies of Central Arkansas Foundation, participants concluded the event with guided tours of UA-PTC's state-of-the-art facilities, visiting the Machining and CNC Labs and the Energy Grid Simulation Lab.



MALACHI STEWARD

Alumnus Enters SMU Physics Ph.D. Program



When Malachi Steward stood on the commencement stage at UA–Pulaski Tech in May of 2023, he already represented the pinnacle of student success. Graduating with a perfect 4.0 GPA, an Associate of Science in Technology and Engineering, and a spot on the prestigious All-USA Academic Team, Steward’s journey was just getting started.

Now, the UA-PTC alumnus is taking a huge leap forward. Steward has been accepted into the Ph.D. program in Physics at Southern Methodist University (SMU) in Dallas, complete with a full tuition waiver and a teaching assistantship.

Steward’s path from North Little Rock to a doctoral program is a testament to what he calls "academic grit." While a student at UA-PTC, he served as president of Phi Theta Kappa and even helped fund a scholarship to inspire others overcoming

adversity. Remarkably, he balanced his rigorous engineering coursework with a passion for wildlife conservation, volunteering as a certified turtle rehabilitator and traveling as far as Sri Lanka to study sea turtles.

After transferring to SMU as a Gilman Scholar, Steward shifted his focus from wildlife to the world of particle physics. As he prepares to enter SMU’s Moody Graduate School, the former community college leader continues to prove that a two-year degree can be the ultimate launchpad.

“Malachi was a truly exemplary student who not only excelled as an individual, but he was a mentor and leader to his fellow students,” said MaryKate Snow, Associate Vice Chancellor for TRIO Programs and Veterans Services. “It’s gratifying to see him thriving today.”





UNIVERSITY *of* ARKANSAS

UAPTC

PULASKI TECHNICAL COLLEGE



MISSION

University of Arkansas – Pulaski Technical College provides access to high-quality education that promotes student learning and enables individuals to develop to their fullest potential.

Deans present awards at the annual Celebrating Student Milestones event.