



Building momentum for postsecondary success



Strong Start to Finish – an initiative supported by Education Commission of the States – is an emerging network of committed postsecondary leaders and philanthropists, working together to change institutional practice and policy across the nation and bring equity to education. We aim to significantly increase the number and proportion of low-income students, students of color and returning adults who succeed in college math and English and enter a program of study in their first year of college.

## **Strong Start Arkansas (SSARK)**

Arkansas Community Colleges in partnership with the Arkansas Department of Higher Education was awarded \$150,000 from the Kresge Foundation, as well as a matching allocation of an additional \$150,000 from Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson to serve as one of five Strong Start to Finish sites that serve as exemplars for scaling evidence-based practices.

Spearheaded by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, with additional implementation leadership from the Arkansas Community Colleges (ACC), SSA will partner with technical assistance providers as well as math and English faculty from all 22 public two-year and 10 four-year institutions to scale co-requisite course design in math and English to dramatically improve completion rates for underprepared students.

### **Priority Action Areas**

SSARK is focused on four priority action areas:

- Phasing out virtually all stand-alone remedial courses in English and math.
- Eliminating the use of a single placement test score for placing students into remedial instruction.
- Expanding co-requisite English Accelerated Learning Program (ALP).
- Establishing and expanding math pathways across all institutions.

### **Strategies at Scale**

Through the financial support from Kresge Foundation and the Governor's Office and through professional networks of Strong Start to Finish, SSARK will bridge the "last mile" by scaling the following reforms:

- Eliminate stand-alone remedial courses for most underprepared students and implement co-requisite courses.
- Place most underprepared students in gateway math and English with co-requisite support.
- Support institutions to develop a policy of using multiple measures for placement in gateway math and English.
- Ensure co-requisite courses will be available for each college level math course that is part of the Arkansas math pathways project.
- Provide in-depth, data-based technical assistance to leadership and faculty at all SSTF institutions using regional coordinators.
- Build out a comprehensive set of online resources on both the Dana Center and Complete College America's web platforms to ensure customized content focused on co-requisite implementation for practitioners.
- Conduct workshops, phone calls, and interactive virtual meetings for institutional teams (faculty, administrators, and advisors) on implementation, improvement, and growth of English and math co-requisites.

## Project Leadership and Campus Involvement

Strong Start Arkansas will be managed by a leadership team consisting of top leadership from the Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE), including **Dr. Jessie Walker**, Senior Associate Director for Academic Affairs/Research & Analytics and top leadership from Arkansas Community Colleges (ACC), including **Mike Leach**, Director of the Center for Student Success. Providing overall oversight and input on strategy and management matters to the leadership team will be top staff from the Governor's office and the Director of ADHE. This will ensure that the Governor's Office can support project implementation, and that the project is aligned with state policy priorities.

All 22 community colleges and 10 public four-year colleges in Arkansas will focus on redesigning foundational English and math courses based upon evidence-based practices, in accordance with the state's placement policy highlighted here: [https://static.ark.org/eeuploads/adhe/Student\\_Placement.pdf](https://static.ark.org/eeuploads/adhe/Student_Placement.pdf) and with the support of the Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin and Complete College America. Strong Start Arkansas plans to reach approximately 50,000 students a-year by 2020.

Arkansas Northeastern College  
Arkansas State University - Jonesboro  
Arkansas State University Beebe  
Arkansas State University Mid-South  
Arkansas State University Mountain Home  
Arkansas State University Newport  
Arkansas Tech University  
Black River Technical College  
College of the Ouachitas  
East Arkansas Community College  
Henderson State University  
National Park College  
North Arkansas College  
North West Arkansas Community College  
Ozarka College  
Phillips Community College of the University of Arkansas  
South Arkansas Community College

Southeast Arkansas College  
Southern Arkansas University  
Southern Arkansas University Tech  
University of Arkansas - Fayetteville  
University of Arkansas - Fort Smith  
University of Arkansas - Little Rock  
University of Arkansas - Medical Science\*  
University of Arkansas - Monticello  
University of Arkansas - Pine Bluff  
University of Arkansas Community College at Batesville  
University of Arkansas Community College at Hope/Texarkana  
University of Arkansas Community College at Morrilton  
University of Arkansas Cossatot  
University of Arkansas Pulaski Technical College  
University of Arkansas Rich Mountain  
University of Central Arkansas

*\*The University of Arkansas - Medical Science serves as a transfer partner for most institutions in Arkansas but does not provide gateway math and English courses. Therefore outcome data on gateway courses as required by SSTF will not be reported.*

## Key Implementation Partnerships

Charles A. Dana Center at the University of Texas at Austin  
Complete College America

Strong Start to Finish is an initiative supported by Education Commission of the States and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Ascendium Education Group, and The Kresge Foundation.

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