



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## NWACC's Computer Networking Program Designated as a National Center of Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense

*NWACC is the first community college in Arkansas to receive designation.*

**BENTONVILLE, ARK. (June 27, 2023)** – The National Security Agency (NSA) and Department of Homeland Security recently designated Northwest Arkansas Community College's (NWACC) Computer Information Systems (CIS) – Networking program as a National Center for Academic Excellence in Cyber Defense (CAE-CD) for five years, through the 2028 academic year. The designation is awarded to regionally accredited academic institutions that offer quality cybersecurity related degrees and certificates and meet rigorous requirements to prepare students for the nation's cybersecurity workforce. NWACC is the first community college in Arkansas to receive this designation.

"Such a significant recognition demonstrates the quality of NWACC's computer networking program and how well equipped our students and graduates are to participate in the national initiative to build, secure and defend our nation's cyber infrastructure," said NWACC CIS-Networking Program Coordinator Shankar Ravi.

NWACC joins the University of Arkansas and University of Arkansas at Little Rock as the three institutions in the state to receive designations from the NSA. As the first Arkansas community college to be designated, NWACC is honored to be recognized for its commitment to excellence in cybersecurity education regionally and nationally.

"CAE-CD designated institutions are viewed as leaders in cybersecurity education," explained project originator and NWACC Director of Policy and Compliance Kimberly Bertschy. "This recognition will help NWACC attract students and faculty, funding opportunities and collaboration with government agencies, four-year institutions and industry partners."

Institutions that receive a CAE-CD designation have met rigorous requirements set forth by the NSA. The National Centers of Academic Excellence in Cybersecurity (NCAE-C) aims to create and manage a collaborative of cybersecurity educational programs that:

- Establish standards for cybersecurity curriculum and academic excellence
- Include competency development among students and faculty
- Value community outreach and leadership in professional development
- Integrate cybersecurity practice within the institution across academic disciplines
- Actively engage in solutions to challenges facing cybersecurity education

The NCAE-C program is managed by NSA's National Cryptologic School. Federal partners include the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)/National Initiative on Cybersecurity Education (NICE), National Science Foundation (NSF), Department of Defense Office of the Chief Information Officer (DoD-CIO) and U.S. Cyber Command (USCYBERCOM).

As part of the NCAE-C community, NWACC has access to resources to aid student success through workshop facilitation, marketing efforts and communication tools. The NCAE-C community actively engages with government representatives to provide educational workshops, opportunities for funding, conferences and working groups. The community also partners with industries to ensure that students entering the next-generation cyber workforce have the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities for a successful career in cybersecurity.

**About NorthWest Arkansas Community College (NWACC):**

NWACC is an accredited, public two-year institution that serves and strengthens its surrounding communities by helping students maximize their potential and exceed expectations. With state-of-the-art facilities, NWACC provides excellent academic instruction, workforce training and personalized attention from highly respected faculty, staff and administrators. For more information about NWACC, visit [www.nwacc.edu](http://www.nwacc.edu).

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## NWACC Expands Integrated Design Program with National Science Foundation Grant

**BENTONVILLE, AR (May 2, 2023)** - NorthWest Arkansas Community College (NWACC) recently received a \$618,319 Advanced Technological Education (ATE) grant through the National Science Foundation (NSF) to expand the college's integrated design program's disciplines and further develop its design curriculum to include an emphasis on product development and package design.

"We are thrilled to receive this grant from the National Science Foundation. This funding will allow NWACC to continue to innovate and expand its integrated design program's interdisciplinary design thinking curriculum," said NWACC NSF Grant Director Elysia Contreras Springer. "Students will be further exposed to the program's multiple degree tracks while gaining hands-on learning and industry-ready credentials."

NWACC's original integrated design program included three disciplines: fine art, construction technology and computer aided design. With the ATE grant funding, the program will now include two additional disciplines, graphic design and engineering technology, further strengthening the program to be an interdisciplinary hub for creativity and innovation.

The integrated design program will also expand its curriculum to include product development and package design, a rapidly growing sector of design and business in Northwest Arkansas. The curriculum will include design thinking, prototyping, problem-solving and hands-on projects and collaborations with industry professionals. Students will develop critical skills to support retail suppliers, start-ups, and many other creative industries.

In addition to curriculum development, the grant funds will go toward purchasing specialized equipment for the Integrated Design Lab, expanding community workshops and classes, and enhancing professional development opportunities in design thinking and sustainability for college and K-12 faculty.

The grant will also allow NWACC to continue to grow its design industry partnerships by adding more industry leaders on to the Integrated Design Advisory Board and creating a business and industry leadership team. Through this type of collaboration, the college's integrated design faculty will be able to better incorporate hands-on training with specialized equipment and provide students with relevant workforce skills.

To learn more about NWACC's Integrated Design program, visit [www.nwacc.edu/integrateddesign](http://www.nwacc.edu/integrateddesign).

**About National Science Foundation (NSF) Advanced Technological Education (ATE) project grant:**

The [National Science Foundation](http://www.nsf.gov) (NSF) is an independent federal agency that supports fundamental research and education across all fields of science and engineering. NSF funds reach all 50 states through grants to nearly 2,000 colleges, universities and other institutions. The foundation's [Advanced Technological Education](http://www.nsf.gov/ate) (ATE) program focuses on two-year Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) and the education of technicians for the high-technology fields that drive our nation's economy. The ATE program supports curriculum development; professional development of college faculty and secondary school teachers, career pathways and other activities.

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## **NWACC to Host Juneteenth Celebration**

**WHO, WHAT:**

Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States, and NorthWest Arkansas Community College (NWACC) is partnering with the University of Arkansas African & African American Studies to host a celebration with guest speakers, art activities, games, live music and delicious food, as well as a panel discussion and live recording of KUAF's podcast Undisciplined. They will be discussing the topic of ongoing movements towards freedom in Northwest Arkansas. Bring the family, friends, blankets and lawn chairs!

**ACTIVITIES:**

- Guest speakers
  - Including Reverend Stephan Ivey, Pastor of Children & Youth at St. James Baptist Church
- Panel discussion and live recording of KUAF's podcast Undisciplined
- Poetry, art and history exhibits and yard games
- Therapeutic art by My-T-By-Design
  - Pre-sketched canvases and clean canvas art project for the first 50 people who visit their booth.
  - Take-home goodies for all ages, including personal tote bags.
- Live music by Akeem Kemp Band
- Food from Kinley's Soul Food, Meaux Beignet and YourmetNow
- Live painting by Artist Kinya Christian, which will be silent auctioned.
  - Part of the proceeds will go toward an NWACC scholarship.
- CB to You: Mobile Art Lab
  - Weave your own friendship bracelets and necklaces and pick up an exhibition coupon to visit the special exhibition at the museum: [The Dirty South: Contemporary Art, Material Culture, and the](#)

[Sonic Impulse](#). The exhibition examines visual and musical traditions of southern Black culture in the past and influences now throughout the American South and contemporary art.

**WHEN:** Saturday, June 11<sup>th</sup> from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m.

**WHERE:** NWACC campus - One College Drive, Bentonville, Arkansas.  
In the field outside of NWACC's Becky Paneitz Student Center.

**ADDITIONAL INFO:** Event attendance and art activities are free. Food will be available for sale.  
Learn more about the event at [www.nwacc.edu/Juneteenth](http://www.nwacc.edu/Juneteenth)

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## NWACC Foundation to use Grant to Establish a Trails Trade School

*First of its kind to be established in the nation's mountain biking capital of the world.*

**BENTONVILLE, Ark. (January 10, 2023)** – NorthWest Arkansas Community College's (NWACC) Foundation was recently awarded an \$8,000,000 grant from the Walton Family Charitable Support Foundation to establish a trails trade school with a state-of-the-art lab. Students will be able to gain certification in trail building and maintenance and build upon these credentials by earning a bike technician certification and an associate degree in construction technology or general technology.

The trails trade school's goals are to produce a workforce of certified trail technicians for NWA businesses, ensure access to regional bicycle trails, promote responsible environmental practices, and further the outdoor recreation collaboration among area organizations. Research, curriculum development and renovation of the college's former physical plant into a trails lab are planned to begin in 2023 and the school is scheduled to open in fall of 2024.

"We are excited to offer Northwest Arkansas a unique trails trade program that will be the first of its kind because of how it uniquely builds upon the college's bicycle technician, construction and general technology programs, offering graduates a range of professional pathways," explained NWACC Dean of Workforce & Economic Development Dr. Megan Bolinder. "The grant and trails trade school will help standardize workforce training in trail skills, allow NWACC to respond to the community's need for trails of all types - mountain bike, hiking, equestrian, shared use, etc.- and elevate the outdoor recreation economy in Northwest Arkansas."

"Our region has an incredible opportunity to solidify Northwest Arkansas as a major hub for outdoor recreation and our academic institutions play a big role in that," said Charitable Support Foundation Chairman Steuart Walton. "This new trade school will drive innovation in trail building here in the mountain biking capital of the world, throughout our state, and across the nation."

NWACC's trails trade school educational pathways will include a Certificate of Proficiency, a Technical Certificate in Trail Building and Associates of Applied Science in General Technology or Construction with an emphasis in Trail Building, and eventually apprenticeship pathways. Those who want to pursue further education can transfer their college credits to Arkansas Tech University to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Organizational Leadership online, to John Brown University to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Construction or to the University of Arkansas to pursue a Bachelor of Arts in Outdoor Recreation Leadership and/or a graduate certificate in Landscape Architecture.

NWACC plans to further partner with the University of Arkansas to develop additional trail programming pathways in the Fay Jones School of Architecture, the Walton College of Business, and the Outdoor Recreation and Leadership areas, and solidify these pathways through MOUs and 2+2s.

Grant funding will also be used to further renovate NWACC's former physical plant to house the new trails trade school's lab space, classroom, heavy equipment and fine tools.

NWACC plans to enhance current partnerships with trails management leaders such as the Professional Trail Builders Association and American Trails, and to extend collaboration with The Office of Outdoor Recreation and various government, land management, non-profits and private stakeholders to create an internationally recognized hub for innovation in trail design, maintenance and workforce and employer certification.

Another grant objective is to work toward establishing a Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) for Sustainable Trails with the Department of Labor so that the trail building industry will have a specific category, be able to obtain data and employment trends and qualify for federal and state funding available to SOC designated trade apprenticeships.

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#### **About NorthWest Arkansas Community College (NWACC) Foundation:**

The NWACC Foundation is a separate non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that serves as the philanthropic arm of NorthWest Arkansas Community College. The foundation supports NWACC students, faculty, alumni and the greater community by providing resources for growth and development. Private funds raised by the NWACC Foundation enable NWACC to empower lives, inspire learning and strengthen community through accessible, affordable and quality education.

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## **Op-Ed for NWACC Board Chairman Joe Spivey**

As 2020 quickly approaches, I find myself reflecting and feeling so grateful for the opportunity to serve as the chairman of the NorthWest Arkansas Community College (NWACC) Board of Trustees for the past two years. Much of the college's many accomplishments – opening a new Integrated Design Lab and a Washington County facility, meeting the great demands of the region's workforce, increasing its diverse student population, and elevating the culinary programming at Brightwater – have become a reality because of the sacrifices and dedication of local business owners, banks, educators, community leaders, philanthropists, school administrations and the college's founders.

Frequently, I remind my fellow trustees of NWACC's humble beginnings and to never forget the sacrifices made by those early pioneers who stood up against long odds to bring us the college we cherish today. They truly sacrificed their personal and professional reputations to bring this journey to its destination of a comprehensive community college. I tend to relate their early mindset to a famous quote by Robert F. Kennedy.

*"Some men see things as they are and say, 'Why?' I dream things that never were and say, 'Why not?'"*

It was this type of philosophy that began the process of establishing NWACC in 1989 as a college without walls and strategically appropriating an original budget of \$50,000. NWACC employees and its many supporters were determined to see the new college serve the region. As the area experienced economic growth and businesses were in need of skilled workers, the college responded by developing academic programs, purchasing land, building a campus in Bentonville, and now expanding even further into Washington County, and growing its budget to \$43 million. NWACC now boasts a faculty and staff of over 800 and is a major cog in the economic engine of NWA.

This fall, NWACC opened the Integrated Design Lab (IDL). The lab's concept is that of collaboration and integration, where form and function, visual art and construction trades work side by side. This facility also provides more space to grow high-demand trade and apprenticeship programs.

The newly opened Washington County facility will welcome close to 800 students in January and offer general education courses and expand essential health professions programs. This long-sought facility will consolidate various leased spaces, providing one convenient location and a truer collegiate environment.

This school year, NWACC experienced a four-percent increase in student enrollment, generating an increase in diversity among the college's demographics. Students of minority, veteran and international background continue to make NWACC their choice for higher education. It is by design that the college

undertakes several initiatives aimed at increasing the recruitment and retention of minority students, such as the college's Learning, Improvement, Fun and Empowerment (LIFE) program. Now in its eighth year, LIFE plays an important role in student retention and program completion.

NWACC's Adult Education program also serves a diverse clientele in a variety of academic pursuits ranging from English language acquisition to GED preparation. Our community can also find pride in the college's veteran's assistance program, a model worth replicating by two-year colleges.

With the recent addition of Executive Director Marshall Shafkowitz, the NWACC's culinary school, Brightwater, has plans to elevate its programming in artisanal food, pastry and baking and beverage management, while also teaching the importance of enriching our community through sustainability and food waste reduction. This is another model program that we believe other colleges will strive to replicate.

I truly believe our region is a better place today because of NWACC. Every day, I meet community members who have attended NWACC and now have a two or four-year degree and have acquired trade skills, started a new profession, and/or have experienced a higher quality of life.

It has been an honor and a privilege serving as board chairman, and I appreciate the faith and confidence that my fellow trustees have shown by asking me to serve in this honored leadership capacity. I look forward to continuing on the board, and offer my full support to Mr. Todd Schwartz, our incoming chairman, along with President Dr. Evelyn E. Jorgenson. She deserves much credit, leading this college to new milestones in programming and building during her six years here.

A big thank you to our stakeholders in the Rogers and Bentonville school districts for the past 30 years. Because of you, we now have the largest community college in Arkansas that improves lives throughout the region.

And once more, we are beholden to our early pioneers such as Dr. Bob Burns, Dr. Becky Paneitz, Dr. Donald White, Bob Crafton, Dick Trammel, Dr. John Bland, Frank Tillery, Howard Smith, EvaLena Mayo, Jim Hall, Carolyn Walton, Sandy Brannan and Doyleene Fuqua and legislators, Dick Barclay and Kim Hendren. We will forever be thankful to the C. Don Whitaker family who gave the first philanthropic major gift to this young enterprise.

Cheers to the New Year and NWACC's continuous growth and impact on our community.

- Joe Spivey, NWACC Chair, Board of Trustees.

(Joe Spivey is the current chairman of the NWACC Board of Trustees and Senior Vice President of First National Bank. He may be reached at [joe.spivey@fnbank.net](mailto:joe.spivey@fnbank.net) )