

2

We should be the premier resource in the state of Arkansas for delivering timely and relevant education and skills needed by industry and workforce in public and private sectors here in the state of Arkansas, through the creation of innovative academic programs for our students. This includes new and relevant programs at the undergraduate and graduate levels as well as post-baccalaureate certificates that provide additional education needed in areas like data science to healthcare law.

I have been in higher education for more than 35 years and our colleges and universities are currently facing the most volatile period of time that I can remember during that period. Many have begun to question our value and many stakeholders have growing and changing expectations about who we are, what we do, and how we do it. It is becoming increasingly clear that to stay relevant in this dynamic and rapidly changing world we need to evolve and adapt if we are to reaffirm our value to society and address the changing expectations of others. Corporations, businesses and whole industries disappear if they don't remain relevant, and it seems clear that this relevancy is strongly tied to having a well-educated and modern workforce. That's where we come in: our university must continue to provide the private and public sectors with well-educated graduates who make a difference in the world, in addition to the cutting edge research done on our campus every day.

Some things we have taught for many years will always have value: critical thinking, creative problem solving, the ability to organize and elucidate complex ideas clearly, and the ability to deal with change in a very dynamic world. Many of these important skills come from the solid exposure we provide our students through the liberal arts. Indeed, a solid foundation in the liberal arts is the cornerstone of a college education and is still important and sought after by those who employ our students after graduation. Therefore, it is

important that this foundation be retained as we evolve and adapt to our rapidly changing world. And has always been the case, other skills needed by our students will be replaced by newer, more pressing needs and critical advancements in the workplace. Much of this revolves around advances in technology and the definition of what constitutes a particular job and a particular career. The challenge we face is to create curricula and programs that retain the best features of our existing foundational education while at the same time prepare our students for the realities of an ever-changing workplace.

Given the above, it seems imperative that we work closely and more directly with business and industry to modify existing degrees to meet current workforce needs, as well as develop innovative degree programs that respond to a changing world. This was the vision behind the recent establishment of a B.S. in Data Science here at the U of A. In response to a report released by Governor Hutchinson's Blue-Ribbon Commission on the Economic Competitiveness of Data Analytics and Computing in Arkansas, three U of A colleges—Fulbright, Engineering and Walton—came together in consultation with industry, philanthropic and government partners to create a new, multidisciplinary, multi-pathway degree that will serve our students and private sector partners well. The establishment of this degree provides a great template for future collaboration and coordination between our

academic colleges and industry partners, especially when clear state leadership has been shown. We need to constantly look for other opportunities such as this through better communication with our external partners and stakeholders. To this end, we plan to hire one or more private sector liaisons who will work closely with existing and potential private (and public) sector partners on how the university can design and offer a variety of post-baccalaureate educational opportunities that are innovative and timely. These liaisons will also play a key role in making sure that our private sector partners know more about the high quality graduates we produce while assisting businesses and industries in finding the talent they need from our pool of very talented graduates.

Earning a bachelor's degree has traditionally been thought of as the end of most people's formal education. However, given how rapidly people change jobs and sometimes whole careers as well as the rapidly changing demands people encounter in the workforce, lifelong learning and educational opportunities are needed now more than ever. It seems clear that in the future the initial degree won't provide all of the skills needed for the rest of an individual's working life. Indeed, perhaps one of the biggest changes we are seeing in higher education is the realization that baccalaureate degrees are increasingly becoming springboards into lifelong learning—the first step, not the last one. We need to be more involved in the lifelong learning process that is emerging. A big thing we can do is to create more post-baccalaureate certificate programs that provide additional education for Arkansans already in the workforce. Post-baccalaureate certificate programs typically include 4-6 courses that provide a great way to supplement your initial degree with new methods, ideas, and skills that can help you advance your career or simply stay abreast of the latest workforce trends.

Creation of post-baccalaureate certificate programs that provide additional education for Arkansans already in the workforce will continue to be important. We already offer a few of these programs, including the Cybersecurity Graduate Certificate (approved in 2018), Lean Six Sigma Graduate Certificate (approved in 2019), and the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages Graduate Certificate (approved in

2019). I believe that we are positioned well to become a leader in providing additional post-baccalaureate education. We can be more responsive to private sector needs by asking what is needed and not waiting to be approached by our potential private and public sector partners. We can be more responsive by creating methods for launching these educational programs as rapidly as possible. And, developing these kinds of programs and opportunities addresses another fundamental issue we are facing—creating new markets for the outstanding educational experiences we offer at the U of A as we face a declining number of high school students available for recruitment to campus.

Distance education is a way to make some of these post-baccalaureate education opportunities, as well as full degree programs, more accessible to people who are already in the workforce. One out of every 10 U of A students in academic year 2018-19 studied exclusively online. Over the same timeframe, four out of every 10 U of A students took at least one online course. Continued development of innovative distance programs will provide access, opportunity, and value. Indeed, we are making rapid progress. The university added 4 new master's and bachelor's degree programs and 6 new graduate certificate programs last year alone. Plans are also underway to develop between 9 to 12 new online programs in the near future. We're taking a more strategic approach based on data that can identify viable, market-driven online programs that directly meet our constituents' needs. This includes the creation of more professional master's degree programs, as well as more bachelor's degrees. And, to incentivize the development of new offerings, we will create a robust revenue sharing model that returns as much of the revenue as possible back to colleges where the programs originate. This revenue stream should be useful for supporting a range of activities in our academic units.

We also need to create additional 2+2 and 3+1 programs with other universities and community colleges around the state. Currently, the Bumpers College has a 3+1 in Poultry Science program with Arkansas State University and University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, whereby students can attend those colleges for three years before transferring to the UA campus to complete their final year. This enables our institutions to be

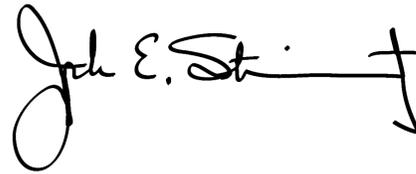
mutually supporting rather than competing, while also creating cost efficiencies. In recent years, the Walton College has developed several 2+2 programs, including with NorthWest Arkansas Community College, University of Arkansas, Pulaski Technical College, and North Arkansas College. The College of Engineering also has a 2+2 with UA Fort Smith for Electrical Engineering and Mechanical Engineering. These programs improve and expedite the transfer process, create opportunities, and help to ensure students aren't taking classes that don't transfer. It may also allow students to stay closer to home initially, save money, and make a commitment to earning their degree before transferring to the U of A for their final years.

I believe that it is also important that we bring the U of A experience to more off-campus locations instead of expecting students to come on campus for classes and programs. The executive education center in Little Rock that was created by the Sam M. Walton College of Business is an example. To this end, we should examine the possibility of creating a satellite campus to our north in Benton County to deliver courses and programs, especially post-baccalaureate opportunities, to employees of local businesses and industries. Many of these classes would necessarily be in the evening, and I believe we would find widespread interest if these

classes came without an additional 30-minute drive to Fayetteville (and back) after a full day of work. In describing our student success efforts, we have always said that we want to meet our students where they are. In this case, we need to consider the viability of meeting them literally where many of them are: Benton County. And to ensure cost efficiencies, perhaps co-locating the Rogers Global Campus facility at the same site would make sense.

In summary, the ultimate message here is that we need to be flexible, adaptive, collaborative, and efficient in the creation and delivery of courses and programs if we want to increase our value and relevance to students – wherever they reside, and at whichever point they are in their lives and careers.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joe E. Steinmetz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Joe Steinmetz,
Chancellor, University of Arkansas