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Ark. receives \$1M grant to boost college grad rate

LITTLE ROCK, Ark.

Nine Arkansas colleges and universities will focus on changing remediation programs and other efforts through a \$1 million grant aimed at increasing the state's college graduation rate, Gov. Mike Beebe and higher education officials announced Tuesday.

The state received the grant through Complete College America's Completion Innovation Challenge. The grant is financed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Beebe said the money will help the state address its lagging numbers in college completion rates. The state Department of Higher Education said in a report last year that less than 40 percent of students who enroll in Arkansas public universities obtain a degree within six years.

"This is the area that's being concentrated on because this is the one area we haven't been able to beat out chest about yet," Beebe said at a Capitol news conference to announce the grant.

Arkansas was one of ten states awarded grants through the program. The state will have 18 months to implement initiatives to enhance student success and close attainment gaps for traditionally underrepresented populations. Thirty-three states competed for the grants.

Interim Higher Education Director Shane Broadway said the state's efforts will focus on changing remediation programs at the nine schools. The schools participating are Arkansas State University-Beebe, Arkansas Northeastern College in Blytheville, North Arkansas College in Harrison, Southern Arkansas University-Tech in East Camden, Arkansas State University in Jonesboro, Arkansas Tech University in Russellville, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, University of Arkansas-Pine Bluff and the University of Central Arkansas.



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