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# Annual Report

ARKANSAS CENTER FOR  
DATA SCIENCES





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**data tells a story**

"LIFE EMPOWERED THROUGH DATA SCIENCE"

# MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN



ALL ARKANSANS SHOULD be proud when reading the following pages. I've worked in tech in this state for half a century, and as my companies have prospered, I've experienced first-hand the difficulty of finding enough talented IT professionals to keep our businesses growing. People are the key to any company's success, and Arkansans are smart, resourceful, and hard working. For years I hoped for some entity like the Arkansas Center for Data Sciences to come along and help nurture what I knew could be—with the proper training—a hotbed of homegrown tech talent.

The non-profit ACDS was formed, in late 2018, as a result of Governor Asa Hutchinson's Blue Ribbon Commission on "advancing the economic competitiveness of data analytics and computing in Arkansas." I'm honored to be ACDS' Chairman, and since its official launch as a tiny three-person staff in early 2019, I've watched this group grow and take root all across this state, forming vital partnerships with employers and educators and government agencies to facilitate lasting change and a bright new future for Arkansas. Data tells a story, and on the following pages you'll find that it's a very impressive story indeed.

--Charles D. Morgan, Chairman,  
Arkansas Center for Data Sciences

## ABOUT ACDS

The Arkansas Center for Data Sciences (ACDS) is a non-profit dedicated to building and retaining top data science and information technology talent in the state of Arkansas. We partner with companies large and small across all industries to facilitate apprenticeship programs.

### MISSION

Our mission is to increase the number of IT professionals produced by Arkansas educational institutions and employed by Arkansas corporations.

### VISION

Our vision is for Arkansas to become a global leader in the transformation of existing industries through the application of data analytics and related computing capabilities involving the integration of technical and business skills, advancement of talent pipelines, and ongoing upgrades to relevant workforce skills.

### GOALS

- Arkansans being hired by Arkansas companies
- More employers engaged & participating in registered IT apprenticeships
- Identify motivated talent and connect with engaged employers
- Increase an understanding of IT occupations and career paths
- Expand outreach into the IT community

# DIRECTOR'S REPORT



**Bill Yoder**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
ARKANSAS CENTER FOR  
DATA SCIENCES

THE ARKANSAS CENTER for Data Sciences (ACDS), in collaboration with the Department of Commerce's Office of Skills Development (OSD), was initially encouraged to focus on apprenticeship programs for IT occupations. The U.S. Department of Labor invests in these programs across the country, and we quickly learned that apprenticeships are the most cost-effective pathway to take people with passion and potential, train them in the specific skills that employers require, and put them in a rewarding career. The employer benefits, the employees and their families benefit, and our state has one more IT job with an Arkansan working for an Arkansas company.

Apprenticeship programs entail four major responsibilities, all managed by ACDS:

- **Client Development:** ACDS builds trusted relationships with Arkansas employers, learning their business and, in particular, the IT skills they require to support and grow that business. We explain apprenticeships as a "supplemental staffing strategy," taking the employers from an initial awareness, to a real interest, to finally a commitment and participation. We have met with more than 400 Arkansas employers.
- **Talent Acquisition:** ACDS started taking apprenticeship applications in July 2019, and to-date we have processed some 3,500 applicants. We assess, interview, coach, and provide an initial background check on potential apprenticeship candidates, winnowing them with each step, presenting only the most qualified to employers.
- **Training Partners:** We have compiled a catalogue of partners who have skilled, experienced instructors and relevant and current curriculum that can be customized to an employer's specific needs. Our priority has been to use Arkansas training partners, but for some occupations there are good reasons to work with national providers.
- **Project Management Office:** This is ACDS quality assurance. Our PMO experts manage all the steps in a minimum of a one-year apprenticeship. They do the tracking and reporting required by the Department of Labor and are involved with the training partners, the apprentices in each cohort, and the employers. They schedule cohort kick-offs and manage certificate and graduation ceremonies.

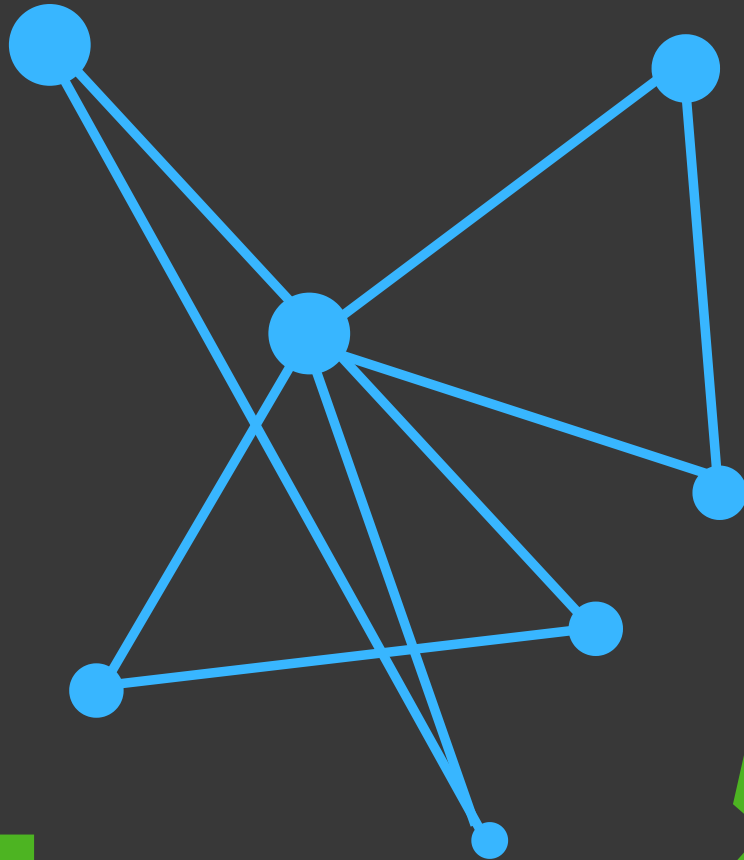
This team is exceptional. Partnering with the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, we applied for a Department of Labor grant and were awarded \$2,000,000 over four years, starting in March 2020. We launched our first cohorts in the fourth quarter of 2019 and had some aggressive goals for 2020, which were impacted by the pandemic. However, our quarterly meetings with the DOL brought some encouragement: "You guys are doing much better than most, believe me," they said. And just last week we learned that Arkansas finished 2nd in the nation for number of IT apprentices in 2020.

**TOP 5 STATES WITH  
THE HIGHEST NUMBER  
OF IT APPRENTICES IN 2020**

#1 South Carolina - 110  
**#2 Arkansas - 91**  
#3 Washington - 86

#4 Texas - 78  
#5 California - 69

# OUTREACH



ACDS hosts programs and events that educate, inform, and encourage participation in technology and data science. Regular communication and education through the ACDS website, social media, and newsletter were key to our outreach efforts in 2020.

# ARKANSAS

# EVENTS

BUILDING A COMMUNITY FOR TECH IN ARKANSAS

**35**

VIRTUAL  
EVENTS  
HELD

**7**

IN  
PERSON  
EVENTS  
HELD

**983**

ATTENDEES  
ACROSS ALL  
EVENTS

**3,653**

NEWSLETTER  
SUBSCRIBERS

## Tech After Five

MONTHLY NETWORKING EVENT (IN PERSON > VIRTUAL)

**357**

TAS  
ATTENDEES



## NEWSLETTER

Our subscriber list grew 4.4x from 838 in January 2020 to 3,653 and it's showing no signs of slowing down. Our contacts include: employers, state leadership, education partners, talent, and the general public. You can find all of our topics and posts on our website: [acds.co/blog](https://acds.co/blog)



# SOCIAL & SUBSCRIBERS

OUR FOLLOWERS BY THE NUMBERS

## Getting Social by Platform

OUR TOTAL FOLLOWERS ACROSS ALL SOCIAL PLATFORMS IS 1,587



19

NAW2020  
EVENTS  
STATEWIDE



## NATIONAL APPRENTICESHIP WEEK

Arkansas landed 2nd in the number of events held for 2020 (coming in behind Texas) for our region. ACDS was lead on 7 of the 19 events held in the state. These events ranged from apprenticeship program kick-offs and employer forums to Day in the Life sessions. All events were held virtually this year.

## Day In The Life: A Monthly Series

SPEAKERS SHARE ABOUT THEIR DAY-TO-DAY WORK



Marie Stacks  
Project Manager  
Boost Midwest



Nikiya Simpson  
Data Developer  
UAMS



Chelsay Hollon  
SOC Analyst  
Simmons Bank



Quint Heady  
Data Analyst  
Propertyys LLC

# PROGRAMS



ACDS' primary mission is to provide accelerated advanced training programs that can be applied to corporate careers in computer & data science with ACDS partners. Our DOL registered apprenticeship programs provide the curriculum to teach the required general skills. A portion of the curriculum is customizable, allowing corporations to teach their own specific culture, processes, and tools.

# CENTER



# APPRENTICESHIP

## ANNUAL OVERVIEW, GOALS & OBJECTIVES

### Apprentices 2020

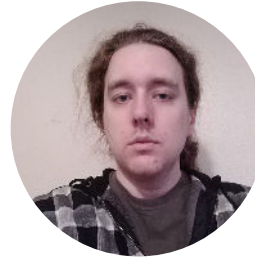
CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR RECENT APPRENTICE GRADUATES



JUSTICE BAKER  
QA Developer  
Metova



CLAY DRAPER  
QA Developer  
Movista



JAKE KOOIMAN  
QA Developer  
WhyteSpyder



NATHAN LESMANN  
QA Developer  
Movista



CHRISTOPHER MCNAMES  
QA Developer  
WhyteSpyder



JACOB SCHOTT  
QA Developer  
WhyteSpyder



JUSTIN TORRES  
QA Developer  
Movista

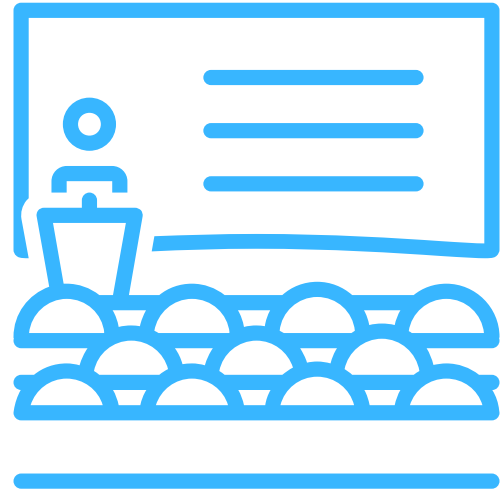
In 2020, a total of 91 apprentices registered under the ACDS sponsored DOL registered apprenticeship program. This included 30 companies from around the state of Arkansas and occupations such as: QA Java Developer, Cybersecurity Specialist, Data Analyst, Project Manager, RPA Developer, IT Generalist, SharePoint Developer, and .NET Developer among others.

*"Apprenticeship programs can help with both recruiting the talent and creating the skills, and doing it in record time."*

*- Charles D. Morgan, First Orion*

# PRE-APPRENTICESHIP

Pre-apprenticeship programs provide training to individuals to help them prepare for apprenticeships. We are proud to connect applicants with pre-apprenticeship courses through UAGC, funded by OSD and the AAPI grant (through NWAEDD). Courses provided to pre-apprentices in 2020 include *Introduction to PC Security* and *Introduction to Database Development*.



## TRAINING IS THE KEY

Training for technology careers is expanding and ACDS was proud to offer a variety of course options throughout the year. This involved working with proven training partners for our apprenticeship programs including: University of Arkansas Workforce & Professional Development, Xpanxion, Arkansas Coding Academy, Northwest Technical Institute, Tech Talent South, and Forge Institute. We also offered free courses such as Amazon Web Service and LaunchCode's LC101 Code Odyssey.



**975**  
TALENT  
SCREENINGS  
CONDUCTED

**20**  
COHORTS  
KICKED  
OFF

**91**  
APPRENTICES  
REGISTERED

**59,526**  
ARKANSANS  
REACHED  
THROUGH  
RESKILL  
ARKANSAS  
PROGRAM

# TITAN GRANT & PARTNERSHIP

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TRANSFORMING IT APPRENTICESHIPS NOW  
CLOSING THE SKILLS GAP in ARKANSAS

ACDS worked with the Arkansas Division of Higher Education (ADHE) to submit for the DOLETA Closing the Skills Gap grant resulting in an award of \$2 million. During the grant period (2020-2024), ACDS will serve an estimated 4,800 participants including 1,600 IT apprentices statewide. Additionally, the Unified Community Apprenticeship Team (UCAT) was formed bringing together organizations such as ADHE, ACDS, OSD, ADWS, local workforce boards and community colleges to discuss moving IT apprenticeships forward throughout the state.

# RESKILL ARKANSAS

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Led by the Arkansas Office of Skills Development (OSD), the ReSkill Arkansas program was launched in November 2020 with the mission to reskill and re-employ Arkansans whose jobs were impacted by COVID-19. Over 59,000 unemployed received notification of the opportunity to reskill themselves for a career in information technology.

By the end of December, 315 applications had been received by the ACDS Talent Acquisition team and 73 were enrolled in IT-related courses provided by University of Arkansas Workforce & Professional Development.



# EDUCATION

FROM THE START TO THE CULMINATION

22

TWO YEAR  
COLLEGES

22

FOUR YEAR  
COLLEGES

16

DATA  
SCIENCE  
PROGRAMS IN  
ARKANSAS

33,021

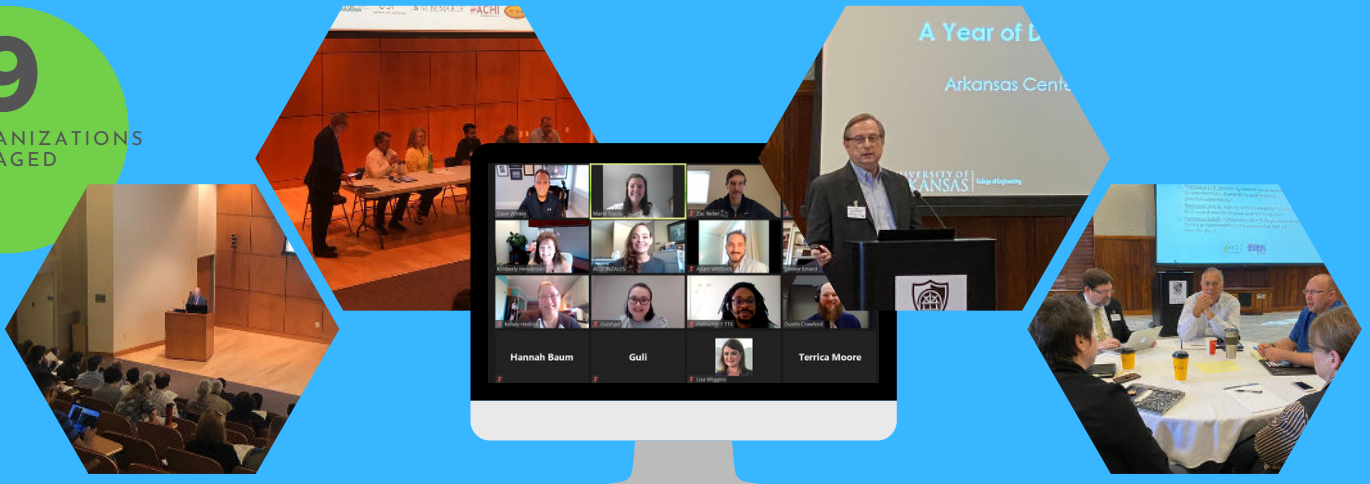
HIGH SCHOOL  
GRADUATES  
'19-'20

## Solving the Data Science Riddle

FINAL WORKSHOP OF A THREE-PART HIGHER EDUCATION SERIES WAS HOSTED VIRTUALLY IN APRIL

19

ORGANIZATIONS  
ENGAGED

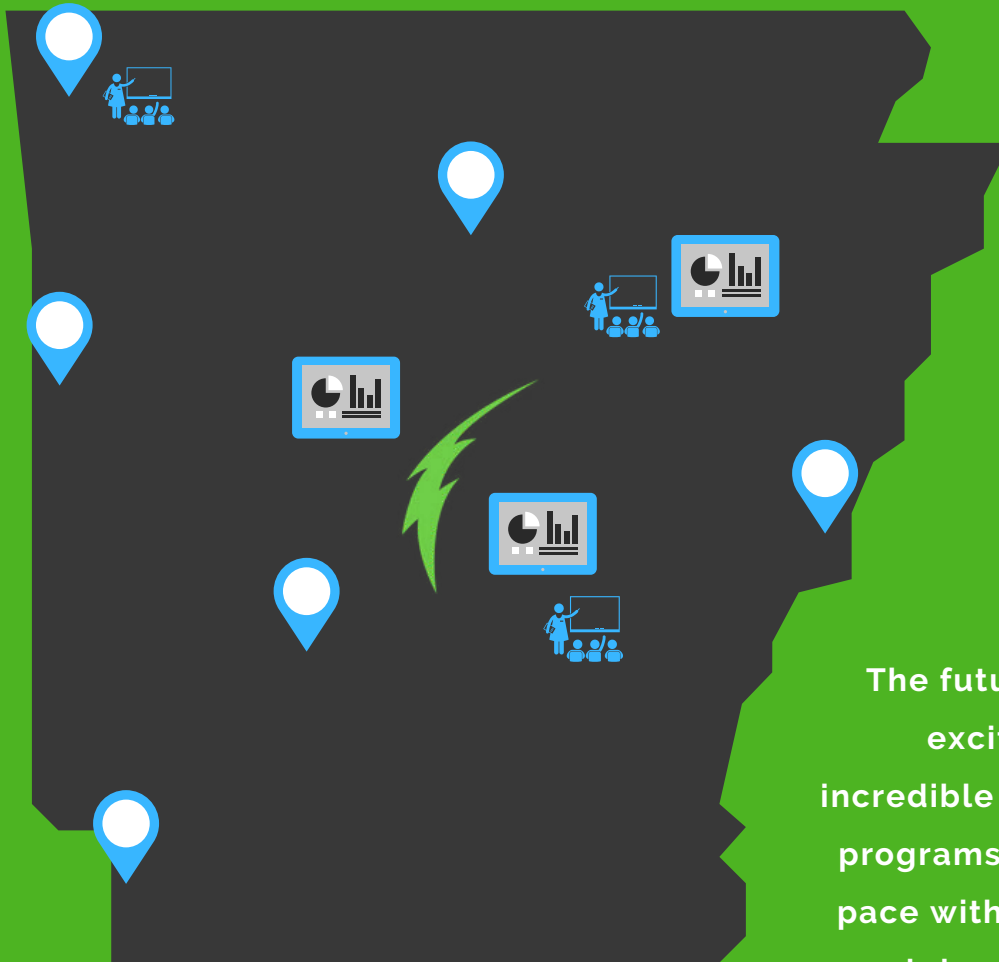


ACDS and the Arkansas STEM Coalition worked with key leaders of the state's universities and community colleges to build a three-part data science workshop focused on how to address the growing gap in the demand for data science professionals. While the first two sessions were held in 2019, the third part of the series was revamped from an in-person event in April 2020 to a virtual summer workshop. The result has been a collective and concerted effort statewide to expand the delivery and availability of data science programs at all higher education institutions.





# HORIZON



The future of ACDS is bright and exciting! We are planning an incredible amount of growth in our programs and are striving to keep pace with the demand of IT talent statewide. Additionally, we are furthering the development of IT education and training for Arkansans of all ages.

## MAP KEY



Technology Center of Excellence

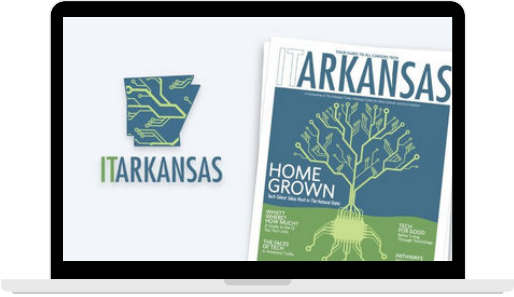


Data Science as a Service



K-12 Outreach & Chamber Engagements

# DATA



# K-12 ENGAGEMENT

In 2021, we are looking to expand the impact ACDS has in the K-12 education space. We are planning to engage with career coaches to provide a clearer pathway to IT careers for students from a diverse background. In January 2021, we launched our first edition of *ITArkansas Magazine*, a guide to tech careers for young Arkansans, which is available in print and online at [ITArkansas.com](http://ITArkansas.com).

# DATA SCIENCE AS A SERVICE

The Data Science as a Service (DSaaS) program will develop data capabilities of Arkansas-based companies and address increasing data analytics talent across the state. Through this program, a team of subject matter experts will help companies better understand data environment, how to leverage data in decision making, and roadmap for the future. ACDS will work with employers to build its data science capacity by upskilling existing employees and/or onboarding data analyst apprentices.



# EXPANDING OUTREACH

We look forward to continuing our Tech After Five - Little Rock series virtually until safe to move back to an in-person venue. The virtual format allows us to reach beyond our original Central Arkansas region and farther into the state. ACDS also launched our new Podcast "Empowered by Tech" in January 2021.



*We're looking forward to reconnecting in person in our new office space in North Little Rock sometime in 2021!*

# LEADERSHIP



Our team is the heart of what we do and our mission is at the center of our actions. We're proud to engage our team with the state of Arkansas and with our partners at every level each day.

# SCIENCES

# LEADERSHIP & TEAM

THE PEOPLE BEHIND GETTING IT DONE

## Meet the Team

OUR TEAM HAS GROWN IN 2020 TO INCLUDE 8 FULLTIME AND 9 PART-TIME PROFESSIONALS



Top Left to Bottom Right: Bill Yoder, Marie Stacks, Lonnie Emard, Kelsey Hedrick, Logan Hunt, Crystal Hartman, Don Walker, Clint Hankinson, Katie Frazier, Kristen Shryock, James Morgan, Justin Murdock, Lisa Wiggins, and Ashley French.

Not pictured: Shalonda Nelson, G.B. Cazes, and Robert Arsenault.

## Board of Directors

- Charles Morgan, CEO, First Orion
- Mike Preston, Secretary of Commerce, AEDC
- Warren Stephens, CEO, Stephens Inc.
- Scott Spradley, CIO & CTO, Tyson Foods





# WHAT THEY SAY

"The apprenticeship program has allowed us to find awesome, motivated people like Christina who are the right culture fit that we can train and mentor. We see apprenticeship as a key part of our growth strategy."

- Co-founder & Principal, Consulting Firm

"The apprenticeship program offers a unique opportunity to not only find talent in a challenging hiring market, but to also show an investment in all of our team members."

- Senior Director Security, Pharmaceutical Co.

"We found tremendous value in the program and will continue to participate. All three of our apprentices have grown to provide significant value and are currently impacting our new software products."

- CEO, e-Commerce Agency

"I am grateful for the partnership with ACDS which presented us with strong candidates like Ryan."

- SOC Supervisor, Financial Institution



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