

UAMS News Bureau

Office of Communications & Marketing
4301 West Markham # 890
Little Rock, AR 72205-7199

uamshealth.com/news



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Media Contacts:

Leslie W. Taylor, 501-686-8998
Wireless phone: 501-951-7260
leslie@uams.edu

Liz Caldwell, 501-686-8995
Wireless phone: 501-350-4364
liz@uams.edu

G. Thomas Frazier, M.D., Invested in Inaugural G. Thomas Frazier, M.D. Chair in Hand and Upper Extremity Surgery

LITTLE ROCK — G. Thomas Frazier, M.D., an assistant professor in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery in the College of Medicine at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), was invested Dec. 19 in the inaugural G. Thomas Frazier, M.D. Chair in Hand and Upper Extremity Surgery.

“It’s a really auspicious day, and having everybody here means a lot to me and my family,” said Frazier. “It’s my honor to receive this chair, and I will continue doing everything I can to improve outcomes for our patients.”

Frazier joined UAMS in 2017, where he specializes in hand and microsurgery and has a special interest in joint replacement of the hand, wrist and elbow, and joint arthroscopy for the elbow and wrist, minimally invasive surgeries in which a tiny camera is inserted into the joint through a small incision, thereby avoiding traditional open surgery.

An endowed chair is among the highest academic honors a university can bestow on a faculty member. A chair is established with gifts of at least \$1 million, which are invested and the interest proceeds used to support the educational, research and clinical activities of the chair holder. Those named to a chair are among the most highly regarded scientists, physicians and professors in their fields.

“This is a well-deserved honor that recognizes Dr. Frazier’s extraordinary contributions to the field of hand and upper extremity surgery,” said UAMS Chancellor Cam Patterson, M.D., MBA.

Ellis Walton provided funding for the chair to honor her son-in-law Frazier’s contribution to the treatment of the hand. She and her late husband, Gus Walton, have been graciously philanthropic to UAMS in various capacities over several decades, and the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery and specifically the Section of Hand and Upper Extremity Surgery has been near and dear to their hearts. She has volunteered with the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute, and has served on boards for the Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging and the Psychiatric Research Institute.

“Dr. Frazier, it’s clear that with your reputation and all of the support that you have, it’s no wonder that you’re being recognized today,” said Christopher T. Westfall, M.D., UAMS vice chancellor and dean of the College of Medicine. “I would like to extend a special thanks to Mrs. Ellis Walton for her generosity, her philanthropy and her long-term support of this university, in making this wonderful honor a reality.”

“Ever since I have known what an orthopaedic hand surgeon was, I have known about Tom Frazier,” said Theresa Wyrick-Glover, M.D., vice chair and associate professor in the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery. “Tom Frazier is all-in here at UAMS, and we’re just so proud to be his partner. This is an opportunity for him to continue to provide to the citizens of our state this outstanding care he has done his entire career.”

The investiture ceremony hosted a packed house on the 12th floor of the Jackson T. Stephens Spine & Neurosciences Institute, many from Frazier’s hometown of Hope. That sense of community was referenced many times, including Frazier’s longtime friend and fellow Hope native Larry D. Wright, M.D., an associate program director for internal medicine residencies and associate professor in the Department of Internal Medicine.

“As far as I know, there was nothing in the water in Hope, but there was something in that community that was nurturing and encouraging and expecting the best from all of us,” said Wright. “If Tommy Frazier could make it to be the starting quarterback for the Hope Bobcats, then maybe he could also make it in pre-med at Hendrix College; maybe he could also get into medical school; and maybe one day he would be named to an endowed chair in hand and extremity surgery at UAMS. I know everyone in our hometown is proud of Dr. Frazier, with all he’s accomplished and particularly his magnificent award today.”

Frazier was presented with a commemorative medallion by Patterson and Westfall. He thanked his mentors, colleagues and family, and presented roses to his wife, Cynthia Walton Frazier, and his mother-in-law.

“Gus and Ellis Walton are two of the most wonderful people I’ve ever known,” said Frazier. “We lost Gus about a year ago, but apparently Ellis and Gus had discussed this chair before he got sick. And to her credit, and my benefit, she pursued that and persisted in endowing this chair, and I will be forever grateful. Ellis, I love you.”

Frazier’s guest of honor was Danny Dozier, a former patient whose thumb he saved many years ago after it was nearly severed. Dozier demonstrated full use of his thumb by playing guitar for a delighted audience and thanked Frazier.

“They were getting ready to start sewing me up, and an orthopaedic surgeon who knew me as a guitar player said, ‘Don’t start sewing Danny up yet.’ And he came in and said, ‘Dozier, we’re sending you to Frazier. You’re going to go to Little Rock, because that’s who’s going to fix your thumb.’” After about a year, Dozier resumed playing guitar. “You just never know how somebody’s going to touch your life,” he said.

C. Lowry Barnes, M.D., chair and professor of the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, has a special relationship with Frazier, having known him since Barnes was a medical student at UAMS and Frazier a resident. Both men helped form Arkansas Specialty Orthopaedics, with a focus on sub-specialty orthopaedic care, where Frazier served as chairman of the board and Barnes was president and managing partner.

“This truly was Tom’s idea to come for his ‘give back’ period, which is the same reason I came to UAMS – because we care so much about this state, and we want to make it better,” said Barnes. “Tom, I hope that we have many years remaining as good friends and colleagues. I love you, friend.”

Barnes surprised Frazier with a recorded message from mutual friend and Hope native, former Gov. Mike Huckabee.

“I’m absolutely and genuinely proud of my neighbor, but not the least surprised,” said Huckabee, who grew up across the street from Frazier. “He was destined for greatness by his intelligence, work ethic, kindness toward others, and dedication to excellence in all that he has ever undertaken.”

Frazier grew up in Hope, Arkansas, graduating from Hope High School and later Hendrix College with a Bachelor of Arts in biology. In 1982, he graduated from the UAMS College of Medicine and completed an internship with the Department of Orthopaedic Surgery, where he was selected Outstanding Intern. He completed his orthopaedic residency in 1987, and Hand and Upper Extremity Surgery Fellowship in 1988, both at UAMS. Frazier then joined Orthopaedic Associates to practice and helped start the Arkansas Hand Center in 1991. Along with his colleagues, Frazier helped provide the entire spectrum of hand care for Arkansas. In 1998, the Arkansas Hand Center joined with Orthopaedic Specialists and the Arkansas Spine Center to form Arkansas Specialty Orthopaedics.

Frazier is a member of the American Society for Surgery of the Hand, the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, the Mid-America Orthopaedic Association, the Southern Orthopaedic Association and the Arkansas Orthopaedic Society. He is board certified in orthopaedic surgery and holds a certificate of added qualification in hand surgery. He has been listed in “Best Doctors in America” each year since 2004. Frazier has served as an inaugural board member at Access Schools, a member of Hendrix College’s Physician’s Advisory Council, a board member and president of The Anthony School, and on the Potluck Food Rescue’s board of directors.

UAMS is the state’s only health sciences university, with colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Health Professions and Public Health; a graduate school; hospital; a main campus in Little Rock; a Northwest Arkansas regional campus in Fayetteville; a statewide network of regional campuses; and seven institutes: the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute, Jackson T. Stephens Spine & Neurosciences Institute, Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute, Psychiatric Research Institute, Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging, Translational Research Institute and Institute for Digital Health & Innovation. UAMS includes UAMS Health, a statewide health system that encompasses all of UAMS’ clinical enterprise including its hospital, regional clinics and clinics it operates or staffs in cooperation with other providers. UAMS is the only adult Level 1 trauma center in the state. *U.S. News & World Report* named UAMS Medical Center the state’s Best Hospital; ranked its ear, nose and throat program among the top 50 nationwide; and named six areas as high performing — cancer, colon cancer surgery, heart failure, hip replacement, knee replacement and lung cancer surgery. UAMS has 2,727 students, 870 medical residents and five dental residents. It is the state’s largest public employer with more than 10,000 employees, including 1,200 physicians who provide care to patients at UAMS, its regional campuses, Arkansas Children’s Hospital, the VA Medical Center and Baptist Health. Visit www.uams.edu or www.uamshealth.com. Find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).