

**UAMS News Bureau**

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

[uamshealth.com/news](http://uamshealth.com/news)



**News Release**  
**Nov. 20, 2020**

**Media Contacts:**

Leslie W. Taylor, 501-686-8998  
Wireless phone: 501-951-7260  
[leslie@uams.edu](mailto:leslie@uams.edu)

Liz Caldwell, 501-686-8995  
Wireless phone: 501-350-4364  
[liz@uams.edu](mailto:liz@uams.edu)

**Steven Barger, Ph.D., Invested in Louise G. Hearn Chair in  
Dementia and Long-Term Care**

LITTLE ROCK — Steven Barger, Ph.D., a neuroscience and neurological disease researcher at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), was invested Nov. 18 in the Louise G. Hearn Chair in Dementia and Long-Term Care.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Barger was invested in a brief ceremony broadcast online via Zoom. Attendees wore masks and were socially distanced.

“This chair recognizes a member of our faculty dedicated to the problem of dementia, and that’s become a labor of love for me,” said Barger. “I can’t be any more grateful than I am to Louise Hearn and her family for their essential role in making it possible for me to continue in this pursuit.”

Barger, who last year received national attention for his research showing brain sugar malfunctions in people with Alzheimer’s disease, joined UAMS in 1996. He is a professor with appointments in the Geriatrics, Neurobiology and Developmental Sciences, and Internal Medicine departments in the UAMS College of Medicine. Since 1996, he has been jointly appointed at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

An endowed chair is among the highest academic honors a university can bestow on a faculty member. A distinguished 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.

“Dr. Barger is an accomplished geriatric scientist whose work helps us unravel the mysteries of aging-related diseases, and we thank him for his dedication to the people of Arkansas,” said UAMS Chancellor Cam Patterson, M.D., MBA, and CEO of UAMS Health.

The chair was established in 2006 with a gift from the estate of Louise Hearn, with encouragement from her nephew, Elwood Smith.

Born in 1924, Hearn grew up in Arkansas before moving with her husband, Vernon, in the 1950s to Houston, where they owned a printing company, were majority stockholders in a Houston bank and owned a cattle ranch and other property. In her seventies, Hearn returned to Arkansas so that Smith could care for her. As she planned her estate, family members suggested that her will include something to honor Arkansas. She was a patient at the Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging and enjoyed its Ottenheimer Fitness Center, so a gift to the institute seemed like an ideal choice.

The Donald W. Reynolds Foundation helped establish the chair with an equal match. Over the years, the Reynolds Foundation gave more than \$99 million to UAMS, making it the single largest donor in its history. Much of the foundation's philanthropy benefited the eponymous Reynolds Institute on Aging. In 2017, the foundation ceased operation, marking the end of decades of visionary and transformative philanthropy to UAMS, other institutions and projects of benefit to the public.

In addition to the honor of being named chair holder, Barger received a commemorative medallion and an inscribed wooden chair. In addition to the Hearn family, he thanked the Department of Geriatrics in the College of Medicine as well as Robert Reis, D.Phil., and Sue Griffin, Ph.D., for their influence on his career.

"I have always been motivated by a burning curiosity and a compassionate desire to help others," said Barger. "I was strongly encouraged by the committed geriatricians and gerontologists around me to learn more about the process of aging. A deeper understanding of what it means to age, and what purpose that might serve, has profoundly impacted my view of who I am and what purpose I serve."

"I am profoundly grateful to the Hearn family and the Donald W. Reynolds Foundation for making the Louise G. Hearn Chair in Dementia and Long-Term Care possible," said Christopher T. Westfall, M.D., UAMS executive vice chancellor and College of Medicine dean. "Dr. Barger's research acumen is well-known at UAMS and his work has been invaluable to advancing our knowledge of aging."

A Searcy native, Barger graduated from Hendrix College in Conway, Arkansas, where he received the Earle A. Spessard Biology Award for the top graduate in the Department of Biology. He then obtained a Ph.D. in cell biology at Vanderbilt University. He received postdoctoral training at the Sanders-Brown Center on Aging at the University of Kentucky, where he received three postdoctoral fellowships, including a National Research Service Award from the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

After joining UAMS in 1996, Barger became the first recipient of the Inglewood Fellowship for Alzheimer's research. He is also an instructor and research advisor for UAMS graduate students, including service as director for the "Basic Biology of Aging" course and as track director for the aging biology track.

Barger has published over 100 scientific articles in the field of neuroscience and neurological disease and has received continuous NIH funding for 23 years. He is senior editor at *Neurobiology of Aging*, deputy chief editor for the *Journal of Neurochemistry*, and is active on the editorial boards of two other scientific journals. He was elected to the American Society for Neurochemistry Council and to the Committee for Animals in Research at the Society for Neuroscience, where he served as president of that society's Arkansas chapter. He is a member of the Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives. He is a member of the Alzheimer's Disease Advisory Board of the Arkansas General Assembly.

Barger received the National Research Prize from the Neurosciences Education and Research Foundation in 1999, and the Odyssey Medal for Research from Hendrix College in 2010.

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 — COPD, colon cancer surgery, heart failure, hip replacement, knee replacement and lung cancer surgery. UAMS has 2,876 students, 898 medical residents and four 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](http://www.uams.edu) or [www.uamshealth.com](http://www.uamshealth.com). Find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

Like us, we're social:    