

UAMS News Bureau

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

uamshealth.com/news



News Release
May 20, 2022

Media Contacts:

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

Yavonda Chase, 501-686-8994
Wireless phone: 501-416-0354
yavonda@uams.edu

**UAMS Invests John David Pemberton, D.O., MBA, in Stella Boyle
Smith/Gissur J. Petursson Chair in Ophthalmology**

LITTLE ROCK — The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) College of Medicine invested John David Pemberton, D.O., MBA, in the Stella Boyle Smith/Gissur J. Petursson, M.D. Chair in Ophthalmology during a ceremony on May 17.

“It’s a great honor to be named the new Stella Boyle Smith/Gissur J. Petursson, M.D. Chair in Ophthalmology,” said Pemberton. “These chairs are vital to our support for academics, research and education. I plan to be a steward of this chair and honor Stella Boyle Smith and Gissur Petursson.”

Pemberton, who joined UAMS in 2011, is a professor in the Department of Ophthalmology in the College of Medicine. As an ophthalmologist, he treats patients at the Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute, Arkansas Children’s Hospital and the John L. McClellan Memorial Veterans Hospital. He is certified by the American Board of Ophthalmology, specializing in plastic surgery of the eyelids, orbital masses, orbital reconstruction, tear drainage repair and other surgeries of the structures surrounding the eye.

The Stella Boyle Smith/Gissur J. Petursson, M.D., Chair was established by a gift from Smith to support an ophthalmologist or a basic scientist in reducing vision loss through research, education and patient care in adults and children. She credited Petursson, her former ophthalmologist at UAMS, with “saving her life” by restoring her vision.

“It’s incredible to think about how much benefit the people in the state of Arkansas and people here at UAMS have derived from this gift, that’s the past,” said Cam Patterson, M.D., MBA, UAMS chancellor and CEO of UAMS Health.

“The future is everything Dr. Pemberton is going to do with this endowment going forward, and it’s so gratifying to think about new science, new ways of providing great clinical care, new ways of teaching our students to be their better selves,” he added. “The future that he will create with this gift is so extraordinary, and I’m excited for him to get to do it and I’m excited for all of us that will get to stand on the sidelines and watch him do it. I congratulate him for a very well-deserved honor.”

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.

“Endowed chairs have a profound impact on our faculty, students, residents, fellows, patients at UAMS and those around the state,” said Susan S. Smyth, M.D., Ph.D., executive vice chancellor of UAMS and dean of the College of Medicine. “Ultimately, it is Arkansans that benefit from the generosity of the gifts that go behind the support of the endowed chairs.”

In addition to the honor of being named chair holder, Pemberton received a commemorative medallion and an inscribed wooden chair.

Pemberton was one of three doctors honored during the ceremony. He was joined by Paul H. Phillips, M.D., who was invested in the Pat Walker Endowed Chair in Ophthalmology, and Ahmed A. Sallam, M.D., Ph.D., who was recognized as the holder of the John W. Nutt Chair in Ophthalmology.

Pemberton received his undergraduate degree in biological sciences with a minor in theater from Grand Canyon University in Phoenix, and his doctorate in medicine from Touro University, California College of Osteopathic Medicine in Vallejo, California. He completed a residency in ophthalmology and was the chief resident at West Virginia University in Morgantown, West Virginia. He completed a 15-month fellowship in oculoplastic surgery at the Beraja Medical Institute in Coral Gables, Florida, and another 15-month fellowship in oculoplastic and orbital reconstructive surgery at the renowned Massachusetts Eye and Ear, Harvard Medical School, in Boston. While there, he saw patients at the Massachusetts General Hospital, Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and the Brigham and Women’s Hospital — all teaching hospitals for Harvard Medical School.

Pemberton served in the U.S. Army as a combat medic. In 2002, after completing his internship at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, he was stationed at Fort Hood as a flight surgeon for the 1st Cavalry Division of the 7th Cavalry Regiment. He remained with this unit from 2002 through 2005, 13 months of which included a tour in Iraq. He received the Bronze Star Medal, Combat Medical Badge, Golden Spurs Award and the Iraqi Expeditionary Medal for his service. Pemberton retired from the military in 2018 at the rank of lieutenant colonel.

“I have always said that John is a success story. While not perfect, it’s his relentless pursuit of perfection that separates him from everyone else,” said Col. Jeremy Wilson, chief of staff, 4th Infantry, U.S. Army, a longtime friend and former military colleague. “He has set an example for all of us to follow. For those of us who have had a chance to serve with him, both in the military and private sector, this selection does not come as a surprise.”

UAMS is the state's only health sciences university, with colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Health Professions and Public Health; a graduate school; a 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. UAMS is the only adult Level 1 trauma center in the state. *U.S. News & World Report* recognized UAMS Medical Center as a Best Hospital for 2021-22; ranked its ear, nose and throat program among the top 50 nationwide for the third year; and named five areas as high performing — colon cancer surgery, diabetes, hip replacement, knee replacement and stroke. UAMS has 3,047 students, 873 medical residents and fellows, and six dental residents. It is the state's largest public employer with more than 11,000 employees, including 1,200 physicians who provide care to patients at UAMS, its regional campuses, Arkansas Children's, the VA Medical Center and Baptist Health. Visit www.uams.edu or www.uamshealth.com. Find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

Like us, we're social:    