

**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**  
**Sept. 13, 2022**

**Media Contacts:**

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

Yavonda Chase, 501-686-8994  
Wireless phone: 501-416-0354  
[yavonda@uams.edu](mailto:yavonda@uams.edu)

**UAMS Invests Matthew A. Steliga, M.D.,  
in Kent C. Westbrook, M.D., Distinguished Chair  
in Surgical Oncology**

LITTLE ROCK — The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) College of Medicine invested Matthew A. Steliga, M.D., chief of the Division of Thoracic Surgery in the UAMS Department of Surgery and a tenured professor of surgery in the UAMS College of Medicine, in the Kent C. Westbrook, M.D., Distinguished Chair in Surgical Oncology during a Sept. 7 ceremony.

“I want to thank the East family for establishing this endowment, Lynn and Julie Marshall for extending it further and to Dr. Kent Westbrook for being a pioneer and leading us forward in surgical oncology,” said Steliga. “This endowed chair allows us to reflect on our past and all the great things that have come before us in a very humbling way, and I hope that we can push our work even further into the future.”

Steliga is a recognized expert in lung cancer, cancer screening, smoking cessation and surgical education. He has represented UAMS globally, speaking throughout North America, Asia, Australia and Europe. Because of his expertise in cancer care and prevention, he has been selected to serve in advisory roles for the American Cancer Society and the Arkansas Department of Health. Further, he has chaired workshops with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, the American Association for Cancer Research and the International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer.

“I applaud Dr. Steliga’s unwavering championship for quitting smoking and his support for the work we have done to help patients stop smoking, not only those in the clinic but also with low-dose CT patients,” said Claudia P. Barone, DNP, Ed.D., the Nicholas P. Lang, M.D., the Helen F. Lang RN Endowed Professor in the College of Nursing. “With many of these patients, we are able to intervene when their cancer is very small, and that makes a huge difference in their lives.”

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 \$1.5 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.

James C. and Mary Kay East, longtime supporters of UAMS, established the chair though a \$1 million gift in 2015. Mary Kay East passed away in 2018. Kent C. Westbrook, M.D., the inaugural chairholder, served from 1984-1999 as director of what is now the UAMS Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute. A distinguished professor in the Division of Surgical Oncology in the Department of Surgery, Westbrook also served in such roles as interim chair of the Department of Surgery, interim vice chancellor for development, and chair of the Department of Dermatology.

The elevation of the chair to a distinguished chair was made possible by a gift from Lynn and Julie Marshall.

“Endowed chairs honor our most distinguished faculty members, and I want to congratulate Dr. Steliga for all that he has accomplished,” said Cam Patterson, M.D., MBA, UAMS chancellor and CEO of UAMS Health. “He has worked hard on behalf of his patients and the people he has helped educate, but he has also worked hard to advance scholarship that helps people across the globe.”

“Our mission at UAMS and the College of Medicine is to improve health. We do this in large part through education, research and clinical care,” said Susan S. Smyth, M.D., Ph.D., executive vice chancellor of UAMS and dean of the College of Medicine.

“Endowed chairs provide support for our programs in all three of these areas, and the cumulative impact of the gifts that establish these chairs is almost difficult to fathom because this support continues in perpetuity through the earnings on the endowment.”

Steliga completed his undergraduate studies and a master’s degree in Speech, Language, and Learning at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. He returned to his home state of Wisconsin to complete his medical degree at the Medical College of Wisconsin in Milwaukee. Following medical school, he completed a surgical internship and residency at the University of Tennessee Health Science Center’s College of Medicine in Memphis before moving to Houston for cardiothoracic fellowship at the Texas Heart Institute. Upon completion of his two-year cardiothoracic training, he completed an additional fellowship as an instructor at MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston with focused training in thoracic surgical oncology. He joined UAMS in 2009.

Steliga’s clinical work focuses on thoracic oncology with an emphasis on lung cancer, esophageal cancer, other tumors of the chest and metastasis to the lung with a focus on minimally invasive surgery. Since joining UAMS, he has grown the Division of Thoracic Surgery and pushed for expansion of UAMS surgical programs and oncology programs with the Baptist Health system. He was instrumental in developing lung cancer screening and integrating smoking cessation in clinical care at UAMS. His work has gained national and international attention and he has led workshops on tobacco cessation in cancer care.

Steliga is board certified by the American Board of Surgery and the American Board of Thoracic Surgery, and he is a member of the Society of Surgical Oncology as well as several other professional societies. He has represented Arkansas on the National Lung Cancer Roundtable consortium for the American Cancer Society. He was appointed by the Arkansas House of Representatives to sit on the advisory board for the Arkansas Department of Health's Tobacco Prevention and Cessation program. He served as a committee chair for the International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer with organization of international multidisciplinary cancer conferences and is the current president of the Arkansas Chapter of the American College of Surgeons.

“Dr. Matthew Steliga is a superb surgical oncologist who specializes in the cancer of the lungs and esophagus. He has built a great clinical program with treatment, prevention, detection and research components,” said Westbrook. “I congratulate him on his accomplishments and look forward to his future role as the leader in surgical oncology at UAMS Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute.”

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. 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](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: 