

**UAMS News Bureau**

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

uamshealth.com/news



**News Release**  
**Nov. 13, 2023**

**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)

**Sean Taverna, Ph.D., Joins  
UAMS as Graduate School Dean**

LITTLE ROCK — Sean Taverna, Ph.D., is the new dean of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) Graduate School.

He succeeds Robert E. McGehee, Jr., Ph.D., who retired after serving as dean since 2004.

A cancer researcher and molecular scientist with a successful track record as a graduate student mentor, leader and recruiter, Taverna joins UAMS from the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in Baltimore, where he was an associate professor in the Department of Pharmacology and Molecular Sciences with joint appointments in the departments of Oncology and Medicine. He also served as the director of graduate recruiting in the Pharmacology and Molecular Sciences program and as associate director for the Institute for Basic Biomedical Sciences Epigenetics Center.

“I know I have some big shoes to fill,” said Taverna. “I’m excited about joining the dynamic team at UAMS, and I’m fortunate to inherit a great team of administrators and staff. My goal is to advance recruitment and retention across the Ph.D. program.”

“When I announced this search early this year, I expressed confidence we would find a new dean to continue the Graduate School’s growth and success,” said Stephanie Gardner, Pharm.D., Ed.D., UAMS provost, chief academic officer and chief strategy officer. “I believe we have accomplished that, as well as continuing to bolster our research mission with the addition of a talented scientist.

“I also want to again express my gratitude to Dr. McGehee, who was to retire at the end of May,” Gardner added. “I was grateful when he agreed to continue in the role until Dr. Taverna arrived.”

Taverna earned his doctoral degree in biochemistry and molecular genetics in 2004 from the University of Virginia, followed by completion of a post doctorate in chromatin biology and epigenetics at The Rockefeller University in New York.

At UAMS, his work will be split between serving as Graduate School dean and as a professor of biochemistry and molecular biology for his research program based in the 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 3,275 students, 890 medical residents and fellows, and five dental residents. It is the state's largest public employer with more than 12,000 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](#), [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

Like us, we're social:    