

**UAMS News Bureau**

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**News Release**  
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**UAMS Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute Achieves  
\$30 Million Fundraising Goal for NCI Designation**

LITTLE ROCK — The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) met its \$30 million fundraising goal for the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute’s campaign to achieve National Cancer Institute (NCI) Designation.

The fundraising milestone was achieved with a \$5 million gift from the Chris Fowler family of Jonesboro. In total, 8,700 philanthropic gifts have been received from Arkansans and donors across the U.S. to support this campaign.

“Reaching our fundraising goal is exciting news, and I know it will embolden UAMS to work harder in achieving our overall goal of NCI Designation, which will have a profound impact on UAMS and Arkansas,” said Cam Patterson, M.D., MBA, UAMS chancellor and CEO of UAMS Health. “Huge credit for this achievement of course goes to the many donors who have championed this campaign. I would especially like to thank the Chris Fowler family, who made significant contributions that realized this goal.”

“I am overjoyed that UAMS has reached this important milestone towards achieving NCI Designation, and I am proud that I could play a role in making it happen,” said Fowler. “When I learned of my own cancer diagnosis, I was encouraged by some to seek treatment outside of Arkansas. However, after meeting with the specialists at the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute, I was thoroughly convinced that they had the experience and resources to save my life. The Cancer Institute conducts phenomenal work, and I am passionate about elevating it through NCI Designation so that UAMS can better help people in Arkansas, the U.S., and I truly believe this, the world.”

NCI Designation is a highly competitive assessment process during which cancer centers must demonstrate outstanding depth and breadth of high-quality cancer research and treatment. Receiving designation brings substantial benefits, including the ability to access significant federal research funding and offer novel clinical trials not available to non-designated centers.

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“Philanthropic fundraising remains the life blood of a cancer center — these funds are vital in our pursuit of NCI Designation as we recruit top cancer researchers and physicians from all over the country, upgrade our research spaces and significantly expand our cancer services across Arkansas,” said Michael Birrer, M.D., Ph.D., UAMS vice chancellor and director of the Cancer Institute.

“Arkansas will have a seat at the table to strategically drive cancer research funding priorities,” he added. “This is very important in our state given the huge cancer burden we have and the desert of non-designated cancer centers in the most rural and underserved areas of the South.”

Designation is also expected to result in a \$72 million economic impact on Arkansas and create approximately 1,500 new jobs over five years.

In 2019, the Arkansas Senate and House unanimously passed Senate Bill 151, which created an account to deposit funds for NCI Designation, and Gov. Asa Hutchinson signed Act 181 into law in March that year.

State lawmakers then approved a combination of taxes for the effort. To date, Arkansas has awarded UAMS \$170 million towards NCI Designation. UAMS also pledged to raise \$30 million in private funds to support that effort. It took just over three years to reach the halfway mark, most of which took place during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The campaign to reach NCI Designation requires the help from a wide variety of people and organizations, and it’s clear that we have been grateful to find that support from several integral sources throughout Arkansas,” said Kevin Crass, a Little Rock lawyer and member of the Board of Trustees of the University of Arkansas. “In addition to this wonderful gift, I would also like to acknowledge the efforts our government representatives have extended in steering critical funding towards this campaign — we are truly grateful for their support.”

There are 72 NCI-Designated cancer centers across 36 U.S. states and the District of Columbia, with the closest to Arkansas being in Memphis (pediatrics only), Dallas and Oklahoma City.

Approximately 68% of the funds awarded by the National Cancer Institute for research and clinical trials go to NCI-Designated centers. The centers without such designation are left to compete for the other 32%, and many NCI community outreach and program grants are only offered to NCI-Designated cancer centers.

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.

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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 3,240 students, 913 medical residents and fellows, and five 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](#).

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