

## UAMS News Bureau

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## UAMS Establishes Institute for Community Health Innovation

FAYETTEVILLE — The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) announced today the establishment of its eighth institute, the UAMS Institute for Community Health Innovation, effective March 1.

The institute will work with communities across Arkansas to conduct community-based research and deploy community-driven programs to improve health outcomes in rural and medically underserved regions of the state.

The institute, which will be based in Northwest Arkansas, will have staff and offices across the state, including in Batesville, El Dorado, Fort Smith, Helena-West Helena, Jonesboro, Lake Village, Little Rock, Magnolia, Pine Bluff and Texarkana.

“This landmark designation follows our institution’s tradition of creating institutes as centers of gravity where clinical, academic and research activities are organized around a specific condition or mission, in this case, reducing health disparities through community-driven innovation,” said UAMS Chancellor Cam Patterson, M.D., MBA.

The institute will be led by founding Director Pearl McElfish, Ph.D., MBA, who has more than 20 years of experience implementing innovative community health programs and community-based research.

“The Institute for Community Health Innovation’s vision is to partner with people and organizations across to state to implement innovative research, clinical care and community-based programs outside the traditional academic walls of UAMS to meet the needs of the state’s most rural and medically underserved communities,” McElfish said. “If we’re going to move the needle and improve health outcomes of all Arkansans, we must have innovative solutions that meet people where they live, work and play.”

McElfish, a professor in the UAMS College of Medicine, has been at UAMS since 2010. She is one of UAMS’s most highly regarded and impactful researchers, with more than 280 peer-reviewed manuscripts and extramural grants totaling more than \$200 million. She has led changes in health policy and practice, resulting in improvement in health and health care for rural communities and underserved communities. Her work — and that of

the Office of Community Health and Research, where she has served as director — has integrated translational research, community-engagement, clinical care and population health in the areas of maternal and child health and chronic disease prevention and management. McElfish and her team have also been instrumental in training and advocating for community health workers and doulas.

“Achieving status as an institute within UAMS is a testament to the work our team and community partners have accomplished together over the last 10 years,” McElfish said. “We are working to improve health outcomes for all Arkansans, and as an official institute, we look forward to spreading our work even further as we continue our shared mission to create a better state of health for all.”

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 eight 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, Institute for Digital Health & Innovation, and the Institute for Community 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](#).

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