

**UAMS News Bureau**

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**UAMS College of Medicine Welcomes 175 Students  
at Joint White Coat Ceremony in Little Rock, NWA**

LITTLE ROCK — The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) College of Medicine welcomed 175 new medical students to its Little Rock and Fayetteville campuses in an Aug. 9 white coat ceremony attended by hundreds of friends, family and other well-wishers.

A tradition for incoming medical students, the ceremony followed a week of orientation before classes started Aug. 12.

It began with several distinguished speakers offering words of wisdom from the Robinson Center Performance Hall stage in Little Rock. Most of the students, who are starting medical school on the main campus, watched from the first several rows, while 19 freshmen at the Fayetteville campus participated through a live feed from the Schmieding Center in Springdale.

James Graham, M.D., executive associate dean for academic affairs for the college, led the Class of 2028 in the recitation of the medical student oath, which will be substituted upon graduation with the Hippocratic Oath.

Students then donned the crisp white coats symbolizing the beginning of their four-year journey through medical school and the responsibility, compassion and hard work that comes with it. At each location, family members or mentors joined the students onstage to help them into the new garments as official photographs commemorated the moment and the audience applauded.

It was the first white coat ceremony for Steven Webber, M.D., a pediatric cardiologist who on March 1 became dean of the College of Medicine and executive vice chancellor of UAMS.

Webber congratulated the students for being among the 6% of the 2,782 people who applied to UAMS and were accepted.

“You worked really hard to get here,” he said, “and you have shown not only that you have the academic ability to succeed but that you also have the desire to improve lives, and that you are part of this class because we believe you will help us carry out our mission of improving the lives of all Arkansans.”

Webber noted that since 1879, UAMS has graduated more than 11,000 physicians.

Johnathan Goree, M.D., an associate professor of anesthesiology and director of the Chronic Pain Division at UAMS, gave the keynote address.

He told the incoming students that while at first they may feel a trace of “imposter syndrome,” they should remember that “you belong. You’ve earned your place here. In four years, I can’t wait to call you colleagues.”

“It’s always been amazing to me — the power of a stiff, cotton-polyester blend, bleached, starched and eventually coffee-stained white jacket,” Goree said. “But this white coat means so much more than a garment. It’s a tool. It’s a symbol. And honestly, it will become part of your identity.”

He told the students that it will give them a platform, cause people to listen to them and be a source of love and caring. It will also provide them a glimpse into “the most challenging moments of human existence,” Goree said. “You’ll see families fight; you’ll hear secrets that no one has ever told a soul. You’ll tell someone for the first time that they have cancer. You’ll see babies born. You’ll watch people die. You’ll be a shoulder to cry on. And you’ll be the target of unwarranted anger. All because of this stitching.”

Through it all, he urged them to never forget the basics of empathy, respect, love, curiosity and integrity, because “they’re what got you here,” and without them, “it’s honestly all for naught.”

“I challenge all of you to write down why you want to be a doctor. Write down your basics. And keep that safe, because I promise you your basics will be challenged, and by remembering them, you will harness the power to save lives.”

George Connor, president of the Arkansas Medical Society and a veteran family medicine physician in Forrest City, offered a similar message, encouraging students to stay focused.

“We’re about helping people live better lives, if you boil it down to one thing,” he said. He also urged the students to treat patients with diligence and cheer, saying, “A cheerful heart is good medicine.”

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UAMS Chancellor Cam Patterson, M.D., MBA, started off the ceremony by reminding students that the white coat is a sign of trust and requires them to uphold the highest standards of the medical profession while honoring their responsibility to their patients and the patients' families.

"You're now in the spotlight," he said.

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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