

UAMS News Bureau

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

uamshealth.com/news



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Media Contacts:

Leslie W. Taylor, 501-686-8998
Wireless phone: 501-951-7260
leslie@uams.edu

Yavonda Chase, 501-686-8994
Wireless phone: 501-416-0354
yavonda@uams.edu

UAMS Chancellor's Circle Awards Grants to 17 Programs

LITTLE ROCK — The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) awarded 17 grants totaling \$350,000 at the annual Chancellor's Circle Grant Awards ceremony held Oct. 23 at the William J. Clinton Presidential Library & Museum.

The Chancellor's Circle is UAMS' premier annual giving society, which marks its 40th anniversary in 2024. Through its unrestricted annual giving, this group of dedicated members donates more than \$200,000 a year that funds grants to address the institution's highest priorities. More than 250 household and corporate members make up the Chancellor's Circle.

"I want to thank all the donors who support the Chancellor's Circle, the funds of which will continue to have an impact on the lives of the people of our state," said Cam Patterson, M.D., MBA, UAMS chancellor and CEO of UAMS Health. "Your partnership with us as members of the Chancellor's Circle makes a critical difference in our ability to advance and grow the mission of UAMS to improve the health of all Arkansans."

UAMS uses the grants to purchase state-of-the-art medical equipment, provide seed monies for innovative health and wellness programs, and finance research projects of high potential to the state's economic and social development.

Since the inception of the Chancellor's Circle in 1984, donors have given more than \$9 million to support UAMS' mission. The funds awarded in the ceremony will support key mission areas in health care education, research and patient care.

"Every year we welcome new members to the Chancellor's Circle and this increase in membership, along with support from other members, has brought in over \$9 million of investment with the proceeds used to support a variety of programs at UAMS," said Lester Matlock, chair of the UAMS Board of Advisors and Chancellor's Circle member. "In 2014, we began issuing these funds through grants, and after today, more than \$3

million in grant funding will have been awarded to projects and programs at UAMS.”

This year's grants were awarded to the following:

- **The Comprehensive Diabetes Center of Excellence**, in the UAMS Department of Pediatrics, will be established to serve both pediatric and adult patients. Funds from the grant will be used to generate a foundation of data to help design and implement the program with the goal to grow and provide more comprehensive diabetes care that will distinguish the UAMS program nationally, while also providing insight into the needs of the unique populations in Arkansas that are affected by diabetes. Jon Oden, M.D., section chief and professor in Department of Pediatrics Division of Endocrinology, accepted the \$20,000 grant.
- **Expand Maternal Newborn Care Access Through Nurse Midwife Simulation Equipment and Education**, a program in the Practice Department of the UAMS College of Nursing, is developing a midwifery program to help address the high maternal and infant mortality rate in Arkansas. The program will teach midwifery students the skills to help promote safe care of pregnant women through their gestation, delivery and postpartum period. Patricia Cowan, Ph.D., RN, dean of the College of Nursing, and Teresa Whited, DNP, APRN, associate professor and associate dean for academic programs in the College of Nursing, accepted the \$30,000 grant.
- **Tele-Lactation Intervention among Hispanic Mothers in Arkansas** is a study designed by the Institute for Digital Health & Innovation to evaluate the impact of a tele-lactation program in initiating and sustaining breastfeeding among Hispanic mothers in Arkansas. Karina Leal, BSN, research nurse, and Crystal Jones, M.S., research associate, accepted the \$28,000 grant.
- **Nourishing Knowledge with Culinary Medicine for a Healthier UAMS**, an initiative in the Culinary Medicine Program, builds on a previous Chancellor's Circle grant that provides free teaching kitchens for students, faculty and staff. This program will help students, faculty, staff and patients assess their own diet and learn practical ways to improve the quality of their diets. It will include patient-facing culinary nutrition outreach in cooperation with various UAMS clinics. Alyssa Frisby, M.S., RD, LD, instructor in the Culinary Medicine program, and Gina Drobena, M.D., associate professor in the Department of Pathology, accepted the \$26,000 grant.
- **The Innovations in Artificial Intelligence Across Clinical, Education and Research Settings Conference**, an initiative of the Center for Faculty Excellence, will bring national experts to Arkansas over the next three years to help UAMS staff to better understand how artificial intelligence can be leveraged in clinical care, research and education. Wendy Ward, Ph.D., associate provost for faculty in the Division of Academic Affairs, accepted the \$25,000 grant.

- **The Medical Innovation and Entrepreneurship Honors Track**, a BioVentures program established in 2023, is one of the first two programs in the nation to implement the XO Medtech platform, a cutting-edge online community where medical technology innovators can collaborate, share ideas and seek advice. The Medical Innovation and Entrepreneurship Honors Track will expand to other UAMS disciplines, such as the College of Pharmacy, to further support students in prototyping and participating in student business plan competitions, further enhancing their entrepreneurial skills and opportunities. Thomas Forcum, internship coordinator with BioVentures, accepted the \$5,000 grant.
- **Beyond Stigma: A Forum on Mental Health Challenges and Solutions**, administered by the UAMS Department of Psychiatry, is a speaker series designed to educate the community about some of the most pressing mental health issues impacting Arkansas today, including suicide and addiction. The goal is to harness the energy and awareness sparked by these events to create an ongoing action-oriented conversation around the mental health needs of Arkansans. Abbey Richison, M.D., assistant program director of the Addiction Medicine Fellowship, and Mike Cucciare, M.D., associate professor in the Department of Psychiatry, accepted the \$25,000 grant.
- **Balanced Beginnings: Developing Arkansas' First Pediatric Vestibular Clinic**, administered by the Department of Audiology & Speech-Language Pathology in the UAMS College of Health Professions, will be Arkansas' first center for pediatric vestibular care. Pediatric vestibular disorders have a profound impact on a child's development and overall quality of life. Symptoms such as dizziness, vertigo and loss of balance can impair a child's ability to meet developmental milestones and participate in everyday activities. The clinic will serve as a dedicated center for diagnosing pediatric vestibular disorder, providing comprehensive evaluations and individualized treatment plans to enhance quality of life for Arkansas's children. Madison Howe, Au.D., assistant professor in the College of Health Professions and audiology clinical education director, accepted the \$40,000 grant.
- **Utilizing Continuous Glucose Monitors to Improve Pharmacy Student Ability to Provide Care for Patients with Diabetes**, administered by the Department of Pharmacy Practice in the UAMS College of Pharmacy, is an initiative that will purchase continuous glucose monitors for hands-on, immersive training to second-year pharmacy students. Most patients receive these devices from their pharmacists. This training will help the students learn how to instruct patients on the proper use of the device and assist with troubleshooting and any barriers patients encounter. Cindy Stowe, Pharm.D., dean of the College of Pharmacy, accepted the \$20,000 grant.

- **Workforce Communities**, a program administered by the Department of Employee Relations in the Division of People & Culture, seeks to expand a sense of community among UAMS staff by creating quarterly opportunities for employees to come together and discuss their experiences as part of the UAMS community. Audrey Bradley, M.A., senior director of Employee Relations, accepted the \$10,000 grant.
- **“Driving Community” at a Community-Based, Student-Run Free Clinic** seeks to make the 12th Street Health & Wellness Center a place of greater encouragement and hope for patients and local residents. The program will upgrade the center aesthetically by painting the interior and exterior of the building and replacing the outdoor planters to make the building more welcoming. Plans to install a commercial glass-front refrigerator and freezer will expand the food pantry offerings to include perishable items. Melissa Halverson, Pharm.D., MPH, director of 12th Street Health & Wellness Center; Audra Wilson, M.S., assistant professor in the College of Health Professions; and Sydney Darling, director of finance and administration for the Center's Student Board of Directors, accepted the \$10,000 grant.
- **The Wrightsville Unit Growing Together Revitalization Project**, administered by Women and Infants clinical services, works to improve the health of mothers incarcerated at the Arkansas Department of Corrections' Wrightsville Unit and their infants. The program, created in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, will expand to provide breast pumping supplies, educational materials and equipment to encourage mothers to breastfeed and promote bonding with their babies. Rebecca Sartini, DNP, assistant director of nursing for Women and Infants Health services; Leslie Bourne, RN, clinical specialist; and Susan Hughes, accepted the \$5,000 grant.
- **The Sexual Assault Focused Enhancements in the Emergency Department (SAFE-ED) program**, administered by the UAMS Emergency Department, is working to create a room within the Emergency Department specifically dedicated to conducting medical-forensic exams for patients who experience sexual assault. Sherrie Searcy, BSN, RN, director for the Institute for Digital Health & Innovation TeleSANE program; Ashley Connors, BSN, RN, assistant director of TeleSANE; and Carrie Knauer, BSN, RN, clinical specialist with the Department of Emergency Medicine, accepted the \$15,000 grant.
- **The Surgical Aneurysm Hands-on Green Lab** in the Department of Neurosurgery will address a gap in surgical skills training for the treatment of intracranial aneurysms. The lab will develop four models based on actual patients' anatomy with the capacity for intra-operative rupture for treatment of an aneurysm. These models can be remade and reused, eliminating the high cost of human cadavers. Deanna Sasaki-Adams, M.D., neurosurgeon at the Neurosurgery Clinic, accepted the \$12,000 grant.

- **FOUND (Facilitating Our Understanding of Neighbors with Dementia)**, a program administered by the UAMS Centers on Aging, has developed a first-of-its-kind “wandering kit” to help address the risks associated with dementia-related wandering. The kit includes medical ID bracelets with a scannable QR code that allow for real-time updates to medical conditions, medications, contacts and other health information through a cloud-based dashboard accessible on any smartphone. There are currently 400 kits in the final stages of production. Once finalized, they will be distributed statewide through local UAMS Centers on Aging offices, the UAMS South Central Telehealth Resource Center satellite centers, first responders and the Alzheimer’s Association. Amy Leigh Overton-McCoy, Ph.D., RN, director of the Centers on Aging, accepted the \$30,000 grant.
- **The Department of Talent Acquisition** in the Division of People and Culture works to provide more encompassing recruitment of faculty to all UAMS departments across the five colleges and graduate school. To find and engage talent with uncommon skillsets, it will maintain a database of qualified leads and identify workforce talent gaps, enabling UAMS to more effectively hire faculty and staff. Kristy Fritz, director of Talent Acquisition, Shaun McWeeney, senior recruiter, and Kristen Reynolds, executive search coordinator, accepted the \$14,000 grant.
- UAMS will join the **Arkansas Imagination Library**, a program with the mission to increase literacy and school readiness in Arkansas by ensuring all young children across the state may participate in Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library. The program will provide every baby born at UAMS with a new book each month for the first five years of their lives. The children will receive their first book before being discharged from UAMS and then receive a book per month in the mail. This simple contribution will help these children prepare for early education and potentially set them on a path that leads to healthier outcomes for the rest of their lives. Andy Davis, vice chancellor of institutional relations, and Stephanie Gardner, Pharm.D., Ed.D., provost and senior vice chancellor for Academic Affairs, accepted the \$35,000 grant.

It was also announced during the ceremony that beginning in 2025, there will be a special grant awarded each year in honor of Nancy “Jo” Smith, which is inspired by Smith’s more than 50 years of dedication to UAMS and the nursing profession, with the grant directly supporting the work that Smith does for patients at UAMS.

“From across Arkansas and around the world, Jo has touched the lives of thousands of people who have needed care and treatment at UAMS, doing everything in her power to make their treatment more comfortable while assisting them in navigating the logistics related to their care at UAMS,” said Patterson. “I look forward to the opportunity to

honor Jo and her commitment to UAMS through this special grant award annually beginning in 2025.”

To learn more about the Chancellor's Circle, visit giving.uams.edu/chancellorscircle.

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 3,485 students, 915 medical residents and fellows, and seven 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 or www.uamshealth.com. Find us on [Facebook](#), [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

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