



UNIVERSITY OF
ARKANSAS

UAMS
University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences

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UAMS, University of Arkansas Launch Six-Year Bachelor's to Medical Degree Program

LITTLE ROCK — The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) and the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville (U of A) recently announced plans for a new accelerated six-year Bachelor of Science to Doctor of Medicine (BS-MD) program, creating a direct pathway for exceptional students to progress from high school to a medical degree while reducing both training time and student debt.

When the program welcomes its inaugural cohort beginning in fall 2027, it will become only the third program in the United States to offer a six-year bachelor's-to-MD pathway.

“The collaboration between UAMS and the University of Arkansas reflects what is possible when two great institutions align around a shared purpose,” said UAMS Chancellor C. Lowry Barnes, M.D. “We understand that the path to becoming a physician can be long and costly, and that creates real barriers for talented students and for the communities that need doctors most. This six-year program changes that equation, giving exceptional Arkansas students a faster, more affordable route to a medical degree and, ultimately, to the patients who need their care.”

The innovative pathway, developed jointly by UAMS and the U of A, is designed to provide a streamlined educational track for highly motivated students who are certain they want to pursue careers in medicine.

Steven A. Webber, M.D., dean of the UAMS College of Medicine, was once one of those motivated students, and he initiated the conversation with the U of A about developing this program. Born in London, he went straight from high school into a five-year combined preclinical and clinical education for a medical degree. Five- and six-year combined programs are typical in most of Europe.

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“UAMS has long been committed to developing Arkansas’ future health care workforce, and this collaboration with the University of Arkansas is a natural extension of that mission,” Webber said. “Students who are certain medicine is their calling will now have a uniquely direct and rigorous path to that goal, right here in Arkansas.”

Preference will be given to Arkansas residents, followed by students from border states and then, potentially outstanding applicants from across the United States. The inaugural cohort will be limited to 20 students. For the first year, admission will be by invitation; students who apply to the U of A and demonstrate strong alignment with the program’s criteria will be identified and contacted directly.

“As a land-grant institution, the University of Arkansas is committed to improving the lives of Arkansans, and this partnership with UAMS helps us do just that,” said Charles Robinson, U of A chancellor. “Together, we are creating a faster, more affordable path to a medical degree that will expand opportunity for exceptional students while strengthening health care statewide.”

Students who are accepted into the program will spend their first two years at the U of A in Fayetteville, earning credit for a Bachelor of Science in Medical Science through the Fulbright College of Arts and Sciences. Upon successful completion of a rigorous pre-medical undergraduate curriculum, students will transition into the standard four-year College of Medicine curriculum at UAMS, the same program attended by all UAMS medical students. The medical school curriculum will remain unchanged, ensuring students meet the same rigorous academic and clinical standards required for physician training.

“This partnership between the University of Arkansas and UAMS represents an important step toward building Arkansas’ future physician workforce,” said Jim Gigantino, Ph.D., senior vice provost for academic affairs at the U of A. “By attracting outstanding students and providing an accelerated pathway into medicine, we can help retain talented Arkansans and encourage them to build their careers here.”

A distinguishing feature of the program is that UAMS involvement begins on day one. Modeled after the nationally recognized “docent” curriculum pioneered by the University of Missouri-Kansas City, it will have UAMS faculty embedded in the program throughout years one and two. Small groups of students will receive early clinical skills training, mentorship, and direct patient exposure at UAMS clinics and other regional clinical partners, helping students build clinical knowledge and professional identity early in their training.

“Our faculty on the UAMS Northwest Regional Campus will be actively involved in the curriculum during the first two years to provide early clinical education and to show the correlations between what they are learning in college and what they will need to know as physicians,” said John Spollen, M.D., associate dean of the UAMS College of Medicine on the Northwest Arkansas campus.

The new program also addresses one of the most pressing challenges facing Arkansas and the nation: a looming physician shortage. The U.S. is projected to face a shortfall of up to 86,000 physicians by 2036. By compressing the traditional eight-year college-plus-medical-school timeline by two full years, UAMS and the U of A are providing a faster, more affordable route to producing the physicians that communities across the state need.

“This program is rooted in a shared commitment to supporting students. In Fulbright College, we’re proud to provide a rigorous academic foundation while helping students grow into knowledgeable, caring future physicians,” said Brian Raines, dean of Fulbright College of Arts & Sciences. “By creating a more direct and affordable pathway into medicine, we’re expanding opportunity for talented students across Arkansas and helping meet critical workforce needs in our state.”

About the University of Arkansas: Founded in 1871, the University of Arkansas’ fundamental purpose as a land-grant institution and state flagship remains unchanged — to serve the state of Arkansas. The U of A provides an internationally competitive education in more than 200 academic programs and contributes more than [\\$3 billion to Arkansas’ economy](#). Through the teaching of new knowledge and skills, entrepreneurship and job development, as well as discovery through research and creative activity, the U of A is among the few U.S. colleges and universities with the highest level of research activity classified by the Carnegie Foundation. *U.S. News & World Report* also annually ranks the U of A among the top public universities in the nation. The U of A represents the best of public higher education, advancing Arkansas while building a better world.

About UAMS: 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 3,553 students and 1,015 medical residents and fellows. It is the state’s largest public employer with about 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 or www.uamshealth.com. Find us on [Facebook](#), [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).