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News Release
May 20, 2026

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U of A and UAMS Advance Joint Research Through Razorback Research Catalyst

LITTLE ROCK — Chancellor C. Lowry Barnes, M.D., of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) and Chancellor Charles Robinson, Ph.D., of the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville (U of A), announced today the selection of a research team for the inaugural Razorback Research Catalyst, a joint initiative designed to elevate collaborative, high-impact research across both campuses.

The selected proposal, titled “Negative Effects of GLP-1 Receptor Agonists on Bone and Muscle,” is led by Charles O’Brien, Ph.D., of UAMS and Nicholas Greene, Ph.D., of the U of A. Their work will explore how medications commonly used to treat diabetes and support weight loss may affect bone strength and muscle health, helping to better understand both the benefits and potential risks of these widely used treatments.

The Razorback Research Catalyst program was developed through a shared vision of U of A Chancellor Robinson and UAMS Chancellor Barnes, whose leadership has emphasized the importance of strategic coordination across the state’s flagship research institutions. Their support has been instrumental in launching a program that brings together complementary strengths in discovery, translational science, and clinical application.

The Catalyst initiative reflects a growing commitment by both institutions to work in a more coordinated and intentional way, strengthening research outcomes through partnership rather than parallel efforts. This approach aligns closely with the U of A’s 150 Forward initiative, which prioritizes research excellence, interdisciplinary collaboration and expanded impact. The Catalyst also aligns with UAMS’ ASPIRE 2033 initiative that demonstrates a commitment to research expansion and increased

translation of basic science discoveries into clinical application and community health improvement.

“This effort reflects a shared commitment to strengthening research across Arkansas by bringing together the distinct strengths of our two institutions,” Robinson said.

“By working collaboratively, our researchers are positioned to accelerate discovery and translate knowledge into meaningful outcomes that benefit communities across the state,” said Barnes.

The Catalyst program is designed to support sustained collaboration between U of A and UAMS investigators, encouraging multidisciplinary teams that span disciplines and career stages. Each team is co-led by principal investigators from both campuses and includes early-career researchers, fostering mentorship and building long-term research capacity.

The program was jointly developed by campus research leadership with the full support of both universities’ chancellors, representing a deliberate, coordinated investment in Arkansas’ research enterprise. Through this effort, both institutions are aligning resources and expertise to pursue transformative research with the potential to secure large-scale external funding and generate meaningful impact for Arkansans.

For UAMS, the Catalyst represents a renewed and strengthened partnership with U of A researchers, expanding opportunities to bridge foundational research with clinical practice and public health outcomes. For the U of A, the program advances the university’s strategic emphasis on collaborative research growth and positions faculty to engage in large-scale, multidisciplinary initiatives.

The selection process for the inaugural Catalyst team was highly competitive, with strong proposals submitted from across both campuses. While only one team can advance in this cycle, the quality, creativity and collaborative spirit reflected in the submissions underscore the promise of the program and the strength of the research community across Arkansas.

“The depth of ideas and level of collaboration demonstrated across the submissions affirm that this program is already achieving its intended purpose — bringing together researchers to pursue bold, impactful work,” said Daniel Voth, Ph.D., vice chancellor for research and innovation at UAMS.

“This was a difficult decision given the strength of the applications received,” said Margaret Sova McCabe, J.D., vice chancellor for research and innovation at the U of A.

The selected team will now develop a full proposal outlining their research vision, anticipated outcomes, and strategy for securing significant external funding. The Catalyst program is designed to position teams to compete for major grants exceeding \$5 million and, over time, to grow into sustainable research centers or institutes.

The inaugural focus area for the Catalyst includes orthopaedics and exercise science— areas of shared strength across both campuses with significant potential for research expansion. Future focus areas will be shaped by input from faculty and research leadership at both institutions.

The Catalyst joins other U of A and UAMS initiatives including the jointly operated Doctor of Occupational Therapy program, which welcomed its first students in 2020, and an accelerated six-year Bachelor of Science to Doctor of Medicine (BS-MD) program that is slated to begin in fall 2027.

About the Razorback Research Catalyst: The Razorback Research Catalyst is a joint U of A–UAMS program that supports high-impact, multidisciplinary research teams advancing discovery and improving outcomes for Arkansans. The program fosters sustained collaboration, supports early-stage innovation, and prepares teams to compete for large-scale external funding opportunities.

About the University of Arkansas: As Arkansas' flagship institution, the U of A provides an internationally competitive education in more than 200 academic programs. Founded in 1871, the U of A contributes more than \$3 billion to Arkansas' economy through the teaching of new knowledge and skills, entrepreneurship and job development, discovery through research and creative activity while also providing training for professional disciplines. The Carnegie Foundation classifies the U of A among the few U.S. colleges and universities with the highest level of research activity. *U.S. News & World Report* ranks the U of A among the top public universities in the nation. See how the U of A works to build a better world at [Arkansas Research and Economic Development News](#).

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](#).

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