

UAMS News Bureau

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**UAMS Invests Sarah J. Rhoads, Ph.D., DNP, FAAN,
in Linda C. Hodges Endowed Dean’s Chair**

LITTLE ROCK — The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) invested Sarah J. Rhoads, Ph.D., DNP, FAAN, dean of the UAMS College of Nursing, into the Linda C. Hodges Endowed Dean’s Chair during a May 7 ceremony.

“As I prepared for this day, I reflected on stories that brought me here, and I want to say that my story is not unique — time and time again I’ve seen nurses, remarkable individuals, who pursued their education while working full-time jobs, raising families, and caring for others, with many of these people facing life challenges. Perseverance is the heart of our profession,” Rhoads said. “Today I stand on the shoulders of many that come before me — mentors, colleagues, friends, and generous donors that made this endowed chair possible — and it will provide me the resources to advance the college and nursing in Arkansas.”

Rhoads started her career at UAMS. She returned to the institution as dean of the College of Nursing in September 2025. Prior to that, she was professor and chair for the Department of Community and Population Health in the College of Nursing at the University of Tennessee (UT) Health Science Center in Memphis, Tennessee.

“I’d like to extend my congratulations to Dean Sarah Rhoads for her accomplishments that merited her this honor,” said C. Lowry Barnes, M.D., UAMS chancellor. “It is obvious from all the kind words said about Sarah today that the College of Nursing is in great hands. We look forward to all of the things that you’re going to accomplish in the coming years.”

An endowed chair is among the highest academic honors a university can bestow on a faculty member. A chair is established with gifts of at least \$1 million, which are invested and the interest proceeds used to support the educational, research and clinical activities of the chair holder. Those named to a chair are among the most highly regarded scientists, physicians, and professors in their fields.

“Endowed chairs have a profound impact on the faculty who hold them as well as on the entirety of our institution as they help us recruit and retain world-class educators, scientists, and clinicians while providing the flexible sustained support needed for innovation,” said Stephanie Gardner, Pharm.D., Ed.D., UAMS provost and chief strategy officer. “The Linda C. Hodges Endowed Dean’s Chair carried a particularly meaningful legacy — it’s origins trace back to the origins and generosity of Daphine D. Doster, a trailblazer in nursing education in Arkansas. This chair not only recognizes distinguished academic achievement but also stands as a testament to mentorship, service, and enduring power of philanthropy.”

The chair was established in 2000 upon the death of Daphine D. Doster, Ph.D., who bequeathed funds to establish a professorship to recognize the strong leadership that then-Dean Linda C. Hodges, Ed.D., RN, provided the College of Nursing, making it one of the outstanding nursing programs in the country. Doster was active in citizen-sponsored drives to establish the first collegiate school of nursing in Arkansas to offer a bachelor’s degree. She served as acting dean of the University of Arkansas School of Nursing and was instrumental in establishing the four-year bachelor’s program in nursing.

Rhoads received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Master of Nursing Science, and Ph.D. in Nursing from UAMS in 1995, 2000, and 2013, respectively. She received her Doctor of Nursing Practice degree from the UT Health Science Center College of Nursing in 2006. She is certified as a nurse practitioner in women’s health and in inpatient obstetrics.

Rhoads began her nursing career in 1995 as a labor and delivery nurse at UAMS. In 1999, she became an assistant clinical instructor at the College of Nursing. She was granted tenure as an associate professor in the UAMS College of Medicine with a continuing joint appointment in the College of Nursing. Rhoads also held leadership roles at UAMS that further explored her research interests in digital health, care quality, education, health care access, community-engaged research, and maternal health.

Rhoads’s recent studies include remote patient monitoring for postpartum patients, telelactation services, and the impact of food security on maternal health. She has been funded as a primary investigator by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI), the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), the Skelly Foundation, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. Since 2010, she has had continuous grant funding totaling more than \$13 million as a primary investigator. She has published more than 40 peer-reviewed articles and more than 200 referred and invited presentations.

Several of Rhoads’ research and project grants have focused on rural areas, and she is particularly passionate about improving maternal and neonatal health in rural areas. She was recognized as an Academy Edge Runner by the American Academy of Nursing in 2016 for the redesign of the Angel Eye Webcam System. She also became a fellow in

the American Academy of Nursing in 2017 and a fellow in the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric, and Neonatal Nurses in 2024.

Rhoads was the first member of her family to become a nurse and to graduate from college. Many of her family members have followed in her footsteps and become nurses, including her two daughters and three of her nieces.

"I am so happy to be here today because I am so proud of Sarah Rhoads — it's certainly an honor to be speaking about her achievements and her career journey," said Hodges, now a professor emeritus for the college. "In closing, as they say in your sister state Texas, buckle up and get ready, students, faculty, and university administration for a fast, exciting, and successful ride into the future."

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](#).