

HEALTH PROFESSIONS

UAMS
University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences
FALL 2015

A Season of Firsts

College Sees First Dental Residents, First PT Students, First PA, Bachelor of EMS Graduates

By Jon Parham

The College of Health Professions saw a flurry of firsts recently in the life of its newest academic and degree programs.

It started in May, when UAMS commencement included graduation of the first class of physician assistants and first graduates of the Emergency Medical Sciences' bachelor's degree program. In July, the first resident dentists arrived for the postgraduate dental residency in the college's Center for Dental Education. Then in August, classes began for the first 24 students in the physical therapy program based on UAMS' northwest Arkansas campus in Fayetteville.

"Our college's programs always have so much going on but it is not often you can celebrate seeing so many milestones reached at the same time," said Dean Douglas Murphy, Ph.D.

Physician Assistant 1st Class Graduates

Although the first 26 students to receive their master's degree in the physician assistant program walked in the May commencement, they were not quite done. Clinical rotations and work on a capstone project continued through the summer until the end of classes on Aug. 28.

"It is an honor to have been part of the first class in this program," said Courtney Moseley, who was the class president and set to start a job in hospitalist medicine in central Arkansas. "Not only am I honored to be a part of UAMS and PA program history, but also to be a part of this graduating class — my classmates are all phenomenal people."

Development of the program, the first physician assistant program at a public university in Arkansas, started in 2011. Patricia Kelly, Ph.D., program director and chair of the college's Department of Physician Assistant Studies, arrived at UAMS in late 2011 said it is felt "a little surreal" to see the first class graduate — "it seems like I arrived on campus

just yesterday to start the program, but it's a great feeling and I am really proud of each of them."

The 34 students in the third class in the program started classes in May. Kelly said the first class will not be forgotten, having developed the culture of the entire program during their experience.

"They are the groundbreakers and they took that role very seriously," she said. "They have been the advocates for the physician assistant profession in Arkansas. So as our first graduates, they are not only the face of our program, but also of the profession in the state."

First Graduates of Bachelor's Degree EMS Program

Also during May commencement, UAMS graduated the first three from a unique program for enhancing leadership and problem-solving skills for experienced emergency medical services professionals.

Fort Smith paramedic Miranda Hagans was one of the first three to receive a bachelor's degree in Emergency Medical Sciences. The college started the program, the first of its kind in Arkansas and one of the few in the nation, in 2013.

"I had always wanted to further my education but there were fewer options after the associate's degree," said Hagans, who has been working in emergency medical services for 13 years — the last seven as a paramedic. "I really have a deep passion for EMS and seeking the latest information available. I want to be part of moving emergency medical

Continued on page 4



Fort Smith paramedic Miranda Hagans was one of the first graduates of the bachelor's degree program in emergency medical sciences at UAMS.



College of Health Professions

Fall 2015 Newsletter

The UAMS College of Health Professions Mission

The mission of the UAMS College of Health Professions is to improve the health of culturally diverse populations by:

- Offering education, research and service opportunities for students in the allied health professions
- Providing students with a total educational experience that emphasizes life-long learning
- Collaborating with other health care professionals to be an innovator in allied health education

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A Message from the Dean



The fall semester has started for 664 students, 87 faculty members and our valued staff in the College of Health Professions. The beginning of a new academic year is always exciting — meeting new students, welcoming back others, greeting new faculty and celebrating the start of new programs and new activities.

This is the ninth issue of this print newsletter since we started it in the fall of 2011. It lets us deliver a snapshot in the life of our college to alumni and supporters.

The “snapshot” this time is crowded with several of our programs reaching milestones, including the arrival of our first dental residents and classes starting for our first physical therapy students. Our first class of physician assistants just completed their final bit of coursework.

The amount of scholarly work by our faculty is increasing with more grants and more published research. Those activities reinforce the role of UAMS as an academic health sciences center and strengthen our faculty, which in turn improves our students and ultimately the patients and professions they later serve.

We are glad to have your continued interest and support of our college.

Thank you

Douglas L. Murphy, Ph.D.

Dean, College of Health Professions

Dietetics and Nutrition Program Develops Dietary Translators

Internship and Clinical Nutrition Programs Find Success in Research, Clinical Rotations

By Jon Parham

To hear the chair of the College of Health Professions' Department of Dietetics and Nutrition tell it, his program is turning out translators.

There is now so much information (and misinformation) about diet and nutrition readily available through the Internet, on TV and easily shared through social media. To help the public cut through the misinformation and understand how to eat healthier and make better dietary choices, the department seeks to produce dietitians and clinical nutritionists charged with translating the latest nutrition science.

Whether it's through supervised practice rotations working with patients and the community or working on research projects, the students are gaining experience and skills to make them better dietary translators.



Reza Hakkak, Ph.D.

"Our responsibility is to educate students and therefore educate the public," said Reza Hakkak, Ph.D., longtime department chair and active researcher in showing how diet choices can cause or prevent chronic disease. "Whatever I do in research, I'm working to translate it into language that our students

understand so that they can translate it into terms and ideas that the public can understand — that's how the message of good nutrition gets out."

The department's academic mission also can be seen translated into the success of its students and graduates. Today, across hospitals, clinics, school districts and businesses in Arkansas and elsewhere, graduates of the UAMS dietetics and nutrition program can be found making a difference.

"I love being able to see the day-to-day progress each of my patients make, especially from a nutrition standpoint," said Courtney Byrum, a dietitian at Baptist Health in Little Rock. "Many times my patients will be admitted

on continuous tube feeding and leave a couple weeks later on a regular diet with thin liquids. I truly admire their determination and positivity in the midst of their struggles."



Courtney Byrum

at the University of Central Arkansas.

Byrum, a 2014 graduate of the dietetic internship, also was selected by the Arkansas Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics as the Dietetic Intern of the Year that year. The UAMS program accounts for the past four recipients in a row of the statewide award selected from interns at UAMS and the program



Juanita Montelongo

work at training sites including UAMS, Arkansas Children's Hospital and the Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System.

"At work, you never know how many patients you are going to have that day, at least for me since I'm in a new place once or twice a week," said Montelongo. Learning to work better as a team player during the internship has helped me look for opportunities to help out my coworkers in any way I can."

Tina Crook, Ph.D., associate professor and dietetic internship director, said the 40-week internship program is focused on giving the interns the skills and knowledge they

That streak includes this year's recipient, Juanita Montelongo, along with Byrum, Leigh Delavan and Amy Berry. Montelongo, who just started working as an endocrinology dietitian at Children's Medical Center in Dallas, said the internship program equipped her with some intangibles — time management and learning to work as a team player through the rotations and

Continued on page 9

Continued from page 1

services forward as health care changes.”

Danny Bercher, Ph.D., chair of the college’s Department of Emergency Sciences, said the degree program positions a graduate at the forefront of emerging trends in the profession. He mentioned the aspect of community paramedic with the EMS professionals taking on a more preventative and disease management health care roles, complementing with work of community health professionals, providing follow up with patients discharged from hospitals and other types of patient education. “Miranda exemplifies why we added the degree program — a way to strengthen leadership skills and make an experienced paramedic even more valuable to the community they serve,” Bercher said.

First Dental Residents Arrive



Michael Dienberg, D.D.S., (left) and Ashley McMillan, D.D.S., are the first two resident dentists in the UAMS Center for Dental Education.

UAMS welcomed its first two dental residents on July 1 when Ashley McMillan, D.D.S., a Little Rock native, and Michael Dienberg, D.D.S., of Racine,

Wisconsin, arrived to begin a yearlong postgraduate dental residency in the college’s Center for Dental Education. Creating the residency program, accredited earlier this year by the Commission on Dental Accreditation, was a goal of the Center for Dental Education when it was established in 2012 as a hub for dental education programs at UAMS.

“As our inaugural dental residents, Dr. McMillan and Dr. Dienberg will help our UAMS dental program take a big step forward as they gain valuable experience across a number of unique patient settings and in an interdisciplinary environment alongside physicians, nurses, pharmacists and other health professionals,” said Gene Jines, D.D.S., director of the Center for Dental Education.

Residents will receive 12 months of advanced education from faculty dentists while providing dental care at UAMS, Arkansas Children’s Hospital, the student-led UAMS 12th Street Health and Wellness Center and the Harmony Health Clinic in Little Rock.

Both residents said they wanted to gain experience

providing dental care for hospital patients. Some of their initial cases involved providing dental exams on patients as part of the medical clearance process prior to surgery.

“I want to ensure I have the skills to be a comprehensive practitioner, able to provide dental care to patients in any setting,” said McMillan, who received her dental degree from the University of Tennessee College of Dentistry in 2014.

The program will expand to six resident dentists per year after the first year.

Physical Therapy Classes Begin



The first 24 students in the UAMS physical therapy program pose for a group photo.

August brought another milestone for the college’s physical therapy program, when its first 24 students began classes on Aug. 17. The physical therapy doctoral program is the first program based solely on UAMS’ northwest Arkansas campus in Fayetteville.

John Jefferson, Ph.D., chair of the Department of Physical Therapy, who arrived in early 2014 to lead the program, marveled at all the work done by so many to get to the beginning of classes. He said all of the details and work seemed like a blur — “it’s amazing how fast it feels like this year-and-a-half has gone.”

“I can remember standing here in the remnants of eight old hospital operating rooms with copper pipe hanging down from the ceiling,” he said. “Now we have beautiful facilities, wonderful equipment, energetic faculty and a fabulous rehabilitation clinic for seeing patients and helping teach our students.”

Gracie Frizzell of Little Rock, one of the first students, called being part of the first class exciting. The former college basketball player at the University of Mississippi said being in physical therapy to overcome injuries inspired her to become a therapist herself.

“I understand the empowering feeling of how to come back from an injury and I want to motivate others to have that same feeling,” she said.

Research, Scholarly Work by Faculty Strengthens College

A 'win' for students, for patients and for science

By Jon Parham



Nannette Nicholson, Ph.D., of the Department of Audiology and Speech Pathology visits with Dean Douglas Murphy, Ph.D., about her research poster during the Faculty Showcase.

As much as producing new health care professionals, having faculty and students involved in scholarly activity — research studies and projects — is vitally important to the success of the college, according to the dean.

“As an academic health center, I think it’s our responsibility to be leading our professions by contributing to the intellectual and clinical capital of our disciplines,” said Dean Douglas Murphy, Ph.D. “Part of the way we can do that is to generate new knowledge and scholarly activity.”

The dean said the college is producing more grant activity and is seeing more faculty and students involved in research. He said he’s pleased and excited about the number of grants that faculty are receiving and that it’s across so many of the college’s programs.

Some programs have had a strong tradition of faculty research. In a recent announcement of new research grant awards, faculty members from Audiology and Speech Pathology and Respiratory Care received awards. The projects all seek to advance clinical treatments or scientific understanding in those disciplines.

“Scholarly activities among the faculty represent a growing and evolving department,” said Betholyn Gentry, Ph.D., a professor in the Department of Audiology and Speech Pathology. Gentry, whose work is in the area of addressing social communication needs of individuals of all ages with autism spectrum disorder, was recipient of the Faculty Excellence in Research Award for the College of Education and Health

Professions at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, which jointly hosts the department with UAMS.

“Recognition for faculty ultimately means recognition for the department, college and university,” she said. “I think having faculty who are active in research and scholarly activities provides national visibility and helps the university’s reputation among peers.”

Naveen Nagaraj, Ph.D., an assistant professor in the Department of Audiology and Speech Pathology, was part of a team receiving \$30,000 from the Hearing Health Foundation for studying an interdisciplinary effort for a new assessment of Central Auditory Processing Disorder in children. Faculty member Samuel Atcherson, Ph.D., and a research partner from the Rochester Institute of Technology were awarded \$88,054 by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development for their work adapting a patient outcomes measurement system into American Sign Language for individuals who are deaf/hard of hearing with low English language proficiency.

Earlier this year, Erna Boone, Ph.D., chair of the Department of Respiratory and Surgical Technologies, was part of a team that received a \$50,000 grant from the Arkansas Cancer Coalition for two smoking cessation programs. It’s the second year running the coalition has awarded grants to the program that Boone developed with Claudia Barone, Ed.D., A.P.R.N., a professor in the UAMS College of Nursing, and UAMS thoracic surgeon Matthew Steliga, M.D.

In three years, the program has shown a 70 percent success rate in getting patients off tobacco.

‘I’m Addicted to Conducting Research’

Reza Hakkak, Ph.D., chair of the Department of Dietetics and Nutrition, said conducting research makes him a better educator. A passionate advocate for the role good nutrition plays in prevention of disease whose nutrition research has been funded constantly for 20 years now, he noted that content from textbooks all originated from scientific examination.

Continued on page 6

Continued from page 5

“I’m addicted to conducting and following the latest research – it keeps you alive mentally,” Hakkak said.

Participating in research or presenting work at a scientific conference is a requirement for UAMS nutrition students. For the past several years, all Master of Science in Clinical Nutrition students and their faculty mentors have presented the results of their own research projects at the Experimental Biology national conference. (Note: See the feature on the nutrition program in this newsletter for more on this work.)

In August, many College of Health Professions faculty members gathered for the college’s first Faculty Showcase. Research and scholarly activity was highlighted with a poster presentation during the event intended to spark even more collaboration and collegiality in the college.

“We have faculty and students in our college doing extraordinary things but who are not necessarily known within the college,” said Dean Murphy in explaining the motivation for the showcase featuring 24 posters from faculty investigators across the college.

The posters included studies into food allergies; home visiting programs for children who are deaf or hard of hearing; implementation of electronic health records into health information management curriculum; laboratory sciences equipment use; and team-based learning vs. traditional lecture in some physical therapy instruction. Faculty investigators fielded questions about their work from colleagues during the poster sessions.

Catherine Smith, M.Ed., instructor and interim program director for the Cytotechnology Program in the Department of Laboratory Sciences, serves as chair of the college’s Faculty Development and Services Committee, which planned the showcase. It was based in part on a 2014 symposium for student research in laboratory sciences. “Participation increases awareness and understanding of scholarly activity and offers a model for interprofessional collaboration, which is a hallmark for successful health care education,” said Smith, who presented a poster on success of the student research symposium during the showcase.

Dean’s Society Awards Grants to Four Projects

Two education innovation projects and two research projects received grants recently through the Dean’s Society of the College of Health Professions.

The grants were award to:

- **“Use of Baby ISAO Simulator and Standardized Parents in Hearing Screening and Parent Counseling Education”** by Ahmad Alanazi, doctoral student; Nannette Nicholson, Ph.D.; Samuel R. Atcherson, Ph.D.; and Clifford A. Franklin, Ph.D., all of the Department of Audiology and Speech Pathology — A \$3,260 grant to pilot a curriculum designed for use with a baby simulator and standardized patients to teach students how to conduct an infant hearing screening and counsel parents on the results.
- **“The Protective Role of Blueberry in Vascular Senescence”** by Rafaela G. Feresin, Ph.D., Department of Dietetics and Nutrition — A \$2,500 grant to study how the molecular mechanisms regulating the protective effects of blueberry polyphenols in preventing cardiovascular disease.

The projects were selected from among 10 applicants, both the highest number of applications and projects funded in a single year since the grant project started in 2011.

- **“Measuring Listening Time in an Elementary School Classroom”** by Clifford Franklin, Ph.D., Department of Audiology and Speech Pathology, Donna Smiley, Arkansas Children’s Hospital — A \$2,500 grant to pilot a method for collecting data regarding the amount of time a school-aged child is required to listen during the school day.
- **“VOLARE-Video Observation of Learning in Auditorily-Responsive Environments”** by Mary Ellen Nevins, Ed.D., Department of Audiology and Speech Pathology; Kathleen Sussman, Weingarten Children’s Center, Redwood City, California — A \$4,799 grant to create a video library of 100 instructional videos that demonstrate skills to encourage excellent listening and spoken language outcomes for young children with hearing loss.

Howard Quittner, M.D.



Howard Quittner, M.D., former professor of clinical pathology, is shown here in 1968 during his tenure at UAMS.

If you were to name the Founding Fathers of the College of Health Professions, Howard Quittner, M.D., would surely be on the list. And although he had other career stops before his retirement, he has never forgotten UAMS.

As a professor of clinical pathology in the early 1970s, he helped arrange a consolidation of laboratory sciences (then known as medical technology) programs at UAMS, the VA Medical Center and St. Vincent Infirmary. It was part of a larger effort that ultimately brought together five existing UAMS allied health programs — medical technology, dental hygiene, radiologic technology, surgical technology and biomedical instrumentation — to form the college in 1971.

Reached by phone at his New Orleans home, the now 93-year old Quittner says of he and his wife, Carolyn, “We have nothing but the deepest affection for UAMS.”

Carolyn is a graduate of the UAMS laboratory sciences program. Her late son, Kelly Stewart, M.D., graduated the UAMS College of Medicine and daughter-in-law Beth, married to Carolyn’s other son, Alan, works in Clinical Programs. Honoring those family connections to UAMS, the Quittners recently endowed the Carolyn and Howard Quittner, M.D. and Kelly R. Stewart, M.D. Endowed Scholarship in Laboratory Sciences.

“Students need money and support to help get through school,” Dr. Quittner said when asked why endow a scholarship. “The more scholarships a program has, the better off it will be.”

After a summer visit to the UAMS campus, the couple — who will celebrate their 50th anniversary next April — was impressed with the growth. “Very impressed with what all is going on at UAMS,” Dr. Quittner said. “You just can’t imagine how much it has grown since I was there on faculty.”

The faculty, staff and students of the College of Health Professions would like to say “thank you” to these generous donors who made gifts to the college from Jan. 1-June 30, 2015.

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Continued from page 3



Tina Crook, Ph.D., of the Department of Dietetics and Nutrition talks about food allergy research during the Faculty Showcase.

need to succeed as professional dietitians. The 14 interns in the program are motivated to succeed even before arriving, she said.

“Our students demonstrate leadership skills and have valuable work/volunteer experience when they come to us. These factors make them strong candidates for the statewide award,” Crook said. “The Dietetic Intern Award distinguishes them as upcoming leaders in the field and is a benefit to them as they start their career.”

The Dietetic Internship Program is actually a joint program between UAMS and the Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System (CAVHS), its roots extending back to the early 1970s. It was then when the clinical nutrition program at UAMS joined with the Veterans system. In 1984, the Department of Dietetics and Nutrition joined what was then called the UAMS College of Health Related Professions.

CAVHS provides invaluable experiences for the students over a 20-week period with rotations that emphasize food service systems and management principles. Arkansas Children’s Hospital is another training site for students where they receive hands-on experience providing nutrition care to pediatric patients.

Hakkak said the relationship with the CAVHS makes the program stronger, as does being part of UAMS, the state’s

only academic health center. The program’s reputation can be seen in the more than 100 applications that are received each year from across the country for 14 internship positions. The internship program has regularly achieved perfect or near-perfect pass rates on the registered dietitian certification exam.

For students in the clinical nutrition master’s degree program, work on research studies is a requirement and at the heart of future success, Hakkak said. So many chronic diseases — including obesity, cancer, heart disease and diabetes — have been shown to have links to diet, he said, so nutritionists fluent in the latest research are at the forefront of preventive medicine.

“We want our students to be exposed to the other aspects of the field, so being able to review the latest scientific literature is critical to stay current in the field,” Hakkak said. “Participation in research also reinforces skills of data collection, writing and education that are important to a successful career.”

All clinical nutrition students have been selected to present their work at national conferences — another barometer for the program’s success. Earlier in 2015, eight clinical nutrition students were lead authors on research presented at an Experimental Biology Annual Conference in Boston. The list included Julie Hall Schwilling, Jody Wells, Susan Melhorn, Fariba Jousheghany, Kobe Johnson, Srdan Markovic, Mawaddah Ezmirly and Allison Brite-Lane.

The abstract “Examine the knowledge of nutrition and physical activity among 3rd graders using two different teaching methods in elementary school” by Melhorn and faculty members Crook, Josh Phelps, Ph.D., and Hakkak, was selected by the American Society for Nutrition as a finalist for its Emerging Leaders in Nutrition Science Poster Competition.



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Degrees and Certificates Offered...	27
Current Faculty.....	87
Current Student Enrollment.....	664
Students Receiving Financial Aid...	85%
2015 Graduates.....	334
(including those from graduate programs)	
Alumni.....	7,500 +
States Where Alumni Live.....	All 50,
District of Columbia and two foreign countries (Canada and Australia)	
Graduation Rate.....	81%
Board Exam Pass Rate.....	86%

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