

## UPCOMING DATES

- **May 26, 2009**  
Summer Registration  
8:30-9:30 am  
Graduate School  
Office  
(\$27 late fee applies  
after this date)
- **May 26, 2009**  
Classes begin
- **June 1, 2009**  
Last day to register  
for Summer  
Semester  
Last day to add a  
class
- **July 3, 2009**  
Independence Day  
Holiday
- **For additional  
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# UAMS Graduate School

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 3

SPRING 2009

## Letter from Dean McGehee

Last week we formally wrapped up our 2008-2009 academic year with our UAMS Commencement at Barton Coliseum. It was a great event. Across all colleges, we set a record with over 800 graduates this year. Quite an accomplishment and a testament to the role UAMS plays in promoting healthcare in Arkansas. As I have commented several times, this continues to be my favorite time of the year. The excitement in the air from our graduates and their families is absolutely contagious and the whole attitude across campus is amazingly upbeat and positive. Through our PhD, MS and shared MNSc graduates, we now have another 122 alumni. Among them were 29 PhD graduates, including 2 MD/PhD graduates, 42 MS and 51 MNSc degrees. I was particularly proud that 27 of our PhD graduates elected to participate in commencement exercises, and it was an honor for me to join with major graduate advisors in hooding them. Our brunch that morning was another great success with over 300 attendees, with many family members having come literally from all over the world. So I would like to thank everyone for helping us make this another very successful year for the Graduate School.



I would also like to pay tribute to two friends we lost this year. Last month, Dr. Thomas E. Andreoli died from complications from a fall. He was a remarkable individual, physician, scientist, friend and a very strong advocate for graduate education. As a graduate student, I remember him telling the faculty at a medicine grand rounds that the difference between a hospital and medical university was research and the scientists and students who take on the challenge. It ushered a new era of excellence at UAMS and he will be missed. At commencement, we also honored Jian Cui, a PhD candidate under the mentorship of Dr. Michael Jennings in the Physiology and Biophysics Program. Jian died last fall after a courageous battle with cancer. Jian was within a few weeks of completing her dissertation work, and her husband, Wayne Hildasheim, was presented her doctoral hood and *Posthumous Honoris Causa* PhD degree. Our thoughts and prayers are with these families.

There are also a lot of exciting things on the near horizon for us as well. The Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology is celebrating a 50 year anniversary next week with over 200 alumni, faculty, students and friends expected to attend. After two years of "squatting" in various temporary locations, the graduate school will be officially moving next month to our new permanent home on the second floor of the Administration West Building and you will be hearing more about that as it occurs. The GSA continues to be a very active organization with lots of activities that are well attended. We have a lot to be grateful for, it's been a good year and we should all look forward to another one. I hope that all of you take time to get out with your friends and families and have a wonderful and safe summer.

Read the [Graduate School blog](#)

Visit the "[UAMS Graduate School Alumni and Friends](#)" Facebook page and become a group member.

## UAMS Graduate Student Profile:

### Brooke E.E. Montgomery



**UAMS graduate student Brooke E.E. Montgomery**

UAMS [graduate student](#) Brooke E.E. Montgomery first became interested in public health issues while volunteering at clinics in Atlanta that served women dealing with sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and drug use.

In many ways, she identified with the women she met while volunteering. They were her age. They were from her hometown. And they shared similar backgrounds.

However, educational opportunities were encouraged and available for Montgomery but this was not the case for many of the women she met, which ultimately put them at greater risk for HIV, STIs, or drug use.

“The more I learned about their sexual risk behaviors like unprotected sex, sex after drug or alcohol use, having multiple sexual partners – I realized it was not just their behavior that put them at risk. “It was the environment they lived in, including their communities, their families, and their friends, that influenced their behavior,” said Montgomery, who is working on her doctorate in the Health Promotion and Prevention Research

Program in the UAMS Graduate School.

“Something that seems so personal, a person’s sexual behavior, can be greatly influenced by so many other factors.”

Montgomery said it was while volunteering that she realized she wanted to dedicate her career to working with populations that are disproportionately burdened by STIs, including HIV, and drug use.

She earned her Master of Public Health degree in 2007, graduating with honors from the UAMS [Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health](#) (COPH). That experience encouraged her to continue toward a doctorate, under the mentorship of her major graduate advisor, Katharine Stewart, Ph.D., M.P.H., an associate professor in health behavior and health education and the COPH associate dean of academic affairs.

She is working with Stewart on a project researching risk behaviors among rural African American cocaine users.

Montgomery said she is

interested in joining biological health sciences, behavioral theory and socio-cultural influences in the design and evaluation of effective community-based public health programs aimed at reducing STI rates and drug use. That means researching and developing the best strategies for changing risky sexual behavior and finding resources for helping specific at-risk populations, such as minorities or those from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, she said.

With a doctorate, she envisions herself equipped to develop programs “to serve marginalized populations burdened by sexually transmitted infections and drug abuse.”

“Brooke is a remarkably bright and committed student”, said UAMS Graduate School Dean Robert E. McGehee Jr., Ph.D. “She came into the program as a Dean’s Distinguished Scholar, has already received a Travel Award for presenting some of her research results at the national meeting of the Society of Behavioral Medicine 2009 Annual Conference. Even more notable, Brooke has been awarded a prestigious Ruth L. Kirchstein National Research Service Award from the National Institutes of Health.

# UAMS Graduate School, Center for Diversity Affairs

## Receives \$1.6 Million NIH Diversity Grant

.As many as 24 minority students could get a boost toward a doctorate in biomedical research with help from a four-year, \$1.6 million federal grant to the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) Graduate School.

The first four students are already enrolled for fall 2009 under the program. After that, six new students each year are expected to enter one of the seven biomedical science doctoral programs, said UAMS Graduate School Dean Robert McGehee, Ph.D.

The qualifying students will receive tuition and a stipend through the Initiative for Maximizing Student Diversity (IMSD) grant from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences, part of the National Institutes of Health.

"There are still very few minority health professionals, and when you get to the basic sciences, the numbers are even worse," said Billy Thomas, M.D., M.P.H., associate dean for the Center for Diversity Affairs in the UAMS College of Medicine and a professor of pediatrics.

McGehee and Thomas are the principal investigators for the grant, along with Kristen Sterba, Ph.D., assistant dean for the Graduate School's Office of Recruiting and Retention.

"This is one of the first major grants we've received targeting recruitment of minority graduate students," McGehee said.

The IMSD program was developed to increase the number of underrepresented minority students graduating with doctorates in biomedical research. It funds the first two years of study in one of the seven biomedical science programs (biochemistry and molecular biology, interdisciplinary biomedical sciences, interdisciplinary toxicology, microbiology and immunology, neurobiology and developmental sciences, pharmacology, and physiology and biophysics). For the student's last two years of school, funding will be provided by the graduate program or the faculty mentor.

Students selected for the IMSD Program also will participate in an eight-week summer transition program consisting of lectures on various biomedical topics, career and developmental seminars, and a summer research rotation prior to the fall of their first year. Students will receive funding and academic credit during this transition program.

"We are also looking at students at the undergraduate level, not just incoming graduate students," Thomas said.

Undergraduates who qualify for early acceptance to the program in their junior year will become

Phillip L. Rayford Scholars, named for the first African-American department chairman in the UAMS College of Medicine. By meeting academic and research requirements, as well as being admitted to a summer research program following their sophomore year, these scholars can position themselves for an easier transition to graduate school.

Also, through a partnership with the Arkansas INBRE (IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence) program based at UAMS, the Rayford scholars are guaranteed a mentored summer research fellowship following their junior year.

Additional benefits of the IMSD Program includes a formal mentoring program, a seminar series featuring nationally recognized minority scientists, development of a competency-based academic portfolio, and group problem-solving sessions.

Students will be selected for the IMSD Program based on several criteria including academic performance and research experience, Sterba said. More information on how to qualify or apply for the program can be found online at [www.uams.edu/gradschool/pro\\_students/IMSD.asp](http://www.uams.edu/gradschool/pro_students/IMSD.asp)

# UAMS College of Medicine

## Student Research Week

This year's College of Medicine Student Research Week was held April 7-9, 2009. Twenty-eight graduate students presented posters at this year's event. Congratulations to the following winners:

### Travel Awards

UAMS Center for Orthopaedic Research Award  
Drew Jones (Biochemistry and Molecular Biology)

UAMS WPRCI Award  
Rebecca Gilbride (Biochemistry and Molecular Biology)

Dr. Buvan Award  
Wei Wang (Neurobiology and Developmental Sciences)

### Graduate School Division Awards

First Place  
Dinesh K. Hirenullur-S (Pharmacology)

Second Place  
Biny Joseph (Pharmacology)

## Graduate School Brunch 2009



To view more pictures, go to the ["UAMS Graduate School Alumni and Friends"](#) Facebook page.



## Graduate Student and Faculty Accomplishments and Awards

### Graduate School Mentor Awards

Cornelia M. Beck  
 Claudia Beverly  
 Nalini S. Bora  
 Elizabeth Ann Coleman  
 Lawrence Cornett  
 John P. Crow  
 Gerald A. Dienel  
 Edgar Garcia-Rill

Robert Kennedy  
 Angus MacNicol  
 Jean C. McSweeney  
 Paul Prather  
 Nancy J. Rusch  
 Pao Feng Tsai  
 Wayne P. Wahls



To view a complete list of graduate student awards received this year, visit <http://www.uams.edu/gradschool/awards/>.

## Graduate Student Association

It's been an absolutely amazing semester for the GSA, and we really hope you've enjoyed all the doughnuts, movies, pizza, and events! The 2009-2010 GSA is listed below, and while we're sad to say good-bye to some great people, we're really excited about welcoming the new ones. Look for more great GSA-sponsored events next fall!

We wish you a safe, fun-filled summer!

### 2009-10 GSA Officers

President	Kim Reynolds
Vice President	Kevin Kim
Secretary	Sherri Smart
Treasurer	Jennifer Watts
ASG Representative 1	Shannon Rose
ASG Representative 2	Omar Rahal
Recycling Coordinator	Steven Smith
Web Master	Katharine Whitney

Kimberly Reynolds  
 GSA President

[Click here to visit the GSA website](#)

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## Summer 2009 Important Dates



July 6, 2009	Last day to drop a class
July 20-August 7, 2009	Registration for Fall Semester 2009
July 17, 2009	Last day of summer session
July 24, 2009	Last day to submit dissertation and thesis to Library
August 17, 2009	Degrees awarded