

UPCOMING DATES

- December 9-23, 2009
Registration
- January 4, 2010
Spring Registration
8:30-10:30 am
Late fee applies after
this date
- January 4, 2010
Spring classes begin
- January 11, 2010
Last day to register for
Spring Semester
Last day to add a class
- For additional
important dates see
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UAMS Graduate School

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 1

WINTER 2009

Letter from Dean McGehee

It is remarkable to me how fast time moves on down the road, and we here we are wrapping up another year and fall semester. It has been a really good year, with a lot of student publications, a record number of PhD graduates, and many student awards with national and international recognition. Just this week one of our faculty in our health promotion and prevention program, Dr. Katharine Stewart, Professor in the College of Public Health has been named Mentor of the Year by the Southern Regional Educational Board. This is quite an accomplishment. Last month, our first two genetic counseling graduates and 2008 alumni, Ms. Darlene Ho and Carla Bell became the first board certified genetic counselors who received their education in Arkansas. As a graduate school we have a lot to be proud of and a lot to be thankful for. I for one am particularly thankful for all of your tireless efforts at making each of our programs the best that they can be.



It has also been a year in which we lost several active and former friends and colleagues who were strong supporters of our graduate programs. Drs. Alan Elbein and Thomas Andreoli, Chairmen of Biochemistry and Medicine, respectively, were very actively engaged in graduate education right up until their untimely death. Dr. Ernie Peck, former biochemistry chair and personal mentor to me for many years, along with Dr. Bill Stroop, former microbiology professor also died this year. Please remember their families in your thoughts and prayers throughout this holiday season.

It has been a year of change as well, with Dr. Dan Rahn becoming our new chancellor, I think we have a lot of very promising things to look forward to as we move forward into 2010 and am very much looking forward to it. I hope each of you have a wonderful holiday season and get the opportunity to spend as much time as possible relaxing and visiting with family. So safe travels and Happy Holidays and New Year!!

Robert E. McGehee, Ph.D.
Dean, Graduate School

Read the [Graduate School blog](#)
Become a fan of the [UAMS Graduate School on Facebook](#)

Brother Draws UAMS Grad Student to Autism Research



UAMS graduate student Shannon Rose

UAMS graduate student Shannon Rose said seeing her older brother living with autism made her want to learn more about the developmental disorder.

Rose, a doctoral student in the [Interdisciplinary Biomedical Sciences](#) program of the [UAMS Graduate School](#), hopes that understanding autism at a cellular level could lead to new treatments. She is studying the potential role of mitochondrial dysfunction in [autism](#) in the lab of Jill James, Ph.D., a professor of pediatrics in the UAMS College of Medicine.

Her work is focused on the pathophysiology of autism – the specific biological malfunctions that either cause autism or are a result of autism. Documenting those changes could lead to new ways to treat the disorder characterized by impaired social interaction and communication, and by restricted and repetitive behavior.

Rose said her brother has a more severe case of autism and does not speak.

"I've always wanted to get a glimpse of how he sees the world," said Rose, who would like her work to improve the lives of those living with autism and their families.

In her two years at UAMS, Rose has been an author on three autism studies. Most recently she was an author on the 2009 study, "Cellular and mitochondrial glutathione redox imbalance in lymphoblastoid cells derived from children with autism" that was published in the *FASEB Journal*.

The Searcy native was awarded the Dean's Distinguished Scholarship when she arrived at UAMS. She also is active in student activities outside the lab, serving on the Graduate Student Association as Associated Student Government (ASG) representative for 2008-09 and will serve in that role again for 2009-10 when she also will serve as ASG treasurer.

Rose, who earned a bachelor's degree in

biology at the University of Central Arkansas (UCA) already had a strong research background before arriving at UAMS. She worked in the neuroscience lab during her undergraduate years at UCA, where she studied the lifelong behavioral effects of neonatal pain with and without anesthesia.

"Math and science have always been my favorite subjects throughout school," said Rose when asked what interested her in science. "My interest in scientific research actually stems from high school when I did my science fair project one summer in a lab at UAMS. It had a lasting impact."

UAMS Doctoral Candidates Receive White Coats

White coats were distributed to 32 University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) graduate students marking “the defining moment” of their young careers as a full house of mentors, faculty and family members watched.

The students were celebrating the initiation of their dissertation research at the second annual Research Induction Ceremony for doctoral candidates held Sept. 28 at the I. Dodd Wilson Education Building Lecture Hall.

“This is truly the defining moment in your lives,” said Robert McGehee Jr., Ph.D., dean of the UAMS Graduate School. “At this point all of the angst and sweat of your qualifying exams is behind you and you all know more now than you ever will the rest of your careers. It’s a pivotal

point in your lives and that’s why we’re here to celebrate.”

The students pursuing the Doctor of Philosophy degree all have successfully passed the Ph.D. qualifying exam and are now formal Ph.D. candidates. The ceremony represents an official transition from enrollment in coursework to the initiation of the dissertation research. Students will now set off on a career of discovery in biomedical and health research with the expectation that their work will lead to improvement in health and a better understanding of the human condition.

The ceremony also marks a time when students have selected their mentor or major graduate advisor who assumes the role of mentor from the program’s graduate director. Students’ relationships with mentors being cultivated during this time is an important linkage, McGehee said.

Galen Wenger, Ph.D., professor in the UAMS Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology, was the ceremony’s guest speaker. He detailed the evolution of the musical genius of Johann Sebastian Bach, who had many mentors in different parts of the world whose styles he mimicked and later made his own.

“In scientific terms, he was building upon an existing database and ultimately discovered something he called his own,” Wenger said. “At this point in your studies, you understand the discoveries of those in your field and you will use that to create your own. The important thing is to not only make discoveries on your own, but to then pass them on.”

Following the presentation of the white coats, the students and faculty joined to recite the “Affirmation of Scientists,” which publicly acknowledges the acceptance of the expected standards of honor and integrity.



Born to be a Nurse

Pamela Gouner, a doctoral student in the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) [Graduate School](#) and [College of Nursing](#), feels like she was born knowing she wanted to be a nurse.

“I can’t remember not wanting to be a nurse,” said Gouner, R.N., chairman of the Division of Nursing at the [University of Arkansas at Monticello](#) (UAM). “Some say it’s a calling and I believe that. What I do know is that when I started caring for patients in nursing school and even before that in a summer job, it felt very natural and comfortable.”

In a varied, nearly 30-year career in nursing, she has been a pediatric nurse, an operating room nurse and a school nurse. She’s worked in four states and two countries. In recent years she has been drawn to education and helping prepare future nurses.

Earning a doctorate, she said, is the next step in advancing her knowledge in nursing education and research.

“A doctorate is the standard in the academic setting, and more and

more is becoming the standard of preparation in nursing education,” Gouner said. “Also, I believe in the art and science of nursing and I believe in contributing new knowledge to my profession. I want to accomplish this through nursing research.”

Research in the area of tobacco cessation and nursing students was the result of two master’s degrees, she said. Degree work toward a master’s degree in education in wellness and health promotion sparked her interest in tobacco cessation while a master’s degree in nursing increased her desire to become a researcher. She said that during her years in nursing, she has seen a lot of nurses who smoked, despite the habit being “the single most preventable cause of disease and premature death in the United States.”

Gouner believes nurse educators can play a role in developing a healthier generation of nurses by promoting tobacco cessation and good health habits.

“I believe we have a responsibility to the future of our profession to nurture our own and let them know their health is important to us. They need to care for themselves if they want a long life as well as a long, healthy career in nursing,” she said. “Also, it’s very hard for a nurse who smokes to teach patients the benefits of not smoking.”

“A nursing curriculum is tightly packed with a variety of courses designed to teach students how to care for others. While that is the point, I don’t believe we should lose sight of the student and their health care needs,” she said. “I think it’s important for students to hear the ‘self-care’ message from their nursing school faculty. Nursing school is a great time to model healthy behaviors and teach students how to be well despite the crazy demands on their time.”

She began her pursuit of a doctorate about two years ago, around the same time she was appointed chairman of UAM Division of Nursing. During this time she has successfully juggled the demands of the growing program with her studies.

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UAMS graduate student Pamela Gouner

Graduate Student Association

Dear UAMS Faculty and Students,

The GSA would like to thank you for your continued support and feedback. We hope you've enjoyed the pizza, movie nights, and doughnuts. Since our Fall "Welcome Back" Picnic at Lake Ouachita was such a success, we'd like to continue that spirit with a Spring "Welcome Back" Paintball War at Paintball Arkansas. Students versus Faculty! Faculty, are your students not working nights and weekends or producing publication quality figures? PAINTBALL! Students, is your mentor asking you to break new ground with an exciting technology no one's ever been able to get to work except a reference in one article published before you were born? PAINTBALL! Afterwards, we will return to our regularly scheduled Movie Nights and Doughnut Wednesdays in addition to the greatly anticipated return of the Spring Canoe trip. Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

Sincerely,

Kim Reynolds, GSA President

Gouner continued from page 4

The UAM program includes 80 students with some 350 nursing majors currently on campus. In the last couple years, Gouner led the program through an approval process with the Arkansas State Board of Nursing while helping the program move into a new facility on campus.

She is District II president of the Arkansas Nurses Association and serves as sponsor for the campus chapter of the Student Nursing Association.

She chaired and co-authored a course, "The Licensed Practical Nurse: Scope of Practice and Behaviors" for the Arkansas Nurses Association. She also chaired the Hospital Tax committee for the Ashley County Medical Center that promoted a quarter-cent sales

tax to benefit the rural hospital that won voter approval.

"My current manuscript focuses on the appropriateness of nurses leading this type of committee to affect change in health care and the practical considerations of managing an effective campaign," Gouner said.

That effort was a great learning experience for nursing students who also took part in the campaign, she said, which led to a national award for their participation.

At the same time, she maintained a 4.0 grade point average in her doctoral coursework and received the William Randolph Hearst Scholarship this year that goes to a doctoral student from a rural, underserved

community. She also found time to attend the Southern Nursing Research Society Conference in Baltimore and review abstracts for the UAMS College of Nursing Research Day.

Recently Gouner was selected to be the consultant at large for the Arkansas Nursing Student Association.

When her doctorate is complete, Gouner said she will focus on the continued growth and success of the UAM nursing program.

"Mostly, I hope to be a positive role model for my students as a lifelong learner, nurse educator, scholar, researcher, administrator and leader," she said. "I hope my passions for nursing and nursing education will be captured and translated into kind, compassionate care giving and an insatiable appetite for learning."

Overcoming Adversity All Worth It, Says UAMS Researcher



UAMS Associate Professor Lee Ann MacMillan-Crow, Ph.D.

A summer research internship hooked [Lee Ann MacMillan-Crow](#), Ph.D., on science. Even almost failing a neuroscience course her first semester of graduate school did not deter her.

The associate professor of pharmacology in the UAMS College of Medicine said the academic adversity paid off in guiding her career path and solidifying her determination. She now runs her own research lab at UAMS studying causes of kidney dysfunction following transplantation and serves as director of the [Interdisciplinary Toxicology Graduate Program](#) in the [UAMS Graduate School](#).

MacMillan-Crow discussed her experiences during the ninth annual Career Day for Biomedical Sciences hosted by the UAMS Graduate School on Oct. 29. The event drew 115 attendees from 14 colleges in three states that included undergraduates, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. The event brings together speakers and presentations to discuss available career and education options.

“There are a lot of things I had to persevere to get here but I truly enjoy what I am doing,” MacMillan-Crow said, describing a day that sometimes starts with answering e-mails from home and includes mentoring graduate students, planning and troubleshooting

experiments, and planning new avenues of research.

A basketball player at Judson College, she said her interest in graduate education was prompted by a 10-week summer research fellowship at the University of South Alabama. Still, nearly failing the neuroscience course her first semester almost derailed her plans.

“I really started to question myself,” she said, especially when a professor counseled her that “what you really should be doing is coaching.”

That made her more determined to succeed, she said, first earning her master’s degree followed by her doctorate in pharmacology.

She also was challenged when her first request for a research project grant (R01) from the National Institutes of Health was rejected. On her second attempt with a different topic, the grant was approved.

MacMillan-Crow has been on the UAMS faculty for seven years. She said she likes being her own boss and having a flexible schedule, which are important for her ‘other’ role as wife and mother of two children.

However, she said, managing a lab requires a great deal of oversight and long-term planning. She is

responsible for obtaining funding, generating a lab budget, handling graduate student training, monitoring the ongoing research and developing new research ideas within her laboratory.

She said drive and persistence are necessary both in graduate school and in operating a laboratory.

“You’re going to fail sometimes. You’ve just got to keep going and really believe in what you are doing,” she said.

Other Biomedical Career Day speakers discussed the life of an undergraduate faculty member, working in drug development for a pharmaceutical company and working in an FBI lab.





GRADUATE SCHOOL

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS FOR MEDICAL SCIENCES

Graduate Student and Faculty Accomplishments and Awards

Graduate Student Regional and National Awards

Sarah Cullen, a recent Ph.D. graduate from Microbiology and Immunology, attended the 2009 NIH Graduate Student Research Festival.

Sujay Kharade, a Ph.D. candidate in the Pharmacology program, received an American Heart Association Predoctoral Fellowship.

Christian Simmons, a M.D./Ph.D candidate in Physiology and Biophysics, received a SREB Dissertation Fellowship.

Avis Simms, a Ph.D. candidate in the Interdisciplinary Biomedical Sciences program, was selected as the inaugural recipient of the Breast Cancer Fellowship sponsored by the UAMS Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute.

Jennifer Watts, a M.D./Ph.D. candidate in the Neurobiology and Developmental Sciences program, received a National Institutes of Health NRSA Pre-doctoral fellowship.

Graduate School Mentor Awards

Dr. Tim Chambers
Dr. Sherry Ferguson
Dr. Angus MacNicol
Dr. Usha Ponnappan

Dr. Roger Rank
Dr. Nancy Rusch
Dr. Elaine Souder



To view a complete list of graduate student awards received 2008-09, visit <http://www.uams.edu/gradschool/awards/>.

Special thanks to the following students who helped with undergraduate tours this summer: Will Atchley, Sherri Smart, Rawad Hodeify, Kevin Kim, Nisha Nanaware, Jennifer Watts, and Martin Watts.

Also, thank you to all of the students who helped with Career Day as a volunteer or video participant: Rakesh Bam, Gwendolyn Carter, Jaclyn Daniels, Tristan Fowler, Jihane Khalife, Kevin Kim, Heather Lavendar, Faith McDaniel, Letha McGarity, Tanecia Mitchell, Nisha Nanaware, Kristy Nicks, Sherri Smart, Gregory Sorenson, Jennifer Watts, Martin Watts

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Spring 2010 Important Dates

January 18, 2010

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

February 15, 2010

President's Day Holiday

April 16, 2010

Last day to drop a class

April 30, 2010

Last day to submit thesis and dissertations to Library

May 5-19, 2010

Registration for Summer Session

May 15, 2010

Graduate School Brunch

May 15, 2010

Commencement

