Hello everyone and thank you for taking the time to read the inaugural edition of our new UAMS Graduate School Newsletter. Lots of exciting things have been going on in the graduate school that we want everyone to know about and we really haven’t had an ideal way to share these things. As examples: we've started a series of well attended grad school receptions; we have a new Career Development Seminar series for students; we have an outstanding Graduate Student Association that is more active than any other in recent history; we have a number of new programs that have recently come on board; we have significantly increased the number of student travel awards and research grants; we have institution-wide recognition of teaching excellence for graduate faculty, and the list literally goes on and on.

It seems that we have reached a point where a publication such as this would benefit everyone who is interested in and affiliated with our graduate school. We would like this to be a newsletter that is really upbeat, positive and something you look forward to regularly receiving. So as you peruse it, I would like for you to think about a few things and give us some feedback. What kind of information would you like to read about? Do you like student/faculty profiles? Program information? Would you like to know more about some of our alumni and where they are? What are some of our recent grad student publications? How about a name for our newsletter? If you can come up with a creative name for our newsletter, we will give you special recognition. After a few issues of tweaking based on suggestions from you, I would like to begin printing hard copies and sending to friends of the grad school and alumni. This is a network of people who could be very helpful to us on many fronts if we take the time to engage them.

It’s hard for me to believe it was over three years ago that I was appointed dean. Life goes a bit quicker when you are holding on to the tail of a tiger, but it is also much more exciting. Those of you who work with me on a regular basis know that I am still on a steep learning curve, but I am really blessed to have had such incredible support from all of you. A lot of grad school kudos get directed my way, but I am always quick to point out it is the grad school staff, faculty and students that deserve the accolades. We have absolutely outstanding graduate faculty and students and it is a real pleasure working with you. Thank you for your support and please let us hear from you with ideas for our newsletter.

Robert E. McGehee, Jr., Ph.D.
Dean, Graduate School
New Graduate Degree Track Targets Clinical Research

Moving medical discoveries from the laboratory to use with patients is an often complex journey. The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) now has a degree program focused on the part of that roadmap concerning the clinical research process, where patients become involved in testing new treatments.

The **Clinical and Translational Sciences degree track** in the UAMS Graduate School is intended to prepare researchers for conducting clinical studies, said **William Wessinger, Ph.D.**, director of the program and an associate professor in the UAMS Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology. The program, offering both master’s and doctoral degrees, addresses the growing need for scientists versed in the proper techniques and requirements for productive research.

“Nationwide, we have seen fewer enter the clinical research field,” Wessinger said. “There aren’t enough physician/scientists to handle the workload in clinical research.

“So we have developed a program at UAMS to close that gap between biomedical research in the laboratory and application of that research in clinical studies.”

Wessinger said the degree track is designed to build a strong foundation in clinical and translational sciences – where laboratory work is “translated” to potential medical treatments through clinical study. Coursework includes biostatistics, epidemiology, data management and analysis, clinical research methodology, clinical trials design, drug development, responsible conduct of research, grant writing and scientific communications.

Each element in the program provides the skills for conducting research with human subjects.

The program also bolsters the research infrastructure at UAMS, Wessinger said, by putting in place the resources for developing new clinical researchers.

For more information about the program, contact **Kristen Sterba, Ph.D., assistant dean for graduate student recruiting and retention in the UAMS Graduate School**, at (501) 526-7396, or by e-mail at kmsterba@uams.edu.

UAMS Pharmaceutical Sciences Program Ranked Fifth

The **Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences** at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) was ranked fifth in the nation recently for the amount of published and cited research by its faculty, according to rankings published in the Jan. 12 issue of the **Chronicle of Higher Education**.

The program in the **UAMS College of Pharmacy** and **UAMS Graduate School** ranked fifth in the pharmaceutical sciences and medicinal chemistry category – despite having the smallest faculty among the top 10. The department recorded the third highest percentage of faculty with a journal publication or having their work cited in another publication.

Other pharmaceutical sciences programs in the top five with UAMS included the University of Washington, ranked first, followed by the universities of Virginia, Arizona and Utah.

The **2005 Faculty Scholarly Productivity Index** ranked 7,294 individual doctoral programs in 104 disciplines at 354 institutions, based on number of faculty publications, citations in other research articles, research funding and faculty awards.

Pharmaceutical Sciences Academic Analytics, the company owned partially by the State University of New York at Stony Brook that compiled the index, pointed to it as an objective method for comparing doctoral programs based on faculty quality and educational effectiveness.

Continued on page 3
Jennifer Shoemaker wasn’t thinking about graduate school when she discovered it was just the right fit for her interest in science. That interest might one day lead her toward finding new drugs for treating amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig’s disease.

The Pennsylvania native and student in the pharmacology program of the UAMS Graduate School was recently recognized for a research poster she presented at an October meeting of the Arkansas Chapter of the Society of Neuroscience. Her work concerned the effect of a drug targeting a specific protein, which could extend the lives of patients suffering from ALS.

Her undergraduate degree in chemical engineering had landed her jobs at International Paper and later, cosmetics maker L’Oreal. She was ready for something different.

“I thought about the aspects of my jobs I enjoyed such as solving problems and learning about obscure but interesting relationships in science. This led me straight to grad school,” Shoemaker said. “I decided on pharmacology because I wanted to understand how certain drugs worked and provided benefits to patients suffering with a variety of illnesses.”

Her research interests include the nature of cannabinoids, molecules found in the cannabis plant, from which the drug marijuana comes. Shoemaker said research is focusing on the endocannabinoid system – which includes cannabinoid molecules and the receptors in the body to which they bind. It is thought that this molecular relationship could have an impact on a wide variety of illnesses, from Alzheimer’s disease to neuropathic pain, she said.

Pharmaceutical Sciences is concerned with the development of dosage systems to deliver medications in proper amounts to the body, how the body absorbs and eliminates those medications, and how those medications exert beneficial or potentially harmful effects. Medicinal chemistry is the study of the chemical properties of medicinal agents, both synthetic and natural.

“Pharmaceutical sciences is a diverse field that encompasses many components of chemistry, biology and medicine, so I think this ranking reflects the numerous productive collaborations with other UAMS colleges and departments,” said Russell Melchert, Ph.D., professor and chairman of the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences.

A department annual report from 2004-2005 showed 32 publications credited to faculty members, including 18 where the UAMS researcher was the senior or lead author and where most of the research took place in a UAMS lab. During that same period, department faculty had active research grants valued at more than $4 million for work in which they were the principal investigators.

Academic Analytics data. Eighty-nine percent of the faculty had their work cited by another journal publication.

“Academic Analytics calculated the index using its own algorithm and numerical values assigned to the number of publications and citations from 2003-2005, grants and awards.

The ranking showed the UAMS program with a faculty of 18. Ninety-four percent of the faculty was credited with a publication from 2003-2005, according to the Academic Analytics data. Eighty-nine percent of the faculty had their work cited by another journal publication.

“This recognition shows that our Pharmaceutical Sciences faculty is contributing to scientific knowledge and passing on this knowledge to students and colleagues,” said College of Pharmacy Dean Stephanie Gardner, PharmD., Ed.D. “This is often best accomplished through publishing research findings, interpreting results and using them to prepare the next generation of pharmacists and pharmacy faculty.”

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Jennifer Shoemaker, Ph.D. candidate, Pharmacology program.

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Brooke Wilkerson, a graduate student in speech pathology at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), needed money to pay for her first-ever research project.

The financial assistance allowed her to expand the project’s impact by letting her survey all the state’s speech pathologists on her research topic instead of a small sample. In addition, her funding came through a UAMS program that introduced her to the grant-writing experience common to research.

Wilkerson was one of four UAMS graduate students who received research grants from UAMS in the most recent funding cycle as selected by the UAMS Committee for Allocation of Graduate Student Research Funds (CAGSRF). Three times a year a committee of UAMS faculty review research proposals from graduate students for grants using funds provided through the Chancellor’s Office for research that supports a student’s degree requirements.

With AAC, the speech-language pathologist teaches the use of signs, symbols, techniques and/or technological devices designed to assist individuals unable to verbally communicate effectively, Wilkerson said. Her research could be used to guide schools in the development of programs to provide adequate education in AAC.

“This grant helped my research tremendously in that I am able to distribute questionnaires to all speech-language pathologists in Arkansas, rather than distributing to a sample group,” said Wilkerson, who is in her final semester of graduate school. “All licensed SLPs in Arkansas will have the opportunity to provide their feedback and suggestions regarding this topic, which would not have been possible without funding from the CAGSRF program.”

The grant is intended to be used for purchasing materials needed for the project. Graduate students who have selected a major graduate advisor and are pursuing research for their master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation are eligible for the grant program.

Annual grant submission deadlines for the program are Jan. 15, April 15 and Sept. 15.

For more information on how to apply for Graduate Student Research Funds, please visit http://www.uams.edu/gradschool/students.
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Fall 2007 Important Dates

August 20-24, 2007   Drop/Withdraw with 100% refund
August 27-31, 2007   Drop/Withdraw with 50% refund
September 3, 2007   Labor Day Holiday
September 17, 2007   A mark of “W” will be recorded on the Academic record for any course dropped after this date
October 15, 2007   Last day to change from credit to audit
November 12, 2007   Veterans Day Holiday
November 13-December 14, 2007   Registration for the Spring Semester
November 22, 2007   Thanksgiving Holiday (day after Thanksgiving is a holiday only if declared by the Governor)
November 26, 2007   Last day to drop a class
December 10, 2007   Last day to submit thesis and dissertation to Library
December 21, 2007   Last day to remove an “I” received during the last enrolled semester/session
The mission of the Graduate School is to provide excellent educational opportunities for students in a stimulating environment of basic and clinical research, integrated with the delivery of superb comprehensive health care services.

For additional Graduate School news, please visit [www.uams.edu/gradschool/news.asp](http://www.uams.edu/gradschool/news.asp).

Congratulations to the following graduate faculty who will be receiving Chancellor’s Faculty Teaching Awards on Tuesday, August 21 at 3:30 pm in Pauly Auditorium.

Timothy Chambers, Ph.D.
S. Michael Owens, Ph.D.
Galen Wenger, Ph.D.