

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS AT LITTLE ROCK  
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**UAMS**  
UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS  
FOR MEDICAL SCIENCES

## **UAMS, UALR Collaborate on New Bioinformatics Graduate Degrees**

LITTLE ROCK, Ark. (Dec. 15, 2004) – UALR and the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) are working jointly to offer new master's and doctoral degrees in the cutting-edge field of bioinformatics that applies information science and high-tech tools to analyze genomic and molecular data.

Technology has revolutionized medical and health-related research, generating enormous amounts of data, and creating the need for the new field of bioinformatics to effectively and efficiently organize, analyze and manage that data. Bioinformatics uses computer-based technologies to service biological, biomedical and biotechnology research.

The new collaborative program – which builds on the strengths of both universities, namely information and computer science, biology, chemistry, mathematics, and statistics at UALR and biomedical research and biostatistics at UAMS – provides an opportunity for students to participate in a rapidly-advancing, multidisciplinary field. It is the first bioinformatics graduate program in Arkansas.

“It is a very interesting arrangement that we have not explored before,” said Dean Mary Good of UALR’s Donaghey CyberCollege. “Nationally, it is a unique approach. The objective is to ‘marry,’ if you like, the computational

**MORE**

## **Bioinformatics –ad one**

faculty that we have with the medical research faculty that UAMS has.”

UAMS Graduate School Dean Robert E. McGehee, said, “We can build on the strengths of both UAMS and UALR to train a new breed of scientists who can mathematically model and statistically analyze the large amounts of data generated by medical research. Graduates can apply their knowledge in genomics, proteomics, and metabolomics to open the door on new therapeutics and new understanding of basic mechanisms in areas such as human development and disease processes.”

The Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) recently approved the program that will be administered by faculty from both institutions under the guidance of the deans of the graduate schools at both campuses. The program was developed by a committee of faculty and administrators from both universities and supported by the National Center for Research Resources division of the National Institutes of Health.

The new program will emphasize four core areas – bioinformatics, the life sciences, biostatistics, and computer and information science. Students graduating from the program will be uniquely qualified to fill the demanding role of a bioinformaticist in industry, government, or academia.

“Through a close working relationship, multidisciplinary Ph.D. research committees and jointly taught bioinformatics courses, the two universities will be able to provide a leading-edge educational and research experience to students within this program,” said Dr. Steven F. Jennings, associate professor of Applied Science and executive director of UALR’s MidSouth Bioinformatics Center.

“This program comes at a critical time when biomedical research has

**MORE**

## Bioinformatics – ad two

produced vast quantities of data that must be analyzed with the latest technological tools and used to address a wide range of health problems,” said Thomas Kieber-Emmons, professor of pathology in the UAMS College of Medicine and a student liaison in the new joint graduate program along with Helen Benes, associate professor at UAMS.

Dean Richard H. Hanson of the UALR Graduate School, said students in the new program “will learn how to apply mathematics, statistics and computer and information science to acquire, organize, and mine vast quantities of biological and biomedical data.”

Admission to the new program will begin in the spring 2005 semester. More information is available at <http://bioinformatics.ualr.edu/grad> or by calling (501) 569-8501.