

# NURSING

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS FOR MEDICAL SCIENCES





## FRIENDS,

We've had another busy year in the UAMS College of Nursing, and I'm excited to share some of the latest developments with you.

In May, the state awarded us a grant of nearly \$1.7 million through the Arkansas Linking Industry to Grow Nurses (ALIGN) program, which will allow us to expand our nursing faculty as well as our capacity to accept more students into the College of Nursing. We've already begun to explore new clinical and educational opportunities that will give students the experience they need to move quickly and capably into the nursing workforce.

As we enhance our program offerings, our students continue to show why these investments are worthwhile. In the 2023-24 academic year, UAMS graduates achieved an outstanding 96.7% pass rate on the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nursing (NCLEX-RN). This accomplishment reflects their dedication to their studies and to all the patients they will one day serve.

Students often tell me that our faculty and staff walk with them on every step of the academic journey, generously offering their time and support during late nights and rigorous assignments. I'm proud to work alongside colleagues who are setting an example for the next generation of nursing leaders.

Thank you for continuing to support the College of Nursing in its academic, research and clinical missions.

Sincerely,

**Patricia A. Cowan, Ph.D., RN, FAAN**

*Dean, UAMS College of Nursing*



## GREETINGS,

As our students immerse themselves in the hard work of preparing for careers in nursing, they're gaining a better understanding of what it will take to provide high-quality care to their patients. The foundation of knowledge that they've built so far will serve them well in the next phases of their training.

In these pages, you'll see that the UAMS College of Nursing's impact extends far beyond the classroom. Through research and clinical practice, our students and faculty members are advancing the nursing profession in ways that will improve the quality of life for all Arkansans.

UAMS continues to receive recognition as one of the nation's best educational institutions for aspiring nurses, placing among the top 100 in *U.S. News & World Report's* annual rankings of undergraduate and graduate nursing programs. If you've ever seen the College of Nursing's faculty and staff in action, then you know that these accolades are well-deserved.

I want to thank Dean Cowan and her entire team for maintaining a standard of excellence in the College of Nursing.

Sincerely,

**Cam Patterson, M.D., MBA**

*UAMS Chancellor, CEO, UAMS Health*

# CONFERENCE AT UAMS SHOWCASES **NURSING RESEARCH**

Nurses and nursing students from across the state gathered in April on the UAMS campus for a conference that highlighted recent advances in research.

The 2024 Arkansas Nursing Research Day featured a mix of podium and poster presentations from students and nursing professionals who are striving to improve health outcomes through research and evidence-based projects.

Janiece Taylor, Ph.D., RN, assistant professor at the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing, served as guest speaker for the conference's morning session, giving a lecture on equity in pain management. She started her speech by asking attendees whether they had ever experienced pain, drawing a show of raised hands throughout the auditorium.

While noting that pain doesn't discriminate, Taylor said researchers have found that underrepresented groups have higher rates of unmanaged pain. Many of these groups receive fewer prescriptions and fewer referrals to pain management specialists and physical therapists, she said.

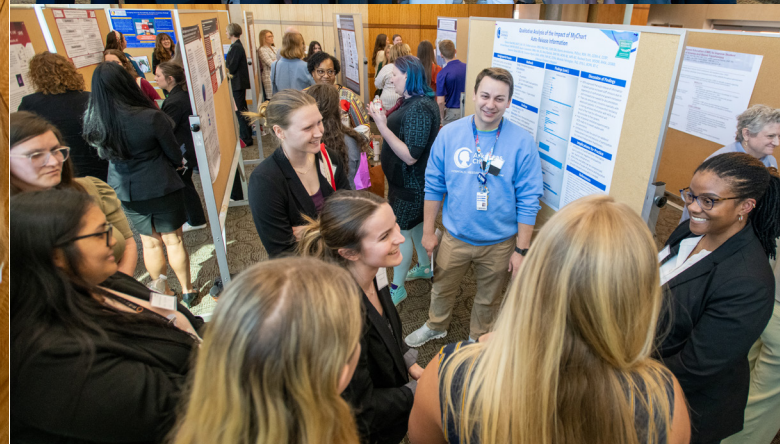
Unmanaged pain not only affects people's quality of life, but it also can worsen their mental health, she said.

The conference's afternoon session featured a lecture from Nicholas Odom, Ph.D., RN, associate professor in the School of Nursing at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Odom's speech focused on ways to support the caregivers of patients with advanced cancer.

In addition to the guest lecturers, several faculty members from the College of Nursing presented research findings. Patricia Cowan, Ph.D., RN, dean of the College of Nursing, spoke about a study of how wellness retreats improved the well-being of nurses experiencing burnout. Other presentations focused on topics such as epidurals and blood culture contamination rates.

Pearman Parker, Ph.D., RN, assistant professor in the College of Nursing and chair of the conference, praised the faculty and students for showcasing the ways in which nurses effect change through research and clinical practice.

"This was our first in-person conference in five years, and I couldn't have been happier with the turnout and enthusiasm for this event," she said.



# PROJECT AIMS TO ENHANCE ARKANSAS' NEWBORN SCREENING PROGRAM



Laura Hays, Ph.D., APRN, associate professor in the UAMS College of Nursing, has received a four-year, \$1.4 million federal grant to expand and enhance the Arkansas Department of Health's Newborn Screening Program.

The new project, known as the Arkansas Coordinated NBS Expansion through Collaboration and Technology (AR CNECT) Program, will improve the efficacy of the state's

newborn screening efforts by creating a comprehensive educational program for health providers and families.

The AR CNECT Program will also expand the state's outreach to families of infants found to have genetic conditions, ensuring that they have access to educational and supportive services. Hays said the program will work with partner organizations to reach underserved communities through digital health services.

Among those who will benefit are the families of infants identified as having hemoglobinopathy traits such as sickle cell. Each year, more than 1,000 newborns in Arkansas carry a hemoglobinopathy trait, which affects the hemoglobin in red blood cells and can be passed to future generations, Hays said.

"In the past, families received notification and education about these conditions through the mail," she said. "Our program will allow for the addition of a full-time, licensed social worker to consult with the families and connect them to available services."

The grant was awarded by the Health Resources and Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Hays has served as a clinical consultant for the Newborn Screening Program for the past nine years. The program helps ensure that newborns are tested for dozens of medical conditions that, if left untreated, can affect their physical and mental development or threaten their lives.

"By empowering families and connecting them to resources in their communities, our goal is to reduce health disparities and ensure that all Arkansans can have a proactive role in their newborns' health care," she said.



## College of Nursing Offers RN-to-Master's Program



The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences College of Nursing is offering a new program that prepares registered nurses for leadership roles in nursing administration.

The RN-to-master's program is available to registered nurses who have a diploma or associate's degree but lack the graduate degrees needed for many leadership positions. Students in the program will earn their Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree before beginning the master's track.

Elizabeth Riley, DNP, APRN, clinical associate professor and director of the College of Nursing's Master of Nursing Science (MNSc) program, said full-time students on the RN-to-master's pathway can complete the program in eight semesters, which amounts to about three years. Part-time students will need 11 semesters, or about 3½ years.

Riley said the new program will help address a shortage of graduate-level nurses in leadership roles.

## PH.D. STUDENT EXAMINES CARE GAPS FOR WOMEN WITH CONGENITAL HEART DISEASE

When Dannis Armikarina, RN, began considering subjects for her doctoral research, she thought about how her daughter will one day have to transition from pediatric to adult care settings.

“It was just this mom anxiety, trying to figure out what’s going to happen after she turns 18 or 21 and has to go see adult providers,” said Armikarina, a Ph.D. candidate in the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences College of Nursing.

Having worked for much of her career in the cardiovascular surgery unit at Arkansas Children’s, she took particular interest in the transition process for women who have congenital heart disease. She found that few research studies have focused on how this condition affects the primary care needs of women as they reach adulthood and assume more responsibility for their health care.

“I wanted to address this concept of holistic and comprehensive care for women with congenital heart disease,” Armikarina said.

Armikarina’s research study aims to identify the unmet needs of women in this population. She’s conducting interviews with women ages 21-30 who have congenital heart disease, with a goal of learning more about how the transition process and the lapse of care during that process affect their health care, quality of life and perception of their health.

Armikarina said congenital heart disease can affect many aspects of a woman’s health, such as menstruation and the ability to have children. It’s important that primary care practitioners, including those who provide women’s health services, understand these nuances and address each woman’s unique needs, she said.

“We want these women to feel that everybody’s looking out for them — not only their cardiologist but also the providers of primary care and women’s health services,” she said.



### *RN-to-Master’s Program continued*

The program offers flexible scheduling, with most of the coursework being conducted virtually. For clinical practicums, the College of Nursing has contracted with hospitals and other health care organizations to help students from across the state receive hands-on experience close to their homes.

The RN-to-master’s program enrolled its first student in fall 2024. Ashley Newton, RN, said she’s excited to be part of an effort that will help more nursing professionals in the years to come.

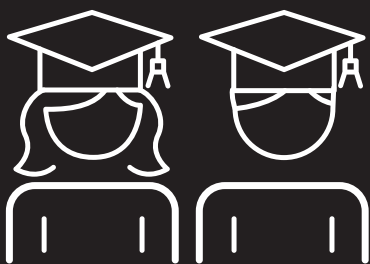
**“I’ve had a great experience so far, thanks to an extraordinary team of professors,” she said. “They were there through the entire enrollment process, and they are committed to seeing me through to graduation.”**

Riley said the College of Nursing plans to accept more applicants for the 2025-26 academic year. UAMS is collaborating with registered nursing programs throughout the state to ensure that students are aware of the RN-to-master’s program and can make informed decisions about prerequisite courses, she said.

# FAST FACTS: UAMS COLLEGE OF NURSING

## ABOUT THE COLLEGE

- Established in **1953**.
- Offers the most graduate nursing specialties in the state.
- **Five-year NCLEX-RN pass rate of 90.16%**.
- **Member of the Hartford Center of Geriatric Nursing Excellence**, dedicated to optimal health and quality of life for older adults and the highest level of commitment to the field of gerontological nursing.



## OUR STUDENTS

- **173** graduates in 2023-24 academic year: BSN—74; ABSN—17; MNSc—34; BSN to DNP—25; CRNA—16; Post-Master's DNP—5; Post-Master's Completion—2
- **5,732** students have earned a BSN degree.
- **2,158** students have earned their MNSc degree.
- **84** students have earned their Ph.D. in nursing.
- **213** students have earned their DNP degree.



## 2024-25 COST OF EDUCATION

The average yearly tuition and fees for Arkansas residents, assuming full-time study, was:

**BSN program:** \$13,246.

**ABSN program:** \$14,681.

**MNSc program:** \$13,679.

**BSN to DNP:** \$14,444.

**Post-Master's DNP program:** \$10,434.

**CRNA program (Nurse Anesthesia):** \$26,514.

## 2024-25 SCHOLARSHIPS

- **\$493,616:** Total amount awarded.
- **\$2,306:** Average scholarship amount.
- **205** students received scholarships.
- **214** scholarships awarded.

# GRANT TO HELP ADDRESS WORKFORCE SHORTAGE



The UAMS College of Nursing is using nearly \$1.7 million in state-administered grant funding to address the shortage of nurses in Arkansas.

UAMS received the funds in May through the Arkansas Linking Industry to Grow Nurses (ALIGN) program, which is operated by the Arkansas Office of Skills Development. The state awarded the grant using federal funds from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

Patricia Cowan, Ph.D., RN, dean of the College of Nursing, said nursing schools across the country have seen enrollment decline in recent years, which has further exacerbated a chronic shortage in the workforce.

**“Part of our challenge in addressing the nursing shortage is that nursing schools like UAMS have not been able to accept additional qualified students because we don’t have enough clinical sites or faculty members,” she said. “The ALIGN grant gives us a way to grow our faculty, our student body and our experiential learning opportunities.”**

The ALIGN program was designed to assist nursing schools in their efforts to teach nursing professionals new skills, expand apprenticeship programs and recruit and retain educators.

Cowan said the College of Nursing is already using the grant to implement programs that will help students learn new skills and reach the workforce more quickly. The college in 2024 added an RN-to-master’s track for registered nurses who are interested in pursuing leadership roles in nursing administration. It also began offering a “summer senior fast-track” program that gives students a more rigorous summer experience and the ability to graduate a semester early.

The College of Nursing is expanding its clinical rotations to give students more opportunities to work with preceptors, Cowan said. It is also upgrading its simulation offerings to further enhance the educational experience.

As UAMS provides more opportunities for nursing students, it will also need more educators to teach them, Cowan noted. To meet this need, the College of Nursing is partnering with community colleges to identify, hire and train adjunct clinical faculty members.

Cowan also said some of the grant funds will be used to provide financial support for students who need the assistance.

## DEGREE PROGRAMS

- Traditional and Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) programs.
- RN to MNSc program.
- Advanced nursing practice degree programs at the master’s and doctoral levels.
- The first College of Nursing in Arkansas to offer nurse practitioner specialty programs in acute care pediatrics nurse practitioner, primary care pediatric nurse practitioner and psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner.
- The first College of Nursing in Arkansas to offer a Doctor of Nursing Practice in Nurse Anesthesia.
- The only College of Nursing in Arkansas to offer a research doctoral program (Ph.D. in Nursing Science).
- Bachelor of Science in Nursing program ranked 74<sup>th</sup> in nation by *U.S. News & World Report*.
- Doctor of Nursing Practice program ranked 45<sup>th</sup> in nation and Master of Nursing Science program ranked 38<sup>th</sup> in nation by *U.S. News & World Report*.





College of Nursing

4301 W. Markham St., #529  
Little Rock, AR 72205

Non Profit  
Organization  
US Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 1973  
Little Rock, AR

## GIVING

Your help is what makes it possible for us to achieve our goals to educate well-prepared nurses, to serve the community and to engage in research that advances the health of our state, region and nation.

## SCHOLARSHIPS

For many students, this year has proved especially challenging. Many have faced hardships as economic factors have affected their income and limited their opportunities for part-time employment. They depend on financial assistance to continue their studies. We can ease that burden, as funding allows, by offering donor-supported scholarship assistance.

## DEAN'S CIRCLE

The Dean's Circle plays a vital role. Funding has provided several benefits over the years, including educational innovations, new programs, scholarships, and research and pilot programs in mental health, addiction, chronic disease, oncology and gerontology — all areas of greatest need in Arkansas.

## MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

- CON Dean's Circle Benefactor—\$5,000
- CON Dean's Circle Corporate—\$2,500
- CON Dean's Circle Individual/Household—\$1,000
- CON Dean's Circle Recent Alumni—\$500

# nursing.uams.edu

To support the College of Nursing, you can donate directly in any amount at [giving.uams.edu](https://giving.uams.edu)

