

UAMS Prepares for Higher Learning Commission Accreditation Review

The University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) is preparing for a regular review of its academic and institutional operations by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), the regional accreditor for institutions of higher education.

UAMS is required to have HLC accreditation in order to allow credits and degrees to be transferred from other accredited higher education institutions and to ensure professional licensure for UAMS graduates. Accreditation is also required before students can receive federal financial aid.



UAMS accreditation was reaffirmed in 2017. As part of the accreditation process, a four-year comprehensive evaluation is conducted, which for UAMS means

2021. The comprehensive evaluation includes a virtual visit by an HLC team of peer reviewers on March 1-2 along with one peer reviewer visiting the campus. Ahead of that visit, UAMS must submit an assurance argument documenting how the institution meets ac-

creditation criteria across five areas: mission, ethics, teaching and learning (resources and support), teaching and learning (evaluation and improvement), and resources and institutional effectiveness.

“This comprehensive review offers the opportunity for UAMS to report on progress made since our 2017 reaffirmation of accreditation in the five areas tracked by HLC,” said Kristen Sterba, Ph.D., associate provost and director of the Department of Institutional Research, Policy, and Accreditation in the Division of Academic Affairs. “We have good news to report, both on specific issues raised during the 2017 reaccreditation and in the many ways UAMS is committed to continuous improvement in those five accreditation areas.”

Among changes made following the 2017 HLC visit:

- Created policies for transfer credit, assignment of credit hours in educational programs, and a student complaint resolution process
- Implemented an institution-wide [UAMS Academic Catalog](#) in fall 2019
- Instituted a biennial internal academic program review with the provost that includes questions regarding assessment

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Campus Life Stages Corn Hole Tournament and More Socially Distanced Activities for UAMS Students

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Accolades

- A super High Five goes to **Fatera Herd, Brenda Burks, and Emily Freeman** of the Faculty Center. Fatera, in collaboration with the leaders of the Women's Faculty Development Caucus, designed the event with Brenda and Emily's oversight and co-facilitation. The Dec. 15 dinner for the UAMS WFDC became the first-ever virtual dinner. Participants received boxes with bingo cards, gifts, and snacks for the group's annual celebration that was forced online due to COVID. The Faculty Center team assembled the 65 boxes and arranged for them to be delivered in time for the event (including to faculty on the Northwest Campus). While a virtual format was a challenge for this typically warm, conversational, relationship-driven

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News from Academic Affairs

January 2021 Newsletter

News from Academic Affairs is published bimonthly (six times annually) by the Office of the Provost to inform students, faculty and staff about programs and support provided by the Division of Academic Affairs and to highlight UAMS initiatives beneficial to students and faculty.

Stephanie F. Gardner, Pharm.D., Ed.D.
Provost and Chief Strategy Officer

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- [Commencement](#)

Institutional Research, Policy and Accreditation

- [Academic Administration](#)
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Society and Health

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- [Center for Patients and Families](#) (on-campus)

Student Services

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A Message from the Provost

COVID-19 is — hopefully — a once in a century event for us; a global pandemic on a scale not seen since the 1918 flu pandemic.

UAMS students also have had the chance to make history themselves through this experience. Hundreds of our students have participated in some element of the UAMS COVID response statewide since the virus arrived in Arkansas last March.



Dr. Stephanie Gardner

Student volunteers answered calls in the COVID 19 call center. Others worked in the contact tracing center. Students assisted in mobile triage and screening locations as well as now in vaccine clinics all over Arkansas. Some students also helped out in their workplaces or through efforts organized by their professional organizations. There were students from all UAMS colleges involved in one way or another.

These students also witnessed the very core of population health. They saw how science and data helped officials to make policy and develop strategies to address this public health emergency.

They watched as the data and our knowledge of the virus evolved over time. This prompted changes in public health policy to reflect the most timely knowledge and most effective strategies to contain virus spread.

It was fantastic to see our students step up and want to help. They embodied the spirit of service inherent in our mission of health care and health improvement to the state.

These students will graduate into their professions even as we still wrestle with the pandemic. Their experiences in the past year — what they did and what they saw — will surely influence their careers.

I am confident that not only will our students' lives and careers be well served by these experiences, but so will we all.

Office of Interprofessional Education

Three Grants Awarded for Interprofessional Projects in Support of Vision 2029

Three proposals recently received small grants for projects including creation of an interprofessional faculty mentoring program, examining implementation of PTSD and depression screening following injury, and pilot study to improve the patient experience during a medical procedure through the use of virtual reality.

The grants were awarded by the Office of Interprofessional Education and the Provost's Office as part of the annual IPE small grant program to promote interprofessional education and collaborative practice at UAMS. The focus of this year's awards was on projects that addressed objectives in the UAMS Vision 2029 strategic plan.

The awards and principal investigators include:

- "Assessing the feasibility and acceptability of post-injury post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression screening and nurse-administered intervention to prevention of PTSD of depression following injury" — PI: Sacha McBain, Ph.D.

- "Using Virtual Reality Technology to Improve Patient Experience and Quality of Care during Brachytherapy: A Pilot Study" — Gary Lewis, M.D.
- "An Interprofessional Mentoring Program" — PI: Emily Freeman, MHSA

"We are pleased to award grants for projects that could move us closer to achieving Vision 2029 goals on faculty retention, improving the patient experience and patient outcomes — and with an interdisciplinary approach that bolsters yet another one of the plan's objectives," said Stephanie Gardner, Pharm.D., Ed.D., provost and chief strategy officer.

The annual small grant program was initially paused last spring at the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic. It resumed in December with a call for proposals and support for the awards from a philanthropic gift. Another round of the program is expected later this year.

Faculty Center

Women's Faculty Development Caucus Adds Northwest Arkansas Campus Chapter

The UAMS Women's Faculty Development Caucus recently organized a chapter on the regional campus in northwest Arkansas.

The inaugural officers are:

- President — Jennifer Aunspaugh, M.D., associate professor, Division of Pediatric Anesthesiology and Pain Medicine
- Vice President — Amy Seay, Ph.D., associate professor, Department of Pediatrics
- Secretary — Marcene McVay-Gillam, M.D., FACS, FAAP, assistant professor, Department of Surgery
- Research Committee Chair — Hanna Jensen, M.D., assistant professor, Department of Surgery
- Trainee and Early Career Committee Chair — Sheena CarlLee, MD., assistant professor, Department of Internal Medicine
- Liaison to WFDC Little Rock Chapter — Wendy Ward Ph.D., associate provost for faculty
- Senior Advisor — Linda L.M. Worley, M.D., FACLP, DFAPA, associate dean, College of Medicine

Events hosted by the chapter so far include an interest group gathering in September, a Leadership talk by Provost Stephanie Gardner, Pharm.D., Ed.D., in October and a joint virtual holiday party with the Little Rock Chapter. Upcoming events include a "Lunch and Learn Series" that will entail brief lunchtime learning sessions covering a variety of topics identified as important to current trainees or faculty who are early in their career. These sessions will occur in February, March, April and then pick up again in August and September. Lisa Wymer, Ed.D., from UAMS Organizational Development, also will present a series of Mentoring Workshops.

The UAMS Women's Caucus was founded in 1989 as a professional development and mentoring program to help women advance their career and assume leadership positions.

Campus Life and Student Support Services

Associated Student Government

To close out the fall term, the Associated Student Government (ASG) provided meals to students living in the UAMS Residence Hall.

Unfortunately, many students living on campus could not return home for the holidays and be with loved ones. ASG filled in by showing kindness and providing complimentary dinners and deserts on Nov. 25 and Dec. 23.

The meals, prepared by Harris-Made Chef Service, were really special. Students enjoyed a wide array of traditional holiday food options as well as vegan and vegetarian plates.

One student even commented that she felt love when she saw the meal that was prepared for her. This remark alone made the entire effort even more heart-felt.

ASG looks forward to providing similar events in 2021.



Chef Harris and Nakia Dedner (right) preparing for the distribution of holiday meals.

Accolades

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event, the virtual breakout rooms and group activities made it a HUGE success. Kudos to all!!

- The Arkansas Department of Health recently engaged the **Center for Health Literacy** to develop COVID-19 vaccine information for community leaders to use in a virtual class setting. Products will include a community-facing booklet that addresses common questions and makes use of plain language writing techniques, along with facilitator materials to help community leaders engage in this important and challenging conversation.
- The **Office of Continuing Education** (OCE) team wants to give a big shout out and thank you to **Jef**

Ferguson, classroom tech support - Senior, and **James Arledge**, classroom tech support Associate. The COVID-19 response required everyone at UAMS to pivot in their education strategies. As we converted traditional in-person annual conferences to live virtual presentations, Jef and James were invaluable partners with the OCE managed conference team to make the conversion successful. They worked closely with **Richelle Thompson**, assistant director of the OCE and director of education and Quality Initiatives, to design and implement a planned approach. Jef and James then worked with Richelle and **Riley Peek**, OCE event coordinator, to teach them how to run a virtual conference and trouble-shoot as needed for future activities. Jef and James displayed professionalism and competence when issues arose, quickly making adjustments. They ensured the participants' learning was not impacted and the conference evaluations reflect that. Thank you for being our partners in learning.

Campus Life and Student Support Services



Student Center

Campus Life and Student Support Services continue to find creative ways to keep students connected and enjoy some activities away from academics. This has included distribution of monthly wellness and other themed grab-and-go kits.

In November, Campus Life prepared wellness cinch-sacks and a free lunch for UAMS students (pictured above). This take home cinch-sack included a jump rope, elastic band, yoga towel, word puzzle, and magic cards. We took an innovative approach to encourage students to step away from their rigorous academic Zoom schedule and have a little fun.

For December, Campus Life planned some holiday-themed fun. While holiday music played, students gleefully came to the Student Center to receive holiday cookie decorating kits (pictured above right). The finished products were not only beautiful and festive, but also delicious (right).



Campus Life and Student Support Services



Socially Distanced Fun — Tournament action (left) gets underway recently at a corn hole tournament hosted by Campus Life and Student Support Activities. The tournament champions (above) were Bret James and Nick Wary.

Intramural Sports Program

COVID-19 has set some strict guidelines for us to follow; however, we are determined to find much-needed physical outlets for our students. To help relieve stress, we continue to think “outside the box” for social distancing sports to offer this year.

We ended the semester with a friendly Corn Hole/Bean Bag Tournament. A few mild days allowed students to enjoy fresh air and sunshine while also competing fiercely for the tournament championship.

HLC

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- Began collecting syllabi in fall 2019 to ensure each contained information in areas such as learning outcomes
- A new Institutional Assessment and Effectiveness Committee [approved the interprofessional education core domains](#) as institutional learning outcomes and institutional retention (one-year retention rate 80%) and completion (75% of students will complete their program in 150% time expected) goals and are working on a plan for co-curricular assessment
- Established a plan for surveying students every two years and faculty and staff every three-to-four years for institutional assessment.

For more information on UAMS and its HLC accreditation, visit hlc.uams.edu.

Office of Educational Development

eLearning Training Sessions

When you RSVP to BlackboardHelp@uams.edu, you will receive a calendar invitation and a session link. The link must be launched from Chrome or Firefox browsers. It is suggested that participants have a microphone but is not required.

Please make your reservation by noon the day before the session.

February Blackboard Brownbags		
2/2/21	Tues/8:30am	Blackboard's EAC Visual Data: test item analysis & more
2/9/21	Thurs/8:30am	Blackboard Tools that Promote Interactive Learning
2/16/21	Tues/8:30am	Managing Your Grade Center in Blackboard
2/23/21	Tues/4:30pm	Collaborate Ultra Tools and Tricks for Interactivity
2/25/21	Thurs/4:30pm	Using Videos in Blackboard (including storage tips)

Comprehensive Blackboard (Bb) Training

Comprehensive Bb Training is available by request BlackboardHelp@uams.edu

Sessions are 2 hours and are available online only. When you register you will be sent a calendar invite and a link for joining.

- ***Session #1** includes Overview to Blackboard; Communication tools; Assignments; and Rubrics.
- ***Session #2** includes Testing in Blackboard and Respondus products (Lock Down Browser, Respondus 4.0; Respondus Monitor) and EAC Visual Data.
- ***Session #3** includes the Grade Center; Groups; Course Analytics; and Collaborate Ultra.

Division of Academic Affairs News

- **Emily Freeman**, MHSA, director of the Faculty Center, recently had her responsibilities expanded to include activities that support faculty recruitment, appointments and promotions, orientation/onboarding to UAMS, continued professional development, and retirement transition/emeriti faculty. She will continue to work closely with the associate provost for faculty, the Intercollegiate Faculty Council, as well as the deans of all colleges, senior leadership in all colleges, the Provost and the Chancellor. The director also supports activities that involve reporting faculty data, as requested by appropriate individuals, organizations, and agencies, both internal and external to UAMS, along with conducting research to

support faculty affairs, faculty development and special projects.

- In November the Center for Health Literacy welcomed (CHL) **Emily Taylor**, M.Ed., as our new plain language program specialist. In this role, she contributes to the Center's plain language editing, writing, field testing, and training services. She joins us from North Little Rock High School where she taught both English and health science classes. Emily earned a bachelor's degree in dietetics from the University of Central Arkansas and a master's degree from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. She is currently enrolled the Master of Public Health program at UAMS.