Graduate School

Letter from Dean McGehee

As all of you get this newsletter, I hope you are well into your plans for an enjoyable summer. We have had a remarkable year in the Graduate School and several of the events that helped make it a success are highlighted here. We are just now closing down what is my favorite time of year that I call Commencement Season. For me this season starts with our Spring Reception and continues through Commencement that was held on May 16 in Verizon Arena. UAMS had a record 931 graduates, and of those, 110 were from the Graduate School. In total we had 29 Certificate, 51 Master of Science, and 30 Doctor of Philosophy students graduate. The picture above includes a few of those very happy PhD students I caught up with in the pre-commencement bustle. A look at those faces and others throughout this newsletter make it very obvious why this is my favorite time of year. Those are numbers worth celebrating. In fact, we have a lot of accomplishments over the past year that are well worth celebrating. Despite what has effectively been a reduction in extramural funding at the national level, we have more graduate students supported on extramural dollars than in the history of the graduate school. We currently have three NIH supported T32 training grants and one pending with the renewal of our Translational Research Institute. The newest of these training grants, the Systems Pharmacology and Toxicology grant under the direction of Dr. Phil Mayeux had its inaugural graduate, Dr. Neil Detweiler this spring. We successfully renewed the NIH R25 Initiative to Maximize Student Development diversity training grant for 5 more years, and this program had its first four inaugural graduates highlighted below. We just got word that the NIH INBRE, under the direction of Dr. Larry Cornett was renewed for 5 more years. This award serves a critical role in pipeline development by supporting faculty research at a number of our undergraduate state institutions and also supports training of students in the joint Bioinformatics Graduate program we share with UALR. I’ve stated before that these training grants are a good barometer for the quality of a graduate school, but the gold standard is when they are successful in getting competitively renewed, particularly in the current environment. This is a major stamp of approval by peers around the country that you are not only doing things really well but that you are doing so in an innovative manner.

I get a lot of thanks and kudos throughout the year for the success of our Graduate School and I hope that to a person, I let them know where all the credit goes. It goes directly to the Graduate School staff, students and faculty. In our office, we have Dr. Kristen Sterba, Regina Dennis, Toni Emerson, and Brittany Hudson, and these folks do an amazing job. This year we said goodbye to two of our long term graduate school family. Jackie McRoberts retired and Pattie Hamilton was administratively transitioned to the new Office of the University Registrar. I also hope you can find some time to come meet our newest employee, Allyson Douglass. Allyson just started this week and brings many years of experience with international students and admissions and we are excited about her joining us. As I said to all our attendees at the Graduate School Brunch the morning of commencement, I could not be any prouder of our graduates, more thankful to their family and friends, and more appreciative of our faculty and staff. I hope everyone will take time to get away and have some summer fun over the next few weeks. I will lead by example, and if you are somewhere close to Lake Ouachita, please let me know………
Students Share Research in Inaugural GSA Symposium

Poster and oral presentations from 30 UAMS Graduate School students were featured March 16 in an inaugural research symposium sponsored by the Graduate Student Association (GSA).

“We saw an opportunity to create an event that incorporated poster presentations and oral presentations together in one day, like what you’d see at a scientific conference” said Lee Ann King, a Ph.D. student studying thyroid cancer and GSA president.

“We extended an invitation to all students to participate, including junior trainees who may not have had the opportunity to travel to one of these conferences yet. Presenting at a national conference can be a bit overwhelming your first time, therefore we wanted to provide an opportunity for our students to learn how to network outside of their area of research, develop oral presentation skills, and go through the process of generating a poster. All of these skills are important for students to have when they travel to national conferences and represent UAMS, and these skills also help prepare students professionally as they move up in their careers.”

“As students go through the Ph.D. process, we often become immersed in very specific and focused areas of research. Sometimes, it is easy to forget how beneficial it can be to have a scientist outside of our field look at our projects and bring a different perspective. By presenting your research to scientists from multiple fields, you open the door to receiving critiques that can make you think about your project differently and steer you in directions you didn’t consider before. My own project has become stronger from receiving ideas from scientists outside the field of thyroid cancer, so I definitely encourage students to share their research with scientists outside their fields who can look at it from a completely different perspective.”

She said providing more opportunities like this fosters the development of new ideas and ways of thinking about research projects because students and faculty from multiple departments are being brought together and communicating with each other face to face. Aside from being student organized and garnering participation from a broad range of UAMS departments, King said she was thrilled that faculty offered their time to help run the event. Seven faculty members agreed to judge the 30 abstracts. Three more agreed to be judges for the poster presentations and four judged oral presentations, which were given by the 10 students who submitted the highest-rated abstracts.

“The amount of faculty support that we received has been overwhelming and wonderful. They made it easy for us to accomplish this and set it up,” King said.

Though the GSA has sponsored social events before, King said this was the first academic-oriented function the group has organized, and the level of administrative support and student participation makes them optimistic about growing the event for next year.
Graduate Student Advocates on Capitol Hill

Rachel Hendrix, a graduate student at UAMS, was among 52 members from the Society for Neuroscience to meet March 26 with members of Congress to express support for increased federal funding for scientific research. Hendrix is pictured here with Senator John Boozman. Photo courtesy of the Society for Neuroscience

The meeting was part of the society’s ninth annual Capitol Hill Day. Hendrix met with five legislative offices representing Arkansas and Mississippi to discuss the latest advances in the field of neuroscience and share the economic and public health benefits of investment in scientific and biomedical research. In total, Society members met with 81 offices representing 26 states and the District of Columbia.

“It was an eye-opening experience being on Capitol Hill, and having the opportunity to speak directly with Sens. John Boozman and Tom Cotton outside the Senate floor was a major highlight of the event,” said Hendrix.

Hendrix said she hopes the time spent speaking with the senators and Rep. French Hill’s staff about the need to foster research in Arkansas will allow UAMS to continue its leadership as an innovative medical center.

Hendrix participated in the event as one of 10 fellows in the Society’s 2105 Early Career Policy Fellows Program, which is designed to teach early career neuroscientists how to become effective advocates for science and how to encourage others to do the same. Because many neuroscientists may not be particularly comfortable in an advocacy role, the fellowship aims to help younger scientists learn how to communicate the importance of federal funding for scientific research.

“In 2013, across-the-board spending cuts called sequestration lowered the budgets of the National Institutes of Health by $1.5 billion and the National Science Foundation by $356 million. While the Ryan-Murray Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 provided a two-year reprieve from sequestration, it could make a return later in 2015, and, even if it doesn’t, the NIH budget has already lost almost 25 percent purchasing power over the past decade, after factoring in inflation,” said Hendrix.

Hendrix said her major motivation for applying for the fellowship stemmed from witnessing first-hand the effects the budget cuts have had at UAMS and other institutions around the state.

Story continued on next page.
In addition to Hill Day, fellows commit to engaging in at least three additional advocacy-related activities at their home institution over the course of the year. They are paired with previous fellows and faculty members from the society’s Government and Public Affairs Committee to guide them through their activities during the year.

This year Hendrix helped organize Brain Awareness Day activities at the Museum of Discovery on March 20. She plans to continue her fellowship by hosting a laboratory visit for U.S. legislators and staff at UAMS. She also plans to open up discussion about the benefits of funding of scientific discovery by organizing a public forum for legislators, researchers and the general public.

Article written by Rachel Hendrix. To contact Hendrix please email rahendrix@uams.edu.

Fourth Annual GSTCA Symposium

May 19, 2015

The Graduate Student Teachers of Central Arkansas hosted its fourth annual GSTCA symposium for students and postdoctoral fellows on May 19th in Rayford Auditorium. The symposium presented information on teaching at the undergraduate or graduate levels and discussed a variety of mediums and tools which can be used in the classroom. Speakers included Dr. Ruth Eudy (UAMS), Heather Smith (UAMS), Dr. Kari Naylor (UCA), Marie Linquist (Clinton School of Public Service), and Leah Dawson (UAMS). The symposium was open to everyone and attendees represented a variety of disciplines, including nursing, pharmacy, public health, and basic sciences.

Adequately engaging students beyond a traditional classroom setting is a concern for all educators and the GSTCA symposium offered something for everyone.

From Prezi to Liberating Structures, the symposium presented several ways to interact with undergraduate and graduate students. Ashlé Reid, a 2015 graduate from the College of Pharmacy, reflected “Dr. Naylor gave impressive insight into the inter-workings of a new generation of students that I had not previously been exposed to. Moving forward into my residency I feel better equipped to engage these students.” Similarly, the symposium’s organizer Daniel Sappington (IBS) shared that “Reaching digital natives in today’s classroom is a challenge. These students learn better in an environment they have grown up in—a digital one. I’ll definitely be using the techniques that Professors Ruth Eudy and Heather Smith discussed in my future classroom.” For more information or to contact the GSTCA, please email gstcauams@gmail.com.
Spring Reception

The Graduate School hosted its 2015 Spring Reception in Helen Guinn Atrium on April 2, 2015. Students and faculty were recognized for their scholastic achievements and contributions to the scientific community. Dr. McGehee awarded Lee Ann King (PHYO, pictured at right) and Emily Reichard (PCOL) the Dean’s Wishbone award. King was recognized for her work with the GSA and their inaugural Student Research Symposium. Reichard has been an active volunteer and organizer with the 12th Street Health and Wellness Clinic. Additionally Anand Shewale (PHSC-PEP) was recognized for receiving a doctoral fellowship at Arkansas Center for Health Improvement (ACHI). For a complete list of 2014-2015 student achievements, please visit http://gradschool.uams.edu/student-awards.

IMSD Milestones

The Initiative for Maximizing Student Development (IMSD) celebrated a milestone on May 5, 2015 by recognizing the achievements of several IMSD students, including the program’s first doctoral graduates during a meal at the Copper Grill. Drs. McGehee and Thomas are pictured here with 2015 graduates Justin Graham (MBIM), Centdrika Dates (IBS) and Gwendolyn Carter (NBDS). Joseph Graham (MBIM) is not pictured but also slated to graduate on May 16th. Congratulations to these graduates and thank you to all the IMSD students for your hard work!

New GSA Officers

The Graduate Student Association elected new officers for the 2015-2016 school year. The new officers are:

President—Wezley Griffin
Vice President—Julie Anderson
Secretary—Leslie Climer
Treasurer—Jessica Bailey
ASG Rep 1—Rachel Hendrix
ASG Rep 2—Thomas Groves
ASG Rep 3—Garrett Sheumaker

Thank you to the 2014-2015 officers!!

New Grad Council Members

The Graduate School would like to thank Dr. Howard Hendrickson, PhD (Pharmaceutical Sciences), Dr. Helen Beneš, PhD (Neurobiology and Developmental Sciences) for their service and contribution to the Grad Council. We appreciate you both.

We would like to announce Dr. Antiño Allen, PhD (Pharmaceutical Sciences) and Dr. Mark Mennemeier, PhD (Neurobiology and Developmental Sciences) as the new Grad Council Members. Welcome to Grad Council and we look forward to working with you.
Health Systems Topic of McGehee Lectureship

The UAMS Graduate School welcomed Maureen Smith, M.D., Ph.D., M.P.H., a professor at the University of Wisconsin School of Medicine and Public Health, on April 15, 2015 as the fourth annual presenter of the Robert E. McGehee, Jr. Distinguished Lectureship in Biomedical Sciences.

Smith, a professor in the Departments of Population Health Sciences, Family Medicine, and Surgery, directs a research program that evaluates the impact of health system changes on access to and quality of medical care for aging and chronically ill persons.

Her talk focused on the need for academic health centers to be at the forefront of health care as adaptive health systems that learn from their own processes.

“For a number of years I have believed that somehow research and evidence must be integrated into how we deliver health care,” Smith said, noting the United States has had a long history of being a poorly performing outlier when looking at global health outcomes related to per capita spending on health care.

She cited the success of the programs developed in Wisconsin, which have developed statewide partnerships opened up numerous avenues of federally funded research that have led to better health outcomes.

Smith is a graduate of the University of Iowa who earned her medical and public health degrees from Yale University School of Medicine. She also holds a doctorate in health services research, policy and administration from the University of Minnesota.

The lectureship is named for Robert McGehee, Ph.D., a professor of pediatrics in the UAMS College of Medicine’s Division of Neonatology, the dean of the UAMS Graduate School, and executive director of the Arkansas Biosciences Institute. It was established and is supported by a gift from grandparents of a student mentored by McGehee and is the first endowed distinguished lectureship of the Graduate School.
2015 Graduation Brunch and Commencement
Congratulations to the 2014-2015 Graduates!

**Graduate Certificate**
Al-Ola Abdelfettah Abdallah  
Mubbasheer Ahmed  
Malathi Banda  
Meghana Bansal  
Shahla Bari  
Zhijun Cao  
Nupur Dutta Chowdhury  
Joe Mike Fowler  
Brenda Marie Gannon  
Swetha Gujja  
Olivia Katherine Irby  
Marla Yvan Johnson  
Amy Jones  
Stancy Jana Joseph  
Varinder Kaur  
Kirshma M. Khemani  
Natasa Milojkovic  
Hui Wen Ng  
John James Panos  
Angela Pennisi  
Taichun Qin  
Appalanaidu Sasapu  
Liudmila N. Schafer  
Russell D. Smith  
Sarah Beth Theriot  
Upasana Tiwari  
Vijayalakshmi Varma  
Shayna Marie Wood  
Paulette Ann Wy

**Master of Science**
Mir Murtauza Ali  
Natalie Atkins  
Samah Mashhour Awad  
Aminiel K. Awichi  
Amber Jordan Barnes  
Kressa Barnes  
Karalah Bogoslavsky  
LaShaunda Briggs  
Joshua David Brown  
Christine Marie Bruha  
Brandi Lace Burton  
Brittany Nicole Cain  
Elizabeth Leigh Delavan  
Lauren Tankersley Drennen  
Mawdah Abdulaziz T. Ezmirly  
Mallory Erin French  
Michael James Guderyon  
Naho Harada  
Jennifer Leigh Hardin  
Emily Claire Harris  
Dominick Harrison  
Haley Danielle Hatcher  
Paige Caroline Hawkins  
Tamara Lynn Haygarth  
Jordan Ainsley Hills  
Leslie Shannel Hunt  
Jacquelyn L. Johnson  
Kobe Austin Johnson  
Amy M. Jones  
Fariba Jousheghany  
Kayleigh Rochelle Majercak  
Srdan Markovic  
Susan R. Melhorn  
Sarah Elizabeth Nation  
Siobhan Janelle Osborne  
Praveen Kumar Potukuchi  
Andrew Alan Prince  
Tara Jordan Rushing  
Katherine Nicole Russell  
Emma Elizabeth Sabel  
David J. Schoen  
Kourtney Latrice Scott  
Anand R. Shewale  
Amber Nicole Silva  
Jessica Lauren Turker  
Lauren Elizabeth Tuttle  
Stevi Taryn Vernon  
Sonet Weed  
Haylee Ann Weisgram  
Jody Beth Wells  
Jonathan Stuart Wells

**Doctor of Philosophy**
David Abasiwani Alagpulinsa  
Advisor: Robert JS Reis, D.Phil  
Melody Lyn Alensworth  
Advisor: Gwen Childs, Ph.D.  
Nathan L. Avaritt  
Advisor: Alan Tackett, Ph.D.  
Paige Bethany Beck  
Advisor: Edgar Garcia-Rill, Ph.D.  
Adam Robert Brown  
Advisor: Frank A. Simmen, Ph.D.  
Lana Brown  
Advisor: Claudia Barone, Ed.D.  
Adam Lee Corken  
Advisor: Jerry Ware, Ph.D.  
Centdrika Renee’ Dates  
Advisor: Anna Radomska-Padya, PhD  
Neil Douglas Detweiler  
Advisor: Nancy Rusch, Ph.D.  
Marisha Boedigheimer DiCarlo  
Advisor: Carol Cornell, Ph.D.  
Joshua Marcus Eichhorn  
Advisor: Timothy Chambers, Ph.D.  
Joseph G. Graham  
Advisor: Daniel Voth, Ph.D.  
Justin Westbrook Graham  
Advisor: Chia Lee, Ph.D.  
Ashley M. Groschong  
Advisor: Jon Blevins, Ph.D.  
Amy L. Hester  
Advisor: Pao Feng Tsai, Ph.D.  
Teresa J. Hudson  
Advisor: Geoff Curran, Ph.D.  
Dae Song Jang  
Advisor: Alexei G. Basnakian, Ph.D.  
Ashley D. Jensen  
Advisor: Claudia Barone, Ed.D.  
Mazen Juratli  
Advisor: Vladimir Zharov, Ph.D.  
Nathan A. Koonce  
Advisor: Robert J. Griffin, Ph.D.  
Xiong Bin Lin  
Advisor: Abdallah Hayar, Ph.D.  
Brent Matthew Molden  
Advisor: Giulia Baldini, M.D., Ph.D.  
Nisha Nanaware-Kharade  
Advisor: Eric Peterson, Ph.D.  
Naeem Kadar Patil  
Advisor: Lee Ann MacMillan Crow, Ph.D.  
Advisor: Philip Mayeux, Ph.D.  
Sara Elizabeth Prior  
Advisor: Masahiro Higuchi, Ph.D.  
Advisor: Kevin Raney, Ph.D  
Emily Elizabeth Reichard  
Advisor: Eric C. Peterson, Ph.D.  
James Scott Steele  
Advisor: Josh Cisler, Ph.D.  
Linda Marie Tate  
Advisor: Pao Feng Tsai, Ph.D.  
Shanthi Vadali  
Advisor: Steven Post, Ph.D.  
Rose A. Willett  
Advisor: Vladimir Lupashin, Ph.D.
Office of the University Registrar (OUR) Now Open

The Office of the University Registrar is now open! Registrars from all colleges and the Graduate School are located in Building 2 on the College of Health Professions grounds. They are open from 8:00am – 4:30pm Monday through Friday and can be reached via phone at 501-526-5600 or fax at 501-526-3220. For questions regarding transcripts, grades, registration, and more please contact the Office of the University Registrar. As always you are welcome to contact the Graduate School if you need additional help.

UAMS has a New Student Information System

Students and staff will soon be able to utilize the new student information system GUS. This system will help with admissions, records, student accounts, financial aid, and more. The admission portion of the system should be live this summer for the fall 2016 application cycle. For more information about the student information system please refer to http://sis.uams.edu.