UAMS CELEBRATES 50 Years of Dental Hygiene
I know I’ve said this before, but I love the start of the academic year. I enjoy seeing all of our students back on campus – the new faces mixed in with familiar ones. This is a time of year when the possibilities are endless as they appear before us.

This academic year is already shaping up to be a great one. We welcomed the Department of Audiology and Speech Pathology to the UAMS campus. Previously, this program was housed at University Plaza, part of the University of Arkansas at Little Rock campus. The Speech and Hearing Clinic will remain at University Plaza for a year, and then will move to a new location at UAMS.

We celebrated the start of the year with a college-wide new student orientation on Aug. 19. This year, we welcomed 374 new students. It is so exciting to watch all of our students on their journey to becoming allied health care professionals. I know they are going to do great things for health care in Arkansas.

In January, we will welcome the first group of Occupational Therapy students. The Doctor of Occupational Therapy program is a partnership between the College of Health Professions and the College of Education and Health Professions of the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville.

Sherry Muir, Ph.D., and program faculty and staff have done a tremendous job of creating an exciting, three-year program that will be housed at UA and the UAMS Northwest Regional Campus. This program will allow us to address a need for occupational therapy services that was identified in a regional assessment.

This is going to be a wonderful year in the College of Health Professions. I thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

Susan Long, Ed.D.
Dean, College of Health Professions
Deep Roots
For Faculty Alumni, There’s No Place Like UAMS

By Yavonda Chase

For some faculty members in the College of Health Profession, their roots at UAMS go deep — all the way back to when they were students themselves. In fact, the 28 faculty members who matriculated at UAMS make up 36% of the college’s faculty.

“I love the fact that UAMS has so many alumni faculty members,” said Dean Susan Long, Ed.D. “We have a very special college, and while I didn’t attend school here, I certainly haven’t wanted to leave since I arrived in 1992.”

Many of these alumni say the relationship they had with their faculty mentors has influenced the way they treat their own students.

One such faculty alum is Layla Q. Simmons, M.Ed., RDCS, RDMS, instructor and clinical coordinator in the Diagnostic Medical Sonography program, who graduated from the program in May 2015 and started at UAMS in September 2016.

“The best part of my program when I was a student was easily the faculty. They took a personal interest in my success and provided so much guidance to me,” she said. “As a faculty member I now get to be that mentor. Seeing the students on day one and then seeing the professionals they become over the course of 22 months in our program is by far the best part of my job as a faculty member!”

Alicia Baird, B.S., CO, COMT, program director and chair of the Ophthalmic Medical Technologies (OMT) program, agreed. She attended UAMS from 2008-2010.

“As a student, I was very impressed by the involvement of physicians and alumni of the program. As a faculty member, I see firsthand how the physicians at the Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute are invested in the success of the OMT students, the same way they are with the ophthalmology residents. There just aren’t any other programs like ours — in Arkansas or the nation.”

Deep Roots continued on page 4
Ashley McCrary, M.P.A.S., PA-C, assistant professor and co-clinical director in the Department of Physician Assistant Studies, was a member of the program’s first class, attending from May 2013 to August 2015. She is now working alongside the faculty who taught her a few years ago.

“As the PA program has developed, we’ve made several improvements,” she said. “But one thing that hasn’t changed is the closeness and family-like feel. Students and faculty both know they’re supported.”

Faculty alumni also have insight into the ways their programs have changed over the years.

Lindsey K. Clark, M.P.H., MLS(ASCP)CM, is an assistant professor in the Department of Laboratory Sciences. She graduated from the Medical Laboratory Sciences program in 2013 and from the Master of Public Health program in the Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health in 2019. In just a few years, she has seen significant changes in the Medical Laboratory Sciences program.

“When I was a student, our program consisted of an on-campus class of about 20 students and a distance cohort of roughly the same number,” she said. “Today, our on-campus cohort remains around 20-30 students,” while the online MLT-to-MLS degree completion program, in which medical laboratory technicians can earn their bachelor’s degree in Medical Laboratory Sciences, has grown to over 100 students — many of whom are in the military.

“It’s a privilege to teach these students who have given so much for our country. For many of them, completing a bachelor-level degree will allow them to commission as an officer and lead the next generation of military lab professionals.”

The Medical Laboratory Sciences program has seen other changes, including the retirement of the faculty in place when he was a student, said Jason Key, M.Ed., MLS(ASCP)CM, who graduated in 2010 and came to work as an assistant professor in 2017.

“We have a very young faculty group now that I think brings about new ideas for the direction of our program, he said. “Even with all of the changes, the college and the department are still a family, which is so rare. I haven’t felt this in the places where I’ve worked before.”

That sense of family is one of many things that distinguishes UAMS from other health sciences universities — and is something that keeps faculty members here year after year.

John Callaway, M.Ed., RT (R)(ARRT), assistant professor and assistant program director of the Radiologic Imaging Sciences program, graduated from the program in 1995 and came back to work at UAMS in 2006.

“The tradition and reputation of UAMS were a big draw to me when I was thinking about where to go to school, and I still think that is a big draw for students today,” he said. “To me, there is no better place to get an education, and our program is second to none. I have a great deal of pride in our program, and I always want to work to make sure it stays the best!”

Lisa Rhoden, M.Ed., RT (R)(M)(ARRT), CNMT, graduated from the Radiologic Imaging Sciences program in 2003 and the Nuclear Medicine Imaging Sciences program a year later. She first worked at UAMS in diagnostic X-ray as a radiographer, and then was hired as the first PET/CT Technologist in the state of Arkansas because of her dual licensure. Now she is the director of the Division of Radiologic Imaging Sciences and an assistant professor.

“I owe so much to UAMS. August marked my 15th year as an employee, and I have never regretted my decision to come here.”
The College of Health Professions celebrated student achievement and donor generosity Sept. 12 at its Annual Scholarship Program. Forty students received 41 scholarships totaling $56,400. Those at the event were surrounded by friends and family as well as college faculty and staff. Donors present at the event included members of the Ann Bowers Hurst family; James O. Wear, Ph.D., and his wife, Judy; Walter S. Nunnelly; John Shock, M.D.; and Virginia Goral, Ph.D.

“Students, thank you for dedicating yourself to serving others in your chosen profession,” said Dean Susan Long, Ed.D. “Many of you will be there for patients when they’re at their most vulnerable, when they’re scared or overwhelmed or at a moment of joy. This is a huge responsibility and opportunity.”

“Donors, thank you for support of allied health and our students,” she said. “Thank you for believing in our students enough to help them financially realize their dreams. Scholarships are crucial to bridging the gap between the increasing cost of a college education and what students can pay,” noting that the college’s Class of 2019 graduated with an average of $48,000 in debt.

Erin McKinney, who received the Ann Bowers Hurst Scholarship for students in the Dental Hygiene program, spoke on behalf of the scholarship recipients and thanked the donors for their “generous gifts and confidence in us.”

“A scholarship is a gift that will follow us the rest of our lives, enabling us to pursue an education without a financial burden,” she said. “It represents the late nights studying, the countless quizzes and chapters read, the patients’ lives we have already affected and our futures in the allied health professions. These gifts are driving the future of health care.”

1. Scholarship recipient Kelsey Kitchens with James O. Wear, Ph.D., and his wife, Judy.
2. Scholarship recipient Erin McKinney (center) with Pat Hurst (second from right) and other members of the Ann Bowers Hurst family.
4. Scholarship recipient Katie Seever with donor Walter S. Nunnelly.
UAMS Celebrates 50 Years of Dental Hygiene

By Yavonda Chase

UAMS School of Dental Hygiene accepts first students.

December 1969 Dental Hygiene’s first class graduates.

1968

The Class of 1971 works in the University Tower clinic. Katy Warren, then a student, is seated, while her classmate, Carolyn Conzel, adjusts the chair.

1971

The School of Health Related Professions is created, bringing together five programs including dental hygiene; Tip Nelms, D.D.S., M.Ed., director of the School of Dental Hygiene, becomes the founding dean.

1975

The school is renamed the College of Health Related Professions.

A lot can change in 50 years. That certainly is true of the UAMS Department of Dental Hygiene, which graduated its first students in 1969 and celebrated its 50th anniversary with a reunion during Alumni Weekend in August.

“As one of the five original programs that made up the then-College of Health Related Professions, the dental hygiene program is literally a cornerstone of our college,” said Susan Long, Ed.D., dean of the now-College of Health Professions and a dental hygiene professor. “We wouldn’t be the college we are without dental hygiene.”

When the program started, it was housed in the University Tower building, at the corner of South University Avenue and West 12th Street, said Katy Warren, R.D.H., M.Ed., an associate professor in the Department of Dental Hygiene.

Warren enrolled in the program in 1970 and graduated in December 1971. A few months later, she was hired as a part-time faculty member, and she has been here ever since.

“I guess you can say I’ve been here since the beginning,” she said. “Many things have changed since those University Tower days.”

When Warren was enrolled, students had lockers at the clinic so they could change from their street clothes into their clinic uniforms, which were white dresses, white support hose, white shoes that
couldn’t be worn outside the clinic and a white nurse’s cap. “Because our hair had to be pulled up with the cap pinned to it, many of us wore wigs in the clinic,” said Warren. “It was much easier to attach the cap to the wig than it was to your real hair.”

At that time, students learned to practice dental hygiene on patients who were half sitting up instead of lying flat as they do now. The early equipment was foot-pump chairs. “Now you can push a button, and the chairs do all the work for you,” said Warren with a chuckle. “The newer equipment definitely allows us to do our jobs more efficiently and helps prevent clinician stress injuries to the wrists and back.”

The program moved from University Tower to the Shorey Building in 1981, Warren said. The sinks, mirrors and supply cabinets in the UAMS Dental Hygiene Clinic were all brought over from the Tower building, she said.

Since 1969, more than 1,450 students have graduated from the program — first with certificates, then associate degrees and now with bachelor degrees.

“So much has changed in the profession over the past 50 years,” said Warren. “Dental hygienists are now more valued members of the team. We’re able to do things, like administer local anesthesia and work under indirect supervision, that years ago, we wouldn’t have dreamed of being allowed to do.

“The law has also changed so that hygienists are able to go into communities that lack a dentist and provide the preventative care that we know is so important.”

1981

The Dental Hygiene program moves from University Tower to the UAMS campus; the UAMS Dental Hygiene Clinic opens in the Shorey Building, where it remains today.

2009

The college and most of its programs move into a renovated Admin West and buildings that were formerly part of the Arkansas State Hospital.

2012

The College of Health Related Professions becomes the College of Health Professions.
James O. Wear, Ph.D., has a long history with the College of Health Professions — first as a program chair and then as a generous donor. Wear discovered in 1969 that the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs didn’t have a real program for taking care of medical equipment. He was tasked with creating the National Veterans Affairs Engineering Training Center, which taught technicians how to maintain medical equipment.

In 1971, his VA training program became one of the first five programs in the newly created UAMS School of Health Related Professions, since renamed the College of Health Professions.

“After more than 25 years, we had filled the need in Arkansas for biomedical engineers,” said Wear. “Of course, now many of the people we trained are retiring, which means hospitals are looking for a new generation of workers to maintain their equipment.”

Wear’s dedication to the college continued even after his program ended. He and his wife, Judy, were founding members of the college’s Dean’s Society. As he neared retirement from the VA in 2007, he donated his remaining office funds to the college. Those funds were the seed money for the James O. Wear, Ph.D., Endowed Scholarship, an annual scholarship that was awarded for the first time in 2011.

Dean Susan Long, Ed.D., said the Wears have been wonderful friends to the college.

“He served as chair of the Department of Biomedical Instrumentation Technology until the program was discontinued in 2000 amid declining demand.

“After more than 25 years, we had filled the need in Arkansas for biomedical engineers,” said Wear. “Of course, now many of the people we trained are retiring, which means hospitals are looking for a new generation of workers to maintain their equipment.”

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“I am so appreciative of James and Judy for their years of support for our students,” she said. “For many of our students, a scholarship allows them to concentrate on their studies instead of having to juggle school and a part-time job.”

Since the scholarship began, the couple has faithfully attended the college’s scholarship reception.

“We enjoy getting to meet the students who have won the scholarship,” he said. “It is interesting to see what they’ve done, and where they’ve come from. We like knowing that we’ve helped someone get an education.”

Donor Hightlight:

Former Program Chair Turned Donor Values Biomedical Technology

James Wear, Ph.D., and his wife, Judy, sit in their North Little Rock home with their poodles, Rhett and Troy. The couple were founding members of the College of Health Professions’ Dean’s Society.

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“At that time, the VA was willing to provide funds for me to teach my training courses at UAMS. This allowed VA employees to receive college credit for the training and widened the program’s reach. Now we were able to train employees for hospitals all over the state how to better care for medical equipment.”

The UAMS program differed from others around the country in two key ways, Wear said. First, it was the only program that was in a health sciences university — the rest were all in Vo-tech schools and community colleges. Second, it was the only program that used instrumentation in the name.
Dean’s Society’s Seed Grants Fund Research Efforts

Since 2011, the College of Health Professions Dean’s Society has awarded more than $87,000 to fund 22 research projects at UAMS.

Now, called College of Health Professions Seed Grants, these grants are intended to promote, enhance, and build on existing strengths of the college, foster and extend excellence, and encourage innovation.

“The purpose of these grants is to provide pilot funding for research projects that have the potential to develop into extramurally funded projects,” said Reza Hakkak, Ph.D., associate dean for research, professor in the college’s Department of Dietetics and Nutrition and a professor of Pediatrics in the College of Medicine.

Last year, nearly $20,000 was awarded to four projects.

One such project was “Providing Quality Laboratory Results at Community Health Fairs,” by Lindsey Gilbert, M.Ed.; Jason Key, M.Ed.; Nathan Johnson, Ph.D.; Cherika Robertson, M.Ed.; all from the Department of Laboratory Sciences, and Amber Teigan, M.M.Sc., from the Department of Physician Assistant Studies.

As part of their research, the group attended the Vestidos Rojos Health Fair held May 11 at the Metroplex Event Center in Little Rock. Twelve Medical Laboratory Sciences students and five faculty members provided health screenings to approximately 120 Latina women.

A day before the fair, a preparation workshop for students was held to improve the quality of laboratory services at community health fairs, said Robertson.

“We believe that by providing better quality laboratory results, patient care and education can be improved.”

Another project funded in 2018 was “An Interprofessional Fluoride Varnish and Silver Diamine Fluoride Program,” by Melissa Clark, Pharm.D., M.P.H., from the Department of Physician Assistant Studies and director of the UAMS 12th Street Health and Wellness Center, and Claire Tucker, M.Ed., from the Department of Dental Hygiene.

As a result of the project, 70 children that attend UAMS Head Start were screened for decay by dentists and received fluoride varnish by dental hygiene faculty and physician assistant students.

“Because early childhood caries is the most common chronic childhood disease, it is critical that physician assistants are educated and equipped with the skills to apply fluoride varnish to their patients they treat in practice following their education,” said Tucker.

Tucker said she and Clark are seeking outside grant funding to continue this project on an annual basis.

Also funded last year was “Visuospatial Abilities and Success in a Physical Therapy Program: Is There a Relationship,” a two-year study by Christopher Walter, D.P.T., Ph.D., from the Department of Physical Therapy and Denise Compton, Ph.D., from the Department of Geriatrics in the College of Medicine.

Students were recruited from the physical therapy (PT) Class of 2021 to participate in the study, and more are being sought from the Class of 2022, said Walter.

“I want to know if there is a relationship between physical therapy students’ visuospatial abilities and their performance in lab-based courses (those that are visuospatial and kinesthetic in nature) within our PT curriculum,” said Walter.
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“I am so thankful for scholarship opportunities that help ease the burden of tuition. I am in a school with amazing fellow students who deserve this award, so I am beyond thankful that I was considered and chosen.”

– Erin McKinney,
Dental Hygiene program,
2019 recipient of the Ann Bowers Hurst Endowed Scholarship

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For more information about a specific program fund, please contact Amanda May, senior director of Alumni & Annual Giving, at (501) 686-5392 or email AGMay@uams.edu.

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