

UAMS News Bureau

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**Kohler to Retire as Vice Chancellor
of UAMS' Northwest Arkansas Campus**
McElfish Named Associate Vice Chancellor for the Northwest Regional Campus

LITTLE ROCK — Peter Kohler, M.D., is retiring as vice chancellor of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences' northwest Arkansas campus, effective Dec. 31. He will continue to work part time, seeing patients and conducting research in the Center for Pacific Islander Health.

In an organizational change, Pearl McElfish, Ph.D., will lead the campus and other UAMS programs in the region as associate vice chancellor for the Northwest Regional Campus and report to Tim Hill, vice chancellor for Regional Programs. McElfish will also continue her work as the director of the Office of Community Health and Research, co-director of the Center for Pacific Islander Health and as an assistant professor in the College of Medicine.

"Pete has been an invaluable advisor to me as he led our northwest Arkansas campus these past nine years," said Chancellor Dan Rahn, M.D. "While it is difficult to imagine the campus without him at the helm, he has earned his retirement, and we wish him and Judy the best."

"I am very excited that Pearl has accepted this leadership role for the UAMS Northwest Regional Campus," said Hill. "I look forward to working closely with her and am confident that she will do an outstanding job in her new position just as she has done in every other role."

Kohler, who is also a distinguished professor of medicine in the Department of Internal Medicine, was hired in 2007 to lead efforts to open UAMS' northwest Arkansas campus. He had recently retired from the Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU) in Portland after serving more than 18 years as president there. He remains OHSU's president emeritus.

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However, he was not a new face to UAMS. From 1977 to 1986, Kohler served as chairman of the Department of Internal Medicine in the College of Medicine. He also served as interim dean of the medical school in 1985-1986. From UAMS, he went to the University of Texas School of Medicine in San Antonio, where he served as dean.

Educated at the University of Virginia and Duke Medical School, Kohler received his postgraduate training at Duke Medical Center and Georgetown University Hospital. He worked at the National Institutes of Health and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute before going to the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, where he served as professor of medicine and chief of endocrinology. In 1994, he was inducted into the National Academy of Medicine and is the only person in Arkansas to hold this prestigious appointment.

"I consider myself fortunate to have served twice at UAMS over the course of my career," said Kohler. "I am proud to have overseen the development of the northwest Arkansas campus, and I look forward to seeing what the future holds for UAMS."

As the associate vice chancellor for the Northwest Regional Campus, McElfish will provide leadership to ensure coordination across UAMS' programs in the region and work closely with area partners.

"UAMS is extremely fortunate to have Pearl McElfish in a leadership role," said Kohler, citing her skills as a visionary builder. "She built the Center for Pacific Islander Health from scratch by evaluating the needs of the community and obtaining federal grant support to fund the activity. She has assembled an excellent research team, including many Marshallese, to work with this underserved population."

"Pearl has a unique combination of experience in health care administration, business development, and community engagement that makes her incredibly well suited to serve as associate vice chancellor," said Rahn. "UAMS is deeply committed to advancing health care in northwest Arkansas and educating the next generation of health professionals in the region, and Pearl is an ideal candidate to lead that next chapter of UAMS' in the northwest region."

McElfish joined UAMS in 2010 as the study director of the National Children's Study for the Department of Pediatrics. In 2012, she was named the director of the Office of Community Health and Research. Then in 2015, she founded the Center for Pacific Islander Health, the first center in the United States that focuses solely on Pacific Islander health issues. She now leads the center with Nia Aitaoto, Ph.D., M.P.H.

Prior to joining UAMS, McElfish worked for various community health organizations, improving efficiency and quality of care and developing strong, sustainability research and community health programs.

She holds a doctorate of philosophy in public policy from the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, a master's degree in community and economic development from the University of Central Arkansas, a master's degree in business administration from John

Brown University and a bachelor's degree in speech communication from Arkansas Tech University.

"I am honored to be asked to serve UAMS in this capacity, and I look forward to building upon the foundation that Dr. Kohler has built at our northwest Arkansas campus," said McElfish.

UAMS is the state's only comprehensive academic health center, with colleges of Medicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Health Professions and Public Health; a graduate school; a hospital; a northwest Arkansas regional campus; a statewide network of regional centers; and seven institutes: the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute, the Jackson T. Stephens Spine & Neurosciences Institute, the Myeloma Institute, the Harvey & Bernice Jones Eye Institute, the Psychiatric Research Institute, the Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging and the Translational Research Institute. It is the only adult Level 1 trauma center in the state. UAMS has 3,021 students, 789 medical residents and five dental residents. It is the state's largest public employer with more than 10,000 employees, including about 1,000 physicians and other professionals who provide care to patients at UAMS, Arkansas Children's Hospital, the VA Medical Center and UAMS regional centers throughout the state. Visit www.uams.edu or www.uamshealth.com. Find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

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