

UAMS News Bureau

Office of Communications & Marketing
4301 West Markham # 890
Little Rock, AR 72205-7199

uamshealth.com/news



News Release
Nov. 17, 2017

Media Contacts:

Dana Engelbert, 479-713-8112
Wireless phone: 479-200-9402
dengelbert@uams.edu

Leslie W. Taylor, 501-686-8998
Wireless phone: 501-951-7260
leslie@uams.edu

**UAMS Northwest Regional Campus Marks 10 Years
of Academic Medicine**

FAYETTEVILLE — Celebrating 10 years as northwest Arkansas’ home to academic medicine, the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) Northwest Regional Campus hosted community leaders, friends, faculty and staff today for a timeline unveiling and open house.

“We are happy to host the community on campus today to celebrate how far we’ve come with the Northwest Regional Campus in the last 10 years,” said Pearl McElfish, Ph.D., M.B.A, associate vice chancellor of the Northwest Regional Campus. “It’s a great opportunity for reflection on the past and to look forward to a future of continued partnerships that will advance academic medicine in northwest Arkansas.”

About 150 members of the public joined McElfish, community leaders, former faculty and other campus leadership in the lobby of the Fayetteville building for the event.

“A lot of you in the audience today – from both on campus and off – played a key role in making this a success,” McElfish said. “Your hard work and collaborative spirit have been vital. As we grow, we look forward to that continued support.”

The timeline is located in the Fayetteville building, near the Regional Campus Conference Room. It starts in 2007 and includes key dates in campus history extending to the present day.

Campus History

In 2007, UAMS made a commitment to academic medicine in northwest Arkansas with the introduction of a regional campus. Peter O. Kohler, M.D., was named vice chancellor and set about building an interprofessional medical education opportunity that also supports the community through research and clinical services.

--more--

“We worked hard to get the funding from the state to get started and worked with the county to secure the building,” said Kohler. “It was a big win for us, for the county and the region. We’ve come a long way in that time.”

The UAMS College of Pharmacy appointed Eric Schneider, Pharm.D., associate dean of the Northwest Regional Campus in 2009. Six third-year medical students came to campus that summer, starting their time on campus with a wall-breaking ceremony to acknowledge the major renovations to come. They graduated in May 2011.

Chris Smith, M.D., was appointed the first regional dean for the UAMS College of Medicine that year. The College of Pharmacy also welcomed its first class of third-year students in 2011. The Northwest Regional Campus housed 107 students and 30 postgraduate medical residents at that time.

“The region’s growth really started to take off and lots of amazing things were happening,” said Kohler. “Health care has been coming more into focus as the population rapidly expands.”

In 2012, Bill Buron, Ph.D., R.N.C., was appointed the first assistant dean for the UAMS College of Nursing in the northwest region. The Pat and Willard Walker Student Clinical Education Center, where students simulate patient interactions, opened in 2013.

In 2014, there was a flurry of activity. John Jefferson, Ph.D., began as inaugural director of the Doctor of Physical Therapy program, which was championed by area leaders. The Northwest Regional Campus is the sole home of the UAMS Physical Therapy program. The Outpatient Therapy Clinic, offering physical, occupational and speech therapy services to the public, opened in the fall.

The North Street Clinic opened in late 2014, offering diabetes care to the local Marshallese community. Marshallese have some of the highest rates of diabetes in the world. Almost 200 students have worked in the clinic, learning about effective culturally appropriate patient care.

The first internal medicine residents came to campus in 2015, bringing future medical professionals specializing in comprehensive adult primary care to the area. Inaugural doctor of physical therapy students arrived on campus that year as well. In late 2015, McElfish and Nia Aitaoto, Ph.D., M.P.H., founded the Center for Pacific Islander Health on campus to focus on health studies within the underrepresented population. It is the first in the continental United States to do so.

Sheldon Riklon, M.D., one of two practicing Marshallese physicians in the country, joined the staff and was invested as the first Peter O. Kohler, M.D., Distinguished Professorship in Health Disparities in 2016. At the end of that year, McElfish was appointed associate vice chancellor of the Northwest Regional Campus, succeeding Kohler.

The Future

“As Dr. Kohler said, we have come a long way since those early days,” said McElfish, who succeeded Kohler as associate vice chancellor upon his retirement at the end of

2016. “We have graduated 336, we opened the student-led North Street Clinic, and we launched the Department of Physical Therapy.”

According to the Northwest Arkansas Council, 27 people have moved to the region each day since 2010.

“We are uniquely poised to advance northwest Arkansas through community-based health care and by developing the next generation of leaders in the field,” said McElfish.

UAMS is the state’s only health sciences university, 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 2,870 students, 799 medical residents and five dental residents. It is the state’s largest public employer with more than 10,000 employees, including about 1,200 physicians who provide care to patients at UAMS and its regional campuses throughout the state, Arkansas Children’s, the VA Medical Center and Baptist Health. Visit www.uams.edu or www.uamshealth.com. Find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) or [Instagram](#).

Like us, we’re social:    

###