

Making the Case

Seeking Five Years of Funding, TRI Submits Application to NCATS



Delegations from NIH/NCATS, U.S. Sen. John Boozman's office and the Senate HHS Appropriations Subcommittee visited UAMS May 7 to learn firsthand about TRI's work.

One year of bridge funding was great news last year for the Translational Research Institute (TRI), but it set the stage for a big challenge.

While the September 2017 Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) allowed TRI time to strengthen its next application for five years of funding, it meant producing a fourth CTSA application in four years, a mammoth undertaking for TRI Director Laura James, M.D., and numerous faculty and TRI staff.

Work on the application began almost immediately after the bridge award was announced, said James, also UAMS associate vice chancellor for clinical and translational research.

"We dedicated ourselves to the application, but we also remained committed to our ongoing initiatives and innovative plans in collaboration with research leaders across our hub [UAMS, Arkansas Children's Hospital (ACH), Arkansas Children's Research Institute (ACRI), and Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System (CAVHS)]," she said.

1,864 Pages

"Until you've been in the middle of this type of grant application, it's hard to understand the amount of work involved in weaving together a consistent and compelling story that clearly explains the incredible progress achieved at UAMS since our first CTSA grant in 2009, as well as the exciting vision we have for the future," James said.

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Message from Dr. James



Dear Colleagues,

As you will read in these pages, on May 24, TRI submitted an application for a five-year Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) from the NIH National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS).

While there are no guarantees, we know that we are on the right path at TRI and our research hub, which includes UAMS, Arkansas Children's Hospital and Research Institute ACH/ACRI, and the Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System (CAVHS). This was affirmed during the May 7 visit to UAMS by leaders at NCATS, U.S. Sen. John Boozman's office and the Health and Human Services Appropriations Subcommittee in the Senate.

Now in our ninth year as a CTSA site, TRI has made lasting contributions to our research infrastructure and continues to work hard implementing innovations that strengthen our research.

To be relevant for Arkansans, our research must engage those who traditionally have not been in the center of clinical and translational research. Our application emphasizes Arkansas' unique health challenges and opportunities for addressing the needs of the state's underrepresented communities.

We have numerous core strengths at UAMS with research champions at UAMS, ACH/ACRI and CAVHS working as a team to enhance the health of Arkansans through transformative research. Let's look forward to learning the outcome of this, our fourth application, which we anticipate will be announced early in 2019!

Sincerely,

Laura James, M.D.
Director, UAMS Associate Vice Chancellor
for Clinical and Translational Research

Making the Case (Continued from page 1)

The latest journey concluded on May 24, 2018, when James and 32 other UAMS faculty submitted the 1,864-page document to the NIH National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS). TRI is seeking five years of funding - \$26.1 million - in an application with three funding components: the main component, an Institutional Career Development Core (KL2 Program) and National Research Service Award Training Core (the Health Sciences Innovation and Entrepreneurship Training Program).

The application describes numerous core strengths at UAMS and how various research champions at UAMS, ACH, and CAVHS will work as a team to enhance the health of Arkansans through transformative research.

Challenges and Opportunities

TRI's strategy for the application was to craft a story that reflected the unique challenges and opportunities in Arkansas.

"Our clinical and education footprint around the state is very strong, as reflected by the numerous outreach clinics and expansive telemedicine program," James said.

The application emphasizes plans for not just strengthening UAMS' research footprint, but also for addressing the needs of Arkansas' underrepresented communities.

"For our research to be relevant for Arkansans, it really needs to engage those who traditionally have not been in the center of clinical and translational research," James said. "It needs to align with the health care needs of special populations, including children and older adults, as well as underrepresented minorities, and individuals with low health literacy."

The quality partnerships that TRI has developed with other CTSA sites over the last four years strengthens the application. "We have partnerships that are centered on research itself, as well as partnerships that address research processes, such as grant reviews, or that are building off our successes in engaging community members to help us with decision-making," James said.

Washington Delegation

UAMS and TRI leaders were buoyed by the May 7 visit from a delegation that included NCATS Director Christopher Austin, M.D., staff from U.S. Sen. John Boozman's office and the Senate Health and Human Services (HHS) Appropriations Subcommittee.

The day began with welcomes from James and Donald R. Bobbitt, Ph.D., president of the University of Arkansas

System, followed by 17 faculty and a community representative giving brief presentations highlighting individual scientific programs and/or TRI programs. Faculty from informatics, pharmacy, public health, pediatrics, psychiatry, family and preventive medicine, pharmacology and toxicology, biochemistry, and internal medicine gave presentations, as did research leaders from ACRI and CAVHS. The day concluded with a small-group discussion that included new UAMS Chancellor Cam Patterson, M.D., MBA, and Lawrence Cornett, Ph.D., UAMS vice chancellor for research.

Congressional staff attending were:

- Laura Friedel, staff director/clerk, HHS Appropriations Subcommittee, U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations
- Mackensie Burt, Legislative Director, Office of U.S. Senator John Boozman

NCATS representatives attending with Austin were:

- Adrienne Hallett, associate director, Office of Legislative Policy and Analysis, NIH
- Pamela McInnes, D.D.S., M.Sc., deputy director, NCATS, NIH
- Michael Kurilla, M.D., Ph.D., director, Clinical Innovation, NCATS, NIH
- Mary Purucker, M.D., Ph.D., director, CTSA Program Hubs, Clinical Innovation Division, NCATS, NIH
- Samantha Jonson, MPS, special assistant to the director, NCATS, NIH

"We were encouraged with the nature of the questions from NCATS as well as their comments about our programs," James said. "It was clear that we are on the right path."

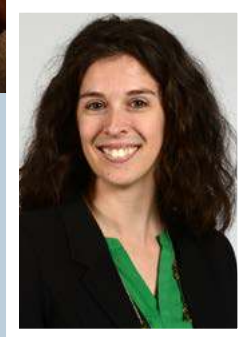
While "third time's a charm" is the best known maxim, James said she would be happy to make it "four's a charm" for this CTSA application.

"I feel confident that we've delivered a competitive application," she said.

TRI's CTSA Application, by the Numbers

When the many sections of TRI's NIH/NCATS Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) application were compiled, we tallied some numbers that may be of interest to our research community.

- Total funding, if awarded, five years, \$26,136,160
- Total application pages, 1,864
- Number of faculty involved in writing application, 32
- Total biosketches, 181
- Total letters of support, 57
- Number of UAMS faculty to be supported by grant, 55
- Grant funding to support UAMS faculty, \$7 million
- Grant funding for pilot awards, \$1.25 million
- Funding for Institutional Career Development Core (KL2 Scholars Program), \$2.27 million
- Funding for National Research Service Award Training Core (Health Sciences Innovation and Entrepreneurship Training Program), \$335,000 year one, \$676,000 years two – five



TRI KL2 scholar awardees including Lisa Brents, Ph.D., were among those presenting their research May 7 to delegations from NIH/NCATS, U.S. Sen. John Boozman's office, and the Senate HHS Appropriations Subcommittee. Brents is conducting opioid research of a new drug for treating neonatal abstinence syndrome.



John Arthur, M.D., Ph.D., TRI Associate Director and Professor, Department of Internal Medicine, UAMS College of Medicine

"As a clinical researcher, I can attest to the excellent TRI resources that helped me implement a clinical trial to test an intervention to slow chronic kidney disease progression. As TRI associate director, it's exciting that more and more UAMS investigators are accessing TRI resources as TRI maintains its commitment to continuous quality

improvement. It's also gratifying to see TRI integrate new resources into UAMS' research spheres. Through its many programs, TRI is helping UAMS investigators address the health needs of Arkansas' diverse, rural population. Its work benefits our researchers and the communities we serve, and the result is like a ship sailing through smooth waters."

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TRIBUTES

**The following UAMS researchers cited the Translational Research Institute (TRI)
in publications after utilizing TRI resources or funding:**

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