

THE TRIBUNE

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Awash in Opportunity TRI Moves Quickly in Wake of \$24.2 Million Grant

TRI has pushed out a wave of newly funded programs for researchers since July. They include training programs for entrepreneurship, implementation science, early-career researchers, and research leadership training for community organizations.

The surge follows TRI's receipt of a \$24.2 million Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) from the NIH/National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences. Since July 1, TRI has released four new funding opportunities, with a fifth on the horizon.

Laura James, M.D., TRI director and principal investigator on the CTSA, said the TRI team was prepared for the big moment.

"We are ecstatic about the grant, but we didn't spend a lot of time celebrating," she said. "Our team was ready to start rolling out programs when it was announced."

The new opportunities, thus far:

- **Health Science Innovation & Entrepreneurship (TL1) Training Program.** This unique program is supporting five postdoctoral fellows for the next two-years. One of two CTSA subawards, the \$1.3 million program is co-directed by Nancy Rusch, Ph.D., professor and chair, Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology,

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TRI Director Laura James, M.D., with UAMS Chancellor Cam Patterson, M.D., MBA, announcing the \$24.2 million CTSA grant.



Dear Colleagues,

As you will read in this issue, we've been busy!

The five years of CTSA funding announced in July has given TRI the resources to implement exciting new programs that will benefit researchers

across UAMS and our partner institutions at ACRI and CAVHS.

The first of three unique initiatives we funded in July is the TL1 Health Science Innovation & Entrepreneurship Training program, a partnership with the Walton College of Business at UA, Fayetteville. Commercialization is a great way to "translate" discoveries into treatments and other health interventions. The HSIE program will be vital to our overall success.

We are also launching the Implementation Science Scholars Program, which will mentor clinical faculty at UAMS and ACH on methods to implement or de-implement clinical practices and/or guidelines.

In keeping with our strengths in Community Engagement, we are excited about a new initiative that links researchers to community-based groups. The Community Partners Educated as Arkansas Research Leaders (CPEARL) Program will be a catalyst for improving health in communities with significant health disparities.

New funding was also announced in July for five KL2 Scholars and five pilot grants. We have increased funding for these two long-standing CTSA programs, which have previously yielded big returns on the investments.

Sincerely,

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

Awash in Opportunity

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College of Medicine, and Curtis Lowery, M.D., professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, College of Medicine, and director, Institute for Digital Health & Innovation.

- **Implementation Science Scholars Program.** Another first at UAMS, this program provides salary support for up to five clinical faculty for one year. It is led by Geoffrey Curran, Ph.D., professor, Pharmacy Practice, College of Pharmacy, and director, UAMS Center for Implementation Research.
- **Community Partners Educated as Arkansas Research Leaders (CPEARL) Program.** This new program is inviting community-based organizations to apply for a new research leadership training program and includes seed funding for health-related community projects. It is led by Kate Stewart, M.D., M.P.H., professor, Health Policy and Management, College of Public Health, director, TRI Community Engagement Program.
- **TRI Pilot Award Program.** Researchers have been invited to apply for awards that will support studies of special populations, such as children, older adults and minority groups. The program is led by Donald Mock, M.D., Ph.D., professor, Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, College of Medicine

The CTSA also bolsters TRI's KL2 Mentored Research Career Development Scholar Award Program. Five early career researchers, announced in July, will receive two years of translational research training (story, page 3). The program, supported by a CTSA subaward of \$2.3 million, is co-directed by Brooks Gentry, M.D., Professor, Department of Anesthesiology, College of Medicine, and Elisabet Borsheim, Ph.D., professor, Department of Pediatrics and Department of Geriatrics, College of Medicine.

TRI's five-year CTSA is allowing the expansion of key programs, infrastructure and resources to further employ its translational research approaches.

For example, TRI's ability to access and utilize troves of clinical data through key collaborations is expected to play a big role in UAMS' translational research output.

Fred Prior, Ph.D., who chairs the Department of Biomedical Informatics, also directs TRI's Comprehensive Informatics Resource Center (CIRC). In a collaboration that includes CIRC and TRI's Biostatistics, Epidemiology and Research Design Program (BERD), directed by Paula Roberson, Ph.D., chair of the Department of Biostatistics, TRI provides a one-stop shop for researchers. It includes assistance using informatics-supported tools and expertise to help strengthen research quality and aid participation in multi-site clinical trials.

James said she looks forward to leveraging the CTSA to help researchers turn their ideas and findings into new medical treatments and interventions. She noted that TRI's mission puts an emphasis on rural communities and on populations underrepresented in research.

"Reducing chronic diseases and health disparities in Arkansas requires that we engage more communities across the state," she said.

Researcher Profile



Amy Jo Jenkins, M.S., CCRP, CCRC, CCRA

*Executive Director, Translational
Research Institute*

*President-elect, Society of Clinical
Research Associates*

How would you describe your role as TRI's executive director?

Intense. I have the opportunity to be involved in all aspects of TRI, from strategic planning to new program implementation to daily operations oversight.

What led you to a career in the research field?

I stumbled into research by accident. I took the first job offered to me right out of college because I needed money. It was an administrative position at a company that managed clinical trials. I had a scientific background and was immediately interested. The rest is history...I never left the field.

What do you enjoy the most about your job?

I most enjoy working with all the institutes and departments across UAMS and with our partner institutions. It is satisfying to be able to facilitate research efforts in so many different areas and fascinating to meet many diverse people.

What career would you have chosen if not this one?

I would be a park ranger, complete with uniform and special hat! I love the outdoors.

Who has influenced on your career the most?

I have had - and continue to have - the tremendous privilege of having many mentors and superiors who have invested in me and fostered my skills and interests. However, I am eternally grateful to the woman who hired me into my first "real" job and took a chance on me. Her decision shaped my entire career, something I could not fully appreciate back then.

Five Researchers Receive KL2 Scholar Awards



The new KL2 scholars are (front, l-r) Isabelle Racine Miousse, Ph.D., Tara Johnson, M.D., Stefanie Kennon-McGill, Ph.D., Pearman Parker, Ph.D., and (inset) Jennifer Vincenzo, Ph.D. Back: TRI Director Laura James, M.D., and KL2 Program Co-Director W. Brooks Gentry, M.D.

Five UAMS researchers will spend the next two years developing their translational science skills as KL2 Mentored Research Career Development Program Scholars.

The early-career researchers, representing four of UAMS' five colleges, are pursuing studies in child health, geriatrics, clinical trials and basic science.

"All of their projects are translational," said W. Brooks Gentry, M.D., co-director of TRI's KL2 program.

The program provides two years of didactic and mentored research training. Scholars receive 75% salary support and up to \$25,000 per year for research, tuition, travel expenses and education materials.

The KL2 Scholars were chosen from a group of finalists interviewed by an independent faculty review committee.

Below are the new scholars, their college, department and title of their KL2 project:

Tara Johnson, M.D.; College of Medicine, Department of Pediatrics, Neurology; "Implementation and Quantification of the General Movement Assessment for Early Detection of Neurodevelopmental Disabilities in Infants"

Stefanie Kennon-McGill, Ph.D.; College of Public Health, Department of Environmental and Occupational Health; "Fetal Exposure to Cannabinoids: Exposure, Methylation and Neurodevelopmental Effects"

Pearman Parker, Ph.D., M.P.H., RN; College of Nursing, Department of Nursing Science; "An exploration of the mental health needs of young women with breast cancer and implications for developing patient educational materials"

Isabelle Racine Miousse, Ph.D.; College of Medicine, Department of Biochemistry; "Decreasing Methionine Intake to Improve Survival in Patients with Metastatic Melanoma"

Jennifer Vincenzo, Ph.D., M.P.H., PT; College of Health Professions, Department of Physical Therapy; "Development of a Falls Prevention Self-Management Plan to Improve Older Adults Adherence to Prevention Strategies after Community-Based Falls Risk Screenings"

Vincenzo is the first KL2 Scholar from the UAMS Northwest Regional Campus and first from the College of Health Professions.

Research on the Horizon: New TRI Study of the Month

- **UAMS Principal Investigator:** Benjamin Tharian, M.D., Assistant Professor, Director of Endoscopy, Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, College of Medicine
- **Summary:** A multi-center trial to evaluate the safety and effectiveness of the Interscope Endorotor® Resection System for direct endoscopic necrosectomy of walled off pancreatic necrosis
- **Significance:** Walled off necrosis is a potentially life-threatening complication of severe necrotizing acute pancreatitis. The new device reaches the necrotic pancreas through the mouth and down the throat, enabling direct endoscopic necrosectomy, which is potentially safer and more cost effective than other approaches.
- **TRI Services:** Medicare coverage analysis, study budget review and negotiation, IRB submission, completion of sponsor's regulatory startup packet, training for study staff/investigators, oversight of enrollment startup, and research nurse coordinator services.
- **Sponsor:** Interscope Medical



Benjamin Tharian, M.D., is assisted on the study by TRI's Monica Smith.

TRIBUTES

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

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Find the appropriate citation language at tri.uams.edu/about-tri-2/cite-tri.*

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