

THE TRIBUNE

JANUARY 2024

Winning Connections TRI Honors Community Partners at Celebration



Joyce Raynor, center, executive director of the Center for Healing Hearts & Spirits, receives the Chancellor's Community Engaged Research Partner of the Year Award. She is joined by TRI's (l-r) Tiffany Haynes, Ph.D., and Christi Madden, MPA, and Darlynton Adegor of Healing Hearts & Spirits. (Photos by Bryan Clifton)

For Joyce Raynor, winning the Chancellor's Community Engaged Research Partner of the Year Award affirmed many years of hard work.

"This award means that we're on the right track," said Raynor, founder and executive director of the Center for Healing Hearts & Spirits, which helps victims of violence. "It means that our partnership with UAMS is working, and it's good."

The UAMS Translational Research Institute (TRI) recognized some of UAMS' many community partners at the recent 2023 Community Partner Celebration. The Dec. 1 dinner and awards ceremony drew 78 community partners, researchers and research staff who are working together to tackle health-related issues in diverse communities across Arkansas.

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Dear Colleagues,

Ten years ago, TRI's Community Advisory Board initiated the annual Community Partner Celebration to acknowledge the critical role of grassroots community groups in the improvement of UAMS' research, education and health care service missions. After a hiatus due to COVID-19, we resumed this important celebration on Dec. 1. Congratulations to all of those who were nominated and received awards during this special event, which you can read about in this TRIBune.

Community involvement in research at UAMS is helping us learn more about the health needs of our communities and informs our approaches through community partnerships to address them. I am grateful that we have so many partners who are willing to work with UAMS on such vital health issues.

I also want to congratulate TRI's community engagement team, which has trained about 241 community partners and provides consultation to researchers that supported new externally funded grants totaling more than \$130 million.

The funding has addressed the health needs of Arkansas communities and provided 49 subcontracts to community-based organizations.

As we closed out 2023, TRI hosted its External Advisory Board (story, page 4) whose final report will serve as a tailwind in our fifth year of Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) funding and our transition into the next funding cycle. We anticipate continued support from our funder based on our strong application scores.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura James, M.D." with a stylized flourish at the end.

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

Winning Connections (continued from page 1)

In addition to Raynor's organization, the award winners are:

- Community Engaged Student/Trainee of the Year: Alice Gardner, a health promotion and prevention research doctoral student in the UAMS Fay W. Boozman College of Public Health.
- Community Advisory Board of the Year Award: Arkansas Community Engagement Alliance (CEAL) Coalition
- Community Engaged Research Staff Member of the Year: Elizabeth Taylor, College of Public Health
- M. Kate Stewart Community Engaged Researcher of the Year: Nakita Lovelady, Ph.D., assistant professor, College of Public Health



Nakita Lovelady, Ph.D. (center), received the M. Kate Stewart Community Engaged Researcher of the Year Award from TRI Executive Director Christi Madden, MPA (left), and Keneshia Bryant-Moore, Ph.D., APRN, FNP-BC.

Raynor founded the Center for Healing Hearts & Spirits in Little Rock after her son was killed by gun violence in 2001. The center has worked with UAMS on multiple research and service projects, including with Lovelady, who nominated Raynor for the award.

"The Center for Healing Hearts & Spirits works closely with frontline workers to connect violent assault survivors with critical social services to optimize recovery and prevent subsequent violence," Lovelady said. "The center provides a range of victim services to violent assault survivors enrolled in the studies. Joyce has an intricate understanding of the issue of violence and survivorship. This affords her an exceptional ability to lead and reach survivors in ways that words can't begin to explain."

Lovelady, a K12 Mentored Research Career Development Award Scholar, received the inaugural M. Kate Stewart Community Engaged Researcher of the Year Award. She and her mentor, Nickolas Zaller, Ph.D., recently received a \$1.4 million grant from the National Institutes of Health to support a community-engaged violence prevention program.

"Dr. Lovelady truly understands the factors that contribute to community violence in Arkansas' most high-risk populations, and she works very hard to find innovative solutions to address those issues and meet people where they are," said Raynor, who nominated Lovelady for the inaugural award honoring Stewart, who retired in December 2022 as director of TRI's Community Engagement Program.

Lovelady was excited to receive the award, noting Stewart's strong legacy and influence on the next generation of community engagement researchers.

"It is such an honor to win this award!" she said. "It's extra special to receive an award in honor of my great mentor and friend Dr. Kate Stewart. She introduced me to community-engaged research more than a decade ago and served as one of the best examples of a community-engaged researcher."

Stewart joined the College of Public Health when it was founded in 2001 and led TRI's Community Engagement Program since it was established in 2009. She created and oversaw numerous innovative programs that have

elevated the status of community-engaged research in Arkansas and across the United States.

UAMS researcher Keneshia Bryant-Moore, Ph.D., APRN, also received an Honorary M. Kate Stewart Award to recognize her significant contributions to community-engaged research at UAMS over the last decade. She is a professor in the College of Public Health and graduate of the TRI K12 Scholar Award Program. Her many achievements include establishing the Arkansas FAITH Network, a robust group of church leaders from across the state who have become important partners in community-engaged research.

Junior Faculty Invited to Apply for K12 Awards



John Arthur



Elisabet Børsheim



Mario Schootman

TRI is inviting applications from early-career researchers for its K12 (formerly KL2) Mentored Research Career Development Scholar Award Program.

K12 scholars receive two years of didactic and mentored research training, including 75% salary support (up to \$100,000) and \$25,000 each year for research related expenses such as supplies, travel, etc. The overall goal of this prestigious program is to increase the number and quality of independently funded clinical and translational science investigators.

It is led by:

- John Arthur, M.D., Ph.D., professor and chief, Division of Nephrology, Department Internal Medicine, College of Medicine; and TRI associate director
- Elisabet Børsheim, Ph.D., professor, departments of Pediatrics and Geriatrics, College of Medicine; director, Arkansas Children's Nutrition Center Physical Activity Core Laboratory
- Mario Schootman, Ph.D., professor, vice chair of Mentorship and Innovation, Division of Community Health & Research, Department of Internal Medicine, College of Medicine; and co-director, TRI Translational Workforce Development

Read the 2024 K12 RFA here by scanning the QR code. 

Letters of Intent are due **Feb. 1, 2024**.

Learn more about the program on the TRI website, TRI.uams.edu.

Questions? Please contact Nik Berardi, NDBerardi@uams.edu.



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TRI Study of the Month

UAMS Principal Investigator: Subhi J. Al'Aref, M.D., associate professor, UAMS College of Medicine, Department of Internal Medicine, Division of Cardiovascular Medicine

Summary: This research study will apply machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) to provide novel analysis of heart motion specific to dyssynchrony and is predictive of Cardiac Resynchronization Therapy (CRT) treatment outcomes.

Significance: The use of AI to analyze heart motion in 4-D (3-D plus time dimension) could expedite the diagnosis and improve treatment of dyssynchrony in certain heart patients.

TRI Services: Regulatory and research coordinator services

Funding Agency:

NIH National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute



TRI's AI Keyes, B.S.N., RN, CRS, director of Clinical Trials, consults with Subhi Al'Aref, M.D., the study's principal investigator.

Finishing Strong External Advisers Express High Praise for TRI



Members of TRI's External Advisory Board pose for a photo with (front l-r) TRI Executive Director Christi Madden, MPA, and TRI Director Laura James, M.D. The EAB members include (front, right) Julian Solway, M.D., (chair) from the University of Chicago; and (back, l-r) W. Robert Taylor, M.D., Ph.D., Emory University; Joel Tsevat, M.D., MPH, University of Texas Health San Antonio; and Rachel Hess, M.D., M.S., University of Utah. Not pictured: EAB members who attended the meeting remotely are Sergio Aguilar-Gaxiola, M.D., University of California – Davis Health; and Sean D. Mooney, Ph.D., University of Washington.

TRI's annual meeting with its External Advisory Board (EAB) in December concluded with its most positive assessment yet of TRI's work over the past 14 years.

"In the eyes of the EAB, the TRI has become the jewel of UAMS," the EAB concluded in its written report following the meeting.

The EAB is comprised of leaders from six CTSA institutions from across the United States.

TRI is wrapping up the last year of its five-year, \$24.2 million Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA), which is funded by the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences at the NIH. TRI recently received strong scores on its applications for renewing its CTSA-funded programs, and a funding announcement is expected in the first half of this year.

The EAB also noted the strong institutional support for TRI, adding that it is essential for such support to continue and grow as TRI enters the new grant cycle.

"We note that multiple other NIH-funded centers at UAMS have come and gone over the last 2 decades – but the TRI persists, reflecting its great accomplishments and great value," the report states. "It serves as a support for other institutional aspirations, including comprehensive cancer center designation."