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Historical Synopsis

The medical school was conceived by a small group of prominent and dedicated Little Rock physicians. With the support of the Arkansas Medical Society, eight founding stockholders convinced the Arkansas Industrial University (renamed the University of Arkansas in 1899) to accept the school as its Medical Department; there was to be no attendant financial responsibility. The school was housed in a three story remodeled building at 113 West Second Street in Little Rock and the doors were first opened in 1879 to twenty students. Dr. P.O. Hooper was named the first Dean. The only related practical education occurred at a free clinic (dispensary) located in the back of a nearby hardware store.

By 1890, a new building was completed at Second and Sherman Streets, six blocks to the east, contracted by the original stockholders. These more spacious quarters permitted the addition of laboratory studies in histology, chemistry and physiology, plus expanded activities in anatomical dissection. The stockholders also donated land to the city to build the Logan H. Roots Hospital adjacent to the new school. Although construction of the Hospital was completed in 1896, it was not used until 1898 because of insufficient funds; even then the use of the Hospital for clinical instruction was meager since emphasis was placed on the theoretical study of disease and materia medica.

When the state legislature and several state agencies moved to the new state capitol building in 1913, much of the old statehouse on West Markham at Louisiana Street was turned over to the Medical Department. In it were housed the library, the administrative offices and some of the basic science laboratories. Several laboratories remained at the Sherman Street building connected to the Roots Hospital. In 1915 an outpatient clinic building was built next to the school specifically for the instruction of medical students, funded from the trust of Dr. Isaac Folsom. To this day, all medical graduate diplomas note that instruction has been received in the Isaac Folsom Clinic. In 1918 the Medical Department was renamed the School of Medicine.

In 1934 the Public Works Administration began construction of the fourth medical school building adjacent to the Little Rock City Hospital on the east end of MacArthur Park. The City Hospital had been built in 1927 and contributed much improved clinical teaching facilities. In 1940 it first received state support and was renamed the University Hospital.

Present Facilities

After the Second World War, a larger student body, a growing full-time faculty and many new programs, gradually led to the concept of still another building plan. With the support of the University, the State Medical Society and Governor Sid McMath, the Legislature appropriated funds in 1951 to relocate the Medical Center to its present location near War Memorial Stadium. The UAMS Medical Center and its associated clinics were the first units occupied in 1957. Since that time, almost continuous construction has led to a modern, state-of-the-art academic medical center, dwarfing the original complex and housing nationally and internationally recognized programs in education, research and patient care.

In July 1975 the Medical Center was renamed the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) and designated as one of the five campuses within the University of Arkansas system, including the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff and the University of Arkansas at Monticello. In conjunction with this reorganization, the School of Medicine became the College of Medicine.

The medical school utilizes the UAMS Medical Center, the Arkansas Children's Hospital and the Veterans Administration Hospitals in Little Rock and North Little Rock as primary teaching units. Additionally, there are valuable educational affiliations with the Baptist Medical System Hospitals, the St. Vincent Infirmary, the St. Vincent Doctors Hospital, the Little Rock Hospital of the Arkansas Mental Health Services and the Baptist Rehabilitation Institute. The Family Medical Centers located within six of the Regional Centers serve as principal educational facilities. Since 1973, seven Research Centers have developed as outreach training sites for predoctoral, postdoctoral and continuing physician education programs. Other educational sites are available, through prearrangement, in many locations throughout the state. A completely new UAMS Medical Center and Psychiatric Research Institute were opened in January 2009. Junior and senior students began to use the new UAMS Northwest Medical Center in Fayetteville, Arkansas, in 2009.

Human Resources

Medical students are taught by a full time faculty of more than 500 members, augmented by a voluntary faculty of more than 1,000 practicing physicians throughout Arkansas. Approximately 500 interns, residents and fellows are in specialty postdoctoral training and participate in medical student instruction. Under the health team concept, faculty, students and trainees work alongside community physicians in assuming teaching and patient care responsibilities. Medical students also learn from associating with other members of the health care team – nurses, pharmacists and numerous other health-related professionals.

