

# UAMS Department of Pharmacology & Toxicology

## Alumni Newsletter, Summer 2024



### Dear Alumni and Friends,

Thank you for the opportunity to update you on some of the events in the Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology in 2023- 2024. The department continues to grow in size and funding in our focus areas of cardiovascular, cancer/toxicology, and behavioral pharmacology/substance abuse. We are a young department with assistant and associate professors accounting for 13 of 18 full-time faculty positions. However, these earlier-stage faculty have embraced the challenge of competing for extramural funding and some of their new awards are featured in this newsletter.

Our mission area of education remains a priority and our graduate students and postdoctoral fellows add creativity to the laboratories and vibrancy to the department. They are winning an amazing number of national and international awards and successfully competing for individual training grants. Our excellent trainees and their mentors enabled the renewal for the 11<sup>th</sup> year of our department's NIH-funded T32 training grant in Systems Pharmacology and Toxicology.

Across our faculty and trainee ranks, we celebrate diversity and talent from across the country and the world. We also are proud of the earlier contributions and accomplishments of our alumni including faculty, staff and trainees. The final pages of this publication provide updates from these individuals that have set a high bar that we continuously strive to raise higher.

Sincerely,

*Nancy J. Rusch, Ph.D.*, Distinguished Professor and Chair

*Faculty, Staff, & Trainees*, Dept. of Pharmacology & Toxicology

### Inside this issue:

<i>In Memoriam</i>	2
<i>Retirements and Farewells</i>	2
<i>Faculty Promotions &amp; Tenure</i>	2-3
<i>Faculty Awards &amp; Recognition</i>	3-5
<i>Trainee Awards &amp; Recognition</i>	6-7
<i>Alumni Updates</i>	8-14
<i>Department Roster</i>	15

## In Memoriam



Professor emeritus **S. Michael Owens**, passed away on April 16, 2024. Dr. Owens was a respected member of the department since 1985 until his retirement in 2019. He held many leadership positions while at UAMS including Director of the Center for Alcohol and Drug Abuse Studies from 2000 until his retirement; Director of Graduate Studies from 1993-1999; Founding Director of the Arkansas Biosciences Institute in 2001-2002; and Interim Chair of Pharmacology and Toxicology in 2004. Dr. Owens devoted much of his time to groundbreaking research aimed at fighting drug addiction. He was continuously funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) for over 30 years and was the recipient of an NIH Career Development Award for 10 years. Dr. Owens was a founding partner and Chief Scientific Officer of InterveXion Therapeutics LLC, a UAMS BioVentures start-up company that designs and tests monoclonal antibody and vaccine medications to treat methamphetamine addiction. Among many honors, Dr. Owens was invested in the Wilbur Mills Endowed Chair in Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention in 2001. He received the Chancellor's Distinguished Faculty Teaching Award in 2006. Dr. Owens was honored as the College of Medicine Distinguished Faculty Scholar in 2013. He was named an Arkansas Research Alliance Fellow in 2015.

## Retirements and Farewells



Professor **Lee Ann MacMillan-Crow** retired from the department on May 12, 2023 after 20 years of service. She joined the department in 2003 and advanced to the rank of professor. Prior to UAMS, she was an assistant professor at the University of Alabama at Birmingham where she received her PhD. She also served as graduate program director for the department since 2009 and then as director of the Graduate Program in Interdisciplinary Biomedical Sciences (GPIBS) from 2020 until her retirement. She and her husband, retired professor John Crow, returned to their native Alabama and are enjoying traveling the country in their RV.



Assistant professor **Zufeng Ding** joined the department from the UAMS Division of Cardiology in 2021 and was the recipient of two NIH grants to support his studies on cardiovascular disease. He was recruited to the Department of Biology at Georgia State University (GSU) in Atlanta in August 2023. As a tenure-track associate professor at GSU, Dr. Ding is involved in research and education at the graduate and undergraduate levels, adding his expertise in cardiovascular research to the existing biology department and providing core services to expand cardiovascular research.

## Faculty Promotions and Tenure

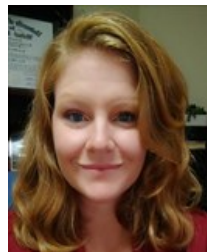


**Dr. William Fantegrossi** was promoted to professor effective July 1, 2023. He joined the department in 2007 as a tenure-track assistant professor from Emory University, advancing to associate professor in 2014. Dr. Fantegrossi's research expertise includes animal models of substance abuse and assessment of abuse liability of emerging drugs of concern. His research has been funded by federal grants and by contracts from the DEA and biotech companies. His laboratory currently is focused on understanding the unique pharmacology, therapeutic utility, and abuse liability of so-called "new psychoactive substances" including synthetic opioids and cannabinoids, analogues of the psychostimulant cathinone, and designer psychedelics. Dr. Fantegrossi assumed the role of co-director of the NIDA-funded T32 Training Program, "Translational Training in Addiction" in July 2024 after serving as associate director for the past 4 years. He also directs the Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship program funded by ASPET. He has more than 80 publications and plays prominent roles in national professional societies.

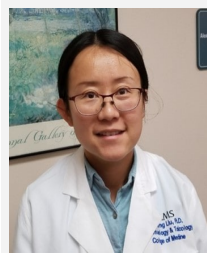
## Faculty Promotions and Tenure



**Dr. Nirmala Parajuli** was promoted to associate professor effective July 1, 2023. She joined the department in 2009 as a postdoctoral fellow in the laboratory of Dr. Lee Ann MacMillan-Crow. She was appointed as assistant professor in 2018. The priority of her research team is to identify strategies to enhance the viability of cadaver kidney grafts by improving the cold storage environment and thereby ensuring a larger pool of donor kidneys and improved long-term survival of renal transplants. Dr. Parajuli received her first R01 in 2021 and also was the recipient of a career development award from the American Heart Association (AHA). She serves as director of the Graduate Pharmacology course and her laboratory is an active training site for graduate students and postdoc fellows. She has 24 publications.



**Dr. Brenda Gannon** was promoted from instructor to assistant professor in the department effective August 1, 2023. She maintains a primary appointment in the UAMS Office of Regulatory Affairs as the Manager of Regulatory Affairs and Quality Assurance. She has held a concurrent faculty appointment in the department since she returned to UAMS in 2021 after being awarded the PhD degree at UAMS in 2015. Prior to returning to UAMS, Dr. Gannon was an assistant professor at the Louisiana State University Health Science Center and at Mercer University.

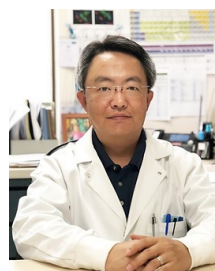


**Dr. Yunmeng Liu** was appointed as assistant professor effective 2023. She joined the department in 2013 as a postdoctoral fellow in the laboratory of associate professor Shengyu Mu and served briefly as a staff scientist before joining the faculty ranks. Dr. Liu serves as a co-investigator on NIH and American Heart Association grants. Her research interest focuses on defining the contribution of insulin and purinergic receptor signaling to the blood pressure elevation that is a comorbid event during diabetes and is associated with increased morbidity and mortality.



**Dr. Esraa Shosha** was appointed as assistant professor effective 2023. She joined the department in 2021 as a postdoctoral fellow in the lab of assistant professor Abdelrahman Fouda. Dr. Shosha received her PhD in 2017 from the Medical College of Georgia, where she was supported by an American Heart Association fellowship. She performed postdoctoral research at the same institution. Dr. Shosha's research focuses on blinding retinal disorders including diabetic neuropathy and retinopathy of prematurity with an emphasis on the retinal vascular response to ischemia.

## Faculty Awards and Recognition



Associate professor **Shengyu Mu** was awarded \$3.7 million in 2023 for the competitive renewal of his R01 grant to continue his groundbreaking studies on the role of immune cells in hypertension. He also received a Transformational Project Award in 2022 from the American Heart Association to investigate the molecular mechanisms by which CD8 T-cells are inappropriately activated in hypertension and establish renal memory of salt sensitivity. He also is the UAMS principal investigator on a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant that is a collaborative project with Dr. Sankar Devarajan from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff (UAPB). These studies will examine the anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, and antihypertensive effects of rice bran extracts obtained from Arkansas rice strains. Finally, another collaborative project between Dr. Mu and assistant professor Lu Huang (UAMS Department of Microbiology & Immunology) was recognized with R21 funding from the NIH and will explore macrophage metabolism during comorbid diabetes and tuberculosis conditions. Dr. Mu's research is being recognized internationally by invitations to speak at national meetings and he recently gave an invited keynote lecture at the annual meeting of the Japanese Society of Cardiovascular Endocrinology and Metabolism.

## Faculty Awards and Recognition



Professor **Andrew Morris** was recognized in 2023 with a VA Research Career Scientist Award from the VA Office of Research and Development. The designation is for established researchers who have distinguished themselves through scientific achievements and substantial contributions to the VA research community. Dr. Morris has been funded by the VA since 2007, both individually and with his wife, the late Susan Smyth, M.D., former College of Medicine dean, for studies of lipid signaling in vascular inflammation and thrombosis. Morris developed and now directs an analytical laboratory at the Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System (CAVHS) that provides biomonitoring to support health research studies of veterans and active-duty military personnel.



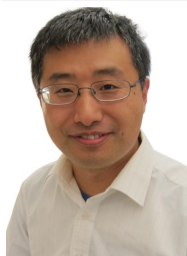
Professor **Alexei Basnakian** was the recipient in 2024 of a VA Merit Review Award from the Biomedical Laboratory Research & Development (BLRD). This 4-year research project reflects Dr. Basnakian's long-term interest in DNA-degrading enzymes and DNases/endonucleases in acute tissue injury. His research team has developed DNase inhibitors, which can protect the kidney from acute toxic injury following skeletal muscle damage. The team also found that some endonucleases regulate alternative pre-mRNA splicing of their own and other genes. This is the 5th VA Merit Review Award received by Dr. Basnakian, who also holds the VA Research Career Scientist Award.



The Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) program has been funded by ASPET for the next three years under the directorship of professor **Bill Fantegrossi**. It supports four undergraduate students each summer to introduce them to pharmacology and toxicology research and heighten their interest in careers in research and health-related disciplines. **Dr. Fantegrossi** also was named co-director of the NIDA-funded T32 training program "Translational Training in Addiction". This program is the oldest and largest T32 on the UAMS campus, funding 3 graduate students, 4 postdocs, a PGY3 psychiatry resident, and a 10-week summer fellowship for 4-6 medical students. The program is beginning its 16<sup>th</sup> year of training.



Associate professor **Eric Peterson** was named the interim president of BioVentures, LLC. He served as executive vice president of BioVentures since 2022 and directed technology development in collaboration with the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. He also has chaired the UAMS Patent and Copyright Committee since 2014. Dr. Peterson continues to support research in the department related to using adeno-associated viruses as strategies for targeted protein expression and consults campus-wide on studies that require pharmacokinetic modeling. At BioVentures, he also co-directs a groundbreaking initiative to benefit Arkansas entrepreneurs from disadvantaged backgrounds. Leveraging a nearly \$3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce, the Arkansas Collaborative for Technological and Innovative Venture Equality (ACTIVE) will provide early-stage technical assistance to develop health technology and health care businesses.



Assistant professor **Huiliang Zhang** received an NIH R35 Early Investigator Award in 2023. The R35 Maximizing Investigators' Research Award (MIRA) is a new NIH funding mechanism that requires only a 6-page application and is designed to enable investigators to take greater risks and explore fundamentally important biological events. Dr. Zhang's \$1.8 million dollar award will be used to characterize the mitochondrial proton leak in multiple cell types, investigate the mechanism of specific pathways that mediate basal proton leak, and screen new drugs that can modulate the mitochondrial proton leak that he proposes contributes to cell aging. Prior to arriving in the department in 2021, Dr. Zhang was an instructor in the Department of Pathology at the University of Washington School of Medicine in Seattle.

## Faculty Awards and Recognition



Assistant professor **Esraa Shosha** has received a Career Starter Grant from the Knights Templar Eye Foundation. "Endothelial HDAC3 mediates pathological angiogenesis in retinopathy of prematurity" is funded for one year for \$90,000. Assistant professor Abdelrahman Fouda serves as the preceptor for this grant, with co-mentorship from professors and chairs Nancy Rusch and Paul Phillips (professor and chair of Ophthalmology). This project, which can be renewed for another year, aims to investigate new treatments for retinopathy of prematurity, a major cause of blindness in children. Dr. Shosha currently holds early-stage investigator status until 2027 and aspires to leverage this grant to secure a larger R-type grant in the future.



Associate professor **Mitch McGill** (College of Public Health) and professor **Andrew Morris's** R01 application titled "The role of phosphatidic acid in liver regeneration after acetaminophen overdose" received a score in the 1<sup>st</sup> percentile in the NIH Hepatobiliary Pathophysiology (HBPP) study section. Acetaminophen (APAP) is the most commonly used drug in the United States, but overdose can cause severe liver injury. APAP hepatotoxicity is the primary cause of acute liver failure (ALF) in the US and several other countries. The McGill laboratory recently discovered that the lipid phosphatidic acid has a fundamental role in liver repair after APAP-induced liver injury by inhibiting glycogen synthase kinase 3 beta (GSK3b). In this new project, Drs. McGill and Morris plan to determine exactly how phosphatidic acid (and possibly other lipid second messengers) control GSK3b. Their long-term goal is to exploit such mechanisms to create new drugs to treat APAP overdose, as well as improve ALF outcomes more generally.



Professor and chair **Nancy Rusch** and program manager **Pam Kahler** received a positive outcome on a recent T32 submission that they submitted in partnership with program directors, Drs. Kevin Sexton and John Imig. The Health Sciences Innovation and Entrepreneurship (HSIE) postdoctoral training program, which is a component of the UAMS Translational Research Institute's CTSA application, received a score of 18 at NIH study section and will be funded for another 5 years starting July 2024. The central component of the CTSA application led by Dr. Laura James that funds multiple research activities across campus also received a fundable score of 22. The HSIE T32 Training Program was launched in 2019 and has trained 17 postdoc fellows, including three former PhD students from the department. In addition to mentored research training, HSIE postdoctoral scholars receive a 15-credit graduate certificate that acknowledges their training in entrepreneurship, which includes 9 credits of classes offered by the Sam M. Walton College of Business at the UA Fayetteville. Dr. Rusch served as the inaugural program director until recently, and Pam Kahler has been the program manager since 2019.

## Special Recognition



Associate professor **Ricky Leung** attended the Executive Healthcare Leadership Program. The program is designed for UAMS faculty and is a collaboration with the Sam M. Walton College of Business at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. The program provides inspirational and practical knowledge that academic medicine leaders need to succeed as individuals and ensure the success of their teams. It consists of monthly leadership training for a full academic year. Dr. Leung stated that it is a great program and he learned a lot in the past year. Associate professor Sheng-yu Mu is an alumnus of the program.

## T32 Training Program Renewed

The Training in Systems Pharmacology and Toxicology (T-SPaT) T32 Program was renewed for 5 years by the National Institute for General Medical Sciences. This program was launched in 2013 by alumnus **Dr. Philip Mayeux**, and following his retirement, the directorship was assumed by professor and vice chair **Paul Prather**. Professor **Shuk-Mei Ho** serves as co-director and Pam Kahler is the program manager. The program provides two years of support to 4 predoctoral students pursuing dissertation research projects in the pharmacological sciences.

T-SPaT hosted its annual symposium in August 2023 that featured oral presentations by the T32 trainees. Dr. Lorenzo Galluzzi from Weill Cornell Medical College gave the keynote address titled "A novel radiotherapy actionable immunological mechanism of resistance to CDK4/6 inhibitors in HR+ breast cancer". Dr. Galluzzi also presented a writing seminar "Scientific writing: rules, tips and tricks" for the graduate students. Dr. Galluzzi is pictured above (center) with Dr. Prather and Dr. Ho flanking the program's trainees. Current trainees include PhD and MD/PhD students from the UAMS Departments of Pharmacology and Toxicology, Microbiology and Immunology, and Physiology and Cell Biology.



## Postdoctoral Trainee Launches Start-up



Postdoctoral fellow **Julia Tobacyk** in assistant professor Lisa Brent's laboratory launched a start-up company, **Pediatrica Therapeutics**, during her participation in the Health Science Innovation and Entrepreneurship (HSIE) training program funded by the NIH National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS). Her company, **Pediatrica Therapeutics**, was featured at an NCATS council meeting. In addition, **Pediatrica Therapeutics** won first place in the high growth technology division of the Arkansas Governor's Business Cup Competition, and placed as a finalist at the Baylor University New Venture Competition, the Rice University Business Plan Competition, and at the University of Arkansas Heartland Challenge Competition. The company's novel drug that was developed in Dr. Brent's laboratory addresses the problem of infants born physically dependent on opioids due to maternal opioid use. The new pharmaceutical is designed to reduce fetal opioid exposure.

## Trainee Awards & Recognition



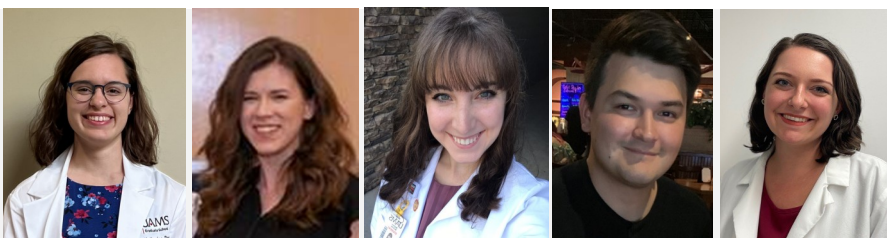
Graduate student **Lance Benson** mentored by associate professor **Shengyu Mu** defended his PhD dissertation in June 2023 titled "CD8 T cells mediate the immune-pathogenesis of salt-sensitive hypertension". Dr. Benson authored five publications as first author and contributed to two additional papers as co-author. Dr. Benson was a two-time winner of the American Physiological Society (APS) Research Recognition Award and was funded by a predoctoral fellowship from the American Heart Association. He also was recognized by awards at the annual meetings of the American Heart Association and the International Society for Hypertension (ISH). Dr. Benson is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) working with Dr. Jennifer Pollock.

## Trainee Awards & Recognition



Graduate student **Brian Parks** successfully defended his PhD dissertation in April 2024, which was titled “Effects of prenatal opioid exposure and early life adversity on adolescent alcohol and opioid abuse susceptibility”. After receiving his undergraduate degree at Abilene Christian University, Dr. Parks joined the department in 2019 in the laboratory of assistant professor **Lisa Brents**. Under her mentorship, he co-authored four publications, one as first author. Dr. Parks has accepted a faculty position as a clinical instructor in the UAMS College of Nursing where he will teach pharmacology to undergraduate nursing students.

Congratulations to our five new PhD candidates who received their white coats at the 2023 Research Induction Ceremony. Pictured left to right are **Katherine “Katie” Deck** (mentor, Shengyu Mu), **Carol Morris** (mentor, Abdelrahman Fouda), **Madison “Katie” McGraw** (mentor, Nirmala Parajuli), **Christoph Mora** (mentor, Shengyu Mu), and **Laura Osborn** (mentor, Kimberly Stephens). These students completed their second year of graduate school and passed their oral qualifiers.



Graduate student **Katherine (Katie) Deck** mentored by associate professor Shengyu Mu was awarded a 2-year predoctoral fellowship from the American Heart Association (AHA) for her research project titled "Kidney-resident memory CD8+ T cells promote hypertension and memorize salt-sensitivity". This funding will cover Katie's stipend for the next two years and allocate \$2,000 per year for additional research-related expenses. Dr. Shengyu Mu serves as primary mentor with professor and chair Nancy Rusch as co-mentor.

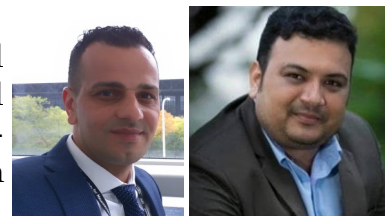


**Carol Morris**, a graduate student with assistant professor Abdelrahman Fouda, was awarded a Science Communication Training Fellowship in 2024 from the Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology (ARVO). Only 10 applicants were accepted to this interactive, one-year program focused on improving science communication and science advocacy skills of early-career researchers. Carol also was awarded a supplement to Dr. Fouda's R00 grant from the National Eye Institute and was awarded a 2024 PhRMA Foundation Predoctoral Fellowship in Drug Discovery Targets and Pathways for her project titled "Protection against ischemic stroke by disrupting the CD47/SIRPa axis". Professor and chair Nancy Rusch serves as co-mentor.



Graduate student **Laura Osborn** won first place for her presentation at the annual meeting of the South Central Chapter of the Society of Toxicology in New Orleans, for her research entitled “Effects of repeated paclitaxel exposure on paclitaxel-induced peripheral neuropathy development”. She also received a travel award from the Cancer Research Training & Education Core of the Winthrop P. Rockefeller Cancer Institute.

**Laura** also won second place in the Three Minute Thesis (3MT) final at the 2024 GPIBS Student Research Day. In addition, postdoctoral fellows **Dinesh Bhattarai** (mentor, Nirmala Parajuli) won the overall best poster award and **Rami Shahrer** (mentor, Abdelrahman Fouda) won the second-place poster award at the research day.



## Alumni & Other Friends

**Bill Allaben** (NCTR) is a principal and managing toxicologist with Toxicology Advisors, LLC and a Board Certified Toxicologist for the Academy of Toxicological Sciences.

**Alex Alund** (PhD, Ronis) is an ORISE postdoctoral fellow at Pfizer in Connecticut.

**Rais Ansari** (Research Assistant Professor, Gandy) is an associate professor in the Barry and Judy Silverman College of Pharmacy at Nova Southeastern University in Fort Lauderdale, FL.

**Rhonda Anthony** (Administration) is a grants specialist and executive assistant to Dr. Mark Smeltzer in the UAMS Department of Microbiology and Immunology.

**Will Atchley** (PhD, Owens) is an assistant professor in the UAMS Department of Internal Medicine (Pulmonary and Critical Care).

**January Baumgardner Schutlz** (PhD, Ronis) is an assistant professor of occupational therapy at the University of Central Arkansas.

**Hudson Bates** (PhD, Harbison, Gandy) and **Helen Cunny** (PhD, Slikker) are working for the Nickel Institute and NIEHS, respectively. Hudson plan to retire as president at the end of the year. Their oldest daughter is getting married while their younger daughter is pursuing a doctorate in neurosciences at Dartmouth College. They welcome any colleagues passing through Raleigh-Durham, NC to get in touch as they'd love to see them!

**Venkata Bhogaraju** (PhD, Crow) is a pharmacy manager at Walmart Pharmacy in Rocky Mount, North Carolina.

**Chris Bolden** (PhD, Peterson) is an assistant professor at Xavier University of Louisiana.

**John Bowyer** is retired from the Division of Neurotoxicology at NCTR.

**Angela Burke** (PhD, Hinson) is at Abbott Medical and working as a toxicologist writing toxicological risk assessments.

**John Budroe** (PhD, Casciano) is chief of the Air Toxicology and Risk Assessment Section (since 2014) in the Air and Site Assessment and Climate Indicators Branch, Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment at the California Environmental Protection Agency.

**Kelly Byrnes-Blake** (PhD, Owens) is still working as a consultant with Northwest PK Solutions and recently moved to Idaho. Her son is an engineering student at Colorado School of Mines. Her daughter returned from traveling abroad in the Semester at Sea program and will start college in the fall.

**Christian Cabanlong** (PhD, Prather) is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center.

**Dian Cao** (PhD) is associate professor/staff cardiologist at UT Southwestern Medical Center.

**Louis Chang** (Faculty) travels to Taiwan frequently and is very involved in "art" and "education" as it is becoming a hot subject these days because of the rapid AI development. Because of his academia background and extensive art collection, he has been invited by the government and several universities in Taiwan to give lectures as well as art exhibitions.

**Yingne Che** (Research Assistant, Owens) is a research associate in the UAMS Donald W. Reynolds Institute on Aging.

**Krishna Chimalakonda** (PhD, Moran) is an associate director of regulatory affairs for Amneal Pharmaceuticals in New Jersey.



## Alumni & Other Friends

**Parimal Chowdhury** (Adjunct) is professor emeritus in the Department of Physiology and Cell Biology at UAMS.

**John Crow** (Faculty) and **LeeAnn MacMillan-Crow** (Faculty) relocated to Alabama and are enjoying their retirement. They are doing a lot of traveling and camping in their RV.

**Danielle Cruthirds** (PhD, Macmillan-Crow) is professor in the Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences at McWhorter School of Pharmacy, Samford University.

**Brian Cummings** (Postdoc, Schnellman) is dean of the Eugene College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences at Wayne State University in Detroit.

**Jaclyn Daniels** (PhD, Wessinger) is a medical writer/editor for the Arkansas Center for Health Improvement and UAMS.

**Greg Davis** (Technician, Wessinger) is a nurse practitioner in Arkansas.

**Linval DePass** (PhD, Morris) was honored at the Society of Toxicology meeting with the Distinguished Toxicology award from the Hispanic Organization of Toxicologists, a special interest group of the SOT.

**Neil Detweiler** (PhD, Rusch) completed his position as assistant professor of biology and director of pre-health programs at Goshen College. He and his wife **Rachel Versluis** (Technician, Rusch) recently moved to Virginia.

**Rob Dorman** (MD, Brock) is a general surgeon at Mercy Hospital in Rogers.

**Malvin Driver** is chief of retina service, South Texas Veteran's Healthcare System in San Antonio, TX. He is teaching ophthalmology to residents from UTSA.

**Sharon Farris** (Administration) is a teacher with the UAMS Head Start program.

**Sherry Ferguson** (Adjunct) is retired from the Division of Neurotoxicology at NCTR.

**Lauren Russell Fitzgerald** (PhD, Fantegrossi) is a postdoctoral fellow in the Psychiatric Research Institute and just received a graduate certificate in Health Science Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

**Terry Fletcher** (Research Associate, Rusch) is working in the department part time in the equipment core.

**Max Ford** (PhD, Prather) is a toxicology at the Center for Toxicology and Environmental Health, LLC.

**Lirit Franks** (PhD, Prather) is a research development associate at the University of Utah.

**Gloria Gabriel** (Administration) runs Gigi's Cake Boutique in Sherwood, AR.

**Brenda Gannon** (PhD, Fantegrossi) is an instructor in the Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology, and the regulatory affairs manager in the Office of Regulatory Affairs at UAMS.

**Brittney Garner** (PhD, Rusch/Mu) is a regulatory scientist at Cook Medical.

**Hollye Garner** (PhD, Wessinger) is senior director, rare disease medical science liaisons for Amgen Medical Affairs.

**Yun Ge** (PhD, Light) works at the FDA/CDRH/OIVD as a scientific writer.

**Karen Gilmore-Thomas** has a granddaughter and grandson she enjoys.

## Alumni & Other Friends

**Jaspreet Gujral** (PhD, Jaeschke) is senior manager of Regulatory and Scientific Affairs at Tate and Lyle.

**Angela (Disch) Gray** (PhD, Ali) is a clinical business solutions analyst with Mercy Health Systems in Fort Smith.

**Michael Hambuchen** (PhD, Owens) is an assistant professor of Pharmaceutical Science and Research at Marshall University School of Pharmacy in West Virginia.

**Jay Harriman** (PhD, Schnellman) is the director of Drug Safety at Boehringer Ingelheim Animal Health.

**Stephanie Hastings** (Technician, Stimers) is a nurse anesthesiologist at Great Rivers Medical Center in West Burlington, IA.

**Charles Hay** (PhD, Peterson) is a postdoctoral fellow at the Medical College of Wisconsin.

**Howard Hendrickson** (Postdoc, Owens) is chair of the Department of Pharmaceutical, Social and Administrative Sciences at Samford University McWhorter School of Pharmacy.

**David Henry** (PhD, Rhee) is a resident physician in the Department of Internal Medicine at UAMS.

**Jack Hinson** (Professor Emeritus) remains active in the department and with Acetaminophen Toxicity Diagnostics, LLC.

**Hunter Holthoff** (PhD, Mayeux) is an assistant professor in the UAMS Department of Internal Medicine, Division of Nephrology.

**Alissa Huberty** (Research Technician, Palade) is a physician assistant at Pinnacle Dermatology in Little Rock.

**Tom Hudzik** is a Volweiler research fellow with Abbott/AbbVie, which is an emeritus, director-level position.

**Bill Hyatt** (PhD, Fantegrossi) is a resident at the Psychiatric Research Institute at UAMS.

**Hartmut Jaeschke** (PhD, Faculty) is University Distinguished Professor and Chair of Pharmacology, Toxicology and Therapeutics at the University of Kansas Medical Center. He received the Career Achievement Award from the mechanisms specialty section of the Society of Toxicology in 2023 and was again named a highly cited researcher (top 1 percent) by Clarivate (Web of Science).

**Dae Song Jang** (PhD, Basnakian) is a postdoctoral fellow at NIH/NIDDK in Bethesda, MD.

**Scott Jarmer** (MS, Harbison) is a pathologist in Wichita, KS.

**Biny Joseph** (PhD, Rusch) is grant program manager in Neuro-oncology Research, a department of the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center.

**Sujay Kharade** (PhD, Rusch) and **Nisha Nanaware-Kharade** (PhD, Peterson), are principal scientists at DMPK at Sanofi.

**Anthony Kiorpes** (NCTR) is “semi-retired”, but lecturing at the University of Minnesota and serving as Associate Editor for the journal *Toxicology and Industrial Health*.

**Charlotte Lemmonds** is principal toxicologist in the product safety group with Amway R&D Global Regulatory Affairs.

## Alumni & Other Friends

**Mark Levi** (Postdoc, Crow) is a pharmacologist at the Center for Biologics at the FDA.

**Ben Lieblong** (PhD, Rusch) lives in New Orleans and has recently started a new position as Medical Science Liaison at Agendia which specializes in breast oncology diagnostics.

**John Lipscomb** (PhD, Slikker) is Senior Toxicologist at the Center for Toxicology and Environmental Health, LLC.

**Xiuli Liu** (PhD, Mayeux) is a professor of pathology and director of GI and liver pathology at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis.

**John Marecki** (Faculty) is an Instructor in the UAMS Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology.

**Beth Maris** teaches AP Chemistry at Little Rock Central High School.

**Bill Massey** (PhD, Adjunct) is Chief Development Officer for Ninnion Therapeutics developing treatments for traumatic brain injury and stroke.

**Hillary Hanvey Mayberry** (Staff, Rhee) is an assistant professor and director of clinical education in the physician assistant program at UAMS.

**Philip Mayeux** (Professor Emeritus) retired in 2020 and started the Arkansas Art Scene Blog.

**Celia McCaslin** (Administration) is coordinator for the UAMS Anatomical Gift Program.

**Samantha McClenahan** (PhD, Owens) has joined Digital Medical Society as program head for the cytokine release syndrome project. She and her husband just welcomed a new son, Isaac Henry who joined big brothers Oden, Abel and Ezra.

**Diane McKinstry** (Administration) is program coordinator for the INBRE Program at UAMS.

**Donald McMillan** (Past Chair) continues in retirement at University House, a retirement community associated with the University of Washington. He spends most of his time giving talks and writing a column that focuses on health science topics, politics, homelessness and similar issues. His son, David, is Chair of Pharmacology in charge of educational programs at Nebraska College of Medicine and daughter, Pamela, is a molecular biologist at Washington University Medical Center. He has three grandsons who are a physician, one studying for his PhD in atmospheric chemistry, and one in high school.

**Alessandra Milesi-Halle** (PhD, Owens) is a child neurologist at Miami Children's Hospital.

**Glenn Millner (PhD, Casciano/Harbison)** is the Founder and Principal Toxicologist of Center for Toxicology and Environmental Health (CTEH,) LLC.

**Tanecia Mitchell** (PhD, MacMillan-Crow) is an associate professor in the Department of Urology at University of Alabama at Birmingham.

**Shankar Munusamy** (PhD, MacMillan-Crow) has been promoted to professor and appointed as Director of Assessment at Drake University College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences.

**Meagan Myers** (PhD) reports a new addition to her family, Sloane Winter Myers.

**Paul Nony** (PhD, Schnellmann) is principal toxicology and senior vice president at the Center for Toxicology and Environmental Health, LLC.

**Andrew Norwood** (PhD, Fantegrossi) is an associate attorney at Denton & Zachary, PLLC.

**James Oldham** (PhD, Cave) is retired and babysitting seven grandchildren.

## Alumni & Other Friends

**Mary Ortiz** (Admin) is enjoying spending time with her two grandsons.

**Edith Parker** (Administration) has taken a new position with Riceland Foods.

**Asif Pathan** (PhD, Rusch) is the associate director of clinical pharmacology at Agios Pharmaceuticals.

**Elina Pathak** (PhD, Mayeux) is a research associate at Genome Institute of Singapore.

**Naeem Patil** (PhD, Mayeux/MacMillan-Crow) is the manager of medical writing at Vir Biotechnology, Inc.

**Merle Paule** retired from the National Center for Toxicological Research in 2018 and is now residing in Santa Rosa, California.

**Aleksandra Pesic** (Research Associate, Rusch) is in cancer research at Toronto General/Princess Margaret Hospital.

**Maheswari Rajasekaran** (PhD, Prather) lives in India and is pursuing a career in medical writing.

**Ron Reed** (Research Technician, Crow) is still showing horses and giving riding lessons.

**Kerrey Roberto** (Research Technician, Palade) is the IACUC Administrator at UAMS.

**Martin Ronis** (Faculty) plans to retire and take an emeritus position at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center. He plans to move to Fernandina Beach, Florida.

**Michael Ruckle** (Staff, Prather) is senior health scientist and epidemiology project manager at the Center for Toxicology and Environmental Health, LLC.

**Joan Runnels** (Administration) moved to Rockwall TX to be closer to family. She is enjoying her grandchildren and her shelter dog, Dodger.

**Jennifer Gibson Schnellmann** (PhD, Hinson) teaches in the College of Medicine at the University of Arizona where her husband, **Rick Schnellmann**, is the dean of the College of Pharmacy. She also coordinates the first BS program in the College of Pharmacy.

**Kathryn Seely** (PhD, Prather; postdoc, Mayeux) is the Director of the Arkansas Public Health Laboratory at the Arkansas Department of Health in Little Rock.

**John Seng** (PhD, Gandy/Leakey) is the senior IRB administrator at UAMS.

**Dinesh Hinenallur Shanthappa** (PhD, Rusch) is an associate research fellow at Pfizer in Boston, MA.

**Cheryl Shelton** (Administration) is the GME Program Coordinator in the Department of Pediatrics at Arkansas Children's Hospital.

**Amal Shoeib** (PhD, Prather) is a postdoctoral fellow at Columbia University.

**Jennifer Shoemaker** (PhD, Prather) is owner and a science writer with Flourish Medical Writing based in Nashville.

**Stephen Shrum** (PhD, MacMillan-Crow) is a postdoctoral fellow in pharmaceutical sciences at UAMS and just completed his graduate certificate in Health Science Innovation and Entrepreneurship.

**Clark Sims** (PhD, Mayeux) is an assistant staff scientist at Arkansas Children's Nutrition Center at Arkansas Children's Hospital.

## Alumni & Other Friends

**Rohit Singal** (PhD, Ronis) is the director of global product development at Pfizer in Boston.

**Sharda Singh** (Faculty) is an assistant professor and director of basic research in the Department of Internal Medicine at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, TX.

**Mary Alice Smith** (PhD, Harbison) is professor emeritus from the University of Georgia. She remains active in the Society for Birth Defects Research and Prevention. She and her husband live on Lake Lanier in Georgia where they enjoy boating and watching wildlife.

**Swapnil Sonkusare** (PhD, Rusch) is a tenured associate professor at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. He was recently awarded his fourth R01 to investigate the role of TRPV4 channel signaling in lung ischemia-reperfusion injury.

**Anup Srivastava** (PhD, Rusch) was promoted to senior pharmacologist in the Office of New Drugs, CDER, FDA. He also cleared the American Board of Toxicology certification exam and is now officially a diplomate of the American Board of Toxicology (DABT).

**Chris Stewart** (PhD, Slikker/Postdoc, Kennedy) is a principal consultant with SGI Consulting.

**Sylvia Stewart** (Administration) is an education specialist in the Department of Physiology and Cell Biology at UAMS.

**Joe Stimers** (Faculty) is enjoying his retirement.

**Amanda Stolarz** (PhD, Rusch) is an assistant professor of pharmaceutical sciences at UAMS. She and her husband, **Daniel Fil** (Postdoc, Kiaei), assistant staff scientist in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, are parents to a new son, Lucas Alexander Fil.

**Christopher Teaf** (PhD) is the president and director of toxicology at Hazardous Substance and Waste Management Research in Tallahassee, FL.

**Keshari Thakali** (Postdoc, Rusch) is an assistant professor in the Department of Pediatrics, Developmental Nutrition at Arkansas Children's Hospital.

**Misty Thompson** (PhD, Crow) is a clinical quality specialist for Penumbra, Inc.

**Manish Tiwari** (PhD, Mayeux) is a physician/researcher at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

**Linda Traylor** (PhD, Mayeux) is vice president and head of medical excellence at Acceleration Point in Roanoke, Virginia.

**Shanthi Vadali** (PhD, Post) is senior program manager at St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital GMP manufacturing facility working on cellular and gene therapies.

**Joel Vazquez** (PhD, McGill) is senior scientist of product safety at L'Oreal in New Jersey.

**Barbara Vogt** (PhD, Mattison) has a consulting practice, Tox Focus LLC, and is an adjunct assistant professor in the UAMS College of Public Health, and guest lecturer.

**Zhen Wang** (PhD, Mayeux) is an assistant professor at the University of Mississippi Medical Center.

**John Wedig** (Adjunct) is enjoying retirement with traveling, trout fishing and competitive shooting.

**Galen Wenger** (Professor Emeritus) remains active in the department helping out as needed. He is an active member of the UAMS Emeritus Faculty Council.

## Alumni & Other Friends

**Dave Wessinger** (Faculty) is enjoying retirement camping in his two airstreams, and having fun with his four grandsons and two granddaughters.

**Sarah White** (PhD, Owens) is teaching chemistry at Arkansas Technical College at Ozark.

**Rick Wiese** (PhD, Kadlubar) is the Head of Singleplex and Special Protein Platforms R&D at MilliporeSigma.

**Cathryn Wilson** (PhD, Prather/Fantegrossi) is a postdoctoral research associate at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

**Linnzi Wright** (PhD, Paule) works at the US Army Edgewood Chemical Biological Center, Toxicology and Obscurants Division, Aberdeen Proving Ground, MD.

**Liping Wu** (PhD, Mayeux) is the associate manager of Regulatory Affairs at Johnson & Johnson in Singapore.

**Xinwen (James) Yu** (PhD, Kennedy) is senior director of translational medicine at Qilu Pharmaceutical.

**Piotr Zimniak** (Professor Emeritus) continues his retirement in California.

**Mark Zorbas** (PhD, Owens) retired from Pfizer in February 2023.



## Faculty & Staff Roster

Department of Pharmacology & Toxicology  
College of Medicine  
University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences  
4301 W Markham, Slot 611  
Little Rock, AR 72205-7199

### Faculty

Nancy Rusch, PhD, Distinguished Professor and Department Chair

Paul Prather, PhD, Professor and Department Vice Chair

Alexei Basnakian, MD, PhD, Professor

Michael Berquist, PhD, Assistant Professor

Lisa Brents, PhD, Assistant Professor

Hui-Ming Chang, PhD, Professor

William Fantegrossi, PhD, Professor

Abdelrahman Fouda, PhD, Assistant Professor

Shuk-Mei Ho, PhD, Professor

KyoungHyun Kim, Assistant Professor

Ricky Leung, PhD, Associate Professor

Yunmeng Liu, PhD, Assistant Professor

Jeffery Moran, PhD, Assistant Professor

Andrew Morris, PhD, Professor

Shengyu Mu, MD, PhD, Associate Professor

Philip Palade, PhD, Professor

Nirmala Parajuli, PhD, Associate Professor

Eric Peterson, PhD, Associate Professor

Esraa Shosha, Assistant Professor

Neville Tam, PhD, Assistant Professor

Huilang Zhang, PhD, Assistant Professor

### Department Administrative Staff

Fred Goad, Business Administrator

Pam Kahler, Program Manager

Tracy Holleman, Education Specialist

### Emeritus Faculty

Donald McMillan, PhD, Former Chair and Professor Emeritus

Jack Hinson, PhD, Distinguished Professor Emeritus

Paul Gottschall, PhD, Professor Emeritus

Philip Mayeux, PhD, Professor Emeritus

Lee Ann MacMillan-Crow, PhD, Professor

Galen Wenger, PhD, Professor Emeritus

W. David Wessinger, PhD, Professor Emeritus

Piotr Zimniak, PhD, Professor Emeritus