



# FRIENDS AND FAMILY SUPPORT HANDBOOK



What you need to know about  
the UAMS College of Medicine

Dear Incoming Freshmen Parents and Family Members,

Congratulations on your son or daughter's acceptance to the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS) College of Medicine (COM) class of 2028. The parents of our sophomore (M2), junior (M3), and senior (M4) medical students share your pride and enthusiasm. As president of the UAMS College of Medicine Parents Club and on behalf of all the parent members, I would like to extend a personal invitation to join the College of Medicine Parents Club.

Established in 1976, the UAMS College of Medicine Parents Club is a pioneering model for other medical schools nationwide. Our primary mission is to enhance the quality of life for medical students. With an annual membership fee of \$50.00 for families, these funds and the proceeds from our fundraisers are dedicated to supporting all medical students, including the incoming class.

During the 2023-2024 academic year, the Parents Club provided invaluable support in various ways, ensuring the well-being and success of our medical students. College of Medicine Student Lounge - study space, kitchen, computers and copier. We supply snacks, coffee and supplies on the Little Rock and Northwest Arkansas campuses.

- Supplemental study materials for the USMLE Step 1 Licensing Exam preparation for M2 students
- Travel funds for medical students attending and presenting research at professional conferences
- Funds for the Academic House Program to support and mentor students. We handed out Le Pops ice cream at the Academic House Olympics last year.
- Purchase of the white coats and embroidery of names on coats for M1 students
- Matched UAMS funds for M4 headshots
- Welcome back breakfast for each class
- Funds for extra-curricular and wellness class activities for each class
- Hosted Family Day at Dickey Stephens Park
- Funds for M3 Oath ceremony
- Funds for M4 Match Day celebration



We invite you to join us in supporting your medical student and others. You can start by visiting our website at [uamscompaents.com](https://uamscompaents.com) to complete the Parents Club membership application form. Your participation and support are greatly appreciated.

Serving with you,

**Debbie Davis**

Mother of John Lee (M4) and Davis Lee (M2)  
President, UAMS COM Parents Club

The Parents Club is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.  
Tax ID# 93-0674121 and all contributions are tax-deductible.



# Welcome from the Dean



I want to welcome you, the family and friends of the Class of 2028, to the College of Medicine at UAMS!

We are so excited that your student is starting this journey with us and that you are already looking for ways to support them.

The students in the Class of 2028 are about to set out on an adventure that, at times, will feel impossible; however, it will also be one of the most rewarding journeys of their lives. Medical school will test students and push them to limits they never expected. They will learn an unbelievable amount of medical knowledge and come to appreciate what it means to make a genuine difference in the lives of the patients they care for. Over the course of the next 4 years, they will transition from students to physicians that we will be honored to welcome into the profession as valued colleagues.

We know you are all proud of the students in this class and excited to be here. We understand that they are nervous and maybe a bit terrified of the unknown. Please know that each of our students were selected because of their potential to become an outstanding patient-and family-centered physician. We recognize they are here not only because of their talents and abilities, but also because of your love, support, and encouragement that has nurtured them every step of the way.

In the coming months, these students will need your support and encouragement more than ever before. The time commitment required to be successful in medical school is probably unlike anything they've ever experienced. It will require the sacrifice of time they might otherwise spend with family and friends. We encourage you to help them to relax whenever they get the opportunity. Remind them that the goal is well worth the effort. Reassure them that you understand the sacrifices and that in the end, you are all working together for a better future.

This Family and Friends Handbook from the UAMS COM Program is designed to help orient you, the family and friends of the Class of 2028, to the challenges and requirements the students will experience as they move through the program. Always remember that you are a vital part of the students' success. The importance of your presence and support cannot be overstated, and the students will need your encouragement every step of the way.

Please know that the faculty and staff of the College of Medicine appreciate everything you have done and will continue to do to support the students in the Class of 2028. Without you, they wouldn't be here now.

**Becky Latch, MD**

Associate Dean of Student Affairs

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# Program Overview

Medical school is a 4-year journey that will transform students into qualified, capable physicians, trusted to make decisions that affect the lives of their patients. The program is difficult and demanding, pushing the students to work harder than they ever have. They will have to sacrifice enormous amounts of personal time in order to learn all they are required to know. They will need all the love, support, and encouragement you can provide to become a doctor who will practice transformative patient- and family-centered care.

Our program has a foundational basic science phase where the students are taught the knowledge and skills needed to be a proficient clinician. While there is some clinical education within the foundational phase, the primary clinical experiences happen during clinical rotations in their M3 and M4 years. Each phase presents unique challenges to both the students and to their families and friends.

## Foundational Phase

The first 2 years of the medical school program is referred to as the foundational basic science phase. During this phase, our students progress through 13 modules that provide background information and knowledge they need to start learning the clinical aspects of caring for patients. While students are enrolled in only one module at a time, the time commitment of these modules is quite large. Successful students frequently spend 8-10 hours a day attending required classes, reviewing recorded lectures and studying all the needed information. In addition to the individual modules, the Practice of Medicine 1 and 2 courses thread through the first two years to add clinical context and physical exam skills to the basic science knowledge students are learning. You may hear your students referring to events like “PIs,” “TBLs,” and “HPCLs.” A description of these events is found later in this handbook. During this time, it may be helpful to you to think of your loved one as working a very demanding full-time job that requires much more than 40 hours per week.

The foundational phase is often described as “drinking from a fire hose,” because of the volume of information students are expected to learn in a relatively short amount of time. These M1 and M2 students will often feel that they are back in college, only it’s more high-stakes and more competitive than ever before. Often for the first time in their life, our M1 students are in a class of 175 students who are equally as smart and accomplished as they are. And now, by definition, half of these students will score below the class average on each exam. As you can imagine, this can be quite a blow to their self-esteem. We have many resources to offer our students who are struggling with the academics or with the emotional impact medical school can have on them, and many of our students utilize these services.

One of the most stressful times for our students is the brief time between the end of the M2 year and the beginning of the M3 year. Medical students across the country typically take the first of three licensing exams, the USMLE Step 1, during that time period. This will likely be the hardest exam a student ever takes and our students must pass it to move on to the M3 year. The stress this causes can be overwhelming and our student affairs and student wellness teams are on high alert throughout this process.

## M1 Modules

- Practice of Medicine 1
- Human Structure
- Molecules to Cells
- Disease and Defense
- Hematology
- Brain and Behavior

## M2 Modules

- Practice of Medicine 2
- Cardiovascular
- Renal
- Pulmonary
- Gastrointestinal and Nutrition
- Endocrine and Reproduction
- Musculoskeletal and Skin
- Independent Step 1 Study Course

# Transitions To Clerkships

After students have completed USMLE Step 1, they enter a three-week "Transition to Clerkships" course. This course discusses important aspects of day-to-day patient care that students haven't yet experienced, including practical skills like scrub technique and softer skills like addressing unprofessionalism and taking care of oneself in the midst of providing patient care.

## M3 Clerkships and Courses

- Transitions to Clerkship
- Practice of Medicine 3
- Family Medicine
- Internal Medicine
- Neurology
- Obstetrics/Gynecology
- Pediatrics
- Psychiatry
- Selectives (Choose 2) from several subspecialties
- Surgery

## M4 Requirements

- Residency Prep Course
- Acting Internship
- Geriatrics
- At least 24 other credits, including rotations away from UAMS in desired specialties

## Clinical Phase

Once students have successfully completed M1 and M2 year and USMLE Step 1, they move into the clinical phase of our curriculum and the M3 clinical clerkships. These clerkships (also called rotations) teach them to apply the foundational knowledge they learned in the first two years in a clinical context. The clerkships also allow them to get a glimpse of the work of different specialists and learn the baseline knowledge needed of each specialty.

Students rotate through seven different core rotations and also complete two 2-week selectives in subspecialty fields (Anesthesiology, Radiology, Orthopedics, Urology, Emergency Medicine, Otolaryngology, Pathology, Dermatology, etc). The scheduling is very different from that in the M1 and M2 year and sometimes that means a student's core peer support group is not as present as they were. Students regularly find themselves in situations where they have to assimilate into new teams and new groups. There are both pros and cons to this. If they aren't enjoying the rotation they're on, it's time-limited. They'll be moving on to a new clerkship soon. However, students who struggle with change may feel like the changes come too frequently. Just when you've figured out what you're supposed to be doing, you move on to something new.



While many students come to medical school with a career plan already laid out, we encourage them to use the M3 year as a time to openly experience multiple different specialties and decide what really fits with their interests and strengths. Students are expected to have decided on a career path by the end of their M3 year and will choose career-specific advisors (i.e. a student going into pediatrics would likely choose a pediatrician as their advisor.) These career-specific advisors can provide mentoring and guidance about residencies and careers in the student's specialty of choice.

Once that career path is chosen, the focus of the M4 year is on residency applications, interviews and the Match process. The application process can be daunting and starts early in the year with compiling a curriculum vitae, writing a new career-specific personal statement and deciding what residency programs a student wants to apply to. After all the applications and interviews, students submit a rank-order list of their preferred residency programs to the National Residency Matching Program (NRMP). At the same time, residency programs are submitting their own rank-order lists of applicants to the NRMP. The NRMP will take all of these rank-order lists and generate a "Match" list of where each applicant is going. This period of medical school is also incredibly stressful to students. They frequently feel that they aren't in control of their own future.

Students find out on Match Day (mid March) what residency program they will be joining after graduation. **Match Day is a CELEBRATION!** Many of our students feel that it is more important even than graduation. They made it through, they have a paying job coming in July and everything after Match day is just coasting on to Graduation.

# LEARNING THE LINGO: Med School Terminology

- **M1**- First-year medical student
- **M2**- Second-year medical student
- **M3**- Third-year medical student
- **M4**- Fourth-year medical student
- **TBLS**- Team-Based Learning Sessions. Learning opportunities where students work within teams of 4-5 students to learn and apply needed knowledge and skills. One expectation of TBLs is that students learn some needed information before the session.
- **HPCLS**- Hybrid Patient-Centered Learning Sessions, Students will work in large and small groups with faculty and M4 peer facilitators to work through clinical cases.
- **PIS**- Peer Instruction Session is a flipped classroom method of teaching. Students study the content before they come to the classroom with the faculty member. In the PI session, students are asked questions over the content. They have discussions with their peers (thus peer instruction) and then with the faculty and class as a whole.
- **Step 1**- the first test of the United States Medical Licensure Exam (USMLE), usually taken between the foundational phase and clinical phase of medical school. While this exam is pass/fail, it is very high-stakes. Students aren't allowed to continue on their clerkships until they have passed Step 1. It is important from a residency application perspective that students pass this on their first attempt; however, if they don't pass initially, they do have three total attempts to pass.
- **Step 2**- the second test of the United States Medical Licensure Exam (USMLE), usually taken at the end of student's required clerkships, between the M3 and M4 year.
- **Step 3**- the third test of the United States Medical Licensure Exam (USMLE), usually taken after their first year of residency.
- **Clerkship**- a foundational clinical course where students learn about specific specialties, lasting anywhere from 4-8 weeks depending on the specialty.
- **Internship**- Once students graduate from medical school, they enter a residency program for on-the-job training. The first year of a residency is called an internship.
- **Residency**- the specialty training a medical student enters after graduation from medical school.
- **Fellowship**- optional further subspecialty training a physician does after completing a residency.
- **The Match**- The National Residency Matching Program coordinates applications, interviews and the selection process for graduating students who are entering residency. The process is called "The Match."
- **Match Day**- The day that all M4 students across the country find out what residency program they will be entering after graduation. The results are released at the same time on the same day (usually mid-March) to every M4 student in the country.

# MILESTONES OF MEDICAL SCHOOL

**White Coat Ceremony**- held at the beginning of M1 year to welcome students into the medical field and remind them the importance of this career.

**Completion of Human Structure** - At the conclusion of the Human Structure Course, students will hold the **Anatomical Donor Ceremony** to remember and honor those who graciously donated their bodies for student education.

**USMLE Step 1**- students must pass this exam to enter the clinical clerkship phase.

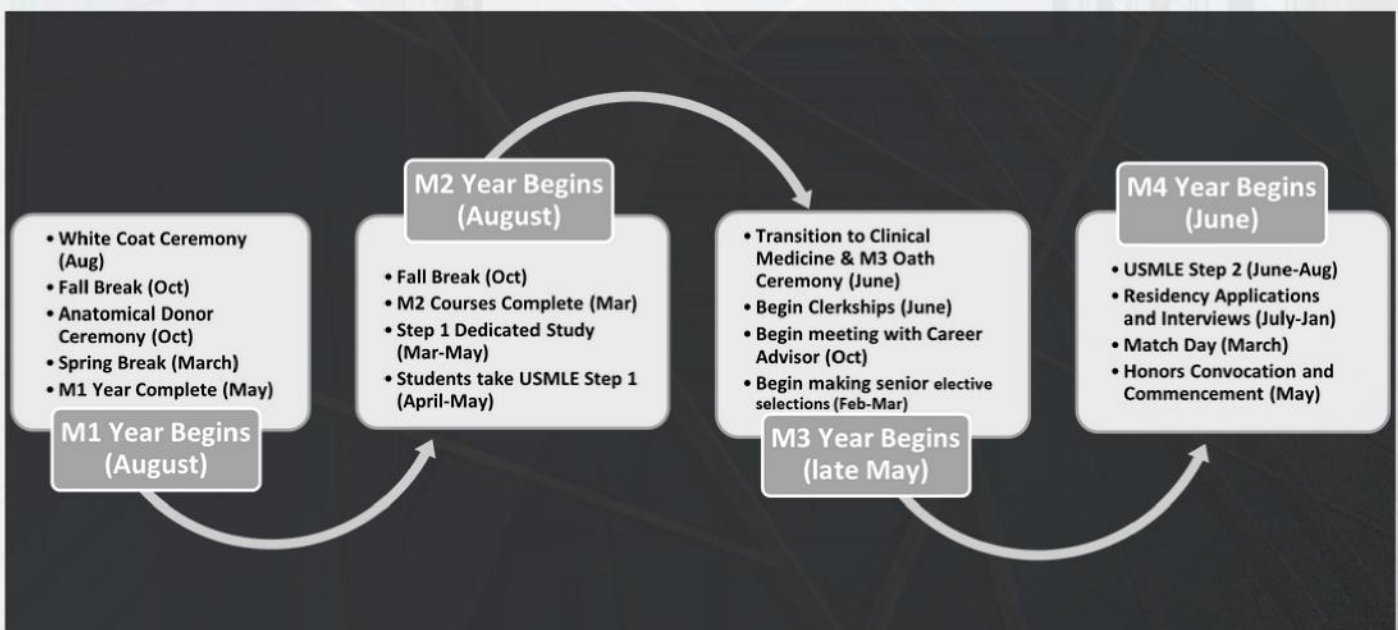
**Transition to Clerkships**- Ceremony held at the beginning of the M3 year to welcome students into the clinical portion of their education.

**USMLE Step 2**- students must pass this exam to graduate from medical school and enter residency.

**Residency applications and interviews**- M4 students begin the Match process through applications and interviews in July-January of their M4 year.

**Match Day**- All M4 students across the country find out what residency program they will be joining after graduation.

**Honors Convocation**-Students will receive their diploma, their doctoral hood will be placed on them, and they will recite the Hippocratic Oath at this graduation ceremony. After this ceremony, your student will be a Medical Doctor (M.D.).



# STUDENT WELLNESS PROGRAM

The UAMS Student Wellness Program, directed by Dr. Tracy Haselow, provides free, confidential and timely counseling and therapy, psychiatric evaluation and medication management services in a safe and nurturing therapeutic environment. This service is free to actively enrolled UAMS students and their spouses who seek help with emotional and mental issues. Students may seek help with depression, anxiety, grief, relationship conflicts, academic difficulties, and numerous other issues that may interfere with maximal functioning.

Students can schedule appointments by calling the Student Wellness Program at 501-686-8408 or by completing the interactive screening program online at <https://studentwellness.uams.edu>. The interactive screening process can remain anonymous.

# EDUCATIONAL AND STUDENT SUCCESS CENTER

The Educational and Student Success Center offers all UAMS students help in achieving their academic goals. Whether struggling in a course, grappling with a writing project or experiencing technical issues with a laptop or mobile device, the ESSC has services in place to help our students.

Our students most frequently utilize the academic coaching and peer tutoring programs through the ESSC. Learning specialists who work specifically with our medical students provide academic coaching on both the Little Rock and the Northwest Arkansas campus. Coaching sessions help students manage their time, prepare for tests, improve study skills and set academic goals.

# ADVISING PROGRAMS

On matriculation, our students are assigned to one of seven Academic Houses or learning communities. Through these houses, our students are connected with fellow students in other classes and with clinical and basic science faculty within that house. Students are assigned a clinical mentor that they meet with at least twice a year. These clinical mentors are faculty members from many different departments who are dedicated to the wellbeing of our students. They are knowledgeable of the services UAMS offers to students and able to help guide students to those resources as needed.

The Academic Houses themselves serve as a “community within our community” for the students. Students develop connections with other students and faculty and provide support to one another during the learning process. Each House has a small budget provided by the COM to have events for its members. We are also grateful to the Parents Club for monetary support that has allowed us to host some All-Academic House events. We will be planning an Academic House Fun Run in early 2025, so look for more details about that soon.

As UAMS College of Medicine is a member of the American Association of Medical Colleges, all of our students have access to the AAMC Careers in Medicine website and resources. This website and resource will be introduced to them during M1 Welcome Week and they are able to use it through medical school. The website offers various assessments that help students narrow their career interests.

As students move through their M3 year, they usually begin to finalize their career decisions. At this point, they are asked to identify a career-specific advisor so that they will have specific advice from an expert in their field on applying to residency programs in that field. Our career advisors also have specific faculty development they must complete to serve as an advisor and are, therefore, knowledgeable about the overall residency application process and what resources UAMS offers to students.

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## **YOUR STUDENT IS NOT ALONE: ISSUES ALL MEDICAL STUDENTS STRUGGLE WITH**

Medical School is unlike anything your student has ever done before. All of our medical students have been strong students in college. That's how they got into medical school. Now, however, medical school will require more from them than anything they have ever undertaken. They will need to re-examine many facets of their academic life so that they can be successful in this new environment. Here are the four new realities that all medical students face.

### **ADJUSTING TO THE RIGOR**

Medical School is going to be one of the hardest things they have ever done, and the first semester will likely be their most difficult. They will be tested and pushed to achieve at a standard they couldn't have imagined. They will learn that they need their classmates, because they can't succeed on their own. And, they will need your support and encouragement more than they know.

### **THE TIME COMMITMENT IS HUGE**

While they may only have class for 4-5 hours a day, they will need to do self-directed studying for an additional 5-6 hours. Many students spend 10-12 hours a day in class or studying on both weekdays and weekends. As our students move to their clinical M3/M4 years, they are often excited that there's less time in class. However, they still will be spending hours studying after a long day of clinical work. One of the hardest things for students is the lack of time for family and friends. They literally don't have much free time, so what they do have becomes incredibly precious.

### **SUCCESS REQUIRES MORE WORK THAN EVER BEFORE**

The amount of material the students are required to learn can be overwhelming, with students likening it to 'trying to take a drink out of a fire hose'. While students may have been able to earn an A in their undergraduate courses easily, they now have to work significantly harder and often struggle to stay in the B range in medical school. Their classmates are all as smart and hard-working as they are and the volume of material is incredible. Students are forced to re-examine their goals and set manageable expectations for themselves in order to cope with all the demands. They will also likely need to redefine success. Success in Medical School may be that they passed an exam with a C. That is a major success in Medical School! Thus, you may also need to redefine your ideas of success and celebrate that C with them.

### **MEDICAL SCHOOL IS BOTH MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY EXHAUSTING.**

Adjusting to all the new elements, information, processes, lifestyle, friends, and time commitments is both incredibly stressful and physically exhausting. As one student commented, "Draining my brain also drains me physically." Students also experience high levels of stress. Common stressors include high-stakes exams, performance tests, fear of failure, and fear of letting others (usually family members) down. Stress can also be the result of unspoken expectations in their interactions with family and friends. Students report that they often feel guilty because they can't participate in family life the way they used to.

## **YOUR STUDENT NEEDS YOU TO KNOW....**

### **THIS IS REALLY THE HARDEST THING THEY HAVE EVER DONE**

They need you to help them remember that the end goal is worth the effort and that in the end, you are all working together for a better future.

### **THEIR GRADES MAY BE LOWER THAN IN THE PAST, BUT THEY REALLY ARE WORKING HARD AND TRYING THEIR BEST**

Remember that the grades only tell a part of the story, and they are constantly learning every day. Like them, you may need to redefine "success" and adjust expectations. Ask them what Medical School success means to them – which may be significantly different than undergraduate success. Celebrate with your students when they achieve their success!

### **THEY ARE PHYSICALLY EXHAUSTED BY THE END OF THE DAY**

They have had to absorb so much during their day, from new information to interaction with many different people; they don't have anything left when they get home.

### **YOU REALLY ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF THEIR LIVES**

They just can't prove it during medical school. Even though they are less available to you, they need you and your support to help them manage all the demands placed on them as they transition from a student into a qualified and capable healthcare professional. Again, remember that there is an end to their lack of availability, and they will become more available to you as they move into the clinical phase and then even more upon graduation.

## Tips for Providing Support

The COM faculty and staff all know that you, the students' family and friends, are the most important part of the students' lives, and are critical to their success. You are as much a part of this journey as the students, and there are things you can do to help them achieve their goals. Here are twelve suggestions from past students about the support they most appreciated.

### **Stay in contact.**

If you are physically distanced, schedule a daily FaceTime or Zoom call.

### **Encourage them in their study time.**

This will reduce their stress and help them focus.

### **Remind them why they are in Medical School.**

Sometimes their goals can get lost under the enormous workload and they forget why they are in school. Reminding them of their goals can increase their confidence and revive their motivation.

### **Offer to help with their study.**

Offer to listen to them explain an important concept so that you, without their training, can understand it. Practicing and re-teaching are two of the most effective study strategies. The more they practice, the greater their confidence grows.

### **Let them practice their physical assessment skills on you.**

The students need many opportunities to practice their skills and will appreciate your willingness to play the role of "patient".

### **Send encouraging texts, emails, funny memes, pictures of nature or animals, silly jokes, or quick notes.**

These are things that students can read during study breaks or other openings in their schedules and will give them a reason to smile and relax a little.

**Find small ways to show your support.** If you live with or close to your student, cook them a meal, offer to pick up some groceries, or help with auto maintenance or vet appointments. If you live far away or in another state, send small care packages with snacks or practical items. We've seen students get teary-eyed because their mom or dad sent them laundry detergent or their favorite treat from a local bakery.

# Tips for Providing Support

**Be open to modifying plans and family traditions to help accommodate the student's limited time.**

Consider things like celebrating multiple birthdays during the time the students are on a break or letting them know that you are happy that they can attend Thanksgiving dinner, yet understand that they will have to return to school early to study for exams.

**Continue to extend invitations to family events while reassuring them that you understand they can't take the time off to come.**

Keeping them in the loop will help them feel connected while letting them know up front that you understand why they can't attend will help reduce the guilt they feel when they always have to say no to invitations. It isn't that they don't want to come. It is because they can't come.

**Encourage them to take one night off every week to relax.**

Help them plan it. Schedule a date night, watch a movie with the kids, invite them to family dinner, or organize a night out with friends. Not only will it help them relax, but it will also give them something to look forward to at the end of the week.

**Ask them how they are doing, or what they are eating, or what they are learning.**

Just don't ask them about their grades. Let them initiate the conversation about grades. Understand that if their grades are lower than in the past, they recognize it. They put enough stress on themselves without feeling as if they are failing their families and friends. Help them to find a new definition for success. Remind them that they are intelligent and will be great providers one day.

**Encourage them to take a vacation during their semester breaks.**

They don't have many breaks, let alone those when they don't need to study. Offer to take care of the planning so they can just relax.

