

# Tallahassee Democrat.

## FSU NEWS

# Florida State University College of Medicine names Big Bend native as interim dean



**Tarah Jean**

Tallahassee Democrat

Published 5:05 a.m. ET Jan. 23, 2023

Florida State University's College of Medicine dean position is no longer vacant as the university's very own Dr. Alma Littles, senior associate dean for Medical Education and Academic Affairs, is appointed as the interim dean.

Littles was appointed by FSU Provost Jim Clark and will start her new role Feb. 1.

As a current faculty member, Littles has a two-decades-long history with the university during her time as the senior associate dean through FSU's College of Medicine, which was founded in 2000.

Her ties to the college continue as she succeeds FSU's Dr. John Fogarty, who has held the dean position for over 14 years before announcing his retirement in summer 2022.

"She's really been my chief deputy and has done a tremendous job with our curriculum, with our development and with all the things that we've done here," Fogarty said. "She's watched the school grow and she's been a major contributor to that growth for the last 20 years, so I couldn't be more pleased that she was selected to be the interim dean."

**Photos:** TMH and FSU break ground on Panama City Beach medical campus

The appointment of Littles as the college's interim dean comes after three finalists — Leon McDougle from Ohio State University, Nicholas Verne from the University of Tennessee and Terry Steyer from the University of South Carolina — were already chosen to be considered for the permanent position.

Two of the three final candidates were minorities, which supports one of FSU President McCullough's goals of gaining more underrepresented minorities through new searches as

the university currently has a few dean positions open this year.

But a finalist has not been selected, and the interim dean appointment is accompanied by plans in the making on how to move forward with the search. A timeline of when the search will be complete has not been announced.

Littles was also a candidate during the search who interviewed for the college's new permanent dean position.

“As sometimes happens with searches of this nature, our initial efforts have yet to produce a new dean,” Clark said in a statement sent to the Tallahassee Democrat Wednesday.

“However, our work to-date has been valuable and productive. We have learned a great deal about where we are and where we are going.”

“President (Richard) McCullough and I are deliberating next steps that will advance the college and the university,” Clark added.

As a Quincy native, Littles believes that one of the College of Medicine’s missions hits home for her as it strives to create more primary physicians that can provide care for individuals in rural and minority communities similar to her hometown.

“I’m excited about it,” Littles said, referring to her new interim role. “I’ve been in multiple phases of medicine and medical education in my career, like being able to be on the ground floor of working with individuals early on while getting the College of Medicine here started and watching it grow from its infancy to where it is now. It really is a highlight of my career.”

**Other news on FSU College of Medicine:** FSU College of Medicine will mark its 20th anniversary in virtual celebration

**More:** Physician Assistant program at FSU placed on accreditation probation

Littles went from being a graduate of the University of Florida’s College of Medicine in 1986 to practicing family medicine in Quincy and completing her family medicine residency at Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare, where she later served as the director of the program.

What prompted Littles to move from the patient-care setting to FSU’s College of Medicine was her increased awareness of the need for physicians in underserved areas across the state and how she would be able to play a significant role in the academic setting to address it.

“Ultimately our goal is getting more physicians to practice and serve the patients who need them the most while continuing to advance science and knowledge in health care,” Littles

said. “For me, it's just an exciting opportunity to continue to lead that process from the dean position.”

In her role as a senior associate dean, Littles has led the college's accreditation efforts while overseeing the medical student curriculum. She has also led the expansion of the college's unique community-based education model, where students are sent across Florida for one-on-one clerkships — also known as rotations — with established community physicians.

**Related news:** FSU College of Medicine students get glimpse of practicing in rural communities

**More:** FSU and TMH aim to make Tallahassee a leader in medical research

Littles's new role comes during the university's major medical-related plans of establishing a new academic research center in partnership with TMH. The Florida Legislature gave the university \$125 million to go toward the five-story building.

Another extensive project in the works is FSU's new health care campus in Panama City Beach with the St. Joe Company and TMH. The partners kicked off the project's construction with a groundbreaking Tuesday.

“Dr. Littles is assuming this role at an exciting time for the College of Medicine,” Clark said in a prepared statement. “Her long tenure at FSU combined with her relationships with the local health care community make her an ideal fit to lead the college, and we are grateful that she is willing to take on this challenge.”

While Littles fills the College of Medicine's dean spot for the time being, some of the other open dean positions at the university are at the College of Health and Human Sciences as well as the College of Social Work and the College of Communication and Information, where searches are underway.

*Contact Tarah Jean at [tjean@tallahassee.com](mailto:tjean@tallahassee.com) or follow her on twitter @tarahjean\_.*

**Never miss a story: Subscribe to the Tallahassee Democrat using the link at the top of the page.**