

Lisanby named founding dean of new ASU medical school

Internationally acclaimed innovator to 'reengineer the future of health' in new role

By Penny Walker, ASU News
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Arizona State University announced today its selection of a decorated and internationally renowned psychiatrist and innovator of neuromodulation technologies, Sarah Hollingsworth “Holly” Lisanby, as founding dean of the ASU School of Medicine and Advanced Medical Engineering, the centerpiece of ASU Health. She will start May 1.

Lisanby, professor emeritus at Duke University and director of the Division of Translational Research at the National Institute of Mental Health, has a strong track record in both research and senior academic leadership.

“Dr. Lisanby brings the professional experience, the mindset and the energy to lead the new kind of medical school that we are creating at Arizona State University,” said Executive Vice President and University Provost Nancy Gonzales. “Her skill set and her work in the convergence of psychiatry, neuroscience and engineering is a perfect match for what we seek to do with ASU’s School of Medicine and Advanced Medical Engineering.”

At NIMH, Lisanby has been responsible for a portfolio of approximately \$400 million to support research and she co-led a team within the NIH BRAIN¹ Initiative. Prior to being recruited to NIH, she was the first woman to be selected as chair of the Duke University Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, a research-focused department of approximately 800 people, including 400 faculty.

“The best way to anticipate the future is to create it,” Lisanby said. “My vision for the ASU School of Medicine and Advanced Medical Engineering is to become the top-ranked producer of physician leaders who will transform the face of medical practice and optimize health for all Arizonans, and I

am very excited to bring my expertise at the interface of medicine and engineering to this new role.”

Based in downtown Phoenix, with [HonorHealth serving as the primary clinical affiliate](#), the School of Medicine and Advanced Medical Engineering will be a new kind of medical school that produces physicians who blend medicine, engineering, technology and humanities. Graduates will leverage new tools such as AI and data science to connect with more patients, seek innovative practices and improve health outcomes.

HonorHealth will be the health system that houses the majority of the training experiences for the medical school’s undergraduate students with rotations in hospitals throughout Phoenix, Scottsdale and surrounding communities.

The training will create a health care leader with a strong sense of innovation, problem-solving, empathy and health systems thinking, with a comfort with new devices and protocols in treatment.

“I am thrilled to welcome Dr. Lisanby as the founding dean of the ASU School of Medicine and Advanced Medical Engineering,” said Sherine Gabriel, executive vice president of [ASU Health](#). “With a distinguished record of leadership at both NIH and Duke University, deep experience as a mentor in education and with an internationally recognized research program, Dr. Lisanby is uniquely poised to lead this pioneering medical school and I look forward to working with her to advance the transformative vision of ASU Health.”

In her senior leadership role at Duke, a top 10 medical school, Lisanby successfully identified opportunities for synergy across disparate research programs, built consensus across stakeholders, tackled complex operational challenges, and rallied support for major structural changes, as illustrated in numerous new programs that launched under her tenure.

At NIH, Lisanby founded and directed the NIMH Noninvasive Neuromodulation Unit, a clinical translational research lab specializing in the development of innovative brain stimulation tools to measure and modulate neuroplasticity to improve mental health. An accomplished clinical translational scientist, Lisanby is internationally known for her pioneering research leading to the FDA approval of novel devices for the treatment of depression, including transcranial magnetic stimulation.

“The field of engineering gives us a range of tools that are already incorporated into medical practice today,” Lisanby said. “Tomorrow’s physicians need to not only master today’s medical devices, but also those of the future. ASU-trained physicians will have the opportunity to lead the future of how medical devices are integrated into systems of care, and it will be essential to view medical devices in the context of the larger health care ecosystem.”

Lisanby has received numerous national and international awards, including the Distinguished Investigator Award from the Brain and Behavior Research Foundation, the Max Hamilton Memorial Prize, the Gerald R. Klerman Award from the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance, and the Eva King Killam Research Award from the American College of Neuropsychopharmacology.

Pending accreditation, ASU's School of Medicine and Advanced Medical Engineering is expected to begin enrolling students later this year and open in fall 2026.

Related

[Jyotishman Pathak, an internationally recognized leader in biomedical informatics and population health sciences, will be the inaugural dean of the new School of Technology for Public Health.](#)

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

¹ The acronym stands for Brain Research Through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies.

Main image



Pending accreditation, ASU's School of Medicine and Advanced Medical Engineering is expected to begin enrolling students later this year and open in fall 2026. Photo by Samantha Chow/Arizona

State University

Text image(s)



Sarah Hollingsworth 'Holly' Lisanby