

3-30-2015

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### Recommended Citation

Cranford, McKenzie, "Ouachita students named competition finalists at regional theatre festival" (2015). *Press Releases*. Paper 95.  
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# OUACHITA BAPTIST UNIVERSITY



# NEWS

For Immediate Release

## **Ouachita students named competition finalists at regional theatre festival**

*By McKenzie Cranford*

March 30, 2015

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at [newsbureau@obu.edu](mailto:newsbureau@obu.edu) or (870) 245-5208

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. – Three Ouachita Baptist University students were named finalists in the Musical Theatre Initiative at the recent region six Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival (KCACTF) at Angelo State University. Two Ouachita students also were named finalists in the festival's Irene Ryan Acting Competition.

The KCACTF is a national organization that supports and encourages excellence in collegiate theatre performance and playwriting. Its region six festival brought together students from Arkansas, Louisiana, Missouri, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.

Fifteen students from Ouachita's Department of Theatre Arts attended the festival to participate in acting competitions, watch performances and attend workshops and readings.

"Ouachita is committed to attending this regional festival with some of our strongest students to give them the opportunity to interact with their peers from other universities," said Eric Phillips, chair of OBU's Department of Theatre Arts and professor of theatre arts. "This enlarges their world in terms of the talent and strategies they get to interact with and experience in the auditions, exhibits, shows and workshops."

Students earning finalist honors at the Musical Theatre Initiative included Benjamin Stidham, a senior musical theatre major from Dallas, Texas; Kayla Walker, a sophomore musical theatre major from North Little Rock, Ark.; and Cami Willis, a senior musical theatre and church media/production arts double major from Flower Mound, Texas.

"Being named a finalist in the competition was an incredible honor because the competition was at the top of its game this year," Stidham said. "It was humbling to be recognized for the hard work I put into performing, but I know that being named a finalist isn't the end-all be-all. Whether I had won the entire competition or got cut in the very first round, I am still just as motivated to continue achieving my goals in life as I was at the beginning of the competition."

In the Irene Ryan Acting Competition, Eli Ash, a freshman musical theatre major from Little Rock, Ark., and Kenderick Scorza, a junior musical theatre major from North Little Rock, Ark., made it to the final round of 16 out of the original 200 entries. Stidham performed with partner Walter Dodd, a junior theatre arts major from Little Rock, Ark., and was named an alternate in the semifinal round of the competition.

Also representing Ouachita in the competition were Tyler Wisdom, a senior musical theatre major from North Little Rock, Ark., and partner Sara Cat Williams, a senior biology and psychology major from Roland, Ark, as well as Hailey Weiner, a junior musical theatre major from Maumelle, Ark., and partner Blaine Surber, a senior musical theatre and mass communications double major from Sulphur Springs, Texas.

Ouachita participated in the design and tech exhibits at the festival as well. Kaylee Nebe, a senior musical theatre major from Mesquite, Texas, took part in costuming and makeup exhibits, and Stidham participated in sound design exhibits.

“My favorite part of the festival was having the opportunity to experience fellow artists’ creations each day,” Stidham added. “Whether I was going to see a brand new show or listen to different sound design schemes from students, I was able to further envelope myself in the arts and grow from it.”

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