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Ouachita marks 17.9 percent increase among first-time freshmen for 2017

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OUACHITA BAPTIST UNIVERSITY



NEWS

For immediate release

Ouachita marks 17.9 percent increase among first-time freshmen for 2017

By Trennis Henderson, OBU Vice President for Communications

September 7, 2017

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ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Welcoming 448 first-time freshmen to campus this fall – a 17.9 percent gain over the previous year’s incoming class – Ouachita Baptist University marked one of its largest year-to-year freshman class increases in recent history.

“The significant growth reflects a surge in middle-income families as well as stronger ACT and GPA scores, reflecting our commitments to affordability and excellence,” said President Ben Sells. “Students are attracted to Ouachita’s Christian liberal arts mission, personalized approach and high-impact learning that contribute to exceptional graduate school acceptance and job placement rates.”

Ouachita’s growth is noteworthy since “the current higher education landscape is challenging,” said Wes Butterfield, vice president of Ruffalo Noel Levitz, a leading higher education consulting firm. “Nationally, we are finding that flat enrollment is the new up for many campuses. When an institution like Ouachita has a 17.9 percent increase, there are a number of positive factors at play.”

Ouachita’s total fall enrollment of 1,545 students compares to 1,517 last year. Top majors among incoming freshmen include biology, business administration, communications, kinesiology and psychology as well as Christian studies and elementary education. Two-thirds of incoming students are from Arkansas and 22 percent are from Texas.

New students are attracted to Ouachita’s broad range of high-impact learning experiences. Examples include participating in summer research for science majors, managing \$1 million of the university’s endowment for finance majors and participating in the Sundance Film Festival for communications majors as well as internships and study abroad opportunities for students across all majors.

Reflecting several positive factors, Ouachita recorded a 70 percent graduation rate last year, among the highest in the state of Arkansas. Additionally, 93 percent of graduates were placed in a job or graduate school within six months of graduation.

As Ouachita begins its 132nd academic year, it continues to be ranked nationally among top liberal arts universities by both *U.S. News & World Report* and *Forbes*. Ouachita also was recognized this past year by Niche.com as the top private university in Arkansas.

Other recent areas of growth include an 11 percent increase in contributions with total fundraising of \$14 million and university endowment increasing from \$100 million to \$107 million in the past year.

Affirming Ouachita's "commitment to our Christ-centered identity and our commitment to academic excellence," President Sells told students, faculty and staff at the university's opening fall convocation, "Ouachita is rising. We are going from strength to strength as Ouachita seeks to foster a love of God and a love of learning."

Ouachita Baptist University, a leading Christian liberal arts university, was founded in Arkadelphia, Ark., in 1886. For more information about Ouachita, visit www.obu.edu or call 800-DIAL-OBU.

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