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Ouachita Online earns HLC accreditation, set to launch two online degree programs

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OUACHITA
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NEWS

For immediate release

Ouachita Online earns HLC accreditation, set to launch two online degree programs

By Trennis Henderson, OBU Vice President for Communications

August 25, 2014

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ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Ouachita Baptist University's new Ouachita Online degree programs have earned official accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission. The HLC accredits "degree-granting post-secondary educational institutions in the North Central region" of the U.S., according to its website.

Ouachita's Board of Trustees approved plans in December to develop and launch online degree programs this fall. With the HLC accreditation finalized, Ouachita's first online term is scheduled to begin Oct. 27. Courses will be offered leading to Bachelor of Arts degrees with majors in either business administration or Christian studies. Additional majors will be added in 2015.

"I am pleased that Ouachita has received accreditation for our online degree programs," said Ouachita President Rex Horne. "This affords an excellent Ouachita education for those who cannot avail themselves of our physical campus.

"We are committed to providing an education that prepares students for a life of faith and service while engaging as difference makers in this world," he added. "I hope many will consider our current degree programs in business and Christian studies."

Ouachita's online Bachelor of Arts degree in business administration offers adult learners a broad business education coupled with an emphasis in business management. The online BA degree in Christian studies provides training in such areas as Christian ministry and missions, ethics and theology. Both programs allow non-traditional students the opportunity to earn an accredited bachelor's degree with the flexibility of online learning.

According to Dr. Stan Poole, vice president for academic affairs, "Launching online degree programs is a major step for the university as we seek to provide educational opportunities to those who would otherwise not have access to a traditional Ouachita education. Our faculty are committed to providing a distinctive Ouachita educational experience in an online format.

"The Higher Learning Commission's approval of Ouachita's first online degree programs confirms our capacity to offer a high-quality online education at an affordable cost," Poole said. "We're excited about this opportunity to engage working adults and others for whom distance delivery opens up the possibility of earning a Ouachita degree. We believe these programs have great potential to enhance the quality of life for those who complete them."

The resolution adopted by trustees noted that Ouachita "desires to extend the reach of its vision to foster a love of God and a love of learning by creating for students and other constituents dynamic growth opportunities both on campus and throughout the world." The board action affirmed that online education "is a continually expanding means of delivering quality undergraduate and graduate education."

Dr. Brett Powell, vice president for administrative services, is serving as director of Ouachita Online. Ashlee Giles, assistant director of admissions counseling, is serving as online enrollment coordinator.

Detailing Ouachita's commitment to online education, Powell explained, "The importance of higher education is growing as more and more employers are requiring a college degree. Added to the changing employment environment is the growing complexity of the world in which we live, requiring more critical thinking skills to be successful.

"Ouachita is uniquely able to prepare students to meet these challenges because of our liberal arts focus and Christian approach to education," he said. "We recognize that not every person who seeks the quality education we can provide is able to complete a degree in the residential setting we offer on our Arkadelphia campus. As a result, Ouachita Online is being launched to extend the reach of our academic programs beyond our traditional campus."

Powell said introducing Ouachita Online with official HLC accreditation "is very important to the Ouachita administration and should be equally important to those who consider studying online. Accreditation means that institutions, and the academic programs they offer, meet strict standards for quality and they are able to follow through with what they say they will do.

"For anyone who is considering studying online, I would encourage him or her to contact us to find out more," Powell added. "Ouachita Online is not just another online university. Ouachita has been educating students for almost 130 years and the quality that has been evident for all those years will be integrated into our online courses. Whether you completed high school months ago or decades ago, you can earn your college degree through Ouachita Online."

For more information or to enroll in Ouachita Online, contact Ashlee Giles at gilesa@obu.edu or 870-245-5200.

Ouachita Baptist University, a leading liberal arts university, is ranked nationally among America's top universities by *Forbes* and *U.S. News & World Report*. Founded in Arkadelphia, Ark., in 1886, Ouachita seeks to foster a love of God and a love of learning in a Christ-centered learning community.

PHOTO AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD AT <http://www.obu.edu/news/2014/08/25/ouachita-online-earns-hlc-accreditation-set-launch-two-online-degree-programs>.