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Ouachita Baptist University

Ouachita Alumni

Winter 2021

The Ouachita Circle Winter 2021

Ouachita Baptist University

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OUACHITA'S PANDEMIC RESPONSE

| NEW ABA MASTER'S PROGRAM STARTS STRONG

| CREATING A CULTURE OF BELONGING

OUACHITA CIRCLE

Winter 2021

2020

UNPRECEDENTED



“Navigating unprecedented times” and other clichés

Due to the pandemic ... canceled until further notice ... we will navigate these uncertain times ... with resilience, optimism and creativity.

These and other phrases became all too familiar in 2020. As a communicator writing on behalf of Ouachita, they have become even more top of mind for me this year. As we chose the theme for this issue of the *Ouachita Circle*, no words seemed sufficient. Even words that were accurate and appropriate had lost their meaning, becoming clichés in our collective consciousness. And now, in 2021, which brings its own challenges, we are weary of the pandemic, weary of reflections on the months we’ve all experienced “together, apart.”

However, what we have done in 2020 as a global society and here at Ouachita, was truly unprecedented – both for the challenges we faced and the triumphs big and small that we achieved along the way. This issue seeks to pay homage to the many things Ouachita has to be proud of in this year that many of us would sometimes rather forget.

From launching Ouachita’s first graduate programs since the 1990s (p. 22) to reimagining Tiger Tunes for a virtual format (p. 16) to intentional progress on the topic of race (p. 24) and many other victories noted in “Campus Update” (p. 2), I think you will be proud of the resilience of your university during this unprecedented year (pardon the clichés). See reflections on COVID-19’s effects on campus from me and longtime faculty member Dr. Byron Eubanks on pages 12 and 10, respectively. The unique challenges that athletics faced are described on page 34.

On March 10, 2020, the week before Ouachita sent all students home for the rest of the semester, the campus community met together for chapel. It turns out that this was the last in-person chapel we would have for more than a year; even now, we continue conducting chapel virtually.

My former Ouachita suitemate Dr. Emily Smith delivered that chapel address and encouraged us with the simple message that “We can do hard things.” With strength from our Heavenly Father, whether you are facing an academic, professional or personal mountain, it is possible. Dr. Smith is a hospitalist at Arkansas Children’s Hospital and one of the smartest and most compassionate people I know. That simple message – even more meaningful coming from a healthcare leader – came to mind for me again and again the following months as I was involved in scaling a variety of mountains as an individual and as a wife, mother, daughter and Ouachita administrator.

We still have many mountains ahead. But let’s not forget the many that have been scaled over the last year. I hope this issue of the *Ouachita Circle* is a reminder that yes, we are resilient, we are optimistic, we are creative. And we can do hard things – even in unprecedented times.

Brooke Zimny

Assistant to the President for Communications & Marketing

UNPRECEDENTED

“We live in an age of unprecedented opportunity.”

Peter Drucker

“You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you decide not to be reduced by them.”

Maya Angelou

“If you are open to the unprecedented, you will change history. The difference is prayer.”

Mark Batterson

“In an unprecedented time, our Savior remains unparalleled.”

Aimee Joseph

“There is no rock like our God.”

1 Samuel 2:2b

OUACHITACIRCLE

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Ouachita's 2020 Commencement ceremony was held in December at Cliff Harris Stadium and streamed live following delays from its usual May date. See more as we celebrate the Class of 2020 on page 17. Photo by Hannah Smith ('21).

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OUACHITA CIRCLE

Winter 2021

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Cover photo by Hannah Smith ('21).

SUBMIT ADDRESS CHANGES AND CLASS NOTES

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FOLLOW US



VISION Ouachita Baptist University seeks 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. With foresight and faithfulness, Ouachita makes a difference.

MISSION Ouachita Baptist University is a Christ-centered learning community. Embracing the liberal arts tradition, the university prepares individuals for ongoing intellectual and spiritual growth, lives of meaningful work, and reasoned engagement with the world.

VALUES Ouachita strives to be an academic community of vision, integrity, and service grounded in the following values:

Faith. We believe that life is lived most abundantly in response to the love of God through Jesus Christ.

Scholarship. We advance excellence in teaching, learning, research, and creative expression.

Growth. We foster broad-based education, encouraging growth in intellectual, spiritual, physical, and social domains.

Character. We affirm that respect and honesty undergird responsible citizenship and stewardship.

Community. We promote a vibrant community strengthened by diversity, sustained by common aims and supportive relationships, and committed to leadership and service on campus and beyond.

CAMPUS NEWS



photo by Bryan McKinney

OUACHITA TEAM SWEEPS TOP UNDERGRAD AWARDS, WINS \$32,000 IN ARKANSAS GOVERNOR'S CUP BUSINESS PLAN COMPETITION

Olivia Brown, Savannah Edwards, Brandon Matros and Sheldon McCown – all 2020 graduates – earned the top two awards for undergraduates at the 20th annual Arkansas Governor's Cup Collegiate Business Plan Competition in April. More than 90 students on 38 teams from nine universities across Arkansas competed in the Governor's Cup in undergraduate and graduate divisions.

The Ouachita team won first place in the overall undergraduate division as well as the undergraduate innovation award, along with \$32,000 in prize money – \$25,000 in the Simmons Bank undergraduate division, \$5,000 in the Innovate Arkansas and Winrock Automotive Innovation Division and \$2,000 for faculty advisor. Their business plan, ImmunoSense, proposes a diagnostics company specializing in the early detection of Type 1 Diabetes via noninvasive tests.

"We've been competing in the Governor's Cup for 11 years, and we've placed in the top three several times ... but this is our first year to win the undergraduate category," said Bryan McKinney, dean of Ouachita's Hickingbotham School of Business. "We couldn't be happier."

Brown is from North Little Rock, Ark.; Edwards is from Searcy, Ark.; Matros is from Arkadelphia, Ark.; and McCown is from Nacogdoches, Texas. The team was advised by Dr. Blake Johnson, former assistant professor of biology.

UPDATE

OUACHITA CROWNS HOLLY SHIPP AS 2020 HOMECOMING QUEEN

Holly Shipp, a senior Christian studies/Biblical studies, Christian missions and Christian ministries triple major from Arlington, Texas, was crowned Ouachita's 2020 Homecoming Queen on Nov. 5 in Evans Student Center. Shipp represented the Pruet Sisterhood, is a member of Tri Chi women's social club and is involved in Campus Ministries.



photo by Wesley Kluck

"I cannot even fully describe just how much it means to be the Homecoming Queen this year at Ouachita," Shipp said. "Ouachita is such a special place to me, and it is an honor to be recognized in this way."

First runner-up was Lindsey Crowder, a senior psychology and sociology double major from Bentonville, Ark. Second runner-up was Jorie Beaumont, a senior nutrition & dietetics major from Lockport, Ill. Third runner-up was Natalie Ward, a senior accounting and finance double major from Harrison, Ark. Fourth runner-up was Bethany Crawley, a senior instrumental music education major from Jonesboro, Ark.



Spring 2020. photo courtesy of Wade Wilson



Fall 2020. photo by Abby Blankenship

TIGER SERVE DAY CREATIVELY CONTINUES COMMITMENT TO SELFLESS SERVICE

The Elrod Center for Family and Community continued its commitment to community service through Tiger Serve Day in the spring and fall, adjusting the typical event in light of COVID-19.

"Because of COVID, we switched gears and served our community in very tangible ways," said Judy Duvall, associate director of the Elrod Center.

In the spring, students had been sent home for completely remote learning, and the Elrod Center encouraged Ouachitonians to serve their families or neighbors in non-contact, COVID-safe ways like yard work, writing notes of encouragement or home organization for their parents.

In the fall, 850 volunteers completed 112 projects around Arkadelphia, focusing on outdoor and public spaces in the community rather than individuals' homes. The event also placed an emphasis on delivering cards and thanking Arkadelphia's city officials, including police officers, firefighters and sanitation crews.

OUACHITONIAN YEARBOOK, COMMUNICATIONS & MEDIA STUDENTS RECEIVE RECOGNITIONS

The *Ouachitonian* yearbook was named one of seven national Pacemaker Finalists by the Associated Collegiate Press (ACP) for its 2018-2019 edition, "Untold." The national recognition was one in a series of 2020 awards given to the volume, including seven individual awards given by the Columbia Scholastic Press Association (CSPA), as well as General Excellence for Yearbook of the Year and 25 individual awards from the Arkansas College Media Association (ACMA).

Several Ouachita students received notable awards, as well. Addy Goodman ('20) from Arkadelphia, Ark., was recognized with six individual CSPA awards, 17 ACMA awards and ACMA Yearbook Editor of the Year for her work on the 2019 *Ouachitonian*. Alex Blankenship ('19) from Little Rock, Ark., received a second place CSPA award in Photo Portfolio for his images in the 2019 *Ouachitonian*. Ethan Dial ('20) from Little Rock, Ark., was named ACMA Website Editor of the Year for his work on *The Signal* student newspaper.

Additionally at the ACMA conference, the 2019 *Signal* student newspaper staff earned five awards in the Newspaper Division, and the "Roar Rundown," Ouachita's student-directed sports broadcast, earned first place in the Television Division.

PATTERSON SUMMER RESEARCH PROGRAM MARKS 20 YEARS

The J.D. Patterson School of Natural Sciences Summer Research Program celebrated 20 years of student research this year with 26 students and 12 participating faculty members. Ouachita was one of the few institutions in the state to continue summer research during the COVID-19 pandemic, with students and faculty members following strict safety protocols.

In its 20-year history, the Patterson Summer Research Program has given 313 Ouachita students the opportunity to work one-on-one with science faculty to conduct research in their respective fields – an opportunity more commonly found in graduate school.

For many students, the program’s decision to continue in person this summer kept them on track with their career goals.

“To be able to do summer research will be significant for each of us moving forward as we prepare for applications and interviews for graduate and professional programs,” said Kayla Whittington, a junior biology and chemistry double major from North Little Rock, Ark.



photo by Landen Irby

CAROLINE DERBY CROWNED MISS OBU IN FEBRUARY 2020

Ouachita hosted the 53rd annual Miss Ouachita Baptist University Pageant on Feb. 1, 2020, and crowned Caroline Derby Miss OBU 2020. Due to COVID-19, the 2021 pageant was canceled, allowing Derby to carry the title for two years.

“To be Miss Ouachita Baptist University is a dream come true,” said Derby, an Arkadelphia, Ark., native. “I have been dreaming of representing my favorite place on earth since I was a little girl. I am grateful, honored and humbled to serve Ouachita.”

Derby is a sophomore communications & media/multimedia journalism major. Her platform, “Aspire to Achieve: Ready, Set, Go!,” encourages people of all ages to chase after their dreams and achieve their goals. In addition to winning the Miss OBU crown, Derby received the Kristen Glover Belew Overall Talent Award for her clogging dance to “Perm” and the Julie Williams Academic Award, which was a three-way tie.

Elizabeth Steely from Conway, Ark., was first runner-up. Danielle Hall from Prairie Grove, Ark., was second runner-up. Melody Stotts from Brookland, Ark., was third runner-up. Katie Kumpuris from Little Rock, Ark., was fourth runner-up.



photo by Justin Trostle

ELROD CENTER LAUNCHES FEED ARKADELPHIA

The Ben M. Elrod Center for Family and Community launched a new program in February, Feed Arkadelphia. The program functions similarly to Meals on Wheels and relies on student volunteers to deliver leftover, packaged cafeteria food to those in need in the community in cooperation with Sodexo, Ouachita’s food service provider.

“Ever since freshman year, God has just placed on my heart that there is such a big need in hunger,” said Reanna Johnson, a senior social justice studies and psychology double major from Rio Vista, Texas, who helped launch the program. “Yearly, universities nationwide waste 22 billion pounds of food, so this will not only help solve hunger, but reduce waste, as well.”

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM SELECTED FOR NATIONAL DISABILITY INCLUSION GRANT

A team of Ouachita faculty members is one of seven community-based organizations to receive an Accelerating Disability Inclusion Community-Based Micro-Grant by the National Center on Health, Physical Activity and Disability (NCHPAD).

Team members include Dr. Amber Chelette, assistant professor of kinesiology & leisure studies; Hallie Clark, instructor of kinesiology & leisure studies; and Dr. Allyson Phillips, assistant professor of psychology. All three have a special interest and expertise in disability and health.

“The purpose of this is to increase overall inclusion of persons with disabilities in community events and neighborhood engagement and improve the ability of persons with disabilities to be physically active in their own communities,” Chelette said.

The team plans to use the NCHPAD Community Health Inclusion Index assessment tool to identify and map accessible walking areas in Arkadelphia neighborhoods and create an educational video about accessibility and inclusion in cooperation with Group Living, Inc. and Pediatrics Plus of Arkadelphia.

RILEY-HICKINGBOTHAM LIBRARY RECEIVES COPY OF ARKANSAS' PORTER FUND LITERARY PRIZE COLLECTION

The Riley-Hickingbotham Library is among five Arkansas university libraries, as well as only one of two private libraries, chosen to receive a copy of the Porter Fund Collection, a curation of works by award-winning Arkansas writers. The collection will be available for Ouachita students, faculty and staff to read virtually, and an exhibition is planned for the Spring 2021 semester. The Porter Fund Literary Prize is awarded annually to a native writer or poet who has accomplished a substantial and impressive body of work that merits enhanced recognition.

Dr. Ray Granade, Ouachita director of library services and professor of history, said the library being chosen to exhibit the collection “provides unsolicited confirmation of Ouachita’s strong academic reputation within the state and recognition that academic libraries, particularly those at private schools, must rely on the kindness of friends to provide all their patrons’ information needs as they try to support their institution’s mission and curriculum.”



CARL GOODSON HONORS PROGRAM AWARDS ANNUAL RESEARCH GRANTS

Five students in the Carl Goodson Honors Program were recognized and awarded grants to further their individual research for their honors theses. Recipients of the 2020 grants included Tray Armstrong, Honors Council Scholar; Kayla Churchwell, Carl Goodson Scholar; Sara Patterson, Garrett Ham Scholar; Hannah Perkins, Honors Council Scholar; and Joao Rodrigues, Ben Elrod Scholar.

Armstrong, a senior English and psychology double major from Rockwall, Texas, is studying comic books and why superheroes matter to individuals and society. Churchwell, a senior biology, chemistry and Spanish triple major from Searcy, Ark., is researching Costa Rica’s healthcare system. Patterson, a senior English major from Wylie, Texas, is writing a theological guidebook to C. S. Lewis’ *The Screwtape Letters*. Perkins, a senior graphic design major from Southeast Asia, is developing digital media campaigns to engage believers in the U.S. to pray for work being done in Southeast Asia. Rodrigues, a senior finance major from Ribeirao Preto, Brazil, is studying the unified healthcare system in Brazil.

Patterson (far left), Perkins (second from left) and Churchwell (far right) are pictured above with René Zimny (center), assistant professor of visual arts, and Dr. Sharon Hamilton (second from right), assistant professor of chemistry. Zimny and Hamilton served as thesis directors for Perkins and Churchwell, respectively.

VIRTUAL AR-CURE SYNTHETIC BIOLOGY WORKSHOP MAINTAINS MOMENTUM

Ouachita’s Department of Biological Sciences virtually hosted 45 faculty members from 38 colleges and universities in June 2020 for its fourth annual AR-CURE Synthetic Biology Workshop, an academic initiative to train institutions to incorporate semester-long research in undergraduate classrooms. The Arkansas Course Embedded Undergraduate Research Experience (AR-CURE) teaches the importance of course-based research and shares how to conduct Ouachita’s Synthetic Biology project or to use it as a model.

With a growing movement in science education to include more research in the undergraduate classroom, AR-CURE offers professional development to science faculty, with preference given to those from resource-limited and minority-serving institutions, at no cost to them. The initiative is funded by the National Science Foundation’s Arkansas Experimental Program.

“Ouachita is gaining a national reputation as a model for science education through the continued development of the CURE curriculum,” said Dr. Nathan Reyna, assistant professor of biology and director of AR-CURE.

Since its creation in 2015, Ouachita’s AR-CURE Synthetic Biology Workshop has been attended by 100 faculty members from across the country, and more than 500 students at 11 institutions have reported participating in a course-based research project that was created at Ouachita.

ELROD CENTER RECEIVES STATE “CELEBRATE LITERACY AWARD”

The Elrod Center for Family and Community received the Arkansas Literacy Association’s (ALA) “Celebrate Literacy Award” last summer for its America Reads/America Counts, Peake Partnership and Homeschool/After-School tutoring programs in Arkadelphia. The Elrod Center was one of only two agencies in the state recognized by ALA for championing literacy in their communities.

“We are so thankful for the opportunity to work with administrators and teachers in order to identify children who qualify for our programs, to schedule tutoring sessions and to provide proper tutor training,” said Leigh Anne McKinney, assistant director of the Elrod Center.

“When we started the America Reads/America Counts Program 23 years ago, we were uncertain as to its long-term sustainability,” said Ian Cosh, vice president for community and international relations. “Thanks to Jan Bass, who was involved in the early years, and to Leigh Anne McKinney’s strong leadership, it has grown into a valuable and enriching relationship with the Arkadelphia Public Schools.”



Pre-pandemic photo by Leigh Anne McKinney



photo by Kate Lance

OUACHITA RECEIVES \$37,000 NETVUE GRANT FOR “DISCERNING VOCATION THROUGH WRITING”

Ouachita was awarded a \$37,000 program development grant from the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE) for its proposal, “Discerning Vocation Through Writing.” The 2020-2022 grant is intended to equip faculty to better assist students in discerning their vocation through reflective writing exercises, enrich already existing interdisciplinary writing courses and develop new courses that involve discovering vocation.

“When the hot summer of the pandemic brought intensified physical, social and political unrest, we renewed our mission to use reflection – through listening and writing – to work hard for our corporate vocation for peace and cooperation,” said Dr. Amy Sonheim, professor of English, who secured the NetVUE grant and serves as the campus coordinator.

In addition to these writing exercises, the group collaborated with Ouachita’s Multicultural Organization Reaching Equality (MORE) and Sigma Tau Delta international English honor society chapter to host a physically distanced discussion of race and culture through the lens of Ebony Flowers’ graphic novel *Hot Comb*.

ALEXANDER, SLONE RECEIVE “BEST DELEGATE” AT MIDWEST MODEL U.N.

Students Cole Alexander and Rylie Slone were recognized with “Best Delegate” awards for their representation at the 60th annual Midwest Model United Nations Conference in St. Louis, Mo., in February 2020. Alexander and Slone, along with Ouachita’s other four delegates in attendance, represented Italy in this Model U.N. simulation, which assembled hundreds of student delegates from approximately 40 colleges and universities.

Alexander, a 2020 political science and business administration graduate from Forney, Texas, was one of three recognized among 12 delegates for his representation on the Food and Agricultural Committee. Slone, a 2020 political science and Christian studies/Christian missions graduate from Bella Vista, Ark., was one of two recognized among 15 delegates for her representation on the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. They also received two of four “Honorable Mention” awards among 30 delegates for their representation on the Economic and Social Council Plenary.

“This was perhaps the best delegation that I have had in my 23 years of taking students to the Midwest Model United Nations,” said Dr. Kevin Brennan, Ouachita professor of political science.



photo by Hannah Smith



photo by Sarah Dean

FINE ARTS ADJUSTS PERFORMANCES, UTILIZES STREAMING VIDEO

The School of Fine Arts made adjustments to its fall performing arts season to both allow students to continue their performance education and allow viewers to experience their art safely.

Live events followed COVID-19 guidelines with reduced seating, physical distancing and in-person attendance limited to Ouachita students, faculty and staff. Additionally, the Division of Music hosted outdoor concerts for the campus community, and streaming options were available for most events. To view streaming options for fine arts productions in the spring, visit obu.edu/boxoffice.

“The fine arts are still alive at Ouachita, and we wanted to give our efforts back to the campus community,” said Dr. Gary Gerber, dean of the School of Fine Arts.

Signature fine arts events that continued in person or were livestreamed included the Women’s Chorus and Ouachita Singers Concert, Choral Concert, Wind Ensemble Concert, Percussion Concert, Percussion Ensemble, Jazz Band Concert, Chamber Winds Concert, *Hay Fever* (the fall theatre production) and the One Act Play Festival.

The opera production, *Gianni Schicchi*, was executed as a film, with director John Alec Briggs, lecturer in music, directing remotely via Zoom. Dr. Joshua Brown, assistant professor of music and director of choral activities, served as the on-site music director. View it as well as bonus content at obu.edu/opera2021.

OUACHITA ENTERS AGREEMENT WITH ARKANSAS COLLEGES OF HEALTH EDUCATION

Ouachita signed an Affiliation Agreement with Arkansas Colleges of Health Education (ACHE) in Fort Smith, Ark., streamlining the admission process for Ouachita’s highest academic performers.

“This will affect a wide range of students seeking to become physicians, physical therapists, occupational therapists and physician assistants,” said Dr. Tim Knight, dean of Ouachita’s Patterson School of Natural Sciences. “I’m confident we will send them the brightest and best prepared students in the region.”

While there is no guarantee of admission through the agreement, the process will be simplified for ACHE’s Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine and Master of Science in Biomedicine programs, as well as forthcoming programs in occupational therapy and physical therapy.

MUSIC AWARD WINNERS

2019 NATS SOUTHERN REGION FINALISTS

Hannah Anderson • Austin, Texas
 Dylan Blackwood • Walnut Ridge, Ark.
 Mallory Cain • Little Rock, Ark.
 Carlin Campbell • Rose Hill, Kan.
 Chaney Campbell • Rogers, Ark.
 Sam Campione • Waxahachie, Texas
 Bonnie Gentry • Arlington, Texas
 Katie Kuss • Monument, Colo.
 Clay Mobley • Wylie, Texas
 Bella Owen • Jonesboro, Ark.

2020 ARKANSAS INTERCOLLEGIATE BAND

Holli Barger • Carrollton, Texas
 Richard Blosch • Fort Worth, Texas
 Cross Brandon • Little Rock, Ark.
 Andrew Coop • Gladewater, Texas
 Craig Crawford • Texarkana, Texas
 Bethany Crawley • Jonesboro, Ark.
 Taryn Toles • Cabot, Ark.
 Sam Youmans • Siloam Springs, Ark.

2020 VIRGINIA QUEEN PIANO COMPETITION

First place: Anna Weyenberg • McKinney, Texas
Second place: Melissa Lee • Singapore
Third place: Sam Youmans • Siloam Springs, Ark.
Honorable mention: Sean Carney • Little Rock, Ark.

2020 MARY SHAMBARGER COMPETITION FOR SINGERS

First place: Clay Mobley • Wylie, Texas
Second place: Bonnie Gentry • Arlington, Texas
Third place: Logan Dooley • Allen, Texas
Fourth place: Hannah Anderson • Austin, Texas

2020 W. FRANCIS & MARY MCBETH WIND AND PERCUSSION COMPETITION

First place: Cross Brandon • Little Rock, Ark.
Second place: Katelyn Still • Benton, Ark.
Third place: Holli Barger • Carrollton, Texas

Ouachita continues to rise

OUACHITA SEES HIGHEST ENROLLMENT IN 20 YEARS AND OTHER ACCOLADES

Even amid the uncertainties of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ouachita recorded several university-wide achievements and accolades in Fall 2020. The university recorded the highest fall enrollment in 20 years as well as the highest four-year graduation rate on record and high regional rankings in *U.S. News & World Report* for innovation, teaching, value and more. Ouachita also launched its first graduate programs – an M.S. in applied behavior analysis and a dietetic internship – since discontinuing graduate education in the 1990s.

“As a Christian university, we genuinely believe every good gift comes from the Lord,” said Dr. Ben Sells, Ouachita president. “We’re thankful for our students and for the support of their families. In the midst of a pandemic, our already incredibly committed faculty and staff redoubled their efforts. Finally, we’re grateful to alumni, friends and Arkansas Baptists who provide difference-making support.”

Even as one of only 20% of the country’s colleges and universities to return to residential learning this semester due to the pandemic, Ouachita’s Fall 2020 student enrollment grew to 1,704, a 4% increase from Fall 2019 and the highest headcount the university has seen since 2000. The total enrollment includes 1,496 residential students on Ouachita’s Arkadelphia campus, 168 online and concurrent students and 40 graduate students. Spring 2021 enrollment totals 1,619, the highest spring headcount in the last 25 years.

“Students and parents told us that what makes Ouachita distinctive is the on-campus experience,” Sells said. “Thus, we put forth a herculean effort and significant expense to safely return to in-person learning, which continues to be our priority.”

The data show Ouachita’s commitment to student success, regardless of the pandemic. The four-year graduation rate for Ouachita’s graduating class of 2020 was 60.5% – the highest on record for the university and far surpassing the most recent state average of 32% published by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Even amid the pandemic, those seniors also reported an impressive 97% career outcomes rate, which measures both job placement and acceptance to graduate programs.

The freshman cohort that completed their first year in Spring 2020 achieved an 81.4% freshman to sophomore retention rate, the second highest at Ouachita since 2010 and compared to a 68% average for all Arkansas four-year universities, also according to NCES.

This year’s freshman cohort also has an impressive academic profile, with 36% earning a 4.0 or higher high school GPA, an average ACT score of 24.8 (matching Ouachita’s highest on record) and including 30 Arkansas Distinguished Governor’s Scholars.

Ninety-four percent of those freshmen returned to Ouachita in the spring, Ouachita’s third highest spring persistence rate in 20 years.

Ouachita earned the “#2 Best Regional College in the South” ranking for the second consecutive year, a comparison to public and private colleges in a 12-state region. In the South region, Ouachita trails only High Point University, a college in North Carolina with an enrollment of 4,590. Ouachita also received high honors in other categories in the region, including #4 rankings for “Most Innovative” and “Best Undergraduate Teaching” and #5 for “Best Value.” The “Most Innovative” ranking, specifically, is defined by *U.S. News* as “schools the public should be watching because of the cutting-edge changes the colleges are making on their campuses.”

“I’m especially pleased that Ouachita earned this distinction while simultaneously being recognized for outstanding undergraduate teaching,” said Dr. Stan Poole, Ouachita’s vice president of academic affairs. “Year after year our students affirm the quality of our faculty and the strong tradition of teaching excellence, grounded in personal relationships, that distinguishes their Ouachita educational experience.”

“These recognitions speak to distinctive qualities we are proud of.” – DR. BEN SELLS

Ouachita’s Hickingbotham School of Business also was listed in the *U.S. News* “Best Undergraduate Business Programs” nationwide; the academic school is one of only nine private, undergraduate-only schools in the world to be accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB).

“These recognitions speak to distinctive qualities we are proud of – providing an excellent and affordable education, embracing innovation and supporting our students in the classroom and beyond to meet their educational and career goals,” Sells said.

This includes Ouachita’s efforts to offer new strategic, non-traditional academic programs to its more than 200 off-campus and graduate students. Such programs have included growing fully online degree offerings including degree completion options; expanding concurrent enrollment offerings at Christian high schools across the state and region; launching a Bachelor of Science in Nursing program with two innovative RN-to-BSN tracks; establishing the first Master of Science degree in applied behavior analysis in the state; and enrolling the first cohort in a post-baccalaureate dietetic internship program for students pursuing careers as registered dietitians.

 **1,704**
TOTAL FALL
ENROLLMENT

OUACHITA'S
HIGHEST ENROLLMENT IN
20 YEARS

#2 BEST COLLEGE • #4 BEST UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING
#4 MOST INNOVATIVE • #5 BEST VALUE

AMONG REGIONAL COLLEGES
IN THE SOUTH

(U.S. News & World Report)



40 STUDENTS ENROLLED
IN OUACHITA'S
2 NEW GRADUATE PROGRAMS

OF FRESHMEN:
36% = 4.0+
HIGH SCHOOL GPA

23% OF FRESHMEN
ARE FIRST-GENERATION
COLLEGE STUDENTS

4 YR. GRADUATION RATE

60.5%

VS. RECENT STATE AVERAGE*

32%

RETENTION RATE

81.4%

VS. RECENT STATE AVERAGE*

68%

**for all four-year institutions in Arkansas, according to the National Center for Education Statistics*

ADAPTING IN AN UNPRECEDENTED, CHALLENGING, REMARKABLE YEAR

By Byron Eubanks

“2020: The Worst Year Ever,” declared the Dec. 14 *Time* magazine cover. Even with a pandemic and contentious presidential election, that’s surely an overstatement, given the sweep of human history. In the more limited sweep of our personal histories, though, it may seem an understatement. However, thinking in terms of “worst” primes us to dwell on all that went wrong this year. Thinking of the ways 2020 is unprecedented invites us to acknowledge the negatives but to be grateful, too, for the good in this very challenging year.

As I reflect on the year at Ouachita, many negatives spring to mind. As COVID-19 worries grew in March, college campuses across our state and nation closed. Ouachita sent students home a week before Spring Break. Uncertain how the semester would end, students and professors alike scrambled to learn how to use Zoom video conferencing software. Some had a crash course on using Moodle, our campus learning management system. I suspect every course crashed in some way during those weeks. Spring sports schedules, Tiger Traks, graduation on Cone-Bottoms lawn – all canceled. What a disappointing way for seniors to complete their final semester.

Moving into summer, the first cohort of graduate students in applied behavior analysis could not meet on campus as planned. Cancellation of Super Summer and other camps left us with an empty campus and diminished income. Distancing requirements ambushed room assignments for fall classes. Rules and recommendations from the CDC and state agencies seemed to change weekly. The decision of most colleges to continue remote learning in the fall put Ouachita among the minority planning to return to face-to-face classes on campus.

The fall schedule began a week early and ended with finals completed remotely the week after Thanksgiving. Some students started the semester on quarantine. Many left later in the semester, sometimes more than once, for two-week quarantine or isolation. At one point over 250 students were quarantined. Quarantines

were particularly challenging for science labs and courses in the fine arts. And imagine trying to have band or choir with masks and distancing. Chapel, Refuge, Tiger Tunes, social club activities, fall sports: the list goes on of ways the pandemic pummeled routine campus life. We even suffered a cybersecurity incident that shut down portions of our campus network for several days. Some faculty members lost years of work stored on their office computers.

Yes, it’s been a tough year for Ouachita. But that is only half the story. So, let’s go back to the middle of March and consider *other* ways it has been unprecedented.

When students left in March, faculty and staff had two weeks to gear up for remote learning. IT Services shifted into overdrive. They found the programs and trained an often skeptical faculty to navigate new tools. Students were largely patient and willing to assist faculty with the technology. And they showed up! Attendance via Zoom was often better than normal in my classes. Given the challenges of Zooming from home, limited library access and all the pandemic stresses, Ouachita’s administration granted students some creative grace to manage final grades.

In April, Dr. Wesley Kluck began leading Ouachita’s Health Monitoring and Action Team (HMAT). This dedicated group has devoted an estimated 1,100 hours in meetings alone to think through details related to doing college in person. Combined with work outside of meetings and work by other groups on campus, Ouachita faculty and staff put in over three years of work in a matter of months.

Through the summer, every employee on campus was rethinking our work in light of the virus. Graduate and Professional Studies led an adjusted but successful launch of the new applied behavior analysis master’s program, beginning a new era of graduate education at Ouachita. Academic Affairs worked some logistical wizardry enabling deans to track classroom changes necessary to accommodate distancing.



10 | THE OUACHITA CIRCLE

photo by Abby Blankenship



photo by Hannah Smith



photo by Callie Rogers



photo by Kirsten Shaw



photo by Hannah Adamson



photo by Abby Blankenship

YES, IT'S BEEN A TOUGH YEAR FOR OUACHITA. BUT THAT IS ONLY HALF THE STORY.

Fall classes brought masks, distanced desks and MoFlex units (large monitors and camera technology to allow quarantined students to Zoom in to class). IT again provided training and support. After the cybersecurity attack, they worked countless hours to get our network safely working again. They installed some 400 copies of Windows on campus computers in less than 12 hours. Wow!

Health Services staff, some newly hired, expertly managed on-campus COVID-19 testing and contact tracing. Faculty and staff found creative ways to manage concerts, virtual chapel, fall social club rush, intramurals, TWIRP events and “routine” academic work. For example, my wife recruited my help with an iPad and laptop so quarantined students could take an anatomy lab test on the human skeleton via Zoom! And 2020 seniors finally got their graduation ceremony at Cliff Harris Stadium in December.

I could go on and on. Ouachita’s size and genuine sense of community under Christ allowed us to adapt, to find new ways to fulfill our mission to educate our students in a 2020 world. Perfectly? Far from it. But certainly remarkable. Even unprecedented. Thanks be to God.



photo by Levi Dade



Dr. Byron Eubanks, chair of the Department of Philosophy, professor of philosophy and director of the Sutton Center for Integrity, has taught in Ouachita’s Pruet School of Christian Studies since 1987. He also has served on Ouachita’s

Health Monitoring and Action Team this year. He earned Ph.D. and M.A. degrees from the University of Arkansas, an M.Div. degree from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and a B.A. degree from Ouachita.



photo by Madison Melcher



photo by Sarah Dean

UNPRECEDENTED

KLUCK TAKES ON HIS LATEST LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE


By Brooke Zimny, assistant to the president for communications and marketing



Serving Ouachita has been a calling for 15 years, and this is one of the fruits of that calling.” – Dr. Wesley Kluck

photo by Tyler Rosenthal

10,500+ 
**CONTACT TRACING
PHONE CALLS**

\$1,745,355
**DISPERSED
TO STUDENTS** 
*Emergency Financial Aid Grants
Spring 2020 CARES ACT • Room & Board Credits*

**58 OUACHITA
CONTACT TRACERS**

 **OTHER TYPICAL ILLNESSES
DOWN 60+%**

**ZERO INSTRUCTORS
INFECTED**
IN OUACHITA CLASSROOMS

**80 ATHLETICS
MATCHES
CANCELED** 

**1,100+ COMMITTEE
HOURS
IN HMAT
MEETINGS** 

Dr. Wesley Kluck did not have a restful 2020. As university physician and vice president for student development at Ouachita, he led the university's health efforts in response to COVID-19, chairing Ouachita's Health Monitoring and Action Team (HMAT).

"The worst thing was waking up in the middle of the night, thinking of things," he said. "There was a lot of that. Sometimes I would get up and make a PowerPoint real quick, just type it all down and go back to sleep."

HMAT, a group of 13 faculty and staff members as well as the Student Senate president, worked through a planning guide of more than 625 items to prepare Ouachita for on-campus learning in the fall, collaborating with colleagues across campus to check off each one. It's no wonder he couldn't sleep.

Kluck, a 1977 Ouachita graduate, was serving as chair of the Board of Trustees when he was invited to return as vice president for advancement and university physician in 2005. His many hats also have included team doctor for the Tigers, volunteer photographer, instructor, college ministry leader at his church and philanthropist, and he still oversees his local pediatrics clinic.

It's clear Kluck loves Ouachita and loves a challenge. Helping steer the university through COVID-19 may have been his biggest one yet.

"Serving Ouachita has been a calling for 15 years, and this is one of the fruits of that calling," he said. "It looked like I was at the right place at the right time. I hope I was. God didn't write it on the wall, but it sure made sense."

"I've had confidence that if any university could operate safely in a pandemic, it would be Ouachita, because of the commitment and resilience of our faculty, staff and students," said Dr. Ben Sells, Ouachita president, "and because we had Wesley Kluck, an experienced, trusted medical doctor and deeply devoted Ouachitonian, whom the Lord had prepared, it seemed, all of Wesley's life for this moment."

Ouachita was one of few universities in the nation to complete in-person learning in the fall. But to pull this off responsibly, a tremendous amount of planning had to be done.

"I didn't realize we were an outlier," Kluck said. "I never felt like we were taking a chance. To me, really back in April or May, it was very clear we had a blueprint for what we needed to do. It was a lot of work over the summer, but I never felt like we were taking a chance with our university, our students, our faculty."

While Kluck's counterparts at other universities were getting up to speed on medical terminology, he was in his element.

"Being a physician helps the learning curve," he said. "I just had to learn about a new disease, and I've been learning about new diseases for years. I educated myself and kept following the changes."

Kluck collected information from reputable sources, analyzing the original scientific research on which health recommendations were based and comparing notes with colleagues at other universities. He participated in weekly meetings with pediatricians



ADVICE FROM THE DOC

Drawing on piles of data collected over the past few months at Ouachita, here is some of Dr. Wesley Kluck's best advice as we continue to battle the coronavirus. Kluck serves as Ouachita's university physician and vice president for student development.

IF YOU FOLLOW PROTOCOLS, YOU DON'T HAVE TO SIT AT HOME.

Wear a mask, keep your distance and wash your hands. These simple practices work.

GET OUTSIDE.

We have shown that outside is probably the safest place to be, but you still have to follow the rules, especially physical distancing.

DON'T WAIT UNTIL YOU HAVE FEVER AND A COUGH TO GET TESTED.

Most people who had COVID this year on campus said, "Oh, it's my allergies; oh, it's a sinus infection; oh, it's a cold; oh, I'm just tired." – including myself! Only 23% of Ouachita cases had a fever, and only 20% had a cough. The three most common symptoms for our positive cases were nasal congestion, throat irritation and headache.

TAKE PUBLIC HEALTH SERIOUSLY.

It's very difficult to get your head around the principles of public health when you're used to individual healthcare. We have to realize with public health, the things you do affect other people around you, and you have to respect that.



**2020 COVID-19
RESOURCES
UTILIZED**

60+ sheets of plexiglass

460 hand sanitizing stations

3 disinfecting fogging machines
used 3-6 a.m. nightly

215,000 sanitizing wipes

800 gallons of hand sanitizer

30 MoFlex units built *to enable any
classroom with remote learning access*

125 webcams

95 personal voice amplifiers

23,360 Zoom sessions launched

7,358,472 Zoom minutes logged

across the state as well as meetings with the Arkansas Department of Health and all Arkansas colleges. These data as well as collaboration with colleagues on HMAT and across campus informed Ouachita's approach to in-person learning for 2020-2021.

"We didn't take anyone's word for it. We looked for proof," Kluck said. "We weren't gambling with the students or the university."

In addition to the burdens of COVID-19, Kluck and his wife, Debbie, balanced personal highs and lows as their daughter, Jennifer Hopkins ('08), delivered their second grandchild and as Kluck's father later died. Again, his medical training Christian faith were assets, allowing him to process both the joys and the sorrows.

"You learn how to do that in a meaningful, compassionate, real way," he said. "And I was able to not let the sorrow affect the things that needed to be done in other ways, and not affect the joy of a grandbaby. I was able to see that expressed in the joy of my dad, who got to hold her several times before he passed."

Meanwhile, the work didn't stop at Ouachita. After the focus on campus shifted from high-level planning, Kluck led implementation efforts in a variety of ways. He built a team for rapid on-campus COVID-19 testing and contact tracing, with four staff members in the Office of Health Services and new COVID-19 Testing Center plus eight additional staff members and 46 students serving as contact tracers. These efforts ensured swift action to identify positive cases quickly and limit the spread. His student development staff also led in implementing health guidelines across campus.

"We had a protocol based on science and the latest proven recommendations that we enforced uniformly," Kluck said. "As I find out, most schools didn't do that. It came across like we were very strict, but we were just uniformly enforcing protocols to stop the spread."

"We had three little bumps in cases, and each one of those came down in a couple of weeks, which is fast in a COVID timeline," he continued. "Across the state, that's not what happened. Their bumps kept going up, and ours came back down to zero. I think that was a success, and that's just due to everybody being a part. That's where everybody had to be a team player."

Sells affirmed this collective effort of Ouachitonians, as well.

"Faculty and staff worked nonstop to create the conditions

for students to have a safe and meaningful experience. Our Board of Trustees walked alongside us, wisely providing their governance and stewardship responsibilities by Zoom," he said. "But, from a human perspective, we've only been able to have a fully in-person experience because our students made it happen."

Sells established a 175-member President's Leadership Circle of student leaders to improve communication between students and administrators,

provide additional support to the student members, who are in key roles across campus, and to influence campus culture for the better.

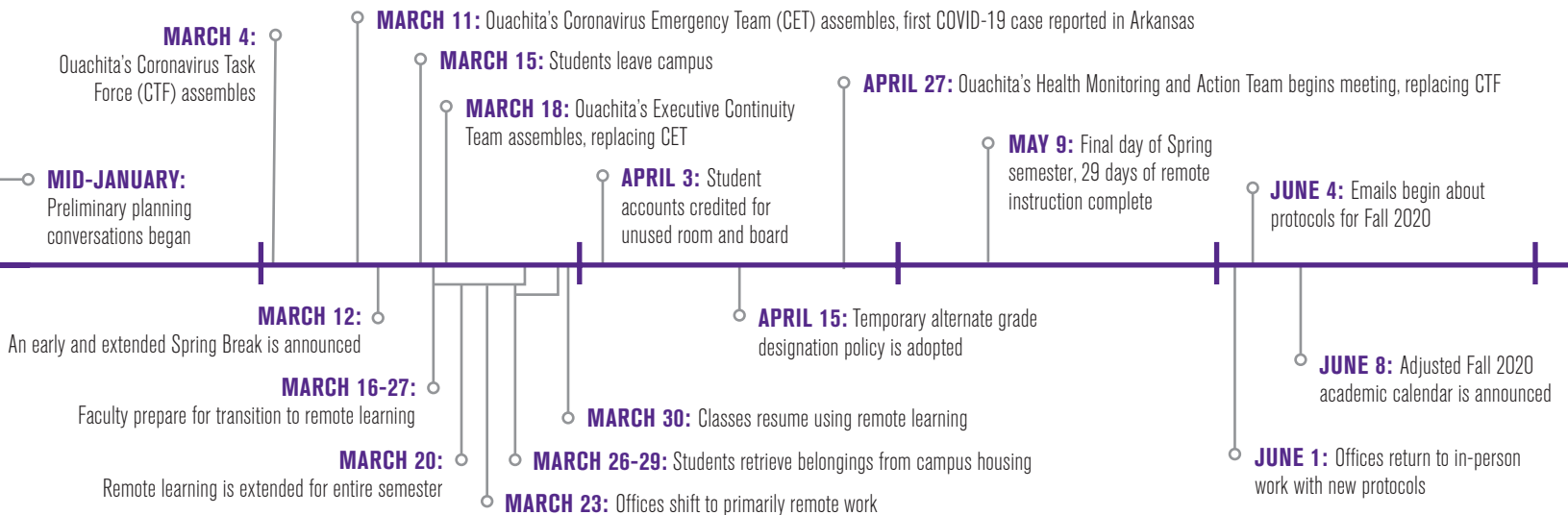
"I'm especially grateful to these student leaders who have led by example and encouraged their peers and who provide us ongoing feedback," Sells noted.

This concept of working as a team is the biggest variable in battling COVID-19. Even with the weeks of planning and work put in by Kluck and hundreds of faculty and staff on Ouachita's campus, limiting the spread came down to actions of individuals aligning. And we're not finished yet.

"Our greatest challenge is ahead of us, I think," Kluck noted in mid-January as the Spring 2021 semester was about to begin. "We're not celebrating. This is halftime. We're regrouping."

I've had confidence that if any university could operate safely in a pandemic, it would be Ouachita. – Dr. Ben Sells

OUACHITA COVID-19 TIMELINE: 2020



HOW DID THAT WORK?

Big decisions in Ouachita's pandemic response.

Life at Ouachita moved in many unprecedented ways in 2020. In the spring, Ouachita transitioned to remote work and instruction. Planning also immediately began for in-person instruction and campus life for the fall semester. The fall calendar was shortened, and students would have 100 days on campus, completing finals online after Thanksgiving.

And we made it. Ouachita was among an estimated 20% of colleges nationwide that held the majority of classes in person in the fall. With most of those colleges being small institutions similar to Ouachita, perhaps only 5% of college students nationwide had such an experience. But how? A few Ouachita administrators give their opinion on some of the key decisions for Ouachita in 2020:

It seemed that new complications arose daily, even hourly, in the early days of the pandemic, and it was heartening to see my colleagues' unwavering and resolute determination as they sought to solve each new problem for the benefit of our students. Dr. Sells' leadership was exemplary in keeping us focused on our mission, our students and the broader Ouachita community.

- DR. KELDON HENLEY, chief of staff and vice president for institutional advancement

There was considerable work put into applying for and reporting on the various new grants available due to COVID, working with insurance companies on numerous claims issues that arose during the year, carefully planning budgets with uncertainty surrounding our revenue sources and managing how to keep our faculty and staff safe.

- JASON TOLBERT, chief financial officer

One of our most important decisions was to prioritize in-person instruction above all other activities. We converted into classrooms the larger indoor spaces normally used for events and performances to increase the number of classes that could be offered face-to-face.

- DR. STAN POOLE, vice president for academic affairs

We stopped asking for gifts last March out of respect for donors, but they kept giving. Their support helped us achieve 99% of our 2020 fundraising goal. And as of December, they'd given a record amount to the Ouachita Cornerstone Fund.

- TERRY PEEPLES, vice president for development

With on-campus testing with a rapid antigen test that was extremely reliable, we were able to take action quickly and not wait three or four days for results. With on-campus contact tracing, we were able to identify close contacts immediately and take action the same day that the test was positive.

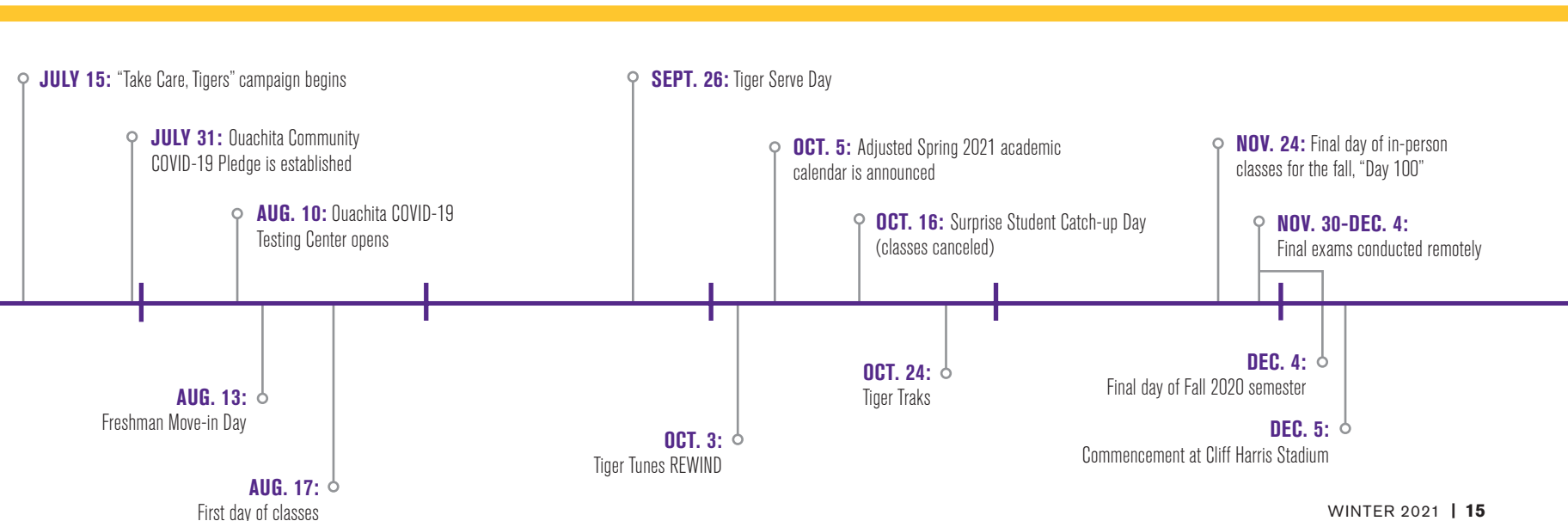
- DR. WESLEY KLUCK, university physician and vice president for student development

In March, when the campus went remote, we learned how to leverage video technologies for instruction and meetings. When we returned to in-person classes, we quickly learned to conduct classes in a hybrid environment by integrating virtual technology with in-person instruction.

- BILL PHELPS, assistant to the president for IT services and facilities management

Our team of caring financial aid and student account specialists worked long hours in a challenging, remote environment to provide Ouachita students with stimulus funds. We were committed to helping all of our students but especially the 25% of families who experienced loss of income.

- SUSAN HURST, associate vice president for student financial services



PANDEMIC PROFILES



MATT DOUGLASS
Academic Affairs



KARI LEDFORD
Sodexo



KEVIN HERRINGTON
IT Services



RANDALL QUILLIN
Facilities Management



KRISTIN KESTERSON
COVID-19 Testing Center



KRISTI SEALS
COVID-19 Testing Center



CHESTER MITCHELL & COLEMAN ROGERS
Facilities Management



See more stories of staff members going above and beyond to rise to the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19 at obu.edu/pandemicprofiles.

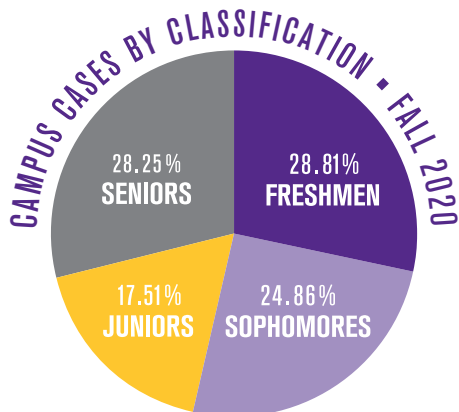


500+ TESTS
RAPID ANTIGEN

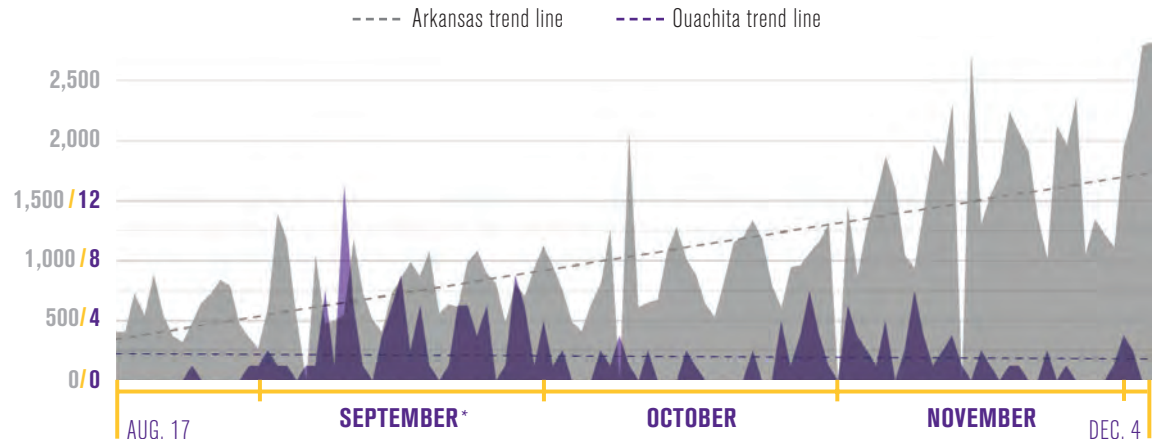
1,000+
PCR TESTS

ON-CAMPUS RAPID COVID-19 TEST
97% ACCURATE

photo by Wesley Kluck



DAILY COVID-19 CASES: FALL SEMESTER STATE OF ARKANSAS VS. OUACHITA



*Ouachita's September spike is due in part to screening more than 400 asymptomatic athletes prior to beginning contact practices.

COMMENCEMENT 2020: A YEAR OF CIRCUMSTANCE ENDS IN CELEBRATION

By Rachel Gaddis, editorial coordinator

Only days after typically bitter December weather, 213 Ouachita graduates donned their gowns, mortar boards and stoles, as well as face masks, and walked under a beautiful cloudless blue sky on Benson-Williams Field at Cliff Harris Stadium to receive their diplomas. The warm western sun cast deep green shadows on the turf behind their physically-distanced white chairs. Other graduates watched their long-awaited graduation ceremony from home.

Saturday, Dec. 5, marked nearly seven months since the class of 2020's original May commencement date, which was canceled due to COVID-19 last spring. It also was the first time many in the class had stepped foot onto campus since students were sent home in March when the university shifted to remote learning to finish the semester and prevent the spread of the virus.

The ceremony, which honored August and December 2019 graduates as well as May and August 2020 graduates, was unlike any before. The crowd was unusually quiet, honoring the grads' accomplishments as well as the struggles of the preceding months.

Even in a new venue, at an unusual time of year and with precautions limiting interactions according to Arkansas Department of Health guidelines, much about Ouachita's traditional ceremony to honor its graduates remained the same. Graduates walked past and exchanged nods with their professors and mentors, who stood on the sideline of the home stands, as they proceeded to their seats. Family members, friends, faculty and staff stood at the mention of their students' and peers' names being called from the podium.

In his commencement address, President Ben Sells praised the class' "resilience to finish in the face of adversity."

"Lisa and I arrived at Ouachita in 2016 like many of you. We feel a special kinship with you because we began our Ouachita journey together," said Dr. Sells. "That kinship, however, isn't based just on the years we've spent together but on what we've lived through together – a pandemic of great enduring consequence.

"The intersection of your college years and COVID-19 make it very possible that this crisis will have a profound impact on your life and set your generation apart from all others," Sells added.

“EVERY GRADUATING CLASS DESERVES
HEARTFELT CONGRATULATIONS, BUT THIS
YEAR, WE FEEL IT DEEPER WHEN WE SAY TO
YOU, 'CONGRATULATIONS; WELL DONE!'

– DR. BEN SELLS



photo by Abby Blankenship



photo by Hannah Smith



photo by Hannah Smith



photo by Hannah Smith

With emotion in his voice, Sells recalled telling them goodbye in March 2020, before what everyone had hoped would be an extended, two-week spring break as the pandemic hit the U.S.

“I remember seniors departing from campus for the last time, some in tears, and some gathering for prayer in Berry Chapel,” Sells said. “I remember how you prayed for me.

“Crises and adversity reveal character, and experiences may also illuminate a truth – truth that changes our heart, our habits and our hopes for our future – truth that also forges character,” he continued.

Sells then charged the class with advice given to him by a mentor, a mentor who had been given the same advice 50 years prior: “If you can’t see very far ahead, go ahead as far as you can see.”

Referencing Psalm 46:1, Proverbs 20:18 and Jeremiah 29:11, Sells shared his gratitude for the comfort found in Scripture as well as the community and commitment of Ouachita’s faculty, staff, trustees and friends.

“Ouachitonians, in this, our final gathering, may I suggest that it’s well worth your time to ask, ‘How then shall we live, both in the shadow of a pandemic and in the light of eternity?’” he said. “And, to consider what truths have been illuminated for you, and how your character is being formed for good.

HOW THEN SHALL WE LIVE, BOTH IN THE SHADOW OF A PANDEMIC AND IN THE LIGHT OF ETERNITY?

– DR. BEN SELLS

“Every graduating class deserves heartfelt congratulations,” Sells said as he closed. “But this year, we feel it deeper when we say to you, ‘Congratulations; well done!’”

Following the ceremony, graduates mingled in small groups across the football field. Cori Gooseberry, a May 2020 engineering physics graduate, celebrated with his brother, Justin, a 2019 grad. The twins, both from Little Rock, Ark., studied the same major and played right and left tackle for Tiger football. But graduating only a year apart, the two had drastically different senior years.

“With this year, how tough it’s been with COVID-19 and getting adjusted with new things, I guess for me it just means the closing of one door and opening of another,” Cori said. “It wasn’t what we expected toward the end, but as the year has continued to go on, we’ve just started on new pathways.”

“And we’ve been preparing for this moment our whole life,” Justin chimed in.

For another Ouachita athlete, Tiger softball pitcher Faith Melton, graduation day was long-awaited, and needed, for even the smallest feeling of closure. Like other Ouachita athletics teams, Tiger softball’s season ended abruptly in March.

“Even though it was six months later, I’m just glad we finally got the recognition and could come together for the last time,” said Faith, a May 2020 kinesiology and leisure studies/pre-professional studies graduate from Maumelle, Ark. “One thing about Ouachita is that I think I’ll always keep in touch with my professors and friends.”

Newlyweds Dylan and Brooke (Sanderford) Bester echoed Melton, with Dylan saying that Commencement “felt more like a family reunion.”

“The ceremony’s nice, because it feels official, but I think what was really special was the graduation brunch and getting to catch up with people we hadn’t seen and to be together for the first time since March,” said Brooke, a May 2020 communication sciences & disorders and Spanish graduate from Stephenville, Texas.

“We had our own disappointments with COVID,” said Dylan, a December 2019 business administration/entrepreneurship graduate from Johannesburg, South Africa. “Our wedding fell through, and my family had planned to come to graduation in May, and they couldn’t be here today.

“But, the thing is, you make friendships at Ouachita that feel like family,” he added.

For other graduates and their families who did not attend Commencement in person, the livestreamed video of the ceremony offered an alternative way to celebrate. Dillon Luterek, a May 2020 biology graduate from Georgetown, Texas, is the first in his family to graduate from college. Although his family could not attend due to scheduling conflicts, Dillon decided it was worth it to walk to reunite with friends and professors.

“Once I was finally there and saw everyone again, I felt a sense of pride that I finally was able to walk, and I know my family felt the same way,” he said. “I know watching via livestream is not the same as in person, but just watching me walk is what made them happy.”

Abby Leal, a May 2020 communications & media/strategic communications and graphic design graduate from Hot Springs, Ark., and her family watched the ceremony online out of continued caution concerning COVID-19.

“Watching the ceremony online can’t compare to being there surrounded by your classmates, but I did appreciate being able to see my friends walk across the stage and hear my name called,” she said.

Commencement 2020 was different than any before it but also very much *like* every Commencement before it – bittersweet. For generations of graduates who have loved Ouachita, Commencement has been the inevitable closing of one chapter in life and the excitement of beginning another.



OUACHITA BAPTIST UNIVERSITY CLASS OF 2020 RESUME

11 STATES // 8 COUNTRIES // 53 STUDIED ABROAD

65 FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE GRADUATES



HIGHEST 4-YEAR GRADUATION RATE ON RECORD AT OUACHITA

167 HONOR GRADUATES

16

PERFECT 4.0 GPA

32

SUMMA CUM LAUDE

71

MAGNA CUM LAUDE

61

CUM LAUDE

32 COMPLETED CARL GOODSON HONORS PROGRAM

235 DEAN'S LIST | 169 PRESIDENT'S LIST
at least once during their Ouachita career

13,000+ VOLUNTEER SERVICE HOURS LOGGED THEIR SENIOR YEAR



97% CAREER OUTCOMES RATE
(jobs or grad school acceptance)

30% CONTINUING EDUCATION
(in graduate/professional school)



8 ARE THE FIRST IN OVER 25 YEARS TO ENTER A OUACHITA GRAD PROGRAM *(pursuing M.S. in ABA)*



Working for such companies as:

| | | |
|---------------|------------------------|--------------|
| Apptegy | JB Hunt | Simmons Bank |
| Arvest Bank | New York Times | Windstream |
| Ernst & Young | PricewaterhouseCoopers | |

61 STUDENT ATHLETES

38

SCHOLAR ATHLETES

19

ALL-CONFERENCE HONORS

7

ALL-AMERICAN/NATIONAL HONORS

CHAMPIONSHIPS



MEN'S SOCCER



VOLLEYBALL



FOOTBALL

3 GAC CHAMPIONSHIPS



4-0

BATTLE OF THE RAVINE

3 APPEARANCES IN NCAA PLAYOFFS

STATE, REGIONAL & NATIONAL RECOGNITIONS

National Association of Teachers of Singing regional & state finalists - Clay Mobley, Jhonika Wright, Dylan Blackwood, Bonnie Gentry

Miss Arkansas 2019 Top 15 finalist & Non-finalist Overall Talent - Emma Pitts George

2019 Arkansas College Media Association (ACMA) Yearbook Editor of the Year - Addy Goodman

2019 ACMA Website Editor of the Year - Ethan Dial

2019 American Chemical Society Leadership Award - Catie Shirley

2019 CASE ASAP District 4 Outstanding Student Leader - Selby Tucker

2020 "Best Delegate" Midwest Model United Nations recipients - Cole Alexander & Rylie Slone

2020 Arkansas Intercollegiate Band - Richard Blosch & Andrew Coop

2020 Arkansas Governor's Cup Collegiate Business Plan Competition Winners, undergraduate division - Olivia Brown, Savannah Edwards, Brandon Matros, Sheldon McCown



OUACHITA ACADEMIC AWARDS

OVERALL ACADEMIC ACHIEVER - Maggie Donnell // OUTSTANDING SENIOR MAN - Caleb Byrd // OUTSTANDING SENIOR WOMAN - Addy Goodman

Top students in each academic school:

HICKINGBOTHAM SCHOOL OF BUSINESS - Katie Camp

PRUET SCHOOL OF CHRISTIAN STUDIES - Seigen Nichols

HUCKABEE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION - Savannah Hart

SCHOOL OF FINE ARTS - Lesley Howard

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES - Abby Morse

PATTERSON SCHOOL OF NATURAL SCIENCES - Sheldon McCown



TIGER TUNES REWIND

REIMAGINES TUNES TRADITION DESPITE PANDEMIC

By Rachel Gaddis, editorial coordinator

In August 2020, the Ouachita Student Foundation (OSF) announced that its flagship event, Tiger Tunes, would be adapted due to COVID-19 with the theme “Tunes REWIND” and showcase recordings of favorite shows from years past in a single virtual event instead of its usual live, three-night format.

Tiger Tunes’ annual, full-scale production of themed shows – complete with costumes, choreography and clever original lyrics – attracts thousands of spectators and raises more than \$100,000 in student scholarships each year.

For the first time in the 43-year history of Tiger Tunes, OSF adjusted its annual fundraiser to be watched exclusively online. Each club or organization voted on their own favorite shows from the past, and the winning shows were included in Tunes REWIND. The ultimate winners were chosen by viewers’ donations in the same style as OSF’s typical People’s Choice Award.

Tunes REWIND was a special treat for alumni as they had the opportunity to relive their own Tiger Tunes glory days. OSF

mailed watch party host kits to alumni and friends, packaged in an appropriately vintage-inspired VHS case, that included a program and judging scorecards, hand sanitizer, exclusive Tiger Tunes M&Ms, a recipe for “Tunes REWIND Mega-mix” snack mix and more. Five hundred boxes were made available and alumni registered how many guests they’d have at their home parties. All 500 kits were reserved quickly, registering over 5,000 viewers around the country.

“We saw posts from so many parties around the country,” said Jon Merryman, director of alumni relations and OSF. “From custom cookies to club alumni converging on social media to see which of their shows would be competing, alumni and friends showed their support of Ouachita and OSF by tuning in and donating. We especially loved the streamed reunion of the Fourth Floor Guys after the Tiger Tunes REWIND stream was finished. It was great to see alumni still so connected to their groups, their shows and the university.”

TUNES



Thanks to the generosity of alumni, students and friends, OSF raised over \$65,000, far exceeding expectations for the virtual event.

“OSF was so thrilled to see the success that was Tiger Tunes REWIND,” said Mason Woolbright, OSF president and a senior from Benton, Ark. “The reactions from future, current and past students were beyond encouraging as we brought that same energy we normally associate with Tiger Tunes.”

OSF also partnered with Ouachita’s Office of Student Life and students in the Event Planning class to offer an on-campus watch party on Cone-Bottoms lawn for current students.

“Tunes is where I met a lot of my friends who have become some of my best friends,” said sophomore Sarah Collins, a member of the event planning team from Lucas, Texas. “The fact that we weren’t having Tunes stinks, but we wanted everyone to be as involved as possible so they could have that same feeling I had as a freshman.”

“I continue to be impressed by our students as they find creative ways to keep traditions and fun alive on campus,” Merryman said. “It was so fun to look on Cone-Bottoms lawn and see them watching shows like the Sigma Alpha Sigma ‘Road Barrels’ – such a classic – and I’m sure it was new to most of them watching. I’m glad the current students embraced Tunes REWIND, and I am thankful to those who planned the on-campus event to engage their fellow Ouachitonians in this virtual experience.”

While the club shows featured in Tiger Tunes REWIND were past shows, OSF brought freshness to the performances with new host and hostess performances, recorded physically distanced on the JPAC stage.

“Whenever we auditioned in February [2020], we expected a full, normal Tunes show. I barely knew what the coronavirus was back then, so the expectations were not the end result,” said Melody Stotts, a junior from Jonesboro, Ark., who performed as a Tunes hostess. “It was crazy and different, but also exciting because we were the first group that got to do this online format.”

Merryman coordinated the production along with three other Ouachita alumni: musical director Dr. David Stanley (’01), choreographer Stacy Hawking (’16) and videographer Paul Huenefeld (’12). Merryman, who has led Tiger Tunes efforts as a staff member

“THE REACTIONS FROM FUTURE, CURRENT AND PAST STUDENTS WAS BEYOND ENCOURAGING AS WE BROUGHT THAT SAME ENERGY WE NORMALLY ASSOCIATE WITH TIGER TUNES. – MASON WOOLBRIGHT, OSF PRESIDENT

since 2012 and as an OSF member during his student years, said it was surreal to be in the room as the songs were filmed for the production.

“My wife Emily and I were emotional as they filmed the opener with just a few friends each in the audience,” Merryman said. “Emily said, ‘It’s not fair they don’t get a Tunes with this place filled with people,’ and she was right.

“The virus changed so many things this year,” he continued, “and these students rose to the occasion, put in the work – they even did so joyfully and professionally – and helped to create a beautiful virtual Tiger Tunes event to help keep the spirit of Tunes alive.”

WATCH NOW AT OBU.EDU/REWIND



photo by Hannah Adamson



photo by Jon Merryman



photo by Abby Blakenship

SHOWS SELECTED

PRESHOW

- CHI IOTA SIGMA PALACE GUARDS • 2008
- CHI RHO PHI CHI-RHO-PRACTORS • 2013
- FOURTH FLOOR GUYS SAFETY • 2009
- INTERNATIONAL CLUB AMERICAN TOURISTS IN PARIS • 2007
- SIGMA ALPHA SIGMA ROAD BARRELS • 2002

SHOW

- EEE TOY SOLDIERS • 2016
- RHO SIGMA FIREMEN • 2008

- CAMPUS MINISTRIES BAPTISTS • 2009
- TRI CHI MATCHES • 2015
- KAPPA CHI COAL MINERS • 2008
- CHI DELTA HENS • 1990
- TIGER BLAST! THRILLER • 2008
- GAMMA PHI BANANAS • 1990
- BETA BETA ASTRONAUTS • 2016
- STUDENT LIFE FRESHMAN YEAR • 2014
- ETA ALPHA OMEGA DADS • 2015
- CHI MU MUSES • 2018

HOSTS & HOSTESSES

- MOLLY KENNEDY • *Melissa, Texas*
- WADE WILSON • *Springdale, Ark.*
- ELIZABETH DAWSON • *Little Rock, Ark.*
- LONDON DENMAN • *Fort Worth, Texas*
- CARLIN CAMPBELL • *Wichita, Kan.*
- MELODY STOTTS • *Jonesboro, Ark.*
- RYAN LYNCH • *Bryant, Ark.*
- AUTUMN ROMINES • *Cabot, Ark.*

OUACHITA'S NEW M.S. PROGRAM IN APPLIED BEHAVIOR ANALYSIS ADDRESSES CRITICAL NEEDS

By Trennis Henderson

Establishing the first full master's degree in applied behavior analysis (ABA) in Arkansas is a significant milestone for Ouachita as well as for families across the state.

The university's Master of Science degree in ABA officially launched in May and is designed to address a critical shortage of trained Board-Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) throughout the region. Graduates of the program will be equipped to provide therapy options to treat such issues as autism, dementia and Alzheimer's.

The innovative low-residency program combines online and in-person instruction, carefully and efficiently aligning field experience with course curriculum to allow students to complete the program in just 15 months.

"What's different about Ouachita's program is that we have an intensive face-to-face component," explained Dr. Sheila Barnes, who serves as director of the new program. The program begins with five days of "bootcamp" on campus, followed by completely online coursework and in-person fieldwork that is overseen by adjunct faculty members, BCBAs in Ouachita's partner clinics.

Barnes, who is uniquely qualified to develop and lead the program, holds the highest academic credentials in her field and is a former president of ArkABA. She has extensive experience working in a variety of settings with infants and children with autism or other disabilities.

She explained that applied behavior analysis involves applying scientific principles of behavior to build useful skills and reduce common behavioral problems for at-risk populations ranging from children to the elderly.

ABA PROGRAM OFF TO STRONG START

Even amid the unprecedented challenges brought on by a global pandemic, Ouachita's ABA program is off to a strong start with 30 students already over halfway through the 15-month program.

"Several of our students have started the intervention phase of their research projects with astounding results!" Barnes remarked. "Students are already sharing results, and I am truly in awe.

"Many of our students have tackled a 'resistant-to-intervention' behavior," she added. "Several students have taken on a very, very difficult-to-teach child. At my clinic, a child who never, ever made a spontaneous request was taught to ask for what he wants. This skill went from zero spontaneous requests to 150 in a five-hour therapy session. He also generalized to making requests at home!"

SEVERAL OF OUR STUDENTS HAVE STARTED THE INTERVENTION PHASE OF THEIR RESEARCH PROJECTS WITH ASTOUNDING RESULTS! – DR. SHEILA BARNES

Citing the acute shortage of BCBAs in Arkansas and the surrounding region, Dr. Monica Hardin, associate vice president for graduate and professional studies, affirmed the program's long-term impact.

"Families report being on waiting lists of as long as two years before being able to receive therapy for their kids," she noted. "During that time, a prime window for effectiveness passes.

"By offering a program that combines in-person and online elements in a rapid course sequence," she added, "we seek to train students who will have both the academic knowledge and practical experience to be effective practitioners immediately upon graduation."



CREATIVE PARTNERSHIP ENHANCES PROGRAM

Clinical settings that provide hands-on fieldwork and supervision for ABA students play a vital role in Ouachita's overall degree requirements. One key partner is Pediatrics Plus, owned by 1993 Ouachita alumni Todd and Amy Denton.

Ouachita has partnered with Pediatrics Plus to provide land for an \$8 million clinic construction project on the southwest corner of campus. In addition to working with ABA students, the clinic will provide internship and employment opportunities for undergraduate students in related fields as well as offering a convenient childcare option for faculty and staff.

During a groundbreaking ceremony in March for the new Pediatrics Plus clinic, Ouachita President Ben Sells noted that "for higher education, healthcare and rural communities, it's a disruptive time. But today is evidence that where there is disruption, there is also opportunity – for those who seize it." Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson also attended and spoke that day, voicing his support.

Describing the planning and implementation process for the ABA program and the Pediatrics Plus partnership as "a testimony to dreaming a larger dream, perseverance and collaboration," Dr. Sells expressed appreciation to several community and statewide partners "for seizing this opportunity and your commitment to continue on this remarkable journey for the benefit of the people we're each called to serve."

Todd Denton emphasized that the program's "hands-on approach will allow the students to gain a deeper understanding of ABA concepts" and be "better prepared to serve as BCBAs after graduation."

With the growing demand for applied behavior analysis, Denton said Ouachita's commitment to train qualified professionals will enhance opportunities to "expand into underserved areas to provide these much-needed services."

Keeping her eyes clearly focused on the ABA program's big picture, Dr. Barnes concluded, "Not only are we preparing future BCBAs, but in the process, we are changing the lives of children."



Trennis Henderson, former vice president for communications at Ouachita, has served since 2018 as a national correspondent for Woman's Missionary Union.



photos by Brooke Zimny

WATCH MORE ABOUT ABA AT OUACHITA: obu.edu/aba



including the story of one child's progress thanks to the work of Ouachita student Lakota.



Creating a culture of belonging begins with a biblical basis.



Pre-pandemic photo

Listening and leading

TOWARD BIBLICAL BELONGING

by Ben Sells, president

Ouachita's progress in recent years, much of which is referenced in this *Circle*, reflects the input and ideas from listening to responses from two questions in regard to our future: "What *shouldn't* change?" and "What *should* change?"

Since arriving here in April 2016, Lisa and I have listened to many Ouachitonians answer these questions. We'll continue to do so. Those answers guide our prayers and our work.

A part of our listening includes hearing the voices of our students and alumni of color. Their stories are both similar to and different from the white voices we've heard. Both groups share a deep appreciation for their Ouachita education and experience. But, far too often, our minority students and alumni tell us about feeling misjudged, misunderstood or mistreated by words and actions of students and employees – often unintentionally, but sometimes directly.

Listening to their stories about specific incidents of racial prejudice on our campus is not easy. Sometimes it's extremely uncomfortable. But, Lisa and I believe that Dietrich Bonhoeffer was right when he said in his book *Life Together*, "The first service that one owes to others in the fellowship consists in listening to them." Until we listen, we can't understand how to make Ouachita a place where belonging is central to the outstanding educational experience our graduates always mention.

These stories of prejudice are not unique to Ouachita – it's the experience of many people of color, especially Black and Hispanic students, at predominately white institutions. But it does not reflect God's intent or design for us moving forward.

To create a culture of belonging for our students, we must "think Christianly" about racism and what it means for our university. Dr. Danny Hays, dean of Ouachita's Pruet School of Christian Studies and a leading evangelical scholar on the theology of race, gives us two helpful statements to guide how we learn and live as a campus community:

All people are created in the image of God, and therefore all races and ethnic groups have the same equal status and equal unique value.

The picture of God's people at the climax of history depicts a multi-ethnic congregation from every tribe, language, people and nation, all gathered together in worship around God's throne.

Creating a culture of belonging for all races begins with a biblical basis, and our actions are driven by theological convictions. But there are other reasons – educational and demographic.

Differences among students cultivates learning. Engaging with people of different ethnicities and cultures develops intercultural competence, more important than ever to live, work and minister effectively in our local, national and global contexts.

The demographics of our country are changing, and those trends are already reflected at Ouachita. For example, 5.6% of our current students are Hispanic – our highest percentage ever. It mirrors population shifts in Arkansas and surrounding states.

As we work toward creating a campus culture where students and employees of color feel they do belong, it's important to remember, as painful as it is, that until the mid-1960s, Ouachita prohibited Black students from enrolling. Our campus is now more racially diverse than ever: 16.4% of students are minority, 2.4% are international and 81.2% are white. About 12% of our employees are faculty and staff of color. Our progress is good news. I'm convinced that as we become increasingly diverse, we'll be a stronger university as a result.

Ouachita doesn't have a specific racial diversity goal for enrollment, but we do have a *belonging* goal. All college students have challenges, but the color of one's skin shouldn't be a challenge to feeling welcomed, accepted and supported on our campus. *Belonging* should be one of the defining experiences of every Ouachita student.

Lisa and I have listened to more than 200 students and alumni of color, and we have learned that Ouachita should be doing more to create this *belonging* atmosphere. We're making progress, gaining ground. Ouachita, however, needed help in this ministry of listening, engaging and supporting students and alumni of color. It's important work, worth focused attention at the senior leadership level – a first for Ouachita.

I met alumnus Dr. Lewis Shepherd in my first few weeks at Ouachita and we have worked alongside one another in the community for four years. Listening to his Ouachita story convinced me that he was the person to help us achieve our goal for every student *belonging*. Read more about Dr. Shepherd and his new role on the next page.

Shepherd returns to Ouachita with goals for belonging

A Q&A with Dr. Lewis Shepherd

Dr. Lewis Shepherd returned to his alma mater in August as special assistant to the president. Shepherd is a double graduate of Ouachita, having earned a bachelor's degree in religion and a master's degree in education. He earned his doctorate in higher education from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. He previously served at Ouachita for 29 years in such roles as assistant to the dean of students, director of Student Support Services, director of TRiO Programs, assistant to the president for special programs and university compliance officer.



photo by Tyler Rosenthal

Q: Tell us how your Ouachita story began.

A: In 1974, I received my call into the ministry, and one of the first people who spent time with me about my future plans was my youth pastor, Jesse Gossett, at the Friendship Baptist Church near Magnolia, Ark. Although I was only a junior in high school, he did not want to waste any time in making sure I was prepared to enroll in Ouachita. I only visited one campus in search of my college home, and it was Ouachita.

Q: You are returning to Ouachita as special assistant to the president. What does that role entail?

A: The role of special assistant to the president covers three specific areas:

- First, providing the support and resources necessary to ensure that all faculty, staff and students of color have a sense of belonging as they participate in the Ouachita experience.
- Second, there is a focus on alumni of color to hear about their experiences and invite them to serve as mentors, encouragers, recruiters and supporters to current students.
- Third, because I pastor a local church and am active in the Arkadelphia area, I help represent the university and the president to the community.

There are two areas that report to this office: Multicultural Student Programs, the current administrative parallel to Black American Student Society (BASS), to which I belonged as a Ouachita student; and TRiO, which are federally-funded outreach and student services programs designed to identify and provide services for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds. I previously served in several roles in TRiO.

Q: As a Ouachita alumnus and former staff member, what is it like returning to campus for this new assignment?

A: It is absolutely wonderful! During my first stint at Ouachita, which lasted 29 years, I enjoyed it tremendously. During the 11 years that I was away, with each passing day my heart would ache for Ouachita more and more. I have been overwhelmed with such welcoming comments from students, faculty and staff that I am meeting for the first time but also the “welcome back” expressions from former colleagues.

Q: *In this year's often polarizing climate for race in our country, what do you see as the path forward?*

A: America has always been a nation where, regardless of the issue, it will at some point fall along racial lines. The year 2020 has been the most interesting year that I have experienced in my lifetime. We have had partisan politics in its most intense form, civil unrest that rivals the 1960s and 1970s, and a virus that has left us exposed physically, financially, mentally and socially. We live in challenging times. But, in every previous situation that was daunting and challenging to Americans, we allowed our resilient spirit to take control and help propel us to greater heights than ever before.

In order to be successful, students must have a sense of belonging.

The guiding principles that will lead us at Ouachita focus on three primary areas: Acknowledgment that people are different because of their cultures, experiences and values; Acceptance that while people are different, they also have more in common than not; and, Appreciation for the differences, which leads to empathy.

The Apostle Paul gave us direction in dealing with human relations, and it goes across all barriers of ethnicity, color, creed, gender or socioeconomic lines: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:2).

Q: *What kind of practical changes do you hope to see in the Ouachita community through your work?*

A: Here are two examples. While students and alumni of color believe the words and actions directed at them are usually unconscious or unintentional, it works against a sense of belonging. I want to help other students, faculty and staff understand that not only do words hurt, but they also scar, and in far too many cases, for a lifetime. In order to be successful, students must have a sense of belonging. Additionally, I hope to see a higher percentage of students of color get internships, participate in high impact learning opportunities, graduate, get jobs and enroll in graduate programs.

Q: *What work already is underway this semester that has been particularly exciting?*

A: The area that has been the most intense is my interaction with alumni of color. The focus has been graduates who are from the Black, Asian and Hispanic communities, and they have responded. They're excited that they are asked to be engaged, return to campus, serve as mentors to current students, assist in locating internships and help with faculty and staff searches. It is overwhelming to hear alums say they have not been back to campus in 25 or 30 years, but they plan to attend once COVID-19 is a thing of the past.



LA FUERZA

photo by Callie Rogers

Ouachita's newest student organization, La Fuerza, has been active on campus this year providing community, support and awareness for Hispanic students on campus. They hosted events celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month in the fall for the first time on campus.

THE Annie Abrams LIVING LEGACY AWARD

Ouachita established the Annie Abrams Living Legacy Award in June. The award honors Arkadelphia native and civil rights activist Annie



TYRESE ALLEN



DAYJA JAMES

Abrams and recognizes Black student leaders.

Learn more about the award and its first two recipients, Tyrese Allen and Dayja James, at obu.edu/abrams.



Ruth Plymale

Holder of the J.D. Patterson Chair of Biology

By Jon Merryman, director of alumni relations

Ask Dr. Ruth Plymale what she loves about Ouachita, and her answer is easy – the students! “Ouachita students are phenomenal,” Plymale shared. “They’re nice, for one, but also super hard-working. They want to do a great job, and they’re just lovely people. I’ve had students pray for me; we encourage one another. I love getting to know students – which may not have been the case if I taught at a larger university without a focus on community.”

Born in Japan and growing up in Texas and Northwest Arkansas, Plymale arrived at Ouachita to teach biology in 2009 after earning degrees at the University of Arkansas and Penn State. Now Arkadelphia feels like home and her students like family.

“I love not only getting to know my students but other Ouachita students I meet at campus activities,” Plymale said. “One day I was picking up groceries, and the employee bringing my groceries to my car was a student I met at a ballgame in the stands. I was so excited to see them and reconnect!”

“Ruth is one of the most organized and most conscientious people I know,” said Dr. Tim Knight, dean of Ouachita’s Patterson School of Natural Sciences. “She is not just a great teacher but an excellent advisor, as well. She genuinely cares for students and wants to see them succeed.”

In addition to teaching biology courses and advising students, Plymale serves as coordinator of Ouachita’s Biomedical Scholars Program, a program built for students preparing to enter health professions.

“Unlike a typical biology degree, Ouachita Biomedical Scholars take courses in physics, logic, communications; courses that focus on other people like Death and Dying; they participate in TranServe and study abroad; and they graduate with 50 hours of medical shadowing,” Plymale explained. “We have an outstanding alumni network working with students for shadowing – even during COVID-19! Completing all of these courses and experiences make these graduates excellent applicants for health professions.”

When in-person instruction shifted to remote in March due to COVID-19, Plymale and her colleagues worked tirelessly to ensure learning continued smoothly. Labs were created that could be completed at home, lectures were recorded to be watched on demand while class time was spent in synchronous question-and-answer sessions. Plymale’s famous shark dissection lab took place via Zoom from her bathroom at home, where there were “plenty of wipeable spaces,” she said.

Other home-friendly labs also were used, including labs that are now models for other science programs across the country thanks to Ouachita’s unique AR-CURE program.

“Students can learn to measure this and that and put it in to this formula – and they’re great at that – but if they *just* do that, they won’t know how to apply those techniques to anything else,” Plymale explained. “Instead, if you have students work on a project where they learn to solve problems, they gain confidence in their abilities to solve problems.”

These “CURE”s, course-embedded undergraduate research experiences, have been a keystone of Ouachita’s Patterson School for several years, with faculty members recently building the nationwide initiative to provide pedagogical resources to other undergraduate programs. This summer, they hosted the fourth annual AR-CURE Synthetic Biology Workshop, only this time it was virtual. Plymale and her colleagues hosted faculty members from 38 colleges and universities for the weekend workshop.

Problem solving proved to be a critical skill in this unprecedented year not only for Plymale’s students but also for faculty, staff and others as we each made adjustments to life as usual.

“Completing all of these courses and experiences make these graduates excellent applicants for health professions.”

Rob Hewell

Director of Online Learning Initiatives & Professor of Music

By Jon Merryman, director of alumni relations

While many of us were home in March learning to bake homemade bread or binging Netflix, Dr. Rob Hewell was working swiftly with IT Services and other campus partners to shift every Ouachita student to remote learning. Hewell thrived not only assisting current students but also faculty and staff with moving courses to Zoom and Moodle while continuing his typical daily work with students in Ouachita's online degree programs.

"I think there is a silver lining to this dark cloud we've been living under in this season, and that is that our residential faculty have had the opportunity and need to rethink how they do what they do and realize there are resources they didn't know about that can help students learn," Hewell shared. "I love serving at Ouachita and working with fantastic colleagues and students. Online education is here to stay, and I love being able to help faculty and students succeed online."

"The last seven weeks of the semester could have been disastrous, but Dr. Hewell stepped up to offer the resources, training and assistance faculty needed to manage such a massive disruption to their plans," said Dr. Stan Poole, vice president for academic affairs. "Dr. Hewell's knowledge and competence – and especially his heart for service – couldn't have been more timely or more deeply appreciated by those who benefitted from his expertise."

Part of what has made Hewell the perfect person to lead Ouachita's online education component is his love of a challenge, having taken on many new opportunities throughout his career. After over

a decade in church music ministry and eight years with the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, he joined Ouachita's faculty in 2001 as chair of the Department of Church Music (later Worship Arts). With the launch of Ouachita Online in 2014, Dr. Hewell became an online course

"I love being able to help faculty and students succeed online."

designer, then coordinator of online course development and later the director of Ouachita Online.

"I am committed to helping Ouachita be robust in how we help students who might never have the chance to come to Ouachita – particularly non-traditional students – attend and complete their degrees. Even if a student is never able to set foot on campus, I want to help them become a Ouachitonian and a Tiger for Life."

The newest degree offerings through Ouachita Online are degree completion programs in interdisciplinary studies and organizational leadership, as well as an RN-to-BSN completer program. Additionally, the new M.S. degree in applied behavior analysis is a low-residency program, with all but one week of the program completed online.

"It's been wonderful to help people realize their goal of completing their Ouachita degree," Hewell said.

"Dr. Hewell is a perfect reflection of what Ouachita is all about," said Bryant Adams, a 2020 alumnus who completed his degree online over 20 years after starting in person as a freshman. "He is kind and caring toward his students while seeking to encourage and empower them to achieve their goals. In my experience, during the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, he was a vital leader standing up for remote learning for the entire Ouachita community while still effectively teaching and shaping his students in the degree completion program."

If you are considering finishing a degree you started, Hewell suggests reaching out for a free preliminary transcript review. See obu.edu/online for the current online degree offerings.

"It's completely free – I'll take a look at how many courses and how many hours you have left to complete a degree," he said. "If it works for you now, that's great! If not, we'll be here when you're ready."



Christa Neal ('08)

FACILITATING HOPE AND HEALING

By Jon Merryman, director of alumni relations



photo by Tyler Rosenthal

Alumna Christa Neal admits that talking about child abuse and maltreatment isn't fun or joyful, but there is joy in helping children who are victims of abuse find hope and healing.

Seven years ago, Neal was named executive director of the newly established Percy and Donna Malone Child Safety Center in Arkadelphia. There wasn't a "center" to speak of at the time, just a vision of helping children who were victims of abuse or maltreatment in the area. Soon, a location would be found, Neal would grow funding and support and families would gain much needed services.

Neal entered Ouachita without a clear career path, but a general psychology class her freshman year piqued her interest and led her to work in counseling and now non-profit management.

"I remember at a young age feeling concerned for those who were hurting or needed someone to stand up or fight for them," she said. "I'm definitely for the underdog and am a lover of justice. I had no idea how great the need really was when I first started this work. After seeing the need, I felt responsible to do something, and that is what I hope others will feel as well as they learn more about child abuse."

In her current role, she not only manages the center's staff of eight, but also provides mental health therapy to children, completes grant proposals and reports, provides expert testimony in court, raises funds and support from the community and collaborates with other organizations who help protect children.

"The highs are high and the lows are low," Neal shared. "Soon after I started at the center, my husband, Jay, told me that I seemed different. And I think it is true. You cannot look evil in the face and not be changed."

Because over 90 percent of abused children are the victim of someone they know or trust, when schools closed this spring due to the pandemic, many children were stuck at home with their abusers. Teachers contribute the majority of calls to the child abuse and maltreatment hotline, so without direct access to teachers, reports dropped off almost completely in the spring and summer and then rose sharply in August.

"We know that children wait to tell (if they do tell), so I think we will see the effects of this isolation and these COVID-19 restrictions for years to come," Neal said.

She noted several ways that individuals can be part of the solution, beginning with acknowledging that abuse happens. Statistics show that 10% to 20% of Americans are victims of sexual abuse before the age of 18.

"I encourage everyone to be a safe person for kids," Neal added. "Invest in relationships and educate yourself. Open, age-appropriate conversations with kids in our lives – nieces, nephews, grandkids, our own kids – these are important. While studies show the effects of trauma on children are lasting, studies also show that those who find healing are those who have safe, caring adults in their lives."

TO HEAR MORE OF CHRISTA'S OR JULIO'S STORIES,
CHECK OUT THE TIGER FOR LIFE PODCAST AT
obu.edu/tigerforlifepodcast.



Julio Pruitt ('20)

FORMER NFL PLAYER COMPLETES DEGREE

By Mandy Halbert

When it came time for Julius “Julio” Pruitt to graduate high school, he knew he was headed to Ouachita to focus on football, a decision that would later lead him to the opportunity to be among the top 1% of football players in the nation.

“My best memory of my time playing football would be my final game at the Battle of Ravine – going for 10 catches, 250 yards and four touchdowns against that school from across the street,” Pruitt said. “We walked across Highway 7 and put it on Henderson pretty good.” The Tigers won that 2008 match-up 43-36.

His time at Ouachita, however, would be cut short. On Sept. 7, 2009, Pruitt received a phone call from Brian Gaine, an executive for the National Football League’s Miami Dolphins, offering him a spot on the practice squad.

“The transition from college to pro football was challenging,” Pruitt said. “The level of competition was like nothing I’ve experienced before and, on top of that, I had to deal with the south Florida heat.”

Pruitt was one of eight practice squad players for the Dolphins from 2009 to 2010. At the end of his first year, he was the only member of the original squad who remained on the team. Pruitt later was signed from the practice squad to the active roster in 2011 and played through 2013.

“I just kept my head down, worked hard and tried to make it impossible for the Dolphins to replace me,” Pruitt said. “The odds of making it to the NFL are 1%, and the average NFL career is three years. I was fortunate enough to make it three years.”

Pruitt was only 16 hours shy of graduating from Ouachita when he left to play for the Dolphins. Following his retirement from the NFL, he hoped to complete his degree as a recipient of the NFL Trust Scholarship.

Ouachita’s Dr. Rob Hewell contacted Pruitt about completing his Ouachita degree; all of his remaining course credits had become available through Ouachita Online.

“Dr. Hewell came through in a huge way,” Pruitt said. “I really appreciate him and all those that played a part in me getting back into Ouachita. I returned this year as a student to fulfill a promise I made to myself, my parents and my coaches.”

Pruitt completed his degree this fall from his home in Homestead, Fla., where he lives with his wife, Marylen, and his four children. In coming months, they plan to move back to Newport, Ark., to open Upfront Performance Enhancement – a sports training facility for youth, including a nutrition program by Marylen, who is a Le Cordon Bleu-trained chef.

“Everything that I do now, I get a chance to experience it with the family I’ve been blessed to create,” Pruitt said. “My kids have seen me working and studying. They see that you don’t ever have to stop learning, and you can do anything if you’re willing to try and work.”



Photo courtesy of Julio Pruitt



Mandy Halbert is a senior communications & media/multimedia journalism and graphic design double major from Allen, Texas.

TIGER ATHLETES DIG IN DESPITE COVID-19 CHALLENGES

By Thomas Donley, director of athletic communications

The sports world has been no stranger to the impact of COVID-19. Seasons have been postponed, shortened and canceled. Teams have been forced to alter the way they prepare and what they even prepare for. Athletes, coaches and entire teams have been quarantined. An ever-changing understanding of an invisible opponent has led to frustration both for those who just want to play and coach the games they love and for the diehard fans left with empty spaces in their hearts and their weekends.

It remains to be seen when Tiger fans will be allowed to pack Cliff Harris Stadium, Bill Vining Arena or any of Ouachita's other venues, but there is light at the end of the tunnel. The Great American Conference (GAC) announced on Nov. 16 its plans to return to play in January 2021.

It hasn't been easy, but Tiger athletics teams have been doing what they do best – staying strong, staying positive and working hard.

With no games to prepare in Fall of 2020, Coach Todd Knight and the defending GAC champion Tiger football team had to adjust to the lack of external competition.

"We're doing the best we can with it, but it's not the same as when you get up on game day and everybody's geared up – the officials are coming in, the field is set up and ready to go, campus is full and tickets are being sold," Knight said. "It's a little harder to get motivated when you're possibly a year from being able to play, but our guys have handled it well."

Tiger football spent the fall focused on many areas of growth in what Knight called "Man School."

"First, we work on personal growth, trying to figure out

who we are spiritually," he said. "Next is academics. There's no reason you shouldn't be better academically with fewer hours invested in football. Next is the physical aspect, just trying to get your body as good as you can get it. You've got a full year to get ready; let's see if we can blow it out and be stronger, faster, better-conditioned athletes. That's the best motivation at this point, and the guys have bought in and they're doing a good job of it."

Fall practices took several hits; positive cases and careful quarantine protocols rendered entire teams unable to practice for weeks at a time.

"The single biggest day-to-day struggle has been not knowing when there is going to be a positive test on any of our 15 athletic teams that, through contact tracing, could result in quarantining many athletes, or possibly a whole team and staff," said Ouachita Director of Athletics David Sharp.

Tiger volleyball has felt the disappointment of the fall season being shut down and the frustration of the whole team being sent home twice. But with a 10-game spring semester schedule beginning Jan. 26, Head Coach Allison Frizzell-Kizer and her team gained a new goal to work toward.

"Our student-athletes were beyond disappointed that our fall season was canceled, but there was some light when we realized there was still a chance to play in the spring," Frizzell-Kizer said. "Assistant Coach Jalissa Trotter and I started making plans of how to use the fall as our 'pre-season.' Once we made that distinction, our team went to work with the mentality of using every repetition and every workout for the goal of competition in the spring."



photo by Callie Rogers



photo by Abby Blankenship



SPORTS UPDATE

photo by Hannah Smith

*It hasn't been easy, but Tiger athletics teams have been doing what they do best – **STAYING STRONG, STAYING POSITIVE AND WORKING HARD.***

Temperature checks at the door of the gym, hand sanitizer between drills, a limited number of athletes in the locker room at one time and physically-distant team huddles have been just some of the differences that remind Ouachita volleyball players that this isn't a normal year. Frizzell-Kizer and crew have even adapted the way they congratulate one another, using "foot-fives" rather than slapping hands.

When sports were shut down in March 2020, spring seasons were just starting to ramp up. Tiger baseball had won two straight games and was preparing for a five-game homestand when the news broke.

"We were practicing on a Thursday getting ready to host Southwestern Oklahoma State University in a conference weekend," said Head Coach Luke Howard. "The players that were coming late from class started asking if we had heard the news about school being dismissed. I stopped practice and addressed it right then and there, and Coach Sharp came down and told the team what was going on. It came to a screeching halt."

Nearly nine months later, every Ouachita team except football have competitions planned for the spring semester. (See obutigers.com for the latest information on winter and spring sports.)

For many Tiger athletes, the pandemic disrupted their senior seasons. Craig Ward and Ouachita men's tennis were on the road when the bad news came down. The team was preparing for a three-day tournament in San Antonio having just beaten some top-ranked teams. That momentum came to a screeching halt.

"We felt that our best days were ahead," Ward said. "Having to break the news to the guys that our season had just ended was one of the most difficult experiences of my coaching career."

"The most difficult was telling our three seniors," he said. "All three had been great leaders and examples the previous three years on-and-off the court. The thought that everything could end so suddenly and be out of our control was a tough life lesson. That last night in San Antonio, I took the guys downtown and we had our picture made in front of the Alamo. It seemed fitting under the circumstances."

Since the pandemic first became a global crisis in early 2020, Ouachita Athletics' approach to dealing with drastic changes has become somewhat normalized. Discussions that seemed unthinkable in March were taken in stride in November.

"I'm proud of how our Tigers have handled these unprecedented disruptions, from student athletes and coaches to medical staff and administration," Sharp noted. "We've continued to make decisions with the knowledge available and asking for wisdom from the Lord, always seeking to have our athletes' best interest at the forefront. That being said, we are eager to get back on the courts, fields and pools for competition as soon as we are able. I'm confident our hard work during these unusual months will pay off."



Thomas Donley is director of athletic communications. He joined Ouachita's staff in August 2020.



photo by Abby Blankenship



photo by Hannah Smith



photo by Mikaela Monahan



KOURTNEY CHUMBLEY

CHUMBLEY NAMED OUACHITA WOMEN'S TENNIS COACH

Kourtney Chumbley, a 2015 Ouachita alumna, returned to Arkadelphia as head women's tennis coach in October 2020. Chumbley, a three-time All-Conference selection and 2013 Tiger MVP, is coming off a three-year stint at the University of Mount Olive as assistant men's and women's tennis coach and, more recently, director of student-athlete development.

"Her experience as a former tennis student-athlete here along with the experience she has gained coaching tennis at the Division II level will enhance our efforts as we continue to move forward into the future," said David Sharp, Ouachita's director of athletics.

"I am thankful for an opportunity to give back to the university that gave so much to me during my time as a student-athlete," Chumbley said. "Ouachita is truly a special place for student-athletes to flourish on and off the court."



CHRIS LAWSON

LAWSON TRANSITIONS TO COACH TIGER MEN'S SOCCER

Chris Lawson was named the new head coach of the Tiger men's soccer team in August 2020. Formerly the assistant coach for women's soccer, Lawson previously served as the first team manager for Lincoln United Football Club from 2017-2018, assistant women's soccer coach at Doane University from 2015-2018 and goalkeeper coach at Buxmont Torch Football Club in 2015.

"We are fortunate Chris Lawson has been assisting our soccer programs for the past three seasons," Director of Athletics David Sharp said. "His knowledge about the game of soccer and his expertise in recruiting will serve our men's program well."

"I am extremely grateful for the faith that Mr. Sharp and the rest of the administration have placed in me to lead this program, for all the hard work that Coach Wilson Jones put into it and for the support I have received from Coach Wright and the rest of the Ouachita community," Lawson said.

OUACHITA LAUNCHES INTERCOLLEGIATE WOMEN'S TRACK & FIELD TEAM, MEN'S CROSS COUNTRY TEAM

Ouachita expanded its competitive running program in Fall 2020 with a new NCAA Division II women's track and field team as well as a men's cross country club team. The men's cross country club is expected to transition to an NCAA intercollegiate team in Fall 2021.

"It's very exciting to me that we have added the opportunity for more women to compete in an NCAA sport," said David Sharp, Ouachita's director of athletics. "These opportunities show our commitment to students engaging in extracurricular activities."

Steve Guymon, who has served as Ouachita's head women's cross country coach and the director of competitive club sports since he was hired in spring of 2019, now also will oversee women's track and field and the men's cross country club. Guymon was named conference Coach of the Year 28 times and NCAA South Region Coach of the Year 12 times at his previous institution.

Track and field and cross country have been practicing physically-distanced in accordance with health guidelines in anticipation of spring competitions.

"This season has definitely been a challenging one with the restrictions due to the coronavirus," Guymon said. "I have been so blessed with a team that has come to practice each day with a positive attitude. They have been training hard for the unknown."



photo by Levi Dade

CLASS NOTES

connecting the circle

1940s

Louise (Morris '40) Davis celebrated her 100th birthday on Feb. 11, 2020, with friends and family at Windsor Cottage. Louise returned to Ouachita to earn her master's degree in music education from Ouachita in 1969. In August 2020, she was honored as a Worthy Ouachitonian by Ouachita President Ben Sells in recognition of the 80-year anniversary of earning her undergraduate degree.



1950s

Beth (Moore '51) Church celebrated her 91st birthday and 70th year as a Ouachita graduate this year. She was an elementary school teacher for more than 50 years and is a faithful member of Remount Baptist Church in Sherwood. Her two children and two of her grandchildren also attended Ouachita.



Henry (54) and Melba (Briggs '57) Wood moved from their home in Texarkana, Texas, to be closer to their daughter, **Amanda (Wood '92) Aucoin**, and four grandsons in Wake Forest, N.C.



1960s

Ruth (Venable '63) Munnerlyn retired after a 25-year career as a nurse.

1970s

Larry ('70) Lefler and his wife, Charlotte, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary on Feb. 21, 2020.

Charles "Chuck" Overton ('76) retired following nine years as hospice chaplain for Caris Healthcare and 26 years as a pastor in Kentucky. He earned a certification in thanatology from the Association for Death Education and Counseling in 2006. He and his wife, Debbie, live in Cookeville, Tenn.

Dr. Shawn Shannon ('77) now serves as minister of spiritual formation at Tallwood Baptist Church in Houston, following nearly four decades in campus ministry with the Baptist Student Ministry of Texas Baptists.

Mark ('78) and Becky (Huddleston '77) Allison served as co-chairs for the 2020 Evolve Gala benefiting The Centers for Youth & Families in Arkansas.

Tommy Conzel ('78) retired after 42 years of technical and engineering duties for Reynolds Metals Company, Poulan Weed Eater and Mission Plastics of Arkansas. Tommy and his wife, Tina, plan to spend more time visiting with their grandchildren, fishing and traveling the country.

Dr. Rodney Davis ('78) received the Headstream Memorial Award for Lifetime Achievement from the Arkansas Urologic Society. Rodney is a professor and chair of the Department of Urology at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.



Calling all Tigerettes

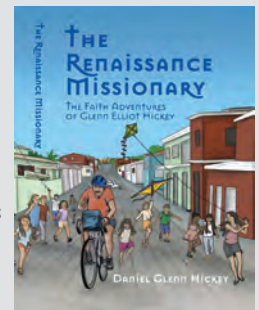
Former Tigerette basketball players are hoping to gather in the fall for a reunion.

Contact the Office of Alumni Relations at alumni@obu.edu or (870) 245-5506 to be added to the mailing list.

Daniel Glenn Hickey ('78)

authored *The Renaissance Missionary: The Faith Adventures of Glenn Elliot Hickey*, which is available on Amazon.

It tells stories from the ministries of his parents, **Glenn and Dorothy Hickey ('53)**. Other Ouachitonians featured in the book include **Henry Wood ('53)**, **Fred Spann ('56)**, **Guy Key ('79)**, **Bob Berry ('78)**, **Steve Dewbre ('79)** and **Daniel Grant ('77)**.



1980s

Larry Root ('80) was named a Best-in-State Wealth Advisor by *Forbes* magazine. Root is a private wealth adviser with Ameriprise Financial.

Vera (Brim '82) Rideout published her book *May I Borrow Your Eraser?* on Sept. 14. Vera is the founder and coordinator of Safe In His Arms Ministries and is an educator in southeast Arkansas.

Brent Houston ('89) was elected Saline County Third Division Circuit Judge. He and his wife, Lisa, celebrated their 30th wedding anniversary in August. Their twins, Harrison and Harmony, attend Bauxite High School.

1990s

Kimberley (Dawn '91) Hamilton serves as life enrichment coordinator for Dallas Retirement Village in Dallas, Ore.

Denver Peacock ('94) received the 2020 Crystal Award from the Arkansas chapter of Public Relations Society of America. He was honored for his nearly 25 years of dedicated and continuous contributions to the Arkansas PR community.

Michelle Nicholson ('97) is pursuing certification as a life coach with the goal of helping missionaries and their children who are transitioning back to life in the U.S. She currently is a technical content editor for emergency response plans in various industries.

Jennifer Ray ('98) married Steven Hill on July 18, 2019. They reside in Sheridan, Ark., with their sons, Nathan, Scott and Jadyn. She is pursuing a master's degree in adult education through the University of Arkansas and works at Southeast Arkansas College in Pine Bluff, Ark.



2000s

Kevin Miles ('00) serves as south central regional coordinator for the National Network of Youth Ministries.

Jeffrey Verlander ('00) serves as chief operating officer with Kingdom Growers Coffee in Forney, Texas. Kingdom Growers Coffee roasts and sells specialty coffee beans all over the U.S. and seeks to advance the gospel among coffee farmers around the world. Verlander previously served 17 years with LifeWay Christian Stores.

Rachel (Brackett '04) Austin serves as education coordinator at Williams Baptist University. Her husband, Josh, is the men's basketball coach at Williams, and they have two daughters.

Katie (Kolb '04) Dwyer released her debut children's album, *Music Makes Me Happy*, and also uses her music to teach children in her online classes, Katie's Corner. Learn more at katedwyermusic.com.

April (Adams '04) Wingfield began working for Aspire Realty in April. She and her husband, **Derek ('03)**, live in Little Rock with their two daughters.



Chris Davis ('05) has become a program advisor for the office of Business and Marketing Technology in the Arkansas Department of Education's Division of Career and Technical Education. His wife, **Jill (Hickey '06)**, earned her Master of Science in Nursing degree from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and is a pediatric nurse practitioner for The Children's Clinic in Jonesboro, Ark. Chris and Jill have two children, Charlie (10) and Caroline (7).

Dr. Brent Smith ('05) serves as the team physician for two high schools in Cleveland, Miss., along with serving as the physician board member for the Mississippi Athletic Trainers Association and chair of the Mississippi High School Activities Association Sports Medicine Advisory Committee, coordinating efforts to keep students safe in athletics during the COVID-19 pandemic. Brent is a former Mississippi Academy of Family Physicians New Physician of the Year and Sports Medicine Person of the year.

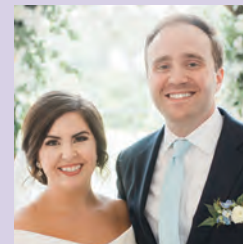
Stacie (Mackey '05) Williams serves as director of market waiver services with CareSource.

Amanda Ozment ('07) was promoted to Vacation Bible School customer service specialist with LifeWay Christian Resources.

Dr. Andrew Pyle ('09) was granted tenure and promoted to associate professor in the Department of Communication at Clemson University in May.

2010s

Jordan Burnett ('10) married **Aaren Crews ('12)** on June 13 in Little Rock, Ark. They reside in Keller, Texas.

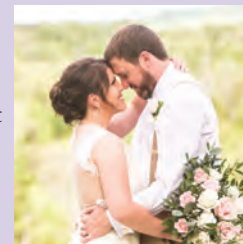


Eli Cranor ('10) was awarded the Peter Lovesey First Crime Novel Contest for *Don't Know Tough*, which will be published by Soho Press in 2022.

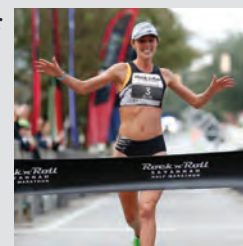
Allison Hodges ('10) married John Leftwich on Aug. 31, 2019. Allison is a senior manager at Golin, a public relations company in Dallas, Texas.

Hannah Pilcher ('13) earned a Master of Arts degree in higher education from John Brown University in May. She serves as resident director for Frances Crawford Hall and area coordinator for Georgia Hickingbotham Hall at Ouachita.

Sarah Porter ('13) married Brady Blair on May 10 in northwest Arkansas at Sarah's parents' farm.



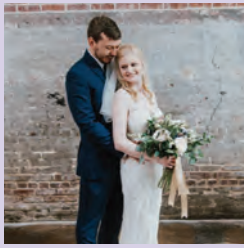
Jo (Casey '14) Butler qualified to compete in the Marathon Olympic Trials in Atlanta on Feb. 29. She is a professional fitness and nutrition coach and sponsored runner for Oiselle.



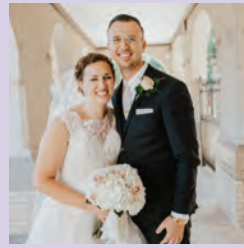
Chandler (Wilson '14) Carroll was named a "Women to Watch" by *Little Rock Soirée* magazine. She owns Wilson Carroll Research Associates in Little Rock.

DO YOU HAVE A CLASS NOTE?
 SUBMIT TO ALUMNI@OBU.EDU
 OR AT OBU.EDU/ALUMNI/CLASSNOTES

Jennifer Coon ('14) married Austin Cleek on July 10.



Emma Riley ('17) married Chadd Feyas on July 12, 2019.



Kathryn Coffey ('15) married Elias Infante Rodriguez III on March 14.

Tegan Taylor ('15) married James Larue Utterback on Nov. 30, 2019, at Cabin Creek Lookout in Lamar, Ark. They reside in Clarksville, Ark., where Tegan is an insurance agent for Phil Taylor Insurance Agency, Inc., and James works for Walmart Distribution Center.



Mattison Griffin ('18) earned a master's degree in history with an emphasis in public history from Arkansas State University on Aug. 7.



Kenzie (Lionberger '16) Givler was promoted to coordinator of the Elder Victims of Crime program at the Area Agency on Aging of Western Arkansas in Fort Smith, Ark.

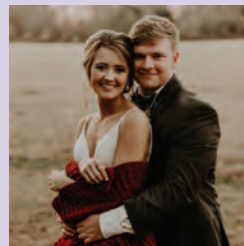
Griffin Peebles ('16) married **Estefanie Perez ('16)** on Sept. 5 at Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock, Ark. Griffin earned his juris doctorate degree from the University of Virginia School of Law in May, received the Edwin S. Cohen Award for the Top Tax Law Student and passed the Texas Bar Exam. The couple reside in Houston, where he works for Baker Botts Law Firm and she will work remotely for CJRW, a Little Rock-based advertising and communications agency.



Kinzie Schmidt ('18) married Jordan Washington on Oct. 11 at Loft 1023 in Little Rock, Ark. They reside in Little Rock, where Jordan teaches Bible and coaches basketball at The Baptist Preparatory School and Kinzie is the human resources director for Chick-fil-A Chenal.



Josiah Smith ('18) married **Baylee McBride ('18)** on Dec. 14, 2019. They reside in Conway, Ark., where Josiah is a property manager for Salter Properties and Baylee is pursuing a doctoral degree in physical therapy at the University of Central Arkansas.



Maddie Brodell ('17) married Nicholas Schmidt on Sept. 26 at Marlsgate Plantation in Scott, Ark. They reside in Little Rock, Ark.



Brady Thompson ('18) married **Layten Moseley ('18)** on Nov. 9, 2018, at Geyer Springs First Baptist Church in Little Rock, Ark. They reside in Temple, Texas, where Brady works in tech sales for Dell EMC and Layten is pursuing a master's degree in occupational therapy at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor.



OUACHITA HOSTS SANDERS, EDWIN IN PRE-PANDEMIC LECTURES



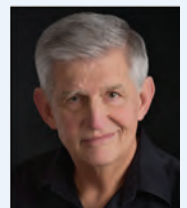
Prior to COVID-19 shut-downs in March 2020, Ouachita hosted two guest speakers as part of its Birkett Williams Lecture Series. Sarah Huckabee Sanders, a 2004 Ouachita graduate and former White House press secretary, spoke on March 2, and Robert Edwin, professional singer and actor, spoke and performed on March 5.

Sanders' lecture followed a question-and-answer format as she responded to questions developed by senior communications and media students on her experience as press secretary and as a Ouachita student.

"I stepped onto this campus almost 20 years ago. If you had told me at that time, when I was coming to Ouachita, that I would one day be the White House press secretary," Sanders said, "I would have laughed in your face. I got the preparation I needed from Ouachita to do that job. And, frankly, if Ouachita can prepare me for that, it can prepare anybody for anything."

Sanders previously served on campaigns for President George W. Bush and her father, former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee. Just prior to publication of this issue, Sanders announced her own bid to run for governor of Arkansas.

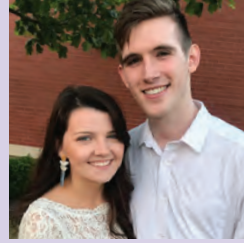
Edwin delivered a lecture-recital titled "Is Music Really a Universal Language," exploring insights from his career as a voice teacher and professional performer. He is an associate editor of the *NATS Journal of Singing*, is a longtime ASCAP songwriter and has had such notable students as Ian Eisendrath, music supervisor and director of *Come From Away* on Broadway.



Dylan Bester ('19) married **Brooke Sanderford ('20)** on April 10 in Stephenville, Texas.



Aaron George ('20) married **Emma Pitts ('20)** on May 23 in Rogers, Ark.



Mary Grace Hill ('19) married Tyler Freeman on March 14 in Bryant, Ark.



David Lundstrum ('19) married **Katie Kibe ('18)** on Dec. 21, 2019. They reside in Springdale, Ark.



Kord Offenbacher ('19) married **Madison Burch ('20)** on Sept. 4 at Second Baptist Church in Arkadelphia, Ark. They reside in Little Rock, Ark., where Kord serves at Downline Ministries and Madison serves at Fellowship Bible Church. They are both pursuing Master of Divinity degrees online through Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

..... Faculty

Dr. Steve Garner, assistant professor emeritus of music, authored *Clarence Dickinson, Dean of American Church Musicians*, a biography of one of the most influential figures in church music in early 20th century America. It was published by Gatekeeper Press in February. Dr. Garner served at Ouachita from 1990 to 2012 and was chair of the Department of Church Music from 1990 to 1996.

FUTURE TIGERS

..... 1990s

Steve Brawner ('91) and his wife, Melissa, welcomed daughter Hope Renee on Jan. 10, 2020. She joins sisters Mattie and Abigail.



Joshua ('97) and Shelley (Buck '98) Hughes welcomed daughter Olivia Violet on Feb. 22, 2019. She joins big brother Alex.



Justin ('97) and Shannon (Cone '96) McDonald welcomed son Jude Shepherd on Nov. 26, 2019.



..... 2000s

Dr. Teri (Jeffers '00) Vancil and her husband, Toby, welcomed daughter Sloan in April. She joins big brother Dylan (2). Proud grandparents are **Dr. Joe ('66) and Charlotte ('78) Jeffers**.

Adam ('01) and Hayden (Huey '03) Norwood welcomed son Krosby James on June 13, 2019. He joins brothers Kaison (11) and Kerith (10).



Margrett (Starling '05) Howard and her husband, Tyler, welcomed daughter Clara Anne on July 27.



Ashlee (Hill '05) Smith and her husband, Daniel, welcomed daughter Amalee Bell on Oct. 1, 2018. Ashlee works at a veterinary office in Ruston, La., following 12 years in the preschool industry.

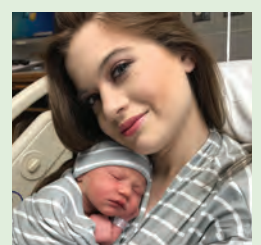


Samuel ('07) and Angela (Grossman '06) Coston

welcomed daughter Ambrose Walter on Feb. 6, 2018. She joins big brothers Trent (8) and Moses (5). Angela is the founder and executive director of a non-profit, For the Sake of One, and Samuel is assistant principal at New Boston Elementary School.



Dr. Joshua Richards ('07) and his wife, Savanna, welcomed son Thaddeus Roscoe Richards III on Oct. 26.



..... 2020s

Tyler Duncan ('20) married **Bethany Courtney ('20)** on May 22 at Faulkner Lake Orchard. They reside in Little Rock and are both employed at Fellowship Bible Church. Bethany is the administrative assistant for the adult discipleship department and Tyler is a tech and media assistant for the worship and protech department.



Kara (Rainey '07) Street and her husband, Wesley, welcomed daughter Violet Ruby on Aug. 9, 2019. She joins big brothers Liam (5) and Rhys (2). They live in St. Louis.



Kenley (Singleton '09) Boyd and her husband, Dr. Dusty Boyd, welcomed son Lucas James on March 11.



Alan ('08) and Laura (Sikes '12) Greenwood welcomed son Beckett Cole on March 4. He joins big sister Brighton (3).



Nicole (Stuart '09) Porchia and her husband, Reggie, welcomed daughter Emma Kate on Nov. 29. She joins big brother Bennett (4).



Molly (Magee '10) Shepherd and her husband, John Thomas, welcomed son George Monroe "Roe" on April 16. He joins big brother Tommy.



Hayley (Harper '10) Wreyford and her husband, T.J., welcomed son Whitley James on Sept. 15, 2019. He joins big brother Jack (4).



Jason and Lauren (Vickroy) Purdy ('08) welcomed daughter Evelyn on March 14. They reside in Jacksonville, Fla.

Jason Smith ('08) and Dr. Myra Houser ('07) welcomed son Elton Mateo Romero on July 30. He joins big sister Maryi Andrea (13) and big brother Santiago Andres (10), whom they welcomed in February 2020.



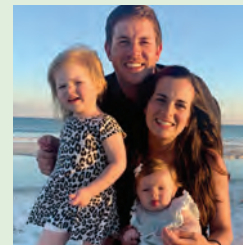
Tiffany (Murphree '09) Tucker and her husband, Clint, welcomed son Pete Jackson on Oct. 9, 2019.



..... 2010s

Matt ('10) and Ariel (Boxerman '09) Bealer welcomed son Elijah Rhett on Sept. 5.

Brady and Katy (Krikorian) Canright ('11) welcomed daughter Ellie Kay on Jan. 23, 2020. She joins big sister Taya. They reside in Jonesboro, Ark., where Brady is the pastor at Nettleton Baptist Church and Katy stays home with their daughters.

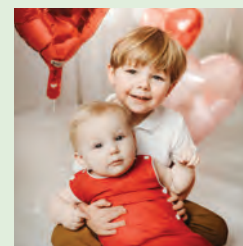


Nathan and Molly (Brown) Courtright ('11) welcomed daughter Ellis Josephine on Feb. 17, 2020.



David and Leslyn (Ichter) Jacks ('11) welcomed son Declan William on May 27.

Holly (Garland '11) Nicholson and her husband, Aaron, welcomed son Ellis James on April 30, 2019. He joins big brother Rhodes (3).



OUACHITA LIFELONG LEARNING INSTITUTE OFFERS FREE SERIES ON SOCIAL JUSTICE AND FAITH

Beginning in April, Ouachita's Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) will offer a three-course series on social justice, Christian faith and American political systems. The Entergy Charitable Foundation is partnering with OLLI to provide the online, non-credit courses at no charge. The courses are open to alumni as well as the general public and do not require an application.

"We are grateful to Entergy for making this series possible," said Dr. Myra Houser, assistant professor of history and coordinator of Ouachita's Social Justice Studies Program. "Our educational mission paired with Entergy's commitment to community education makes

this an ideal partnership."

From April to May, Houser will teach "Faith and Social Change," discussing how Christians view their roles in advocating for social change. In July and August, Dr. Rebecca Jones, associate professor of communications, will offer "Lights, Camera, (Social) Action," which considers the intersection of faith, social change and film. Beginning in late September, Houser will teach "Race and U.S. Policy." Each course will feature digital resources and opportunities for reflection and discussion. Students may choose to participate in the whole series or in an individual course. For additional information, visit www.obu.edu/gps.

CLASS NOTES

Andrea (Jones '11) Smithers and her husband, Bridger, welcomed daughter Arielle Kay on Aug. 6, 2019. She joins big brother Ezra Jones (1).



Aubrey (Elliott '12) Adams and her husband, Nick, welcomed daughter Remington Ella on Sept. 22. They reside in Prior Lake, Minn.



Dr. Chris ('12) and Carrington (Tillery '14) Chandler welcomed daughter Charlotte Alise on Sept. 3. She joins big brother Christopher.



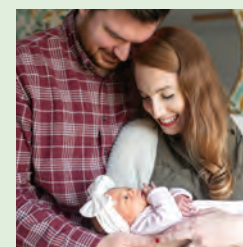
Jake ('11) and Dayton (Lavender '12) Stanley welcomed daughters Madelyn Ruth and Joelle Grace on May 27. They join big brother Everett.



Kendall (Calvert '12) Britnell and her husband, David, welcomed son Edgar Lee on Aug. 22.



Paul ('12) and Ashley (Briggs '14) Huenefeld welcomed daughter Rosemary Martha on Oct. 30.



FACULTY, STAFF HONORED FOR COMBINED 780 YEARS OF SERVICE

Ouachita recognized 36 faculty and staff members this year in celebration of their milestone anniversaries working for the university. Together they have served a total of 780 years, with six faculty and staff members celebrating 35 years or more.

This year's longest serving honorees are Janice Ford and Kevin Sullivan. Ford, professor and government documents librarian, celebrated 45 years of service, and Sullivan, facilities management, was recognized for 40 years.

In her time at Ouachita, Ford has worked with government documents, specifically the McClellan Collection, and securing interlibrary loans for the Riley-Hickingbotham Library.

Ray Granade, director of library services and professor of history, described Ford as "a librarian of learning, diligence and integrity, particularly her ability to procure through interlibrary loan even obscure and rare materials that our patrons need."

Sullivan, in addition to his many projects for facilities management over the years, installs the senior sidewalks on Ouachita's campus each year with the sandblasting system he created.

"There is nothing he can't fix or figure out," said John Hardman, director of Ouachita facilities management.

Those celebrating 35 years of service to Ouachita include: Steve Hennagin, professor of mathematics; Sherri Phelps, director of human resources; Doug Reed, associate vice president for academic affairs, Herbert and LaDelle Moody Professor of Pre-Law Studies and director of the Maddox Public Affairs Center; and Ruby Williams, facilities management.

"The dedication of Ouachita faculty and staff matters – they are investing years of their lives in students," said Ouachita President Ben Sells. "Many parents over the years have entrusted their students to Ouachita because of our faculty and staff's love for students, as well as the excellence they exhibit in their fields."

Other employees honored include:

30 Years: Nancy Hardman, Edna and Freda Linn Professor of Communication Sciences and Pre-Medical Studies; Deborah Lee, facilities management; Craig Ward, men's tennis coach and coordinator of tennis.

25 Years: Robin Green, facilities management; Laurie Huneycutt, School of Fine Arts administrative assistant; Glenda Secrest, professor of music; Molly Wallace, director of health services; and Kim Ward, tennis center manager.

20 Years: Dennis Brashier, facilities management; Detri Brech, Charles S. and Elma Grey Goodwin Holt Professor of

Dietetics and Pre-Medical Studies; Kevin Cornelius, professor of physics; Larry Dyess, facilities management; Kent Faught, professor of management and holder of the Jay and Lynn Heflin Chair of Business; Tracey Knight, executive assistant to the president; and Martha Womack, Campus Ministries administrative assistant.

15 Years: James Files, associate professor of accounting; Melinda Fowler, IT software developer; Tim Harrell, director of Student Life; Kevin Herrington, network services administrator; Jonathan Hughes, facilities management; Benny Johnson, facilities management; Wesley Kluck, vice president for student development and university physician; Susan Monroe, staff accompanist; Tara Pritchard, Social Sciences administrative assistant; and Diane Runyan, Elrod Center administrative assistant.

10 Years: Ashlee Giles, director of enrollment initiatives and senior admissions counselor; Bethany Hicks, associate professor of history; Elizabeth Kelly, associate professor of sociology and Elrod Center applied research associate; Mike Pritchard, facilities management; and René Zimny, assistant professor of visual arts.

Austin ('12) and Jillian (Vire '11) King welcomed son Benjamin Andrew on May 1. He joins big brother Taylor Woods (3).



Devan (Malone '13) Elbert and her husband, Ernie, welcomed son Samuel Gray on July 15. He joins big brother Peter (2).



Philip Reeves ('12) and his wife, Kavya, welcomed daughter Sloane Ahana on Feb. 10, 2020.



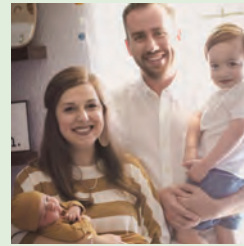
Lindsey (Barnhart '13) Law and her husband, Jason, welcomed daughter Josie Kelly on July 29. She joins big brother Easton and big sister London.



Daniel Smith ('12) and his wife, Hallie, welcomed son Porter Daniel on July 9.



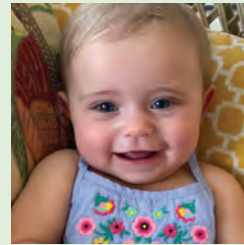
Justin ('13) and Elizabeth (Davis '12) Trewitt welcomed son Holden David on July 3. He joins big brother Hudson (4).



Katelyn (Smith '12) Yzquierdo and her husband, Ricardo, welcomed daughter Caroline Grace on May 25.



Pete ('14) and Caroline (Nimocks '15) Brunson welcomed daughter Elizabeth Ann on Jan. 9, 2020.



Marshall and Stephanie (Hampton) Butler ('13) welcomed son David Hampton on April 30.



Molly Anne (Turner '14) Sandefur and her husband, Jake, welcomed daughter Opal Jenny on Jan. 21, 2020.



Michael and Amberly (Green) Curtis ('13) welcomed daughter Parker Ann on Sept. 4. She joins big brother Bennett (2).



Nick Burt ('15) and his wife, Amanda, welcomed daughter Emerson Paige on June 4.



FACULTY & STAFF

MYRA HOUSER AUTHORS BOOK ON APARTHEID CIVIL RIGHTS LEADERS

Dr. Myra Ann Houser, assistant professor of history and a 2007 Ouachita grad, authored *Bureaucrats of Liberation: Southern African and American Lawyers and Clients During the Apartheid Era*, which was released in September. The book follows the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Right Under Law and its work in the U.S., South Africa and Namibia.

LAURIE HUNEYCUTT NAMED SUPPORT STAFF MEMBER OF THE YEAR

Laurie Huneycutt, who has served as administrative assistant to the dean of the School of Fine Arts for 25 years, was named the 2019-2020 Support Staff Member of the Year. Huneycutt, a Ouachita graduate, said "it is amazing to see what talent our students have and how that talent grows along with their confidence in using that talent."

COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING WINS NATIONAL GRAND PRIZE

Ouachita's Office of Communications & Marketing won a grand prize and seven other awards from Baptist Communicators Association. It received the Diane Reasoner Award for Exceptional Achievement in Interactive Communications for its "Meaningful Work Video Series," which profiles Ouachita alumni. The team includes alumni **Brooke Zimny, Tyler Rosenthal** and **Rachel Gaddis**, as well as **Ashley Carozza** and **Tiffany Pickett**.

HAMILTON RECEIVES \$300K GRANT FOR BIOMED RESEARCH

Dr. Sharon Hamilton, assistant professor of chemistry, was awarded \$297,431 by the Arkansas IDeA Networks of Biomedical Research Excellence (INBRE) to support her research of incorporating proteins into novel modern wound dressings. Hamilton is working in collaboration with Ouachita students as well as faculty at the University of Arkansas to accelerate wound healing.

Spencer and Megan (Clay) Knight ('15) welcomed son Levi Todd on May 20. Proud grandparents are Coach **Todd ('86) and Julie (Hartsfield '87) Knight** and **Ronnie and Kristi (Mason) Clay ('87)**.

Tyler and Anna (Sikes) Rosenthal ('15) welcomed son Graham Sikes on April 1.



Curt and Kaley (Thompson) Tucker ('15) welcomed daughter Tessa Faye on June 2. Proud grandparents are **Dr. J.D. "Sonny" ('83)** and Nicki Tucker and Stan and **Sharyla (Cooper '88) Thompson**.



Layne (Castleman '16) Doles and her husband, Kendall, welcomed son Samuel Clark on Aug. 26.



Will and Elizabeth (Bacon) Peevy ('16) welcomed daughter Ruby Jane on Sept. 26.

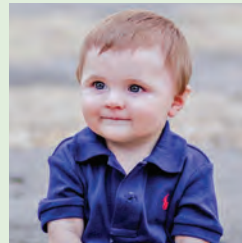


Garrett ('18) and Sydney (Hoffman '16) Logan welcomed daughter Clara Jane on June 18.



Staff

Brett Shockley and his wife, Leigh Ann, welcomed son William David on March 2. Brett serves as offensive line and tight ends coach and recruiting coordinator for Tiger football.



Shane Seaton and his wife, Hannah, welcomed son Calum Charles on April 11. Shane serves as director of recreational life. Proud grandparents are **Byron ('80) and Amy (Coleman '82) Eubanks**.



IN MEMORIAM

We remember the following alumni who recently passed away, listed with their class years and dates of death.

1940s

- Katie Jean (McGraw) Jacks ('42) •** June 14, 2020
- Evelyn "Chick" (Allen) McQueen ('42) •** March 31, 2020
- Eloise (Landers) Goldsby ('43) •** Feb. 8, 2020
- Edward "Elmer" Griever, Jr. ('43) •** July 27, 2020
- Willadeen "Deena" (Lawrence) Glover ('44) •** April 13, 2020
- Alta D. (Brogdon) Shaddox ('44) •** Dec. 15, 2019
- Jessie (Gladden) West ('45) •** May 9, 2020
- Betty Ree (Crawford) Honeycutt ('45) •** May 21, 2020
- Dr. James Clarence Harrell Simmons ('46) •** Sept. 7, 2020
- Virginia (Burks) Rhea ('46) •** Jan. 26, 2020

- Louis H. Fish ('47) •** Jan. 7, 2020
- Mary Marcella (Gray) Allen ('48) •** Dec. 13, 2019
- Caroldene (Warren) Jones ('48) •** July 26, 2020
- Dora Laurine (Hardcastle) Barnett ('49) •** June 8, 2020
- William "Doyce" Spears ('49) •** July 16, 2020
- Rev. Glenn Weldon Wood, Sr. ('49) •** Oct. 30, 2019

1950s

- Betty Anne (Williams) Autry ('50) •** Oct. 28, 2020
- James Edgar Crittenden ('50) •** Sept. 5, 2020
- Rev. Harrison H. Johns ('50) •** Nov. 17, 2020
- Vannye (Whitley) Besancon ('51) •** April 27, 2020
- Mary Ann (Orr) Drinkwater ('51) •** Jan. 25, 2020
- Dr. Roderick Fitzgibbon ('51) •** Dec. 19, 2019
- F. LaVern (Moore) Kelly ('51) •** Dec. 15, 2019
- Mary Jo (Balcom) Rogers ('51) •** July 15, 2020
- Florence (Dawley) Ryburn ('51) •** Feb. 18, 2020
- Hugh Green Smith ('51) •** May 5, 2020
- Joanna (Bell) Thompson ('51) •** Nov. 11, 2020
- Dorothy D. (Brock) Tipton ('51) •** Jan. 18, 2020
- Rev. Larry D. O'Kelley ('52) •** Aug. 20, 2020
- Elsie (Kennedy) Warnock ('52) •** Feb. 25, 2020
- Robert Hale Watson ('52) •** July 27, 2020
- Mary Lee (Carter) Williams ('52) •** March 18, 2020
- Rev. Jesse L. Kidd ('52) •** Sept. 24, 2020
- Robert D. Melton ('52) •** Oct. 22, 2020
- Nancy (Sagely) Edwards ('53) •** April 11, 2020
- Dr. Joseph Leon Martindale, Sr. ('53) •** Dec. 11, 2019
- Gloria (White) Plumlee ('53) •** Nov. 16, 2020

- Frances Louise (Cockrill) Zastrow ('53)** • Feb. 15, 2020
- Robert "Bob" Eubanks ('54)** • March 4, 2020
- Rev. Jesse W. Whitley ('54)** • July 7, 2020
- Dr. Luther G. Brewer ('55)** • Nov. 28, 2019
- Mary Ann (Traylor) Davis ('55)** • Sept. 23, 2019
- Darla Diane (Lee) Elms ('55)** • July 26, 2020
- Patricia "Pat" (Byars) Harrison ('55)** • Jan. 2, 2020
- Marvin Lee Sexton ('55)** • April 26, 2020
- Charles Russell Baker ('56)** • Dec. 21, 2019
- Rosa "Charlene" (Lincoln) Robertson ('56)** • Dec. 10, 2019
- Harrell Dean Stark ('56)** • Dec. 8, 2019
- Rev. William "Bill" Lee Hinds ('57)** • Jan. 2, 2020
- Linda (Ridgeway) Buckner ('58)** • Aug. 8, 2020
- Rev. James N. "Jimmy" Hoffman ('58)** • March 22, 2020
- Lula Mae (Kincaid) Phillips ('58)** • Dec. 20, 2019
- Luther Junell "Jay" Porier ('58)** • March 4, 2020
- Jacquelyn Marie Cox ('59)** • Dec. 12, 2019
- Marshall O. Rowe ('59)** • Jan. 16, 2020
- Victor "Ray" Tweed ('59)** • Sept. 30, 2020

..... 1960s

- Arnold David Harrington ('60)** • July 10, 2020
- Marjorie (Trigg) Kennedy ('60)** • Aug. 10, 2020
- Carolyn (Jones) Otwell ('60)** • Oct. 29, 2020
- James Edward Ready, Sr. ('60)** • Nov. 17, 2019
- Roy Edward "Ed" Snider, Jr. ('60)** • March 14, 2020
- Daniel Lee Whitaker ('61)** • April 30, 2020
- Carole Ruth (Grim) Carter ('62)** • Aug. 26, 2020
- Bonnie Sue (Crowder) Colvert ('62)** • Oct. 5, 2020

- Robert Elias Deaton ('62)** • May 25, 2020
- Lawrence Wayne Harrison, Sr. ('62)** • Sept. 4, 2020
- James Tyson ('62)** • Sept. 30, 2020
- James M. "Jim" Whitlow ('62)** • May 4, 2020
- Marguerite Lee (Fielding) Zimmerman ('62)** • Sept. 22, 2020
- Charles Edward Jackson ('63)** • Nov. 26, 2020
- Betty Ruth (Pye) Wylie ('63)** • Nov. 2, 2019
- Stanley G Whitlow ('64)** • Nov. 10, 2020
- Rev. John Leonard Wood ('64)** • Aug. 27, 2020
- Jack H. May ('65)** • Nov. 18, 2020
- Mary Ann (Thornton) McKinney ('65)** • June 28, 2020
- Calvin Thomas Stackhouse ('65)** • Nov. 15, 2020
- Bobby Kay Stone ('65)** • Oct. 9, 2020
- Dr. P. Nelson Wilhelm ('65)** • April 2, 2020
- Frances Ann (Croxtan) Parks ('66)** • April 4, 2020
- Mason W. "Buddy" Clinton, Jr. ('67)** • Jan. 14, 2020
- Carl Wesley Kluck, Sr. ('67)** • Sept. 30, 2020

Lane Howard Strother ('67), former associate director of development at Ouachita, died on May 25, 2020. In addition to



Ouachita, Strother was a graduate of the University of Arkansas and the University of Oxford in England. He also served as a 1st Lieutenant in the U.S. Army. Lane joined the Ouachita staff in 1972 and helped initiate the Ouachita Student Foundation, Tiger Tunes and Tiger Traks. The director's office in Ouachita's Elrod Center for Family and Community is named in his honor. He is survived by his wife of almost 54 years, Judy; his daughters, **Jodi ('90)**, Megan and **Mica ('94)**; and seven grandchildren.

Donald Wayne Bates ('68) • June 17, 2020

Save the Date

stepping up for Ouachita

Luncheon benefiting scholarships for Ouachita women

NOVEMBER 12, 2021

CHENAL COUNTRY CLUB
LITTLE ROCK

Honoring four women in healthcare:

Dr. Jana Crain

Debbie Kluck

Sherrie Sharp Thomasson

Tammy Young

obu.edu/steppingup

pending approval from health authorities

MEMORIAL GIFT HONORS CHARLEE MORRISON, INVESTS IN CANCER RESEARCH AT OUACHITA

By Rachel Gaddis, editorial coordinator

Ouachita received a gift from Russell and Patti Morrison in memory of their daughter, Charlee Morrison, a former Ouachita student who passed away in 2000 during her senior year at Ouachita. The gift will be used to enhance Ouachita's first undergraduate research laboratory dedicated to cancer cell biology.

This fall marked the 20th anniversary of Morrison's death. Originally from Benton, Ark., she battled cancer from the age of 13 and passed away due to complications on Oct. 30, 2000. Morrison was a sociology major and a member of Tri Chi women's social club.



"She was always happy, even when she was hurting, and had the most positive outlook possible for her life," said Emily Goode, a fellow Ouachita senior and friend, in a tribute to Morrison in the 2000 *Ouachita Circle*.

The same tribute reads, "Students at Ouachita will not likely remember the way that Morrison died, but the way that Morrison lived."

The monetary gift by the Morrises will allow Ouachita to create a cancer cell culture research experience for Ouachita students, a first for the university. This includes augmenting Ouachita's existing molecular biology research facility and expanding the quality and quantity of research opportunities for students.

"I immediately remembered the story about Charlee when I was informed of the Morrises' gift," said Dr. Tim Knight, dean of the Patterson School of Natural Sciences. "Several hundred students will benefit, as well as several faculty members. We have a small cohort of faculty already working in cancer- or cell biology-related research."

"We have been working on this concept for a while," said Nathan Reyna, associate professor of biology. "However, the gift has given us the leverage to enhance a facility that

will ensure a large portion of our students will be able to participate in unique, class-based research experience."

"Charlee would have been delighted to see this used toward an educational program," said her father, Russell Morrison of Benton. "We're fully aware of the importance of medical equipment and training which saves lives. Excellent medical training and equipment equals better outcomes for those that are struggling with life threatening diseases such as adult leukemia that threatened and finally took Charlee's life.

"Charlee loved Ouachita Baptist and was so happy to be a student there," he added. "I know she would be honored to share this gift."

In 2018, Reyna led a team to create Ouachita's Cell Biology Education Consortium (CBEC), a National Science Foundation-funded consortium that focuses on the development and modification of cell culture techniques that can be incorporated in the undergraduate classroom. Since that time, Reyna said the "development of novel research methods and the student demand for participation in these projects outpaced our resources and facilities."

With the help of the gift, the adaptation of Ouachita's current research facility will allow for more Ouachita students to be involved in the research, Reyna explained, as well as "strengthen critical thinking skills in the classroom, facilitating the transition from student to scientist."

"Ouachita is committed to undergraduate education through an active, inquiry-based, hands-on approach to learning in the classroom," said Reyna. "The opportunity for students to conduct mammalian cell culture and cancer biology research using this new facility with current molecular techniques in class is consistent with our goal to integrate research into the classroom."

For more information or to give, visit obu.edu/give and list "In memory of Charlee Morrison" in the special instructions field, or contact Susan Warren, senior director of donor engagement, at 501-920-1042.

John Stephen "Steve" Charlton ('69) •
Feb. 9, 2020

Michael F. Hildmann ('69) • Aug. 3, 2020

Dr. John S. Hilliard, Jr. ('69) • Nov. 15, 2019

Dr. Buford "Ray" Turnage ('69) died on April 14, 2020. A native of Searcy, Ark., Ray graduated from Ouachita and UAMS School of Pharmacy.



The Turnages opened and operated Market Place Pharmacy beginning in 1980. Ray served on many local and state boards, including Ouachita's Board of Trustees. He is survived by his wife of 51 years, **Janice (Craig) Turnage ('68)**; his children, **Stephanie Southerland ('96)** and **Chris ('00)**; and three grandchildren.

Connie Sue (Allen) Viala ('69) • Nov. 2, 2019

..... 1970s

Lola (Avent) Enis ('70) • Nov. 19, 2019

Susan (Murray) Grier ('70) • Feb. 14, 2020

Linda Faye Murphree ('70) • Oct. 15, 2020

Susan Grace (Sutley) Reed ('70) •
June 24, 2020

Dr. Guy Marvin Whitney Jr. ('70) •
July 10, 2020

David Jack Wilson ('70) • Oct. 31, 2020

Mary Anne (Pierce) Berryman ('71) •
May 31, 2020

Mary Frances Pearl (Johnson) Evans ('71) •
June 16, 2020

Freddie D. Hall ('71) • Jan. 7, 2020

Leon Nelson ('72) • June 15, 2020

Peggy Ann (Sisson) Snow ('72) •
March 8, 2020

Helen Louise (Dicus) Vowan ('72) •
Nov. 10, 2020

Randall "Randy" Alvin Wyatt ('72) •
March 3, 2020

Mike Harris ('73) • May 20, 2020

Henry F. Harrison ('73) • April 22, 2020

Dr. William Paul Miller ('73) • May 23, 2020

Frances D. (Eason) Nelson ('74), died July 18, 2020. She earned both her Bachelor of Science in Education and Master of Science in Education



degrees at Ouachita. Nelson served students in TRiO programs, education programs for underrepresented students, more than 20 years, serving at Ouachita as Talent Search coordinator and Student Support Services/Academic Success Center director; she also was founding sponsor for the Reaching Out to Multicultural Students organization. Nelson also served with numerous community boards and volunteer organizations and was a member of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority and Mt. Morriah Missionary Baptist Church of Arkadelphia. She is survived by her husband, Terry Nelson, Sr.; her children, **Terry, Jr. ('04)** and **Desarae ('10)**; and two granddaughters.

Dr. Jerry Donell Gragg ('75) • April 10, 2020

John Dyle West ('75) • Jan. 2, 2020

Melba Jean (Redditt) Hooker ('76) • May 23, 2020

Helen Carolyn Settles ('76) • April 16, 2020

Rev. Robert L. Sigle ('76) • Oct. 6, 2020

Wanda (Whitney) Fincher ('77) • Aug. 2, 2020

Katherine (Dunbar) Gipson ('77) • Nov. 26, 2020

Johnny J. Jackson ('77) • Dec. 20, 2019

Napoleon Cross ('77) • Oct. 24, 2020

Mary Ann Marshall ('77) • March 11, 2020

Rev. Ralph Porchia ('77) • June 19, 2020

John Paul Lavender ('78) • April 25, 2020

..... **1980s**

Johnny Talley, Jr. ('80) • April 3, 2020

Johnny Edwards Shaw ('82) • July 25, 2020

Susan (Randolph) Braden ('83) • March 27, 2020

Charles Blain Smith ('84) • Dec. 8, 2020

Susie Baker ('85) • Feb. 9, 2020

James Martin Collier, Jr. ('87) • Nov. 3, 2020

Freeman Earl Green ('87) • June 4, 2020

Vincent Bernard Sanders ('88) • Sept. 3, 2020

R. Jay McLain ('89) • Dec. 2019

..... **1990s**

Brent K. Trammel ('91) • Sept. 19, 2020

..... **2000s**

Lyndsey Nicole (Hawkins) Taylor ('04) • Aug. 4, 2020

..... **2010s**

Seth Hunter Hutchinson ('15) • Sept. 12, 2020

..... **Faculty, Staff & Trustees**

William Walter Allen • Nov. 27, 2020

Virginia Brandon • May 19, 2020

Jack Estes, professor emeritus of modern languages, died on June 11, 2020.

In his 36 years at Ouachita, he chaired the Department of Modern Languages, taught French and served as director of the exchange program with Seinan Gakuin University and as assistant dean in the School of Arts and Science. He was a member of First United Methodist Church of Arkadelphia and served on the Ouachita Board of Trustees and Henderson State University Wesley Foundation Board. He is survived by his wife, Bonita; three children, **Mark ('79)**, **Rev. Pamela Jean ('74)** and **Dr. Julia Marie Carter ('82)**; three grandchildren; and eight great-grandchildren.



Earl Robinson • Oct. 28, 2020

Kaye (Campbell) Stanley died on Oct. 11, 2020. She worked as a library technical support assistant at Ouachita until her death; she had served at Ouachita since



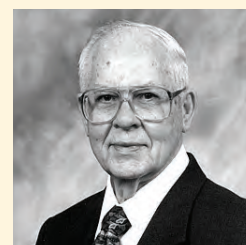
2013. Stanley previously served as a social work community nursing home support assistant and led Girls in Action and Acteens programs. She attended Third Street Baptist Church in Arkadelphia. She is survived by her daughter, Kimberly Cain, and grandchildren, **Caroline ('16)** and Caleb.

Ollie Belle Riley Stivers • May 18, 2020

Dr. Cecil C. Sutley,

professor emeritus of religion, died on Sept. 23, 2020, at the age of 100.

Dr. Sutley served at Ouachita for 33 years, as a volunteer



hospice chaplain for 20 years and as an interim and supply pastor for Baptist churches throughout Arkansas. Previously he was a chaplain's assistant in the Army Air Corps during World War II and served as pastor. He and his wife, Ellajane, later served as volunteer missionaries in Liberia and Niger. His writings were recently compiled as a book, *Every Good Gift: Cecil's Scribblings and Other Thoughts*, available in the Ouachita Bookstore. He is survived by his children, **Marie Dallas ('65)**, Jeanne Hanson, **Jacque Goble ('79)** and **Bill ('79)**; 10 grandchildren; 15 great-grandchildren; and two great-great grandchildren.

Billy D. Sutton • Oct. 25, 2020

Robert "Bob" Thomas • Oct. 3, 2020



PROGRESS IN A PANDEMIC

In the midst of a pandemic, Ouachita's progress makes us an encouraging outlier in higher education. While total university enrollment in the country

continues to decrease, Ouachita increases – our highest in 20 years. We're also graduating students at our highest level in history plus a placement rate of 97%.

We're preparing students to serve in additional ways, including in health professions that are all the more important in today's world. Our new Bachelor of Science in Nursing program seeks to meet the national shortage, and our M.S. degree in applied behavior analysis – the first option of its kind in the state – provides therapy for autism, which affects one in 50 children.

Credit goes to incredibly capable and committed faculty and staff who made us ready for classes in a once-in-a-century pandemic. We benefit from distinctive students and parents who partner with us, including a stellar freshman class. Ouachita is more racially diverse in students and employees than any time in its history – even as there is more to do. We've been helped by the generosity of alumni, friends and Arkansas Baptists – giving more in the last four years than any four-year period in our history, even when we stopped asking last spring.

All of this in a pandemic.

Ouachita is rising, but it's not enough. We must continually be found faithful to our Christian purpose. And, we are. The preceding measures, while encouraging, are means to something more: the realization of the university's vision and mission in students' lives. We desire

for them to advance in their love of God and love of learning marked by intellectual and spiritual growth, lives of meaningful work and reasoned engagement with the world.

The most important indicator is each student's life, in relationship with Jesus Christ; it's students becoming the person God intended them to be – here, and in the years to come. To give us some insight, we administered a survey to May 2020 graduates designed exclusively for and completed by 43 of the country's leading Christian colleges. Our seniors scored above average on 13 of 18 spiritual attributes.

For all that's summarized here and illustrated in this special edition of the *Circle*, we give thanks to the Lord. Living and learning with students in a pandemic revealed to me a Ouachita characteristic in a fresh way: *At Ouachita, we're serious about learning and our Christian faith, but we don't take ourselves too seriously.*

This crystalized for me while hosting a little surprise party every 10 days last semester to celebrate progress toward the goal of 100 days on campus. I stood by the Tiger statue and handed out treats while watching our students smile and laugh and enjoy the moments. Together. In a pandemic. Moments of levity like these were important. Even more so this year than others.

Decades from now, I wonder what today's students will remember about this year. I trust they'll remember and value the intellectual and spiritual growth that occurred. The career preparation, too. The friendships, for sure. Perhaps Ouachita's momentum. I also hope they'll remember how we attempted, with your help, to share our lives with them in these unprecedented times – and that it becomes a precedent for how they share their lives with others.

Decades from now, I wonder what today's students will remember about this year.

Ben R. Sells, PhD
@OuachitaPrez

OUACHITA CORNERSTONE FUND

Together building the foundation for the household of God, for which Christ is the chief cornerstone (from Ephesians 2:19-22)

INVESTING IN ALL STUDENTS

When you make a gift to the Ouachita Cornerstone Fund, you are *investing in...*

...student scholarships. The Cornerstone Fund supports student scholarships such as the Legacy Scholarship for children of alumni, assistance for children of ministers and missionaries, and additional need-based financial aid for students.

...student success. The Cornerstone Fund supports research projects and innovative learning experiences for all students that includes travel and professional conferences.

...student spiritual development. The Cornerstone Fund directly supports the initiatives of our community and Christian leadership ministries as well as student development activities and programs that enrich and build the Christ-centered residential community experience.





[OBU.EDU/GIVE](https://obu.edu/give)

 **#1 STUDENT SATISFACTION**
IN AR, TX, LA
by collegeconsensus.com

100% 
OF INCOMING FULL-TIME FRESHMEN
RECEIVE INSTITUTIONAL AID

 OF ALL OUACHITA STUDENTS
98.5%
RECEIVE FINANCIAL AID

 **97%**
CAREER OUTCOMES RATE
FOR 2020 GRADS

 **\$41.9 MILLION**
STUDENT AID IS AWARDED
BY OUACHITA EACH YEAR

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REP OUACHITA AND REFER A FUTURE TIGER!

Did you know that about 65% of our fall 2020 incoming class said they first heard about Ouachita from a friend, family member, teacher or pastor? That's why we need your help. What 9th through 12th graders – with a special focus on juniors and seniors – do you have a connection with? Relatives, members of your church's youth group, neighbors, friends' kids – we'd love the opportunity to introduce them all to Ouachita!

VISIT [OBU.EDU/TIGERREFER](https://www.obu.edu/tigerrefer)
REFER A STUDENT AND GET A FREE T-SHIRT!

