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OUACHITA BAPTIST UNIVERSITY



NEWS

For Immediate Release

Ouachita professors awarded grants for undergraduate research

By McKenzie Cranford

March 16, 2015

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

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. – Reinforcing the continued achievements of Ouachita Baptist University's J.D. Patterson School of Natural Sciences, Ouachita professors Dr. Lori Hensley and Dr. Marty Perry were each recently awarded research grants from the Arkansas IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence (INBRE).

"The INBRE grants awarded to Dr. Hensley and Dr. Perry help us primarily in our undergraduate research program because the funding will provide for a minimum of 15-20 students during the lifetime of the grant," said Dr. Tim Knight, dean of the Patterson School of Natural Sciences. "Additionally, the grant recognizes the quality work of both Dr. Hensley and Dr. Perry as well as the excellence of our research program."

Ouachita faculty members received two of the nine INBRE grants awarded in Arkansas. "It's always nice to have your scientific ideas recognized by your peers," said Dr. Perry, OBU's Nell I. Mondy Professor of Chemistry. "More importantly, I was thrilled for the students at Ouachita who will benefit the most from the research opportunities these grant funds provide."

Dr. Perry, who has also been awarded INBRE grants in the past, cited that "Ouachita has been extremely fortunate to be associated with the Arkansas INBRE program for over a dozen years." The faculty in Ouachita's biology, chemistry and physics departments began to emphasize and require research projects for all students about the time of the initial INBRE funding. "The INBRE funding advanced our progress at a rate that would not have been possible otherwise through allowing us to purchase cutting-edge scientific instruments and supplies," Perry said.

"It is important for the sciences and our students at Ouachita to continue to thrive through funding and participation with the INBRE program," added Hensley, who holds the J.D. Patterson Chair of Biology and has received funding from INBRE since 2003. "Additionally, the grant allows me to work on a disease about which I am passionate and share that experience with my students."

Perry and his students will use the grant to continue exploring the interactions of drugs with human proteins using computer software and molecular modeling. The goal of the research is to determine why the molecules react in certain ways through examining the molecular structure of the proteins as they metabolize the drugs. Hensley's research is focused on finding new therapeutic options for a pediatric cancer called Ewing's sarcoma. She and her students have designed experiments to demonstrate how a class of compounds called cannabinoids might provide targeted therapy for cancer cells with mutations specific to Ewing's sarcoma.

Along with providing money for equipment, supplies and software, the funding also will give students the opportunity to continue traveling to professional meetings to present research results and network with other scientists.

"Students benefit greatly from the entire experience from literature review and software tutorials all the

way through presenting and publishing their results,” Perry said. “They learn that science is not just about learning facts and memorizing equations. It is about exploring, creating and communicating with a community.”

Perry, who has taught at Ouachita since 1998, holds degrees from Arkansas Tech University and Oklahoma State University. Hensley has taught at Ouachita since 2002. She holds degrees from Bowling Green State University and the University of Tennessee-Memphis.

For more information, contact Dr. Tim Knight at knightt@obu.edu or (870) 245-5528.