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McKenzie Cranford
Ouachita Baptist University

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NEWS

Ouachita students win first place for Alpha Chi interdisciplinary research

By McKenzie Cranford

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ARKADELPHIA, Ark. – Three students from Ouachita Baptist University won first place for their research at the Alpha Chi National College Honor Society convention held recently in Chicago. Given the theme “The Nexus of Science and the Arts,” students were challenged to craft research projects exploring the intersection between science and the arts. Six universities accepted the challenge, with Ouachita’s team earning the \$5,000 first prize.

Describing Ouachita’s winning team as “an amazing group of bright and enthusiastic students,” Dr. Lori Hensley, Ouachita’s Alpha Chi sponsor, said, “I think the interdisciplinary focus of the collaborative research project is absolutely perfect for students from liberal arts universities. The nature of the project forces students to think outside their majors and consider their knowledge in a broader perspective, a skill that is critical in the real world.”

Led by Dr. Allyson Phillips, assistant professor of psychology, the student team members included Stoni Butler, a junior psychology major from Camden, Ark.; Jessie Little, a senior biology major from Woodway, Texas; and Dustin Walter, a senior biology and chemistry double major from Marion, Ark. They worked together to research, plan and conduct the study. Butler and Little then presented the research, “Too Tired to Think Outside the Box? An Analysis of Ego Depletion's Effects on Creativity,” at the convention.

“Stoni, Jessie and Dustin were truly a joy to work with, and I was so excited to see them win,” Phillips said. “They worked exceptionally hard on this project, and it was thrilling to see them rewarded for all of their efforts. It was a well-deserved win, and I feel so blessed to have been a part of this experience.”

Combining psychology, biology and chemistry, the project allowed the students to collaborate and learn how to complete research outside of their majors. “Being a biology and chemistry major, I have had little exposure to the field of psychology,” Walter explained. “What makes this kind of research so interesting is the researchers get to analyze people’s motivations for their actions and connect one’s biological processes to his or her behavior. This merger between my major and a new field of study was the best part of this experience.”

“What I have taken away from this entire experience is the importance of clearly communicating your research,” Little said. “It is essential that researchers have the ability to describe their research simply and relate it to their audience. I felt that we were able to achieve this goal and leave our audience with something to take away.”

Citing the support of Ouachita as a key to their success, Butler said, “Ouachita professors pour so much into their students, and I think this award is a testament to that. While we did the work on this project largely on our own, the skills and support to do so came from our university.”

“We had put in many hours of hard work, and it was so wonderful to have it pay off,” Little added. “It was also nice to gain the recognition as a group of students from a small private school competing against large schools across the nation with groups including graduate students.”

For more information, contact Dr. Lori Hensley at hensleyl@obu.edu or (870) 245-5529.