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OUACHITA
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NEWS

For immediate release

Ouachita honors 343 graduates, awards honorary doctorate to Dr. Sonny Tucker

By Trennis Henderson, OBU vice president for communications

May 11, 2015

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

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Celebrating Ouachita Baptist University's 128th spring commencement on Saturday, May 9, university officials conferred a total of 350 degrees on 343 graduates, including Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Music, Bachelor of Music Education and the university's first three Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees.

Ouachita President Rex M. Horne, Jr., also presented Dr. J.D. "Sonny" Tucker, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, with an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree on behalf of the university's Board of Trustees. Dr. Tucker, a 1982 graduate of Ouachita, also holds Master of Divinity and Doctor of Philosophy degrees from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary in Memphis, Tenn.

President Horne emphasized that Dr. Tucker "is adept at analyzing and engaging young adults in ministries within the Arkansas Baptist State Convention and beyond."

He added that "for many years, Ouachita has benefited from its relationship with this good man and the strong reputation he has built in service to God and the church."

"From the deepest place in my heart, I want to express my appreciation for this tremendous honor," Dr. Tucker responded. "To receive this recognition from a place that I love so deeply will be among my greatest honors and moments in life."

Citing Ouachita's "impact and investment in me" as a student, Tucker also expressed appreciation for Ouachita "being a place that has greatly impacted my two children." He and his wife Nicki's daughter, Megan Seyler, is a 2010 Ouachita graduate and their son, Curt, graduated from Ouachita on Saturday.

"When we brought them here, we placed an incredible amount of trust in this place," Tucker noted. "We prayed about every aspect of our children's OBU experience – from faculty advisers to majors to professors to friends to roommates and even spouses. Our prayers were answered."

Tucker also affirmed Ouachita's "impact on Arkansas, the world and the Kingdom of God," declaring that "you are not a Bible college and you are not a church camp. You are a liberal arts university that is Christ-honoring, Bible-based and Kingdom-focused."

Describing Ouachita's graduating class of 2015 as "smart, bright, energetic, enthusiastic, questioning, discerning and incredibly committed," Tucker thanked the graduates for "the impact you have already had and the lifelong Kingdom impact you will have."

In his remarks to the graduates, President Horne highlighted the values of opportunity, symmetry, community and legacy.

"Ouachita has afforded you opportunities to learn, mature, succeed, fail, serve, worship, grow and increase awareness of the good and not so good that is a part of our world," he said. "We pray that you will build on these opportunities."

Dr. Horne said symmetry in life involves searching for facts, truth and living by faith. He added that pursuing genuine community is among the values that differentiate Ouachita as an exceptional university.

Affirming the class of 2015's legacy as difference makers, he urged each of the graduates to "bear fruit and good works and do God's work throughout your life."

This year's graduating class featured 143 honor graduates, including 21 who graduated *summa cum laude* with a grade point average of 3.95 or higher, 46 who graduated *magna cum laude* (3.75 GPA) and 76 who graduated *cum laude* (3.5 GPA). University officials also recognized 26 graduates who completed Ouachita's Carl Goodson Honors Program and 34 members of the Alpha Chi national honor society.

Dr. Ray Granade, director of library services and professor of history, and Dr. Nancy Hardman, the Edna and Freda Linn Professor of Communication Sciences and Pre-Medical Studies, served as the commencement marshals. Dr. Raouf Halaby, professor of visual arts and English, served as honorary marshal. Retiring after 42 years on the Ouachita faculty, Dr. Halaby has been named professor emeritus by the Board of Trustees.

During the commencement services, Senior Class President Jamie Barker, a biology major from Smackover, Ark. led the invocation. Scripture reading was led by three students from the Pruet School of Christian Studies: Sophie DeMuth, a Christian studies and speech communication major from Rockwall, Texas; Blake Kutter, a Christian studies major from Farmington, Ark.; and Sara Walker, a Christian studies major from Sulphur Springs, Texas.

Dr. Stan Poole, vice president for academic affairs, introduced the graduates as they received their degrees. Dr. Danny Hays, dean of the Pruet School of Christian Studies, led a responsive reading and Jay Heflin, chairman of the Board of Trustees, delivered the prayer of dedication.

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

PHOTOS AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD AT <http://www.obu.edu/news/2015/05/11/ouachita-honors-343-graduates-awards-honorary-doctorate-to-dr-sonny-tucker>.