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OUACHITA
BAPTIST UNIVERSITY



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Gene Whisenhunt named chairman of Ouachita presidential search committee

By Trennis Henderson, OBU Vice President for Communications

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Jay Heflin, chairman of the Ouachita Board of Trustees, has appointed the university's presidential search committee. They will be responsible for recommending a successor to Ouachita President Rex Horne who has announced his resignation to accept the presidency of Arkansas' Independent Colleges and Universities. The full board will be responsible for electing the new president.

Gene Whisenhunt, immediate past chairman of the OBU Board of Trustees, has been named chairman of the search committee. A 1983 Ouachita alumnus, he is executive vice president and CFO of Hickingbotham Investments in Little Rock.

Dr. Tim Knight, dean of Ouachita's Patterson School of Natural Sciences, will serve as vice chairman. A 1984 Ouachita alumnus, he has taught at Ouachita since 1989.

Phil Hardin, OBU's assistant to the president for administration, will serve as secretary. A 1973 Ouachita alumnus, he has served on Ouachita's administrative staff since 1992.

Heflin, a 1993 Ouachita alumnus, will serve as an ex officio member of the search committee. He is vice president of Legacy Termite and Pest Control in Little Rock.

Heflin and Whisenhunt spoke at a faculty/staff forum on June 11 to discuss details of the presidential search process. Heflin shared a timeline that includes the full committee meeting on July 2, accepting nominations for presidential candidates from July 6 through Sept. 1 and meeting again on Sept. 10 to begin reviewing nominations and resumes.

Emphasizing that "a national search will be conducted" for the next president, Heflin said, "The committee desires to recommend a candidate whose assets will provide the best possible match to Ouachita's current needs."

He added that the search committee "will seek candidates who would inspire the trust and confidence of the entire campus community as well as Ouachita's Baptist constituency and who value and understand Ouachita's relationship with the churches of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention."

Expressing appreciation for the opportunity to chair the search committee, Whisenhunt told the forum crowd, "This is a real honor for me to serve on this committee. I love Ouachita. It's been a huge part of my life. I love this place and I care a whole lot about its future."

"I think we're going to have a great group of people (serving on the search committee) who see things a lot of different ways and I think that's important," Whisenhunt added. "I understand how important this process and decision is. I think we're going to have great candidates from across the country to consider."

Heflin and Whisenhunt agreed that the search process realistically could take six months to a year to complete. "The future of this institution is too important to rush," Whisenhunt said. "We commit to you to work hard, to hear the opinions and the voices define the need and give you our very best. It will be a huge priority in my life each and every day to get this done."

In an interview following the faculty/staff forum, Heflin said, "With the announcement of the search committee, it feels like we're actually moving forward. I'm encouraged by the breadth and depth of the Ouachita experience that we have on the committee. I'm excited about the fact that we have a lot of people who are successful in their own right who will bring a lot of insight and experience to the committee."

Heflin said he also was "really encouraged by the interaction" with faculty and staff during the forum. He affirmed the opportunity "to have some good dialogue among the committee, the board and the faculty and staff which will be important throughout the transition process."

In addition to the search committee officers, other committee members include:

Julie Dodge, a 1981 alumna and current member of the Board of Trustees. She is a former music teacher and OBU adjunct faculty member from Conway.

Richard Lusby, a 1974 alumnus and current member of the Board of Trustees. He is an attorney with Womack, Phelps and McNeill in Jonesboro.

Dr. John McCallum, pastor of First Baptist Church of Hot Springs and a current member of the Ouachita Board of Trustees

Nicole Porchia, a 2009 alumna and director of Ouachita's Academic Success Center.

Molly Shepherd, a 2010 alumna and a law clerk for the U.S. Eighth Circuit Court of Appeals in El Dorado.

Dr. Amy Sonheim, professor of English and a member of the Ouachita faculty since 1993.

Mica Strother, a 1994 alumna and vice president of marketing and business development for Baldwin and Shell Construction in Little Rock.

James S. Young, a 1988 alumnus and current member of the Board of Trustees. He is group vice president for Tyson Foods in Springdale.

Following the search committee's July 2 meeting, the committee will release contact information and details for submitting presidential nominations beginning July 6.