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Software engineering leader Leigh Fanning to deliver lecture at Ouachita Oct. 20

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NEWS

For immediate release

Software engineering leader Leigh Fanning to deliver lecture at Ouachita Oct. 20

By Cimber Winfrey

October 6, 2015

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

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Ouachita Baptist University will host Dr. Leigh Fanning, president of Versiera, LLC, a software engineering enterprise, as part of the university's endowed Birkett Williams Lecture series on Tuesday, Oct. 20. Fanning's lecture, "Ethics and Implications: Remembering the Private Citizens We Once Were," will be held at 7:30 p.m. in Mabee Fine Arts Center's McBeth Recital Hall on Ouachita's campus and is free and open to the public.

The lecture series is held each semester and rotates among Ouachita's seven academic schools. This semester, the J.D. Patterson School of Natural Sciences invited Fanning as the guest lecturer.

"Dr. Fanning has been very successful in her career and has a multidisciplinary background in science, computer science and business," said Dr. Tim Knight, dean of the Patterson School and professor of biology. "Her experiences are so diverse that students from many different majors and backgrounds will find her interesting."

Fanning earned a Bachelor of Science degree in engineering physics from the University of Colorado at Boulder in 1987. Following over a decade of work in industry, she earned her master's degree in computer science from the University of New Mexico (UNM) in 2007 in the area of computational biology. In 2014, after starting Versiera, she joined the UNM Molecular Computing Group where she earned her Ph.D. in computer science.

Fanning is currently cofounding a startup in genomics to commercialize technologies she developed within her Ph.D. research. Her research is centered on constructing molecular models of different drugs and determining through computer programming which treatment mechanism will work most effectively. The models work as preliminary trials by creating a chemical structure of a drug before it is tested in a lab. Through her research, companies can save significant funds by first narrowing the potential outcomes of a specific product before undergoing testing.

Fanning's other interests include programming languages, cyber-privacy, combinatorics, representation methods and information theories.

Fanning also is an entrepreneur, creating Versiera, a software engineering enterprise, in 2001. Versiera is a web-based system that provides system administrators with a simple alternative to

routine business tasks, thus reducing the price of ownership. It also works to quickly identify functionality problems and detect system performance issues within an organization.

Knight encourages students of all disciplines, especially computer science and business majors, to attend the lecture in hopes that they will gain a broader view of entrepreneurship and future career opportunities.

Ouachita's Birkett Williams lecture series was established in 1977 as a gift from the late Birkett L. Williams, a 1910 Ouachita graduate. The lecture series gives students the opportunity to extend their liberal arts education outside of the classroom by inviting leading scholars and public figures with diverse backgrounds to Ouachita's campus.

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