

Ouachita Baptist University

Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita

Press Releases

Office of Communication

Summer 6-16-2016

Ouachita trustees celebrate campaign milestone, authorize feasibility study for new nursing degree

Trennis Henderson

Ouachita Baptist University

Ouachita News Bureau

Ouachita Baptist University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/press_releases



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), [Organizational Communication Commons](#), and the [Public Relations and Advertising Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Henderson, Trennis and Ouachita News Bureau, "Ouachita trustees celebrate campaign milestone, authorize feasibility study for new nursing degree" (2016). *Press Releases*. 277.

https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/press_releases/277

This News Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of Communication at Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. It has been accepted for inclusion in Press Releases by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. For more information, please contact mortensona@obu.edu.

OUACHITA
BAPTIST UNIVERSITY



NEWS

**Ouachita trustees celebrate campaign milestone,
authorize feasibility study for new nursing degree**

By Trennis Henderson, OBU Vice President for Communications

June 16, 2016

For more information, contact Trennis Henderson at hendersont@obu.edu or (870) 245-5206

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Convening Ouachita Baptist University's first Board of Trustees meeting since the election of Dr. Ben Sells as OBU's 16th president, trustees addressed a number of key issues, ranging from a major fundraising milestone to a nursing feasibility study.

As trustees gathered on campus June 9 for their summer meeting, Board Chairman Jay Heflin affirmed that university leaders are "thankful to usher in the Ben Sells era at Ouachita Baptist University."

"It's a privilege for me to be here in this role," Dr. Sells responded. "I think we can and we will dream a larger dream that honors God, that advances the Ouachita mission, that helps Arkansas Baptists and serves the common good."

Board members received a report that Ouachita's "Defining the Difference" capital campaign, which was launched in 2010 in conjunction with the university's 125th anniversary celebration, has been successfully completed. The campaign included a base goal of \$25 million and a challenge goal of \$35 million. University officials announced that total giving during the six-year campaign exceeded \$48 million, surpassing the campaign's challenge goal by 37 percent.

The overall objective of Defining the Difference was to fund "the strategic plan to assist Ouachita Baptist University in achieving its mission." Six specific campaign objectives for Defining the Difference included funding for student scholarships, construction and renovation, academic advancement, global connectivity, undergraduate research and university operations. Giving to the campaign also provided support for other university priorities.

Recent campus improvements funded through the campaign include such major projects as the dedication of Cliff Harris Stadium, construction of a new facility for the Ben M. Elrod Center for Family and Community and the renovation and expansion of Moses-Provine Hall to include the Rosemary Adams Department of Visual Arts and Adams Gallery.

Presenting a report on an "Emerging Framework for the Future," Dr. Sells noted that "the essential Ouachita mission is strong," especially in the context of "our commitment to academic excellence in a Christ-centered learning community." He added that a key priority is "making the mission more economically viable for students and their families, for faculty and staff and for the generations of people who will come after us." Specific steps include such efforts as increasing university enrollment over the next few years as well as increasing fundraising and developing a new strategic plan.

Among those goals, the Board of Trustees affirmed launching a feasibility study for a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. The study will include conducting surveys of potential students and employers, developing a list of faculty and support staff needed to establish a quality program and identifying appropriate and available clinical facilities. University officials anticipate presenting a recommendation based on the study for consideration by trustees in December.

Trustees also approved a proposal to develop a new strategic plan for the university. Dr. Sells told board members the proposal was based on discussion with the university's Planning Committee, Administrative Council and Deans' Council. He added that it will involve "a deeply collaborative effort, inviting the larger Ouachita family to share their voices in developing a five-year strategic plan." Following an in-depth evaluation and proposal process, the Planning Committee will present a final report by December 2017.

Board members received an update on the Berry Bible Building renovation and Horne Center for Biblical Preaching construction project. Dr. Sells reported that fundraising efforts are continuing on the project. Trustees also adopted the university's 2016-17 operating budget and approved refinancing some long-term debt to take advantage of current lower interest rates.

Trustees also received reports on three new degree programs approved by university faculty and a name change for the Office of Student Services to the Office of Student Development.

The new degree programs include a major in finance in the Hickingbotham School of Business and majors in public history and social justice studies in the Sutton School of Social Sciences. The finance major is designed to "allow students to gain additional depth of knowledge in key areas of finance," according to a written report from Dr. Stan Poole, vice president for academic affairs.

The public history major will prepare graduates for "work in museums, archives, tourism, community history, historic preservation, cultural resource management and interpretation and media." The interdisciplinary major in social justice studies draws primarily on existing courses from each department in the Sutton School as well as an upper-level course in the Pruet School of Christian Studies. Graduates will be prepared for further study or employment in such areas as legal studies, government agencies, non-profit organizations and social work.

The new name for the Office of Student Development is designed to better reflect the mission and work of the division, which seeks "to foster student development within the context of the university's Vision, Mission and Values Statement." In conjunction with that change, the Office of Campus Activities will be renamed the Office of Student Life.

In other actions, board members adopted a resolution honoring Dr. Charles Wright as well as one in memory of Betty Ferguson Oliver and in honor of her husband, Robert "Bob" Oliver.

Dr. Wright, who served the past 10 months as Ouachita's interim president, previously served 40 years as a faculty member and dean of the School of Fine Arts. Affirming Dr. Wright's "positive and effective leadership to faculty, staff and students during the 2015-2016 academic year," the resolution expressed "sincere and eternal gratitude" to Dr. Wright for his service as interim president.

Mrs. Oliver, a 1958 Ouachita alumna and university trustee, passed away April 9. Trustees expressed their gratitude for her "consistent and generous support for Ouachita through fervent prayers, trustee service, student recruitment, financial gifts and fundraising" throughout her lifetime.

Affirming her husband's "unselfish and unswerving support for his wife's generous service to Ouachita over many years," trustees expressed their "appreciation for this beloved couple and their solidarity with Bob at this time" as well as their "prayers and friendship for all the days ahead."

Among personnel-related actions, board members approved the election of one faculty member and four staff members, including:

- Autumn Mortenson, assistant professor and circulation/reference/librarian in Riley-Hickingbotham Library. Mortenson holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Cornell College and a Master of Library and Information Science degree from Louisiana State University. She also earned a teaching certificate in early childhood education and has taught third grade at Central Primary School in Arkadelphia since 2011. She previously served with the Bryan (Texas) Public Library; the Ringer Public Library in College Station, Texas; in the Special Collections Department at Ouachita; and as reference librarian

at Henderson State University's Huie Library. Her husband, Dr. Chris Mortenson, is an associate professor of history at Ouachita.

- Erica Brown, student relations coordinator for Educational Talent Search. She holds a Bachelor of Business Administration in Management degree from Southern Arkansas University and previously was a financial aid counselor at Henderson State University.
- Stephen Curry, admissions counselor in the Office of Admissions Counseling. Curry is a 2016 Ouachita graduate with a Bachelor of Music Education degree. He will be recruiting prospective students in northwest Arkansas and Oklahoma. As a student, he was a member of Concert Band, Marching Band, Concert Choir and Ouachita Singers. He was a member of Eta Alpha Omega men's social club and was named to Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges.
- Steve Myers, Jones Performing Arts Center technical director. Myers, a 2006 graduate of Ouachita, holds a Bachelor of Arts degree with majors in theatre arts and mass communications. He also holds a Master of Science in Media Management degree from Indiana University. He has served as an instructor and project manager at Indiana University and as a video and photo manager and video producer at Pine Cove Camp in Tyler, Texas.
- David Winkler, Annual Fund and Tiger for Life coordinator in the Office of Development. Winkler, a 2015 Ouachita graduate, holds a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in accounting. He previously worked in college ministry at Immanuel Baptist Church in Little Rock. As a student, he served on the Hickingbotham School of Business Student Advisory Board, Tiger Serve Day Leadership Team and Welcome to Ouachita's World Orientation Steering Committee. He also was named to Who's Who Among Students in American Universities and Colleges.