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NEWS

For immediate release

Ouachita to host NEA Chairman Jane Chu for Birkett Williams Lecture Sept. 27

By Haley Martin

September 16, 2016

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

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. – Ouachita Baptist University will host OBU alumna Jane Chu, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, to present the Birkett Williams Lecture on Tuesday, Sept. 27, at 7:30 p.m. in OBU's McBeth Recital Hall. The lecture is free and open to the public.

Each semester, the Birkett Williams Lecture Series rotates among Ouachita's seven academic schools. Ouachita's School of Fine Arts will host Chu's lecture, "The National Endowment for the Arts: Supporting the Arts and Creativity in American Communities."

Dr. Chu was nominated in 2014 by President Barack Obama and confirmed by the U.S. Senate to serve as the 11th chairman of the NEA, a governmental organization that seeks to provide equal access to the arts and arts participation in American communities. The NEA supports arts learning and provides development opportunities through funding and support.

"Chu is the champion for the arts for the United States," said Dr. Gary Gerber, dean of OBU's School of Fine Arts. "She represents the entire governmental outreach and outpouring of the arts."

Chu was raised on Ouachita's campus where her father, Dr. Finley Chu, was a business professor and her mother, Rosemary "Mom" Chu, served as a hall director. Chu earned her Bachelor of Music degree in piano performance and Bachelor of Music Education degree from Ouachita in 1979. She went on to earn a master's degrees in piano pedagogy from Southern Methodist University, an MBA degree from Rockhurst University and a PhD in philanthropic studies from Indiana University.

During her years as a Ouachita student, Chu was a member of the Ouachita Student Foundation, the Ouachita-Tones and concert Band. She also was elected Homecoming queen and was the recipient of a Ouachitonian Leadership Award.

"It's great because she is a Ouachita grad, and she understands us. This is where she started," Gerber said. "She knows how a small liberal arts college can make a difference locally, in our state and in our world."

As an artist and musician herself, Chu supports creative endeavors across the nation and seeks to encourage other Americans to do the same. Having awarded more than \$240 million in NEA grants across the country, Chu continues to promote the arts through research and leadership initiatives. Prior to her current position, she served as president and CEO of the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts in Kansas City, Mo.

"We've got to bring people together and make sure that people understand that the arts are not off by themselves, that they are relevant and we cross sectors and cross conversations," Chu said in an interview with *ArtWorks*, a publication of the NEA. "We have multiple people and different perspectives who come to the same table."

“She will discuss how people can support the arts where they are and how this makes a difference nationwide,” Gerber added. “When people support their local arts programs, they support the arts nationally.”

Musical groups all over the nation are impacted by the grants and support of the NEA. Groups such as the Ouachita’s steel drum band, Tiger Steel, have received grants in order to help fund their development as they partnered with the Clark County Boys and Girls Club for a mentorship program.

"Although many may not realize it, the arts actively intersect with areas such as the economy, human development and community vitality," Chu said. "The arts and artists who are funded and supported by the NEA are an integral part of the solution to the challenges we face in all parts of our society."

For more information about the Birkett Williams Lecture Series or Ouachita’s School of Fine Arts, contact Gary Gerber at gerberg@obu.edu or (870) 245-5128.

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PHOTO OF CHU AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD AT <https://www.obu.edu/news/2016/09/16/ouachita-host-nea-chairman-jane-chu-birkett-williams-lecture-sept-27>.