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NEWS

For immediate release

Ouachita hosts Consortium for Global Education as group celebrates 30th year of international impact

By Trennis Henderson, OBU Vice President for Communications

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ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Launching the Consortium for Global Education’s 30th year, participants from across the nation and around the world gathered Sept. 14-16 on the campus of Ouachita Baptist University for the organization’s annual meeting.

The consortium, which was established in 1987 under the name Cooperative Services International Education Consortium, supports the development and programs of international education between member Baptist colleges and universities and partner institutions of higher education overseas, especially in restricted countries.

This year, CGE member schools from 44 campuses have been involved in academic opportunities in more than 90 nations and have hosted nearly 4,800 international students from more than 130 nations.

During last week’s annual meeting, keynote speakers, international presenters and special guests traveled from nations ranging from Cambodia, China, Myanmar and Thailand to Egypt, Lebanon and Tunisia.

Ian Cosh, Ouachita’s vice president for community and international engagement and director of the Grant Center for International Education, hosted this year’s CGE annual meeting.

“Ouachita is one of the founding members of CGE so it is particularly meaningful for us to host the group,” Cosh noted. “Three of Ouachita’s former presidents have served as leaders of the organization. Dr. Daniel Grant served as CGE president for a decade after his retirement as president of Ouachita. Dr. Ben Elrod and Dr. Andy Westmoreland each served as chairmen of CGE.”

Dr. Grant, president emeritus of Ouachita, and other founding members of the organization were honored during the meeting, including Dr. Bob Agee, president emeritus of Oklahoma Baptist University; Dr. John Belew, retired vice president of Baylor University; and Dr. Lewis Myers, retired vice president of the Southern Baptist International Mission Board.

Dr. Grant volunteered for a decade as CGE’s founding president alongside his wife, Betty Jo Grant, who volunteered as secretary/treasurer. He said he and other early leaders of the organization spent two to three years getting the group organized and functioning. Affirming the significance of building international relationships, he described the organization as “an opportunity for relationships, exchange programs and strong global friendships” as well as “sharing of information and talents.”

Citing his personal and professional commitment to “academic excellence and Christian excellence,” Dr. Grant said CGE “tied in so well with that as an organization to help cultivate and develop involvement within each of our member Baptist colleges.”

Welcoming CGE participants to campus, Ouachita President Ben Sells noted numerous missions leaders over the years “who had the desire to take the gospel where Christ is not named.”

Challenging consortium members to continue to expand CGE's international involvement and impact, Dr. Sells asked, "What isn't being done that needs to be done that if it were done would make a difference for the Kingdom?"

CGE officials presented two Global Leadership Awards during the annual meeting. Dr. Carolyn Bishop, CGE president, said the awards are "given to individuals who are not current members yet represent the goals of this organization and partner with the consortium members to engage in international education programs and mobilize others to be actively support of CGE's global efforts."

She added that the recipients "represent both the spirit of CGE on our campuses and exhibit a tireless effort to be our partners overseas in building strategic and sustainable relationships."

This year's Global Leadership Award recipients were H.E. Nhem Thavy, a member of Parliament in Cambodia, and Dr. Larry Cox, president and CEO of Lifeshape Foundation, an international philanthropic organization affiliated with Chick-fil-A.

Dr. Bishop noted that in his role in Parliament, Thavy "gave help and an umbrella of protection to early CGE colleagues associated with Oklahoma Baptist University and others."

"As we have built educational partnerships with the University of Management in Phnom Penh and other schools," she added, "he hosted our teams and introduced us to rural Cambodia."

Thavy, who also is president of the Cambodia Baseball Federation, "has a vision for education in Cambodia and meeting the many needs of students in rural schools," including opening the door for baseball in Cambodia "as an avenue of a lifestyle and sharing witness."

Thavy emphasized that a primary need in Cambodia is offering young people hope through educational opportunities. "Come and see what you can do, what you can share with the underprivileged," he urged CGE members. "Your resources and education will help those kids."

Dr. Cox has served for the past 12 years with the philanthropic organizations of Chick-fil-A. He previously served 23 years with the Southern Baptist International Mission Board, including serving as a vice president and leading missionaries in Eastern Europe, the Middle East and Northern Africa.

"Larry met early CGE teams overseas and helped them begin to build the models of partnership that so many of us have learned from," Dr. Bishop said. "Most recently, as CGE has transitioned to new structures and new horizons, Larry has been a voice of wisdom and a reservoir of organizational perspective."

Dr. Cox affirmed that CGE member schools "are not interested in just sending tourists and going on excursions or adventures. CGE member schools want to make a difference in the world.

"Working cross-culturally has a profound impact on the lives of your students, your faculty and your staff," he said. "You are in the business of shaping young lives. It's your responsibility to make sure that they leave your school with the kind of DNA that says I care about people in other cultures, I care for the eternal significance."

During the consortium's opening plenary session, Dr. Bishop highlighted the importance of Christian universities engaging global trust, emphasizing that "your global impact has increased educational development and has changed lives."

She said CGE's involvement in more than 90 countries "illustrates the heart and trustworthiness of our organization" as member institutions "engage in a critical role of shining a light on educational opportunities that enrich and stretch the minds of students and faculty."

Describing CGE campuses as "educational lighthouses," Dr. Bishop said participants "partner with high government officials and community leaders to address global needs of schooling, curriculum, teaching, community service and assisting with schools for refugee students."

Keynote speaker Dr. Joshua Walker, vice president of global programs for APCO Worldwide, an international strategic communications firm, addressed “Engaging Globally as Christ’s Education Bridge-Builders.”

Dr. Walker, who previously served in the U.S. Department of State, noted that “without bridges, what are you left with? You’re left with islands, walls, barriers.”

By contrast, he said, “Education is probably the most powerful and the most basic of all human instincts. There are going to be times when you are persecuted. But if you go in there with the right spirit, it’s amazing to me the way we can find connections. They tend to give you grace when you come at them from a very genuine point of view.

“It’s hard to share with someone if you don’t have a relationship with them,” he said, adding that it also is “hard to hate your neighbor when you’re sitting across the table from them.”

Reflecting on CGE’s three-day annual meeting and the consortium’s ongoing global impact, Cosh said, “CGE provides a marketplace where ideas, needs and opportunities can be expressed to the leadership of the attending colleges and universities. Building relationships based on trust is the coin of the realm within CGE and providing access to the leadership involved in international education brings great value to all participants.”

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