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Ouachita announces \$1 million gift; trustees authorize Berry Bible/Horne Center project

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OUACHITA
BAPTIST UNIVERSITY



NEWS

For immediate release

Ouachita announces \$1 million gift; trustees authorize Berry Bible/Horne Center project

By Trennis Henderson, vice president for communications

September 26, 2017

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ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Hearing positive reports about Ouachita Baptist University’s recent enrollment and endowment growth, the university’s Board of Trustees addressed a variety of budget, personnel and facility-related issues during their quarterly board meeting held Sept. 21 on Ouachita’s Arkadelphia campus.

Citing Ouachita’s 17.9 percent growth in first-time freshman enrollment for the fall semester and an endowment increase of more than \$7 million to a total of \$108 million, Ouachita President Ben Sells told trustees, “We are stronger because of enrollment growth and endowment growth.”

Affirming efforts to “grow undergraduate enrollment to capacity” over the next five years, Dr. Sells added, “If we can grow to 1,750 students compared to 1,500 and can do that for 10 years in a row, over those 10 years we would graduate at least 1,000 more students than we otherwise would. More importantly, we will be extending the impact of our mission.”

Among actions taken during the meeting, trustees:

Received a report that fundraising is complete for the \$2 million renovation of Berry Bible Building and addition of the Horne Center for Biblical Preaching and authorized beginning the construction project in January 2018.

Reviewed and approved the university’s annual external financial audit report that cited a “clean” audit reflecting increased financial strength for Ouachita.

Approved a 3.5 percent increase for tuition, room and board for the 2018-19 academic year. Ouachita ranks 14th among 18 peer institutions in average net cost and recently was ranked in the top 5 percent nationally as “Best for the Money” by *USA Today/CollegeFactual.com*.

Dr. Sells also reported a \$1 million gift to the President's Innovation Fund from a first-time Ouachita donor interested in providing resources to help fund the university's strategic growth plans. "I believe Ouachita is rising, going from strength to strength, building on our wonderful heritage and history," Dr. Sells noted.

Trustees also heard reports highlighting Ouachita's quality and accountability, including receiving an update on the university's strategic planning efforts, adopting 2017-2018 university priorities and preparing for a Higher Learning Commission accreditation site visit in December.

Ouachita's new strategic plan, scheduled to be finalized in December, includes such strategic directions as sustaining the university's Christ-centered identity, supporting committed faculty and staff, ensuring transformative learning experiences, expanding beyond the residential undergraduate model and strengthening partnerships with alumni and friends.

Emphasizing the significance of Christ-centered identify and transformative learning, Dr. Sells said, "Those twin commitments are important and we must excel at both."

The 20-point university priorities approved by trustees include an expanded focus on high-impact learning opportunities, launching a program to benefit multicultural students, initial preparation for developing a campus master plan and continued emphasis on increasing new student enrollment and retention.

In personnel-related actions, new coaches and staff members approved by trustees include:

Kevin Crutchmer, head wrestling coach. A graduate of Northeastern State University, he previously was head wresting coach and an instructor in criminal justice at Union Public Schools in Tulsa, Okla.

Kevin Wewers, assistant football coach. He holds three degrees from Arkansas Tech University and previously served as residential dean, teacher and coach at Subiaco Academy.

Brooke Huber, resident director for Maddox Hall. A 2015 Ouachita graduate, she previously served at the Southern Ohio Pregnancy Center in Hillsboro, Ohio.

David Miller, resident director for Anthony Hall. A graduate of Point Loma Nazarene University, he previously was campus life coordinator at Erskine College in Due West, S.C.

PHOTO OF BERRY BIBLE RENDERING AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD

AT <https://www.obu.edu/news/2017/09/26/ouachita-announces-1-million-gift-trustees-authorize-berry-biblehorne-center-project/>.