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For immediate release

Endowed scholarship honors life and legacy of Ouachita professor emeritus William Downs

March 6, 2018

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ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Alumni of the Rogers Department of Communications at Ouachita Baptist University have established a \$50,000 endowed scholarship to honor the life and legacy of Dr. William D. Downs, professor emeritus of communications at the university. Downs served for 41 years on the Ouachita faculty, retiring in 2007.

The William D. Downs Endowed Scholarship was supported by alumni taught by Dr. Downs from the 1960s through the 2000s, and the endowment doubled in recent weeks thanks to a generous gift from Sarah Clark, a 1983 Ouachita graduate.

“It is an honor and privilege to pay this forward for Dr. Downs,” Clark said. “He was an encourager and had a special way of making you better – stretching you without you even knowing it. He never accepted mediocrity.”

Clark shared the sentiments of many communications alumni concerning Dr. Downs’ influence on his students’ lives.

“Dr. Downs made us feel as if we were the most important student. He had the biggest smile on campus and just made you feel good by his presence,” she said. “He challenged us, taught us, loved us and positioned us for life with the real-life lessons he shared. Personally, I have tried to carry many of those attributes forward in my own professional career. Dr. Downs will forever be an important part of my story.”

The endowed scholarship will benefit students in the Rogers Department of Communications who are pursuing a major in communications & media.

“Several alumni discussed with me the desire to honor Dr. Downs with this scholarship, and we have worked over the last few years to make this a reality,” said Dr. Jeff Root, professor of communications and dean of the School of Humanities and Huckabee School of Education. “Thanks to these alumni, and a special gift from Sarah, this scholarship will benefit students and honor a man who has influenced hundreds of students throughout his life.”



Root, along with current faculty members Dr. Deborah Root and Dr. Dave Ozmun, and former faculty member Mitch Bettis, shared the news with Downs, who is dealing with advanced stages of Parkinson's. He and his wife, Vera, and son, Bob, expressed gratitude for the recognition.

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PHOTOS OF DOWNS AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD AT <https://obu.edu/news/2018/03/06/ended-scholarship-honors-life-legacy-ouachita-professor-emeritus-william-downs/>.