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For immediate release

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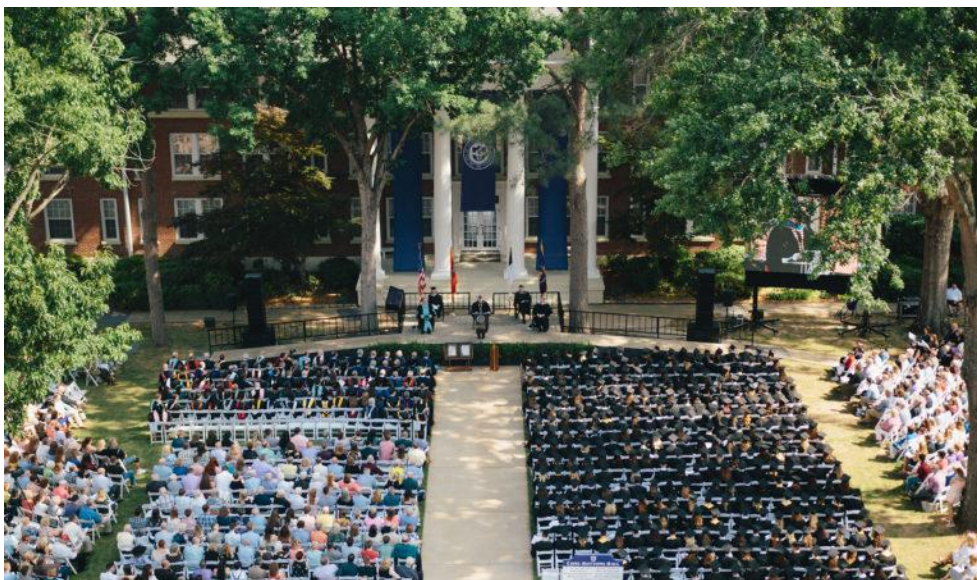
By Brooke Zimny

May 15, 2018

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ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Ouachita Baptist University celebrated 336 graduates during its 131st spring commencement on Saturday, May 12, with university officials conferring Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Music, Bachelor of Music Education, Bachelor of Fine Arts and Associate of Arts degrees. Dr. Ben Sells, Ouachita president, presided over the annual commencement exercises.



“As a residential, Christian liberal arts university, place matters,” Dr. Sells said as he opened the ceremony. “Today we’re gathered purposely in front of our most historic structure, Cone-Bottoms Hall. We’re surrounded by places you have worshipped, where you’ve learned and where you’ve lived these last four years.

“You’re surrounded by many of the people who’ve helped make this day possible for you,” he added, “people who believe in you, people who continue to be for you, people who are eager to see all that God will do in and through you. Class of 2018, this ceremony is about you and celebrating your college degree. It’s about welcoming you to the Ouachita alumni family and commencing the next and exciting season in your life.”



This year’s graduating class featured 157 honor graduates, including 33 who graduated *summa cum laude* with a grade point average of 3.95 or higher, 63 who graduated *magna cum laude* (3.75 GPA) and 61 who graduated *cum laude* (3.5 GPA). University officials also recognized 39 graduates who completed Ouachita’s Carl Goodson Honors Program and 31 members of the Alpha Chi national honor society.



Dr. Sells shared “Wisdom for Ouachitonians,” insights drawn from Proverbs, as his commencement address.

“Your Ouachita education and experience provide you a wonderful foundation – from working and studying with faculty and staff to living, learning and worshipping together,” he said. “Our university theme this year is ‘Love God and learning.’ It comes from our vision statement, and the integration of the two cultivates wisdom.

“Let me leave you with these last two Proverbs on this special day,” he concluded. “If you follow them, they will make you wiser and give you a life with fewer regrets: ‘Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life,’ (Proverbs 4:23) and ‘Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.’ (Proverbs 3:5-6)”

Senior Class President Lauren Ford, a political science major from Cabot, Ark., led the commencement invocation. The university’s vision, mission and values statement was read by Rickey Rogers, dean of students; Kori Bullard, a biology major from Percy, Ark.; and Dr. Rachel Pool, assistant professor of education. Scripture reading was led by the top three graduates from the Pruet School of Christian Studies: Ashley Sharpe, a Christian studies/Christian missions and Christian theology major from Houston, Texas; Sarah Shepard, a Christian studies/Christian missions, Christian ministries and Christian theology major from Benton, Ark.; and Kristopher Torres, a Christian studies/Christian missions major from Aguadilla, Puerto Rico.

Dr. Terry Carter, W.O. Vaught Professor of Christian Ministries, and Dr. Ray Granade, director of library services and professor of history, served as commencement marshals. Honorary marshals were Dr. Scott Holsclaw, professor emeritus of theatre arts, and Dr. Phil Rice, professor emeritus of business administration. Additionally, two emeriti administrative staff were recognized: Sharon Cosh, director of English as a second language emerita, and Phil Hardin, assistant to the president for administration emeritus.

President Sells noted that these emeriti faculty and staff members “are emblematic of an unbroken chain of loyal and effective service that is linked to Ouachita’s founding.”

Ouachita Baptist University, a leading liberal arts university, is ranked nationally among “America’s Best Colleges” by *U.S. News & World Report* and *Forbes* magazines and has been named the top private university in Arkansas by Niche.com. Founded in Arkadelphia in 1886, Ouachita seeks to foster a love of God and a love of learning in a Christ-centered learning community.