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For immediate release

Ouachita trustees approve university priorities, hear updates on campus master plan and nursing

By Trennis Henderson, vice president for communications

June 19, 2018

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ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Ouachita Baptist University's Board of Trustees addressed a variety of issues during their quarterly board meeting held June 14 on the university's Arkadelphia campus. Major business items included approving university priorities for 2018-19 and a preliminary budget for the new fiscal year as well as hearing updates on campus master planning and the university's new Bachelor of Science in Nursing program scheduled to launch this fall.



Trustees also approved two faculty members for endowed chair appointments. Dr. Sara Hubbard, associate professor of chemistry in the Patterson School of Natural Sciences, was named to the Nell I. Mondy Chair of Chemistry, and Dr. Ruth Plymale, associate professor of biology in the Patterson School, was named to the J.D. Patterson Chair of Biology. Dr. Hubbard, who joined the Ouachita faculty in 2009, holds her PhD in analytical chemistry from the University of Wyoming. Dr. Plymale, who also joined the Ouachita faculty in 2009, holds her PhD from Pennsylvania State University.

Ouachita's 20 priorities for 2018-19 are organized under the university's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan, which emphasizes sustaining Christ-centered identity, advancing faculty/staff support, ensuring transformative learning, growing residential enrollment, diversifying educational offerings and strengthening key partnerships.

According to Ouachita President Ben Sells, the 20 priorities "are intended to be accomplished in one year to help us achieve our five-year plan," adding that "we believe these deserve special attention and focus to help the university move forward."

The preliminary 2018-19 budget approved by trustees is based on current enrollment projections for the fall semester. Noting that the budget will be reviewed in September and revised as needed based on actual fall enrollment, Dr. Sells told trustees he is "encouraged by new student enrollment and retention of current students."

In a related budget update, Dr. Sells reported that the university's alumni and friends were generous in their giving during 2017-18. There will be a final report available later in the summer.

Concerning campus master planning, one of the university's Strategic Plan goals is to "develop and implement a campus master plan to guide strategic investments in physical facilities." The yearlong

planning process, designed to accommodate current enrollment and projected growth, was launched in March. It will address such issues as facilities, parking and traffic flow, campus aesthetics and safety.

Trustees approved a recommendation to rename Ouachita Apartments the “Kluck Hillside Apartments” in recognition of a generous gift from Dr. Wesley Kluck, vice president for student development, and his wife, Debbie. The facility, which includes 16 apartment units, is undergoing extensive remodeling and will be open for occupancy for the fall 2018 semester.

Addressing Ouachita’s proposed Bachelor of Science in Nursing program, Dr. Sells told trustees, “We received a very encouraging report from the Higher Learning Commission visit team and will receive a formal response from HLC in early August.”

In other actions, trustees:

- Heard updates on the Berry-Peeples Bible Building renovation and Horne Center for Biblical Preaching, which will open this fall and be dedicated on Sept. 27, as well as the renovation of Kluck Hillside Apartments and the addition of Hatcher Soccer Pavilion.
- Approved plans for the university to apply for membership in the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. CCCU is the primary professional association for Christian universities with more than 180 member institutions in the U.S. and around the world.
- Elected Dr. John McCallum, pastor of First Baptist Church of Hot Springs, as chair of the Board of Trustees and Julie Dodge of Conway as vice chair.
- Affirmed the employment of new faculty and staff since the board’s spring meeting, including nine new faculty members and eight new staff members.

-30-

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