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For Immediate Release

**Ouachita Baptist University and Baptist Health partner to provide innovative nursing education**

August 21, 2018

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Little Rock, Ark. – Ouachita Baptist University and Baptist Health today announced a partnership to address the shortage of nurses in the state and region.

Ouachita recently received approval from its accreditor, the Higher Learning Commission, to offer a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree. The inaugural class convenes in the 2018 fall semester with 23 students.

The partnership with Baptist Health College Little Rock (BHCLR), the teaching component of the Baptist Health System and one of the largest nursing programs in Arkansas, creates a distinctive dual enrollment RN-to-BSN completion program. Capitalizing on the strengths of both institutions, the program will allow nursing students to work as RNs a full semester earlier than most traditional BSN programs.

“This is an innovative partnership with Baptist Health College Little Rock that expands nursing education and makes it more affordable,” said Dr. Ben Sells, president of Ouachita. “This program allows students to earn two degrees in four years and expedites their entry into the healthcare workforce.”

Students will attend Ouachita during the first four semesters of the program, giving them the opportunity to experience campus and college life. Subsequently, students will continue their degree through Ouachita Online while dually enrolled at Baptist Health College Little Rock to earn an Associate of Applied Science in Nursing degree.

Midway through their senior year, students will sit for the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses. Once that exam is passed, they will be licensed to work as RNs during the final semester of their senior year while completing Ouachita’s BSN requirements for graduation.

“This partnership with Ouachita makes sense for Baptist Health,” said Troy Wells, president and CEO of Baptist Health. “Our respective missions and cultures are very much aligned, and we share a commitment to faith-based education. We strongly complement one another.”

Baptist Health is Arkansas’ largest healthcare system, with hospitals in Little Rock, North Little Rock, Arkadelphia, Conway, Heber Springs, Malvern and Stuttgart. Additionally, it recently purchased Sparks Health System, with locations in Fort Smith and Van Buren.

“As we grow, so too does our need for nurses, preferably those with BSN degrees,” Wells added.

“Healthcare demand is growing at a rapid pace, and we must be diligent and innovative in our efforts to respond to the demand for services.”

“BHCLR has a reputation of producing quality graduates,” said Dr. Judy Pile, chancellor of Baptist Health College Little Rock. “Our students receive extensive clinical experience early in the educational process, giving them the opportunity to distinguish themselves from other professionals in the field.”

Ouachita also has a longstanding record of successfully preparing students for health-related professions. The Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree will complement Ouachita’s existing degree programs in natural sciences while answering nationwide calls for innovation in nursing education.

“This partnership is ideal for Ouachita and Baptist Health, and for the benefit of healthcare in the state and beyond,” said Dr. Sells. “Baptist Health can tap into Ouachita’s significant pool of potential students in Arkansas and surrounding states. Our university, on the other hand, can play a leading role in helping find solutions in a time of significant disruption and change in higher education and healthcare.”

While research and conversations into a potential partnership had been underway for several years, Ouachita and Baptist Health began the formal planning process three years ago.

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**About Ouachita Baptist University:** Ouachita Baptist University, a private liberal arts university in Arkadelphia, Arkansas, is in its 132<sup>nd</sup> year as a Christ-centered learning community. It is consistently ranked among the “Best National Liberal Arts Colleges” by *U.S. News*. The University has an average student/faculty ratio of 13:1. Its seven academic schools include business, Christian studies, education, fine arts, humanities, natural sciences and social sciences. Additionally, Ouachita offers more than 20 study abroad opportunities with partner institutions around the world. For more information, visit [www.obu.edu](http://www.obu.edu).

**About Baptist Health:** Baptist Health is an Arkansas-based, locally owned and managed, not-for-profit and faith-based healthcare organization. Baptist Health is also Arkansas’ most comprehensive healthcare organization, with more than 9,300 employees operating nine hospitals. For more information or to make an appointment, call Baptist Health HealthLine at 1-888-BAPTIST or visit [baptist-health.com](http://baptist-health.com). Find us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [YouTube](#).

**About Baptist Health College:** Founded in 1920, Baptist Health College Little Rock has a long and distinguished history of providing education, mentoring, academic support and student services to Arkansans called to serve in the healthcare field. Graduates of BHCLR stand out as academically prepared and clinically prepared to “provide quality patient services and respond to the changing health needs of Arkansans with Christian compassion.” For more information, visit [www.bhclr.edu](http://www.bhclr.edu).