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Ouachita to host Innovation Summit, keynote speaker Rep. Bruce Westerman

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NEWS

For immediate release

Ouachita to host Innovation Summit, keynote speaker Rep. Bruce Westerman

By Rachel Moreno

March 27, 2019

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at newsbureau@obu.edu or (870) 245-5208



ARKADELPHIA, Ark. – Ouachita Baptist University will host its inaugural Innovation Summit on Monday, April 8. The summit, which focuses this year on “Sustainable Forestry and Wood Products for the Future,” will feature presentations by experts in the fields of forestry and innovative wood products, including keynote speaker Congressman Bruce Westerman. It will be held from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. in Walker Conference Center on Ouachita’s campus.

With 19 million acres of timber in the state of Arkansas, the 2019 Innovation Summit is intended to gather industry leaders, entrepreneurs, students and others to consider both the environmental and industrial benefits of developing sustainable forestry methods and new, strategic uses for wood products in Arkansas. The summit will focus especially on consumer products, bio-chemical products and building products. The idea for the gathering was sparked by the insight that while Arkansas has an abundance of timber, much of the innovation for wood products is occurring in other states.

“Our hope is that in hearing from these speakers – some who will talk about this topic broadly, and others deeply – we will fire the imagination of students and people in this region to think creatively about how we can use the abundance of the natural resource that we have in a way that is sustainable, usable by consumers around the world, and beneficial to the local economy,” said Ouachita President Ben Sells.



Rep. Westerman, the keynote speaker for the 2019 Innovation Summit, is a Hot Springs native and engineer and forester by trade. He serves on the Committee on Natural Resources and is a Ranking Member of the Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee. He also holds a Master of Forestry degree from Yale University.

Other guest speakers include: Jody Doak, plant manager for Highland Pellets based in Pine Bluff, who has 25 years of experience in the fiber and energy sector overseeing product development and process optimization; Joe Fox, Arkansas' state forester, director of the Arkansas Forestry Commission and chair of the Forest Resource Management Committee of the National Association of State Foresters; Peter MacKeith, dean of the Fay Jones School of Architecture and Design of the University of Arkansas and a leader in the innovation of cross-laminated timber, a product made from layers of solid-sawn lumber; and David Sanders, director of Innovate Arkansas, a partner of Winrock International. Sanders, a 1997 Ouachita alumnus, served in the Arkansas General Assembly from 2011 to 2019, first as a member of the House of Representatives and then the Senate.

The summit is co-sponsored by the Arkadelphia Regional Economic Development Alliance and Area Chamber of Commerce, Henderson State University and Innovate Arkansas, an initiative arm of Winrock International that connects entrepreneurs and industry leaders to help the Arkansas economy.

"Today's students are very entrepreneurial, and Ouachita's location – in a forest, on a bluff, by a river – provides us an opportunity to respond to a growing need in our region and the state of Arkansas," Sells said. "This collaboration with other institutions demonstrates Ouachita's ongoing commitment to foster innovation in higher education."

Tickets for the 2019 Innovation Summit are \$35 each and include meals. Doors open at 7:45 a.m. for registration. Breaks will take place throughout the event to allow for networking. Register and find the schedule for the day at www.obu.edu/forestryinnovation.

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