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For immediate release

Ouachita Sigma Tau Delta English honor society members present at 2019 annual convention

By Ashly Stracener

April 3, 2019

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ARKADELPHIA, Ark. — Seven Ouachita Baptist University students presented their academic work at the Sigma Tau Delta international English honor society's 2019 national convention in St. Louis March 27-30. Ouachita chapter members presented academic papers as well as one of the convention's 32 roundtable discussions, a first for Ouachita.

Students presenting academic papers were Aaron East, a senior English and history double major from Royse City, Texas; Haydn Jeffers, a senior English and mass communications double major from Hot Springs, Ark.; Micah Overstreet, a senior English and Spanish double major from Sheridan, Ark.; Claire Seale, a junior English major from Little Rock, Ark.; and Paige Smith, a junior English and political science double major from Beebe, Ark.

"The Department of Language and Literature is extremely proud of their creativity and analysis," said Dr. Amy Sonheim, professor of English and sponsor for Ouachita's Sigma Tau Delta chapter. "Their professors enjoy reading their work at Ouachita, so it is rewarding to have their talents affirmed by unbiased scrutiny."

"I learned how to overcome my nerves and present a paper to a room packed with students and professors I'd never met, and I got to see first-hand just how different one person's interpretation of a literary work can be from another's," Jeffers said. "I was able to connect with others through those differences, which was an incredibly enlightening experience."

Jeffers, Overstreet and Smith – along with Kaitlyn Taylor, a senior English and Spanish double major from Taylor, Ark., and Laura Ward, a senior English major from Springdale, Ark. – also led the roundtable discussion "Word Processors: Roleplaying the Writing Process." Sonheim said the roundtable was unique to the conference as it was interactive and taught critical thinking for editors who want to empower writers to see their own mistakes.

Additionally, and another first for Ouachita, Seale was selected by Sigma Tau Delta and named Student Representative for the Southwestern Region, which spans from Arkansas to Arizona. She will correspond

with and visit chapters in the region, aid in the production of regional and Student Leadership Committee publications and attend the Board Meeting in Las Vegas in the fall.

“Throughout my trip to St. Louis, I was able to be surrounded by people with the same loves and passions,” Seale said. “It was a fantastic experience to present one of my creative papers as well as earn the title of Southwestern Student Representative.”

This year’s Sigma Tau Delta convention theme, “Work in Progress,” spoke to the effort and labor that occurs within the discipline of English. In addition to their presentations, Ouachita’s students had the opportunity to attend other paper discussions, roundtables, workshops and hear from two award-winning writers, science-fiction novelist Nnedi Okorafor and poet Tess Taylor.

“To get to go to an event where there are thousands of other students there and the MVP is a poet or science-fiction writer validates English majors’ passion for words and working with words when sometimes we feel as if we’re sort of the grammar police of the university instead of the creatives or analyzers or the difference makers,” Sonheim said. “We believe art makes life better, and good art makes life best. The Sigma Tau Delta conference affirms that.

“Of these seven students, half have been accepted to graduate programs in disciplines based on language skills – English literature, library science, creative writing and editing – so this conference was like a B-12 shot for them,” Sonheim continued. “They will understand that they matter, they count and that the world needs them.”

For more information, contact Dr. Amy Sonheim at sonheima@obu.edu or (870) 245-5552.

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