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For immediate release

Six Ouachita science students selected to present at National Conference on Undergraduate Research

By Madison Cresswell

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ARKADELPHIA, Ark. – Six Ouachita Baptist University students from the Patterson School of Natural Sciences were selected to present their independent research projects at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research (NCUR) held at Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw, Ga., April 11-13. NCUR is a biennial event that brings together students, faculty and academic professionals interested in the improvement and promotion of undergraduate research.

Chosen from more than 4,000 student research submissions, Ouachita students Hayden Bowman, a junior biomedical science major from Searcy, Ark., and Kelsey O'Brien, a senior biology and psychology double major from Weatherford, Texas, were accepted to present poster presentations, while Olivia Brown, Kayla Haberman, Justin McGee and Danielle Schaal were accepted to present oral presentations. Brown is a senior biology major from North Little Rock, Ark.; Haberman is a senior biology and psychology double major from Lorena, Texas; McGee is a senior psychology and biomedical sciences double major from Benton, Ark.; and Schaal is a senior biology major from Fayetteville, Ark.

"NCUR is a celebration of undergraduate research," said Dr. Nathan Reyna, associate professor of biology at Ouachita. "It was a good opportunity, and it shows that what Ouachita is doing related to student engagement is relevant and robust. Students were able to see the quality of research being done by other students and see how their work compared.

"Our students represented Ouachita well, and we are very proud of them," Dr. Reyna added.

"The NCUR event was significant to me because it was my first experience to present any sort of research work I have done," said Brown, who presented research titled "Cancer CURE: Glioblastoma Uses Exomes to Modify Their Cellular Niche Environment." "It was not a competition, but I did have to apply and be accepted to do an oral presentation, so this was great experience in getting my research ready for a conference and not just a class presentation."

For McGee, who presented his research, “Exosome-Induced Neuronal Differentiation,” attending the conference and representing Ouachita at the national level “was pretty amazing.”

“I presented research on exosomes, which are small vesicles released from cells that carry genetic information. I looked at their effect on improving neuronal differentiation, which is a fancy term for helping neurons grow,” he said. “The biggest thing I learned was how well Ouachita and the natural sciences department prepare us from a research perspective.”

Schaal presented “Role of Exomes on Cell Differentiation into Cancer Subtypes: an RNA Sequencing Analysis.” Her next step is to publish the research.

“My collaborators and I are hoping to have it published by the end of the school year,” Schaal said. “This will be very exciting for me because I will be a primary author on a major science publication as an undergraduate student. Most people don’t publish a paper until graduate school, so this is quite an accomplishment.”

Haberman presented “Carbon Nano-Onion as an Extracellular Growth Matrix for Stimulating Neuronal Regeneration;” O’Brien presented “Examining the Expression Profile of PD-1/PD-L1 in EGFR Positive Glioblastoma Multiforme;” and Bowman presented “Lysogenic Host Bacterium Alters Infectivity of *Gordonia* Bacteriophage.”

Funding for research and travel was provided by the National Institute of Health through AR-INBRE program, and by the National Science Foundation through AR-EPSCoR and the Cell Biology Education Consortium. Students conducted their research as part of the J.D. Patterson Ouachita Summer Research Fellowship.

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