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OUACHITA
BAPTIST UNIVERSITY



NEWS

For immediate release

Ouachita to adjust schedule for fall 2020



By Brooke Zimny

June 9, 2020

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

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.— Ouachita Baptist University President Ben Sells announced yesterday in an email to students, faculty and staff that the university will begin classes on campus for the 2020-21 fall semester on Aug. 17, eight days earlier than originally scheduled. Additionally, in-person instruction will be compressed, and students will not return to campus following Thanksgiving.

“While this semester will not be normal, we are committed to making it meaningful,” Dr. Sells said in his email. “The challenges presented by COVID-19 give us the opportunity to be innovative and imaginative while also making careful preparations.”

Move-in for all students will be Thursday through Saturday, Aug. 13-15, on a staggered schedule to minimize crowds. In-person classes will begin Monday, Aug. 17, and end Tuesday, Nov. 24. Final exams will be administered remotely after Thanksgiving. Additionally, classes will be held on Labor Day, Sept. 7, and the previously scheduled Fall Break, Oct. 8-9. This maintains the needed number of instructional days in the semester while compressing the overall time spent on campus.

“We know from data I’ve collected over the last dozen years that cases of the flu increase the most on our campus in the weeks between Thanksgiving and Christmas,” said Dr. Wesley Kluck, university physician and vice president for student development. “Avoiding students returning to campus following the Thanksgiving holiday, spent with family and friends across the country, is among the best things we can do to prevent the spread of COVID-19.”

Kluck also chairs the university’s Health Monitoring and Action Team (HMAT), which is providing leadership on campus for developing plans and protocols related to COVID-19 for the fall. In addition to collaboration with other leadership groups on campus, HMAT utilizes guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Arkansas Department of Health and American College Health Association, as it develops recommendations for the campus response.

“We realize this change raises questions about move-in, social life, the classroom environment, athletics and many campus events,” Sells noted. “Your university is diligently working to prepare for on-campus classes in this COVID-19 environment with two overarching goals in mind: supporting the health and safety of our Ouachita community and facilitating the kinds of relational experiences that make Ouachita, Ouachita.”

For students pursuing fully online courses at Ouachita, the schedule is adjusted as follows: Online Fall Term 1 classes will run from Monday, Aug. 17, through Sunday, Oct. 11; Online Fall Term 2 classes will run from Monday, Oct. 12, through Sunday, Dec. 6.

Additional information will be released to the campus community throughout the summer regarding detailed plans for the fall semester. The spring 2021 semester still is scheduled to begin Jan. 12. To see Dr. Sells’ complete message to campus and read more about Ouachita’s coronavirus response, visit obu.edu/coronavirus.