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### Memorial gift honors Ouachita student Charlee Morrison, invests in cancer research at Ouachita

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Ouachita News Bureau

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OUACHITA  
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NEWS

For immediate release

**Memorial gift honors Ouachita student Charlee Morrison, invests in cancer research at Ouachita**



November 16, 2020

*By Rachel Moreno*

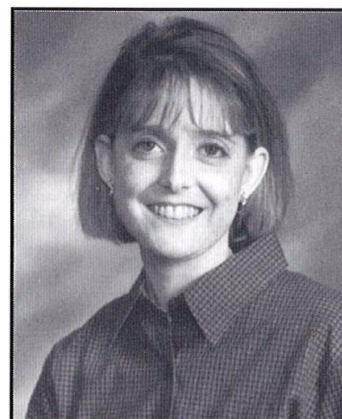
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ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Ouachita Baptist University has received a gift from Russell and Patti Morrison in memory of their daughter, Charlee Morrison, a former Ouachita student who passed away in 2000 during her senior year at Ouachita. The gift will be used to enhance Ouachita's first undergraduate research laboratory dedicated to cancer cell biology.

Last month marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Morrison's passing. Originally from Benton, Ark., she battled cancer from the young age of 13 and passed away due to complications on Oct. 30, 2000, in Little Rock. Morrison was a sociology major, a member of Tri Chi women's social club and respected by her Ouachita professors and peers.

"She was always happy, even when she was hurting, and had the most positive outlook possible for her life," said Emily Goode, a fellow Ouachita senior and friend, in a tribute to Morrison in the 2000 *Ouachita Circle* alumni magazine.

The same tribute reads, "Students at Ouachita will not likely remember the way that Morrison died, but the way that Morrison lived."



"I immediately remembered the story about Charlee when I was informed of the Morrisons' gift," said Dr. Tim Knight, dean of the Patterson School of Natural Sciences. "Though I did not know Charlee personally, we are a small campus family, and we consider all students as 'our own.'"

The monetary gift by the Morrisons will allow the Patterson School of Natural Sciences to create a cancer cell culture research experience for Ouachita students, a first for the university. This includes augmenting Ouachita's existing molecular biology research facility and expanding the quality and quantity of research opportunities for students.

"Several hundred students will benefit, as well as several faculty members," Knight said. "We have a small cohort of faculty already working in cancer- or cell biology-related research."

"We have been working on this concept for a while," said Nathan Reyna, associate professor of biology. "However, the gift has given us the leverage to enhance a facility that will ensure a large portion of our students will be able to participate in unique, class-based research experience."

"Charlee would have been delighted to see this used toward an educational program," said her father, Russell Morrison of Benton. "We're fully aware of the importance of medical equipment and training which saves lives. Excellent medical training and equipment equals better outcomes for those that are struggling with life threatening diseases such as adult leukemia that threatened and finally took Charlee's life."

"Charlee loved Ouachita Baptist and was so happy to be a student there," he added. "I know she would be honored to share this gift."

In 2018, Reyna led a team to create Ouachita's Cell Biology Education Consortium (CBEC), a National Science Foundation-funded consortium that focuses on the development and modification of cell culture techniques that can be incorporated in the undergraduate classroom. Since that time, Reyna said the "development of novel research methods and the student demand for participation in these projects outpaced our resources and facilities."

With the help of the Charlee Morrison memorial gift, the adaptation of Ouachita's current research facility will allow for more Ouachita students to be involved in the research, Reyna explained, as well as "strengthen critical thinking skills in the classroom, facilitating the transition from student to scientist."

"Ouachita is committed to undergraduate education through an active, inquiry-based, hands-on approach to learning in the classroom," said Reyna. "The opportunity for students to conduct mammalian cell culture and cancer biology research using this new facility with current molecular techniques in class is consistent with our goal to integrate research into the classroom."

For more information or to give, visit [obu.edu/give](https://obu.edu/give) and list "In memory of Charlee Morrison" in the special instructions field or contact Susan Warren, senior director of donor engagement, at [warrens@obu.edu](mailto:warrens@obu.edu) or 501-920-1042.

PHOTOS AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD <https://obu.edu/stories/news/2020/11/memorial-gift-honors-student-charlee-morrison-and-invests-in-cancer-research.php>