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NEWS

For immediate release

Ouachita hires Shepherd in full-time role to support students, faculty and staff of color



By Brooke Zimny

August 3, 2020

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at newsbureau@obu.edu or (870) 245-5206

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.— Dr. Ben Sells, president of Ouachita Baptist University in Arkadelphia, announced today that Dr. Lewis Shepherd, Jr., will join the school's executive leadership team as special assistant to the president.

Dr. Shepherd's hiring represents the first-time in Ouachita history to have a full-time position devoted to advancing racial diversity.

"Ouachita, with minority enrollment 16.4% of the student body, is more racially diverse than any time in its history; however, there is more progress to make," Sells said. "This historic

commitment by our university will help make Ouachita a more welcoming and supportive campus for students, faculty and staff of color.”

Dr. Shepherd is a double graduate of Ouachita, having earned a bachelor’s degree in religion and a master’s degree in education. He earned a doctorate in higher education from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

From 2009 to the present, Dr. Shepherd held senior leadership roles at Henderson State University focusing on student life, external relations and community engagement. He previously served 29 years in a variety of roles at Ouachita. Since graduating from Ouachita, Dr. Shepherd has been a bi-vocational pastor and has served since 2000 at Greater Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in Arkadelphia, the largest Black church in the community.

“I’m excited about the opportunity to return to my alma mater and in such an important capacity,” said Dr. Shepherd. “I want to help everyone associated with Ouachita and our community understand racial diversity and its impact.”

Ouachita’s current strategic plan has a goal to “expand campus diversity while improving support for minority students, faculty and staff.” It resulted in Dr. Sells establishing the Office of Multicultural Student Programs in 2017, which Dr. Shepherd will also oversee and expand.

“As a graduate of Ouachita connected with many of our alumni of color and as someone who has been the pastor of many black students, faculty and staff, I’m pleased with the progress that Ouachita has made,” Shepherd said. “I’ve worked closely with President Sells on community efforts since he came to Ouachita in 2016. I appreciated his June 1 statement that ‘Ouachita has more to do to advance racial justice and human dignity’ and I’m excited to help lead my university in this area.”

“Increased racial diversity represents intentional university efforts, contributes to a richer learning environment, and reflects changing demographics,” Sells said. “It’s also a priority for us as a Christian university because all people are created in the image of God.”

In addition to his career in education and ministry, Dr. Shepherd has been involved in numerous civic endeavors, including having served on the Arkansas State Police Commission, as past president of the Arkadelphia Chamber of Commerce and as a founding member of the Arkadelphia Sunrise Rotary Club. He currently is chair of the Board of Directors of the Percy and Donna Malone Child Safety Center.