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Ouachita News Bureau

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For immediate release

Christa Neal to serve as Ouachita Title IX coordinator, Community and Family Services program advisor



By Rachel Gaddis

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

Arkadelphia, Ark. – Ouachita Baptist University has announced its appointment of Christa Neal as both Title IX Coordinator for the university and program advisor for the Community and Family Services academic program, effective June 2021. Neal is the founding executive director of the Percy & Donna Malone Child Safety Center in Arkadelphia, Ark., a licensed professional counselor (LPC) and a licensed family and marriage therapist (LMFT) in the state of Arkansas.

Neal has more than 10 years of experience in mental health and human services, from providing therapy and working with law enforcement to developing policies in the nonprofit sector and championing community education. In addition to her licenses, Neal has expertise in trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), parent-child interaction therapy, clinical mental health, criminal justice systems and child forensic interviewing, as well as social and human services.

Her role at Ouachita will combine continued practical service with mentoring students seeking to enter these types of fields.

“Christa is uniquely qualified to serve in both of these roles, building on our efforts to make our campus a safe place to live and learn and also to give guidance to students hoping to forge a career serving others in these ways,” said Dr. Ben Sells, Ouachita president.

“The college campus is something that I’m excited about,” Neal said. “I love to grow programs and learn new things.”

Title IX is the federal law that guides Ouachita’s Sexual Misconduct Policy and processes for reporting, complaint resolution and more. Neal will oversee and expand these university efforts. Neal said she is especially passionate about not only seeking to prevent misconduct through education but also helping achieve healing through evidence-based responses.

“When it comes to abuse and assault, it is best to address them head on,” she said. “Campus sexual assault is an uncomfortable topic to address, but raising awareness and empowering people with resources are important.”

As program advisor for Ouachita’s Community and Family Services academic program, Neal will advise students, develop course offerings and serve as an instructor.

“I think so many who come to Ouachita feel a calling on their life,” Neal said. “While I’ve never worked in a faith-based organization, this is the most ministry-minded work I’ve ever been a part of. This kind of work is a calling, even if it is not in a traditional ministry role.”

A relatively new major, Ouachita’s bachelor of arts degree in community and family services was added to the university’s more than 60 academic programs in the 2017-2018 academic year. The Community and Family Services Program is designed to prepare graduates for a wide range of vocations in areas of community, family and social services or for graduate education in such fields as social work, counseling, law or ministry.

“The community and family services major has been very successful at attracting students since we launched, but I have always felt like there was a lot of room for improvement, especially in the areas of special activities, internships, mentoring and vocational guidance,” said Dr. Danny Hays, dean of the Pruet School of Christian Studies.

“Christa brings so many assets to this major – knowledge, experience, contacts in the field, passion for this work, mentoring, etc.,” Hays continued. “We are honored to have her join us in the Pruet School of Christian Studies, and we look forward with anticipation to the bright future for those students in this major.”

Neal has ambitions to offer Ouachita students more hands-on learning experiences in the region and across the state.

“I’d like to build relationships between Ouachita and community and family services organizations so students can gain more real-life experience,” she said. “I’ve overseen interns who come back years later and tell me how much they learned. You can read the book all day long, but experiencing it is completely different. We’re excited to put theory and research into action, much like Ouachita’s other well-respected programs related to this field, such as psychology and social justice studies.”

Serving as the executive director of the Percy & Donna Malone Child Safety Center since 2013, Neal has developed and managed the nonprofit from the ground up while also providing treatment as a mental health therapist to its clients. She also regularly provides expert testimony as a certified forensic interviewer and serves as a child and family advocate. In early 2021, the center obtained national accreditation under Neal’s direction. The center also has expanded to offer locations in Malvern and Prescott, Ark.

Previously, Neal served as a mental health therapist in the Arkadelphia School District from 2011 to 2013 and worked closely with the Clark County Department of Human Services, Court Appointed Special

Advocates and Clark County Juvenile Court. From 2009 to 2011, Neal worked for Living Hope Southeast in Bismarck and Kirby, Ark., John Brown University's CARE Clinic in Siloam Springs, Ark., and Youth Bridge, Inc., in Fayetteville, Ark.

Neal is a 2008 Ouachita graduate with a bachelor of science degree in psychology. She earned dual master of science degrees in community counseling and marriage & family therapy from John Brown University.

To learn more about Ouachita's Community and Family Services Program, visit obu.edu/community-familyservices or contact the Pruet School of Christian Studies at (870) 245-5599.

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