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### **Ouachita trustees adopt five-year Strategic Directions that highlight "faithful excellence"**

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Ouachita News Bureau

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For immediate release

**Ouachita trustees adopt five-year Strategic Directions that highlight “faithful excellence”**



*By Trennis Henderson*

December 20, 2017

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

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. — Positioning Ouachita Baptist University for future growth and impact, the Ouachita Board of Trustees unanimously approved the university's five-year strategic plan during their quarterly board meeting held Dec. 14 on Ouachita's Arkadelphia campus.

Approval of the 2018-2022 strategic plan culminated an 18-month planning process, including an interim report released in March and a preliminary final report released in October. The plan includes six strategic directions and 24 specific goals to achieve those directions; the strategic directions are:

- Sustain Christ-Centered Identity
- Advance Faculty/Staff Support
- Ensure Transformative Learning
- Grow Residential Learning
- Diversify Educational Offerings
- Strengthen Key Partnerships

Ouachita President Ben Sells said the trustees' action “fulfills the charge given at their June 2016 meeting to utilize a deeply collaborative approach to formulate a five-year plan with difference-making strategic directions.”

The university's new strategic plan was compiled by the University Planning Committee, in cooperation with trustees, faculty and staff. According to President Sells, who chairs the Planning Committee, the planning process has included 50 listening sessions with each of Ouachita's academic schools and administrative departments, meeting with several of the university's advisory councils and six workgroups that developed draft goals for each of the six strategic directions.

Comparing Ouachita's future direction to the Old Testament account of Daniel, Dr. Sells described Daniel as a person of faithful excellence. Affirming the adoption of Ouachita's strategic directions as a milestone for the university, Dr. Sells said, "If I can use only two words to describe these strategic directions, I would use faithful excellence. These strategic directions are about deepening and broadening the impact of Ouachita. They are means to accomplishing our mission to graduate an increasing number of men and women whose lives are marked by faithful excellence."

In addition to adopting the strategic plan, board members elected four new trustees. The four female alumnae include:

- Nancy Benton ('83), a homemaker and family business co-owner and a member of Central Baptist Church of Jonesboro.
- Susan Goss ('80), a licensed professional counselor and marriage and family therapist and a member of First Baptist Church of Bentonville.
- Terri Mardis, ('84), an attorney who previously served two three-year terms on the Board of Trustees and a member of Cross Church of Springdale.
- Molly Shepherd ('10), an attorney and a member of First Baptist Church of El Dorado.

President Sells said the election of the four women increases the number of females serving on the board to nine, the highest number in the university's history. He noted that the election of Molly Shepherd "brings a young alumni perspective to the board," adding that "young alumni are critical to our future."

Trustees also elected four current trustees to a second three-year term, including Julie Dodge of Conway, Beth Neeley of Camden, Tom Thrash of Little Rock and James S. Young of Springdale as well as Scott Street of Nacogdoches, Texas, to a second term as a national director. Trustees who completed their service on the board included Dr. Steven Collier of Augusta, Susie Everett of Benton and Dr. Larry White of Conway. The board's officers were re-elected, including Chair Jay Heflin of Little Rock, Vice Chair John McCallum of Hot Springs and Secretary Mary Pat Anthony of El Dorado.

Trustees adopted a revised Endowment Policy following a year-long review to better position the endowment to achieve its purpose to "generate a stable and continuously growing income stream for the activities and programs supported by the endowment." The university's endowment currently stands at \$108 million, an \$8 million increase over the previous year.

Trustees also heard an update about the Higher Learning Commission's recent reaccreditation visit to campus. Dr. Stan Poole, vice president for academic affairs, said the visit went well as students, faculty and staff shared "a positive sense of direction and momentum for the university." Final results of the reaccreditation process are expected this spring. Ouachita has maintained continuous accreditation since 1953.

In other board actions, trustees:

- Adopted a resolution in memory of Millard Aud of Arkadelphia, a Ouachita trustee since 2014 who passed away Nov. 20 at age 83. The resolution noted that Aud "was a loyal friend of Ouachita Baptist University for many years." Citing Aud's "consistent support for Ouachita through fervent prayers, trustee service, strategic student recruitment, and generous financial gifts," trustees expressed "gratitude to God for the life and legacy of Millard Aud."
- Heard an update from Dr. Sonny Tucker, executive director of the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, about the work of the state convention and its partnership with Ouachita. Dr. Tucker, a 1983 Ouachita graduate and father of two Ouachita alumni, described the ABSC as "a network of 1,560 churches working together to create spiritual synergy to make impact." Expressing appreciation to "Dr. Sells and Ouachita for partnering with us," he added, "This school has had much impact on me and my children."
- Received updates on university enrollment and development. As of mid-December, new student applications for fall 2018 are up more than 20 percent and acceptances are up 13 percent

compared to the same time a year ago. Total fundraising activity as of Nov. 30 is \$11.7 million compared to \$5.9 million a year ago. The Ouachita Cornerstone Fund is at \$435,000 compared to \$341,000 a year ago.

- Approved hiring Ashleigh Harris as assistant athletic trainer. Harris, who holds a Bachelor of Science degree in athletic training from Emporia State University, previously was a graduate assistant at Missouri Western State University.

Ouachita Baptist University, a leading Christian liberal arts university in Arkadelphia, Ark., is committed to fostering a love of God and a love of learning. For more information, call 1-800-DIAL-OBUE or visit [www.obu.edu](http://www.obu.edu).