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Ouachita to build 144-bed student apartment complex for Fall 2022



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

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Ouachita Baptist University will break ground on a 144-bed, \$12.6 million student apartment complex this month, with plans for it to be open for the Fall 2022 semester.

The apartments are phase two of Project Foresight, an initiative the university launched three years ago. Project Foresight encompasses eight acres and 30 properties on the southwest edge of campus, including many that were vacant and seriously deteriorated.

Phase one of Project Foresight included leasing land to alumni-owned Pediatrics Plus, a children's specialty healthcare clinic. The company built an \$8 million facility adjacent to Ouachita's campus that opened in January 2021. It provides services to families with special needs, extends learning opportunities for Ouachita's undergraduate students and serves as a clinical placement site for the university's new Master of Science degree in applied behavior analysis, a leading therapy for autism.

"Three years ago, we began dreaming and planning to transform our campus," said Dr. Ben Sells, Ouachita president. "Ouachita is and will continue to be a place where each student lives, learns, worships and serves in community to uniquely become the person God intends in order to serve his purposes in their generation."

Ouachita is a highly residential campus with 97% of students living in residence halls and apartments. The new apartment complex caps 15 years of improvements to on-campus housing. Ouachita's iconic Student Village, which includes Gosser and Tollett Halls, was built in 2009; Georgia Hickingbotham and Susie Everett Halls were built in 2010; Kluck Hillside Apartments were renovated in 2018; and Pine Square Apartments, renamed Tatman Corner, were renovated in 2021. Ongoing improvements also have been made to the university's three freshman residence halls.

"There's always more to do with a campus of 1.3 million square feet," said Dr. Keldon Henley, chief of staff and vice president for institutional advancement. "We're excited to begin this major addition to our residence life facilities and extend our institutional momentum for the sake of the students we're called to serve."

Ouachita's Board of Trustees appointed a subcommittee last fall to work with university staff and architects John McMorran and Ryne Pruitt of Lewis Architects Engineers to design the apartments. General contractor and construction management firm CDI was chosen for the project. The Board of Trustees formally approved going forward in a meeting last month.

Incorporating ideas gathered through an alumni survey, which elicited nearly 800 responses, the new apartment complex will feature two buildings divided into six houses. Each three-story house includes six apartments with two double-occupancy bedrooms, two bathrooms, a laundry room, kitchen and dining area open to the living area. The units will be fully furnished for students' convenience.

"These new apartments will provide another opportunity for our students to build community while they live together on campus, elevating and enriching the student experience," said Rickey Rogers, dean of students and director of housing. "They will support the university's continued growth, improve safety and alleviate parking issues."

The projected cost of the apartments is \$12.6 million, and 60% of the funding has been identified. Gifts are needed for the remaining \$5 million.

"So much is happening at Ouachita that isn't happening elsewhere with our enrollment growth, high graduation rate, record giving and new undergraduate and graduate programs," Sells added. "It's happening because of Ouachita's adherence to its Christian mission and a long history of investment in students by trustees, faculty, staff, alumni, churches and friends. We are ready and capable of rising to this next great moment to strengthen our Christ-centered learning community."

Ouachita Baptist University, a private liberal arts university in Arkadelphia, Ark., is entering its 135th year as a Christ-centered learning community and is ranked the No. 2 "Regional College in the South" by *U.S. News & World Report*. In 2020, Ouachita recorded its highest enrollment in 20 years and its highest-ever four year graduation rate while also launching its first graduate programs in more than 30 years. Learn more about the university's highly personal approach, reflected in a student/faculty ratio of 13:1, at www.obu.edu.