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Ouachita News Bureau

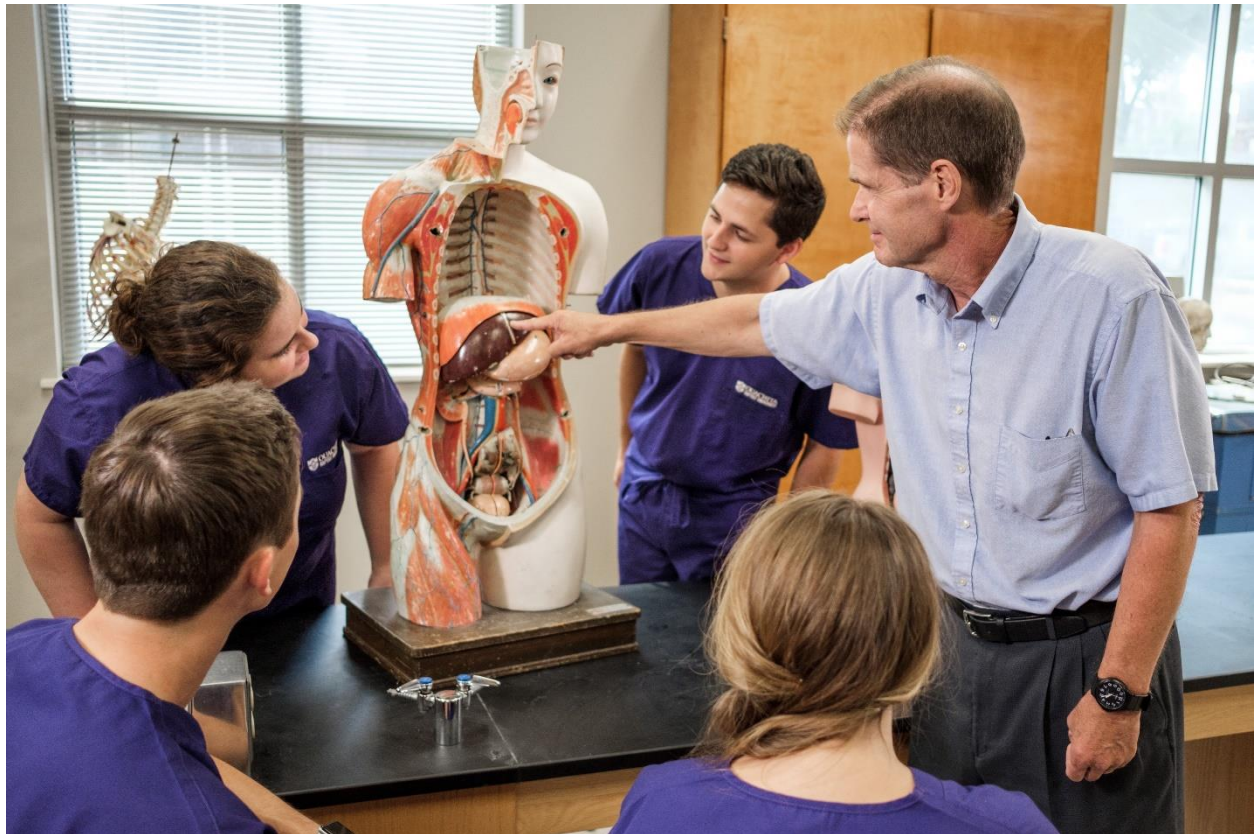
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For immediate release

Ouachita receives prerequisite approval for 4-year BSN program in Arkadelphia



By Felley Lawson

September 14, 2021

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

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.— Ouachita Baptist University received prerequisite approval last week from the Arkansas State Board of Nursing to establish a 4-year, residential pre-licensure program offering a Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

“It is an historic time for Ouachita and our nursing students,” said Dr. Brenda Trigg, director of nursing in Ouachita’s Patterson School of Natural Sciences. “Offering a 4-year residential BSN program will allow students to experience Ouachita’s student-focused culture, study with experienced, qualified faculty and prepare for a career that will serve patients in the state, region and beyond.”

“It’s been a work in progress for a long time,” said Dr. Tim Knight, dean of the Patterson School. “We’re excited to be at this point in the process, and even more excited about the future of nursing at Ouachita.

“More than one-third of all Ouachita students major in science-related fields,” Knight said, adding that Ouachita’s nursing program “only increases our capacity to provide solid, well-prepared young men and women in health care professions.”

The pre-licensure program will give students a third option when choosing a degree track to obtain a BSN at Ouachita. In Fall 2018, Ouachita launched its nursing program with a distinctive [RN-to-BSN dual enrollment completion program](#) in partnership with Baptist Health College Little Rock. The Department of Nursing has since added a [fully-online RN-to-BSN degree](#) program for students who already have a valid registered nurse license.

With the addition of the pre-licensure program, Trigg said, “We will be able to help support the region’s growing workforce needs and assist in meeting the demand in Arkansas for nurses with baccalaureate-level preparation.”

In keeping with Ouachita’s commitment to answering nationwide calls for innovation in nursing education, the university is extensively expanding and renovating Hammons House to become a 6,600 square foot Nursing Education Center. The facility will supplement the adjacent 70,000 square foot Jones Science Center that also serves nursing students.

The Nursing Education Center will give students clinical experience in the safety of a state-of-the-art simulation and teaching center that will house a clinical skills lab, five simulated hospital patient rooms and a pharmacy. The use of high-fidelity simulation mannequins will replicate real-life scenarios, allowing students to practice assessment, clinical and communication skills without risk of harm to patients. Opportunities for hands-on clinical experience in non-acute, acute and community settings in south central Arkansas will also be part of the curriculum. All aspects of the program are offered under the instruction of Ouachita’s faculty of highly-experienced nurse educators.

“We appreciate the confidence of the State Board of Nursing and the broad support of regional health care providers who will provide onsite clinicals for our nursing students,” Trigg said.

“The new BSN program extends the university’s momentum, building on our recently announced record enrollment, and positions Ouachita to play a leading role in addressing healthcare challenges,” said Dr. Ben Sells, Ouachita president. “The impact of the nursing shortage—magnified by the pandemic—is real: less accessible healthcare and overworked nurses, especially in underserved areas. Our expanding nursing program will provide a new avenue for our students to fulfill their calling to serve our communities.”

Next, Ouachita will seek “initial approval” status from the Arkansas State Board of Nursing in January 2022 with a target date to open the program in the Fall 2022 semester. In addition to benefiting new students, currently enrolled freshmen and sophomore nursing majors, which number approximately 70, will have the option of continuing in the on-campus program without delaying their graduations. Applications for the program will be open to new or currently enrolled Ouachita students once initial approval is confirmed.

For more information about Ouachita’s [Department of Nursing](#), contact Dr. Brenda Trigg at triggb@obu.edu or (870) 245-5384.