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Ouachita News Bureau

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# OUACHITA NEWS

For immediate release

## **Ouachita to add undergraduate degree program in criminal justice**

*By Felley Lawson*

November 2, 2021

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

ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Ouachita Baptist University has established a residential undergraduate degree program in criminal justice, to be offered beginning in Fall 2022.

The innovative program is distinctive among criminal justice degree programs in Arkansas and is designed to equip graduates for careers in the criminal justice system at every level. Housed in Ouachita's Department of Sociology, the Bachelor of Arts degree track will offer a multidimensional approach that includes classes exploring the intersection of criminal justice, sociology, political science and psychology. It will add 30 new credit hours – or new 10 courses – to Ouachita's catalog as part of the 120 hours required to complete a bachelor's degree in criminal justice.

“We are delighted to debut a criminal justice degree that seamlessly integrates Ouachita’s Christian identity and mission, interdisciplinary social science scholarship and the expertise of working criminal justice professionals,” said Dr. Kevin C. Motl, acting dean of the W.H. Sutton School of Social Sciences at Ouachita. “This program will not only deliver a rich, hands-on experience unique to Ouachita, but also respond to ongoing changes in both the practices and philosophy of law enforcement in the United States.”

Ouachita’s criminal justice program is unique “in that courses will be taught not only by experienced faculty, but also local law enforcement officers, judges and other legal professionals,” said Dr. Elizabeth Kelly, associate professor of sociology and applied research associate at Ouachita’s Ben M. Elrod Center for Family and Community.

Another element that sets the program apart is its inclusion of opportunities for field experience. Through internship partnerships with local law enforcement agencies, students will have ride-alongs with officers from the Arkadelphia Police Department and Clark County Sherriff’s office, and sit in on district and circuit criminal court proceedings.

A 6-hour practicum administered by campus police through Ouachita’s Office of Campus Safety and Emergency Management, led by Director Jeff Crow, will offer practical experience as well as certification for part-time uniformed law enforcement employment upon completion.

Crow has 35 years of experience in public service, having previously served as director of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, as a trooper and sergeant with the Arkansas State Police and as a law enforcement management instructor with the University of Arkansas Criminal Justice Institute. He also is a former corporal in the U.S. Marine Corps and a retired sergeant major with the U.S. Marine Corps Reserves. Crow is certified as a professional law enforcement instructor and law enforcement firearms instructor, as well.

Curriculum for the criminal justice degree track also will address mental health in law enforcement, preparing students for challenges particular to the field. When they’ve completed 59 hours of study, they’ll be evaluated to ensure their emotional and psychological suitability for upper-level criminal justice coursework.

To learn more about Ouachita's new undergraduate program in criminal justice, contact Dr. Kevin C. Motl at (870) 245-5512 or [motlk@obu.edu](mailto:motlk@obu.edu).