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Gov. Beebe urges Ouachita students to support cornerstones of education, economic development



By Trennis Henderson, Vice President for Communications

March 21, 2014

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

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. -- Declaring that education and economic development are “the two cornerstones of how you build quality of life for your people and how you build the state,” Arkansas Gov. Mike Beebe delivered the keynote address at Ouachita Baptist University’s annual Business Administration Day luncheon March 19.

The luncheon, hosted by Ouachita’s Frank D. Hickingbotham School of Business, honors business school students as well as the school’s advisory board members who represent leading businesses and industries throughout the state.

“Business Administration Day has become a meaningful tradition for all the key stakeholders of the Hickingbotham School of Business,” said Bryan McKinney, dean of the Hickingbotham School. “We enjoy hearing insights from members of our Executive and Business Advisory Boards during morning meetings, and then we love the opportunity to enjoy lunch with students, faculty, advisory board members and key community and business leaders.”

Ouachita Baptist University “has a history of great leadership,” Gov. Beebe said. Noting that the day’s activities are “all about business,” he said the university’s Hickingbotham School of Business “is named after a pretty good entrepreneur.”

Suggesting that “Arkansas has probably, per capita, a disproportionate number of extraordinarily successful home-grown entrepreneurs,” he cited such examples as Sam Walton, J.B. Hunt, Murphy Oil, Tyson Foods, Acxiom, Dillard’s, Riceland and TCBY.

“This was done by people who were taking risks; entrepreneurs who had a vision and a work ethic,” Gov. Beebe said. “They were people who were willing to take those chances necessary to build something and then watch it grow.”

Emphasizing that education and economic development must work together hand-in-hand, he said, “You can’t have good jobs without an educated workforce and you can’t have an educated workforce that does you any good if you don’t have good jobs for them when they get out of school.

“When we talk about economic development, we start with education and I’m not just talking about K-12,” he added. “I’m talking about cradle to grave.

“In today’s world, we need more than a high school diploma. ... We need constant training and retraining and relearning in an economy that moves so fast,” Gov. Beebe said. “Education never quits. It’s an escalator that people can get on and get off in various stages of their lives but they should never quit learning.

“Let’s talk about jobs,” he continued. “A country that doesn’t make stuff isn’t going to last very long. Certainly the service industry is important for us to be able to have a good, viable economy but we also need to know how to make stuff. Manufacturing is still and should still be a major part of what this country is all about.

“Manufacturing has to be part of our total economic effort,” Gov. Beebe reiterated. “We’ve got to have carpenters; we’ve got to have plumbers; we’ve got to have electricians; we’ve got to have people who can work in factories. ... It takes education, it takes training and it takes workforce training.

“You’ve got to have a work ethic too. It takes cooperation and effort from all of us,” he insisted. “Over and above that, we’ve got to be high tech.

“America is strong because of our diversity. America will remain strong because of smart, bright, educated people who are willing to take chances and are willing to go out there and make something new happen or who are willing to invest in a workforce that can meet our needs,” the governor said.

“You young people have the responsibility going forward to continue that entrepreneurial business acumen tradition,” Gov. Beebe told the business students. “We’re counting on you all. We need you. America needs you. Arkansas needs you.”

Reflecting on the success and impact of the annual luncheon, McKinney said Ouachita President Rex Horne “often speaks of difference makers, and we certainly enjoyed hearing from a difference maker today. ... We know the governor has many demands on his time, and we are so grateful he chose to devote this day to OBU and our students.”

For more information about Ouachita’s Hickingbotham School of Business, contact Bryan McKinney, dean, at mckinneyb@obu.edu or (870) 245-5513.