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Carl Goodson Honors Program celebrates 50 years of academic excellence



By Jessica Stewart

March 13, 2014

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

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. -- Highlighting its 50-year commitment to academic excellence, Ouachita Baptist University's Carl Goodson Honors Program recently hosted its fourth annual Black and White Reception. In addition to presenting awards to several current students, the 50th anniversary celebration featured reflections from several individuals connected with the program, including Dr. Tim Goodson, the son of honors program namesake Dr. Carl Goodson.

"For those who choose honors, a four-year experience at OBU just wouldn't be the same without the learning and fellowship they experience here," explained Dr. Barbara Pemberton, director of the honors program and professor of Christian missions.

"Graduates are always quick to express appreciation for how the program taught them to do independent research, to write professionally and prepare for graduate seminars, as well as teaching them to take charge of their own education," she added.

Dr. Carl Goodson, the program's founding director in 1964, was remembered for his vision and commitment. Goodson served at Ouachita as a professor of religion and vice president for academic affairs. Following his retirement in 1982, the honors program was named in tribute to him.

"He wanted Ouachita to be academically excellent," recalled Goodson's son, Tim, a Little Rock physician. "Everything he did was done in a pursuit of excellence and integrity."

Dr. Joe Jeffers, Holt Professor of Chemistry and Pre-Medical Studies, was an honors program student at Ouachita during the program's first year. Recalling Goodson's leadership in 1964, Jeffers noted, "We had to do a paper and really it was all just getting started."

After earning his PhD from Purdue University in 1972, Jeffers returned to Ouachita as a faculty member and became director of the honors program two years later. He established the directed studies and honors theses that students still participate in today.

In his role as director, Jeffers had the opportunity to help lead the effort to honor Dr. Goodson by naming the honors program after him. Jeffers said he did so “in part because Dr. Goodson was the first director but much more than that because of his integrity and scholarship that he brought to the campus.”

Students and guests attending the reception also heard from honors alumni Rachel Poole and Phillip Williamson as they spoke about their time in the program.

Poole, a 2007 Ouachita graduate, now serves as an instructor of education at OBU. She recalled that she conducted her directed study and honors thesis on Christian education by looking at Jesus as the master teacher. “Seven years later I am still using this thesis in my Foundations of Education class as devotionals to set the stage for future teachers who want to learn from and be like the master teacher,” she added.

Williamson, a 2010 Ouachita graduate, also holds a law degree from the University of Virginia School of Law. Affirming the significant impact of his professors in the honors program, Williamson said, “My takeaway from the honors program is to think critically and connectedly. You must be able to put all of the puzzle pieces of life together.”

For more information about the Carl Goodson Honors Program, contact Dr. Barbara Pemberton at pembertonb@obu.edu or (870) 245-5541.