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OBU trustees elect two new faculty members, honor Keck and Webster as emeriti professors



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. -- Ouachita Baptist University trustees approved two new faculty members and honored two retiring professors during the university's quarterly Board of Trustees meeting on the Arkadelphia campus.

The two new faculty members, Myra Ann Houser and Allyson Phillips, were named to Ouachita's Sutton School of Social Sciences effective this fall. Houser was named assistant professor of history and Phillips was named assistant professor of psychology. The two retiring faculty members, Dr. Ouida Keck and Dr. Robert L. Webster, were named emeriti faculty.

Houser, a 2007 Ouachita graduate with majors in history, mass communications and Russian, holds a Master of Arts degree in comparative history from the College of William and Mary. She currently is working on her doctorate from Howard University and expects to earn her PhD in May. She has taught African history courses at Howard and served as a teaching assistant at William and Mary. Her husband, Jason, a 2008 Ouachita graduate, is currently director of youth at Calvary Baptist Church in Washington, D.C.

Phillips, who grew up in Little Rock, holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology from Colorado Christian University and a master's degree in psychology from the University of Alabama. She currently is a doctoral candidate and expects to complete her PhD in May. She has served as an undergraduate instructor, teaching assistant and guest lecturer at the University of Alabama. She and her husband, Cameron, will relocate from Tuscaloosa, Ala.

"These two young women going into the Sutton School are the highest quality," said Ouachita President Rex Horne. "They are committed Christians who want to teach at a place like Ouachita."

Trustees also approved Sonya Arnold's position as student success coordinator in Ouachita's Academic Success Center. Arnold, who holds bachelor's and master's degrees in business administration from American InterContinental University, previously served as a human resources consultant at Oregon State University. At Ouachita, she works with the tutoring program, meeting one-on-one with students, and assists the Academic Success Center with various student success programs.

Affirming career milestones for Dr. Keck and Dr. Webster as well as other faculty members who were granted tenure, promotions and sabbaticals, Dr. Stan Poole, vice president for academic affairs, said, "We are grateful for their service and blessed by their contributions to the Ouachita community."

Dr. Keck, who serves as the Addie Mae Maddox Professor of Music, was named Professor Emerita of Music. A 1971 Ouachita graduate with a Bachelor of Music degree, she also holds a Master of Music degree from the University of Arkansas and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Iowa.

Dr. Keck, who has served 30 years at Ouachita, began teaching piano part-time in the music department in the 1970s and joined the faculty as a full-time assistant professor in 1982. After several years away, she returned to Ouachita as an associate professor in 1996 and was promoted to professor of music in 2001. Under her instruction, Ouachita has produced student keyboard competition winners on the state, regional and national levels. Among her many leadership roles, she has chaired the University Committee and served as president of the National Federation of Music Clubs.

Dr. Webster, who holds the George Young Chair of Business, was named Professor Emeritus of Accounting. Serving at Ouachita since 1993, the Hickingbotham School of Business' first year of operation, Dr. Webster joined the faculty as an associate professor of accounting and chair of the Department of Accounting. He was promoted to professor of accounting in 1999.

A 1968 Ouachita graduate with a Bachelor of Arts degree in business administration, Dr. Webster also holds a Master of Business Administration degree from Syracuse University, a Master of Science degree in accounting from Long Island University and a Doctor of Business Administration degree from Louisiana Tech University. He also served as a commissioned officer in the U.S. Army.

In other board actions, the following faculty members were granted tenure:

Dr. Tully Borland, Assistant Professor of Philosophy

Dr. Joey Dodson, Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies

Dr. Maggie Garrett, Assistant Professor of Music

Daniel Inouye, Assistant Professor of Theatre Arts

Dr. Chris Mortenson, Assistant Professor of History

Dr. Steve Thomason, Assistant Professor of Political Science

The following faculty members were granted promotions:

Donnie Copeland, from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor of Art and Design

Dr. Kayla Dwelle, from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor of Mathematics

Dr. Kent Faught, from Associate Professor to Professor of Management

Dr. Lori Hensley, from Associate Professor to Professor of Biology

Dr. Rob Hewell, from Associate Professor to Professor of Music

Dr. Kevin C. Motl, from Assistant Professor to Associate Professor of History

Dr. William C. Viser, from Associate Professor to Professor of Christian Ministries

Faculty members granted sabbaticals include:

Donnie Copeland, Assistant Professor of Art and Design (Spring 2016)

Dr. Joey Dodson, Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies (Fall 2015)

Dr. Kayla Dwelle, Assistant Professor of Mathematics (Fall 2015)

Dr. Nathan Reyna, Associate Professor of Biology (Fall 2015)

Dr. Caroline Taylor, Professor of Music (Fall 2015 or Spring 2016)

Dr. William C. Viser, Associate Professor of Christian Ministries (Fall 2015)

In his report to trustees, President Horne noted that spring commencement is set for Saturday, May 10. He said university officials expect to confer degrees on more than 360 students – Ouachita's largest graduating class in more than 30 years. "This will be a great day," he said. "We're proud of graduates."

Citing a number of previously announced campus construction and renovation projects, Dr. Horne said plans are under way for construction of Cliff Harris Stadium, the renovation of Moses-Provine Hall to house the expanded and updated Rosemary Adams Department of Art and Design and the construction of a new facility for the Ben M. Elrod Center for Family & Community.

He said plans also are moving forward toward the implementation of a revised core curriculum in the fall as well as the launch of an off-campus Associate of Arts degree in partnership with New Life Church in Conway and plans to offer online degrees in business and Christian studies. A campus site visit by the Higher Learning Commission is set for May, with the online degree program expected to begin in October.

Ian Cosh, vice president for community and international engagement, shared an overview of the work of the Grant Center for International Education. Describing the center's work with international students and missionary kids, Cosh said Ouachita includes about 30 internationals and 30 MKs from a combined total of 30 nations.

Cosh said English as a Second Language and other programs are aimed at "investing in the lives of young people who will become leaders in their countries." Affirming the "internationalization of the campus," he said the Grant Center also provides diverse opportunities for American students to study abroad.

In other business, trustees approved Frank Hickingbotham as a national director. Hickingbotham, a longtime Ouachita trustee, concluded his most recent board service in 2013. As a resident of both Arkansas and California, he fits the university profile for service as a national director, President Horne explained, helping the university “broaden our reach and our influence.” Hickingbotham joins Dr. Jarrett Stephens of Lewisville, Texas, as Ouachita’s national directors.

Trustee Clay Conly of Bentonville presented the board’s opening devotional. Reflecting on his experience as a Ouachita student, he said, “I knew Ouachita was the right place for me. I ended up here because I sensed the Lord calling me here. It totally changed my life.

“There’s a reason that we serve Ouachita,” he reminded fellow trustees. “We know that it changes lives. It is very personal to me.”

Upcoming events on the university calendar include spring break on March 24-28, Tiger Serve Day on April 5, the spring musical “Guys and Dolls” on April 10-13 and spring commencement on the lawn of Cone-Bottoms Hall on May 10.