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NEWS



For immediate release

Dr. Kevin C. "Casey" Motl named dean of Ouachita's Sutton School of Social Sciences

By Felley Lawson

June 27, 2022

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ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Dr. Kevin C. "Casey" Motl has been named dean of the William H. Sutton School of Social Sciences at Ouachita Baptist University. The Sutton School houses Ouachita's departments of History, Political Science, Psychology and Sociology.

Motl earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in education from Texas A&M University and a Master of Arts in history from the University of North Texas, then returned to A&M for his Ph.D. studies in history before joining the faculty at Ouachita in 2006. He was named the R. Voyt Hill Chair of History in 2014 and has served as interim dean of the Sutton School since Fall 2021, when Dr. Randall Wight—professor of psychology and biology at Ouachita and former dean of the Sutton School—left the dean's post to return to the classroom.



Photo 1 Dr. Kevin C. "Casey" Motl

“Dr. Motl served the Sutton School well as interim,” said Dr. Ben R. Sells, Ouachita president. “In the search to fill the permanent position, he participated in an intensive review process that invited input from his colleagues and students, and from Ouachita administrators.

“Dr. Motl is recognized as an instructor committed to preparing students,” he added. “As dean, he’ll work to advance the high standard of excellence in teaching, learning, research and creative expression for which the Sutton School is known.”

“I look for patterns and continuities; that’s how I approach the world,” Motl said. “I see the dean’s position as an opportunity to apply that kind of thinking to the well-being of our programs here in the Sutton School and to Ouachita as an institution.”

Motl’s on-the-job training offered him opportunities—like helping build Ouachita’s new criminal justice major that launches this fall—that provided valuable insight into ways he can help grow the Sutton School.

“We designed a program that balances theoretical elements and very practical experiences, and we did it in consultation with law enforcement professionals in our community,” Motl explained. “They gave us great advice, and we reverse-engineered the entire program from those outcomes.”

The recruitment goal for Ouachita’s first cohort of criminal justice majors was 15 to 20 students—a target that has been met and likely will be surpassed.

“The number of graduating seniors nationwide is shrinking, and we have to find ways to appeal to these prospective students. Our Christian identity has a great deal of value in that regard,” Motl said. “They also need to earn qualifications to move into a profession that will give them satisfaction in life and a decent livelihood. We’ve got to reach out to them in creative, innovative ways, and I feel like our criminal justice program does that. I’m very excited to see how it grows over the next couple of years.”

According to Dr. Jeff Root, dean of the School of Humanities and the Michael D. Huckabee School of Education at Ouachita, that excitement is on brand for Motl.

“I have always been impressed by Dr. Motl’s sheer enthusiasm for his work. He is always looking to move forward but has the wisdom to listen carefully to every point of view. It’s a good combination for a leader,” observed Root, Ouachita’s longest-serving dean.

Root and Motl served together on the Arkadelphia School Board; Motl has been president for the last three years.

“Being on the school board has completely changed my life,” Motl said. “It’s taught me what effective leadership means and looks like in practice; that I don’t always have the right answers and the good ideas, that I do better as a leader and as a person when I let other smart people volunteer their thinking on any given question.”

During the past four years, changes the board has made shifted the school district from a six-figure deficit to annual surpluses exceeding a million dollars—funds earmarked to increase employee salaries and help finance projects such as a new elementary school.

“We get to think big in Arkadelphia when we could not before,” Motl said, adding that credit for the board’s success is always split seven ways. “At the end of the day, it’s all a collaborative effort.”

Motl’s appointment as dean of the Sutton School adds another layer of Ouachita connection for his family, active members of First Baptist Church in Arkadelphia. His wife, Lori, is a 1993 graduate and Ouachita’s director of admissions counseling. Their children are Ryan, a 2021 Ouachita grad; Sydney, a junior at Ouachita; and Joshua, an incoming freshman. Ryan and his wife, Mattie—a 2019 grad—have a one-year-

old daughter, Miriam. And outside the classroom, Motl is known to fans of Ouachita athletics as the “voice of the Tigers” for football and basketball games.

While Motl will continue to teach classes in Ouachita’s Department of History, he sees the other possibilities in front of him as dean: to promote programs in the Sutton School, to engage alumni and connect them with students figuring out their own careers, to forge relationships with donors and find funding for new learning experiences for students.

He said, “I see opportunities to create interlocking good outcomes that improve the quality of life for everybody connected to the Sutton School of Social Sciences.”

-30-

PHOTO AVAILABLE FOR DOWNLOAD AT <https://obu.edu/stories/news/2022/06/motl-named-dean-of-sutton-school.php>.