

Ouachita Baptist University

Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita

Press Releases

Office of Communication

11-22-2021

Dr. Julyse Horr: A Scientist-Practitioner Led by Faith

Kiki Schleiff Cherry

Ouachita Baptist University

Ouachita News Bureau

Ouachita Baptist University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/press_releases



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), [Organizational Communication Commons](#), and the [Public Relations and Advertising Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Schleiff Cherry, Kiki and Ouachita News Bureau, "Dr. Julyse Horr: A Scientist-Practitioner Led by Faith" (2021). *Press Releases*. 1161.

https://scholarlycommons.obu.edu/press_releases/1161

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Office of Communication at Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. It has been accepted for inclusion in Press Releases by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Commons @ Ouachita. For more information, please contact mortensona@obu.edu.

OUACHITA
BAPTIST UNIVERSITY



NEWS

Dr. Julyse Horr: A Scientist-Practitioner Led by Faith



By Kiki Schleiff Cherry

November 22, 2021

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

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. – Dr. Julyse Migan-Gandonou Horr, Ouachita's new director of applied behavior analysis, credits her faith with bringing her to where she is today.

"I can look back now and see how God was guiding me every step of the way," said Horr (pronounced "haw"). "In each chapter of my life, he put the right people in place at just the right time."

Horr was raised in a Christian home, but it was not until college that she began to own her faith, she said.

"I read my Bible and did all the right things because it was expected of me," Horr said, "but in my early 20s I started authentically seeking truth and God's will for my life."

Horr entered college as a nursing major but quickly realized it was not for her, although she knew she wanted to pursue a career in science.

"The more science classes I took, the more convinced I became that God is real," Horr said. "I was amazed at all the things I learned about the human body, our solar system, our galaxy and the universe. I couldn't help but be in awe of how precise and incredibly well designed everything around us is. I became convinced that he is the author of the very phenomena we study as scientists."

Horr also began to realize that the same God who crafted each precise element of the universe cared deeply about the details of her life.

"I decided to change my major to clinical psychology," she said, "and then 'accidentally' discovered my current field, applied behavior analysis, because it was the only elective that would fit in my schedule."

It was in that applied behavior analysis class that Horr met Dr. Bertram Ploog, the professor who would introduce her to the field and guide her on her journey.

"Dr. Ploog took me under his wing and showed me what it meant to be a behavioral scientist," Horr said. "I started in the animal research lab running experiments on operant conditioning with pigeons."

"After a semester in the lab," she added, "I moved to the applied branch of behavior analysis, serving as an intern at a school for children and adults with intellectual disabilities and autism, which allowed me to see how the things I learned in the lab translated to the real world with humans."

Upon graduation, and at the encouragement of Dr. Ploog, she moved from New York to Florida to pursue her master's degree at Florida International University.

"It was there I had the privilege of working with Dr. Yanerys Leon in her severe behavior disorders clinic," Horr said. "I gained experience working with that subset of the autism population who engage in extremely challenging behaviors that are difficult for schools to manage. I also had the opportunity to do applied research for the two years that I worked at the clinic."

As Horr began her career as a practicing Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), she deeply desired to be able to use her knowledge and skills to help others in a meaningful way.

"I had read the story of Solomon many times as a child, but I didn't really fully appreciate it until I started working as a BCBA," Horr said. "So every morning as I got ready for work, I would pray and ask for deeper knowledge (beyond what I learned in my studies) and the wisdom to use that knowledge in a way that would directly or indirectly transform the lives of my clients."

God answered her prayer by placing two mentors in her path. Dr. Haydee Toro, then-chair of the Florida Agency for Persons with Disability's local Review Committee and former president of the Florida Association of Behavior Analysts (FABA) saw something special in Horr and encouraged her to pursue a doctorate in applied behavior analysis.

Horr enrolled in the Ph.D. program at The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, and soon met her second mentor, Dr. Robyn Catagnus, the department chair of the doctoral ABA program. Catagnus soon invited Horr to become her graduate teaching assistant.

“It was during that time I discovered my passion for investing in others,” Horr said. “I began to see that my life purpose was to teach, train and mentor future behavior analysis practitioners who would go out and make a difference in the world.”

Horr has since taught at the University of North Dakota, the Florida Institute of Technology, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology and Florida International University. She has served as a visiting assistant professor of applied behavior analysis at Ouachita since August 2020, and will become director of Ouachita’s master’s program in applied behavior analysis effective January 2022.

“The field of ABA is relatively new and has some controversy surrounding it,” Horr said. “But that is primarily a result of misinformation, miseducation and poor training. For that reason, I am passionate about our program producing competent, quality-driven, scientist-practitioners with strong character. I tell our students that whether they want to be or not, they will be ambassadors of both ABA and Ouachita when they become practicing BCBAs.”

The demand for BCBAs has increased each year, with a projected job growth rate of over 20% in the next eight years.

“There is a great need out there for BCBAs, and an opportunity for Ouachita to impact the lives of numerous people with behavioral disorders,” Horr said. “I believe God answered my prayers by equipping me with the knowledge and wisdom to train the next generation of compassionate, competent behavior analysts. They in turn will be the answer to prayer for so many hurting families.”