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For immediate release

Madison Melcher wins \$5,000 in annual Ouachita Business Plan Competition

By Addie Woods

May 3, 2023

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

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. — Ouachita Baptist University's Hickingbotham School of Business hosted its 13th annual Business Plan Competition in December. Madison Melcher, a senior business administration major from Rockwall, Texas, placed first in the competition with her business plan, Covered by Grace, and received a \$5,000 cash prize. Melcher was advised by Johan Eriksson, visiting instructor of business administration and director of entrepreneurship programs.

Covered by Grace merges the physical and digital formats of the Bible to provide a personalized and cohesive user experience.

"Madison is a super gifted student," said Eriksson. "She took a business that she had worked on for a while and really made it her own."

Starting at a young age, Melcher pursued several creative outlets. She said, "Walking away from the competition, I have learned that resilience and confidence pay off. And Professor Eriksson has provided indispensable knowledge and experience."

Second place went to Jillian Woodruff, a senior business administration/management major from Hope, Ark., who created Wadderbuddy, a device used to help hunters remove waders. She was advised by Dr. Chris Brune, professor of finance and holder of the George Young Chair of Business, and received a \$4,000 cash prize.



Photo 1 Madison Melcher

Members of the team that placed third were Connor Bjerke, a senior accounting and finance double major from Oak Leaf, Texas; Emma Bynum, a senior biology from Troup, Texas; Jade Dorman, a senior biology and Spanish double major from Benton, Ark.; Keren Fernandez, a 2022 nutrition & dietetics and biology graduate from San Pedro Sula, Honduras; and Kaitlyn Montgomery, a senior biology major from Montgomery, Texas. The team created Microcures, a biotechnology company that developed therapy for non-small cell lung cancer and were advised by Dr. Nathan Reyna, professor of biology. They were awarded a \$3,000 cash prize.

Fourth place, with a \$2,000 cash prize, was awarded to a team that included Heather Brown, a senior finance, business administration/marketing and business administration/entrepreneurship triple major from Omaha, Texas; Colton Schrader, a senior finance and business administration/entrepreneurship double major from Red Oak Texas; Jacob Smith, a senior finance and business administration/entrepreneurship double major from Rowlett, Texas; and Cooper Timmons, a senior business administration/management and business administration/entrepreneurship double major from League City, Texas. They created Shade M-8, a lens cover for active glasses, and were advised by Eriksson.

The team in fifth place, also advised by Eriksson, was made up of Trey Flint, a senior business administration/management and business administration/marketing double major from Grapevine, Texas; Jax Gasaway, a 2022 business administration/entrepreneurship graduate from Star City, Ark.; Hailey Houghton, a senior business administration/entrepreneurship major from Stuttgart, Ark.; Peyton Stafford, a 2022 finance, business administration/marketing and business administration/entrepreneurship triple major from Amarillo, Texas; and Morris Tsuma, a senior business administration/management and business administration/marketing double major from Arlington, Texas. They created Tidy Tractor, a mobile cleaning station for agriculture equipment, and won a \$1,000 cash prize.

Open to any students on campus who want to participate, the competition is modeled after the statewide Governor's Cup Business Competition, and many students go on to compete and place in it.

"The Hickingbotham School of Business has a proud legacy of entrepreneurship," Eriksson said. "Dean Bryan McKinney is so committed to creating these opportunities and rewarding these students who put the work in."

To learn more about the business plan competition at Ouachita, contact Johan Eriksson at erikssonj@obu.edu or at (870) 245-5071.