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OUACHITA
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NEWS



For immediate release

Ouachita to begin construction on track & field complex

By Felley Lawson

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For more information, contact Ouachita's Office of Communications & Marketing at comm-mark@obu.edu or (870) 245-5206.

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. — Ouachita Baptist University will begin construction on an NCAA-compliant track & field complex to serve as a home venue for its thriving cross country and track & field teams. Scheduled to be completed by Summer 2024, the complex will occupy land on the north side of campus adjacent to the cross country course and along the Ouachita River.

Since 2019, the number of student-athletes participating in the university's cross country and track & field programs has grown from 15 to 109, representing 50 academic majors. This increase has been a key factor in Ouachita's sustained record enrollment, which climbed again in Fall 2023 with a headcount of 1,815 – the highest total enrollment in 57 years.

“Ouachita is experiencing significant institutional momentum, including increased enrollment, high graduation and placement rates and record giving, all as a distinctively Christian university,” said Dr. Ben Sells, Ouachita president. “We continue to attract growing numbers of outstanding students, including the student-athletes in our cross country and track & field programs. We're very proud of how they have succeeded athletically, academically and personally.”

During the 2022-23 season, the women's cross country team won its first Great American Conference championship; the men's team finished fourth in the conference. Between them, members of the women's and men's track & field teams earned 23 All-GAC honors.

The women's track & field team earned the highest GPA in NCAA Division II with a collective 3.80; among the women's and men's teams, there were 12 distinguished scholar athletes and an elite scholar athlete.

"Alumni and friends have noticed the university's enrollment growth and been inspired by these student-athletes, and as a result responded generously so that this complex can be fully funded by gifts and grants," Sells added. "I'm grateful for their support, and to our Board of Trustees for their leadership."

Steve Guymon is in his fifth year as head coach of Ouachita's cross country and track & field teams. He said, "A track complex is very important to our student-athletes, to give them a place to practice and call home. We'll be able to host meets and bring other students here – junior high, high school, other colleges. In fact, we believe this venue will become a preferred location to host meets in south Arkansas and beyond. But it's not just for us. It's also for all students, faculty and staff, as well as the Arkadelphia community."

He added, "We're going to be one of only about five colleges that I know of in the United States that will have a track & field complex and a cross country course right next to each other. That's just not heard of. So I think the school and the town will be very proud of it."

While Guymon believes the complex will draw prospective student-athletes to Ouachita, "they also want to come here because of the school itself: the strength of our faculty and our academics, the beauty of our campus, the way people cooperate," he said. "I've never seen a school where everyone works together – admissions, athletics, faculty, everybody – like we do at Ouachita. It's a very special place, and it's very easy for me to recruit here. But this will make it even easier."

Lewis Architects Engineers in Little Rock, Ark., led the design of Ouachita's track & field complex. Construction manager for the project is Baldwin & Shell Construction of Little Rock, and primary contractor will be United Turf and Track in Arcadia, Okla. Beynon Sports Surfaces will manufacture the track surface.

For more information about Ouachita's track & field complex, contact Brian Ramsey, assistant athletic director for communications, at ramseyb@obu.edu or at (870) 245-5186.