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Office of Communications & Marketing

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# OUACHITA NEWS

For immediate release

## **Ouachita honors outstanding alumni during Homecoming festivities**

*By Felley Lawson*

October 12, 2021

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

Ten Ouachita alumni received the university's Alumni Milestone Award in conjunction with Ouachita's Homecoming celebration Sept. 30-Oct. 2. Based on their professional achievements, community service and dedication to their alma mater, they were chosen by a committee of Ouachita faculty and staff and Ouachita President Ben Sells.

"Every year, several exemplary graduates are nominated for the Alumni Milestone Award," Sells said. "They're all worthy recipients, so we aspire to select a group of inductees that each year and over time live lives of service and best represent the generations of extraordinary students who are the heart of Ouachita."

The 2021 Milestone Award recipients were presented Saturday, Oct. 2, during halftime festivities at Cliff Harris Stadium, where the Ouachita Tigers took on the Northwestern Oklahoma State Rangers. The following is a list of this year's Milestone honorees:



Amber Wilson Bagley

**Amber Wilson Bagley** of Little Rock, Ark., class of 2001, launched her legal career as a law clerk for Arkansas Supreme Court Justices Annabelle Clinton Imber Tuck and Tom Glaze after graduating from the William R. Bowen School of Law at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Named the 2021 VOCALS Attorney of the Year for her pro bono work, Bagley is managing director of the Little Rock law firm Cross, Gunter, Witherspoon & Galchus.

“Ouachita prepared me academically for law school through its emphasis on critical thinking, research and writing,” Bagley said. “It also prepared me by connecting me with the most amazing group of friends who are more like my family. Because of Ouachita, I have the most special group of friends that pray for me, support me and never miss a chance to say they love me. I can’t think of any better preparation for life.”



Mitch Bettis

**Mitch Bettis** of Little Rock, Ark., class of 1990, began his media career before he even graduated from Ouachita; he launched an advertising agency with his friend and roommate Jeff Noble out of their Daniel South dorm room. Bettis now is president of Arkansas Business Publishing Group, which he owns with his wife Meg.

“The Ouachita network of staff and former students has been a meaningful part of my life in the past 30 years,” Bettis said. “At Ouachita, I saw from my professors that it’s possible to demand high expectations of yourself and high expectations of others while also walking in faith and living out Galatians 5:13—in love, serve one another.”



Cari Cordell

**Dr. Cari Cordell** of Hot Springs, Ark., class of 2000, is a graduate of the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences, where she completed a residency in orthopedic surgery. Cordell is the only female orthopedic surgeon in Arkansas who is fellowship-trained in both hand and shoulder. She practices with CHI St. Vincent Orthopedic Clinic in Hot Springs.

“Ouachita provided the education necessary to help me excel on testing, and it prepared me for medical school,” she said. “I love my career and am confident I would not be here if I had not attended Ouachita.”



Suzanne Ferrell

**Suzanne Ferrell** of White Hall, Ark., class of 1991, was recruited to play basketball at Ouachita.

She and her husband, David, own Hunter’s Refuge, a sporting goods store in White Hall that’s also managed by their son, Chandler, a 2019 Ouachita graduate.

“Through the relationships I had with my professors and fellow students, Ouachita instilled in me the importance of integrity and Christian values,” Ferrell said. “This is an asset in both my personal and business world.”



Ron Greenwich

**Ronald Greenwich** of Manaus, Brazil, class of 1970, has dedicated his life to church planting and social ministries.

He received a Master of Religious Education degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth and a master’s degree from the Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Houston. After a 33-year career with the International Mission Board, Greenwich and his wife, Alana, came out of retirement in 2020 to serve as mentors and language coaches for missionaries serving in Manaus.

Greenwich said, “The Christian atmosphere at Ouachita allowed me to grow spiritually and to consider God’s call on my life. My double major in sociology and psychology paved the way for what was to become my lifelong career.”



**Edwin Payne** of Woodbridge, Va., class of 1981, holds a master's degree in strategic studies from the United States Army War College. He served a combined 46 years in uniform and as a Department of Defense federal senior civilian, where his contributions included management of a \$7 billion information technology budget for the Army as well as command positions within the DOD for the Army and the United States Air Force. Payne retired with the rank of U.S. Army colonel.

**Edwin Payne** Payne said, "The instruction I received from Ouachita enabled me to hone in on and optimize essential on-the-job abilities such as time-management, leadership and communication skills. Ouachita contributed to fine-tuning my preparation phase in life for the road map to success."



**Lyn Pruitt** of Little Rock, Ark., and Dallas, Texas, class of 1980, served as an admissions counselor at Ouachita before enrolling in the William H. Bowen School of Law at UALR. Her legal career began with a year-long Arkansas Supreme Court clerkship, after which she joined the Little Rock-based law firm of Mitchell, Williams, Selig, Gates & Woodyard where she was recognized locally, regionally and nationally for her work as a trial lawyer.

**Lyn Pruitt** "Ouachita taught me about being a leader and how to lead, that hard work in my studies would be necessary to be successful in a career," Pruitt said. "And it taught me to hold fast to my values. I learned about getting along with others and remembering the importance of connecting with people no matter where you work or live."

Pruitt recently joined the international law firm DLA Piper, where she practices in the areas of products liability defense and toxic tort litigation.



**Tommy Thomason** of Fort Worth, Texas, class of 1971, said he chose to attend Ouachita in part based on his impression of what was at that time known as the university's Department of Communications.

"Ouachita gave me a great background in journalism," said Thomason, "but more importantly, Ouachita was where I learned to think critically."

**Tommy Thomason** After graduation, Thomason worked in journalism and public relations in Arkansas, Texas and Virginia before joining the faculty at Texas Christian University in Fort Worth. He is the founding director of TCU's Bob Schieffer College of Communication, where he's now professor emeritus. In June 2021, Thomason was named to the Texas Newspaper Hall of Fame by the Texas Press Association.



**Abby Turner** of Rogers, Ark., class of 2011, is a third-generation Ouachitonian. After graduation, she received a master's degree in sports marketing from the Hankamer School of Business at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. She worked in college athletics before relocating to Northwest Arkansas, where she serves as an associate director with Walmart. She's also a blogger and author; Turner's first book, "The Living Table," was published this year.

**Abby Turner** "Ouachita was a great stepping stone into life," Turner said. "It connected work with faith, bridging the gap between adolescence and adulthood. This foundation has been paramount in Christ being the center of everything I've done and continues to be the light to the path ahead."



Philip Williamson and family

**Philip Williamson** of Cincinnati, Ohio, class of 2010, is the son of two Ouachita alumni, Gus and Pearlette Williamson of Batesville, Ark. Following graduation from the University of Virginia School of Law in Charlottesville, Williamson served as a law clerk for federal Judges Lavenski Smith, Amul Thapar and Ray Kethledge. He is a partner with the Taft Stettinius & Hollister law firm in Cincinnati.

“Ouachita delivered exactly what a liberal arts education is supposed to,” Williamson said. “It taught me to love God, love people, think critically, communicate clearly and appreciate beauty.”