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Brooke Zimny

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For immediate release

“Navigating unprecedented times” and other clichés (Editor's notes from the Winter 2021 "Ouachita Circle")

By Brooke Zimny

March 11, 2021

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

Due to the pandemic ... canceled until further notice ... we will navigate these uncertain times ... with resilience, optimism and creativity.

These and other phrases became all too familiar in 2020. As a communicator writing on behalf of Ouachita, they have become even more top of mind for me this year. As we chose the theme for this issue of the *Ouachita Circle*, no words seemed sufficient. Even words that were accurate and appropriate had lost their meaning, becoming clichés in our collective consciousness. And now, in 2021, which brings its own challenges, we are weary of the pandemic, weary of reflections on the months we've all experienced “together, apart.”

However, what we have done in 2020 as a global society and here at Ouachita, was truly unprecedented – both for the challenges we faced and the triumphs big and small that we achieved along the way. This issue seeks to pay homage to the many things Ouachita has to be proud of in this year that many of us would sometimes rather forget.

From launching Ouachita's first graduate programs since the 1990s to reimagining Tiger Tunes for a virtual format to intentional progress on the topic of race and many other victories noted in “Campus Update,” I think you will be proud of the resilience of your university during this unprecedented year (pardon the clichés). See reflections on COVID-19's effects on campus from me and longtime faculty member Dr. Byron Eubanks, as well as the unique challenges that athletics faced.

On March 10, 2020, the week before Ouachita sent all students home for the rest of the semester, the campus community met together for chapel. It turns out that this was the last in-person chapel we would have for more than a year; even now, we continue conducting chapel virtually.

My former Ouachita suitemate Dr. Emily Smith delivered that chapel address and encouraged us with the simple message that “We can do hard things.” With strength from our Heavenly Father, whether you are facing an academic, professional or personal mountain, it is possible. Dr. Smith is a hospitalist at Arkansas Children’s Hospital and one of the smartest and most compassionate people I know. That simple message – even more meaningful coming from a healthcare leader – came to mind for me again and again the following months as I was involved in scaling a variety of mountains as an individual and as a wife, mother, daughter and Ouachita administrator.

We still have many mountains ahead. But let’s not forget the many that have been scaled over the last year. I hope this issue of the *Ouachita Circle* is a reminder that yes, we are resilient, we are optimistic, we are creative. And we can do hard things – even in unprecedented times.



Brooke Zimny has served since 2019 as assistant to the president for communications and marketing and editor of the *Ouachita Circle* and has worked in Ouachita's communications office since 2008. A 2008 Ouachita grad, she later completed Columbia University's Columbia Publishing Course and earned a Master of Arts degree in corporate and non-profit communication from Johns Hopkins University.