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### Turning from fear to hope

Brooke Zimny

Office of Communications & Marketing

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**OUACHITA**  
BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

**NEWS**



For immediate release

### **Turning from fear to hope**

*By Brooke Zimny*

December 14, 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.

I had a front-row seat to Ouachita's approach to pandemic planning as a member of several administrative groups on campus. I remember feeling fear, anxiety and discouragement starting in March 2020 at the challenge ahead of and all around us. Perseverance, optimism and grit were displayed in abundance, but still a strange cloud hung over the year for me, knowing how it compared to typical years not only on campus but also personally. We were adapting as well as we could, but everything was different about how we were experiencing the world.

One of my roles this academic year was to update our "COVID-19 dashboard" on the website each weekday with the number of cases and quarantines on campus and other data. After a fall with ups and downs and the significant nationwide increase in cases over the holidays, I steeled myself for another difficult journey as we entered the spring semester. And it wasn't easy. But by January 29, only two weeks into the semester, our daily report never again increased above five cases a day. By March, the daily increase was always one or zero, and there were no new on-campus cases after March 11 – and none even from off-campus after April 16. For the entire academic year, there had been no hospitalizations among our Ouachita students or employees. Sometime in March, I began to feel hope.

It's not a new insight to compare the return of spring to God's blessings. But this year, I really felt it. Even after our record-breaking winter storms in Arkansas this February, the flowers returned, some of them more beautiful and abundant than ever. I was astounded and appreciative. The 2020-2021 school year was a record-breaking storm. As Dr. Doug Nykolaishen helps us remember, lamenting the losses of this year is a healthy process but one that can be balanced with hope. Rising senior Anna Roussel reflects on her experience as a student this year and her hopes for next year.

Amid the pandemic, programs began: our first class of post-baccalaureate Dietetic Internship grads crossed the Commencement stage; the student worship band Ouachita Worship exemplified the evolving Worship Arts Program; and junior Reanna Johnson ramped up a new volunteer program to “Feed Arkadelphia” and simultaneously reduce waste from campus dining. We also marked the time for many to move on from their time on campus, whether through graduation, retirement or other circumstances. These groups hold a particularly special place in Ouachita’s history.

Even as I personally felt weighed down by the challenges of the year, the Ouachita world kept turning. The whole world kept turning. God remained faithful and present, even if we couldn’t feel it in our limited ways. There is hope. Thanks be to God.



*By Brooke Zimny, assistant to the president for communications & marketing*