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Courage to engage

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Courage to engage

By Brooke Zimny

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

Ouachita prides itself in its personal approach to higher education, from the thoughtful attention prospective students receive during their college search, to the ways faculty and staff invest in students' lives, to our commitment to tight-knit Christian community, which is built in dozens of ways for students whether they live on campus or attend classes online. During the pandemic, this level of engagement was challenged. Physical distance separated us; events, classes and residence life took new approaches.

While life over the last year slowly began to look more like the pre-pandemic world, things came into focus on campus even more this fall. Homecoming events and Tiger Tunes performances returned to "normal" levels, new buildings opened to facilitate engagement in the classroom and residence life and we engaged with Ouachita's imperfect past as we honored Black alumni in the newly named Green-Blevins Rotunda. Faculty and staff continually seek to engage students in new ways through new academic programs, such as a new Master of Business Administration degree, and memorable opportunities outside of the classroom, like performing at the historic inauguration of Gov. Sarah (Huckabee) Sanders '04.

To engage with members of a community or with opportunities laid before you isn't always easy, though. It can take a healthy dose of courage, or grace, or patience. And as we grow and change, even something as institutional as a university can seem to shape-shift before our eyes. I highly recommend flipping to page 8 to read the reflections of Felley (Nall) Lawson '88 on our evolving relationships with community, Ouachita's long-held "secret sauce."

I often hear students given the advice that “you get out of Ouachita what you put in,” that their college experience will be what they make of it. For its size, Ouachita provides an impressive breadth and depth of ways to engage with other students, with brilliant faculty and staff, with challenging academic material. But it’s on each Ouachitonian to decide how to proceed. “You can lead a horse to water,” and all that.

For each entering class of Ouachitonians, I pray that they take that advice to heart. That they make the most of that horse water. That they don’t let fear, anxiety, laziness or lack of confidence keep them from experiencing the many ways this university and its people can shape their lives for the better. It will be the context for life-changing decisions, relationships and lessons, whether they like it or not. All of us who have experienced Ouachita can attest to that. What’s not certain is how they will choose to engage, how they will be formed as individuals and how they will become a piece of the complex Ouachita community.



By Brooke (Showalter) Zimny '08, *Chief Marketing Officer*