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### Tending the greenhouse

Brooke Zimny

Office of Communications & Marketing

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For immediate release

**Tending the greenhouse**

*By Brooke Zimny*

November 18, 2022

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've always had what can fairly be called a black thumb. Even the most resilient houseplants haven't stood a chance in my care. I went so far as to tell my husband not to buy me flowers or plants of any kind when we were dating. I didn't want him to read too far into the analogy of a dead love fern.

Lately, though, things have changed. In the fun of cultivating a small family garden, I've finally begun to understand the enjoyment my parents have in tending their yard. As I've learned about different plants and the care they need, it's rewarding to see those efforts pay off—and fascinating to watch as some thrive in spite of my failures. My thumb's not quite green yet, but there's progress.

In Ouachita culture, the concept of the "Ouachita bubble" has survived generations. However, I've recently heard my colleagues Dr. Rebecca Jones, professor of communications, and Dr. Justin Hardin, our new vice president for academic affairs (meet him on p. 16), both explain it differently—describing our close-knit community as a *greenhouse*.

Our residential campus can feel like a world to itself. But rather than keeping us separated or protected from the outside world, it's about creating conditions for growth, with faculty and staff as patient gardeners focused on providing each student their best chance for success. This culture carries into our new online and graduate programs, as they avoid the impersonal, high-volume model of so many of the schools you see advertised at every turn.

Here, growth is about concepts more nuanced than data. Our mission statement reminds us to prepare our students "for ongoing intellectual and spiritual growth," and growth stands as one of our five university values; a Ouachita education encourages growth "in intellectual, spiritual, physical and social domains."

I hope you see evidence of that throughout this issue, as we welcome newly appointed leaders such as Hardin and Dr. Kevin C. "Casey" Motl as Sutton School dean (p. 10); develop new programs (p. 12-15) to better prepare students for fulfilling their callings; and celebrate Ouachitians marking milestones such as graduation, professional successes and national acclaim. Hannah Pilcher, assistant director of residence life, offers thoughts to encourage us in pursuing intentional growth (p. 8). We also remember President Emeritus Dr. Daniel R. Grant and the many years he spent cultivating this campus and its people (p. 35).

People can grow anywhere, and close attention does not guarantee success. But with the right conditions, attentive gardeners and the miracles that only God can provide, a greenhouse is a pretty choice location for growing to maturity. Look only as far as Class Notes (p. 28) for evidence of the many gardens being brightened by those who once were saplings in Arkadelphia.



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