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Reflections on a trip to remember: 2024 Ouachita MBA Retreat

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Office of Communications & Marketing

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Photo 1 Mallory Lester (third from right) was among the Ouachita faculty and students from the online MBA program who attended the Wyoming retreat. Others included (from left) Payne Warren, Dr. Madison Ngafeeson, Madison Goodman, Dr. Chris Brune, Emily Trigg, Mollie Eldridge, and Lori Ramsey.

June 07, 2024 - [Mallory Lester](#)

For immediate release

Reflections on a trip to remember: 2024 Ouachita MBA Retreat

By Mallory Lester

June 07, 2024

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

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. — Last week, I had the incredible opportunity to travel to Jackson Hole, Wyo., with my Ouachita MBA cohort, and it was a blast!

The day we took a scenic float trip down the Snake River, it was unbelievably cold. I'll be honest – it was a rocky start! We were all huddled down in the bottom of the boat because the wind was so cold on our backs. We passed a goose that was floating across the river, and I made the corny joke, "I bet that goose sure is silly."

Everyone laughed except Dr. Madison Ngafeeson, one of our professors who joined us on the trip. It was our first time getting to meet Dr. N. in person; he's a visiting professor who lives in Florida, where he chairs the business data analytics program at Palm Beach Atlantic University.

Dr. N., who was born in Cameroon, seemed confused. I said, "Oh, you know, 'silly goose'?"

He looked at me as serious as could be and asked, "But what makes the goose so silly?"

That broke the ice, and we all started dying laughing! It really helped open us up to joking around and telling stories for the rest of the float.

Former Ouachita President Dr. Andy Westmoreland also joined us on this trip. It was my first time having the opportunity to meet him, but I had heard wonderful stories about him during my time in the undergraduate program. Dr. Westmoreland is teaching our Management Strategy class this summer. His engagement in the MBA program is something of a homecoming to Ouachita for him. His love for Ouachita radiated through in the conversations we had with him on the trip.

For our first assignment in the summer course, Dr. Westmoreland conducted an interview with Ben Sells, Ouachita president. We got to spend some time during the trip crafting questions for the interview, which sparked meaningful conversations about the future of Ouachita. Getting the time with Dr. Westmoreland was such a treat for us all!

Dr. Chris Brune, the George Young Chair of Business at Ouachita, led a Bible study in the hotel lobby for us one night of the trip. He prompted us to consider the sights we'd seen throughout the week and challenged us to come up with words to describe them. "Incredible," "intentional," "humbling" and "breathtaking" are a few of the words we chose. We then got to reflect together over how special it is that the same God who created the mountains and the wildlife we saw throughout our tours also hand-designed us in His image.

As I sat and discussed creation and the Creator with my professors and fellow classmates, it was a precious moment to reflect on why I love Ouachita so much. I don't think that's an experience I would have had with any other university.

Some great highlights from the trip were getting to visit Grand Teton National Park and Yellowstone National Park. These were vivid reminders that if God put so much effort into creating this beautiful environment, He put just as much thought into creating me, too. It was inspiring and a great picture of how intentional our Creator is. And the fellowship that was able to occur between my cohort and our professors was priceless. It was a fabulous trip!

Thank you to Ouachita Baptist University and to the Hickingbotham School of Business for making this possible!

Mallory Lester '18 lives and works in Conway, Ark., where she is the regional sales manager for Otis Elevator Co.