



SCIENCE AND MATH

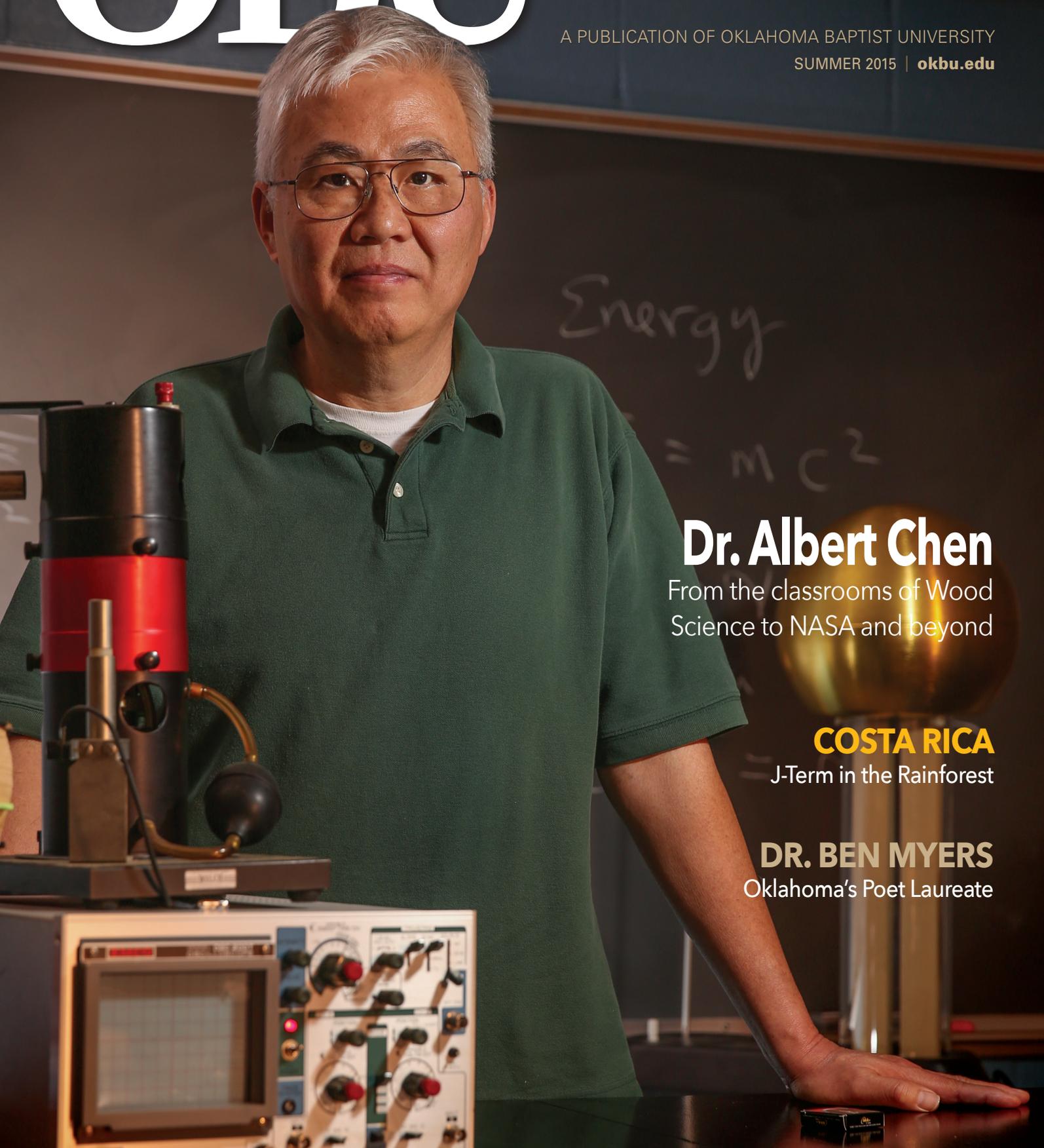
ANOTHER OBU TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE

# OBU

MAGAZINE

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SUMMER 2015 | [okbu.edu](http://okbu.edu)



## Dr. Albert Chen

From the classrooms of Wood  
Science to NASA and beyond

**COSTA RICA**

J-Term in the Rainforest

**DR. BEN MYERS**

Oklahoma's Poet Laureate



## COSTA RICA

Five OBU students, along with Dr. Dale Utt, OBU biology professor, traveled to Costa Rica to experience its biological diversity and tropical ecology.



SUMMER 2015

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OBU is consistently ranked as one of the nation's top Christian liberal arts universities.

Liberal arts institutions seek to provide students with discipline specific training and knowledge for their future careers, along with a broad exposure to history, philosophy, literature, fine arts, science and mathematics. Studying these fields gives students a rich knowledge base

from which to analyze and solve problems, form conclusions, develop informed viewpoints, and engage the world.

In the pages that follow, you will learn about two of these fields – science and mathematics – and the great things happening on campus in those disciplines. Our main article features Dr. Albert Chen, a dedicated professor who has shaped minds in the classroom and in the physics lab on Bison Hill for nearly three decades, while also contributing his expertise to projects at NASA. We are also excited to share our plans to expand and renovate W.P. Wood Science Building, and the benefits to be enjoyed by future Bison studying these disciplines.

This issue of *OBU Magazine* will introduce you to two groups of students who left the mainland to engage the world in mobile biology classrooms in Costa Rica and Hawaii. You will also meet OBU's very own Dr. Ben Myers, who now serves as Oklahoma State Poet Laureate. Read on to learn about alumni who have impacted the corporate world, transformed ministry around the state of Oklahoma and served inside the state capital.

As you read the following pages, I hope you are blessed by the impact our students, faculty, staff and alumni are making on our campus, in our community, around the state and throughout the world. May God bless you as He continues to bless OBU.

David Wesley Whitlock  
OBU President

## OBU MAGAZINE STAFF

### Editor

Dr. R. Stanton Norman

### Managing Editor

Paula Gower

### Contributing Editors

Kenny Day, Mackenzie Dilbeck

### Writers

Kenny Day, Travis DeWall, Ray Fink, Casady Fletcher, Angela Sanders

### Creative Services Coordinator

Chele Marker-Cash

### Photographer

William Pope

### View OBU Magazine Online

okbu.edu/magazine

### Contact OBU Magazine

obumagazine@okbu.edu | 405.585.5410

## UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION

### President

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### Provost and Executive Vice President for Campus Life

Dr. R. Stanton Norman

### Executive Vice President for Business and Administrative Services

Randy L. Smith

### Vice President for University Advancement

Dr. Will Smallwood

### Vice President for Information Integration and CIO

Paul Roberts

## CONTACT INFORMATION

(area code 405)	
Academic Center.....	585.5100
Admissions.....	585.5000
Alumni .....	585.5413
Business Office.....	585.5130
Campus Ministry .....	585.5700
Career Services.....	585.5260
Mabee Learning Center .....	585.4500
Marketing and Communications..	585.5400
President's Office.....	585.5801
Residential Life.....	585.5253
Student Development .....	585.5250
Student Financial Services .....	585.5020
Switchboard .....	275.2850
University Advancement.....	585.5412

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# DR. ALBERT Chen

Changing the universe one student at a time.

NASA. Mars. OBU.

One man is connected to all three, working for two and exploring the other. Through his years of experience in NASA research and three decades of teaching, he unlocks the mysteries of space for students on Bison Hill.

**M**ost students have heard of Newton's laws of motion, developed by famed physicist, Sir Isaac Newton. The first of those laws states that an object in motion tends to stay in motion while an object at rest tends to stay at rest.

So it is with Dr. Albert Chen, professor of physics and 2015 recipient of the University's Distinguished Teaching Award. For 29 years on Bison Hill, he has remained in motion, always moving ahead, convinced that forward motion improves his students' experience, while rest leaves them behind the curve.

"Science is an important part of our lives," Chen said. "Society moves so fast with scientific development and discovery, it's amazing. Now, if you don't catch up and know what's going on, it's kind of dangerous. It's like swimming up a stream. You have to work hard to move forward, or the current will push you back."



**CHEN WAS BORN** in Taiwan where he discovered science at a young age. Receiving encouragement from a teacher to pursue his strong interest in science, he began studying physics and found an aptitude for the combination of math and scientific principles.

After earning a bachelor's degree at Chung-Wang Christian College of Science and Engineering in Taiwan, he applied to graduate school and was accepted into the doctorate program at Baylor University in Waco, Texas, where he also served as a teaching assistant.

### A Call to Teach

Shortly after Chen began teaching at OBU in 1986, he received his first student feedback surveys. After discovering the surveys contained both positive and negative feedback, Chen reviewed them with a colleague who had been teaching for a number of years. The experienced faculty member offered him encouragement and advice, helping Chen realize that the results actually indicated he was doing a good job because he was challenging his students to excel.

Chen also had the unique opportunity to receive student feedback from his own children who attended OBU, providing him a totally new perspective.

“They would tell me if there was something I should change,” Chen said. “One time my daughter told me I was too serious and I needed to slow down and smile more. I thought I was smiling. But I found out that what I think is a smile, the students don’t think is a smile. So I’ve worked on that.”

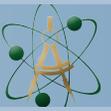
Chen enjoys teaching at OBU and working closely with students to help them prepare for the future.

“OBU is a wonderful place and it’s a pleasure to teach here,” he said. “When you get to know your students and see the change in them, you feel like you’ve accomplished something special.”

### The OBU Difference

Chen believes his students benefit most if he is both encouraging and challenging at the same time. He believes strongly in the quality of education students receive in math and science at OBU, noting they are well prepared for whatever the next step may be. He encourages all of his physics students to attend graduate school and advance their education, noting his students have been highly successful in pursuing advanced degrees.

“Students who receive degrees from OBU find they have many options. Those with physics degrees can get into almost any engineering program they want. Schools of engineering prefer physics students because they have a strong math background and they work hard. They have to work hard at OBU.”



He also saw the fruits of that preparation and character development in the lives of his own children. His second son graduated from OBU with a chemistry degree and went on to earn a master's degree from Virginia Tech. He is working for a pharmaceutical company in Norman. His daughter graduated with a biochemistry degree from OBU two years ago and is studying medicine at OU Medical School.

Chen believes there is a powerful difference in OBU as compared to other universities because of the sense of community among both current students and alumni.

Chen also believes there is a powerful difference here compared to other universities...

"My daughter thoroughly enjoyed OBU and made a lot of friends here," he said. "During

her first year in medical school, she encountered quite a few OBU alumni as upperclassmen. They treated her like a member of the family and told her to let them know if she needed any help."

### To Infinity and Beyond

With a special interest in space physics, Chen served as a NASA Summer Research Fellow at Stennis Space Center in Mississippi; Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas; and in the engineering research division of Dryden Flight Research Center in Edwards, California. He worked on projects at Kennedy Space Center in Florida, and his research has

included Martian dust simulation studies and researching the design of high altitude diffusers for space shuttle main engines.

"My professor and mentor at Baylor worked at NASA for many years and maintained a close relationship with NASA," he said. "As a result, I was able to participate in a grant studying interplanetary dust particles. When the project finished, I applied for a summer faculty fellowship sponsored by NASA. That was a two-year study, but I've applied many times and been able to continue."

His work at NASA opened his mind and expanded his knowledge base, but he is most gratified to share those experiences with his students on Bison Hill. They are interested in learning all kinds of things about space, so he challenges them to consider issues associated with living in a space environment, and encourages them to consider entering the emerging field of space medicine.

"You can't drink out of a bottle in space, as the air bubbles will cause you pain," he said. "Also, your bones no longer support your body so they lose calcium in space. This is an area we don't know enough about and we need good people in this field. Remote medicine also is important in space exploration. When someone gets sick on a space station, doctors try to provide a diagnosis through a video feed from earth. We can use this same technology between two locations

on earth, so if some remote area doesn't have a doctor, a doctor could diagnose the patient from far away."

### A Bright Future for Science and Math on Bison Hill

Chen foresees continued success for his students, with even greater potential in the years to come. He is excited about the future expansion and rebuild of W.P. Wood Science Building, as well as the impact the improvements will make on students and faculty.

"OBU had a good reputation in the past, but it's even better now. We are doing a better job because of the provision of better equipment and more faculty to teach these subjects. Over the years, the number of science students has increased at least twofold and now we need more space," he said. "We need to expand so we can serve more people and also expand the message of what Oklahoma Baptist University is really doing. We have a Christian message and a strong program that can generate a lot of good people for society, and I think that's really important."

Chen has served at Stennis Space Center, Johnson Space Center, Dryden Flight Research Center and the Kennedy Space Center.

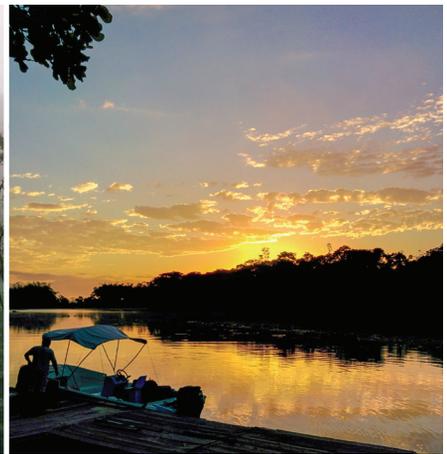
Chen loves physics, enjoys solving problems and savors the opportunity to learn new things. Yet, his passion is for his students and for the people they will impact through science and discovery.



# COSTA RICA

## PURA VIDA

The people of Costa Rica have adopted these words and turned them into a signature phrase, which can act as a greeting, a goodbye or a simple statement of how one is doing.



*During the month of January, Travis DeWall and four other students, along with OBU Associate Professor of Biology Dr. Dale Utt, traveled to Costa Rica to experience its biological diversity and tropical ecology first-hand. DeWall shares their journey through his eyes, detailing how their perspectives and understanding were forever changed, and how the local phrase “pura vida” (translated “pure life”) came to define their experience.*

After arriving in Costa Rica’s capital city San Jose, we boarded a van that took us to a small town on the banks of the Rio Sierpe. Our van ride passed rolling terrain – a pleasant disparity from the stretching flatlands of my native western Oklahoma – but the lush rainforests did not come into

view for quite some time. As we gradually made our way out of the sprawl of San Jose and toward our river destination, the land began to thicken. Dead fields, once cleared to create farms that had long since been abandoned, gave way to scraggly outcrops and tufts of trees. The evening went on and we encountered seemingly endless rows and columns of palm trees. They were pristinely organized and their faultless placement was beautiful, a fact I would reflect upon later in the trip.

In the morning, following breakfast at a riverbank café, we loaded our supplies onto a small boat and set out toward our first destination. The sunrise was astounding. The sky and water were splashed with light oranges and pinks of the

sun just making its way over the trees that stood on either side of the river. In the water, a perfect reflection of the surface was visible, and it was then, through the beautiful symmetry and the brilliant scene around us, that we gained the first glimpses of the tropical paradise we had imagined when we signed up for the class.

We stopped at one point and disembarked on kayaks to navigate the mangrove forest, whose sprawling roots twisted and tangled on either side of narrow passes between each trunk. When our party once again boarded the boat, we were quickly at the mouth of the river. To our right was the seemingly endless expanse of the Pacific Ocean, and to our left was the lush landscape of the Osa

Peninsula with its towering trees that would have dwarfed any of the pines or oaks found in Oklahoma.

Our destination finally came into view – an unassuming lodge overlooking a small beach spotted with a few dark rocks. It was the research field station for Proyecto Campanario, a conservation effort focused on the protection of tropical lowland forests and first-hand education of tropical ecology. Its founders and current caretakers maintain the reserve's natural state while providing students and scientists a place to learn and work. There are no roads built to the research station. The only way to reach it is to either drive to a nearby village and hike an hour along the coast or to arrive by sea as we did.

From the station, our simple cabins were a five minute hike up a twisting hillside path. Spider monkeys munched on fruit trees that lined the trail. The evening sun cast its rays upon the sea, which sparkled and shone in the light. The fronds of palms bounced up and down in the breeze and the ever-present sound of the tide on the shore was a constant companion.

Our daytime hours were spent with treks into the rainforest. These hours-long journeys were accompanied with lessons about tropical ecology by both our guide, Frenier, and Dr. Utt. We witnessed the tangling, shallow root system of the rainforest trees, being careful to not trip over their knotted jumble. We studied and perceived the fragile nature of the rainforest and the complicated ecosystem immersed in it. We saw the timidity of the tropical creatures whose life often depends on the ability to be unseen and unheard; experienced

the astounding diversity of plant life and the strategies they employ to grow; and witnessed the spectacle that undisturbed nature could be.

It was at these times, after beholding a pair of scarlet macaws flying to a distant palm or crawling into the hollow of a massive tree to take a look at some sleeping bats, that I remembered those neat rows of palms in evenly spaced columns. They had somehow lost their original sense of beauty. Sure, they were organized and perhaps their uniform aesthetics were still pleasing to the eye, but their arrangement now appeared unnatural and lackluster. They were missing the wild and genuine – the “pura vida.”

After a stint at La Selva Biological Research Station in the northeastern lowlands, we departed for a lodge near Volcan Arenal, the youngest active volcano in Costa Rica. Our inn was situated with an observatory deck facing the volcano's peak and overlooking Lake Arenal below. Our educational focus here was on the cloud forest and its difference from the tropical lowland rainforests we had just left. Cloud forests exist where the altitude is high enough that the clouds are actually near ground level, causing less rain but frequent drizzle. This sort of misty scene followed us to the Arenal hanging bridges, which were suspended sometimes hundreds of feet off the ground.

Our final drive returned us to San Jose, where we experienced urban Costa Rican life in crowded markets, local cafés and other

hidden gems, including a curated fair-trade boutique where native artists and artisans sold pieces of traditional and modern work.

It is a difficult concept to grasp, that a country nearly two and a half times smaller than Oklahoma can support five percent of the total species on our planet. That means five percent of Earth's species exist on three hundredths of a percent of the planet's surface. That would be like managing to fit a car onto the face of a single quarter. And yet, even an environment so dense with animals, so overgrown with plants and trees that scrape the sky, is vulnerable to the actions of people and the forces of nature.

There is no way to truly understand and respect the tropical rainforest without experiencing it yourself. Words cannot do justice to the whole, both the massive and the minute. Fortunately, OBU and its passionate faculty provided an opportunity for us to glimpse the complex nature of a place so foreign to our usual lives.

Our journey truly fulfilled OBU's mission, just like an evangelical mission to an unreached corner of Asia or a medical mission to an impoverished village in Mexico. We developed knowledge and skills that encourage lifelong learning; we learned about and appreciated cultures other than our own; and we discovered and responded to the needs of the world both locally and globally. My trip to Costa Rica was an experience that has deeply impacted me and is one I will never forget. ■

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by **Travis DeWall**

A junior nursing major from Enid, Oklahoma, Travis works part-time as a writer in the university marketing and communications office.





# JOURNEY to the Big Island

“Hawaii.” Just hearing its name evokes images of a tropical paradise, surfing, volcanos, luaus and Hula. It triggers dreams of an island paradise – a relaxing, distant place of beauty, far removed from the rolling hills of central Oklahoma.

For a group of OBU students and their professor, Hawaii became reality this March as they embarked on spring break to study the “Natural History of the Big Island.”

Dr. Dale Utt, associate professor of biology, led the expedition along with his wife, Randy.

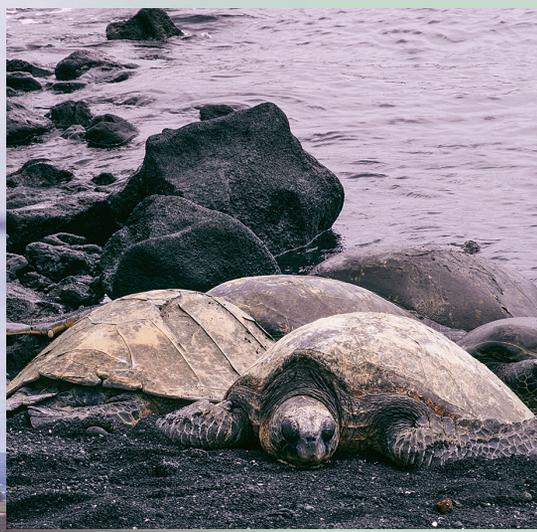
The class traversed the island of Hawaii, experiencing numerous adventures along the way, from whale watching to exploring the Blue Sky Coffee Plantation; from dining at a luau to star gazing at Mauna Kea; from snorkeling with turtles at Kahalu’u Beach Park to experiencing the wonder of nature’s majesty in waterfalls, rainforests and volcanos.

Keaton Nye, one of the students on the trip, shared the following reflections and visual images he captured along the way.





Front row, left to right: Jordan Jackson, Emma Patton, Hannah Cantrell, Hannah Lounsbury and Keaton Nye. Back row, left to right: Allison Haines, Dr. Dale Utt, Randy Utt, Sarah Haines and Andrew Thomsen. Photo by Keaton Nye.



»»» To view additional photos, visit [okbu.edu/magazine](http://okbu.edu/magazine)

“This class allowed me the opportunity to study biology, geology and culture,” Nye said. “We saw real life examples of things we studied in the books. We toured the island by helicopter, were hands on with volcanos, rode on a submarine, snorkeled and visited many ‘non-tourist’ places.

“I’ve traveled to nearly 20 countries, but I had never been to Hawaii. Like many islands, Hawaii had a relaxed demeanor to it, and the people were extremely welcoming. There were a few sandy beaches, including black and green sand. We saw waterfalls, rainforests, sea turtles, lava, whole towns that were consumed by lava, and a cave-like structure formed by lava called a lava tube.”

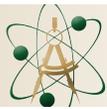
Nye valued the educational aspects of the trip as well as time spent with mentors and each other.

“The most rewarding part of the trip was not only the knowledge I gained, but also the relationships I built,” Nye said. “Spending so much time together was an extremely fun experience. I gained new friends and was able to experience a professor outside a typical classroom setting. Getting to spend this time with Dr. Utt really allowed me to not only see him as a professor who gives me invaluable information, but also see him as a person.”

Nye encourages all students to challenge themselves and take a trip like this. The benefits are lasting and the effort is worth it.

“This kind of trip is extremely important for OBU students to participate in because it gives us a chance to experience nature and a culture that we can’t experience back home,” he said. “Apart from all the incredible scientific information you learn, students also are able to work on relationship building skills, understand how to better share their faith with other groups of people and experience a college class in a totally unique way.”

Nye graduated this May with a degree in Digital Media Arts. He plans to pursue a career in commercial cinematography, continuing his love and passion for story telling through visual imagery.



Dean Bosch answers ...

## WHY SCIENCE+MATHEMATICS MATTER ON BISON HILL



Science and mathematics education has experienced significant growth in recent years as demand for qualified workers in these fields has increased. Dr. Debbie Bosch, dean of the James E. Hurley College of Science and Mathematics, shares information concerning science and mathematics education and, in particular, the unique benefits of obtaining an education through the Hurley College of Science and Mathematics.

### **Q Why is it important to study science and mathematics?**

**A** Whether students are interested in a career in one of the STEM areas (Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics) or just want to be better in their chosen non-STEM field, studying science and mathematics makes them better prepared for their future and can open doors of opportunity. It makes students smarter consumers, better planners for their future and better citizens if they understand very large numbers, like the national debt, or very small numbers, like DNA evidence.

### **Q Why should students come to OBU if they want to pursue science and math?**

**A** One obvious reason is class size. “Large” for us is a freshman chemistry class of 45 as opposed to a freshman chemistry class elsewhere of 400 to 500. Second, all of our professors are Christians who are intentional about integrating faith with their discipline. They ask themselves, “What does my faith have to say about this?” as they study the logical and ethical implications in their fields. A third and critical reason is our professors provide students with the knowledge and skills they need to pursue their careers following college. We do not have classes taught by teaching assistants, but by fully qualified professors.

### **Q What do students learn from an OBU education in the Hurley College of Science and Mathematics?**

**A** Simply put, Hurley College students learn how to learn and how to become their own best educators. They learn that knowledge is not compartmentalized into disciplines but is all connected – science with mathematics, with history, with music, with literature, with faith. It’s one thing to be able to solve problems once one knows which formula to apply, but it’s another matter entirely to take a complex situation, determine which information is relevant, which information is irrelevant, which information is missing, and what might be the best approach to solving the problem.



An architectural rendering shows the expanded W.P. Wood Science Building from the southwest corner.

## Legacy Continued

Consistently strong programs and increasing numbers of students in physics, biology and chemistry courses have taxed the resources of the W.P. Wood Science Building. To enable the Hurley College of Science and Mathematics to continue its legacy of excellence, the University plans to expand the building by adding 15,000 square feet to the south of the current structure and to make significant updates to the current facility. This rebuild adds critically needed laboratories for organic and physical chemistry and biology along with the opportunity to reconfigure and enhance existing classrooms and faculty offices.

### **Q** When students graduate with a degree in science or math from OBU, what careers are they prepared to enter?

**A** Some graduates immediately enter careers in education, government agencies, the biotech industry or numerous other fields. For others, an OBU degree is the first step in a longer educational pathway, whether becoming a medical doctor, a physician assistant, a veterinarian, a pharmacist or earning higher degrees in science to focus on laboratory research. A number of our students use their preparation in mathematics and the sciences as platforms for ministry. Many have come to OBU with a heart for missions or have found that heart while being students here or while participating in OBU GO Trips.

### **Q** What does the future of science and mathematics hold at OBU?

**A** The increasing role of science and mathematics in society makes our role in educating all OBU students ever more important. In 2015, the MCAT Standards increased the rigor significantly for applicants to medical school. OBU anticipated this change and implemented a “new” biochemistry degree when the changes were first discussed at the national level a decade earlier, thus preparing our students far ahead of the curve. This type of forward thinking from both science and mathematics professors helps prepare our students for their futures.

### **Q** How will the proposed expansion and renovation of Wood Science Building impact the college?

**A** It will provide much needed space. We have grown significantly and have simply outgrown the capacity for classroom and office space. For the first time, all Hurley College faculty will be able to office in the same building. The renovations will provide our students with new and updated chemistry labs, additional physics lab space and more classroom space for all disciplines.

# vision FOR A new century

## Continuing a Tradition of Excellence



Dr. Will Smallwood  
Vice President for  
University Advancement

OBU has a distinctive history of providing exceptional academic programs in numerous areas of study. The Hurley College of Science and Mathematics has produced extraordinary graduates, many of whom have become internationally acclaimed researchers and highly successful physicians through the years. More than 90 percent of OBU's pre-medicine graduates are accepted to medical school while the national average acceptance rate hovers around 60 percent. Additionally, the United States Navy identified OBU's physics and mathematics majors as the only tier one academic majors in the state of Oklahoma and the North Texas region for the Navy's Nuclear Propulsion Officer Candidate program (NuPOC). With this recognition, OBU joins only four other tier one universities nationwide.

This tradition of excellence has resulted in substantial growth in the number of classes offered by the college, creating a significant need for additional lab and classroom space.

The expansion and rebuild of W.P. Wood Science Building is essential to meeting this need. It is also a step toward adding engineering programs to the University's curriculum offerings.

The Vision for a New Century Capital Campaign extension will focus efforts on raising funds to finance this vital rebuild. Doctors, scientists, researchers and engineers are in high demand and those with a Christian worldview will make a significant impact on the world for Christ. OBU has provided a solid academic and spiritual foundation for these professionals and this transformed facility will supply the space and resources to continue that legacy.

Thank you for sharing this vision with us as we seek to transform lives by providing academic excellence, spiritual growth and world engagement opportunities that equip students to fulfill the high calling of God in Christ.

### President's Council Dinner

Jack Moore, '88, and his wife, Betty, of Shawnee, are recognized by OBU President Dr. David W. Whitlock as new members to the Cornerstone of Excellence of the President's Council Life Member Program. They received this honor by giving \$100,000 to \$249,000 to the University in their lifetime. Jack Moore serves the University as director of development and assistant to the president for strategic partnerships.



## Revive the Roof Campaign

**RALEY CHAPEL** is the iconic symbol of Oklahoma Baptist University. It serves as the destination for new students during The Walk taken at the close of Welcome Week, and for those who take their final steps as students on Bison Hill as they journey to Commencement. Since 1961, Raley Chapel has been the launchpad for student educational and spiritual journeys while at OBU, and from this iconic building more than 18,000 graduates have been sent out to transform the world for God's glory.

The Revive the Roof Campaign continues, raising funds to replace the original roof tiles on Raley Chapel. Pictured, an original tile lays across a new replacement tile. The new tiles will last 75 years and are colorfast throughout, remaining red even as they weather.

A \$20 gift helps purchase one of 42,000 tiles needed to complete the project.

To learn more and make your gift,  
visit [okbu.edu/advancement](http://okbu.edu/advancement).



## Leaving a Legacy: Nick Stavros Impacts Future of College of Nursing

Nick K. Stavros was born Dec. 4, 1934, in Athens, Greece, and died Jan. 12, 2015. He was 80 years old. Stavros met his wife Jane Eleanor Hurt Stavros through mutual friends. They were married July 16, 1960, settled in Tulsa and began their family. In the years to follow, the couple founded Metro Builders Supply, which has become known as Metro Appliances and More.

In 2014, Nick Stavros provided the lead gift for construction of the new facility for the OBU College of Nursing. The building is named in honor of his late wife, Jane, who was the daughter of Victor C. Hurt, legendary OBU athletic director and football, basketball and track coach.

Stavros is survived by his daughter, Stephanie Stavros Guinn and her husband, Steve; daughter, Tina Stavros Morton and her husband, Rusty; son, John Stavros and



Nick K. Stavros is pictured here at the groundbreaking ceremony for Stavros Hall, May 2014. He is holding "The Bison Spirit," presented by the University in gratitude for his generous gift.

his wife, Rebecca Jones Stavros; seven grandchildren; a brother and sister-in-law; and many nieces and nephews.

### Construction Progress

Progress continues on Jane E. and Nick K. Stavros Hall, future home of the College of Nursing. The building sits north of Shawnee Hall near the intersection of Kickapoo and MacArthur. The facility is set to open by January 2016. Pictured is a view of the front of the building from across MacArthur as the cupola is placed on the roof.





# PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2015

## Vision for a New Century Capital Campaign

1,000

New Donors

\$18.1

MILLION

Gifted for Endowment

150+

Unique Scholarships Created

6

New Faculty Positions Funded

## Major Capital Projects

Mathena Center for Sports Medicine and Athletic Training



Bob and Sara Lou Cargill Alumni and Advancement Center

Cafeteria Remodel - Café on the Hill

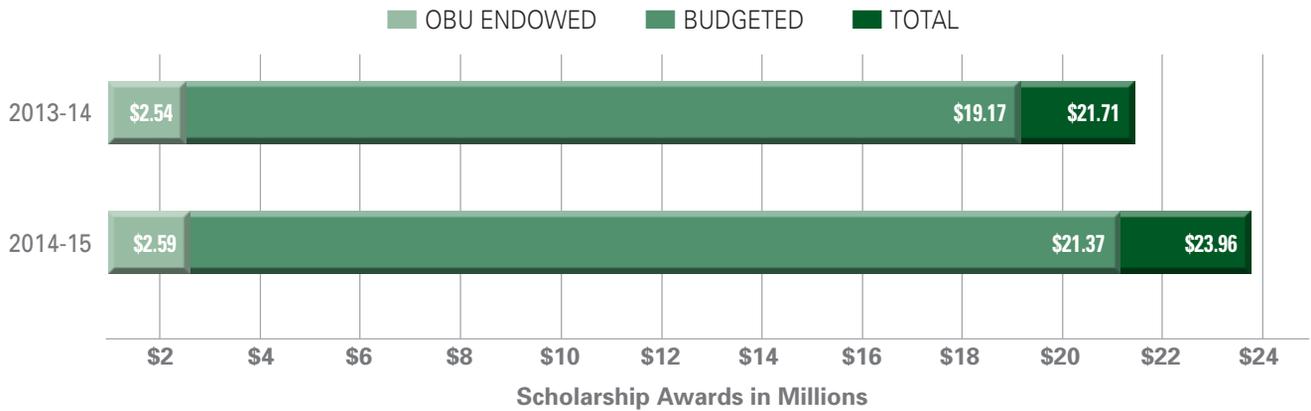


Jane E. and Nick K. Stavros Hall Future Home of the College of Nursing

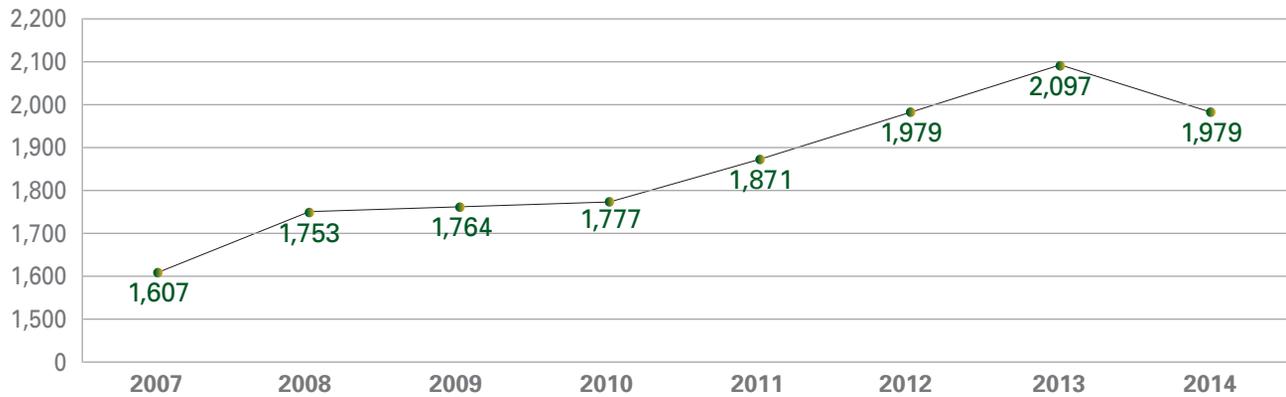


Montgomery Hall Renovation of Second Floor

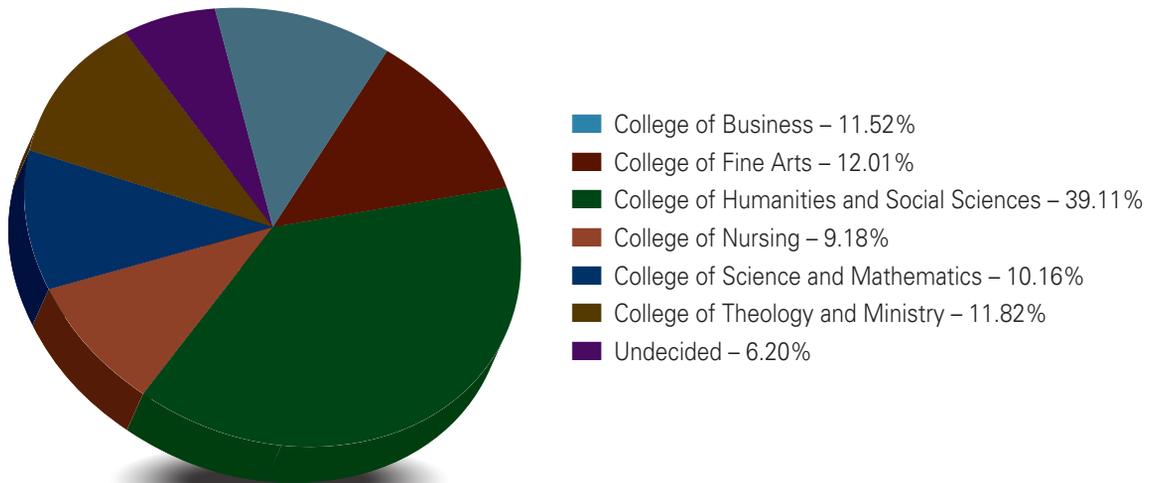
## Scholarship Awards



## 2007-14 Term Enrollment



## Colleges by Degree Program Enrollment



# POET

## Oklahoma's



AMY MOSS RADCLIFFE PHOTO

Dr. Benjamin Myers

### TORNADO

Toward evening the clouds began  
circling each other like dogs.  
A light like the golden skin  
of the sun itself fell  
steady as rain before the rain  
and puddled between round bales  
uncollected in the pasture.

Then the utility poles  
were a row of broken teeth  
up the highway to town,

and once again  
the ordinary light.

*From Lapse Americana  
(New York Quarterly Books, 2013)*

### A FAMILY

is a fence line  
through tall grass,

each post  
bent  
by a slightly different  
wind.

*From Lapse Americana  
(New York Quarterly Books, 2013)*

**DR. BENJAMIN MYERS**, OBU's Crouch-Mathis professor of literature, has long been respected as a poet. His gift for wielding words to paint portraits of emotion has taken his career to great heights.

He is the author of two books of poetry, "Lapse Americana" (New York Quarterly Books, 2013) and "Elegy for Trains" (Village Books Press, 2010). His works have been set to music and his poems may be read in "The Yale Review," "The New York Quarterly," "Nimrod" and other journals.

Yet, he received his highest honor to date this year, being appointed to serve as the 2015-2016 Poet Laureate for the State of Oklahoma by Governor Mary Fallin.

“Through his poetry, Dr. Myers demonstrates a deep love and kinship to Oklahoma,” Fallin said. “His poetry about our state offers a nuanced view of our people, our land and the values that we hold dear.”

A native of central Oklahoma, Myers’ poetry is deeply influenced by his life experiences growing up in Oklahoma and in his community in particular, as well as by his faith. He believes poetry is something to be experienced, something that is so much a part of everyday life it cannot be separated.

“Oklahoma is more to me than just the place I live; it is my home, my homeland,” he said. “The opportunity to combine my love for this land with my love for poetry is an opportunity I am very thankful for. I’ve always belonged to Oklahoma, and now I am honored to be its poet.”

Myers assumed the post in January and will serve a two-year term through December 2016. Through the Poet Laureate program, he gives readings, makes appearances at schools, universities and community groups, talks about his poetry, and presents workshops in communities throughout Oklahoma. He is excited to promote poetry in the state and hopes to inspire more Oklahomans to read and write poetry.

“I’ve actually been a little surprised how open to poetry most Oklahomans are,” he said. “I think we have a God-given need for art, a desire for expression and beauty put there by our Creator. I’ve been delightfully surprised at how many people are willing to feed this part of their soul, when they get a little help and encouragement.”

Myers spends a good portion of most days teaching creative writing and literature to OBU students. He believes students should be taught how to enjoy poetry and how to find pleasure in the language, sound, imagery and emotion of a poem.

“A lot of times people encounter a small amount of poetry in school and then decide they don’t like it, which is a little like hearing one or two songs on the radio and dismissing all of music because you didn’t like them,” he said. “There is a great amount of variety in poetry, and, if you spend a little time looking around, it’s not hard to find something you like.”

Myers believes poetry is art made from words and like other art forms has inherent value in its beauty, ingenuity and creativity. “Poetry is good for the soul,” he said. “Without poetry, and without art in general, the soul lacks an essential part of its necessary diet.”

Myers’ events and appearances related to the poet laureate program are coordinated through the Oklahoma Arts Council. To request a visit or reading, email Myers at [ben.myers@okbu.edu](mailto:ben.myers@okbu.edu). For additional information about the poet laureate program, visit [arts.ok.gov](http://arts.ok.gov).

»»» To read more of Dr. Myers’ poetry, visit [okbu.edu/magazine](http://okbu.edu/magazine)

## ANCESTORS

Men long and thin like the late afternoon  
shadows of the mountain pines,  
they followed mules with plows bumping over  
rock and red dirt,  
listing to one shoulder,  
lopsided on the slant of hard Oklahoma hill,

and here  
am I  
following this lawn mower,  
self-propelled  
over the easy green.

What would they say to the painless  
hush of everyday, the low,  
bookish hum of my morning in the office?

I imagine them coming in from the cold  
of black and white  
photographs, to sit sharply  
angled on our leather furniture,  
little china coffee cups in  
blue and white flowers balanced  
above the worn places on their trouser knees.

They are silent and looking at me.

I want to explain to them  
it is hard where I am  
also, the struggle not with rock  
nor earth but still to plant  
one green thing in the minds of my students.

I, too, lie tired and wide-eyed in the darkness.

*From Elegy for Trains (Village Books Press, 2010)*



## OBU Confers Degrees on 301 Graduates

The University celebrated the close of another successful academic year during its 101st Spring Commencement, Friday, May 15.

Barbara Green, co-founder of Hobby Lobby, challenged the graduates to apply their education and keep God at the center of their lives. During the ceremony, OBU honored both Barbara and her husband, David Green, with the Honorary Doctor of Christian Ethics degree.

“Today, you have accomplished something in your short lives that my husband and I have never accomplished,” she said. “Neither one of us went to college.”

“But now, for you graduates, comes application of that education. This is where the ‘rubber meets the road,’ as we used to say. And in that process of application the most important question is, ‘where is God?’ Will He be the center of all you hope to attain in life, or will He be pushed to the sideline of your life?”

OBU President Dr. David W. Whitlock presented the University’s top three awards for faculty and staff.

Dr. Albert Chen, professor of physics, was honored with the Distinguished Teaching Award. He joined the OBU faculty in 1986. During his time at OBU, he has conducted extensive research with NASA, including Martian dust simulation studies and researching the design of high altitude diffusers for space

shuttle main engines.

Dr. Contessa Edgar, assistant professor of biology, was recognized with the Promising Teacher Award. She joined the OBU faculty in 2012. She previously worked as an associate research scientist for the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation and an instructor

in the graduate program in biomedical sciences at the University of Oklahoma Health Science Center.

Dr. Linda McElroy, professor of kinesiology and leisure studies, was honored with the Meritorious Service Award. She joined the OBU faculty in 1990. She recently concluded 25 years as the OBU cheerleading sponsor. In 2010, she received the Distinguished Teaching Award from the University.

The University also presented the J.M. Carroll Award to Dr. Reagan Bradford. The namesake for this award, Dr. J.M. Carroll, served as the first president of the Baptist University of Oklahoma. OBU presents the award in recognition of outstanding denominational service in the state of Oklahoma. Bradford is the former director of the Lipid Research Clinic at the



OBU graduates are congratulated by faculty as they take their final walk across campus as students on their way to Commencement.

Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation. He has served as a trustee for the Baptist Foundation of Oklahoma, as well as both a member and chair of OBU’s Board of Trustees.

In his charge to the graduates, Whitlock challenged them to remember they carry the distinction of being graduates of OBU, having studied at an

institution that has sought to stand for Christian distinctiveness and academic excellence since its founding in 1910.

“You are recipients of a great heritage, and I charge you to move forward with hope and courage. I challenge you to use what you have learned as a foundation block upon which you will build the rest of your life.”



Pictured, left to right: Dr. Contessa Edgar - Promising Teacher Award; Dr. Linda McElroy - Meritorious Service Award; and Dr. Albert Chen - Distinguished Teaching Award.



Dr. Scott Pace, OBU Chair of Christian Ministry, records a lecture for one of the online Master of Arts degrees.

## OBU Offers New Master's Degrees Fully Online

The OBU College of Graduate and Professional Studies now offers two new Master of Arts degrees. The Master of Arts in Christian Studies and the Master of Arts in Intercultural Studies are available fully online.

Each degree includes a common set of classes designed around understanding the essentials of the Christian faith, worldview and life. Students will build on these core competencies as they pursue training centered on leading the church, defending the faith and reaching the world. Courses are taught with an absolute commitment to both the authority of scripture and a passion for the gospel,

ensuring that students will finish their master's degrees well prepared to serve in ministry or missionary settings, or to pursue additional graduate studies.

The Master of Arts in Christian Studies offers two tracks. The leadership track equips students to lead the church or support those who do. This degree plan is ideal for pastors; associate pastors; ministers of music, education or missions; active church laypeople in leadership positions; and those desiring to lead. The apologetics track teaches students to defend the faith while expanding their biblical knowledge and understanding.

The Master of Arts in

Intercultural Studies also offers two tracks. The intercultural track equips students to reach the world globally as well as locally, as they learn the intricacies of intercultural and cross-cultural gospel communication. The orality track prepares students to reach the world in primarily oral cultures, as they learn from professors on the forefront of this emerging field of study.

Courses within these degrees meet the International Mission Board graduate level education requirements for career assignments. Each course is offered in an online eight-week format, and all tracks may be completed in as little as one year. The professors who teach these courses have advanced degrees and years of practical experience in the field.

To apply, visit [okbu.edu/graduate](http://okbu.edu/graduate) or call 405.585.4601.

## Annual Pastors School Scheduled for July 20-22

The 2015 OBU Pastors School will be held July 20-22 on the Shawnee campus. The School is designed to provide an opportunity for ministry development for Baptist pastors. This year's theme is "Do the Work of an Evangelist," based on 2 Timothy 4:5.

"Our goal is to continue the long standing OBU tradition of reaching out to ministers in Oklahoma and beyond," OBU President Dr. David W. Whitlock said. "For 14 years, I served as a bi-vocational pastor and know the importance of ongoing preparation

for ministry. During those blessed bi-vocational days, I enrolled in courses through OBU and attended pastors' schools for encouragement and development. Those times of study and growth were extremely helpful."

The 2015 Pastors School will feature John Meador, senior pastor of First Baptist Church, Euless, Texas, and Ken Fentress, senior pastor of Montrose Baptist Church in Rockville, Maryland. Meador will provide teaching, testimony and training through proven principles put into practice in his

own congregation. Fentress will expound on the theme with practical teaching, encouragement and application for ministry at any size church.

The event will also feature breakout sessions led by faculty from OBU's Hobbs College of Theology and Ministry. Dr. Stan Norman, Dr. Bobby Kelly, Dr. Tawa Anderson and Dr. Galen Jones will bring their expertise as they explore additional insights from their fields of study regarding Paul's charge to each of us to do the work of an evangelist.

"Oklahoma Baptist pastors will have an unforgettable

experience at the OBU Pastors School," said Dr. Mark McClellan, dean of the Hobbs College of Theology and Ministry. "They will be taught, enriched and inspired by nationally known preachers and scholars. This conference provides a unique opportunity to get to know and share with them personally."

The cost for the entire event including housing and meals is \$99. For more information, contact OBU's Spiritual Life office at 405.585.5700. To register, visit [okbu.edu/pastors-school](http://okbu.edu/pastors-school).

## Club Sports Program Launches

OBU recently launched its club sports program with 11 teams including men's and women's basketball, soccer, and volleyball. The program also provides coed opportunities in shotgun, archery, ultimate Frisbee, disc golf and rock climbing.

Club sports provide students the opportunity to compete in their sport of choice against other universities. Membership

in a club sport is open to all full-time undergraduate students of OBU and is an alternative to varsity athletic competition.

Tim Thomsen, OBU coordinator of club sports, is excited to introduce these teams.

"My vision for club sports is to provide a wide variety of traditional and non-traditional options," he said. "We are

building these programs so students may continue competing in their respective sports or learn a new one."

In addition to enjoying healthy competition, students will be given unique leadership opportunities in managing and leading athletic teams. Students will experience co-curricular learning through athletic competition, skill development, scheduling, fundraising,

organization, administration and budgeting.

Competition and practice schedules vary between clubs. Student leadership and the team coach or sponsor develop the schedules for their teams. Open tryouts take place at the beginning of the fall semester.

For more information, visit [okbu.edu/student-life/club-sports](http://okbu.edu/student-life/club-sports) or email [timothy.thomsen@okbu.edu](mailto:timothy.thomsen@okbu.edu).

## Spring Chapel Provides Range of Speakers



ELLIFF

LANKFORD

NELSON

MARSH

The spring chapel series delivered challenging and motivating messages from speakers including a former president of the International Mission Board, a U.S. senator, a former Miss America and a news anchor.

Dr. Tom Elliff, former president of the International Mission Board, led Focus Week services to kick off the semester. "God always attaches what we believe with how we behave," he said. "Faith at its heart is doing what God says. It is acting on the basis of His revealed will."

United States Senator James Lankford spoke in April, examining 1 Peter 2:11 and the ensuing verses, detailing how to live a godly life amidst an ungodly culture. "This is a moment where we need Christian voices in every aspect of our culture, to speak with clarity but to not speak with arrogance, and to speak in such a way that leaves open the opportunity for ministry," he said.

Former Miss Oklahoma and Miss America Lauren Nelson, along with News 9 anchor Robin Marsh, spoke during Woman's Mission and Ministry Day. "Being Miss America was awesome, but Jesus is so much better," Nelson said. "God doesn't just fix us up, he makes us totally new."



Bertholomew Bailey, OBU admissions counselor, presented the famous civil rights era speech, "I Have a Dream."

## Black History Month Observed

OBU hosted several events during February in observance of Black History Month. Bertholomew Bailey, OBU admissions counselor, reenacted the famous "I Have a Dream" speech by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The OBU English department and United Students of Color sponsored an African-American Read-In where readers shared literary works from numerous authors. The campus also hosted a gospel music service featuring choirs from local Baptist churches.

The United Students of

Color and other members of the OBU community also attended Unity Baptist Church in Oklahoma City for a Sunday service. The church was founded by the late Rev. Dr. Eric A. Mayes, Jr., the first African-American graduate of OBU in 1963. He authored five books and founded a nonprofit ministry which provides scholarships for college-bound students. He died Sept. 10, 2014, leaving behind 90 years of an outstanding legacy in both Baptist ministry and African-American achievement.

## Artist Bill Secunda to Create Life-Size Bison Sculptures On Campus



Renowned Pennsylvania sculptor Bill Secunda was commissioned by OBU to create three life-size Bison, crafted in his unique style from welded masonry nails. Pictured is a tabletop maquette of the work. The sculptures will stand on the northeast corner of the OBU campus facing the intersection of Kickapoo and MacArthur. View a video of Secunda's visit to OBU at [okbu.edu/magazine](http://okbu.edu/magazine).

## Mullins, McClellan Bid Farewell to Bison Hill

Dr. Robbie Mullins, Lawrence Peitz Chair of Business and professor of business, retired in May.

"The most rewarding aspect of my time here was the interaction with all the energetic, young professionals who were carving out their futures," Mullins said. "I have loved having the opportunity to cross paths with so many motivated students and develop relationships that extend throughout the years."

When reflecting on the conclusion of her 31-year career on Bison Hill, she said, "To sum it up in one sentence: I found what I loved and I

loved what I did."

Mullins has taught all levels of marketing courses at OBU focusing on selling, motivation and business communications. She has served as a frequent seminar speaker, discussing marketing trends, marketing audits and other topics. She has also served on the board of directors for Arvest Bank in Shawnee.

Dr. Mark McClellan, dean of the Herschel H. Hobbs College of Theology and Ministry



MULLINS

and professor of theology and missions, retires in June after six years at OBU.

"Serving as the Dean of the Herschel H. Hobbs College of Theology and Ministry at OBU has been one of the greatest privileges of my life," he said. "It has been challenging, rewarding, fulfilling and humbling. I thank the Lord for this wonderful opportunity, and I will be forever grateful to President Whitlock. OBU will always be a part of who I am."

McClellan's career has included work as an educator, administrator, theologian, missionary and attorney. He previously served as professor

of theology and missions at Boyce College in Louisville, Kentucky.

He was an associate professor of theology and director of the Arizona campus for Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary and served as a church planter in Central America and Central Asia. He also served in the U.S. Army, as a Ranger with airborne and special forces and was discharged with the rank of infantry captain.



MCCLELLAN

## Oteka Ball Receives Honorary Doctorate

Dr. Oteka Ball, OBU professor emerita of sociology and child care administration, received the Honorary Doctor of Humanities degree during the annual Founders' Day chapel service Feb. 4.

"Dr. Ball has dedicated her life to helping others, academically and professionally, working tirelessly for Oklahoma families," said OBU President Dr. David W. Whitlock.

She dedicated much of her career to studying and teaching about family relations. While acquiring her advanced degrees, she focused on the study of what made certain families strong and shared her findings with students in her classes.



# Joe Wilkins '87

## Reaching Out

Joe Wilkins, investment relations officer for United Parcel Service (UPS), has led an inspirational life. Those who know him and his story are challenged to live a life of excellence as he has.

Wilkins is the first to attribute his personal and professional success to Jesus Christ. His life of excellence and positive approach to circumstances is defined by tried and true principles he derived from personal Bible study and learned by experience during his undergraduate years at OBU.

“Emotions are temporary,” Wilkins said, “but you can have joy in all situations, regardless of what’s going on in your life, through Jesus Christ, because of what He did on the cross.”

Wilkins, the youngest of four siblings, was raised in a Christian home by parents who worked hard and valued success.

“Church, school, sports and family, that’s just what we did,” Wilkins said. “My mother and father didn’t ever attend college, but both of them were wise about the ways of the Lord, and He led them in all areas of their life.”

His father died unexpectedly when Wilkins was 14 years old, leaving him and his mother on their own at home. Wilkins’ mother, who had never worked outside the home before, began cleaning houses and soon found a job working for the Potter County Jury Department. Even so, as high school graduation neared, he wasn’t sure what his next step would be.

“I wanted to go to college, but I had no money,” he said. “I had no idea how to get there. I typed up a letter that said ‘My name is Joey Wilkins. I play baseball. I

want to go to your school. Do you have any money for me?’ I sent it to five or six schools.”

He received rejection letters from all except one – Oklahoma Baptist University.

“Coach Bobby Cox called and said, ‘Joey, I called your high school coach. We need a catcher. We can’t give you a full scholarship, but we can help you out,’” Wilkins said.

And so began a relationship between player and coach that would impact Wilkins in ways he could not possibly predict.

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**“I’m just so thankful for a Christian education, and OBU is unapologetic about being Christian.”**

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“Coach Cox showed me grace for four years,” Wilkins said. “He was a father figure to me, although he probably never knew that. He knew what I was going through and worked with me rather than giving up on me. He saw down the road in my life rather than focusing on who I

was in that moment. No matter what I did, he stayed positive and kept picking me up and dusting me off.”

Wilkins took a part-time job at UPS to help pay for school as he only received a partial scholarship for playing baseball.

“It was grueling,” he said. “I worked at UPS from 4 to 9 a.m., went to class from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., and played baseball from 1 to 6 p.m. I met my wife Stephanie when I was a sophomore. After that, any extra time that I had, I spent with her.”

Wilkins’ schedule left him less than enthusiastic about attending class at times. Again, it was an OBU faculty member that helped direct his thinking.



“I’M JUST A  
KNUCKLEHEAD  
KID THAT GOD HAS  
CHOSEN TO BLESS.”

“Max Brattin was my economics professor and my counselor,” he said. “He made class fun and brought economics alive for me. He also really liked sports and came out to our games to support all of us.”

Wilkins’ learning was not limited to the confines of a classroom. His education stretched to the baseball diamond as well.

“I learned that success is more mental than physical,” he said. “On the field, you’re constantly thinking and evaluating. You make informed decisions. Baseball taught me that successful people are always learning, always working toward a goal.”

Those lessons learned on the baseball field translated into the way Wilkins approaches his career and the way he works with others.

“It’s good to be liked and happy and energetic,” Wilkins said “But if you really want to help people and do well, you need to work hard and be accountable to your teammates, whoever they may be. You have to get results. You have to be effective for yourself and for them.”

Wilkins continued to work for UPS following graduation and began to advance within the company, earning his Master of Business Administration from Oklahoma City University along the way.

“Being successful is about servant leadership,” he said. “It’s about making your teammates, your boss, and everyone around you better, understanding their goals and helping them achieve them. When you do that, you’ll be blessed with the outcome every time.”

Thirty years into an illustrious career with UPS that has provided for his family, Wilkins is passionate about giving back. He currently serves on the board of C-5 Georgia, a program that takes seventh graders with high academic potential, but limited socioeconomic means, through a five-year mentorship program designed to groom them for success. He is also an active member of First Baptist Church, Atlanta, where he teaches a Sunday school class for young married couples with his wife, Stephanie.

Today, Wilkins remembers his years at Oklahoma Baptist University with deep fondness and gratitude.

“I’m just so thankful for a Christian education, and OBU is unapologetic about being Christian,” he said. “They’re not afraid to teach the truth of the Bible and the unconditional love of God. People there loved me when I was sometimes unlovable. They taught me that you can be bold in your faith.”

Above all, Wilkins is grateful for the unmerited favor God has shown him through the love and support of his wife and children, his parents, the OBU faculty, friends, family and UPS.

“I’m just a knucklehead kid that God has chosen to bless. I don’t understand why, but I’m so very thankful and want others to experience the same joy.” ■

# Kelly King '84

## Leading the Way

“I always felt called to ministry, but as a layperson,” said Kelly King, women’s missions and ministries specialist for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma (BGCO). “Bible studies, discipleship, teaching, leading small groups – that’s what I was drawn to. Ministry opportunities for women were limited when I was growing up. I honestly never imagined God would lead me into vocational ministry, but that’s what He’s done and I love what I’m doing.”

King graduated from Oklahoma Baptist University in 1984 with a degree in journalism and a wealth of professional, interpersonal, and spiritual experience.

“I was really shy and introverted in high school,” she said. “When I got to OBU, I was pushed out of my comfort zone. I had professors who invested in me personally, and I flourished.”

During her time at OBU, King became a member of the Phi Omega Sigma sorority. In fact, she drafted its charter. She was also editor of the *Yahnseh* and served as president of the *Bisonettes Women’s Glee Club*.

“I wasn’t even a voice major,” King said. “That’s one of the great things about *Bison Hill*. OBU’s supportive and accommodating environment allowed me to do things I loved to do outside of my degree and form lasting relationships I wouldn’t have had otherwise. OBU broadened my perspective of ministry and the world, and inspired me to explore all kinds of leadership opportunities. You just can’t get that in the same way from larger universities!”

Following graduation, King went to work for *WEOKIE Credit Union*, and began to serve in her local church leading small groups and teaching Bible studies. It was during that season of her life that she met her husband *Vic*.

“I didn’t marry a minister, but I married the kind of man every minister wants in his church – a pastor’s best friend,” King said. “He is a godly man, and I’m blessed.”

When her first child, *Conner*, was born, she chose to stay home to care for him and began work as a freelance graphic designer, using skills she developed at OBU as yearbook editor. When her youngest child, *Courtney*, was in first grade, King received a call from *Council Road Baptist Church* that would dramatically shift the trajectory of her involvement in Kingdom work.

Kelly attributes much of her success to the investment her OBU professors made in her.

“They wanted me on staff,” King said. “After three months of saying no, I was spending time with the Lord one morning and realized that I would be disobedient if I didn’t say ‘yes.’ I started working part time, and it became the greatest joy. I realized how much I enjoyed

vocational ministry.”

The year *Courtney* entered middle school, King began working for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma.

“I felt like my children were the right age for me to begin working full time,” she said. “That was important to me because I’ve always felt that being a wife and mother was my first calling. I never wanted to feel that I had neglected that in any way.”

For King, the transition from local church staff to denominational work was a smooth one, as she had already done freelance work for the BGCO and had been leading women’s seminars and conferences.

“I feel very fortunate,” she said. “You know, as women, we struggle to stay within the boundaries of what is

expected, but God has ideas for us that aren't always inside the boxes we create for ourselves. When we obey and let God show us what to do next, He opens doors and uses our gifts and talents for His glory in unique ways. I believe He is opening doors for women in ministry, and I've been blessed to be a part of that movement."

For the past 10 years, King has encouraged the Baptist women of Oklahoma in the roles that God has called them to, inspired them to embrace who God is and equipped them to echo His heart through missions and evangelism. She looks for opportunities to connect with women personally and has spoken in over 100 Oklahoma churches. Under her leadership, the BGCO Women's Retreat has become a much anticipated social and spiritual event for many Oklahoma Baptist women. In addition, she is an author and Christian curriculum developer. Her work has been published repeatedly by StudentLife, Lifeway Christian Resources and various Christian magazines.

Humbled by the unique opportunities God has given her to serve, King is grateful for the continued support of her family.

"Vic has never said 'no' to something I felt God was leading me to do," she said of her husband. "And the kids ... well, I think they have loved being ministry kids. They've never said or done anything to make me think otherwise."



King attributes much of her success to the investment her OBU professors made in her.

"Kathryn Palen made a big impact on me," she said. "She was my professor and boss, and gave me confidence by letting me take responsibility. Jack Pearson became a sort of surrogate dad for me. Honestly, there are so many influential people from my time at OBU. It's hard to name them all."

She also appreciates the sisterhood she has enjoyed throughout her life and thanks God for it.

"You know, looking back, you have those 'ah ha' moments where you can see what God was doing, and how He was putting everything together," she said. "I know it was no accident He put me with so many wonderful women at every life stage. The younger women I mentored, and the older women who let me lead and fail and stuck with me anyway, all of those women loved me and let me love them. They prepared me for the future, and they are my heroes." ■

# Kris Steele '97

## Restoring Hope ... One Oklahoman at a Time

Kris Steele is a familiar name for most Oklahomans. As former Speaker of the Oklahoma House of Representatives, he was seen on the evening news, in the papers, online and everywhere in between. Yet, his position of power and influence has not defined his life. Rather, that role helped him discover a purpose for which he now strives – one with a vision to better the lives of individuals and the future of Oklahoma.

Feeling called to pursue a career in ministry, Steele determined OBU would provide the best training to prepare for that calling. In 1997, he earned a bachelor's degree in religion from the University.

He uses his ministry training and experience along with the knowledge he gained as a legislator to serve as the executive director of The Education and Employment Ministry (TEEM), a nonprofit organization dedicated to breaking cycles of incarceration and poverty through education, personal development and job readiness training. TEEM helps former prisoners discover their talents and matches their skills and abilities with employment opportunities that benefit the employee, employer and entire community.

Steele became motivated to serve in this capacity after reading a state audit which revealed Oklahoma's incarceration rates were the highest in the nation. According to the audit, Oklahoma has more crimes punishable by incarceration than other states.

"As a result, spending for corrections had become our state's second fastest growing expenditure," Steele said. "Every year we would add to the list of crimes punishable by incarceration and/or we would add to the minimum length of time a person would have to serve once incarcerated. I began to study the return on investment for all of this money being spent."

Steele also took a careful look at successful re-entry programs for former prisoners in other states and their efforts to increase public safety. He researched crime rates, for both violent and non-violent offenders, male and female incarceration rates and the likelihood for released inmates to return to prison.

"What I realized is that when we incarcerate a non-violent offender, even for a short period of time, and we fail to address root issues such as substance abuse, mental illness, lack of education, lack of job training, lack of basic life skills ... statistically that person will transition back into our community at a greater risk to public safety than even before they were incarcerated," he said.

This revelation placed a burden on him and instilled a passionate desire to help turn around this pressing issue within Oklahoma. In November 2012, as his time in the legislature came to an end, he began serving as the executive

director at TEEM and was charged with addressing the issue.

"I don't think there is such a thing as a spare Oklahoman, and the fact that we would exclude somebody or throw them away just because they've stumbled is not okay with me," he said. "I tell people all the time that I'm very thankful that I'm not judged by my worst moment in life, and I don't think it's at all fair that we judge someone who's been impacted by incarceration by his or her worst moment in life."

Although he believes that violating the law calls for consequences, he also believes releasing incarcerated individuals back into the community without a clear path to success is problematic.

TEEM has developed a re-entry service model that helps people break the incarceration cycle. Elements

**"My OBU experience reinforced the value of perseverance, hard work and collaboration with others."**

of the program include basic education, job training and mentoring. TEEM case managers also connect participants with housing, substance abuse treatment, transportation and health care. A legal aid attorney helps them through legal issues to identify and remove as many barriers as possible before they transition into the community, and job placement coordinators teach basic computer skills and interviewing techniques.

“When you see hope renewed within a person who is living in defeat and the person comes back to life and understands they have a future and a new beginning, it’s a pretty remarkable thing,” Steele said.

All TEEM participants are presented the gospel through Bible studies led by volunteers and board members. Those looking for a church home are connected with a local congregation focused on discipleship and development.

“The faith component also comes into play with the way we as a staff conduct ourselves,” Steele said. “We do our best to work and operate in a spirit of grace, mercy, forgiveness and love. Regardless of what a participant’s beliefs may be, they will get the same measure of love that we give anybody.”

Steele credits his OBU education with preparing him for the challenges of his career.

“My time at OBU was enlightening and enjoyable,” he said. “It provided an understanding of the importance of public service and established a foundation to address societal issues in positive, productive ways. My OBU experience reinforced the value of perseverance, hard work and collaboration with others.”

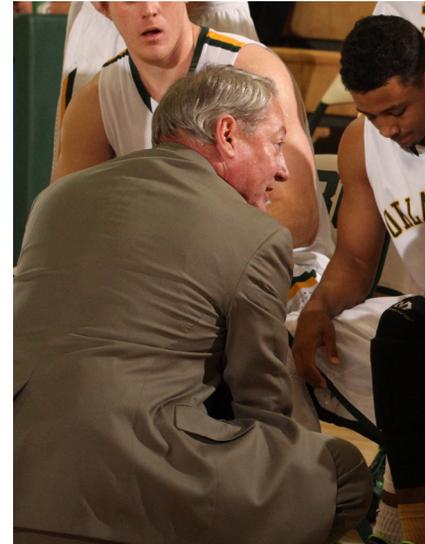


Kris Steele, executive director at The Education and Employment Ministry, speaks with program participants. TEEM provides hope for individuals emerging from incarceration. The ministry provides education and tutoring, job training, mentoring, life skill refinement and an employer network to help participants successfully rebuild their lives.

A calling comes when God reveals a specific purpose for someone’s life. Kris Steele heeded his calling and has committed himself to a life of purpose, full of love and service, for Oklahomans in need of support as they work to rebuild their lives.



# Changing of the Guard



As the NAIA era at OBU draws to a close, so too does the career of one of its most heralded coaches, who passes the baton to an alumnus and former assistant, carrying the men's basketball team into NCAA Division II competition.

## ◀ Doug Tolin Retires as Men's Basketball Coach

The Doug Tolin era ended at OBU when the longtime coach announced his retirement Thursday, March 12. Tolin entered the NAIA Hall of Fame earlier this spring and retired as the all-time leader in men's basketball wins at OBU with 402. He was inducted into the OBU Athletic Hall of Fame in 2011 and the Oklahoma Basketball Coaches Association Hall of Fame in 2013.

"Doug has represented the University incredibly well over his 15 seasons," said OBU Director of Athletics Robert Davenport. "His players, colleagues in the profession and

everyone in the OBU community has the highest respect for his integrity and for what he has achieved here."

Tolin began at OBU in 2000 and led the Bison to 14 consecutive NAIA tournaments, including the national championship in 2010. His teams reached at least the quarterfinal round seven times and the NAIA championship game three times. He was voted Sooner Athletic Conference Coach of the Year in 2002, 2003 and 2012 and the NAIA National Coach of the Year in 2010.

He led the Bison to six regular season conference titles, and his teams won at least two games in the NAIA tournament in all but three seasons.



Tolin led six teams to 30 or more wins, with his lowest win total being a pair of 19-win seasons. He coached nine All-NAIA Tournament picks, nine first-team All-Americans, a third-team All-American and three NAIA Players of the Year, as well as nine All-America honorable mention selections and 11 NAIA All-America Scholar Athletes.

His 2014-15 Bison squad won 19 games for the second season in a row. The team was 5-2 against teams ranked in the NAIA Top 25.

A 1975 graduate of East Central University, Tolin holds a bachelor's degree in accounting and a master's degree in secondary education, also earned from ECU. He graduated from Bartlesville Sooner High School in 1971.

Tolin and his wife, Susan, have three grown children, Christy, Kyle and Keely.

## Wooldridge Named Head Men's Basketball Coach

Former OBU basketball player and 2012 Hall of Fame inductee, Quinn Wooldridge, was introduced as OBU's 19th men's basketball head coach during a press conference on the OBU campus March 25.

A 1999 OBU graduate, Wooldridge played all four years as a Bison, finishing his career as the all-time leader in games played and third all-time in career scoring with 1,886 points. He also owns OBU's season and career records for made and attempted three-pointers.

"I was here as a player under coach (Bob) Hoffman and came back and worked under coach (Doug) Tolin. Right now I feel like I'm walking in the footsteps of giants," Wooldridge said. "This is home to me."

He will be the first coach for the

Bison as an NCAA basketball team. OBU joins the Great American Conference and leaves behind the NAIA next season.

"We're elated to get Quinn here and for this opportunity for him to come home," said OBU Director of Athletics Robert Davenport. "I think he is a great choice to lead Bison basketball into this new stage."

He comes to OBU from Southwestern Christian University, where he was the head coach for three seasons and coached five All-Conference selections, as well as 2014 NAIA Dunk Contest winner and current member of the Harlem Globetrotters, Tyler Inman.

Wooldridge also was the head coach at University of the Southwest and had assistant coach stints at OBU, Oklahoma City, Wayland Baptist, Missouri Baptist, Lyon and Eastern Oklahoma State. He coached in the NAIA Tournament in 2002, 2008 and 2010.

Wooldridge also served as head boy's basketball coach at both Edmond North and McAlester High Schools.

A native of McAlester, Oklahoma, Wooldridge earned his Bachelor of Science in Education from OBU and his Master of Education from East Central University in 2003.

Quinn and his wife, OBU Hall of Famer Andy Holubova Wooldridge, have three children, Michal, Lukas and Gabi.

# Bison Finish NAIA Era with

## Swimming and Diving Teams Defend National Championships

OBU captured national titles in both the men's and women's NAIA Swimming & Diving National Championships in March at the Oklahoma City Community College Natatorium. It is the fourth straight title for the men, dating back to the program's inception in the 2011-12 season. The Lady Bison earned their third consecutive title. Bison head coach Dr. Sam Freas was named both the men's and women's NAIA Coach of the Year.

OBU took home titles in 13 out of 20 women's events, scoring 745 points. The Bison men claimed 11 of 20 titles and finished with a score of 798.5. Bison swimmers set five new NAIA National Championship records at the three-day meet. OBU also swept the meet awards, claiming a share of all eight honors.

## Baseball Earns Second Straight Trip to College World Series

OBU won the Shawnee Bracket of the 2015 NAIA Baseball National Championship Opening Round, defeating LSU-Shreveport in a comeback 17-12 win May 15. The victory earned the Bison their second consecutive trip to the Avista-NAIA Baseball World Series, played May 22-29 in Lewiston, Idaho. Results were unavailable at press time.

The Bison entered the World Series as the top seed for the second year in a row. The team finished fourth in the tournament last year. They were one of only three No. 1 bracket



seeds to advance to the World Series, entering with a 52-6 record.

The Bison rank No. 1 in the NAIA in scoring (9.1 runs per game), RBI (8.3), batting (.368) and slugging (.559). The team began the 2015 season 30-0, setting records for the longest winning streak and best start to a season in program history.

## Lady Bison Claim Third Consecutive Indoor Track Title

Oklahoma Baptist rode record-setting performances and unexpected points to its third consecutive NAIA Women's Indoor Track and Field Championship in March while the Bison finished third in the men's team standings. It is OBU's seventh women's indoor team championship, adding to titles in 2005, 2007, 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2014.

Ford Mastin earned his 11th NAIA Coach of the Year award, Elizabeth Dadzie won the Most Valuable Performer Award and Hannah Fields and Travis Hinton captured the Outstanding Performer Awards.

"This was wonderful because of the way we won it," Mastin said. "I've been to 37 national meets and this is the first one I've been to where one team got four of the six major awards. They usually like to spread that out to make everyone happy."

## Lady Bison Wrap Up Final NAIA Basketball Season

The OBU women's basketball team finished their final season of NAIA play with a 27-6 record and the first trip to the NAIA National Tournament quarterfinals since 2009. The team finished the regular season with a 23-4 record, finishing 15-3 against Sooner Athletic Conference opponents to place second in the SAC.

The Lady Bison reached the SAC Tournament final for the second straight year but fell to Oklahoma City and earned a two seed in the NAIA Tournament. The Lady Bison ended their season with an 83-81 triple overtime loss to Westmont (California) in the NAIA quarterfinals.



obubison.com

# Championships



McKenzie Cooper was named SAC Freshman of the Year and Honorable Mention All-America after averaging 13.2 points in her first season with OBU. Senior Charity Fowler was named First Team All-SAC and Second Team All-America, scoring a team-high 15.2 points per game. She ranks eighth on the Lady Bison all-time scoring list with 1,535 career points.

## Lacrosse Receives First National Ranking

Oklahoma Baptist women's lacrosse opened up the year with six straight wins and received the program's first-ever ranking. The Lady Bison defeated then-No. 10 Midland (Nebraska) two games in a row to begin the season 2-0.

Following the two upset victories, OBU was ranked No. 10 in the National Women's Lacrosse League. OBU set a record for the most lopsided win and the most goals scored in a single game with a 26-1 victory over Cornell College.

The team traveled to Georgetown College in Georgetown, Kentucky, for the NWLL West Region Tournament April 16-18. The squad won their first game 13-5 against Asbury University but ended their season at 11-4 with a 23-10 loss versus Georgetown College.

## Tennis, Golf Compete at NAIA Nationals

The Lady Bison tennis team won its first round match of the NAIA National Tennis Tournament but fell in the round of 16 to fifth-ranked Xavier, 5-1. The team finished the

season at 11-8. The men's team qualified but lost in the first round, falling 8-1 to Dalton State.

OBU junior Zachary Oliver competed in the NAIA Men's Golf National Championships. He qualified following his win at the Sooner Athletic Conference Tournament. Results were unavailable at press time.

»»» Read more statistics and highlights online at [obubison.com](http://obubison.com).

## OBU Named NAIA Champions of Character Five-Star Institution

OBU has been honored as an NAIA Champions of Character Five-Star Institution for the 11th time in recent years. The program teaches the true spirit of competition through the five tenets of integrity, respect, responsibility, sportsmanship and servant leadership.

"Our coaches go above and beyond to instill the attributes into our student-athletes," said OBU Director of Athletics Robert Davenport.

OBU's Champions of Character initiative includes a chaplaincy program, service projects, assemblies, small groups, outreach programs and awards for athletes and coaches of character.

# ALUMNI HOMECOMING WEEKEND

NOVEMBER  
6-7, 2015



For a tentative  
schedule, visit  
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# Zip! Bang! OBU

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- |             |             |
|-------------|-------------|
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| 1970 – 45th | 1995 – 20th |
| 1975 – 40th | 2000 – 15th |
| 1980 – 35th | 2005 – 10th |
| 1985 – 30th | 2010 – 5th  |



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CALL FOR

# Award

NOMINEES

The OBU Alumni Office is now accepting nominations for the Association's annual awards to be presented at Homecoming 2016. Each award represents the University's gratitude to the alumna or alumnus for bringing pride and honor to OBU. Nominate a deserving individual today!

## GRADUATE OF THE LAST DECADE

Presented to a young OBU alumna or alumnus who through his or her career has demonstrated outstanding achievement. Nominations are due April 14, 2016.

## PROFILE IN EXCELLENCE

Given to an alumna or alumnus who has demonstrated recognizable accomplishment in his or her profession, business, avocation or life service. Nominations are due August 1, 2015.

## ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

This highest honor recognizes an alumna's or alumnus' outstanding life service. Nominations are due April 14, 2016.



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