

# OBU

M A G A Z I N E

SUMMER 2016 | [okbu.edu](http://okbu.edu)

A PUBLICATION OF OKLAHOMA BAPTIST UNIVERSITY

## EQUIPPING THE CHURCH

ONLINE MASTER OF ARTS

Leadership

Apologetics

Intercultural Studies

Orality

THE PROPHETIC LAWSUIT IN REVELATION Bandy





Greetings from Bison Hill. The spring semester has come and gone and we celebrated another successful class of OBU graduates as they completed their undergraduate education and journeyed into the world.

During the Spring Commencement ceremony, OBU alumnus, pastor **Shane Hall**, '93, delivered the address. He challenged the soon-to-be graduates to be ready when life interrupts their plans. He explained that in order to leave a lasting legacy, they must devote their lives to Jesus Christ, even though their dreams may be altered.

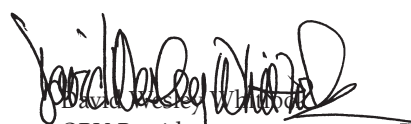
As I looked out over the rows of graduates seated near the front of Raley Chapel, I reflected upon this challenge and upon how we as a University prepare our students to meet it. We challenge them with rigorous academic standards to equip them with the knowledge they need in their vocations. We teach them principles of faith and instruct them in God's Word, merging a biblical understanding of truth with all areas of learning. We encourage them to serve and meet the needs of others, wherever they are in this world, and instill within them a desire to be actively engaged in their sphere of influence. We likewise prepare them to live a life worthy of the plan and purpose for which God has created each of them.

In the pages of this magazine, you will read about two of our graduate degree programs, the Master of Arts in Christian Studies and the Master of Arts in Intercultural Studies, and how they are equipping students to engage the world for Christ. You will read about three of our Profile in Excellence recipients, alumni who are making an impact in the areas of manufacturing, education and music. You will likewise read about the support OBU receives from donors and the impact it makes on the lives of our students.

As you turn the pages of this magazine, I trust you will be blessed, as I have been, to see first-hand the impact an OBU education makes, not only on our students while they are here, but most importantly, in their lives beyond Bison Hill.

At Oklahoma Baptist University, our calling is to transform our students' lives by equipping them to face the challenges that come when life interrupts their plans, so that they in turn may go forth and transform the world. I hope you enjoy the brief "President's Report 2016" included as part of this edition of the OBU Magazine.

May God bless you as He continues to bless OBU.

  
David L. Hays  
OBU President



# In this Issue

## ON THE COVER

In the tradition represented by Raley Chapel's Theology window, OBU engages the world with online Master of Arts in Christian and Intercultural Studies.

## FEATURES

### 3 Q&A

Dr. Heath Thomas, Dean of the Herschel H. Hobbs College of Theology and Ministry

### 4 Online Master's Degrees

MA in Christian Studies  
MA in Intercultural Studies

## DEPARTMENTS

### 8 UNIVERSITY ADVANCEMENT

The Impact of Giving

### 10 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

A Thriving Christian University

### 12 ON THE HILL

Bosch Fellows  
Spring Commencement  
Business Degree Affordability  
College of Business Accreditation  
Retiring Faculty and Staff  
Seven Who Care  
Pastors School

### 16 ATHLETICS

Athletic Teams Finish First Season of NCAA Division II Competition

### 20 PROFILE IN EXCELLENCE

#### RECIPIENTS

Phil Albert  
Christy Nockels  
Dr. Bob Gragg

### 26 ALUMNI

Call for Award Nominees  
Revive the Roof Update

### 27 ALUMNI NOTES

Future Bison; Marriages;  
Class Notes; Obituaries



4



14



16

## OBU Magazine Online

[okbu.edu/magazine](http://okbu.edu/magazine)





Save the Date

HOMECOMING 2016

NOVEMBER 11-12

For a tentative schedule, visit [okbu.edu/alumni](http://okbu.edu/alumni).

# OBU

## magazine

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### OBU MAGAZINE

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Dean Heath Thomas answers ...

# WHY THEOLOGY MATTERS ON BISON HILL



Theological education is a vital part of the success of the global church and for those who serve in ministry vocationally, bivocationally and as laypersons. Dr. Heath Thomas, dean of the Herschel H. Hobbs College of Theology and Ministry and associate vice president for church relations, discusses the Hobbs College, the benefits of an OBU degree and the future of theological education at OBU.

## **Q Why is it important to study theology?**

**A** As a discipline, theology arises from the Scriptures and gives us a way to understand major questions in life: who is God, and who are we? What does it mean to be human, and how do we live with purpose and fulfillment in our world? What is the good life, and how do we attain it? How do we begin to make sense of the wrong and injustice in our world? What is God doing to set it right? What can we call “hope” and how do we embrace it? These are fundamental questions all people ask in some form or another, and Christian theology provides the framework for coherent answers.

## **Q Why should students come to OBU to pursue a degree in the Hobbs College?**

**A** As a distinctively Christian liberal arts university, OBU provides a fantastic context for personal growth and learning. Students will find uncompromising academic rigor matched with unrivaled ministry relevance. In a diverse and post-Christian world, students need both rigor and relevance to be faithful to Jesus and winsome in their lives. Whether in apologetics, ministry, philosophy, religion or Bible, students will engage both aspects to holistic education.

## **Q What can students expect to experience in a Hobbs College degree program?**

**A** Students who commit to the Hobbs College at OBU will learn with a world-class faculty who is committed to see them grow and experience success. They will develop skills necessary to engage a diverse world and live in a manner worthy of the high calling of Jesus Christ. They will also acquire academic and ministry expertise that will prepare them for teaching, leadership and church-related vocations. Finally, they will gain life-long friendships in a community of scholars who are committed to Christ for the sake of the world.

## **Q When students graduate with degrees from the Hobbs College, what are they prepared to do?**

**A** Each student has their own story, but we have seen Hobbs College students graduate with the skills necessary to take them directly into ministry positions at local churches, the academic skills that enable them to matriculate into graduate degrees, and the practical skills that pave the way for them to move into para-church ministries and non-profit organizations. OBU and the Hobbs College have a very strong track record of placement after graduation, so graduates can be assured of finding a place to serve.

»»» Read more of this interview online at [okbu.edu/magazine](http://okbu.edu/magazine)



# TAKING BISON HILL TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH



## **Bison Hill.**

The name that commonly refers to the picturesque campus of Oklahoma Baptist University.

- Its classic brick buildings, crowned with the iconic Raley Chapel and her brilliant stained glass.
- Its green spaces and trees, its famed fountain on the Oval and late nights with friends in the GC.

Bison Hill is a special place, welcoming students to this hallowed ground where character, knowledge and faith are forged.

**Yet, generations** of master's degree students will experience their OBU education from a campus of a different sort ... one that looks more like a kitchen table, a coffee shop, a library, or maybe even a back porch on a Saturday morning, with a cup of coffee in hand.

With the launch of two new Master of Arts degrees joining its existing graduate degree offerings, the campus which proudly stands on Bison Hill is expanding its footprint to the four corners of the earth.





OBU recently launched two new Master of Arts degrees, the MA in Christian Studies and the MA in Intercultural Studies. Classes are delivered fully online, with 36 hours of coursework that may be completed in one to two years. Each class is taught in an eight week modular format, including online lectures, independent reading and writing, and online interaction with professors and fellow students.

The degrees include a common set of classes designed around understanding the essentials of the Christian faith, Christian worldview and Christian life. This common core of 18 hours includes a course in both Old Testament and New Testament studies, biblical hermeneutics, Christian theology, spiritual formation and Christian worldview. The Christian Studies option

has two tracks, Leadership or Apologetics, while the Intercultural Studies option offers specializations in Orality or Intercultural Studies.

The Leadership track prepares learners in contemporary, biblical leadership in the face of various challenges involving staff, congregation or volunteers, and learners are equipped with preaching, discipleship and training tools at an advanced level. This track equips students to lead the church or to support those who do.

The Apologetics track prepares students to face the challenges that arise in defending the Christian faith, empowering them to read Scripture and understand culture; to provide biblical, theological, philosophical and cultural analysis; and to develop reasonable defenses of





the hope found in Christianity. This track is beneficial for all Christians, not just church staff members.



The MA in Intercultural Studies with Orality prepares learners to reach primarily oral cultures with the gospel of Jesus Christ. This track prepares students to analyze worldviews using anthropological tools, develop oral communication strategy and assess effective storytelling. Learners will be at the cutting edge of orality studies, learning from professors who have served around the world.



The MA in Intercultural Studies prepares students to reach the world, whether in global contexts or in one's own back yard. Students will gain advanced skills including ethnographic research, intercultural communication and church planting. These skills are founded and developed in Scripture and theology, providing a robust context for social scientific methods and contemporary missiology.

### The OBU Difference

"The MA programs are exciting because they carry the undergraduate training of Hobbs College forward at an advanced level," said Dr. Heath Thomas, dean of the Herschel H. Hobbs College of Theology and

associate vice president for church relations. "The vision for online education with these MA degrees is missional. We are thrilled that many of our learners are already serving in a professional capacity and that OBU can come alongside them and add value to their work and ministry."

The degrees are offered through a combined effort between OBU's College of Graduate and Professional Studies (CGPS) along with the Hobbs College.

**"What makes our program unique in the online world is the personalized education students receive from OBU professors."**

Dr. Rhonda Richards, dean of the CGPS, sees a major difference in the MA degrees at OBU when compared to other universities.

"What makes our program unique in the online world is the personalized education students receive from OBU professors. Our professors reach out to students individually to review assignments, discuss topics and answer questions. In addition, our professors record lectures for their courses which provides a rich, personal experience for the students."

Richards also emphasized that these degrees are useful for everyone, not only those serving in ministry.

"It's important to note that these degrees are not just for pastors. The apologetics track is literally for everyone," she said.

The quality of the recorded lectures themselves also sets the OBU degrees apart from other institutions. While many universities' online degree programs use webcams to record lectures, OBU's MA degrees feature high quality video and audio, pre-recorded by the University's academic technology and online instruction team. This provides unmatched visual clarity and clear, crisp audio.

The professors themselves likewise distinguish the OBU degrees. They are not only world-class scholars who teach what they have learned, but they are also people who have experience in ministry and leadership around the world. This practical experience helps students learn both theory and practice. These courses are not taught by graduate assistants, as is the case in many other institutions, and the lecture material is created and recorded specifically for the online degree plans, not recycled from an on campus course.

Dr. Tawa Anderson, assistant professor of philosophy and director of the OBU honors program, helped develop the content for the Apologetics track and also teaches two classes within the degree plan.



"The contemporary Christian church is in desperate need of strong apologetic ministry," he said. "Christians have questions and doubts about their faith, and need some help and guidance in sorting those through. Non-Christians have objections to Christianity which demand a persuasive reasonable response. OBU's Apologetics degree equips students to interact with questions, doubts and objections from across the spectrum, and to walk alongside others who are facing such questions."

He stressed that the Apologetics track will benefit all Christians, whether or not they are serving in the ministry. "Our students will be prepared to be thoughtful, engaged apologists in their local church, their workplace, their family, and their community at large."

Dr. Tony Higgins is director of the School of Christian Studies and is involved in oversight for all four of the new degrees. He stressed the value of these degrees originating from within the OBU liberal arts environment, encouraging students to think across disciplines.

"Our degrees are designed to be 'professional' degrees, meaning they are designed to equip individuals to function in any field conducive to utilizing the principles or skills gained. The broad principles learned in the

**"Our degrees are designed to be 'professional' degrees, meaning they are designed to equip individuals to function in any field conducive to utilizing the principles or skills gained."**

Leadership track will be usable in any leadership context. The Apologetics track will enable anyone to 'defend the faith,' regardless of their vocation. Both Intercultural Studies programs equip students for national or international missions, yet, the skills learned also apply outside of 'formal' ministry settings."

### The Sun Never Sets on Bison Hill

For many students seeking these MA degrees, Bison Hill is a place they may never visit. They may never set foot on the Oval, hear the chapel bells chime, don a beanie in the hot August sun or gaze in awe at the splashes of orange and pink from the setting sun behind the chapel spire.

Yet, they will be Bison just the same. And while they may attend their class from the kitchen table, or a coffee shop, or even from the back porch, through the online delivery of OBU's life-changing education, Bison Hill, along with all that it represents, will come to them.



### The Student Perspective

John Cullison currently serves as pastor of First Baptist Church of Geronimo, Oklahoma. A 1985 OBU graduate with a management degree, he spent 25 years in the business world, as well as 13 years serving in the Oklahoma Army National Guard. When he was called to the pastorate, he had a realization.

"When I became pastor at FBC, Geronimo, I quickly realized I needed additional formal training. I heard of the development of the MA program at OBU and when I got the opportunity to begin, I did not hesitate. This degree offered a set of practical tools for ministry along with the theological and doctrinal depth I was looking for."

Cullison is currently enrolled in the MA in Christian Studies in Leadership degree program.

"So far the experience has exceeded my expectations," he said. "The online delivery has been smooth and the support has been exceptional. The lectures are one of the strongest aspects of the courses. Seeing and hearing the professors really facilitates the connection to the class and to the course content. This program is doctrinally sound, professionally and passionately delivered, and contains a practical dimension that reveals the value of each course even as it is in progress. Each course has provided material, knowledge and ideas that I have implemented in the ministries of our church."





The Difference an OBU Education Makes

## Fulfilling Our Mission



Dr. Will Smallwood  
Senior Vice President  
for Advancement and  
University Relations

The English preacher and theologian Thomas Brooks (1608-80) remarked once that “God loves adverbs better than nouns; not praying only but praying well; not doing good but doing it well.”

In 1907, Oklahoma Baptist pioneers envisioned a four-year, co-educational university that would be grounded in the liberal arts – a university that would prepare students to integrate their Christian faith and disciplines as educators, doctors, lawyers, artists, musicians, missionaries, pastors, entrepreneurs, nurses and more. They pursued this lofty vision with urgency and passion, and they pursued it well.

Three years later, the founders established a distinctively Christian university and understood that Christian higher education is best expressed within a liberal arts context, transforming students spiritually, intellectually and physically. A Christian liberal arts curriculum educates the whole person and prepares students to think critically about worldviews, values and truth. A liberal arts education invigorates scholarship and learning in integrative and imaginative ways, essential qualities for graduates in any generation. This type of institution was established on Bison Hill, and it was established well.

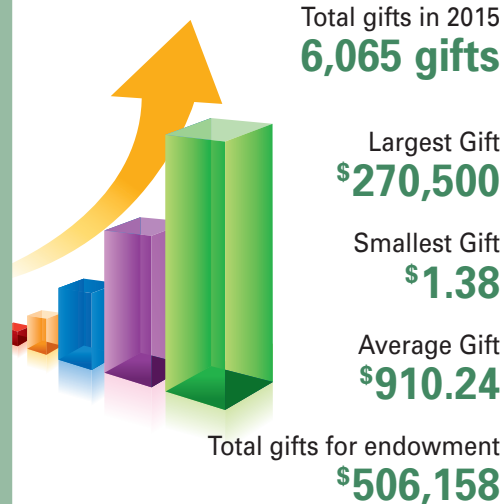
Today, the mission remains the same. OBU’s vision is to continue as a distinctively Christian university that prepares students, through the integration of faith and discipline, to be transformative servant leaders and agents of change in their families, churches, workplaces and ultimately in the world.

## MAJOR CAPITAL PROJECTS



▲ Jane E. and Nick K. Stavros Hall opened for spring semester classes in January providing 32,000 square feet of cutting-edge facilities for OBU nursing students.

## IMPACT OF GIVING



The pages of this magazine serve as a testimony to OBU fulfilling its mission, vision, and values well. Beginning with last summer’s issue, our goal is to share critical information and measurable data with you at the end of each academic year. The President’s Report is one way we can express OBU’s wellness. We hope that you are



◀ Shawnee Hall classrooms for Western Civilization classes were remodeled in time for the 100th year celebration.

The Lodge is the most recently completed building in the residential village. ▲



More than **2,030** students received **\$29M** in financial aid. 3% of this was from Private Gifts.

In 2015, more than **3,630** donors gave **\$5.5M** to OBU

**9.4%** OF OBU ALUMNI DONATED IN 2015



## OBU FUNDING PRIORITIES

### STUDENT SUPPORT

OBU has 631 Endowed Scholarship Funds and 41 Annually Funded Scholarships



### FACULTY SUPPORT

28 Endowed Chairs and Professorships

## ENDOWMENT VALUES

2005-06.....	\$83,938,455
2006-07.....	\$93,792,833
2007-08.....	\$89,833,363
2008-09.....	\$85,329,444
2009-10.....	\$91,026,123
2010-11.....	\$99,638,591
2011-12.....	\$98,030,632
2012-13.....	\$107,888,729
2013-14.....	\$117,482,989
2014-15.....	\$121,778,962



Fifty-eight Women of Vision members gifted \$47,000 to add lighting to the OBU campus. Twenty-five 12-foot light poles have been installed around WMU, Kerr and Montgomery Hall and bollards have been installed in the quad between Shawnee Hall and Sarkeys Telecommunication Center.

encouraged by what you see and read, and we hope you are inspired by the well doing of OBU.

Like OBU's founders, you too can make a lasting impact on the next generation of world changers. We ask you consider doing just that, and even better, to do it well.

- 1 No greater gift can be given than prayer.**  
Pray that OBU would remain faithful to her mission.
- 2 Send students to OBU** and help them find their place in this world.
- 3 Introduce us to individuals and organizations** that need to hear OBU's compelling and incredible story.
- 4 Make a financial gift** to impact the work of OBU at [okbu.edu/onlinegiving](http://okbu.edu/onlinegiving).

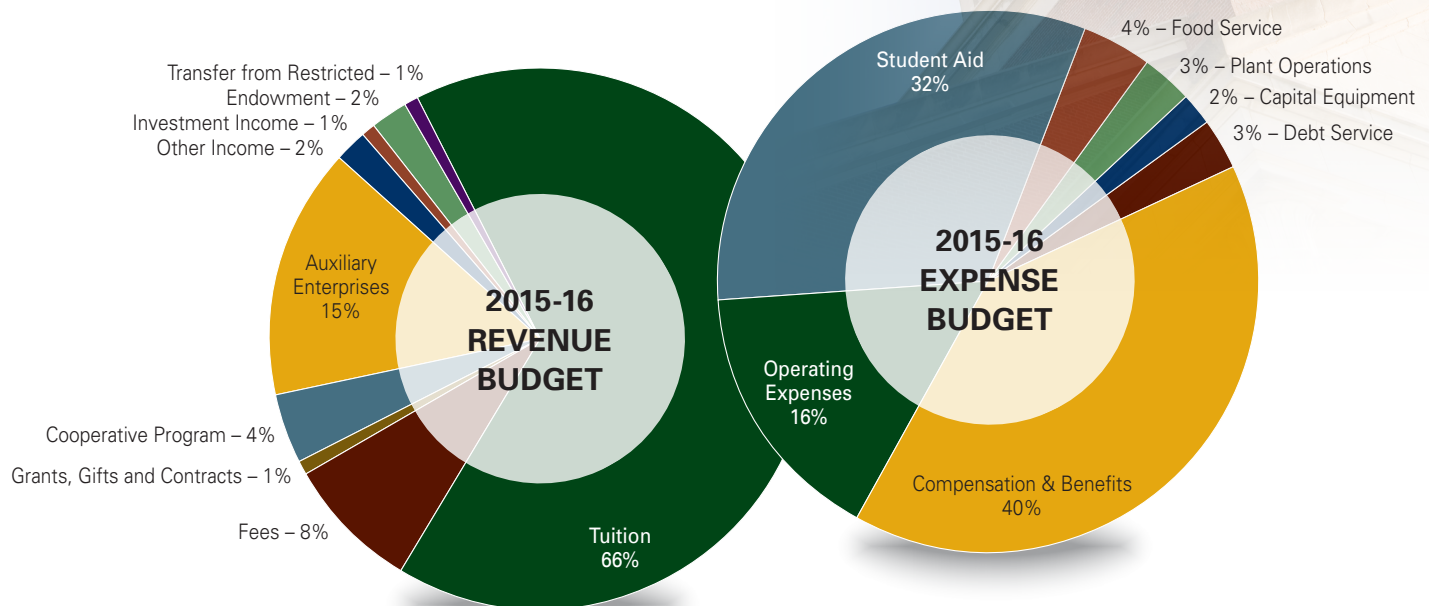




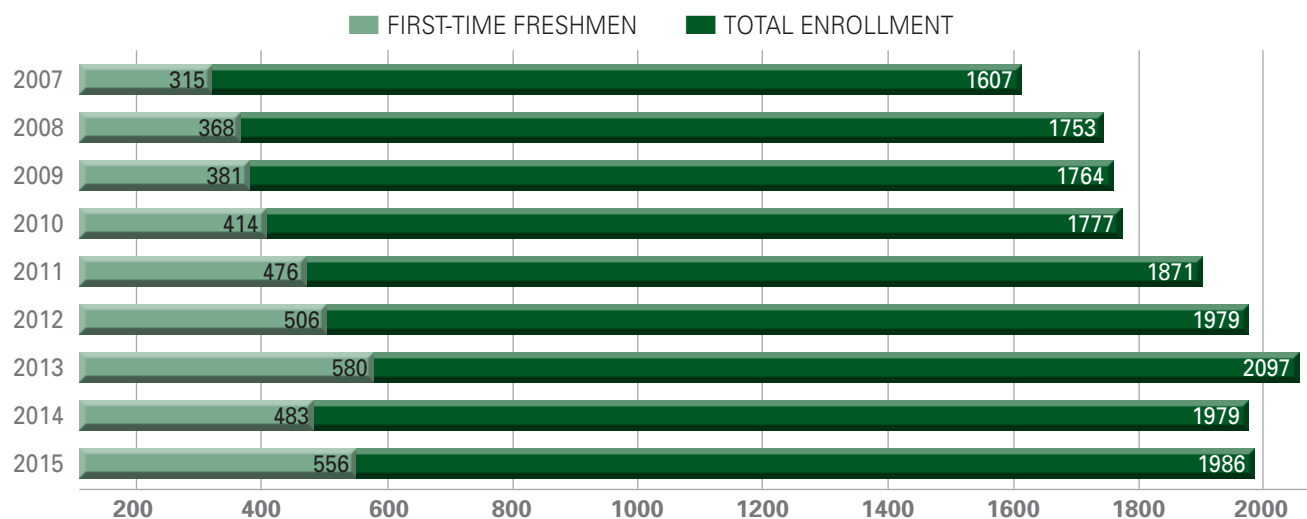
# PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2016

## Financial Data

REVENUE AND EXPENSE BUDGETS – \$69,645,000



## Enrollment 2007-15



## Student Body Profile

Geographic Distribution  
40 states  
35 countries

Student-to-Faculty  
Ratio  
15:1

Average  
Class size  
25

Average ACT  
of incoming class  
22.8

Student Diversity  
26.7%  
of OBU's students self-report as a member of a minority or ethnic group

## Athletics Report

**3.103**  
GPA OF OBU STUDENT  
ATHLETES IN 2015-16

**24** NATIONAL  
CHAMPIONS  
20 NAIA; 4 NCCAA

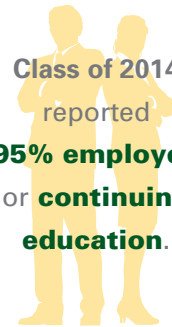
**3** LEARFIELD SPORTS DIRECTORS' CUPS – NAIA



**550**  
NUMBER OF OBU STUDENT  
ATHLETES IN 2015-16 ACADEMIC  
YEAR, REPRESENTING 28% OF  
THE STUDENT BODY

## Outcomes

Class of 2014  
reported  
**95% employed**  
or **continuing**  
**education.**



## Rankings and Affordability

OBU ranked

**#4** BEST  
REGIONAL  
COLLEGE  
IN THE WEST  
by U.S. News & World Report

OBU has been  
named a Best  
in the West  
university by  
**The Princeton  
Review** for 11  
consecutive  
years.

For 8 years,  
OBU has  
been  
on the  
**Forbes**  
list of  
America's Top  
Colleges.

**OBU**

IS THE ONLY  
private university in  
Oklahoma listed in the

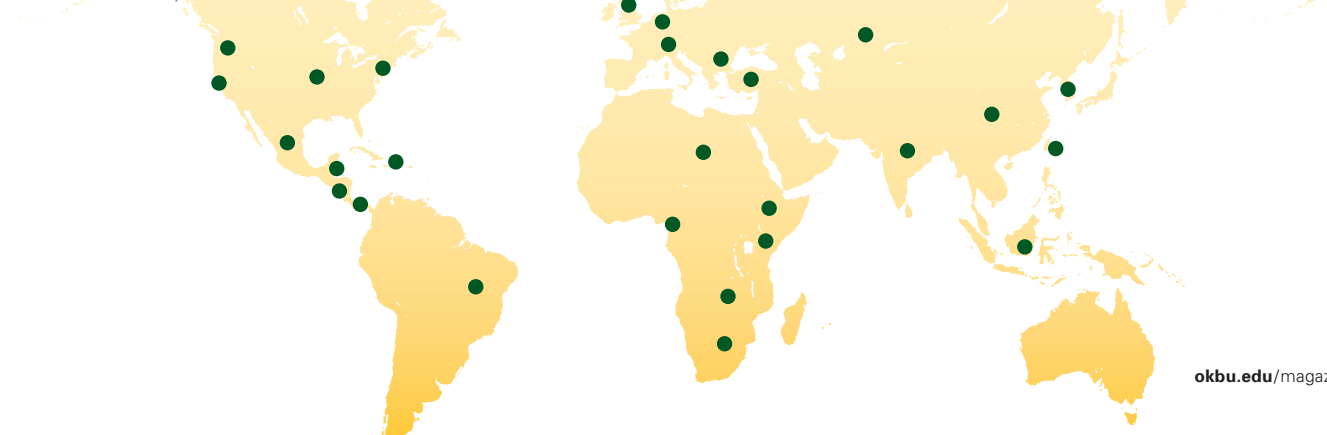
**50 Great Affordable Colleges**

in the Midwest by Great Value Colleges.



## Global Engagement

The Avery T. Willis Center for Global Outreach prepares hundreds of students and mentors each year to serve the global community through global engagement opportunities in the United States and throughout the world. Dots on the map indicate some of those locations.







## Bosch Fellows

### Honoring the Legacy and Impact of Dr. Debbie Bosch

**Everything adorning** Dr. Debbie Bosch's office is a testament to her personality and time at OBU.

From her five strengths displayed on her desk – input, ideation, learner, activator and woo – to which she said, “I just don’t meet strangers; they are friends I haven’t gotten to meet yet” – to the handmade mandolin hanging on her wall, given to her by Dr. John McWilliams, OBU associate professor of natural science. She has memorabilia from her trips to Turkey, China and Korea and even a piece of the old Clark Craig Fieldhouse from Bosch’s time as an OBU cheerleader.

“These are memories I will carry with me the rest of my life,” she said.

Bosch graduated with a Bachelor of Science from OBU in 1972 and rejoined the school as a professor of mathematics

in 1980. This time around, Bosch was considered a colleague to people who had previously been her professors.

“It was exciting and intimidating at the same time, but I thoroughly enjoyed it,” she said. “They embraced me as a peer and also took me under their wings to teach me the ropes of what it meant to be a faculty member.”

Bosch’s favorite memories from her time at OBU all have something in common – they always involve connections with other people.

To honor the many connections she made through the years, her personal passion and devotion to her alma mater, and her numerous contributions to the University, OBU has established the Bosch Fellows program.

The Bosch Fellows will continue her legacy of leadership and impact future

generations of leaders in the area of mathematics, science, medicine and engineering. Fellows can make a commitment by giving a gift of \$2,500, which may be given over a period of time.

Bosch Fellows will be recognized on a wall of honor in the upcoming rebuild of the Wood Science Building, home of the James E. Hurley College of Science and Mathematics.

“This is very humbling,” Bosch said. “To be named for anything like that...I don’t really feel worthy of it. I’m just very honored and pleased it will help support the mission and the activities of science, math and engineering at OBU.”

For more information or to become a Bosch Fellow, contact the Office of University Advancement at 405.585.5412.

### Chapel Service Features All Sons & Daughters



All Sons & Daughters is a Christian worship group led by Leslie Jordan and David Leonard. The duo led worship during Chapel March 30 and Jordan delivered a message centered around the role of worship in our lives.

# Graduating Students, Faculty, Staff and Honorees Recognized During Spring Commencement



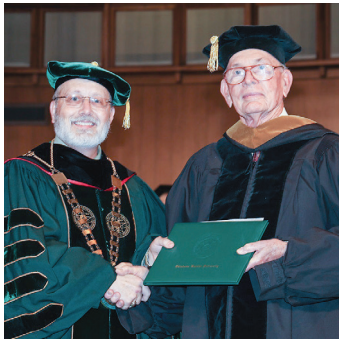
Paul Milburn

**OBU conferred undergraduate degrees** upon 249 students during its 102nd Spring Commencement Friday, May 13, on the OBU campus in Shawnee.

The graduating students took their symbolic final walk across the campus as OBU students when they filed into Raley Chapel's Potter Auditorium for the 3 p.m. ceremony. The walk mirrored one many of the graduates took during their first week as OBU students. Dressed in academic regalia, the graduates proceeded from the Geiger Center to the chapel, passing through rows of OBU faculty members before reaching the chapel's east steps.



Dr. Louima Lilite



J. Thomas Terry

During the ceremony, the University honored Paul Milburn, J. Thomas Terry and Rev. Dr. Eric Mayes, Jr. with honorary doctorates.

The University also presented its top three honors for faculty and staff members. Dr. Louima Lilite, associate professor of music, received the Distinguished Teaching Award. Bill Pope, OBU's staff photographer, received the Meritorious Service Award. Dr. Tawa Anderson, assistant professor of philosophy and director of the honors program, received the Promising Teacher Award.



Bill Pope



Kay Mayes Brown, daughter of Rev. Dr. Eric Mayes, Jr.

Shane Hall, OBU alumnus and pastor of First Southern Baptist Church of Del City, delivered the commencement address. He challenged the students to be prepared for life to interrupt their plans. "Your dreams may be altered. Your plans may be changed. You may be forgotten by this world. But as long as you are honored and remembered by God, what greater accomplishment can you have than that?"

He gave the graduates one key to leaving an eternal legacy. "If you want a life that is honored and if you want a life that is remembered, then lose your life to Jesus Christ."



Dr. Tawa Anderson

## College of Business Earns Accreditation for Next Decade

The Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs (ACBSP) Baccalaureate/Graduate Degree Board of Commissioners has reaffirmed accreditation of OBU's business programs in the Paul Dickinson College of Business. The ACBSP first accredited the business programs in 1995 and reaffirmed the accreditation in 2005.

"Most schools receive at least one note or condition," said Dr. David Houghton, dean of the College of Business. "Our reaffirmation had no notes or conditions. This is great news and speaks to the quality of our education and assessment."





## OBU Nationally Ranked in Business Degree Affordability

College Values Online ranked OBU 27th among the most affordable competitive small colleges in the nation for a business administration degree. The top 50 most affordable schools were selected and ranked based on net price as listed by the National Center for Education Statistics.

Researchers used multiple data sources like College Navigator, Forbes, Kiplinger, US News & World Report and Princeton Review to rank business programs.

Rankings are based on schools that have a bachelor's degree in business administration, a maximum enrollment of 3,000 or fewer undergraduate students, a maximum admission rate of 60 percent or fewer applicants, and minimum SAT scores of 420 on critical reading and 420 on math.

"Being recognized for high quality and good value is strong affirmation of our mission," said Dr. David Houghton, dean of the Paul Dickinson College of Business and professor of business. "The combination allows us to attract students to our programs that will go on to achieve great things in the workplace. This type of recognition for affordability should encourage even more students to experience the life-changing education within the College of Business."

OBU's Paul Dickinson College of Business awards bachelor's degrees in management, marketing, accounting, international business, social entrepreneurship, finance and computer science.

Graduate degree programs include a Master of Business Administration in energy management, leadership, international business or project management.

## Retiring Faculty and Staff Recognized During Awards Convocation

Seven retiring faculty and staff members, with a combined total of 170 years of service, were recognized during the OBU Awards Convocation May 4.

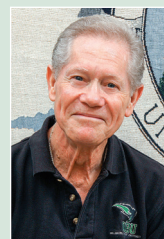
**Dr. Debbie Bosch**, dean of the James E. Hurley College of Science and Mathematics, retired after

36 years of service. She joined the OBU faculty in 1980 as professor of mathematics, and in 1996, she became dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, then the University's largest academic division. She was named OBU's chief academic officer in 2006 and now serves as dean of the Hurley College. She earned a Bachelor of Science at OBU in 1972 and completed a Master of Science in mathematics from the University of Tulsa in 1975. She earned a Doctor of Education in curriculum and instruction from Oklahoma State University in 1991.



**Dr. John Farris**, associate professor of education, retired after 12 years of service. He

joined the OBU faculty for the 2004-2005 school year. Before coming to OBU, he worked as a director of teacher education and the graduate program for a Kentucky college. He has been in the public school arena as a middle school and high school teacher, middle school learning director, middle school assistant principal, high school principal and Christian school superintendent. He earned a Bachelor of Arts from Fresno State College, a Master of Arts from California State University and a Doctor of Education from University of the Pacific.



**Dr. Carolyn Gregory**, assistant professor of education, retired after eight years of service.

She joined OBU in 2008 after 36 years of teaching primary grades for the Harrah School District. One of her passions included teaching young children to read. She was recognized as Teacher of the Year for her school in 1987, and again in 2000, when she was also recognized as District Teacher of the Year. She earned a Bachelor of Science from East Central University and a Master of Education from the University of Central Oklahoma. She then earned a Doctor of Education from Oklahoma State University.



## Faculty and Staff Honored as 'Seven Who Care'

OBU students honored seven faculty and staff members this spring for their work and dedication to the campus community. Members of OBU's Student Government Association presented the Seven Who Care Awards during the university's annual Hyde Park chapel service in Raley Chapel.

The Seven Who Care recipients are selected based upon nominations by students, faculty and staff. The 2016 recipients include Dr. Matthew Arbo, assistant professor of biblical and theological studies; Dr. Kaylene Barbe, professor of communication studies; Dr. Debbie Bosch, dean of the James E. Hurley College of Science and Mathematics; Dawn Chester, secretary of the Division of Teacher Education; Rhonda Jones, director of Kerr, Howard, Midland and Devereaux residence centers; Dr. Lucrecia Litherland, professor of language; and Dr. Yvonne Mbote, assistant professor of chemistry.

**Conchita Hansford,** director of the music preparatory department and assistant professor of music, retired after 26 years of service. She will continue as director of the Shawnee Honor Choir. As a guest conductor and workshop leader for children's choir festivals, she has presented workshops in Texas, New Mexico and Oklahoma, including the Texas Baptist Church Music Conference at Baylor University. She conducted the 1,100-voice children's choir for the Capital Association in Oklahoma City, culminating with a performance in the Cox Convention Center. She earned a Bachelor of Music from Mississippi University for Women and a Master of Education from Wayland Baptist University.



**Steve Hicks,** professor of art and chair of the Division of Art and Design, retired after 36 years of service. His artwork has been displayed in museums in Virginia, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma and beyond. In fall 2015, the Mabee-Gerrer Museum of Art in Shawnee housed an exhibit of his work titled, "Looking Back, Looking Forward," featuring his works produced over the years, including recent works. He earned a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Kentucky, a Master of Arts from Murray State University and a Master of Fine Arts from the University of Arkansas.



**Dr. Tony Litherland,** professor of political science, retired after 26 years of service. He was selected as a Carl Albert Congressional Fellow in 1984. He is a life member of both the Oklahoma Political Science Association (OPSA) and the Midwest Association of Latin American Scholars (MALAS). He received the OPSA Teacher of the Year Award in 2003. He has participated in mission projects across the U.S. and overseas, and has traveled to more than 30 countries. He earned an associate degree from Olney Central College, a Bachelor of Arts from Eastern Illinois University, and both a Master of Public Administration and a doctorate from the University of Oklahoma.



**Bill Pope,** OBU's staff photographer, retired after 26 years of service. A native of Georgia, he came to OBU in 1990. He has since captured more than a quarter of a century of iconic moments on Bison Hill. Outside of his work on campus, he is a renowned cattle photographer, having published hundreds of photos, including more than 90 on the cover of "Cattle Today" magazine. In 2012, he published the book, "The Voice in the Wilderness." He earned a Bachelor of Science in agriculture from the University of Georgia and a Master of Arts in communication from Regent University.



## Registration Open for Pastors School

Registration is now open for the 2016 OBU Pastors School July 11-13. The theme is "Prayer: Key to Preaching the Word in Power" using Ephesians 1:15-23.

The school will feature K. Marshall Williams, Sr., senior pastor of Nazarene Baptist Church in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and president of the National African American Fellowship, SBC; and Michael Catt, senior pastor of Sherwood Baptist Church in Albany, Georgia.

Breakout sessions will be led by faculty of the Hobbs College of Theology and Ministry including Dr. Tawa Anderson, Dr. Matthew Arbo, Dr. Bobby Kelly and Dr. Heath Thomas.

Cost for the event is \$99, which includes housing for two nights, two evening meals, two breakfasts, one lunch and all sessions. To register or for more information, visit [okbu.edu/pastors](http://okbu.edu/pastors).





Payton Wilson vaults during the OBU Invitational.



Kenneth Combs hurdles ahead of the competition for the men's track team.



## Bison Charge Ahead Against NCAA Competition

OBU completed its first season competing against NCAA Division II opponents in the Great American Conference.

The season saw new rivalries established and old rivalries reborn. Building upon decades of dominance in the NAIA, the Bison continued their winning ways, claiming national championships and regional titles, leading the conference in victories, qualifying for national tournaments, and growing through the challenges.

### Track Wins Four National Championships

In their first National Christian College Athletic Association national meets, the OBU men's and women's track teams claimed two indoor track and field national championships and two outdoor track and field national championships. The four championships were the 21st, 22nd, 23rd and 24th national titles in program history.

Ford Mastin, head track coach, was thrilled with the performance of his teams but also touched by the support they received at the national meet.

"We counted 24 families that traveled to Marion, Indiana, for the indoor national meet to support their children," he said. "It's easy to see why our student-athletes behave so well, are consistent witnesses for Christ and are good ambassadors for OBU. They have loyal, committed parents that model wonderful behavior."

"Records were set during the indoor meet on a small, indoor track with no banks... record times that our guys had never run, not even on the oversize tracks where faster times are expected. Their





Cameerah Graves helped lead the Lady Bison to a third place national finish.

performances truly were impressive. Our behavior at the meet was also the kind that added to the Christian atmosphere that was expected. This was a great weekend in the history of OBU Track and Field.”

## Lady Bison Basketball Takes Third at Nationals

OBU finished a successful first season in the Great American Conference and placed third in the NCCAA national tournament.

Picked ninth in the regular season coaches' poll, the Lady Bison finished 12-10 in the GAC and advanced to the NCCAA postseason.

After a runner-up finish in the Central Region, the Lady Bison lost in the semifinals of the national tournament and won the third-place game. OBU lost to Colorado Christian in both the regional finals and the national semifinals. The Lady Bison scored postseason wins over Southwestern Christian, Point University and Northwestern Minnesota.

The Lady Bison ended the season at 17-16 and with numerous awards. Arielle Cooper earned Second-Team All-GAC with McKenzie Cooper earning honorable mention, while both of them

joined Tasha Edge on the All-NCCAA Central Region squad. Additionally, Kiara Moore and Edge earned GAC Player of the Week honors this season.

## Tennis Teams Win Regionals, Qualify for Nationals

Coach Peter McCorkle's squads both clinched titles at the NCCAA Central Region Championship in Abilene, Texas, in late April. The victories qualified both the men's and women's teams to compete in the NCCAA national championship in Mobile, Alabama, May 10-13.

The women's team progressed to the finals before losing to top-seeded Indiana Wesleyan. An historic year for OBU women's tennis, the team set a record with 23 wins and went unbeaten through the Great American Conference for a regular season title in their first year as a provisional NCAA Division II member.

The Lady Bison have earned numerous honors, including Olivia Charvat and Anastasiya Baranova as Great American Conference Players of the Week, and Baranova, Madeleine Boepple and Kateryna Shkot picking up NCCAA Player of the Week honors.

Ending its season in the NCCAA semifinals, the men's team finished



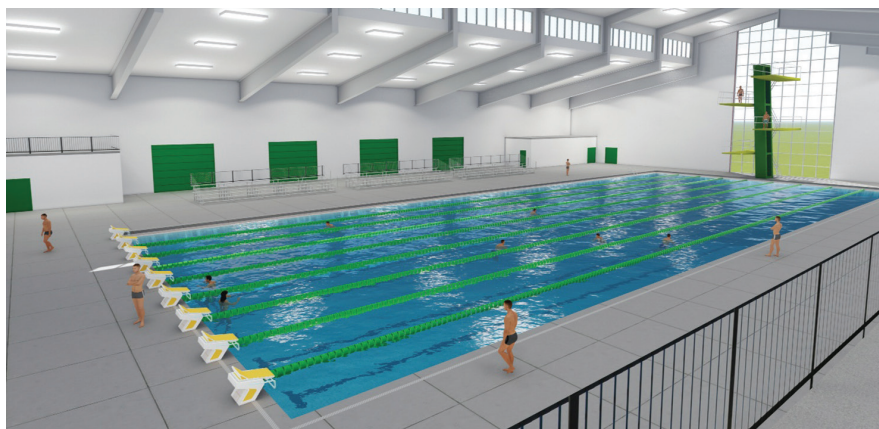
Daniel Aguilera (top) and Caroline Abbe helped lead the Bison to men's and women's regional tennis championships and a berth in the national championship.

18-9. Reda Jirari earned both GAC and NCCAA Player of the Week honors and Thomas Ackerknecht and Lucas Castelo Branco also earned honors from the NCCAA.





Alexa Tininenko (above) and OBU's swimming and diving teams captured a combined championship. Marc Sambolin (above right) led the men's squad to a title at the Speed Central Zone Sectional in March.



Preliminary plans have been developed for a natatorium on the OBU campus in response to inquiries from potential donors concerning the construction of a permanent home for OBU's swimming and diving teams.

## Swimming and Diving Claim Sectional Championships

OBU won the combined title as well as the men's title at the Speed Central Zone Sectional at Jenks High School Aquatic Center in March.

OBU posted 110 points in the final event, the 400-medley relay, to capture the combined title. The men's team claimed their title with 325 points. The OBU women were 11th with 85 points.

## Swimming and Diving Success Generates Support

Since its launch in 2011, the OBU swimming and diving program and Head Coach Sam Freas have amassed seven national titles in just five years for both men and women, breaking 28 national records. Beyond team success, more than 250 swimmers and divers have earned All-America or Academic All-America designations. Swimmers have participated in the Olympic Games, Pan-American Games, World Championships, and other hemispheric championships while attending OBU.

"What has happened at OBU in terms of swimming and diving is unprecedented in collegiate athletics," said Dr. David W. Whitlock, OBU president. "As a result, numerous individuals, corporations, and organizations have inquired about helping OBU establish a permanent home for this outstanding athletic program."

In response to these requests, preliminary plans were developed for a facility that will include a 50-meter pool (Olympic distance) by 25 yards (collegiate competitive distance) with Olympic-standard diving boards and platforms (10-, 7-, and 5-meter platforms, two 3-meter boards, and two 1-meter boards) as well as a therapy pool. The projected location for the facility will be on the north side of MacArthur.

"Such a facility will have the capacity to host national, regional and local events," Freas added. "The facility will also be able to accommodate sports like water polo and synchronized swimming in the future. The void created by the closing of the natatorium at Oklahoma City Community College provides additional inducement for having a facility that will

cater to the needs of students, faculty, staff and athletes as well as the local community and region."

Additionally, a natatorium on the OBU campus has great potential for economic generation for Shawnee, the county and the state. As an indoor facility, the pool will expand the opportunities the local community currently has in the YMCA and the outdoor city pool located in Shawnee's Veterans' Park.

"We are blessed to have corporations, organizations and individuals who are reaching out to us and seeking a way to make this happen. With that support coming in unsolicited, and with the success of the swimming and diving programs, we realized that this is a worthy project for us to undertake," said Dr. Will Smallwood, senior vice president for advancement and university relations.

Designated funding to assist with construction is encouraged with naming opportunities available. For inquiries and/or gifts please contact the Office of University Advancement at [development@okbu.edu](mailto:development@okbu.edu) or 405.585.5412.





**SOFTBALL** finished its first season of Division II play with a 17-35 record, including a win over No. 5 Arkansas Tech that earned Haylee Zimmerman Great American Conference Pitcher of the Week honors. Coach Pam Fink eclipsed the 600 career win mark during the season.

**LACROSSE** completed a 4-7 season in April. Sabrina Attaway surpassed a major milestone with her 250th save of the season. With lacrosse not offered in the NCCAA, the Lady Bison had no postseason.



## Bison Baseball Wins Regional, Earns Trip to World Series

The Bison baseball team hosted and won the NCCAA Central Region tournament May 21, defeating Oklahoma Wesleyan 6-2 and claiming a trip to the NCCAA World Series.

The Bison held their competition to 38 consecutive scoreless innings going into the top of the eighth inning, when Oklahoma Wesleyan's Alejandro Hernandez belted a two-run home run.

Carson McPherson got the win, going 7.2 innings, striking out 10 and allowing one run. Brad Adams yielded one run in picking up his third save.

At press time, the Bison were set to begin World Series play May 25 in Mason, Ohio, against Toccoa Falls College. The 10 team tournament consisted of two five team pools, with the top two teams from each pool advancing to the semifinals.

OBU (37-15) was the top seed in the tournament. The rest of Pool A included Judson at No. 4 (38-23), Oakland City at No. 5 (22-23), Toccoa Falls at No. 8 (21-23), and Hiwassee at No. 9 (34-19).

Pool B included No. 2 Campbellsville (39-17), No. 3 Southwestern Christian (43-14), No. 6 Warner (30-27), No. 7 Trinity Christian (34-21), and No. 10 Bethesda (29-24).

After playing Toccoa Falls, OBU took on Oakland City. They then completed pool play with games against both Hiwassee and Judson. Results were not available at press time.

The Bison closed the regular season with a 33-15 record and a 22-11 mark in the Great American Conference, tying them for the lead in conference wins. Brandon Cuddy led the Bison with a .385 batting

average and 49 RBI, while Ryan Joyce had 11 home runs.

Nathan Thompson led the GAC with 87 strikeouts and threw a complete-game no-hitter with 16 K's against McMurry during the Central Regional. Jinny Parra finished the season at 8-3 with a 2.59 ERA and McPherson went 5-2 with a 2.97 ERA.

Joyce, McPherson and Parra have all earned GAC Player of the Week honors with McPherson and Chad Bennett picking up Pitcher of the Week accolades from the NCCAA.







# Faith in Business and Leadership

**Phil Albert, '81,** is a driven and successful businessman with a sincere passion for both professional and educational excellence.

The president of Pelco Structural, Phil Albert recalls his years at Oklahoma Baptist University and the faculty with gratitude. "I chose OBU for its smaller environment," Albert said. "I sought a university where I could not only identify my best career opportunity, but where I could benefit from a liberal arts setting in a Christ-centered community."

A business and accounting major, Albert appreciated the unique educational opportunities afforded him at OBU.

"I loved my Western Civilization course, with a combined English and history curriculum," he said. "As my career has progressed, I've grown even more appreciative of the well-rounded liberal arts education I received at OBU."

While at OBU, Albert formed life-long friendships not only with peers, but also with faculty members who influenced his worldview and inspired him to achieve, invest and give with tenacity. The Honorable Robert Henry was one such professor. An adjunct professor to OBU teaching business law at the time, Henry would go on from OBU to become attorney general for the state of Oklahoma, chief judge for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit, and dean of Oklahoma City University law school before becoming the current president of OCU.

"Professor Henry was the first instructor I'd ever encountered that taught using the Socratic method," Albert said. "The idea that there could be more than one right answer to a given question was new to me. As a business major, I learned the value of critical thinking and the importance of doing work that matters. Robert Henry is a Renaissance man whose example has profoundly impacted my life and my career."

The summer before his senior year at OBU, Albert married Jo, his high school sweetheart, a student at the University of Oklahoma at the time. Together, they would raise four children, Ginny, Jay, Roni and Jordy, of whom they are extremely proud.

Following Albert's graduating magna cum laude from OBU in 1981 with a Bachelor of Arts in accounting, he made his home in Tulsa, Oklahoma, where he began working for Peat Marwick Mitchell, now KPMG, as an auditor. Soon, he took a position with JEM Engineering, an audit client, which in time proved to be a pivotal building block in the course of his career.

"At JEM, I had the opportunity to wear a lot of hats and gain a lot of experience in business management," he said. "I found I enjoyed creating a tangible product in addition to providing a service."

Albert spent 26 years at JEM Engineering, the last 10 as president of the company. During that time, he continued to seek the Lord's hand and guidance. In 2004, he met his mentor, Phil Parduhn, and they launched Pelco Structural, LLC in Claremore, Oklahoma.

"I knew that it was time to do something different," he said. "Ultimately, it was my faith and my trust in God that led me to resign my position at JEM and end a 26 year career with no prospects and no guarantee that I would be successful."

In 2005, he partnered with Parduhn to open Pelco Structural, a steel pole manufacturing company specializing in made-to-order pole assemblies for the traffic control, utility, lighting and communication industries.

From the beginning, Pelco Structural has experienced steady growth and measurable success, earning numerous prestigious industry and community certificates and awards. Pelco now employs almost 200 people and is on a growth trajectory as innovation and advanced manufacturing continues to diversify its business products.

A recent example of that growth is Pelco's selection by Clean Line Energy to manufacture the transmission poles for a multi-state project known as the Plains and Eastern Project. Recognized for its ability to meet Congressional goals to supply energy through wind power, the Clean Line project recently received the support of the United States Department of Energy and U.S. Secretary of Energy Ernest Moniz.

As a supplier to the Clean Line project, Pelco will more than double its workforce during the course of this multi-year project to deliver clean power produced by Oklahoma's growing wind industry to approximately 1.5 million homes and businesses throughout the southeastern United States.

"What God had planned for me is obviously so much bigger than what I had planned for myself," Albert said. "My time at OBU helped me understand the value of the journey and how the decisions that we make in obedience to God impact that journey."

A firm believer in giving back and investing in others, Albert approaches community involvement with as much creativity,

passion and fervor as he does his own business endeavors, taking every opportunity to better the state of education and business in Oklahoma, focusing his efforts primarily on the public school system and organizations that preserve and promote awareness of Oklahoma's history.

Albert has held and continues to hold many leadership roles in various business and educational organizations on both the local and state level. To name a few, he currently serves as a member of the OU Board of Regents, past chair of the Will Rogers Memorial Commission, and chairman of the Claremore Industrial and Economic Authority. He will soon begin his term as 2017 Tulsa Regional Chamber board chairman.

Believing in the value of public-private partnerships and understanding the financial burden that teachers often bear in an effort to help children learn, Albert, in his role as chair of the local economic authority, partnered with a local elementary school to "fill the gaps" so that teachers could get back to the business of "teaching and inspiring." Other local companies have followed suit, and now every public school in Claremore has a private-corporate partner.

"One of the most important things we can do in business is prepare for the future," he said. "We do that by protecting and nurturing our educational environment. The success of our businesses is closely tied to the quality of education that we offer. My wish is that the students who grow up in Oklahoma would see Oklahoma as a destination for quality opportunities and career development."

Albert's attitude and vision have earned him the respect of his peers. In 2008, he was named Claremore Chamber of Commerce Business Citizen of the Year and the Progressive Citizen of the Year by the Claremore Progress in 2009.

Albert is grateful for the love and support of his family throughout his career and for the well-rounded education he received at OBU.

"Many of the opportunities that I've had came as a direct result of skills I developed there," he said. "The emphasis that OBU placed on competence, clarity and collaboration was invaluable. It prepared me for life and for business, and I love what I do."

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# Pushing Boundaries

A gifted songwriter and worship leader Christy Nockels, '96, is well-respected in the Christian music industry as a singer's singer.

Christy Nockels has a gift for imbuing each lyric she delivers with an authenticity and emotional integrity that resonates with the listener. Considering it a true privilege to be used by God in His redemptive work here on earth on any level, she desires nothing more than to witness true revival in the church. To this end, she exhibits unique transparency and humility in both the songwriting and performance stages of her artistic process.

"The songs always come from something deep," she said, "some kind of refining work that God is doing in me first. It always starts with God's pruning and my response to that pruning. The more we yield to Him, the better the fruit that comes from it, so, for me, songwriting is always an 'I lay me down' kind of process where I ask God, 'What do you want to do in me so I can share it with the people?' It's an approach that I learned from my dad."

A pastor's daughter, born in Fort Worth and raised in Oklahoma, Nockels grew up singing in church.

"I sang my first solo when I was seven," she said. "My dad said, 'Christy, I want you to find a song that speaks to your heart and share it with our people.' My parents were always very ministry-minded. They didn't say, 'You're so talented, Christy. People need to hear you.' Instead, they taught me to minister to people's hearts. I was always on the lookout for songs that were meaningful. I think that early platform and the way my parents approached the whole process had a big impact on the way I write songs."

Knowing that music would play some role in her future, but unsure what that future would look like, she chose to attend college at OBU in 1992 and major in music.

"Going to OBU was just what you did in my family," she said. "My parents met and fell in love there. My older brothers went there. The choice to attend was really a family thing, and OBU felt like home to me from the beginning."

During her time on Bison Hill, God began to whisper to her heart, calling her in a vocational direction she hadn't anticipated, one that was difficult to define at first.

"My time at OBU was very shaping, but not in the way that I thought it would be," she said. "At that time, there were only a couple of educational tracks you could take in music at OBU. I discovered that classical music was not for me, but I didn't know what else to do. Worship music was not a genre at that time."

A gifted musician in his own right, Christy's husband Nathan chose to attend OBU and major in music as well. The two started dating in 1993, following her freshman year, and the couple's shared experience at OBU continues to influence their ministry today.

"It was an exciting time to be at OBU," she said, "an exciting time to be alive. People were starting to sing songs to God, not just about Him. It was new and fresh. All over campus, there were pockets of Bible studies happening and people having worship nights. Nathan and I loved getting to see Christian artists at our own Raley Chapel. The whole experience was incredibly shaping for us, something I don't think we would have gotten on a secular campus at that time."

In 1993, Christy and Nathan attended the Christian Artists seminar in Estes Park, Colorado. During the conference, they spent quality time with a mutual friend of like mind and purpose, Charlie Hall. Within six months, Charlie, Nathan and Christy were working toward recording an independent record under the name Sons & Daughters, one that would, upon its release, lead to an invitation from Louie Giglio to participate in the first Passion conference in Austin, Texas.

Christy and Nathan married in 1995, sharing not only a mutual love and respect for one another, but a burning, God-given desire to "push the boundaries of Christian music."

"It was just the two of us in our little apartment, and there were all of these songs coming out of us. It was a special time," she said. "We didn't know we could make a living doing what we were doing. We thought we would have to get 'real' jobs to support our music habit."

Upon graduation, Christy and Nathan moved immediately to Houston to lead worship Bible studies at First Baptist Church Houston's Metro Bible Study. Feeling a pull to stay in Oklahoma City, Charlie Hall stayed behind, and Christy and Nathan went on to record another album under the name Sons and Daughters. In 1997, a representative from a Christian music label visited Metro Bible Study and began a conversation with the couple about their future. In 1998, the couple signed with Rocketown Records and formed the duo Watermark. Watermark recorded four acclaimed albums, giving Christy's voice a national platform.

In 2008, they moved to Atlanta to become part of Passion City Church, where Christy served on the worship team with Chris Tomlin and Kristian Stanfill. A year later, she released her acclaimed solo debut album "Life Light Up" and spent much of the next two years touring with Tomlin and Passion, her husband Nathan intricately involved in the Passion ministry as well.

Christy and Nathan now make their home in Franklin, Tennessee, where she continues to write and record. They collaborate musically whenever possible, writing songs that

come from a place of mutual experience and meaning. The album "Let It Be Jesus," released in 2015, was one such collaborative effort and is special to Christy because it marks twenty years of marriage and ministry with Nathan.

"A straight-up genius songwriter, musician and producer, Nathan is one of the best musicians I know," she said, "and the most loving husband and dad to our three precious children."

The Nockels make a point of involving their children in their ministry just as Christy's father once involved her in his ministry. They don't consider the demands of parenthood to be a hindrance in any way, although being a mother has certainly had an impact on Christy's creative process.

“*OBU  
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beginning.*”

"I have three children and homeschool two of them," she said. "These days, inspiration comes while I'm standing over the kitchen sink or waiting in the carpool line. I carry my iPhone everywhere and record songs and thoughts as the Lord gives them to me, thousands of little moments, and some eventually turn into something that is an offering, a story."

For Christy and Nathan, the personal and professional struggle lies elsewhere.

"I think the real challenge comes in staying in the lane that God intends for us," she said. "I love Ephesians 2:10. It talks about how we are God's workmanship created to do good works that He has prepared in advance for us to do. I believe that all our

days are planned and that God is sovereign and has specific things laid out for us to walk into. With social media like it is, we are all living in a saturated moment, and the hardest thing is to stay in the secret place. When Nathan and I first began this journey, we didn't have a marketing plan. There were no cell phones. There was no internet. There was a purity to what we were about back then, and we have to discipline ourselves to stay there. We can't let ourselves look right or left or worry about what other people are doing or we will derail. So we try to focus on just doing what He's given us to do and let that speak for itself. Longevity in ministry comes from staying the course."

Christy and Nathan continue to welcome the future one day at a time, enjoying the rewards that come with remaining obedient to God's leading.

"It's a gratifying thing when people come up to you and say things like, 'You gave me the words to sing to God when I didn't know how to say what was in my heart.' There's nothing like it, and I can't imagine doing anything else."





# One Calling

Teacher, principal, superintendent, preacher, pastor and deacon. Dr. Bob Gragg, '73, has held all of these titles in the span of his impressive career.

Bob Gragg has carried out the responsibilities of each of his positions with professionalism, compassion and excellence, consistently demonstrating a Christ-like ability for discernment and encouragement, while bringing healing to the lives of those with whom he works and interacts. Having surrendered to ministry as a senior in high school, he began his coursework at OBU in 1969, hoping to discover the particulars of his calling and to develop the skills necessary to live out that calling.

"I thought God might want me to be a pastor," Gragg said. "But I still really felt called to education. Looking back, it's clear how God has worked all that together in my life, but it wasn't clear then. It was like walking across a bridge with a flashlight, seeing just one step at a time. At OBU, I learned that my calling could involve church ministry and education at the same time."

Encouraged by that realization, he pursued a degree in physical education with a minor in religion.

"I wasn't prepared for the challenges of college initially," he said. "I had to work a little harder, but there were some great folks at OBU who helped me do the extra things I needed to do to catch up. For instance, I had never written a college-level paper before. I could research well and knew math and science, but my English and composition skills were lacking. I got there, though, and I have OBU to thank for that. At OBU, I never felt like a number. There was a lot of support there from faculty and among friends who wanted to see each other succeed."

Gragg's years at OBU were formative and exciting, not just for him, but for the University itself. During his freshman year he observed the faculty working together to develop the first western civilization classes and remembers being impressed by their work ethic.

"They taught me that it's okay for students to research on their own, to go and find answers for themselves, and it's okay for professors to discover and participate in the learning process alongside their students," he said. "Student learning and discovery were the centerpiece of my educational experience at OBU, and it changed the way I thought about education in general. Until then, I thought I was going to school to be a lecturer, but what I found at OBU was the joy of collaboration. It was a real eye-opener for me, a vision that I caught from the get-go and something I have tried to pass along in every educational and ministry setting that I have been a part of."

Gragg married his high school sweetheart, Theresa Boyd, '73, before his junior year of college. As a pastor's daughter and vocal music major with plans to teach, Theresa understood Gragg's dual calling and supported him fully in its pursuit, even as she pursued God's calling and direction in her own life. Gragg's partner in both life and in ministry, Theresa continues to be a special blessing in his life.

"Through everything, she has always been there for me," he said. "She's my counselor and my friend, someone who always wants to help in any way she can. She has been a wonderful companion to me, a fantastic mother, and is now a great Nana, the best!"

Following graduation, the Graggs moved to McAlester where both were employed by the public school system. While in McAlester, the couple's children, Julie Gragg Landes, '01, and Matthew Todd Gragg, '01, were born, and Gragg earned his master's degree in education administration from the University of Oklahoma. He taught physical education, health and social studies. He also served as assistant coach for the middle school football team and head coach for the middle school basketball team, while serving as a supply preacher at his home church in Haileyville.

In 1981, he moved his family to McLoud, where he served as an elementary school principal for four years before taking a job as superintendent of Crowder Public Schools in 1985. From 1988-1996, he served as director of the Kiamichi Technology Center, McAlester campus. While at Kiamichi, he earned his Ph.D. in Educational Administration and Organizational Leadership from Kennedy Western University. In 1996, he became superintendent of Southern Oklahoma Technology Center in Ardmore and served in that capacity for 10 years before considering retirement.

"During that time, I was blessed to serve as an active deacon in three churches. I filled pulpits and even served as a bi-vocational pastor for five years. Through it all, I felt just as strongly as I did in college that the calling to both was actually one and the same. When you're in the middle of it, it's hard sometimes to see the results of what you are doing. But when

I look back on the biggest blessings in my life, I see that God was able to use me to encourage people and bring out the best in them – whether that meant, as a coach, putting a kid back in the game after he'd messed up and teaching him not to quit on himself or, as a deacon, walking a new pastor through a major transition in his life and helping him rise to the challenge."

Before his official retirement in 2008, Gragg served as director of the East Central Workforce Investment Board and worked as director of adult education for Moore and Norman public schools. He found this position just as rewarding as any other he had held to that point because he had the opportunity to help adults earn their GEDs or regain the credits they needed to graduate high school.

*Student learning  
and discovery  
were the  
centerpiece of  
my educational  
experience  
at OBU.*

"They came from all walks of life," he said. "Some were intimidated at the very thought of opening a book. Others couldn't even read at a self-sustaining level. Some had financial problems and family obligations. Some had drug or alcohol problems. But all were trying to better themselves, to equip themselves to succeed, and I got to encourage them through that."

One woman in particular stands out in his memory, a 71-year-old woman who came with her adult son so that they could earn their high school diplomas together. In working with this woman, Gragg was reminded of his own mother, who, after giving birth to 10 children and watching

nine grow up, realized that she was the only member of her family who had not graduated from high school.

"She went back and got her high school diploma through a GED program," he said. "She had been working as a kindergarten teacher's assistant and was awarded her diploma with the first class that she had helped teach. It was very special."

In his retirement, he continues to work as a consultant, provide leadership training, fill pulpits and hold interim superintendent positions from time to time. Yet, his favorite title these days is "Grandpa." Without exception, Gragg feels the privileges and obligations that come with that title trump all others.



# CALL FOR *Award* NOMINEES

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## 2017 AWARD NOMINATIONS NOW OPEN

The OBU Alumni Office is now accepting nominations for the Association's annual awards to be presented at Homecoming 2017. 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, 2017.

### 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, 2016.

### ALUMNI ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

This highest honor recognizes an alumna's or alumnus' outstanding life service. Nominations are due April 14, 2017.

For more information visit [okbu.edu/alumni](http://okbu.edu/alumni) or call **405.585.5413**.

## Revive the Roof Update

In case you missed the news, in November, the alumni board of directors challenged alumni to give to the Revive the Roof Campaign, a campaign to raise funds to help offset the cost of replacing the roof on the iconic Raley Chapel. The board, as a whole, pledged to give **\$25,000**.

During the months of March and April, the alumni office held an email and social media campaign. As of April 30, the alumni board, alumni and friends had pledged or given close to **\$59,000**.

The Class of 2016 participated by choosing this project as their class gift.

It is not too late for you to participate to ensure your class is represented and also receive a special Raley Chapel item as a reminder of your support of this worthy project.

- \$100** A beautiful silver plated Raley Chapel Christmas ornament
- \$500** The ornament and a framed 5x7 unique picture of Raley Chapel
- \$1,000** The ornament, framed print and a brick paver, etched with a message, to be placed in an area near Raley Chapel

If you want more details or are interested in giving online, go to [okbu.edu/revivetherooft](http://okbu.edu/revivetherooft).

Call 405.585.5424 to make a gift, or mail your check to Alumni Office, 500 W University, OBU Box 61275, Shawnee, OK 74804, and be sure to notate it is a Revive the Roof gift.

**Thank you for your support as together we Revive the Roof on Raley Chapel.**













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