

OBU

Alumni Magazine

SPRING 2023

OBU Announces Engineering Degrees

By building strong partnerships with Oklahoma aerospace industry leaders, OBU is developing pipelines to successful engineering careers for future graduates and helping to fill a critical need in the workforce.

PAGE 3





Dear Friends,

You may have heard it said that “excellence needs a center.” In other words, for excellence to grow and thrive in a family, church, business, or institution, then it needs a place that helps it grow and thrive. My friends, OBU is that hospitable space to develop excellence! But we must be mindful of the kind of excellence we develop! If we are hitting all the academic marks but lose our vision of the lordship of Christ, then we are not developing the right kind of excellence. Rather, we will be excellent when we set the primacy of the Lord Jesus in the center of all things. At OBU, we are equipping the next generation of future shapers to live all of life, all for Jesus.

All of life. OBU is in the business of equipping our students to impact all of life: business, theology, education, healthcare, the arts, and now...*engineering*! We are thrilled to share the launch of three new engineering degrees in the Fall of 2023. This is a watershed moment in the history of our university. We will flex into this great need in our communities with our Christ-centered, liberal arts education.

But, engineering marks only one of our exciting new programs established this year! In January we launched our first ever fully online bachelor's program, our BA in Christian Studies, even while we began our first ever fully online certification program, our ACCESS Program for teachers. Much more lay before us. We are asking, “What does our world need...and how can OBU help?” When we leverage our university to meet our world's needs, then we can begin to make a positive impact.

I am also pleased to share how God is blessing OBU with a rejuvenation of our campus. We want the excellence of our facilities to reflect the excellence of our education. To this end, we have begun a major revitalization enterprise on our campus. Much has been done to existing spaces, but we have much more to come (yes, that means YOU, Shawnee Hall!).

All of the work described above informs our master plan development. The future of OBU will move along the lines of our master plan. So please pray for us as we develop it! And if you have thoughts, please let us know as well. This is important work indeed.

Why do we do this? Because excellence needs a center. OBU is the center that equips our students to go into their world and do something beautiful for God. OBU is the center that encourages our students not to waste their lives but leverage their lives for something greater than themselves. OBU is the center of excellence as we inspire our students to excellence: all of life, all for Jesus.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Heath Thomas". The signature is fluid and cursive.

DR. HEATH A. THOMAS
OBU President



8



14



20

CONTENTS

- 4 **OBU Launches Engineering**
Three Degrees Will Begin, Fall 2023
- 7 **Online BA in Christian Studies**
Program Aimed at Adult Learners
- 8 **ACCESS**
Alternative Teaching Certification Online
- 10 **The Heart of Education**
Dr. Liz Justice and Professor Annie Keehn Share Their Passion for Teaching
- 12 **Dr. Beverly 'BJ' Glover**
Q&A With OBU's Vice President for University Culture
- 14 **Campus Updates/Renovations**
Improvements Illustrate Forward Movement
- 18 **Young Alumnus Future Shaper**
Jinny Parra Continues to Build Confidence
- 20 **Student Future Shaper**
Carsten Kates – From Pitcher to Pastor



22

22 The Weekend

Highlights of The Weekend 2022; Profile in Excellence Award Recipients

24 University Advancement

Letter From Vice President of Advancement Tim Rasnic
OBU Giving Day, April 4

26 Alumni Association

Letter From Alumni Director Lea Ann Quirk
Letter From Alumni Board President Laura Hillman

28 Global Outreach – Casey Mills

30 GOLD Award 2021 – Derek Royer, '11

32 GOLD Award 2022 – Austin Manger, '14

34 Alumni Achievement Award – Lou Thelen Kemp, '57

36 Alumni Achievement Award – Danny Garringer, '70

38 Alumni Achievement Award – David Garland, '71

40 Alumni Achievement Award – Shon Remich, '89

42 News Notes – Future Bison, Marriages, Class Notes, In Memoriam

45 Refer a Student



ON THE COVER

OBU graduate Jonathon Stewart, '19, is a systems engineer support analyst for Boeing. Stewart's strong academic base and liberal arts education from OBU provided the perfect combination to continue his path toward becoming a systems engineer.

OBU

Alumni Magazine

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Mya Allen
OBU Junior

*Health and Human
Performance major*

Mackenzie Jackson-Ruth
2022 Graduate

*Health and Human
Performance major*

*Currently pursuing
Doctor of Physical
Therapy degree,
St. Augustine
University in Florida*

Exercise Science, Sports and Recreation

The Division of ESSR works to prepare students for a variety of careers in fields such as pre-allied health, human performance, sports management and ministry. Students have the opportunity to work as interns with OBU Athletic Training and work daily with student-athletes alongside OBU's Certified Athletic Trainers.

okbu.edu/essr

The Gears are in Motion

OBU to Launch New Engineering Program, Fall 2023





- Rigorous academics in math and science
- Students seeking engineering programs
- World-class OBU faculty
- Workforce in need of engineers
- Collaboration and partnerships in place

THESE VARIABLES create the precise formula for the success of OBU's new engineering program. And the time to launch is now. After years of research, envisioning and planning, OBU is unveiling this much-awaited program.

The multi-faceted engineering program offers three bachelor's degree options: mechanical engineering, electrical engineering and systems engineering. For years, prospective students have inquired about OBU offering an engineering program. The foundation is now in place to meet that request.

The curricula for these three 126-hour engineering degrees are comprised of courses that OBU is more than prepared to tackle. With the exceptional academic rigor offered through Hurley School of Science and Mathematics, and the added elements of liberal arts and engineering curricula, students will gain a solid basis of knowledge and theory to succeed in this respected field.

Each of the degree programs will be taught in a context that relates to the aerospace industry yet equips students with the skills and knowledge necessary to enter any industry requiring these engineering degrees.

Dr. Charles E. Baukal Jr., was named OBU's founding director of the engineering program last November. He provides the program extensive leadership and expertise with more than 40 years of industrial work experience.

"He brings a wealth of knowledge from industry, experience in the classroom, and understanding of the ABET [Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology] accreditation process to this program," said Dr. Larinee Dennis, OBU dean of business, health science and education. "We are thrilled to have him at OBU."

Baukal said that one of his main objectives for the program is to generate a strong emphasis on application of the specific theory taught. He stresses the importance of students not only being well-grounded in theory, but that they be able to successfully apply what they are learning into situations in the field.

“In particular, I want students to confidently implement the principles of theory through practice and application. They must be able to use the appropriate equations and critically assess the results,” he said.

In that same light, Baukal is creating a team of partnerships, faculty and advisors that currently are, or have been, working professionals in the field. This assures that students are educated on the actual operations of the engineering industry.

“The reaction of employers has been fantastic,” he said. “Many have offered to help in any way that they can.”

Baukal notes several distinctives that make the OBU engineering particularly attractive. The first key distinctive is smaller class sizes taught only by professors, not by teaching assistants, which offers students individual attention, personalized instruction and mentorship. The University’s student success center also offers flexible tutoring and support as individuals progress in their curriculum.

Another major advantage is OBU’s storied academic success in regard to science and math programs. STEM curricula are already in place and are taught by experienced faculty who are producing successful outcomes. One such faculty member is Dr. Chris Jones, director of STEM innovation at OBU, who has devoted a great amount of time in recent years towards the establishment of the engineering program.

“The implementation of this program builds on our well-established and innovative STEM degrees in fields that equip our graduates to impact the region, state and world in positive ways,” Jones said. “OBU will now help fill the high demand for more engineers with graduates trained with academic excellence and integrity grounded in the Christian faith.”

In regard to meeting the demands of the Oklahoma workforce, Dennis said,

“We are privileged to serve our state by entering an area that has a significant lack in the aerospace workforce. We are thankful for our collaboration and pipeline with industry partners. Our goal is to provide capstone and internships opportunities for our students, and ultimately offer these industries well-equipped graduates to carry out their missions. It’s a win-win situation for everyone involved.”

Those Oklahoma industry leaders include Tinker Air Force Base, Boeing, Kratos and United Dynamics with other partnerships still being developed. Baukal is formulating a strong advisory board to insure extensive collaboration and innovative advancements. Professional associates from Oklahoma CareerTech have been a valuable resource for Baukal as developments continue in the program.

As the fall semester approaches, the new engineering program is taking its rightful place on campus. Currently, many offices throughout the campus have been relocated with the ultimate plan to dedicate all three floors of Thurmond Hall to the engineering program. The building will house state-of-the art lab spaces, wood and metal shops, classrooms, faculty offices, and diverse and flexible learning environments.

Reflecting on the journey ahead, Baukal said, “I am certain God has prepared me over the course of my career to be the founding director of this program and I couldn’t be more pleased. For students interested in a robust, progressive engineering degree, our program will offer all of that and more. OBU offers a world-class education taught with a distinctively Christian worldview.” □

INTRODUCING OBU'S FIRST

Fully Online Bachelor's Degree in Christian Studies

Class could start before sunrise or well after sunset. The student could be perched on a living room couch, sitting in an office or tucked away in a booth at a fast-food restaurant. This is the benefit of online learning. OBU is offering its first fully online bachelor's degree, a Bachelor of Arts in Christian Studies degree through the Hobbs School of Theology and Ministry.

Designed for working professionals, classes for the online Christian Studies program are offered in an asynchronous format, allowing students to access classes at times convenient for their schedules.

"Adult learners who want to go back to school to complete a degree or who feel called to better equip themselves by pursuing a bachelor's degree now have a viable option through OBU," said Micah Meek,

associate dean for online, nontraditional and graduate education.

"This degree is specifically built so adult learners can further their education wherever they may be. We are thrilled to be able to provide access to an OBU education to individuals who may already be employed, established in a community or serving globally. With a tuition rate of \$350 per hour, we have tried to make the degree as affordable as possible," he said.

The online Christian Studies program provides courses in biblical and theological studies along with the University's common core, which equips students with skills that foster critical thinking, intellectual curiosity, effective communication and a Christian worldview in all areas of life.

Courses are offered in eight-week sessions throughout the year. Students may start at any time and can finish in as few as three years or set their own pace for completion. The 120-hour degree can be completed in an even shorter timeframe by students who have already earned college credits. The program includes 25 elective hours so students can transfer in prior undergraduate coursework to fulfill the electives or explore other areas of interests through OBU.

For more information about the online Bachelor of Arts in Christian Studies, visit okbu.edu/online-ba.

"This degree is specifically built so adult learners can further their education wherever they may be."

Growing Deeper in the Word of God



"It has always been a great desire of mine to grow deeper in the Word of God, both personally and corporately, so I may understand more and lead better," said Jim Lewis, senior pastor at First Baptist Church in Coalgate, Oklahoma.

"I am so very thankful that OBU has decided to move forward in offering this degree program. If I can grow deeper, then I am able to lead our church deeper in their relationship with the Lord. It is a great pleasure to be a part of this wonderful school. And ever since I

toured the campus in 1996, as a graduating high school senior, I've wanted to be a part of OBU. What a blessing it is to step forward in this opportunity."

A Lesson Learned

The McCabe Family School of Education has taken the teacher shortage problem and developed a solution that will benefit school children.

Emergencies aren't just an opportunity to react, they are an occasion to learn.

In the 2021-22 school year, Oklahoma learned an important lesson regarding the need for emergency certified teachers.

Emergency certification is temporarily issued for one year to someone who has not yet met the certification requirements of a state-approved program. Districts may request emergency certification for a specific candidate only after exhausting every option to find an appropriately certified person for the open position.

Rather than looking back and saying there was a need, OBU's Henry F. McCabe Family School of Education has looked at the present and is readying for the future with the alternative teaching certificate program, also known as ACCESS (Alternative Certification and Credentialing for Elementary and Secondary Schools).

Dr. Liz Justice is chair and director of the Henry F. McCabe Family School of Education and associate professor of special education. Justice and Professor Annie Keehn serve as co-chairs of OBU's ACCESS program.

Justice said there is a national crisis in education today – a catastrophic shortage of qualified teachers.

"For many years, school districts have faced increasingly significant challenges in recruiting and retaining teachers, especially in critical need areas such as special education, science, and mathematics," she said. "Today, critical shortage areas have increased to include early childhood and elementary education and nearly every other area of certification. Throughout the state of Oklahoma, there is an ever-increasing demand for certified teachers."

In 2011-12, only 32 emergency teaching certificates were issued by the Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE). Just a decade later, that number grew to 3,863 emergency certificates during the 2021-22 school year.

Justice explains that to continue teaching beyond the one year granted through emergency certification, teachers must seek this alternative certification. Again, alternative certification is a pathway to becoming a teacher for those who hold a bachelor's degree but did not complete a teacher education program.

"OBU's School of Education has been in discussions for several years about starting an education program for those seeking alternative certification," she said. "Last year, I developed a proposal for starting the ACCESS certification program at OBU and spent most of 2021-22 working to fully develop the proposal, seeking internal and national accreditation approval. ACCESS was approved in June of 2022. Professor Keehn was hired within the School of Education around that time and she jumped right in, helping with program implementation, recruitment and scholarships."

This program is for the children.

"ACCESS benefits the children in our public-school classrooms as their emergency-certified teacher becomes equipped with the knowledge, skills and disposition that are needed to teach," Justice said. "Research confirms 'If students are taught by a string of underqualified and underperforming teachers, it limits academic potential. However, highly qualified teachers are more likely to expand students' desires to learn and succeed (University of Missouri-Columbia, 2018).' The primary outcome of this program is to equip our emergency certified teachers to guide, support, love and teach children, in the most effective ways, so the children may reach their potential."



Bayleigh Vogel, '21, who graduated from OBU with a cross-cultural ministry degree and two minors in recreational sports and theatre, is a kindergarten teacher at the Shawnee Early Childhood Center. The ACCESS program will help Vogel earn an alternative certification to teach in Oklahoma. She said, "OBU made it possible to work full time, yet participate in this program and still reach success."

The added blessing is that OBU is not championing this program alone. Partners are priceless and the Avedis Foundation is charging forward with the Bison.

Avedis said Keehn wowed them with her presentation of the program to their board.

"I think the Avedis Foundation could see that we are passionate about this program because of the difference it will make for teachers and students," Keehn said. "Colossians 3:23 comes to mind as well, 'Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters.'"

Because of Avedis' participation, tuition assistance is available for eligible emergency-certified teachers currently teaching in Pottawatomie County public schools as well as Meeker, Chandler, Prague, Little Axe and Seminole public school districts. Provided by the Avedis Foundation, the tuition assistance covers 50% of the total program cost. Following admission into the program, eligible students receive instructions about applying for tuition assistance.

This commitment translates to a substantial investment by the Avedis Foundation of \$3,375 in assistance per teacher for those completing the full certificate program.

Each course is offered in a fully online format and may be completed from anywhere.

Another strong-point of this program is that there are multiple opportunities to begin. The first was in January while other start dates follow in June and August.

Plus, OBU's professors have earned the highest degrees and have years of practical experience in their specific

field. In other words, the faculty practices what they teach. Participants will learn first-hand from experienced faculty who have decades of combined experience teaching and leading in public and private schools.

Individuals who have earned a bachelor's degree in any field are eligible to complete this certificate program, take the necessary teaching certification exams and apply for an Oklahoma teaching license.

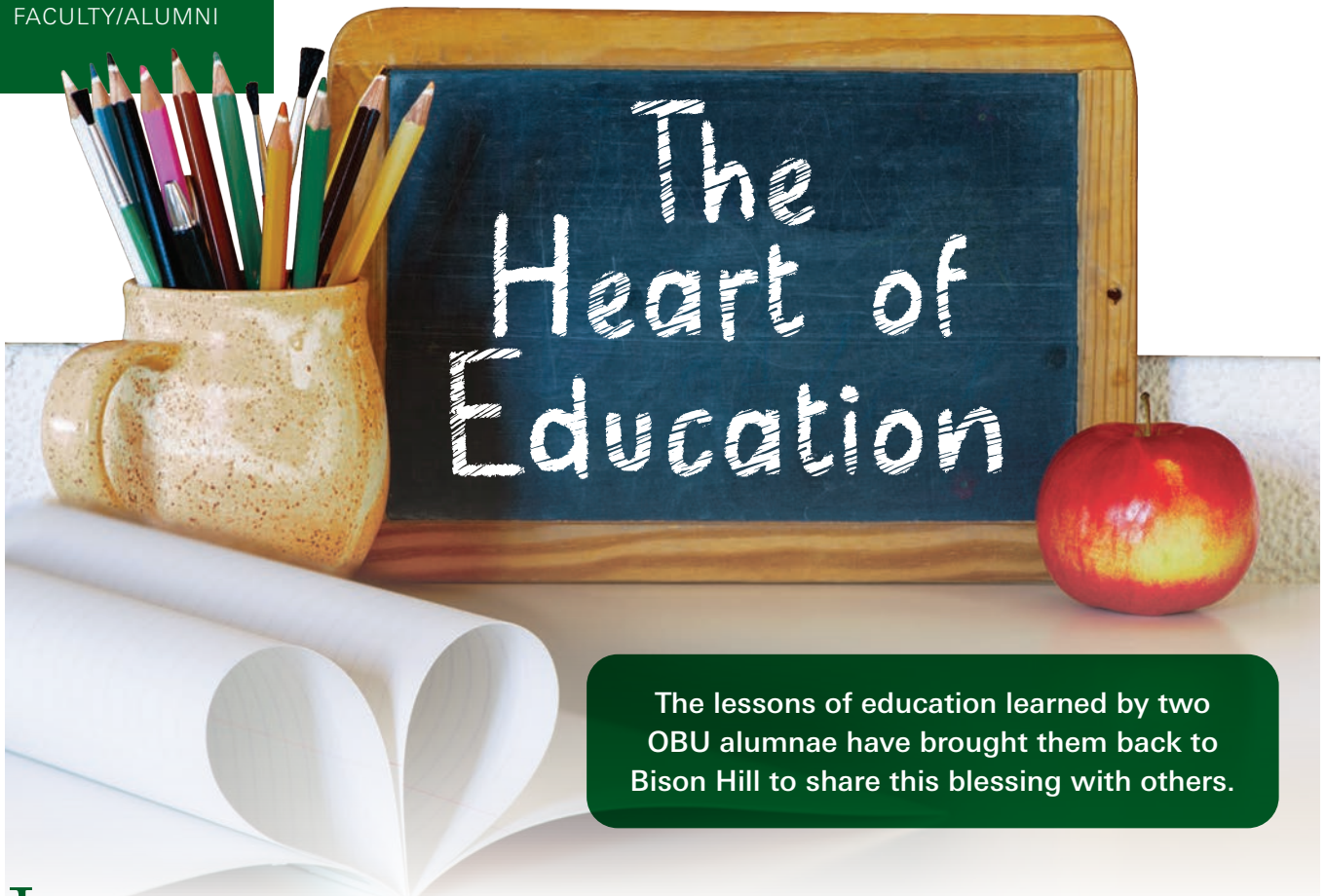
So, the ACCESS program prepares students to take the necessary certification exams to become licensed Oklahoma educators. OBU's undergraduate teacher education candidates have a 95% pass rate on their culminating certification exams, and the University seeks to help alternatively certified teachers experience similar success.

The Avedis Foundation makes the statement that, "Our vision is to measurably improve the health, wellness and quality of life for our state. We're here for good."

So is OBU's commitment to education.

"Avedis Foundation is honored and pleased to partner with Oklahoma Baptist University to fund this project," said Kathy Laster, Ph.D., president and CEO of Avedis Foundation. "This innovative approach to assist school districts with the burden of the teacher shortages within the communities that we serve is an investment in education for all." □

To enroll in the ACCESS program, apply for tuition assistance or find out more information, visit okbu.edu/access.



The lessons of education learned by two OBU alumnae have brought them back to Bison Hill to share this blessing with others.

If under “sources” of a paper, a reader saw the simple notation of “heart,” that might throw them off.

However, for the sake of accuracy, any paper, any instructions, any actions at all regarding education by Dr. Liz Justice or Professor Annie Keehn, are derived straight from the heart. They have well-earned titles and degrees, but their passion for education can easily be traced to this vital organ.

Justice is chair and director of the Henry F. McCabe Family School of Education and associate professor of special education. Keehn is an assistant professor of education. Together, they are co-chairs of the Alternative Certification and Credentialing for Elementary and Secondary Schools (ACCESS) program at OBU.

“Serving, loving, teaching and growing students is the heart of what I do, but even more, it is deeply embedded in who I am,” Justice said. “Compassion, empathy, positivity, encouragement, and inspiration are my love language, and they are what drive me in the classroom.”

She said there are moments when she is teaching that she can hardly contain her joy and gratefulness as she is in awe that God chose her to teach.

“When a student suddenly comes alive with a new revelation or connection, or when one instantly realizes her personal

growth and beams with pride, or when a student confides his deepest joys, successes or hurts and I know I have become a safe place for him...these are the heart of who I am and the heart of why I teach,” Justice said.

Keehn quoted Psalm 127:3, which says, “Children are a gift from the Lord.”

“Teachers have the privilege of working with these “gifts” daily! I teach from the heart because it is my calling to work for the Lord by serving, educating, and loving my students,” she said. “Teaching is my calling, and the classroom is my mission field.”

With both educators, it is obvious that God led them to the classroom, but certainly didn’t leave them there alone.

Justice said that as a fourth-grade student in Mrs. (Cleta) Hoffman’s classroom, she became keenly aware of what it meant to be a “heart teacher.”

“It was also during this year that God confirmed his calling for my life as a teacher,” she recalls. “It may seem odd to some that one could know at 10 years old that God had placed a special calling on your life, but as I watched Mrs. Hoffman lovingly guide, teach, and love each of her students, I instinctively knew that I was being called to do the same.”

Justice isn't saying that she fully understood the depth of that calling at 10. That understanding came along with her first teaching job.

"As a 21-year-old first-year teacher, I stood before my middle school students and became keenly aware of my mission field," she said. "I realized that I may be the only 'Jesus' that some of my students encounter. I may be the only one praying over these children. I may be the only one offering a smile and encouraging word. I may even be the only one to acknowledge their worth. So, I determined that each day, I would ask God to equip me with the heart to teach His children as I served in my mission field."

Keehn said God has "absolutely" been with her in the classroom.

"Through all the ups and downs that an educator experiences, God has walked with me," she said. "When challenges with students arose, I leaned on the assurance that God had placed those particular students in my life that school year for a reason. Someone told me, 'If He calls you to it, He'll see you through it,' and that has certainly been true for me."

There was somewhere else that God led Justice and Keehn before guiding them to the classroom as teachers – OBU.

Justice said that for her, choosing to attend OBU was the easiest decision she's ever made. Her grandparents, parents, some aunts and uncles, several siblings, their spouses, all attended OBU.

"It was and is part of the McCabe legacy to attend OBU," she said. "That legacy now includes my own children and numerous nieces and nephews. Four generations have come to OBU and many of those through the education department. Once I arrived on campus, I quickly learned just how special OBU's School of Education was. The professors did not only teach current research-based practices, content, pedagogy, and classroom management skills, they showed by example how to love and invest in students. Each professor, while unique in their own rights, demonstrated excellence in knowledge and practice."

Keehn looks back and sees that God led her into OBU through one door, and then opened another.

She was studying biology at OBU with plans to attend medical school when she met a classmate who was majoring in secondary science education. Through learning more about that degree program and spending time in prayer, she realized very quickly it was the fit for her.



Dr. Liz Justice, '95 (left), received a Bachelor of Science in special education and Professor Annie Keehn, '10, received a Bachelor of Science in secondary science education.

"Some probably thought I was crazy when I changed my major, but I've never regretted that decision," she said. "I had dreamed of being a teacher as a child, but when I got older and went to college, teaching lost its appeal. I think many young people today fall into the same trap of thinking a career in teaching isn't worthy of their time and talents. However, that could not be further from the truth. Children need caring adults to invest their time and talents in them. This is an opportunity to have a profound impact. Over and over as Dr. Justice and I meet with applicants to the ACCESS program, we hear others share similar stories about how they prepared for another career field in college, but since giving teaching a chance, they've fallen in love with it."

Justice and Keehn both learned over time that God was not finished moving them in terms of their careers, first into roles in administration at public schools and then back to Bison Hill for service in the OBU School of Education.

Do not think that they haven't looked back. In fact, each sees that as a responsibility to the teachers of today and tomorrow, and to the students of each. The ACCESS program is a perfect example.

Keehn said that one of the key issues facing education today is the lack of qualified teachers. This program is a way to help solve that problem. It's another way OBU can prepare those who are seeking initial teacher licensure.

"More importantly though, it's a way to ensure students are being taught by qualified and caring educators," she added.

Justice shares that perspective.

"Through this program, OBU is partnering with public schools to impact our future," Justice said. "The children of Oklahoma are our future and when we invest in their teachers, we invest in them. This program is creating one more avenue that OBU is helping to shape our future. We are investing in future shapers." □

A Grace/Love-filled Academic Environment



Dr. Beverly 'BJ' Glover
Vice President for University Culture

"My vision is that OBU will become the model for other Christian universities with similar challenges and goals of balancing a commitment to the standards of the Bible with remaining agile and relevant in these dramatically changing times."

Q What is your main responsibility as vice president for university culture?

A I'm charged with leading a cultural transformation on Bison Hill to become the grace-filled, Christ-centered academic institution God has called us to be. We want all our community members to be seen, loved, recognized and respected. I am responsible for making sure we remain true to biblical principles and standards as we create a more hospitable campus for individuals from every nation, tribe, people and language (Rev. 7:9).

What excites you most about serving in this role?

After working in secular corporations for 30 years, I'm ecstatic about being able to approach what is commonly called "diversity, equity and inclusion" from a distinctively and openly biblical perspective. Here at OBU, I can stand up for Christian standards with others who share those same values.

What are some of the most rewarding aspects of your position?

One rewarding thing about my role is discovering how my presence on Bison Hill provides comfort and reassurance to parents of students who are racially or ethnically diverse. Also, it is fulfilling to receive feedback from students and even community stakeholders saying they are so happy that I am doing this work because it is so important and so needed. Finally, it is so rewarding to encounter people who admit that they have a lot to learn about diversity and are willing to learn from me.

What are some of the most challenging aspects of your position?

I often joke that the hardest part of my job is trying to schedule anything with anyone else because people here are so busy and have such different schedules. Seriously, though, the biggest challenge for me is hearing false accusations of saying or teaching things that are contrary to our biblical position on diversity issues. Sometimes the allegations are against me personally and other times

against other leaders or the University as a whole. I want everyone to understand clearly our heart for honoring Christ, staying true to the Bible, and loving people well.

What do you think sets OBU apart from other universities?

Aside from our Christian distinctiveness mentioned above, I think the authenticity of our President around diversity is rare. Dr. Thomas genuinely sees the importance of addressing this issue at this time – not only because of the business case, but also because of the spiritual imperative of emulating God's heart about the diversity He designed in the creation of humanity.

Why did you choose to come to OBU?

You know, there have been many times or seasons in my life when I wondered if I was where God intended me to be. Being here at OBU is one time that I have no doubt that I'm right in the center of God's will for me. I can see now how He started engineering my circumstances years ago to get me here at this time and place. I came because it was clear to me that God had a purpose in having me here and that He's up to something significant on this campus.

What is your vision for university culture at OBU?

My vision is that OBU will become the place where students or staff who have not had much exposure to diversity can come to know and experience rich relationships with diverse people who normally would not be in their lives. Also, I hope people who have not known the love of God will find it through people they encounter here (as many have done). Finally, my vision is that OBU will become the model for other Christian universities with similar challenges and goals of balancing a commitment to the standards of the Bible with remaining agile and relevant in these dramatically changing times.

What are some things you enjoy doing when away from the office?

I love watching murder mysteries where, unlike in real life sometimes, we always discover the murderer and get justice. I love several genres of music – especially Black gospel, classical and smooth jazz. Finally, I love volunteering for my church in prison ministry and in civic organizations that have a strong positive impact in disadvantaged communities. For example, I'm on the board of an organization of women who give \$100,000 grants to non-profits each year.

About B.J. Glover

OBU appointed Beverly J. Glover as vice president of university culture in November 2022 following a two-year term as interim vice president. She is the University's first African American to serve on the executive cabinet.

In her previous role as interim vice president, Glover established significant groundwork in providing tools and support for identifying and addressing systemic barriers to a more diverse campus community. She will continue that process to promote new pathways for transforming the University's culture into one that prioritizes being welcoming and hospitable to all people while remaining true to its Christian values and principles. Glover is building the infrastructure necessary to create a culture of belonging throughout the campus.

"Guided by Scripture, OBU works to see kindness, mercy and humility on display in our students, faculty and staff, because we desire to live out our Christian faith," said OBU President Dr. Heath A. Thomas. "OBU strives to instill the biblical values of love of God and love of neighbor within our University. The installation of the vice president for university culture is designed to help us do this better and with consistency across all areas of campus. We continue to develop a culture that engages our diverse world and sees people the way Jesus sees people."

"B.J. Glover's experience and proven leadership will help OBU move forward in our university culture. She is an accomplished professional, with decades of experience in leading organizations in diversity initiatives. Her deep Christian faith, her knowledge, her love for our students and her passion for our mission all came together and made her the obvious choice for this role. She is committed to help us make positive change governed by Christian Scripture, committed to our mission, and driven by Christ's love."

Glover is the founder of B.J. Glover Learning and Consulting, helping organizations and individual clients reach their desired goals through consulting, leadership development and professional coaching. She is an entrepreneur, human resources leader, public speaker and former television news anchor and talk show host, with decades of experience in helping organizations with their diversity goals.

Glover retired in 2015 from Johnson Controls, then a \$55 billion Fortune 100 global enterprise. While there, she earned a Master of Science in human resource development at Villanova University as well as the SPHR and SHRM-SCP certifications.

Updates across Bison Hill... Shaping the Future, Today!

When the mission is to shape the future, it only makes sense to take on a new look that will carry students well into that future.

Last spring after the OBU Board of Trustees made several important decisions including the approval of campus construction projects, OBU President Dr. Heath A. Thomas told University employees, “With new proposed degrees, significant construction improvement projects and faculty promotions in rank, the future is bright on Bison Hill. We are committed to reaching this next generation of future shapers and equipping them to live all of life, all for Jesus.”

From the business services committee, chaired by Steve Bagwell, the board voted to approve two campus construction projects paid for through the generous contribution of the Tulsa Royalties Company at a cost of \$3.5 million. Focused on delivering the best on-campus experience both in housing and in academic facilities, the University began construction last summer. However, the updates don't end there.

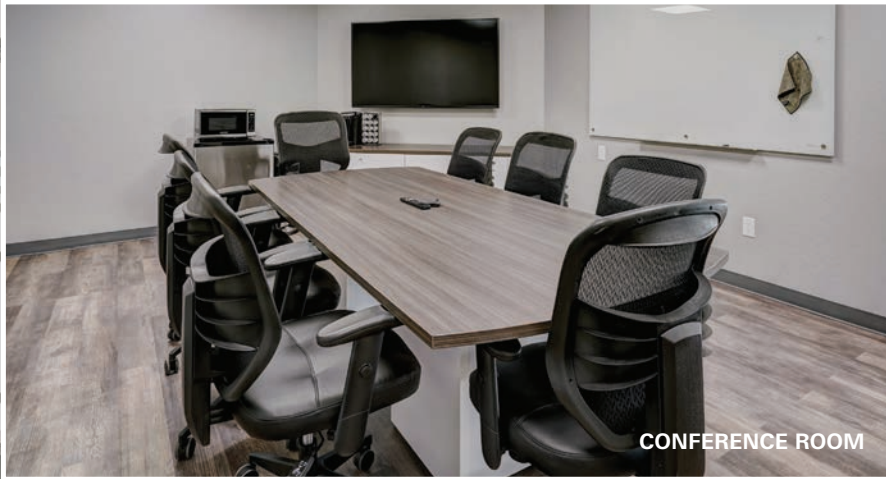
Across Bison Hill, students, faculty, staff and visiting alumni are noticing impressive evidence of this commitment through construction completed and ongoing projects.

COMPUTER LAB





AUDIO/VIDEO EDITING SUITE



CONFERENCE ROOM

SARKEYS REMODEL PHOTOS COURTESY OF COLOR WORKS DESIGN

On a recent day, a tour group of various friends of OBU walked through the doors of the Sarkeys Center. Those who had taken classes in this building a few years back simply shook their heads in pleasant amazement at the changes.

Why such a reaction?

The Sarkeys Center, which houses academic programs in communication arts, underwent a \$1.3 million renovation providing notable updates to classrooms, a student center, faculty offices, audio/video editing suites, a conference room, and the lobby and entry space.

However, as they say, "Wait there's more." Significant improvements in the Sarkeys Center also include modern furnishings and décor, flooring, ceilings,



A New Home

"I love meeting new people and telling their stories," Oliviana Calmes said when asked what she loves most about her job at WBRC News in Birmingham, Alabama. A 2020 OBU journalism and mass communication graduate, Calmes is a multi-media journalist there.

Originally from Ann Arbor, Michigan, Calmes spent most of her formative years in Taiwan where her parents serve as missionaries affiliated with the International Mission Board.

Calmes was familiar with OBU because her grandparents are residents of Shawnee and her grandfather was pastor of First Baptist Church for many years. When considering colleges, Calmes narrowed her selection to OBU and the University of Michigan.

"I visited OBU after my junior year of high school and had a fantastic experience because of the warm welcome of my tour guide. I felt right at home and loved the campus feel," she explained.

continued

lighting, modernized technology and computer labs and a new roof.

Sarkeys Center houses learning space and equipment for a variety of degree programs including communication studies, journalism and mass communications and theatre.

It's in this building that students gain valuable experience through the many resources provided. OBU has a strong commitment to providing opportunities that reduce any gap between learning spaces and actual working environments.

The multi-faceted building offers a professional environment for production of the student news broadcast, "News on the Hill," video production, and creation of the student newspaper, "The Bison."

Theatre students utilize spaces for set design, technical and creative design, rehearsals and theatre performances

inside the Black Box Theater. A large, updated computer lab is also housed in the facility.

That's one of the many projects aimed at making tomorrow much brighter with changes today. Here is a quick look at a few of those:

- In June 2022, the OBU Division of Art and Design installed a painted mural on the north exterior wall of the Art Annex building. With original artwork created by OBU alumna, Vanessa Myers, a crew of alumni, current students and staff worked to bring this unique addition to the campus and Shawnee community. The interior of the Art Annex was remodeled in recent years.
- During Summer 2022, Taylor Residence Center received interior renovations to the common spaces throughout the building creating a brighter, inviting space for upper class women. The next phase of

renovation will include updates to individual rooms.

- Currently, Howard Residence Center is under renovation, providing significant improvements to modernize the facility for student housing usage.

The complex includes suite-style rooms that house 33 students and 12 apartments that house 48 students for a total of 81 students. This project includes new flooring, paint, furniture, cabinetry, appliances, HVAC, electrical systems and windows.

- As OBU students returned to campus in January, changes were underway in Thurmond Hall, which was originally completed in 1954. Thurmond Hall is undergoing significant renovations to create labs and classrooms for OBU's new engineering programs in time for new freshman enrollment in the fall 2023. □



Olivianna Calmes serves as director for OBU TV News (now News on the Hill) in this photo from 2020. This experience at OBU proved invaluable as she made her way into her current role on the news in Birmingham, Alabama.

At the start of her freshman year, Calmes was immediately connected with the OBU international office because she had attended an international high school. It served as a perfect catalyst to make friends, get involved, and celebrate rich diversity of culture and experiences with students from other backgrounds.

“As soon as I arrived on campus, I jumped in and wanted to experience all things OBU. I loved learning our school chant, “Ka-Rip!,” taking in all the fun of Welcome Week, staying up late in the Geiger Center, and making new friends. I knew OBU was going to be a place for me to build close relationships with both classmates and professors,” she said.

Entering the World of News

Because of her experiences overseas and her engagement with people from other countries, the study of international business was of particular interest to her. She was part of OBU TV News (now News on the Hill) for four years, gaining experience in nearly every role of broadcasting including that of reporter, anchor and producer. It was through these experiences that Calmes changed her path to pursue journalism and mass communications as a major and marketing as her minor.

“I had many opportunities to thrive in my major. I was given the chance to excel, grow and gain such rewarding new experiences through the encouragement of my professors. I felt very supported which gave me the confidence I needed to succeed,” she said.



Calmes participated in media conferences around the state and attended an OBU media trip to New York City where she had the opportunity to visit the NYC Fox studios. It was from that experience that the door to intern at Fox News in Los Angeles opened for the following summer.

“My internship in Los Angeles exposed me to the world of network news. It stretched my worldview even more, working and attending church there with brand new friends in a part of the country where I had never traveled. It really broadened my understanding of journalism,” she said.

During Calmes’ senior year at OBU, she interned at KOCO-TV in Oklahoma City and gained practical experience in local news, shadowing the station’s crime reporter.

Engaging in Community

In addition to all the ways Calmes was enriched off campus, she credits her active involvement on campus as a further reason she cherished her time at OBU. She served as a herdie tour guide in admissions and as a student worker in Sarkeys. She was a student government senator and student body vice-president. She had opportunities to emcee and perform in multiple campus events and was nominated for “Best All-Around Female” for Harvest Court.

“OBU definitely impacted and changed me in a positive way. I was surrounded by wonderful students and professors who challenged me in my faith. I was part of a group of six female students who started as a way to provide accountability and evolved into providing deep friendships I will have for years,” she said. □

Dr. David Gambo (left) serves as a mentor and inspiration to Carsten Kates who is completing a degree in pastoral ministry.

Equipped for Ministry with Seminary on the Horizon

An inside look at Carsten Kates, and his surrender, service and satisfaction in the Lord.

Steps of Surrender

Reflecting on his youth, Carsten Kates recalls his world revolving around playing baseball. He first picked up a bat and ball at the age of three and throughout the following years, he found fulfillment in this all-American sport.

As a pitcher, Kates practiced and played baseball year-round through school, tournaments and competitive leagues. His dream was to attend college on a baseball scholarship and to continue his heartfelt passion and pursuit of a world with homeruns and grand slams. Yet, what happened next was a game changer.

Kates grew up in a Christian family and is thankful for the legacy of faith and emphasis on scripture instilled in him. While at Falls Creek camp in 2017, Kates felt the Lord's call to ministry. A few years later while visiting OBU and making plans for his post-high school journey, Kates felt the Lord asking him to hang up his baseball cleats. Life was about to launch into a different type of inning.

"The Lord spoke to my heart saying, 'Carsten, your love for baseball is a misdirected devotion. I want to be first in your life, before baseball, and for you to follow the path I have for you.'" Kates said.

He now sees that this act of surrender and trust has brought more blessing and growth than he could have realized.

Currently an OBU senior, Kates will soon earn his Bachelor of Arts in pastoral ministry through the Hobbs School of Theology and Ministry and will complete his minor in biblical and theological studies.

"OBU is a perfect fit for me," he said. "I knew when I visited campus, that the Lord was calling me to Bison Hill. He continues to prepare me for ministry through excellent academics, growth in leadership, and valuable spiritual formation. I give all thanks to God for redirecting my life."

A Multitude of Mentors

Continuing to prepare for pastoral ministry and having a deep passion for

the local church, Kates credits OBU faculty who invest in him personally. It's a takeaway from OBU that far exceeds what he could have imagined.

"When I began my college journey, I had prayed for a mentor who would help me grow in my faith and develop as a man of God," Kates said. "Well, the Lord answered that prayer exceedingly by offering me a multitude of mentors. It is so encouraging to be surrounded by such godly and intentional adults. I have several professors who pour into my life and help me become a better man, a successful student, a stronger Christian and an equipped minister."

According to Kates, the professors in Hobbs School take a personal interest in his life and serve not only as faculty, but as friends. Dr. David Gambo, Hughes Chair/Assistant Professor of Christian Ministry, is one professor with whom Kates has developed a deep connection. Kates describes Gambo as a man who is passionate, inspiring, and full of joy and peace.

"He is serious about helping me in my walk with the Lord and models that





graciously,” Kates said. “I have a deep respect for Dr. Gambo. I have learned immensely through his teaching and there is no doubt he cares about me and my relationship with God. I have spent many hours in Stubblefield Chapel practicing my preaching and being sharpened by his instruction.

“Dr. Bobby Kelly instills a great amount of truth in me through biblical studies of the New Testament and instruction in Greek. I can’t believe how much I am learning. However, Dr. Kelly is the first to team up with us in a fantasy football league and to enjoy this pastime with students. These men are authentic and demonstrate how to live out biblical truths in all facets of life. I couldn’t ask for a more supportive and caring environment,” he said.

Campus Connections

In addition to a rigorous academic load, Kates has enjoyed a rich and vibrant campus experience. As a member of the Student Government Association, a small group leader for Welcome Week, a member of Salt and Light Leadership, and other areas of involvement, Kates

has developed solid friendships, “the type that help me live in a worthy manner,” he said.

During his freshman year, Kates met his future wife, Kate Abbe, who is now completing her degree in nursing. They were married in January of 2023.

Pathway to Pastor

Kates values the practical experiences he has gained thus far in his ministerial journey. One opportunity was to serve as a team chaplain for the Oklahoma City Ambassadors Baseball program during the summer of 2020.

“I was initially a player, then a coach/chaplain,” he said. “Baseball had been my passion my whole life up until the summer of 2019. It was then that God showed me that he was molding my heart and desires towards ministry. I became less excited about what was happening on the diamond and more excited about ministry off of it.”

Kates spent the summer of 2021 as an intern at Second Baptist Church in Houston, Texas. The following summer, Kates interned at First Baptist Church in McKinney, Texas.

During Kates’ junior year, Dr. Gambo presented an opportunity for supply preaching at Pleasant Home Baptist Church in Prague, a town 25 miles northeast of OBU. Kates took that opportunity while also concentrating on the rigorous demands required of a college student.

In the latter part of 2022, and with additional encouragement by Dr. Gambo, Kates accepted the role as full-time pastor at that church. Members of the congregation fondly refer to him as “Brother Kates.”

In his new pastoral role, Kates preaches two services on Sunday, again on

Wednesday nights, and visits members when needed. He invests nearly 20 hours a week in personal preparation to teach.

“I am enjoying getting to know the congregation of people and how I can care for and encourage them,” he said. “I love preaching the word of God and sharing truths from scripture.”

Shawnee to Seminary

Looking ahead to the fall of 2023, Kates and his wife, Kate Kates, will leave Shawnee and move to Kansas City, Missouri, where he will be a student at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

“At Midwestern, I am planning to pursue my Master of Divinity with an emphasis in biblical counseling. As a couple, we are so excited to see what the Lord has in store for us there,” Kates said.

As a pastoral ministry student, Kates was able to earn 27 credit hours at OBU that will be counted toward his M.Div. at Midwestern cutting his course requirements, time investment and tuition costs at seminary by 25%. OBU has B.A. to M.Div. agreements such as this with eight seminaries including each of the six Baptist seminaries.

Kates’ deep faith, maturity, strong work ethic, service to others, and desire to honor God is the very essence of what defines an OBU future shaper. The passion and pursuit he once held in earlier years for baseball is now manifested on a new field.

Kates is called to the field of faith, equipped by God, sent out as a minister of the gospel, and prepared to continue on God’s path. □

Faith-Based Foundation

From the mound to menus, OBU Alumnus, Jinny Parra, '17, continues to strengthen his faith.

“My relationship with God became better, stronger through the OBU community.”

Jinny Parra's experience on Bison Hill has taken him from fastballs to frittatas, sliders on a three balls-two strikes count to scones, and changeups to croissants.

The native of Santiago, Dominican Republic, came to OBU as a pitcher and has remained on campus as the Chartwell Compass assistant director of dining and catering director.

On a morning earlier this year in the Geiger Center, Parra shuffled from table to table double-checking the Tuscan kale, roasted pepper and goat cheese frittata on one table, the Danish pastry on another and the fruit infused water and orange juice on a third.

Such pre-event moments are to catering what warm-up pitches in the bullpen are to baseball – out of sight of the crowd, but extremely important.

Just a few months earlier in this same banquet space of rooms 219-220, Parra was inducted into the OBU Athletics Hall of Fame. It's not irony that brought the 34-year-old back to these rooms. Rather it's an example of how God is working in his life.

As a right-handed pitcher for the Bison in the 2014 to 2017 seasons, Parra established the school record for career wins, 38, and innings pitched, 348.1.

He's second in most games, 66, and most strikeouts, 317. He graduated in 2017 with a bachelor's degree in sports and recreation management and a minor in accounting.

That same commitment shows itself daily in his attention to details in food service with Chartwells higher education dining services.

Tina Lankas, the Chartwells manager for the district, said, “Jinny and I started our professional journey together four years ago. I have been incredibly impressed by the progress he has made honing his skills as catering director for Chartwells. Not bad for starting out as a student dishwasher. Recently, he has been given additional responsibilities overseeing the front of the house in the Café on the Hill. Jinny has used his education and experiences at OBU to be a faithful servant, create memorable experiences, and be a role model for our students and peers.”

A Strengthening of Faith

There are 60 feet, 6 inches from the mound to home plate. Between the pitcher's release and the catcher's glove, a baseball can do many things – including gaining velocity. Essentially that's what happened in Parra's faith as an OBU student and athlete.

“My relationship with God became better, stronger through the OBU community,” he said. “It made me see things different in life and to appreciate everything more. Part of that was going to chapel on Wednesdays. It was a requirement, but it was much more than that. It inspired my view of God and made me see this is where I was supposed to be.”

In 2016, Parra was the Great American Conference's Pitcher of the Year and was



an All-GAC First Team selection in 2016 and 2017. He also played roles in OBU's two National Christian College Athletic Association National Championships and was a two-time NCCAA All-America selection.

However, Parra's takeaway from his time on the field is more about the influence of a person than a title.

"My coach Bobby Cox taught us on the field, but he was also always sharing the Gospel at the meetings, like in the locker room on Thursdays," he said. "He was teaching us through this, and I use his phrases when I teach baseball. He's a great example."

And just as different pitches are crucial in various situations, so are many of the individuals Parra has come to know at OBU.

"Linda Perkins was my first professor at OBU, when I was learning English," he said. "She really inspired me because she and her family were like a host family. She helped me not just in learning the language, but also American culture."

Parra arrived in Shawnee in August 2013 and within two months was working with Chartwells Compass.

"I looked for a job because I understood there were circumstances money wise back home with my family," he said. "I wanted to make sure they were proud of me and knew that I could actually be responsible for my needs."

One day while working at the Mongolian Grill in the Geiger Center, Troy Jesseph, director of food services, invited Parra into his office.

"I think that was the day he thought about keeping me around because I was so connected and had a great relationship with the students," Parra said "He gave me the opportunity to take an internship. I am responsible and didn't want to fail. Troy said to me, 'You know in baseball, you were the best; try to do the same thing here.' So, it didn't matter if I was washing dishes, I'd try to be the best."

OBU's First Lady Jill Thomas said it is that quality which makes it so easy to work with Parra during campus events.

"Jinny does such a great job that when he asks me what I want for an event, I say, 'You decide,'" Thomas said. "That's how great his catering is; that's how much I trust his judgment."

Parra said he has built that self-confidence on a faith-based foundation.

"I Can't Walk"

Besides the pressure that comes with moving to a new country, and adapting to a new culture, life took a twist that literally stopped Parra in his tracks during his first semester in Shawnee.

Initially, he didn't notice his ankles were swollen. Then he brushed it off as "a temporary thing."

"I thought it was going to be gone the same day," he said.

Three days later he couldn't walk down the hall. The doctor was puzzled.

"I was really scared," he said. "I thought God had put me in the right place, but now I was disappointing Him and my family by not accomplishing what I was here for."

Doctors and coaches gave it a little time, but "I wasn't making any progress." He couldn't even go to class. Parra thought his college baseball dream had ended.

"I had a lot of fear, and I was praying every night," he said. "Then, one day I got up and just walked normal to another room. I was so happy I cried. I think God wanted me to continue to follow my dreams. That changed my whole life. It built confidence in myself to continue. I have continued and I will continue." □

the weekend

2022 HIGHLIGHTS

The Weekend is for EVERYONE!

As students, OBU alumni were involved! So, when they return each fall, it's for an **experience**, not a visit. This past fall, alumni participated in activities like the Worship Service in Stubblefield Chapel and Harvest Dinner. Current students continued the traditions like Harvest Court and the Musical Gala. Prospective students shared in this Homecoming experience, as well!

The OBU family and members of the Shawnee community enjoyed the BBQ on the Oval, Dances of the Decades, and the Bison Bash Tailgate before the Homecoming football game. It's The Weekend to be on Bison Hill!

**Save the date for The Weekend 2023
October 19-21, 2023**



Profile in Excellence Award Recipients

Seven recipients received Profile in Excellence Awards in 2022. The awards are presented to outstanding OBU graduates and former students. Candidates are nominated, and then considered by the Alumni Association's Honors and Awards Committee.

Bison Hill is a building point – for faith, families, careers and more. Bison alumni never really leave this Hill, they take it with them and in many ways, bless those they cross paths with throughout their lives.

To nominate an individual for any alumni award, visit okbu.cc/AlumniAwards.



MICHAEL BURNS, '03

Michael received a degree in religion and biblical languages. He serves as the dean of students at the University of Mary-Hardin Baylor in Belton, Texas. He began his career as the OBU residence director of Agee and soon became director of residence life and student activities.



CHRIS & ASHLEY CAMPBELL, '02

Chris is the executive director of 111Project, which mobilizes the local Church so every child has a family. Ashley is an inspiration to many internet followers with her blog, Under the Sycamore. They are active members of BattleCreek Church in Broken Arrow.

WOMEN OF VISION

WOV PROJECT

Outside, in God's Classroom

Not all learning spaces consist of walls and windows. The phrase, "I wish we could meet somewhere outside today" is far from uncommon in Oklahoma where there is so much to see and experience. Visions or hopes such as this become a reality with OBU's Women of Vision. At their annual meeting and dinner in October 2022, WOV voted to fund an outdoor classroom and social space that will provide meeting opportunities for classes, clubs and performances. This proposal was created by current students representing the strong interest of their peers to have an outdoor place.

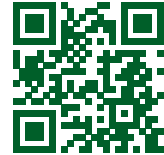
Contextual learning has been shown to add to the educational experience. The proposal mentioned the functionality of the space to allow student groups to meet in an area that engages all the senses as well as enhance the beauty of the University by the design of the outdoor space. The project will

include seating for a typical class of students and a covered structure for protection from the elements.

The annual meeting and dinner was held at the Cargill Advancement and Alumni Center on the OBU campus. With nearly 100 women in attendance, the event generates support and contributions towards projects that greatly impact students and the OBU campus. The event set the stage for a host of festivities taking place during The Weekend Oct.13-15.

Women of Vision is a giving circle dedicated to empowering women through promoting philanthropic endeavors that support OBU's mission. Membership is open to all alumni and friends of the University with activities that foster networking and connection with one another and the OBU community. A key component of Women of Vision is its mission to provide financial resources needed to make lasting improvements and impacts on Bison Hill. OBU First Lady Jill Thomas serves as director of the program, and she encourages you to join and become a part of WOV!

Learn more at okbu.edu/wov.



KENT CHOATE, '82

Kent graduated from OBU with a Bachelor of Arts in religion and youth recreation ministry. He has been in ministry for over 39 years, serving as a pastor for eight years, at the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma, and on the Southern Baptist Convention's Executive Committee, chairing it for two.



CHRISTIE ERWIN, '82

Christie is executive director for Project Zero in Little Rock, Arkansas, seeking ways to find permanent families for foster care children. She is a Congressional Coalition on Adoption "Angel in Adoption" award winner. Christie represented Arkansas as the American Mother of the Year in 2016.



DAVID MANNER, '80

David served for 20 years in music and worship ministry with congregations in Kansas, Arkansas, Texas and Oklahoma. In 2000, he joined the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists and now serves as executive director for the Kansas-Nebraska Convention of Southern Baptists.



BOB WHITE, '77

Bob graduated from OBU with a Bachelor of Arts in English. An avid advocate for the arts, he has produced and directed many theatre productions, mainly for the city of Jacksonville, Florida, which proclaimed a "Robert Arleigh White Day." He now serves as Artistic Director for the Asheville, North Carolina Community Theatre.

“Family is not a cliché at OBU. It is a tradition, and a faith-based map for the future.”

FROM THE DESK OF TIM RASNIC



Dear Alumni and Friends,

Many years ago, I had the opportunity to become familiar with a fundraising campaign that highlighted framed photographs of a university campus, followed by photographs of students, alumni and donors. Pictures are indeed worth a thousand words – or more.

Personally, I saw it as a distinctly visual presentation that created a beautiful, powerful story of the reasons behind a much-needed campaign for funds. Rather than just illustrating generic photographs that represented the campus, the framed subjects each had a specific story to tell. Those stories illustrated the history of the campus while demonstrating how important it had become for the current facilities and programs to be updated and improved.

With that introduction, I am pleased to share with our dedicated and supportive OBU alumni, donors and friends that our campus leadership is actively creating a framework for our future. They have recognized and are acting on the great need to begin creating a master plan for the OBU campus. This planning is done with a long-term view in mind that ultimately will determine the day-to-day business decisions and investments of the University. It should mirror our academic vision and guide the creation of a physical learning environment with enduring value.

The process of moving forward to create a master plan is now underway and it is interesting for sure! We have completed the challenging activity of soliciting proposals and narrowing the field of firms who will be our partners in this process. With great confidence, we have decided upon a group of architects who have an extensive and impressive background in creating campus master plans that become workable, living documents to guide our future.

I firmly believe that our campus leadership is engaging all of the appropriate constituent groups in this process and we are taking into consideration every aspect of our changing campus in the best way possible.

We are excited that OBU has been approved to launch a new and needed engineering program and with that comes the challenge of creating classroom, faculty and program space. This is an exciting development for our beloved University. We believe it will garner strong interest from prospective students and families who have long expressed interest in engineering as an academic major at OBU.

There is much needed work to be done in order to enhance our learning spaces for engineering and other areas of study. The master plan should, and will, provide an excellent road map as we move forward together. It is important that we recognize and consider OBU's history while also propelling forward to determine the best plan to update and improve our beautiful campus. We look forward to keeping you informed of our progress.

Our framework for the future should also include a significant message of gratitude to our OBU donors. We are encouraged and prayerful that the commitment to excellence demonstrated by gifts contributed over the last few years will continue to highlight the importance of this campus master plan and the progress that awaits us.

At the time I am writing this message to our faithful alumni and donors, we are still processing the many end-of-year gifts that will have such a positive and impactful effect upon

*“Together and through
this heartfelt effort we
can strengthen and
further empower OBU
to shape the future.”*

our campus community. We know with certainty that the gift total for 2022 will surpass by several million dollars the highest gift total in the previous decade and likely in OBU's history. This tremendous blessing is accomplished through the incredible generosity of alumni, friends, and churches. Every gift made helps enhance our campus and provide financial support for our outstanding students and community.

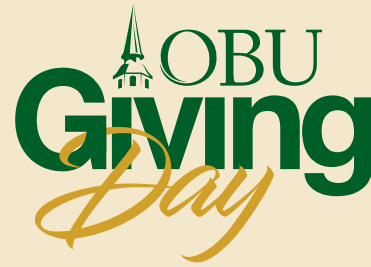
As a bridge to outlining our vision for campus enhancements, and on behalf of every person associated with OBU, I would ask that you prayerfully consider if you will be able to bless OBU with a gift this coming year.

Your generosity will go toward our increased endeavors to continue providing a world-class education and campus facilities that match the excellence found in those programs. I encourage you to leave a legacy in a significant way and be proud to participate in the Bison Spirit as Uncle Jimmy Owens remarks in his book, “Annals of OBU.”

PICTURE THIS: Together and through this heartfelt effort we can strengthen and further empower OBU to shape the future. It is important to us that you realize how deeply we appreciate each of you who contribute to OBU with financial gifts, recruitment assistance and connection, and volunteer endeavors. Family is not a cliché at OBU, it is a tradition, and a faith-based map for the future. The difference you are making, matched with God's plan for OBU, is truly remarkable and follows that intangible Bison Spirit. We are blessed beyond measure and genuinely grateful!

Please reach out to our Advancement and Alumni team if we can be of service to you in any way as we are each thankful and proud to represent OBU. Please accept our best wishes to you and your families.

Tim Rasnic
Vice President for University Advancement



What can we do in a day?

A FOCUS on shaping the future. That's the short definition of OBU's "Giving Day." We still need you with us the other 364 days. However, your gifts of all sizes on April 4 will honor the past, invigorate the present and certainly shape the future. Giving Day supports the Annual Fund, and donors can rest assured every dollar given goes directly to OBU and most often in the form of scholarships that help supplement the cost of a student's tuition.

Join the entire OBU family on our first annual Giving Day for a 24-hour opportunity to give back and celebrate God's generational impact on Bison Hill. **What can we do in a day?**

April 4, 2023

GiveOBU.org/spring

or give by phone – 405.585.5412.

BISON SPIRIT

In his book, “Annals of OBU,” Uncle Jimmy Owens refers to the Bison Spirit in the following manner:

“Nobody can put his finger on the Bison Spirit. It's part of the faith in God which comes through fellowship with Christian classmates, the straight thinking of the teachers, the reverence of traditions, the freedom of mind and spirit, and the love for one another. It is intangible, everlasting and its influence is unlimited.”

From the Alumni Director

Dear OBU Alumni and Friends,

2023 is already off to a wonderful start for your Alumni Association! We are offering new programs, events and services, all with the intent of staying connected to you and adding continued value to your life. Our website has been completely refreshed with updated content, so you can stay up-to-date on all the latest happenings. We've made an effort to provide easy access to online forms like transcript requests, contact information updates (please make sure we have your most updated information), alumni award nominations and more. We've added services like insurance packages and programs like Traveling Bison.

We have ongoing events on campus and regionally that you can attend. We are working towards starting up OBU Alumni Clubs in key Oklahoma cities and beyond, as well as growing a robust "Bison Network" that can be a consistent connection to OBU from wherever you live. We post regularly on our OBU Alumni Facebook and Instagram pages so please find us there to stay informed as well.

I would be remiss if I did not mention our main event of the year...The Weekend! Start planning your return to Bison Hill this fall, October 19-21, 2023. We will once again have dozens of events and experiences you can be a part of while you reconnect with fellow alumni and get to know our current students. Families of current students are invited to participate as well, with Family Weekend activities happening throughout The Weekend. If you have a prospective student in your life, bring them

for Bison Day where they can learn about life on Bison Hill and consider making OBU their collegiate home.

Do you want to see more individuals from your class attend The Weekend? Take the initiative and contact them with a personal invitation.

Forward our emails with a personal note. Make a few phone calls. Share our posts about The Weekend on social media so we can reach even more alumni and friends. Make plans to meet up and reconnect during The Weekend. Let us know how we can help. You can play a vital role in the success of The Weekend by working alongside our team to reach as many alumni and friends as we can.

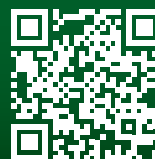
This is THE time to engage and stay connected because of all the exciting things that are happening with OBU Alumni. Join us on this journey in whatever capacity you can. Let us know your ideas and how you want to engage. Join us in regular prayer for our campus and each other. OBU Alumni, we are so incredibly grateful for each of you and the ways God is using you for His glory. Thank you for the support you give and for the love you still hold for OBU.

Sincerely,

Lea Ann Quirk
Director, OBU Alumni Association



We are only as good as the data we have.
Please update your contact information here.



2022-23 OBU Alumni Board

From the Alumni Board President

What a privilege it has been to serve on OBU's Alumni Board since 2015 and as your president for the last year! During those eight years, OBU underwent countless changes and improvements, some of which may seem insignificant and some others that seemed next to impossible. Nevertheless, as we sought to support past, present, and future students in all of our endeavors, the Lord blessed our efforts because of faithful servants like you who so generously and consistently give to our alma mater and its mission to send Future Shapers down the road and all over the world.



Our beloved University is in great hands. The administration, faculty and staff continuously strive to provide rigorous and relevant educational experiences for all students as well as assuring that facilities are state-of-the-art. When students begin their careers, they do so with confidence because OBU prepares them with the best of the best. Furthermore, President Thomas and his beautiful wife, Jill, truly love the students as if they were their own. The relationships developed between students, faculty, staff and administration compare with no other higher education institution. I wholeheartedly believe that there is no better place than OBU to further one's education.

As my presidency comes to an end, please allow me to encourage you to consider serving as a member of the Alumni Board. Under the leadership of Alumni Director, Lea Ann Quirk and her staff, this group aims to engage OBU alumni of all ages and from all walks of life through various events, programs and services. I guarantee there is a place for you on the board!

Thank you and God Bless OBU!
Laura Hillman, '90

2022-23 OBU Alumni Board Members

Pictured L-R

Lea Ann Quirk, '02
Leah Hillman, '99
Mandy Kniskern, '98
Scott Greenland, '03
Amanda Teape Johnson, '10
Karen Sims, '80
Chris Peters, '07
Lisa Roth, '92
Mike McDaniel, '79
Laura Hillman, '90 (*President*)
Jeremy Smith, '00
Megan Higgins, '05
Mandi MacDonald, '12
Kalyn Fullbright, '15
Dena Payn, '02
Leanne Howard, '78
Austin Manger, '14 (*Secretary*)
Deanna Wilder, '97

Not Pictured

Chuck Lawrence, '82
(*Vice-President*)
Libby Atyia, '02
Elizabeth Bird, '98



Casey Mills Deepens her Love for the Nations through Service to Others

Pictured are Casey Mills, far right, and a team of four other OBU students who are completing their three-month internship in OBU's Global Marketplace Engagement program. They are shown here on an outing to a mountain range in Zakopane, Poland.



With each passing year and each new experience, OBU junior Casey Mills expands the gallery of images in her mind as she reflects on the vast number of people, places and opportunities that have shaped her.

Mills first fell in love with traveling in 2018 and 2019 while in high school. Her travels took her to Portugal, in a group partnering with a local pastor, to minister to children and the community there.

In 2021, Mills traveled with OBU on a combined Honors program study abroad trip and Global Outreach trip to Ecuador. While there, Mills served at a non-profit organization serving families in need, and building relationships with native children in the Amazon Jungle.

During the summer of 2022, she participated in the OBU Passages leadership trip to Israel and then returned to Portugal. "Every time I have the chance to travel abroad on one of these trips, I return with a deeper reverence for God's work in the world," Mills said.

The international encounters have strengthened Mills love for these nations and her desire to minister overseas. "I encounter people with lives that are very different from mine, but who are also very much the same. My world is enlarged right before me. I feel enriched, challenged and motivated to continue my calling to the nations," she explained.

It was during her senior year of high school that Mills was first drawn to OBU after learning of the University's strong relationship with the International Mission Board and the establishment of the new Tom Elliff Center for Missions. "When OBU began the Tom Elliff Center for Missions, I decided to major in global marketplace engagement," Mills said. "After graduation, I plan to use my OBU education and experiences to serve in the international mission field."

Now a third-year student in the global marketplace engagement (GME) program, Mills has gained even more appreciation for the international sphere. Her career path is preparing her to enter the ministry realm through training in the classroom and internships in ministry.

Mill's GME degree emphasis is TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages). TESOL specifically aims to offer avenues for students to teach English to refugees and immigrants, to teach overseas, or to start an English language or culture center.

She was able to do just that during the past year as Mills met weekly with teenage girls living in the Ukraine through Zoom meetings. She taught the girls English as a Second Language. She said, "I was able to build a relationship with these teens. Not only did I get to teach English, but more importantly I got to share the Gospel and show them God's love," she said.

Currently, Mills is serving in Poland teaching English to Polish college students. An OBU global marketplace engagement team of five students is there teaching English to Ukrainian women and children refugees. The three-month internship is a fulfillment of the training required as part of the GME program.

"It has been so fulfilling to be here in person and meet some of the students who I interacted with over Zoom meetings. We have had opportunities to go ice skating and even visit a local orphanage," Mills said. "I can see the Lord at work as we continue to build relationships and share the love of Christ. I am discovering God's hand in this journey."

When back at home as a student on Bison Hill, Mills serves her community and campus with the same spirit as she does overseas. She has served as an OBU Welcome Week small group leader and is a member of Kappa Phi Beta, the OBU Honors program, and the Tom Elliff Center for Missions. She also enjoys volunteering with service projects for local non-profit organizations in the Shawnee community.

"I truly believe that OBU is the best college to equip students to enter the mission field."

Mills coaches gymnastics 10-15 hours a week and teaches English as a Second Language when the opportunity arises. She is active in her local church where she is involved in the college ministry and is part of a home group. In spite of her busy academic work and extracurricular activities, Mills has earned her place on the President's Honors Roll nearly every semester.

From her first discovery in high school of OBU's commitment to missions until now serving in Poland, Mills merits OBU for equipping her to fulfill God's plan in her life.

"My professors have expanded my mind in biblical truth, and stretched me personally and spiritually to grow in all areas of life. Through the GME program and the Tom Elliff Center for Missions, I have found an incredible community with amazing people that I couldn't find anywhere else," she said. "OBU has given me the community that I could never have imagined. Those in OBU leadership not only care about my academics, but also about who I am as a person."

"I truly believe that OBU is the best college to equip students to enter the mission field. The courses that I have taken and the discipleship I have received will impact my life while serving overseas," she said.

"It is so rewarding to experience the person-to-person impact that ministry can have on another individual, whether I'm serving locally at home or on the other side of the world." □



OBU's Global Outreach program offers students opportunities to experience the world by traveling to other nations throughout the year. During 2023 J-Term, seven teams of students, faculty and staff set out to serve in a variety of capacities.

One opportunity, offered in partnership with Passages, was OBU's Presidential Leadership trip. Pictured is the team of 30 individuals who participated in the nine-day educational excursion to Israel.



For OBU alumnus Dr. Derek Royer, '14, reaching the highest levels of scientific research only strengthened his belief that faith guides all.

A Journey of Faith and Science

The last thing most of us would ever expect to hear from a scientist is that science, in fact, does not hold all of life's answers.

This may be especially true if that scientist had spent time working at the highest levels of research in microbiology and immunology at elite institutions with names like Duke University and the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

But that's exactly what you'll hear from OBU alum Dr. Derek Royer. It's an insight that has been shaped throughout an inspiring educational and life journey characterized by selflessness, determination, community, and above all, faith.

"It was a God thing."

Growing up in the community of Bartlesville, Oklahoma, Royer came from humble beginnings and what he describes as a "disadvantaged"

background. He was a child of adoption, and when he was a freshman in high school his adoptive mother passed away from pancreatic cancer.

At the age of 15, he was taken in by another family, also in Bartlesville, who were OBU alums. It was here that Royer first became aware of the University and the transformative potential at Bison Hill.

He attended Super Summer and Falls Creek, where he met and was inspired by OBU students. From there, he visited the OBU campus and engaged with the community of students and faculty. And when it was time to choose the best college path for him, the answer was clear.

"It was a God thing," Royer said. "Seeing love in action through the body of Christ, being able to move in with a family that I hardly knew who happened to be OBU alumni. That's

really where my faith journey began. Seeing how much people cared, it doesn't have to be just about family. When the body of Christ is working, lives can be changed. That's what I saw at OBU."

Same Passion, Different Path

Royer always had a passion for science. It was, he felt, a calling. And it was a calling that he initially planned to answer by spending his undergraduate years at OBU preparing to attend medical school.

He was excelling academically, and well on his way along that path. But eventually, while taking upper-level courses that introduced him to the rich array of other career possibilities offered by the sciences, Royer came to the realization that he wanted something different out of learning, and life.

"Often I think what happens is young people go to college and they aren't aware of all the professions that are out there," Royer said. "Especially if you're from a smaller town, you see accountants, nurses, doctors, it's kind of a limited world view. So for me, when I was participating in lab activities and learning about all the other possibilities, that's when I realized I wasn't happy just knowing the answer. I wanted to actually figure things out."

This realization led Royer to change his path from medical school to a Ph.D. program at the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center to prepare for a career in research.

"Science Cannot Explain Everything."

It was the faculty at OBU, Royer said, who supported and guided his decision to pursue a career in research and inquiry-based science.

"We were very blessed to have the faculty we had," he said. "And many of them are still there."

Additionally, it was OBU's immersive faith-based learning experience. But it wasn't just the integration of faith and learning, he said. What he saw from his professors was the integration of faith and learning. And while, to some, faith has no place in scientific pursuits, Royer disagrees.

"Science cannot explain everything," he said. "One thing OBU really tackles is the idea of 'what does it mean to be fully human?' We can approach things with a scientific study, but everything has to be inside the box. From a Christian perspective, and particularly a Baptist theology, a God that loves us and is intimately involved in our lives and has a plan for us, how do you measure that experimentally?"

During his time in his Ph.D. program, Royer was involved with significant research in microbiology and immunology, which opened the doors to a prestigious opportunity at Duke University, where he spent two years researching infectious diseases of the eye. From there, he moved on to the NIH where he spent a year advancing his research in the same field.

"I really loved the topic. I never thought I would go in that direction, but the opportunities came before me, and as a believer it was my thinking that whatever you do, you do it for the glory of God," he said.

A Calling to Community

As fulfilling as his work at Duke and the NIH had been, it got to a point where something, again, was missing in his life.

"Through that journey, I realized that I really loved science and research, but as I got deeper and deeper into the actual science I realized that I was spending less and less time with people," Royer said. "And one of the things I always loved about Oklahoma Baptist was the community that I had as a student."

Royer missed being part of that kind of community, with people from all walks of life who brought different interests and passions. OBU is where he met his wife, on move-in day, although they wouldn't start dating until their senior year.

"I didn't know then that she was going to be my wife. She was way out of my league," he said. "She doesn't remember meeting me, if that tells you anything."

Royer's time at OBU instilled in him a belief in the transformative power a campus community can have on anyone's life. So he made the decision to change career paths again, and accepted a position as a biology professor and department chair at East Texas Baptist University.

"That's one thing I did struggle with a little in my time at Duke was that idea that everybody was supposed to have faith compartmentalized outside of work," he said. "As a believer, that type of environment can be difficult. We had to keep it bottled up, and I really appreciate the freedom I have now in my current role to be able to share that openly with students and encourage them to think about those issues and embrace faith as a part of who they are fully, not in a compartmentalized way."

And now, being able to share his faith and his passion for the sciences with students every day, Royer said it truly feels like home.

"I feel it's a distinct calling, though it's probably not for everybody," he said. "There can be this impression that if you're going to be a scientist then you have to put your faith somewhere else, but I don't think it has to be true. Being able to teach science and bring the enthusiasm I have for it and share that with others while integrating faith, that's just what fuels me every day." □



Austin Manger, '14, has gone from being a good teammate in tennis and football to a reliable teammate in community service.

It's extremely difficult to increase muscle mass when others are doing the heavy lifting for you.

Austin Manger came to realize this at OBU, not as a two-sport athlete in tennis and football but rather in his faith.

"In my spiritual life, campus leaders such as Dr. Mark McClellan and Dr. Bobby Kelly challenged me to wrestle with hard questions and to seek truth for myself," he said. "Many times, I would come to them in frustration, asking them to tell me what to believe about a passage of scripture or a question of life. Thankfully, they would never concede – instead, pointing me to scripture and arming me with an understanding to interpret and make sound decisions for myself and my own faith."

Classes such as Christian worldview and life of Christ both challenged his faith and understanding, in ways he is thankful for today.

Splitting the Uprights

"I still use my color-coded Synopsis of the Gospels to study scripture, which was essentially the textbook for my life of Christ course," Manger said.

Growing up as an athlete and then continuing athletics playing both on the tennis court and on the football field at OBU, Manger readily admits that he found a great deal of his identity in sports.

He left his mark on OBU athletics. Take for example, a 39-28 victory by the Bison over Texas College at Tyler, Texas, on Nov. 16, 2013. This game capped the Bison's first football season since 1940. Manger converted two 40-yard field goals, another from 28 yards and one from 22 yards for a record four-field goal game. He also was perfect in three extra point attempts in the contest to finish the season with a perfect 31-of-31, tying the NAIA lead in percentage with the third-most attempts.

Looking back, he realizes it would have been easy to focus his efforts on sports.

“During my sophomore year,” Manger said, “Dr. Vickie Ellis challenged me to enroll in research and information gathering—arguably the most difficult class in the Communications Department, but not a requirement for graduation. I accepted her challenge and joined seven other students in a semester of tears, struggle, endless office hours, and way too much caffeine.”

Through that experience, Manger began to see himself as an academic and a scholar, not just an athlete.

With Dr. Ellis’ encouragement, he submitted his research to a national undergraduate conference, where his work received the award for the top undergraduate research.

“This was a turning point for my college career, solidifying that my academic accomplishments meant more than just receiving a degree,” Manger said.

During his junior year, he was working on a project that involved corporate interviews with some of Oklahoma’s top executives. To prepare for this, OBU leadership connected Manger with Jack Moore, a former corporate executive and current staff member in the development department on campus.

“Jack’s office quickly became a daily stop for me,” he said, “as I sought to soak up every bit of wisdom and experience that I could from our conversations. Over the years, Jack became more than just an advisor – I call Jack one of my closest friends and confidants.”

Moore continues to be someone that asks Manger the hard questions that he doesn’t want to answer.

“He challenges me to be confident in my decision making – something that I struggled with in college,” he said. “I am truly thankful for OBU providing the opportunity and encouraging me to develop relationships with mentors.”

Moving Forward

Manger, graduated from OBU in 2014, receiving a Bachelor of Arts in communications. A longtime resident of Oklahoma City, he graduated from Carl Albert High School. Following graduation from OBU, he began working for Access Midstream as a community relations representative.

In August of 2014, he went to work for Congressman James Lankford, as the field representative for the fifth district of Oklahoma. When Senator Lankford took office in 2015, Manger transitioned to a job in the U.S. Senate, again as a field representative and policy advisor for the Central Oklahoma area.

Then in the summer of 2017 he began a new role with Oklahoma Natural Gas, as the regional manager of community relations, where he led the company’s statewide outreach and public policy strategy.

Five years later, Manger joined the Hall Capital team as senior director of investor and community relations. Hall Capital is an Oklahoma City based, family-owned, private investment company, with automotive, real estate and oil and gas interests. Still based in Oklahoma City, he is responsible for building and maintaining relationships with current investors and potential new partners.

Manger also acts as the company representative with community organizations, including chambers of commerce, economic development organizations and non-profit partners.

He’s received many awards and honors including being a Leadership and Reputation Academy graduate, a Leadership Exchange Academy graduate, and is a Next Gen Under 30 Award recipient. Manger serves on many boards including the OBU Alumni Board, where he currently holds the position of secretary, First Tee of Central Oklahoma, the Edmond Area Chamber of Commerce and the Talor Gooch Foundation. Manger is a trustee for the Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum and is a campaign cabinet member for the United Way of Central Oklahoma.

“In the latter part of my time at OBU, professors such as Dr. Mark McClellan, Dr. Bobby Kelly and Dr. Vickie Ellis all spoke truth into my life,” he said, “shaping me not only as an academic, but as a follower of Christ and a future leader in the professional world. Without the encouragement and shepherding of those three, my academic experience and professional achievements would look very different.”

Following God’s Map

Manger’s mentor Moore often reminds him, “It’s a short trip.”

That’s his way of telling Manger to make the most out of the relationships, opportunities, and time that he’s been given.

“Undoubtedly, we all will face the ups and downs of life,” Manger said. “Understanding that my faith being tested is a part of having a just and loving God, who wants to see me refined and sanctified, brings me great peace! El Shaddai – God Almighty, more than enough, in every circumstance, in every season – He is good and His plan for our life is good.” □



Memories and Milestones

OBU is rich
with milestones
throughout
its history
of preparing
students to shape
the future, and
alumna Lou
Thelen Kemp,
'57, was here for
many of them.

Every university's story is unique. They are written by the students, faculty and staff who shaped the culture and served as the beating heart of the community over the course of many years and decades throughout history.

And OBU's story is as compelling as any.

Just ask Lou Thelen Kemp. A 1957 graduate, Kemp experienced the campus, community and culture at OBU during many of the institution's pivotal moments and milestones, before moving ahead into a distinctive career as a teacher and family counselor.

It's an experience she wouldn't trade for anything.

A Different Era

For teenagers and prospective students today, learning about a college typically involves looking it up online and receiving slick promotional brochures and literature in the mail. This isn't how it worked in the 1950s.

Kemp became familiar with OBU through a church revival.

"On weekends there would be these weekend revivals and OBU would send a preacher, a psalm leader, and a piano player to all these little churches who would call and ask for their services," Kemp said. "That's how I was first introduced to OBU. I was probably 12 at the time and three young men came from Shawnee and took over for the weekend at our little church."

This was a fairly standard practice for most Christian colleges of the time, Kemp said, and it's one her future husband – Robert, whom she met at OBU – took part in years later.

Her next step was attending OBU's June Jamboree, an overnight campus visit that included free room and board, a campus tour, and introductions to students and faculty, as a way to offer a small taste of college life.

And with that, Kemp knew she had found her college home.

Memorable "Lasts"

Kemp's freshman year began with an event called Freshman Initiation, which was held during the first week

and involved a range of “hijinks” coordinated by the upper-class students.

The activities were relatively tame – freshmen girls wore their blouses inside out, boys wore their jeans inside out; they followed the orders of juniors and seniors, competed in tug-of-war, were sprayed by the town’s firetrucks, and finished with a campus-wide picnic.

OBU decided to put an end to Freshman Initiation, and Kemp’s class was the last one to experience it.

“It was a great way to bond with all the other students,” she said. “You’d get a chance to meet with the older students and make friends with the fellow freshmen. That’s really where the bonding started.”

Anyone familiar with OBU understands the emphasis placed on personal relationships and providing a warm, supportive environment for students. As Kemp points out, that’s not a new thing, and a way female students were compelled to connect and form friendships was another policy that has since ceased to exist.

“Girls weren’t allowed to have cars on campus,” she said. “Only the male students could, because they were going out on weekends and doing the revivals. Unless there was an emergency, the girls stayed on campus for six weeks, and they did that because they wanted us to become very close to one another.”

Historic “Firsts”

Kemp also recalls some memorable “firsts” during her time at OBU, which even today she remembers fondly. During her junior year, OBU integrated its community and welcomed the first African-American student to campus, a girl named Violet Waters.

Administrators had asked a group of female upper-class students, including Kemp, to welcome the new student,

spend time with her, and help her adjust to the OBU community. Waters roomed with one of Kemp’s friends, and during that year the group arranged a birthday party for her at the diner in town.

Another fellow student that year, Kemp said, was a girl from Hawaii who had never seen snow before. When the first snowfall arrived in Shawnee that winter, Kemp recalls her being beyond excited.

“We all went outside and showed her how to make snowballs,” she said. “Well, she was very excited about that. She got a container and put her snowballs in it and then took it back to her room and set it on her window sill right by the radiator. She was so disappointed when she came back and found they had all melted.”

A Career Changing Lives for the Better

During her time at OBU, Kemp was a secondary education major and planned on being a home economics teacher after she graduated. But, things didn’t quite turn out that way.

After graduating, she and her husband moved to Texas, where Robert finished seminary before becoming pastor at a church in Huntsville. From there, they moved to Missouri. In addition to her degree in secondary education from OBU, Kemp also earned certification in elementary education.

She applied for a position in their new hometown of Bolivar, Missouri, but soon discovered that positions as a home economics teacher were hard to come by.

“What I had found out was that most of the time the school’s home economics teacher was married to the vocational agriculture teacher in town, and they stayed there forever,” she said. “So there wasn’t a lot of turnover of home economics teachers.”

Instead, she was offered a job teaching kindergarten, which she accepted and continued doing for 26 years.

“Eventually I started teaching the kids of the kids I had when I just started out,” she said. “I had a father in one of my early kindergarten classes, and on the first day he came in with his beautiful little blonde-haired daughter and said ‘Now Mrs. Kemp, you just make her behave, I don’t want her causing any trouble.’ And I looked at him and said ‘Oh really? Would you like me to share some of my stories of you?’”

During her time as a teacher, many of the parents would come to her with problems and struggles they were experiencing, but legally she wasn’t able to offer them advice. Still, she felt called to help them, which led her to go back to school during the evenings to earn a master’s degree in clinical psychology in 1990.

She became a licensed marriage and family therapist and a registered play therapist. In 1998, she retired from teaching and took on a full-time career in counseling at the Family Institute of the Ozarks where she was the co-director/owner.

The Ronald N. and Lou T. Kemp Marriage and Family Therapy Clinic on the OBU campus bears her name along with the name of her later husband, Dr. Ronald Kemp.

A Credit to OBU

Through it all, Kemp credits OBU for much of the success and happiness she’s achieved throughout her life.

“The teachers were so supportive,” she said. “Even if you had a personal problem, they were there to listen and to encourage you. That, and the ways we developed friendships. It was a full, rich four years with a lot of different learning experiences.” □

God Led Way to Reinvention

Many on Bison Hill demonstrated care to Danny Garringer, '70, while he was a student athlete; he has spent a lifetime paying it forward.

Two cardboard boxes of well-worn clothes and \$30 of crinkled up currency stuffed in the pocket of a faded pair of jeans.

Materially that was it. That was Danny Garringer's inventory of possessions when he arrived on the OBU campus.

He'd grown up in what he describes as the rather insulated small-town environment of Glencoe, Oklahoma. In a way that was bad because everyone knew his story. Yet in another way, that was good, because there were those who knew his story, but cared how it would turn out.

"My mother suffered from mental illness, and we grew up without a father; actually, without any real adults in the household as my 19-year-old brother was the wage earner," Garringer said. "The town, church and school did indeed serve 'in loco parentis' for me and my brothers. I developed a love of

sports and a voracious reading habit, both of which served me well along the way."

In addition to his hometown, OBU welcomed him in. He was encouraged to try out for the Bison basketball team and was offered a scholarship that carried with it far more than financial value.

"I had almost no social graces; I saw myself from the perspective of my family, and had never been really challenged in academics," he recalls. "It took a number of lessons but my eventual success in athletics and my ability to read and comprehend, along with the accepting nature of OBU allowed me time to reinvent myself."

The Reinvented Danny Garringer

Garringer graduated from OBU in 1970 with a Bachelor of Arts in history. He

went on to receive a master's degree in 1973 from what is now the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond.

He's been a great educator, coach and mentor to hundreds of young people who he has taught and worked with for more than four decades at schools in Missouri, Arkansas and Oklahoma.

Garringer served on the state social studies committee for the development of criteria and objectives for the Missouri Mastery Test Program, led Teacher In-Service Programs for Higher Learning Skills and Teaching Methods for Effective Classroom Learning in Joplin, Missouri and was the department chair for social studies at Joplin Missouri High School for eight years.



Following college, Garringer coached for 47 years (17 in Oklahoma, 14 in Missouri, and 16 in Arkansas). As a coach, he was honored as conference coach of the year numerous times – four for baseball, five for boys' basketball, eight for girls' basketball, and two for girls' softball.

While in Missouri, his Joplin Parkwood High baseball team won the state 4A baseball title in 1984, and in Arkansas, his Mountainburg girls' basketball team was State 2A Runner Up in 2014. In the case of the latter, he was named the 2014 girls' basketball coach of the year by the Fort Smith Media.

In 2019, he led an International Sports Federation basketball mission trip to Cape Town, South Africa.

True he arrived at OBU with little. However, while in Shawnee, he gained more than knowledge and playing time – he grew in his faith.

Garringer has served as a deacon in Baptist churches in three states, including his current church home of Main Street Baptist Church in Farmington, Arkansas. He's led many Sunday School classes and has been a pulpit supply preacher in three states.

He met Kathy Crittendon on Bison Hill and they married the day they graduated in 1970. They have three sons, Joel, Ben and Dylan and four grandchildren.

A Winding Road

Garringer looks back on life and appreciates not only the straight stretches he's traveled, but the curves as well.

"It took a number of lessons but my eventual success in athletics and my ability to read and comprehend, along with the accepting nature of OBU allowed me time to reinvent myself."

Why is that?

Because only God could have been leading the way.

Garringer's high school career began at Glencoe (1963-65) and ended at Stillwater (1965-66). He averaged 16.6 points per game as a senior and was a Tulsa World Alternate All State player.

"I had some idea about OBU because Coach Bob Bass' wife was the sister of our hometown banker's daughter-in-law," he said. "I had moved to Stillwater my senior year and my pastor at Hillcrest Baptist, Harry Boydston, actually encouraged me to visit and try out for the basketball team at OBU. He drove me down for my tryout. I was offered a scholarship and just felt it was a good fit for a lifetime Baptist."

Garringer had little idea how college life worked, so much so that he had to take the ACT after coming to OBU before he could enroll that afternoon.

"I struggled academically my first year but was encouraged by Dr. [John] Eighmy, Bob Scrutchins, Dr. [James Samuel] Timberlake, Coach [Gene] Wallace, and John Parrish, among others, to continue," he said.

Garringer prospered at OBU after "righting the ship."

"I also began dating Kathy and attending University Baptist where Jerry Barnes had a great influence on me," he said. "I was and remain a Hershel Hobbs Southern Baptist. Grady Cothen, then OBU President, was also a real influence on my faith and my time at OBU."

Too, he found great strength on the court with teammates Al Tucker, Allan Eaker, Bob Banfield, Jon Singleton and others.

Garringer played for the Bison from 1966-70. At OBU, he scored 997 points and averaged 15.5 points his senior year. The team was the NAIA National Runner Up in 1967 and the conference champions in 1970. In his final year at OBU, Garringer was named Senior Athlete of the Year and Homecoming Best All-Around Man.

Basketball also contributed to Garringer's social and political awareness, which was forged from the '60s, the Vietnam War and the Civil Rights Movement.

"Watching the treatment my Black teammates often received was a strong influence on me," he said. "I felt strongly, that indeed, Black Lives Mattered. Social awareness became an integral part of my faith. OBU, unlike so many other places at the time, was a much more accepting and open place both academically and socially." □



Through both the spoken and written word David Garland's service to God has spanned the nation and the world.

Regifting Blessings

Entered onto a spreadsheet in categories, reflections of one's life would surely feature numerous rows and columns.

In a tireless life of service to God, Dr. David Garland has traveled the nation and the world. Everywhere he's ventured is precisely where God wanted him.

With that in mind, Garland narrowed the focus of data to "when" and "where," and then made a statement that will assuredly stir both pride and familiarity in countless Bison alums.

"As I reflect back . . . I recognize now how OBU was the perfect place for me at that time," he said. "At the Naval Academy, one did not fraternize with professors or anybody else in authority. At OBU, I was taken aback by the kindness, personal support and Christian commitment of the professors."

Then he goes yet deeper into those reflections.

"One of my vivid memories was helping to collate the final copies of Professor Bill Mitchell's dissertation in his home to get it ready to send off to his professors," Garland said. "Only after earning a Ph.D. myself, did I realize how significant that was and what an honor it was to be asked to help. I regretted that I missed out on the four-year experience and only had two and half years at OBU."

Twice Interim President of Baylor

Garland, magna cum laude graduate of OBU in 1971, received a Bachelor of Arts in philosophy. He also has a Master of Divinity degree and a Ph.D. from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Also, he did post graduate study at universities in Germany and Australia.

Throughout his incredible career in Christian higher education, he has served students in the classroom as a professor in areas of study that include the New Testament, Christian scriptures and Greek.

A large portion of Garland's career was spent at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary where he served in many faculty roles including a Garrett Teaching Fellow, chairman of the New Testament department and chairman of the biblical division, as well as associate dean for academic affairs.

The Maryland native now serves as a professor of Christian scriptures at Baylor University but has previously assumed other roles there, including dean for the George W. Truett Theological Seminary, interim provost and twice in the last decade, he has been named Baylor's interim president.

Garland has written 20 academic books and edited five other books related to the interpretation of the New Testament. He is now writing two more books and has written 58 academic articles. His books have been translated into Spanish, Korean, Portuguese, Russian and Arabic.

He is an elected member of the international Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas.

"I am grateful to OBU professors for teaching me how to research and write," he said.

He has given presentations and been a guest lecturer across the world and has received numerous awards. These include the Jent Philosophy Award from OBU in 1970 and the Gold Medallion for Commentaries and Research from the Evangelical Christian Publishers Association in 2003.

Garland was the initial holder of three endowed chairs:

- The Ernest and Mildred Hogan Professor of New Testament Interpretation at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary;

- The William M. Hinson Professor of Christian Scriptures at Baylor University;
- The Charles J. and Eleanor McLerran DeLancey Dean of George W. Truett Seminary, Baylor University.

"I always intended to be a pastor when I went to OBU and later to seminary," he said, "but I was asked to stay as a professor after completing my Ph.D. and kept on teaching in a seminary since 1977 until my upcoming retirement in May, 2023."

He has served as an interim pastor of 17 churches. Garland has preached and conducted Bible studies in over 600 churches and associations in the USA, Germany, Australia and Africa.

In Waco, he is a member of First Baptist Church and in the north-central Texas city along the Brazos River, he was named Outstanding Community Leader in 2010 by the Waco Community Visioning Board. In 2017, Garland was named Honorable Mention as Person of the Year by Waco Today magazine.

The Chapters of Life

In looking at the chapters of his life, Garland said, "I must say that the Naval Academy taught me responsibility and to say, 'No excuse, Sir.' The rigors of Plebe year taught me that I could endure anything that might come my way."

However, he believes he received his academic education at OBU.

"My professors at OBU opened up new academic vistas and prepared me for what I later would become and do in ministry and in academia," Garland said. "I loved all my professors at OBU, but I am eternally grateful to my English and philosophy professors."

Carrying Blessings Forward

Born in Crisfield, Maryland, and raised in Baltimore, Garland became familiar with OBU from nurses who were graduates of the University and were attending First Baptist Church of Baltimore where his father was pastor.

"I transferred to OBU after two years at the Naval Academy where I majored in mechanical engineering," he said. "I applied to OBU very late, and it was the offer of a Prichard ministerial scholarship that encouraged me to enroll."

When he became dean of Truett Seminary at Baylor University and later interim president of Baylor, Garland came to know the Prichard family. That created the opportunity for him to thank the family in person for their life-changing gifts.

And those are gifts he has carried forward to countless people and places.

"God's blessings are not to stop with us or else they will rot like day-old manna," he said. "God gives a surplus of blessing so that it can overflow to others. In other words, God does not bless us to make us happy but to be a blessing to others."

The scope of what he's learned about blessings does not end there.

"Second, I learned that battles are best faced in the community of believers, and that blessings are best received in the community of believers," Garland said. "When confronting 'conflicts on the outside, and fears within,' an individual believer does not stand alone but always within the faith community on which he or she is dependent for nurture and direction." □

God Takes the Lead

From scoring a 14 on his ACT to becoming a decorated military officer, physician and clinical researcher, Col. Shon Anthony Remich has followed God's lead to live an amazing life.

If you were to ask Colonel Shon Anthony Remich what he majored in at OBU, he in turn would have to ask if you are referring to day one or day two.

Remich graduated high school in a class of 11 at Lahoma, Oklahoma, and freely admits he really did not have a concept of college. His parents separated when he was eight years old and he lived with his mother, who had not pursued a college degree. College wasn't talked about very much at his high school, however his Dad had attended college and asked his son to go for one year. If he didn't like it, he could stop and pursue other avenues.

During his senior year of high school, Remich surrendered to the ministry and felt that his vocation would be in missions. After graduation, he joined a ministry group called, "Friendship Ministries." This was a group of

young people that traveled 11 months out of the year sharing the gospel through performing (singing, puppets and drama). After joining Friendship, his team toured and performed in Canada. Toward the end of his "tour" he began to think of college.

He had always considered himself a Southern Baptist.

"I was thrilled to find out that there was a Southern Baptist college in my own home state of Oklahoma," he said. "I did not know the first thing about applying and this was before the internet. After stumbling around a bit, I applied. OBU was the only college to which I applied. I actually didn't realize that you could be turned down for admission. Thinking back, it really feels like ignorance was, in fact, bliss."



After taking the ACT and having a discussion with an admissions counselor there was significant concern about his score of 14 on the ACT.

"Thus, I started OBU on academic probation before I ever took a class," he said. "I spent my first day at OBU as a music major, the second day I asked to change to pre-med. I remember the person at the bursar's office asking if I was 'kidding.' She said she would introduce me to Dr. [Jim] Hurley and if I still wanted to change my major after that I could."

Where this Led

Remich graduated in 1989 with a Bachelor of Arts in psychology and a Bachelor of Science in biology.

He received his medical degree from the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center in 1994 and completed his pediatric internship and residency in 1997, post-doctoral degrees from Georgetown (Clinical Pharmacology) in 2001 and Walter Reed Army Medical Center (Allergy and Immunology) in 2008.

Remich has had a very active and thriving career as a military officer, physician and clinical researcher, serving in the Army for 23 years and is currently working in public vaccine development.

He headed up teams that have worked on treatments for Malaria his first three-year tour in Kenya, and on the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS relief during his second tour in Kenya, and the United States first Ebola vaccine. Recently, Remich served as senior director for Vaccine Clinical Research and Development and a member of the team that developed Pfizer/BioNTech's COVID vaccine. Currently, he serves as vice president for clinical development and operations for Takeda Pharmaceuticals.

He's received numerous awards and honors during his career, including the Railey E. Academic Psychology Award at OBU, the Intern of the Year award at William Beaumont Army Medical Center, the Legion of Merit, two Meritorious Service Medals, four Army Commendation Medals and the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal.

Remich has used his extra time outside of work for ministry-related endeavors. He has a heart for helping others move forward and grow in relationship to Christ. He is an ordained minister, has been discipling men for more than

30 years, is on the board of Go Face to Face (creator of "One on One with God" discipleship), is currently an elder at Calvary Fellowship Church in Downingtown, Pennsylvania, and is a board member of Beaver Creek Haven Farms and Ministries, which he and Kim established to extend the ministry of the church and help the broken find healing.

Staying the Course

"As one might imagine, the first couple of years at OBU were difficult and there were a number of well-meaning friends that felt a tough love approach was in order, expressing that it was not likely I would make it as a pre-med student," he said. "However, what I lacked in background and education, God made up for in an intense passion for learning. After class I would run back to Brotherhood dorm so I could maximize my study time. Weekends were paradise, just me and my books. This sentiment remains intact today. People think I'm weird, but that's only because I am."

Remich learned that a key component of letting God take the lead in his life was to constantly pay attention to what God was telling him or showing him. An example of this occurred during his junior year at OBU.

He had started exploring psychology and added it as a second degree.

"After class I would run back to Brotherhood dorm so I could maximize my study time. Weekends were paradise, just me and my books."

Between the challenges with family, class load and self-imposed performance standards, what he had achieved was total exhaustion.

Remich needed to slow down and listen, because he was about to receive a clear message.

OBU's connections with the International Mission Board provided Remich an opportunity to go on a two-month mission trip to the Philippines.

"During that visit, while staying with a local pastor, we returned from ministering and a young boy had been walking in the local trash heap and had cut his foot," Remich said. "When I arrived, he was near hypovolemic shock from blood loss. While the cut was significant, he had lost an enormous amount of blood from walking and being upright which augmented the blood loss. I asked those tending to him to lay him down. We put pressure on the wound and sent him to the hospital. When I asked the people there why they had forced him to walk around, they said, people who walk around are well, thus, if he walks around, he will be well. All my effort to shake wanting to be a physician could not overcome that experience and served to help me double down on my efforts to pursue that calling." □

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available in the print edition
of OBU Magazine.

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Donald Eugene Clark,

'58, died May 4, 2022. He was 90 years old. In 1967 he was recruited by Dean Warren M. Angell of OBU to teach vocal performance at his beloved alma mater. His zeal for teaching kept him at OBU for 38 years. After retiring from OBU, he served as an adjunct professor at St. Gregory's University for eight years. He also traveled to Italy for 15 summers to teach and perform as a soloist. He taught voice students in the family home until 2020, with wife Wanda accompanying students on the piano. He performed in over 40 operas, oratorios and cantatas. He also sang in countless recitals. As a graduate student, Don was a finalist in a national singing competition hosted by the National Association of Teachers of Singing. He inspired his students to try things they thought they could not do. He showed them how to push boundaries with confidence. He helped them grow as individuals.

When he was a student, his university training was interrupted by the Korean War. He served as a sergeant in the United States Air Force Band at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico, where he was a clarinetist and drum major. He soon became a vocal soloist for the band. On orders from his commanding officer, he began teaching his fellow bandsmen to sing. In the process, he discovered what was to become his lifelong passion, teaching people to sing. Shortly thereafter, he founded and directed the band's Glee Club choir.

He met his future wife, Wanda Fern Grant, at a youth rally in the nearby community of Alamogordo, New Mexico. He was asked to sing at the youth rally, but he needed someone to accompany him on the piano. Wanda was quickly recruited by her friends to play piano, and thus began a lifelong love affair between the two. He and Wanda married in 1954.

He completed his Bachelor of Music degree in vocal performance from OBU in 1958. Shortly thereafter, he and Wanda moved to Pocahontas, Arkansas, where he taught music at the local high school. They later moved to Nashville, Tennessee, where he became chair of the music department at Free Will Baptist Bible College. While in Nashville, he earned a Master of Music degree in vocal performance from the Peabody College of Vanderbilt University. He later earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in vocal performance from the University of Oklahoma.

He touched innumerable lives with his beautiful baritone singing voice. Perhaps most importantly, he inspired hundreds of students over the course of his career. He taught them to become the best musicians they could be.

He also glorified God through music by directing church choirs most of his adult life.



Julie Marks Blackstone,

died Sept. 17, 2022. She was 66 years old.

She earned a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Central Oklahoma and a Master of Education, also at UCO. Early in her career, she served as an intern with an advertising agency in Leeds, England. After graduation, she worked as an artist/designer at the Glasshaus Stained Glass Studio and taught as an adjunct at Oklahoma City Community College.

Her first work at OBU began in 1981 in the ceramics lab. In the years before she became a full-time faculty member at OBU, she helped run the lab, sold artwork in galleries and taught private lessons. Although she taught a variety of mediums, she was best-known for her textiles and fibers. She joined the OBU faculty full time in 1997. In 2009, she became assistant professor of art. In 2017, Julie received the Provost's Award of Excellence. In 2019, Julie received the highest honor for OBU faculty members, the Distinguished Teaching Award.

She was often referred to as a mentor and influence by her students who went on to success in their own careers. Her OBU connections span decades. Her grandparents graduated in the 1920s and her father in 1950. Numerous other family members are alumni, including her great-uncle Fred McCaulley, who brought "Ka-Rip" to OBU.

Corey Fuller, OBU chair of art and design, remembered his friend and colleague with the highest regard: "I could say a lot about Julie the artist, Julie the teacher, and Julie the colleague; however, I want to talk about Julie my friend. Sometimes God gives you the friends you didn't know you needed. We talked about books, politics, art, current and former students and lot of other things. There were days when I spent more time with Julie than I did with my own family. We took students to New York on multiple occasions. She was brutally honest, but sweet to a fault. When you work with someone for a dozen years you see their good deeds, even the ones they try to hide. She was an extraordinary listener and a haven for students who needed her wisdom and care."

Perhaps best known for her textile/fiber art, her "Knotty Girl" works were created using a French Knot embroidery technique with embellishments. Her work has been featured in numerous juried shows, winning awards on both a regional and national level, including Fiberworks and Handweavers Guild of America (Award for Excellence twice). In 2021, she was part of a three-woman show at Gaylord-Pickens Museum.

She appreciated those who excelled in writing and music. She published several books on Amazon under the pseudonyms of Marty Russell (mystery/drama), R.L. Evans (historical fiction) and Jules Marks (medieval fantasy).





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– Maddie Whitehouse
OBU Sophomore
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