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College of the Ouachitas New President to Begin June 6



MALVERN, AR—In a Special Called Meeting Thursday, March 31, College of the Ouachitas Board of Trustees announced Dr. Steve Rook as the College's new president. Dr. Rook will assume the office of President on June 6, 2016. He succeeds Interim President Dr. Barry Ballard who has served in the position since January 2016.

College of the Ouachitas Board of Trustees selected Dr. Rook after a nationwide search. Rook was one of four candidates recommended to the Board for the position by a 11-member presidential search committee, which consisted of faculty, staff, student, and community representatives. The Board selected two finalists who were invited to the school for campus and community tours, meetings with faculty and staff members and students, and open forum receptions.

Mrs. Diana Reggans, chairman of the Board, said, "Dr. Steve Rook is the ideal person to lead College of the Ouachitas and is qualified with excellent credentials for the position. Rook's experience in two-year college administrative posts lends him the needed skills to provide executive leadership for the continued growth and development of the College."

Dr. Rook, a Gould, Arkansas native, is the current Vice President for Academic and Student Affairs at Rich Mountain Community College in Mena, Arkansas. He also served as Interim President of Rich Mountain from May 2011 – September 2011.

Rook received his Doctorate of Education in Higher Education Administration from University of Arkansas at Little Rock, his Master of Science in Education, Guidance and Counseling/Student Personnel from Eastern Illinois University, and his Bachelor of Science in Marketing from University of Arkansas at Monticello.

"I am extremely honored to be offered the position of President at College of the Ouachitas," says Dr. Rook. "It's only once in a lifetime that a dream like this comes true. I promise to work my hardest for the institution, the Board, and the community."

Dr. Rook, his wife, Connie, and their 16-year old son, Grayson, look forward to settling down in Malvern and becoming active members of the community. They have two older sons, aged 23 and 27.

College of the Ouachitas Graduation Set for May 9



College of the Ouachitas Commencement Exercises have been set for Monday, May 9, 2016, at 6:30pm, at Bank of the Ozarks Arena in Hot Springs, AR. The Keynote Speaker is Malvern native, Ms. Claudine James. Ms. James is a 2007 graduate of Ouachita Technical College (now College of the Ouachitas) and a National Board Certified Teacher of 7th and 8th grade PreAP English and Foreign Language Experience at Malvern Middle School. She has taught for seven years and is passionate about designing project-based learning lessons aimed at increasing students' literacy scores and their interest in reading multicultural literature. In January of this year, Ms. James was named the 2015 Hot Spring County Educator of the Year at the Malvern/HSC Chamber of Commerce Banquet.

College of the Ouachitas recently held the Twenty-Third Annual Awards Ceremony where the 2016 honor graduates, students with a cumulative 3.5 or higher GPA, were recognized and presented with honor cords and regalia to be worn at graduation.

2016 Graduates with Highest Honors (each graduating with a 4.0 GPA) include: Heather Michelle Best, Tennia Clark, Sarah Beth Cooper, Sabrina Cranford, Tiwana Dockett, Erin S. Dyer, Jeremy Freeman, Jeneille Hampel, Mandie G. Hodges, Payton Kehner, Sydney McCauley, Jade McCoy, Cory Andrew McMahon, Jay Owens, Megan Porter, Chassidy L. Siratt, Kayla Smith, Sam Tucker, and Kimberly Whitney.

2016 Honor Graduates (each graduating with a 3.5 GPA) include: Tatiana Buskirk, Ashlee Faith Carter, Brandi Nicole Cosby, Whitney Amanda Earnest, James Allen Emerson, Arianna Floyd, Cynthia Ann Gosney, Seana Granger, Kayla Kirksey, Jeri Matthews, Chelsea McKay, Caitlin Mazingo, Brittany Ramey, Jared Stanley, Paralee Taylor, David Ray "Dray" Williams, Yvonne L. Wilson, and Jo Ann Wright.

College Recognizes Top Students

Friday, April 29, was a night to celebrate College of the Ouachitas students. Outstanding Student Award recipients were announced, as well as, club inductions and officer recognitions, and presentations by various campus programs. Henderson State University Transfer Counselor Jennifer Wright announced that 15 College of the Ouachitas graduates have received the Community College Transfer Scholarship to Henderson State University. Ms. Wright also presented the Presidential Transfer Scholarship. During the evening, the Honor Graduates and Phi Theta Kappa Graduates received their regalia to be worn during graduation. Additional photos of the event can be found on the [College's Facebook page](#).



Dray Williams, named Applied Science Outstanding Student of the Year, with Mr. Glenn Franklin, Mechatronics Instructor.



Sarah Cooper, named Arts & Sciences Outstanding Student of the Year, with Ms. Tricia Baar, Dean of Learning.



Paralee Taylor, named Business Technology Outstanding Student of the Year, with Ms. Cathy Boyett, Business Instructor.



Dray Williams, College of the Ouachitas Overall Outstanding Student of the Year, with Mr. Pat Simms, Vice President of Instruction, and Dr. Barry Ballard, Interim-President.



Lisa Baker received the Presidential Transfer Scholarship, presented by Jennifer Wright, Henderson State University Transfer Counselor.

College of the Ouachitas
One College Circle
Malvern, AR 72104

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