

**OUACHITA**  
BAPTIST UNIVERSITY



**NEWS**

For immediate release

**Ouachita students to present their research in D.C.**

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March 9, 2009

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ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Three Ouachita Baptist University senior biology students were chosen by the Council for Undergraduate Research to travel to Washington, D.C., on May 5 to present their research to members of the United States Congress as part of the 13<sup>th</sup> annual Posters on the Hill event.

The students, Heather Ferguson from Hot Springs, Ark.; Adam Hurst from Jonesboro, Ark., and John Sims from Conway, Ark., will have the opportunity to speak with Arkansas' congressional delegates about the importance of undergraduate research. They will also present a poster of their research, "New Hope for the Treatment of Ewing's Sarcoma and Related Cancers," in a session on Capitol Hill attended by members of Congress as well as representatives from federal funding agencies and other foundations in the area.

"It's a huge honor to be chosen to go to D.C.," said Ferguson. "It is always wonderful to be recognized for something you've worked hard on."

"We are very excited about presenting our research to members of our nation's Congress," added Sims. "I think it will be a great opportunity to show them how important undergraduate research can be."

"This student project was one of only 60 undergraduate research projects accepted from the entire country, and that 60 includes all disciplines," said Dr. Lori Hensley, OBU assistant professor of biology. "These students get a chance to speak in person with all of our state's Congressional delegates to tell them why they believe there should be funding available for these types of projects."

The students' research focused on the abilities of two plant-derived compounds to reduce and eliminate Ewing's sarcoma and related cancer cells in the lab. Ewing's sarcoma is a bone cancer that primarily affects children and teenagers. These tumors are highly aggressive and have often already spread to other parts of the body by the time of diagnosis. With a five-year survival rate of only approximately 30%, improved treatment options are desperately needed.

The students conducted their research under the direction of Hensley and in collaboration with Dr. Larry Suva, director of orthopedic research at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences.

The students were quick to give credit to their director. “Dr. Hensley did a great deal to get us selected for this competition,” said Hurst. “She guides us through our research, so it is amazing that she has brought her research to a level that is receiving national recognition.”

“All of the credit belongs to Dr. Hensley, who is the mastermind behind all of our research,” Sims added. “I feel very blessed that I get the opportunity to present research that never would have happened without her guidance.”

“The students’ work was completed in my lab under my direction, but they did the actual experimental work,” Hensley responded. “Each student had to submit a resume and all three students worked with me to come up with the abstract that was submitted.”

In their research, the students modeled cancer growth by developing Ewing’s sarcoma cells that express the enzyme that illuminates fireflies. These engineered tumor cells are then injected into the leg bones of living mice. Tumors will be allowed to develop, and the growth of the glowing tumors will be tracked using specific imaging techniques. Varying doses of potential therapeutic compounds can then be tested in these mice, with tumor responses being monitored and measured.

“If we are able to find a more successful treatment for Ewing’s sarcoma, we could save kids’ lives or at least give them a few more years,” said Sims.

Hurst added, “Related research in the lab could also play a big role in treating multiple sclerosis and affect many lives.”

Upon graduation from Ouachita in May, all three students will continue their studies at medical school at UAMS.

Hensley’s research is funded by the IDeA Network of Biomedical Research Excellence, a program through the National Center for Research Resources of the National Institutes of Health.