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For immediate release

**Eight Ouachita students honored and published in essay journal**

By Rachel Bruton

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ARKADELPHIA, Ark.—Ouachita Baptist University's Department of Language and Literature honored eight students last month for having their essays chosen for publication in the department's annual *Assayers* journal.

*Assayers 27* is the 2018-2019 edition of the essay journal. To be considered for publication in the journal, students must submit their essays to the Department of Language and Literature for a panel of judges to assess their work. In addition to a cash prize and an opportunity to share their work with the university community, students will also see their work used as a teaching tool in Composition 101 at Ouachita.

"Each year it's nice to have students bring their perspectives and connect students together across each year. We all love to get published; the writing impulse is to get published," noted Dr. Doug Sonheim, chair of Ouachita's Department of Language and Literature and holder of the Clarence and Bennie Sue Anthony Chair of Bible and the Humanities. "So, it feeds into what we think is a positive inclination to create work that is true, good and beautiful and get it out there to share. We wanted to have a place for students to do that."

Students may submit essays in one of two categories, personal or research essays.

"We really do think that students who are submitting their work are taking a risk to get something out there to share with other people. It's a gift to share with everyone else. We want to acknowledge their gift of hard work and creativity," Sonheim noted.

Melissa Lee, a freshman worship arts major from Arkadelphia, Ark., placed first in the personal essay category. Mattie Dodson, a junior Biblical studies and English double major from Arkadelphia, Ark., won second place. Morgan Howard, a senior sociology major from Ashdown, Ark., won third. Sykes Martin, a senior biology major from Sheridan, Ark., received an honorable mention.

Lee used her personal essay, "Adult Me," to argue about the challenges faced by children born into large families after growing up within a large family herself.

"I think social media and reality TV has given the world the happy pastime of observing large families from the outside and forming judgments on the inherent benefits, or flaws, of the system. In writing this piece, I was able to honestly reconstruct my childhood experiences through the mature perspective of an adult," Lee said. "I think my most significant takeaway has been the personal growth and healing I experienced and the fact that I now openly embrace my story."

Emily Koonce, a sophomore English and secondary education double major from Wylie, Texas, placed first in the research category. Laura Ward, a senior English major from Springdale, Ark., won second place. Aaron East, a senior English and history double major from Royse City, Texas, won third place. Lindsey Johnson Edwards, a May 2018 Christian studies/biblical studies graduate from Sherman, Texas, received an honorable mention.

Koonce's research essay, "F. Scott Fitzgerald's Legacy of Misrepresenting Black Characters," analyzed how the author negatively portrays African American characters and how that portrayal affects the contemporary audience.

"More than anything, I hope that my audience learns to think more critically about their favorite works, especially when it comes to how minorities are depicted," Koonce said. "Often, we dismiss negative aspects of things we love, and while it's certainly fine to love something that is problematic, I believe that we should also address its faults."

Duel Cunningham, a senior computer science and mathematics double major from Cabot, Ark., also was recognized at the ceremony. His photo was chosen as the cover art for this year's edition.

For more information or to obtain a copy of *Assayers 27*, contact Dr. Doug Sonheim at [sonheimd@obu.edu](mailto:sonheimd@obu.edu) or (870) 245-5554.

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