

OHIO CHRISTIAN

THE OHIO CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE | FALL 2017



Robert W. Plaster Free Enterprise Center Grand Opening

- New Programs Equip Graduates for Careers
- Advancing the Gospel in the 21st Century
- OCU Joins Council of Christian Colleges and Universities



**Ohio Christian University
prepares students to serve effectively
in the church and society by
providing a holistic, Christ-centered,
biblically integrated education
in the Wesleyan tradition.**

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OHIO CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

President's Message



Dr. Jon Kulaga

In J. R. R. Tolkien's book, *The Hobbit*, Gandalf the wizard invites Bilbo Baggins on an adventure, declaring, "I will send you on this adventure. Very amusing for me, and very good for you—and profitable too, very likely, if you ever get over it."

Bilbo's initial response was "We are plain quiet folk and

have no use for adventures. Nasty disturbing uncomfortable things! I can't think what anybody sees in them... Sorry, I don't want any adventures, thank you. Not today."

In the word "adventure," our mind's eye is immediately drawn to the word "venture". And so we imagine an adventure as something like a fun trip or journey. But a venture is more than a nice trip. It is a journey that involves some risk or peril. A venture involves the very real possibility that something bad might actually happen. There is the possibility of failure.

Upon closer examination, we find the word "adventure" actually contains a second word—"advent". As Christians, we refer to the great moment in human history when God literally showed up (with skin on) as the Advent season. In fact, the word "advent" actually means "arrival" or "appearance." When the two words are combined—"advent" and "venture"—you get the idea of a journey, filled with risk and peril, with the very real possibility of failure, unless God shows up.

As the new president of Ohio Christian University, I am asking all of our friends, family, faculty, staff, and students to join me on a new adventure in the story of OCU.

One of the benefits of an authentic Christian university community is that we know we are not on this journey alone. As we struggle, discuss, labor, live, and learn together, we have God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. And, we have each other. The Apostle Paul implies this same truth when he describes how the Holy Spirit manifests Himself in the life of the believer. Virtually every "fruit" requires an "other" in order for that fruit to be made manifest: Love, long suffering, patience, kindness, gentleness, and so on. They all need an "other" toward which to direct their expression.

We know that those we choose to have around us have more to do with how we will act upon what we believe, than what we read, or the ideas we claim to revere. Therefore, the people we choose to travel with on this adventure, that is filled with risk and expectancy, are important to our ultimate success. I am reassured daily, as I meet the faculty, staff, board, as well as community, state, and national leaders who are connected to, committed to, and partnering with Ohio Christian University.

I am spending most of my time in these early days listening and praying. Where we decide to go will not be "my" vision, but "our" vision. It will be future-focused, but Christ-centered. However, I am certain of one thing: It will be an ADVENTure where, like Bilbo Baggins, we will find ourselves "doing and saying things altogether unexpected." We will be taking some risks, doing the unexpected, going into unknown territory, and forging a new identity.

If you are reading this article—then you are invited to join us! And, like Bilbo and his adventure, we will never get over it!

As we dream together and cast a new vision for OCU's future, there is risk involved—but we are confident God will show up.



Academic Updates

New Programs and Services
to Equip Graduates for
Ministry and Careers

New Programs for Students on Main Campus

In August, Ohio Christian University began offering Teacher Education majors that include a Bachelor of Science in Education in Adolescence to Young Adult (AYA, Grades 7-12) with majors in Integrated Language Arts, Integrated Mathematics, and Integrated Social Studies. Consequently, OCU now offers the spectrum of programs that prepare teachers to instruct young children through high school seniors. All programs are accredited and enable graduates to teach in public and private schools.

OCU teacher education students begin learning to teach in classrooms during their freshman year. OCU requires over 200 hours of high-quality clinical experience prior to student teaching to meet national program accreditation standards of the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP) and to ensure our teacher education candidates can develop, practice, and demonstrate the best pedagogical practices to improve student learning on entering classrooms as instructors. When OCU teacher students graduate, they have more than 800 hours of classroom experience and have practiced a proven hands-on philosophy of education.

Graduates of OCU's teacher education programs perform at a 95% pass rate on their first time taking the state teacher licensure

exams, and 98% of graduates are currently employed in school systems. Student teaching may be accomplished in the student's home town, and faculty travel to observe them. Under this policy, graduates have a 100% hiring rate.

In 2014 there was need for 961,600 high school teachers in the U. S. An additional 55,900 teachers will be needed by 2024. This number is in addition to teachers who retire. OCU students with a passion for teaching, wishing a role in educating the next generation and a stable career, can find being a high school teacher is the right choice.



Dr. Hank Kelly

New Programs and Services for AGS Students

OCU's College of Adult and Graduate Studies (AGS) provides high-quality educational opportunities and spreads the gospel of Jesus Christ to students who do not attend the Circleville campus. Most AGS students taking classes online at OCU learning sites are working adults.

AGS typically offers one or two new programs every year, and this year is no different. Three new programs in Information Technology that launched this fall include an Associate of Arts, a Bachelor of Science, and a Bachelor of Science in Data Analytics.

Computer and information technology jobs are the fastest growing occupations in the nation, projected to grow twelve percent through 2024 and add 488,500 new jobs to an industry already 3.9 million jobs strong as of 2014, according to U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Jobs for those with IT degrees include web and software development, network and computer systems administration, and computer operations technical support, paying salaries ranging from \$50,000 to \$90,000.

In addition, AGS added a Bachelor in Human Services in the spring of 2017 and will add a Master of Education in the spring of 2018. AGS also created a new program for 18-22 year olds who wish to attend online, and is the focus of the OCUonline Plus feature story.

Perhaps more important than new programs for new students, however, is helping students already at OCU. Over the past years we expanded services for students to provide 'ladders of success' to aid them in overcoming various obstacles. In 2015, for example, AGS began more intensive advising. In 2016-17, we began tutoring in math and English and created a Student Success Center that provides self-help information, such as study tips. Currently, we offer academic coaching—tutoring that supports students' acquisition of soft skills like study habits. Coaching is proven to increase likelihood of graduating.



Dr. Bradford Sample



OCU Celebrates 67th Commencement

Ohio Christian University conducted its 67th Commencement on Saturday, April 29, awarding 790 diplomas in two services to accommodate growing enrollment numbers. OCU's Georgia campus awarded an additional 108 diplomas earlier in the month at their commencement.

Of the graduates, 122 were residential students and 668 were students in the College of Adult and Graduate Studies (AGS). The average graduate's age was 39 years old with the youngest graduate 17 years of age, receiving Associate of Arts degrees through the Trailblazer Academy (college credit courses for high school students), and one student who, at 77 years of age, was the oldest graduate receiving his Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies.

Dr. Doug Carter, who was President of Circleville Bible College (now OCU) in the 1980s, delivered the commencement address. In his address, "Running the Christian Race," he advised those present not to live in their comfort zone and encouraged them to find their purpose.

At the conclusion of his remarks, Dr. Carter was recognized for his leadership at OCU, for his time as a missionary to Native American tribes in Arizona, and for the work that he's done for the last 20 years training pastors around the world, encompassing 125 countries. In recognition, the OCU trustees and faculty awarded Carter with an honorary Doctorate of Divinity.



ment

TOTAL GRADUATES
898

OLDEST GRADUATE
77

YOUNGEST GRADUATE
17



Honorary doctorate / Dr. Doug and Winnie Carter

**"I believe every person here today is called to be a leader in the Kingdom of God. No one is excluded. Everyone has the potential to be a difference-maker."
~ Dr. Doug Carter**



OCU Morrow GA Celebrates 2nd *Commencement*

“Hope is when you can’t even see the outcome, but you believe it’s going to work out for your good.”

Judge Reynolds

On April 8, 2017, OCU’s Morrow, GA campus celebrated its second annual commencement ceremony by granting over 100 associate, bachelor, and master degrees. Graduation was held at Divine Faith Ministries International, an OCU partner church.

Judge Penny Brown Reynolds, commencement speaker, is a renowned Family Court Judge, TV personality, entrepreneur, social justice advocate, and preacher. An ordained minister, Reynolds provides unique and inspiring prophetic preaching and speaking about often-ignored challenging issues.

Judge Reynolds received a Bachelor of Science from Georgia State University, a Masters from Interdenominational Theological Center, and a Juris Doctorate from Georgia State University College of Law. OCU awarded her an Honorary Doctorate of Christian Leadership during the ceremony.

Reynolds is distinguished as the first African American executive counsel for Georgia’s Governor. A former prosecutor, state Assistant Attorney General, and first African American



From left: Dr. Shawn B. Thomas, Judge Penny Brown Reynolds, Reverend Edward Reynolds, and Reverend Ronnie M. Thomas Jr. Judge Reynolds received an Honorary Doctorate.

chief of staff and legal counsel to the Lieutenant Governor, she is also an entrepreneur with a television court series, *Family Court with Judge Penny*.

Reynolds is president and CEO of Divine Destiny Enterprises, LLC, and founder of a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to strengthening families, women, youth, and children, and providing a voice for the poor.

Author of *My Mother Told Me, 7 Steps to Peace of Mind*, and *Real Talk for Real Sisters*, and co-author of *Women and the Law: A Guide to Women’s Legal Rights in Georgia*, Reynolds’ articles also appear in the *Huffington Post*.

During her address, Judge Reynolds shared that “Hope is when you can’t even see the outcome, but you believe it’s going to work out for your good.” She ended her address with “Never forget who brought you where you are today.”

Save
the
date!

- Nov. 10** Traditional Program Preview Day
- Nov. 16** Student Solo Hour
- Nov. 20** Toler Leadership Institute with Dr. Stan Toler and Dr. Benny Tate
- Nov. 22-24** Traditional Program Fall Break
- Dec. 2** Festival of Carols
- Jan. 8-9** Traditional Program Orientation
- Jan. 10** Traditional Program Spring Semester Classes Begin
- Jan. 22-25** Spring Semester Revival
- Feb. 1-3** 12th Annual Legacy Classic Florida Golf Tournament

Festival of Carols

WHAT CAN I GIVE?

Dec. 2, 2017

6 p.m.

Ministry & Performing Arts Center
For more information, visit
www.ohiochristian.edu/christmas
or call 740-420-5918

OCU Joins Council of Christian Colleges & Universities

This past July, Ohio Christian University was approved by the Board of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) to become its newest member institution. With over 182 institutions around the world that comprise the best of Christian higher education, each institution is dedicated to providing a Christ-centered, biblically grounded education for its students.

Member institutions are committed to holistically integrating the Bible into the educational process, infusing knowledge with wisdom. The Council promotes innovative research and provides administrators with the best practices for success.

Faculty, staff, and students from member schools are eligible to participate in the Council's professional development conferences, student study abroad programs and major-related internships. For example, the BestSemester program offers international immersion experiences in over 10 off-campus programs where students learn to apply their faith within an international context.

"The Council of Christian Colleges and Universities is the premiere organization in America for universities seeking to provide a Christ-centered higher education. Membership in this organization not only speaks well of Ohio Christian University and its standing in this community of peer institutions, it also permits our faculty, staff, and students to engage with like-minded and like-hearted colleagues as we seek to serve the Kingdom of God at our various institutions."

~Dr. Jon S. Kulaga, OCU President

The Council supports students' Christian character development—living with love, courage, and humility, and maintains that "graduates recognize the world's brokenness and believe God has called them to work for its healing. As doctors, teachers, marketers, engineers, parents, coaches, and in other roles, they seek to redeem and restore the world."



Advancing the Gospel in the 21st Century

Research shows 90% of churches in North America are in decline or growing at the same rate as their community (Rainer, 2016). This is not the *Acts'* Great Commission Church with daily new converts. The closest resemblance to a missional church is a new church growing through conversion rather than transfer growth. (Malphurs, 2004)

In *Acts* 1:8, Jesus' final command to his disciples before His ascension into heaven is to go and be His witnesses throughout the world. The *Acts of the Apostles* is a chronicle of the birth and expansion of Jesus Christ's Church. This church was and is today a living and growing organism and not an organization in buildings. Christ's commands were simple: become bands of disciples living out his Word, be witnesses to Jesus' love, and be filled with the power of His love to a lost world. This living church established witness centers in major cities and regions.

C. Peter Wagner echoes the age-old principle from the New Testament when he says, "The single most effective evangelistic methodology under heaven is planting new churches." Ohio Christian University is committed to this missional purpose like no other university. As Professor Pessia explains, "Few Christian universities design their programs to prepare students called to plant new churches and grow missional churches, and equip those students for bi-vocational ministry." At OCU majors and concentrations advance the Gospel in light of current ministry trends and challenges.



Dr. Wayne Pessia

Wayne Pessia, Associate Professor of Ministry, has served in Christian Higher Education for 12 years and pastoral and denominational leadership for 18 years including church planting and revitalization. Ordained for 26 years, Pessia is an elder of the Church of the Nazarene. He holds a Bachelor of Science in Bible from University of Valley Forge, a Master in Ministry from Mount Vernon Nazarene University, and a Doctorate in Higher Education Leadership. His dissertation was on the impact of Millennial Learners on Christian Higher Education. Wayne's wife Anne is a public school teacher, and they have three children, two of whom are medical doctors.

Concentrations in AGS Ministry train leaders to start a New Testament church and grow a Great Commission church. OCU offers options for bi-vocational ministry with a Dual Masters degree completing both a Master of Business Administration and Master of Ministry in an accelerated format.

With excellent programs in Pastoral Ministry and Biblical Studies, OCU believes the church and its ministry needs to return to its New Testament missional effectiveness. World evangelism is the heartbeat of OCU. Faculty are foremost biblically and theologically sound and love Jesus and others enough to adapt ministry to reach the 21st century world. OCU students are trained to be world-class leaders, graduating prepared to engage the culture with sharpened minds, evangelistic focus, and hearts warmed toward God and others.



World Missions



Indiana

By Jamey Gremillion

One summer 2017 mission trip was different. This one focused on an inner city in the Midwest instead of thousands of miles away in a foreign land. Our group of 29 people included OCU students, OCU alumni, parishioners, and members of the Como Recovery ministry.

We weren't sure how this would all play out, but on the first Sunday of June our caravan of vans, trucks, and trailers transported us to one of the most needy inner city neighborhoods in Indianapolis to partner with Shepherd Community Center for their "46201 project", a wonderfully creative approach to bringing hope to an entire ZIP code in the Indianapolis area.

agenda. They needed as many volunteers as possible in order to make this dream a reality. The OCU team was the first of several summer groups to join them in this meaningful work.

Our team split into three groups. Some did construction and demolition. Others canvassed the neighborhood to sign people up for assistance they needed. The rest assisted other ministries just down the road. Although the work was difficult at times, it was enjoyable to see the difference made in a week's time. Our team's contribution was met with heart felt gratitude from many residents of the neighborhood and from the Shepherd Community staff. Each team member was impacted by the tremendous power the Body of Christ wields when it comes together to address an issue like poverty. We are grateful to Shepherd Community for enabling us to be part of fulfilling their vision to erase generational poverty in Indianapolis' inner city. Indeed, they gave us a great gift by helping each team member to think differently about how to confront inner city poverty. There is the

"It was so rewarding to see our team's passion for Jesus on this trip."

The work included renovating many houses, tearing down abandoned places, building new homes, providing backyard gardens for residents of the ZIP code, canvassing the neighborhood to help residents get whatever assistance they needed, whether medical, childcare, educational advancement, or job-skill training. Shepherd Community partnered with select civic authorities in Indianapolis to pull off this ambitious

likelihood of much more fruit from these seeds planted during this week. Another unexpected but tremendous benefit of this unique group was how we all meshed together so well. We stayed together each night and ate together each day. One of the surprising benefits of the trip was how everyone pitched in to prepare our meals. It was an excellent community-building exercise, and we may have actually gained weight despite the hard work because of the fabulous cuisine created by some of the culinary magicians on our team.

Near the end of the trip, team members shared how they were impacted by working together to make a difference in this neighborhood. It was rewarding to see the passion for Jesus during the trip. Each student experienced an incredible sense of God's presence and joy in making a real difference. On one hand, it didn't appear to make sense to take off work, pay to come on this trip where you work even harder, and even sleep on floors. Yet, what is the value of being empowered by the Holy Spirit to become the answer to this neighborhood's prayers? Priceless!



Kenya

By Natasha Grimmett

Millennials are often described as self-centered, lacking motivation and self-discipline to do anything for themselves. After spending two weeks in May 2017 ministering in Kenya with 10 Ohio Christian University students, it is evident that such definitions are not applicable. As World Gospel Mission Student Involvement Director for OCU, I led this team that included Kierra Brown, Sarah Caplan, James Nicholson, Hannah Stewart, Morgan Jenkins, Drayah Johnston, Hope Gill, Tristan Bryant, Jacob Grimmett, and Chase Enochs.

The team had the privilege of serving alongside the Abrams Family, long-term missionaries in Kenya. We designed this mission trip to give the students an opportunity to explore how they can use their gifts in missions, while encouraging and uplifting different missions projects in Kenya.



“This experience grew my passion for helping the international church body through prayer.”

- Hope Gill

In Kenyan culture, it is incredibly important to have genuine conversations and share what God is doing. Each leader of the various ministries we visited was excited to tell us about their work and the joys and struggles that accompany their ministries. Many stories were amazing and only possible through the working of God. Others were truly heartbreaking. However, a common theme in all of the stories is ‘God is good, and He loves and cares for His people.’ Students held abandoned babies, played soccer with young boys who were living on the streets, invested in missionary kids, and spoke encouragement to the ministry of many Kenyan pastors and missionaries.





Mexico



By Natasha Grimmitt

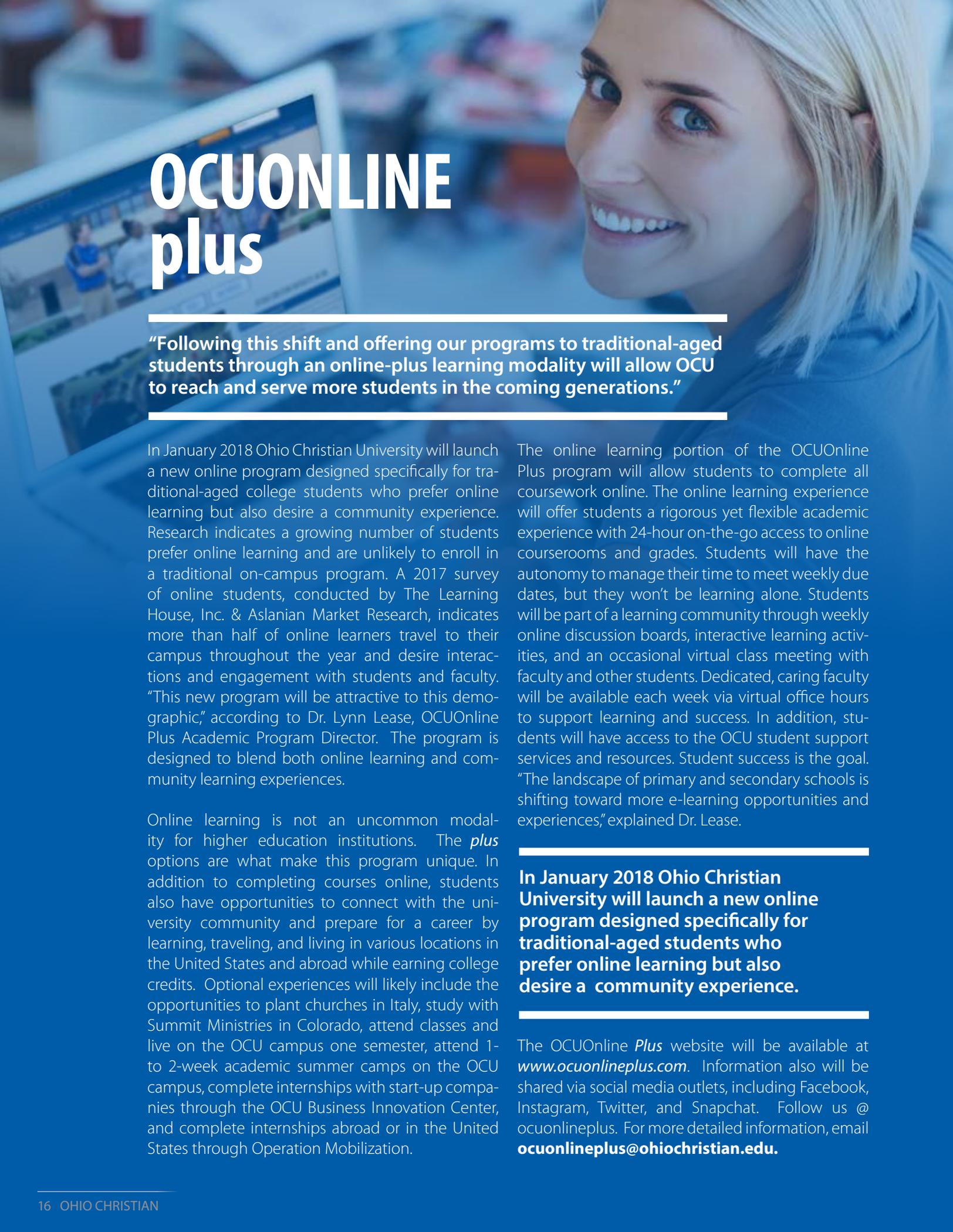
Over Spring Break in March 2017, six OCU students and staff served in Irapuato, Mexico. I led this mission trip, hosted by the Allshouse family, missionaries in Central Mexico for many years. The team included Allena Kinker, Kierra Brown, Victoria Henley, Miranda Bobst, and Sarah Duryea. During our week in Mexico we served at the local churches and poured ourselves into the lives of teenagers and children of surrounding areas. This was accomplished by renovating the nursery of the local WGM church, including painting and building new furniture for the ever-growing children's ministry. The team also assisted with an English class, the church youth group, and Cabana de Dios, a ministry to children in an impoverished area. It was incredible to see how once we began working on the church building, many members of the church were inspired to engage in the work, joining us in bettering their outreach to the community.

We had the privilege of hosting a vacation Bible school in Cabana de Dios, where we shared the parables of the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the prodigal son. While the language barrier sometimes posed an issue, it enabled the church youth group to reach out into their community and act as interpreters for us at the vacation Bible school.

The ministry was so captivating that five OCU students are applying to return to the area through WGM's internship ministry, Volunteers in Action (VIA). Victoria Henley had this to say about her time in Mexico: "Mexico was a life-changing experience. I went into it not sure what to expect, but I came back to the States with a newfound love of God, people, and Mexican culture. Thanks to one week in Mexico, I now am working on going back for a month long VIA internship which hopefully will be the start of what God wants from me in Mexico!"

"Mexico was a life changing experience. I went into it not sure what to expect, but I came back to the States with a newfound love of God, people, and Mexican culture.
~ Victoria Henley





OCU ONLINE plus

“Following this shift and offering our programs to traditional-aged students through an online-plus learning modality will allow OCU to reach and serve more students in the coming generations.”

In January 2018 Ohio Christian University will launch a new online program designed specifically for traditional-aged college students who prefer online learning but also desire a community experience. Research indicates a growing number of students prefer online learning and are unlikely to enroll in a traditional on-campus program. A 2017 survey of online students, conducted by The Learning House, Inc. & Aslanian Market Research, indicates more than half of online learners travel to their campus throughout the year and desire interactions and engagement with students and faculty. “This new program will be attractive to this demographic,” according to Dr. Lynn Lease, OCUOnline Plus Academic Program Director. The program is designed to blend both online learning and community learning experiences.

Online learning is not an uncommon modality for higher education institutions. The *plus* options are what make this program unique. In addition to completing courses online, students also have opportunities to connect with the university community and prepare for a career by learning, traveling, and living in various locations in the United States and abroad while earning college credits. Optional experiences will likely include the opportunities to plant churches in Italy, study with Summit Ministries in Colorado, attend classes and live on the OCU campus one semester, attend 1- to 2-week academic summer camps on the OCU campus, complete internships with start-up companies through the OCU Business Innovation Center, and complete internships abroad or in the United States through Operation Mobilization.

The online learning portion of the OCUOnline Plus program will allow students to complete all coursework online. The online learning experience will offer students a rigorous yet flexible academic experience with 24-hour on-the-go access to online courserooms and grades. Students will have the autonomy to manage their time to meet weekly due dates, but they won't be learning alone. Students will be part of a learning community through weekly online discussion boards, interactive learning activities, and an occasional virtual class meeting with faculty and other students. Dedicated, caring faculty will be available each week via virtual office hours to support learning and success. In addition, students will have access to the OCU student support services and resources. Student success is the goal. “The landscape of primary and secondary schools is shifting toward more e-learning opportunities and experiences,” explained Dr. Lease.

In January 2018 Ohio Christian University will launch a new online program designed specifically for traditional-aged students who prefer online learning but also desire a community experience.

The OCUOnline *Plus* website will be available at www.ocuonlineplus.com. Information also will be shared via social media outlets, including Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat. Follow us @ [ocuonlineplus](https://www.instagram.com/ocuonlineplus). For more detailed information, email ocuonlineplus@ohiochristian.edu.

Ohio Christian University Named One of Best Online Colleges in USA



BestColleges.com named Ohio Christian University one of the best online colleges in the country through its designation of OCU as a School of Distinction - one of only 115 institutions in the nation. BestColleges.com made their selection based on rankings in the areas of academic quality, affordability, and learning opportunities.

In their announcement BestColleges.com noted that "Schools of Distinction have devoted time, energy, and resources to developing quality online programs, meeting a growing trend in higher education. We celebrate these institutions by recognizing that their hard work will provide flexible, customized learning alternatives for today's nontraditional students."

"We are very proud to earn this honor from BestColleges.com for our online programs in the College of Adult & Graduate Studies (AGS) and believe it is an acknowledgement of our hard work over the years," remarked Dr. Bradford Sample, Associate Provost and Vice President.

According to Sample, AGS faculty and staff have continually revised curriculum toward higher academic standards, expanded program offerings, and kept programs affordable. The college has added six bachelor-level concentrations in business, four concentrations in ministry, six MBA concentrations, and six wholly new degree programs in the past two years, while keeping tuition prices at an affordable level.

AGS continues to innovate to provide students with wider choices in a high-quality academic environment. The college anticipates approval from the Higher Learning Commission soon for its Master of Education degree that will provide Ohio's teachers with additional instruction in curriculum and design as well as a specialization in a focus area, such as reading, mathematics, or special needs.

Adult or nontraditional programs cater to students returning to college after a hiatus of years or even decades, or those who did not immediately go to college after high school. Adult programs continue to be one of the fastest growing segments of the higher education market, and the vast majority of that growth is in online programs.

OCU's online programs provide students the convenience of engaging in course materials and assignments at times that work best for them while also setting a schedule that keeps students on pace for graduation. Sample believes OCU's dedication to a Christian worldview and ethics, customer service, affordability, academic quality, and personal flexibility has made it possible to be named a School of Distinction.

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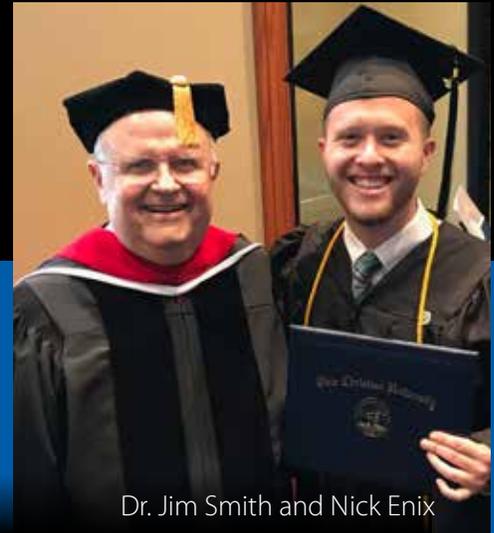
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Alumnus Profile

Nick Enix Shoots for the Stars



Dr. Jim Smith and Nick Enix

Class of 2016 graduate Nick Enix is accustomed to reaching high in advancing his professional goals. As a Chemical Dependency major, Nick was blessed to gain employment with the Pickaway Area Recovery Services (PARS) in Circleville during his junior year. Today he continues there as a licensed Substance Abuse Counselor.

Due to his excellent OCU preparation, Nick was selected over competitors for his position. Completing his bachelor degree in Chemical Dependency Counseling in just three-and-one-half years enabled him to pass the State of Ohio's licensing test quickly and dive headfirst into counseling.

for this job," he explains, attributing his success to the encouragement of Professor Jim Smith.

Nick opines that "the way OCU's Psychology program enables learning from sit-downs with Professors Olson and Smith, to showing respect and Christian love, I learned more about counseling than I could have at any other university. OCU's professors are among the most caring individuals I've ever met."

Nick's determination, passion, and perseverance in and out of class paid off in landing this productive and enjoyable job. Entering his second year at PARS, Nick

"Dr. Jim Smith's chemical dependency counseling program is incredible. He teaches with a focus on developing counseling skills beyond book knowledge—through real-life examples that prepare us for what to expect."

Upon his hiring, Nick began counseling immediately, remembering all he had learned during his OCU years and performing effectively day after day. From individual counseling with 20-25 patients per week to being primary facilitator of the men's Intensive Outpatient Program (IOP) and secondary facilitator for the women's IOP, Nick must maintain intense focus for long periods. Being well-educated at OCU for this challenge made his transition into full-time counseling much easier.

Nick is ecstatic about his professional training: "Ohio Christian University is the best place to prepare me

exemplifies the result of working hard and of having 'shooting for the stars' ambition. After all, serving others with compassion and with Jesus' love is how to live Christian life.

"Sure," Nick remarks, "this work may be hard and frightful at times. You just need to remember counseling is tough because you are exposed to heartbreaking situations. You need a thick skin and a soft heart. You need to love people and know they ultimately make their own decisions. All you can do is try to make a positive difference."



OHIO CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

TRAILBLAZERS



Track / Kyle Benecke helped lead Trailblazers again on track in 2017.



Ariel Young



Zarrria Williams



Prayer Circle Group / OCU Track and Field prays before competition starts.

The 2017 Spring season for Ohio Christian University Athletics was another successful campaign within the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA). Highlighted by both individual and team successes, the Trailblazers achieved multiple awards both from their hard work in competition and in the classroom. Overall, 22 Trailblazers would be named River States Conference Scholar Athletes.

The semester was highlighted by two tremendous efforts from the Track and Field Program. Both **Ariel Young (So.)** and **Zarrria Williams (Fr.)** racked up multiple accomplishments, including both becoming NAIA All-Americans at the NAIA National Meet in Gulf Shores, AL. Williams finished 6th overall in the Women's Long Jump while also breaking the school record. This quality finish came only a few weeks after Williams received four first place medals in the River States Conference (RSC) Tournament Meet: the long jump, 100-meter dash, 200-meter dash, and the 4X100 meter relay, leading her to becoming the RSC Newcomer of the Year.

For Ariel Young, hopes were high that she could continue to build on an already decorated year of accomplishments at OCU. At the RSC Conference Meet, Young won the 10K in route to hitting the NAIA qualifying standard. At NAIA Nationals, she followed up her performance with a 6th place finish in the 10K and a 4th place finish in her first ever marathon. Both of these finishes, along with her performance at the NAIA Indoor Championships, drove Young to becoming a 3-time All-American for the 2016-17 school year.

Another highlight of the year was OCU's annual ESPY awards, dedicated to recognizing the year's best athletic accomplishments and memorable moments.



Women's Softball / Lexi Williams takes mound for 2017 Lady Trailblazers.



Men's Golf / Junior Evan Brouwer awarded 2017 RSC Champions of Character Award.

BLAZERS



Women's Golf / Head Coach Cathy Cook helped lead Lady Trailblazers in first year of NAIA competition.



Track / Freshman Zarrja Williams burst onto scene in 2017 with NAIA All-American season.

The night would include an awards show hosted by Dr. Larry Olson, a challenge to the athletes from Athletes In Action's very own Morris Michalski, and much more.

The Female Athlete of the Year award went to Ariel Young for her phenomenal year of accomplishments within the NAIA. The Male Athlete of the Year went to Marquis Jackson, senior guard for the men's basketball team. Jackson excelled on the floor all season, averaging 24.3 PPG, 5.2 RPG, and 5.8 APG while shooting 48% from the floor and 44% from 3-point. These numbers were good enough to make Jackson a member of the All-RSC First Team as well as NAIA Second Team All-American.

2017 OCU ESPY Award Winners

Female Breakthrough Athlete of the Year
RACHEL LAWWELL

Male Breakthrough Athlete of the Year
RIJN HARTMAN

Female Most Improved Athlete of the Year
JASMINE JUNKINS

Male Most Improved Athlete of the Year
CLAUDE BOGAN

Female Individual Performance of the Year
ERINN BAILEY

Male Individual Performance of the Year
MARQUIS JACKSON

Play of the Year
COLIN HAWKE/MEN'S SOCCER

Upset of the Year
MEN'S SOCCER VS. ASBURY UNIVERSITY

Struggle Bus Award
ESTHER WEBB

Game of the Year
MEN'S TENNIS

Coach of the Year
JAKE WARREN

Female Athlete of the Year
ARIEL YOUNG

Male Athlete of the Year
MARQUIS JACKSON



OCU Welcomes Freshmen Class of 2017

Ohio Christian University welcomed its new freshman class to campus this fall. More than 200 new students began their journey at OCU as they got settled into residence halls, attended orientation, and started classes.

In a newly-established campus tradition, faculty and staff prayerfully considered a name for the incoming class. This year's freshmen will be known as "Discerners," a term taken from Ephesians 5:15-17.

In coming years, each class will be named with a distinct biblical reference. These class names will be a way for classes to distinguish themselves throughout the years and provide thematic talking points.

Joe Wuest, Dean of Students, explains the reasoning for this new naming tradition: "In a day and age where the line between good and evil is increasingly blurred, we need those who discern the truth and, like the 'men of Issachar' in I *Chronicles*, understand the times."

With the Trailblazer Academy students, over 550 students now attend OCU's Residential Undergraduate program at OCU's main campus in Circleville, Ohio.

This freshman class comprises 47% women and 53% men, hailing from 17 states. They hail from California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, New Jersey, Virginia, West Virginia, and Washington, D. C. American Indian, African American, Hispanic, Multi-racial, and Anglo-saxon are ethnicities represented.

Denominations present include Assembly of God, Baptist, Catholic, Churches of Christ in Christian Union, Church of God, Lutheran, Pentocostal, Presbyterian, Mennonite, Nazarene, non-denomincadntional, United Methodist, and Wesleyan.





Robert W. Plaster
**Free Enterprise Center
Is Open For Business**



Dr. Dolly Plaster-Clement speaking at naming ceremony.



Don McIlloy, Dolly Plaster-Clements, Jon Kulaga, Amy Elsea, Bob Peterson

Thursday, August 31st, marked the grand opening of the Robert W. Plaster Free Enterprise Center to begin supporting entrepreneurship, venture acceleration, job creation, and workforce development to achieve greater regional prosperity.

This center has been realized through collaboration of the U. S. Economic Development Agency, State of Ohio, Pickaway County, City of Circleville, Pickaway Progress Partnership, Southern State Community College, The Robert W. Plaster Foundation, OhioHealth, Berger Health, DuPont, Universal Technology Corporation, Huntington Bank, American Electric Power, and Columbus 2020.

The center supports 1) entrepreneurship education, business incubation, venture acceleration, and a community for entrepreneurs, 2) workforce development solutions including internships and custom curriculum and certification 'factories', and 3) research for grant writing, analytics, contracts, and academics. Onsite resources are OCU's School of Business and Government®, Pickaway Progress Partnership, Universal Technology Corporation, and accounting, banking, legal, and marketing services.

Grand opening speakers included Ohio Senators Bob Peterson and Troy Balderson; Ohio Representative Gary Scherer; Jeannette Tamayo, Regional Director of the EDA; Steven White for Senator Rob Portman; Joe Gilligan for Senator Sherrod Brown; Joe Bengoechea on behalf of Congressman Steve Stivers; Pickaway County

Commissioner Brian Stewart; City of Circleville Mayor Don McIlloy; Director of Pickaway Progress Partnership Ryan Scribner; Steve Austria of Zaino, Hall & Farrin; Southern State Community College President Dr. Kevin Boys; Ohio Christian University President Dr. Jon Kulaga; and Plaster Foundation Executive Director, Dr. Dolly Plaster-Clement.

"I am excited about this new Robert W. Plaster Enterprise Center and the opportunities it will bring to students of Ohio Christian University. This free enterprise center is one part of a larger complete package providing students opportunity to leverage hard work with an education to help them create their own best futures that they chose for themselves. And, Ohio Christian students, I can't wait to see your future accomplishments."

~ Dr. Dolly Plaster-Clement

Southern State Community College President Kevin Boys declared that "Southern State Community College is delighted to partner with Ohio Christian University on this important initiative. The synergy between our institutions will enable both of us to accomplish much more than we could individually, and all in the interest of achieving increased economic prosperity in our region."

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OCU Morrow Student Publishes 'Jesus Music' Collection



Atlanta-native Portia Rene' is a new worship and contemporary gospel artist and OCU Morrow student whose passion is spreading Jesus' message. She is an out-of-the-box singer with an out-of-the-box message.

Rene' considers her genre 'Jesus Music.' "God revealed to me in a very slow process that worship songs aren't just a genre of music,"

she explains. "Worship songs are declarations and prayers. They are our gateway to glory—how we recite God's word back to Him. There is no way that these declarations may be subsumed into a single genre."

Rene' sees herself as an innovator in ministry and music: "I want to create synergy between the different gospel genres. I want Christian artists to become more connected. I want to be a trailblazer and channel who helps merge genres."

Rene' believes true artistry is defined by the life we live. Her walk is a true testament of that. Her path of faith has led her into an effective ministry. From her service in the Rebirth Church of Atlanta as Youth Pastor to her dedication as an educator in Atlanta's School system, Portia believes God has called her to be a beacon wherever she treads. Whatever the setting, whether classroom, sanctuary, or amphitheater, she is taking Jesus with her.

Rene's journey is a unique one of redemption and rebuilding and an inspiration for everyone. Her new *The Rebuild EP* is a masterpiece collection of recordings of her worship songs—eclectic, acoustic, traditional, and inspirational music. The *Rebuild EP* takes listeners on a journey within every track. "I believe there is something for everyone in this perennial body of work," she explains.

Title track "The Rebuild" will strike your heart strings with its allegorical affection. "Brand New" is a declaration of change and newness sung with a sultry and contemporary acoustic feel. "Yes" is a simple but powerful affirmation ballad. "Victory" will for sure put you on your toes, literally, with its upbeat tempo and traditional feel.

The *ReBuild EP* is now available on all digital outlets. "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone". —*Psalms* 118:22.





FALL WITH Pastor

Love Chapel Hill's pastor invigorated Fall Revival. "Revival has always been a great time of renewal and spiritual refreshment at OCU," declared Rev. Aaron Duvall, Director of Spiritual Formation. "This year we were exceptionally excited to have had Pastor Matt bringing the Word to our students."

Pastor Matt LeRoy is a preacher, church planter, and folk theologian who co-founded Love Chapel Hill, an eclectic church in downtown Chapel Hill, North Carolina. During OCU's Fall Revival week, Pastor Matt gave inspiring messages during his three-day visit to OCU's main campus, addressing the entire body of students, faculty, and staff. Spirited altar calls engaged many attending the presentations.

REVIVAL

Matt LeRoy

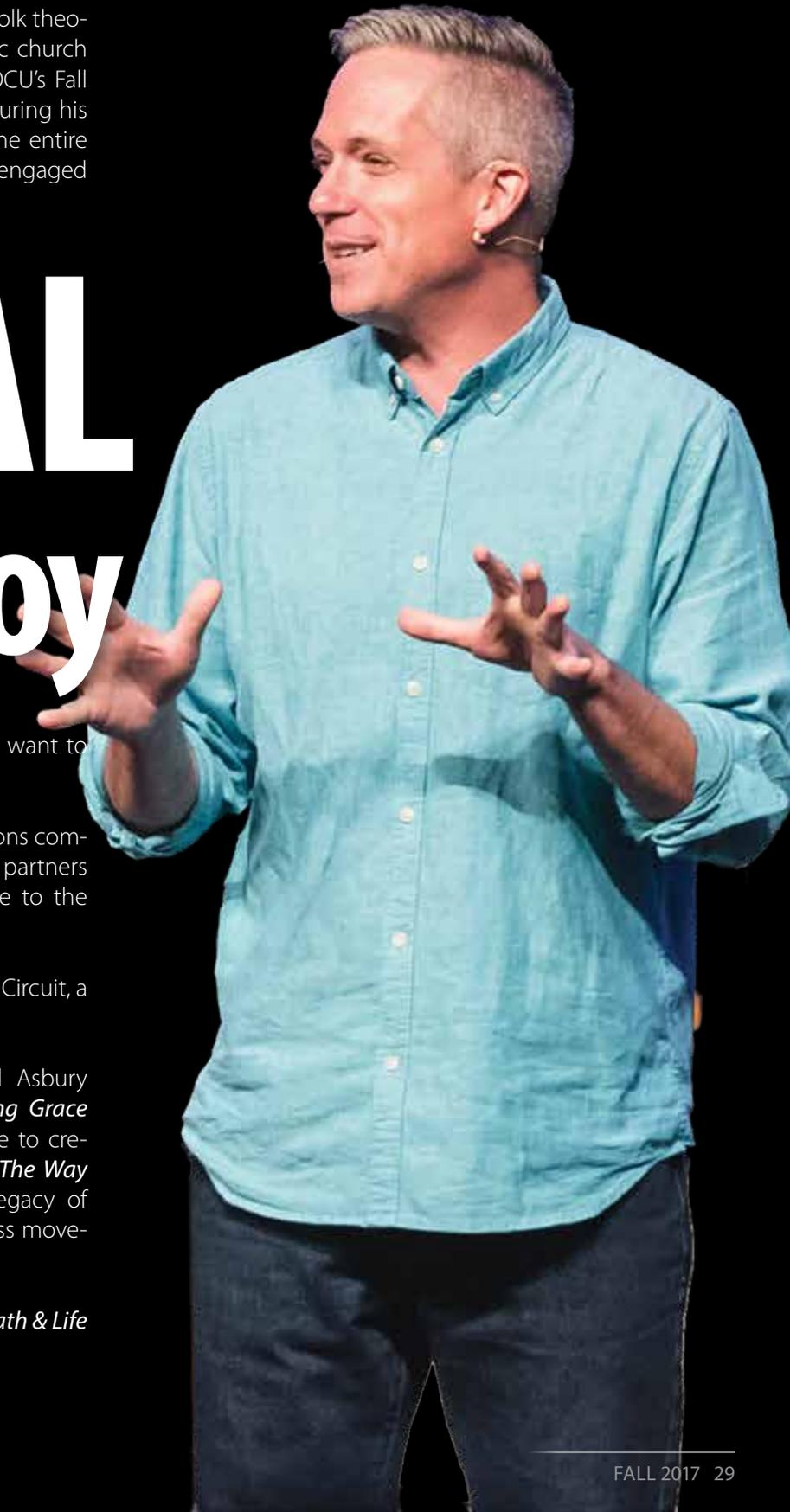
"Our name is our mission," Pastor Matt explains. "We want to love Chapel Hill with the heart of Jesus."

College students, young families, and homeless persons comprise some 200 church members. Love Chapel Hill partners with community outreach services in showing love to the community.

Beyond his work in Chapel Hill, Matt is director of The Circuit, a regional church planting collective.

A graduate of Southern Wesleyan University and Asbury Theological Seminary, Matt is author of *Awakening Grace* and *The Way Forward*. *Awakening Grace* is a guide to creative Christian discipleship and spiritual practices. *The Way Forward* reprises for the current generation the legacy of Wesley, Fletcher, Booth and Asbury, the great holiness movement writers.

Matt's latest book is *The Great Reversal: The Life & Death & Life of Jesus* (Seedbed, 2016).



Alumni Spotlight

The Beers share their testimony of how God helped them through their learning process. Their hope in Christ enables them to carry the Gospel into unreached places.



Beers children in back row (left to right): Jesse, Josiah, Jael, and Jerome. All attended Ohio Christian University.

"If you make another sound, I will shove that ice cream cone down your throat!" These harsh words were directed at Jesse Beers, a teenager attending church camp at the time. Jesse lives with Tourette Syndrome (TS), a neurologic disease that manifests in tics—involuntary muscle movements, sounds, words, and even thoughts.

As Jesse ate his ice cream, he kept having a noisy gag reflex that offended a nearby adult who shouted at him. Jesse tried to explain his disorder to no avail. He was quickly misjudged to be just a rude teen. This is a common experience for Jesse who has been confronted in—and sometimes ejected from—stores, theaters, church events, school, and sports activities.

Jesse is the son of Jerry and Julie Beers. In the past, Jerry has been called to Jesse's school several times a week to comfort, calm, or take Jesse home. The Beers grew to understand TS by participating in special learning events with other families whose children have TS. To help Jesse, Julie received special training and has developed individualized training plans for him and other students with TS.

During a winter retreat, Jesse 'had it out' with God. He laid on his face, wept, yelled, pounded the floor, and eventually surrendered his TS to Jesus. A new peace and power has filled his life. While he still faces struggles, Jesse now lives with TS rather than fighting it. He has embraced his identity in Christ, his disability, and his calling.

The Beers built these events into Disabled by Love, a non-profit ministry that serves individuals with TS, autism, attention deficit disorder, and similar neurologic dysfunctions. Because of first-hand experience and seeking the Lord, the Beers assist families, churches, educators, and pastors who want to care for and minister to similar children and families.

Since forming “Disabled by Love”, Jerry and Julie have been traveling extensively to train school districts, doctors, and churches through conferences and one-on-one instruction. They apply many strategies and therapies to address these challenging neurologic disorders. “Yet, it is Christ’s message and our identity in Him that is making the difference,” Jerry explains.

The Beers share their testimony of how God helped them through their learning process. Their hope in Christ enables them to carry the Gospel into unreached places. They are leading participants in voluntary prayer. Their training seminars end with Q&A sessions that enable the ministry to pray with hundreds of individuals and families during conversations at the events and elsewhere.

Disabled by Love wants churches to be aware of challenges families face when a member has a neurological disability such as TS. They seek to

educate and help churches be sensitive to those challenges. Ministering to families with children with neurologic disorders involves integration not separation. The Beers teach that the goal is to include these children in church activities. This means providing special training for those who work with students who have special needs.

The Beers’ goal is to multiply this training in many churches so families living with TS find acceptance and hope in their churches. Disabled by Love uses a training method rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition of stillness and meditation—experiencing Christ’s presence, love of God, promises of scripture, and cultivating gratefulness.

A 1987 OCU alumnus with a Bachelors in Christian Ministry, Jerry finishes his Doctorate of Ministry at Ashland Theological Seminary in 2018. His dissertation focuses on the use of mindfulness and meditative prayer therapy to help those with TS and other neurologic disorders. Prayers help such people to de-escalate neurological breaks and tic explosions, to prepare for significant events, and to better manage daily challenges. Currently, Jerome serves the Wesleyan Church in Hanover, Pennsylvania.



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